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THE GUARD EXPERIENCE

>> ON THE ROAD

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DIARY FROM THE ARMY
MOUNTAIN WARFARE
SCHOOL'S MOUNTAIN WALK

>> GEAR

"FIRE FOR EFFECT" WITH THE NEW M777 HOWITZER

>> GX HERO

THUNDER DOWN IN DIXIE

SOLDIER HELPS
SOLDIERS THROUGH
RIDE P. 102

FREEDOM

What it means to me

"FREEDOM IS
THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN LIVING
AND JUST
EXISTING."

>> SGT Bryson Yarbrough P. 42



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Letter From Leadership



You Secure Our Freedom

Dear Guard Members,

As Commander in Chief of the Minnesota National Guard, I want to sincerely thank you and your families for your service.

In the defining moments of this glorious nation, our character and our resolve have been tested. Each time, our military has been there.

Everything we enjoy today—our security, prosperity and the ability to enjoy freedom—was bought at the price of service and sacrifice of the men and women in the United States military.

In Minnesota, we are extremely proud of the 13,000 men and women in the Minnesota National Guard. Since Sept. 11, 2001, the Minnesota National Guard has mobilized more than 11,000 Soldiers and Airmen. Our Citizen-Soldiers have served in 33 countries and in multiple disaster relief and homeland security missions.

This spring, more than 1,000 members of the Minnesota National Guard will lead and implement the command and control infrastructure in eight of Iraq's 18 provinces, oversee a 16,000-person multinational force and work in partnership with 40,000 Iraqi Soldiers and police officials.

This high-profile, yearlong mission by the Minnesota Army National Guard's 34th Red Bull Infantry Division is a testament to the Guard's professionalism, strength and dedication. Members of this same unit previously served a 22-month deployment—the longest continuous deployment of any military unit during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We have made it our priority to support these heroes before, during and after their deployments. The Minnesota National Guard has pioneered a program to improve how Soldiers and Airmen are reintegrated back into their communities. Called "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon," the program is named as a reminder that our support cannot end when a deployment is complete and the yellow ribbons are untied.

When our country asks, "Who will stand for us?" the brave men and women of our military raise their hands and answer, "Here I am."

Some give a little, some give a lot and some pay the ultimate measure of sacrifice for their country. For all of these heroes, there must be gratitude, thanks and appreciation from the rest of us reflected not just in our words, but also in our actions as a community.

It's my great honor and privilege to say "thank you." We remain eternally grateful for all you do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Pawlenty".

Tim Pawlenty
Governor of Minnesota

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MISSION: To celebrate and support the Soldiers and families of the National Guard. To provide today's Army National Guard members with information for becoming a better Soldier and better citizen. To encourage and assist Guard Soldiers in maximizing the benefits of their military career as well as their personal and family goals.

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“Freedom is keeping my family and friends safe and alive, at all cost.”

>> SPC Richard Harvey, Washington Army National Guard

The word “Freedom” is tossed around a lot among the military community. But how do we define it? You fight for freedom every day. You have a personal connection; so we asked you Freedom’s true meaning. Check out your response in “Freedom: What it Means to Me” on page 42.

With that, I thought I’d offer my definition.

Freedom: This is the privilege we share, earned through the sacrifice of those with the innate hero quality that compels them to stand up when most do not. It’s the privilege to raise and care for my family while our heroes leave theirs, taking the fight to the enemy, keeping our enemies from sowing terror on our soil. It is a debt we can never fully repay, but must acknowledge with every breath.

One man who has fought for our Freedom for more than 16 years is our own Clint Wood. This guy will go anywhere and do anything for the support and service of America and our National Guard. He spent 22 months in deployment with the 1/34th, and now he’s out in the field, putting the spotlight on our troops at the ground level. This past January, we asked him to check out Mountain Warfare School in Vermont. Yup, we purposely picked the dead of winter. Clint’s hooah like that.

About a year prior, I saw a photo of a Soldier scaling an icy mountain high above the trees, picks in hand. You could feel his never-say-die attitude—I instantly wanted to be there. Being that I am often locked away in meetings, we asked Clint to go. Didn’t take a lot of prodding, to be honest (check out the photo of his grinning mug).

And if you want to keep Clint smilin’ and me jealous, invite Clint to check out the Guard action cooking up in your state. His summer schedule is wide open. Email Clint at Clint.Wood@GXonline.com. We are dedicated to celebrating your heroism and sacrifice for our Freedom.



LUCKIEST EDITOR ALIVE Clint Wood poses for a shot, proving life in the field flat-out rocks.

Thanks!

Keith Kawasaki, Editor-in-Chief
Keith@GXonline.com



ON THE COVER
SGT Bryson Yarbrough of the Kentucky Army National Guard is proud to be defending America's Freedom.

PHOTO BY EVAN BAINES

Mailbag



Clint,
Just saw the bobsled article you did. Wanted to tell you that I thought it was great. Nice job!
—SGT Jeremy White, Guard Bobsledder

Clint,
Thanks for the great bobsled article. Still getting phone calls and emails on it.
—SGT Mike Kohn, Guard Bobsledder

SGT Ken,
Thanks for being the role model and leader that you are! It was truly an honor to be able to work out with you!
—SFC Jennifer Butler,
Utah Army National Guard

Thank you for writing an article about my son, Beau Jordan. It is a special time for our family. The photo you arranged to have done is great. As a mother, I deeply appreciate the heroic light you shine on our young men and women.
—Dana Hall Jordan

I know this is not a picture of a Soldier at service, but I really wanted to share it with you. I believe this picture says so much. This is SGT Robert Vargas of the National Guard here in Texas. He is part of Unit B, Battery 3/133 Field Artillery. In this photo, my husband is being escorted back to the airport to return to Iraq after two weeks of R&R. He is seen walking with his most loyal supporter, his 4-year-old son Adam. We couldn't be prouder of Robert for what he does; he means the world to us. I just really wanted to share this picture with the world. Robert always says that his two kids and I are the reason he does what he does, and they are also the strength he needs to get up every morning, to get through his deployment. And I'm sure there are many other Soldiers who feel that exact same way Thank you for your time, and God bless.

—Amanda Vargas



Letters from the Front

Intro by Christian Anderson

IT WAS STRANGE TO SEE a photo of my buddy, 1LT Robert Conner, in Iraq for the first time. Just a few months ago, I was at his house in Memphis, holding his newborn baby girl. A week later, he deployed to Iraq with the 267th Military Police Company, Tennessee Army National Guard.

When I got to see him just before he deployed, we spoke of what was to come. He was excited to lead his Soldiers and help defend a people who had been oppressed for so long.

As I looked at him in the photo, I saw a Warrior, trained to do what is necessary to defend freedom.

It has been nine years since we met at college, and it's hard to believe that my friend is responsible for so many men and women. I know that is why America is so successful—because people like Rob step up and look the enemy in the eye, never wavering and always charging ahead.

Below are a few short notes from Rob and his men about their mission. We wanted to give them the chance to speak about the defining moment for them in Iraq, what it is like to suit up and go outside the wire, and how they feel about their service.



BUILDING A BETTER TOMORROW
1LT Robert Conner and Soldiers from the 267th MP CO work with local government officials to ensure the safety of the people of Iraq.

The most defining moment for me was the plane ride into Baghdad. I was roughly a 45-minute trip, but the ride felt like it took forever. My perception of Baghdad was clouded with war stories from others, and I was eager to experience Iraq for myself.

The plane ride was my defining moment because it ignited the beginning of my experiences in combat. I now have a story to tell newly enlisted Soldiers who have yet to deploy.

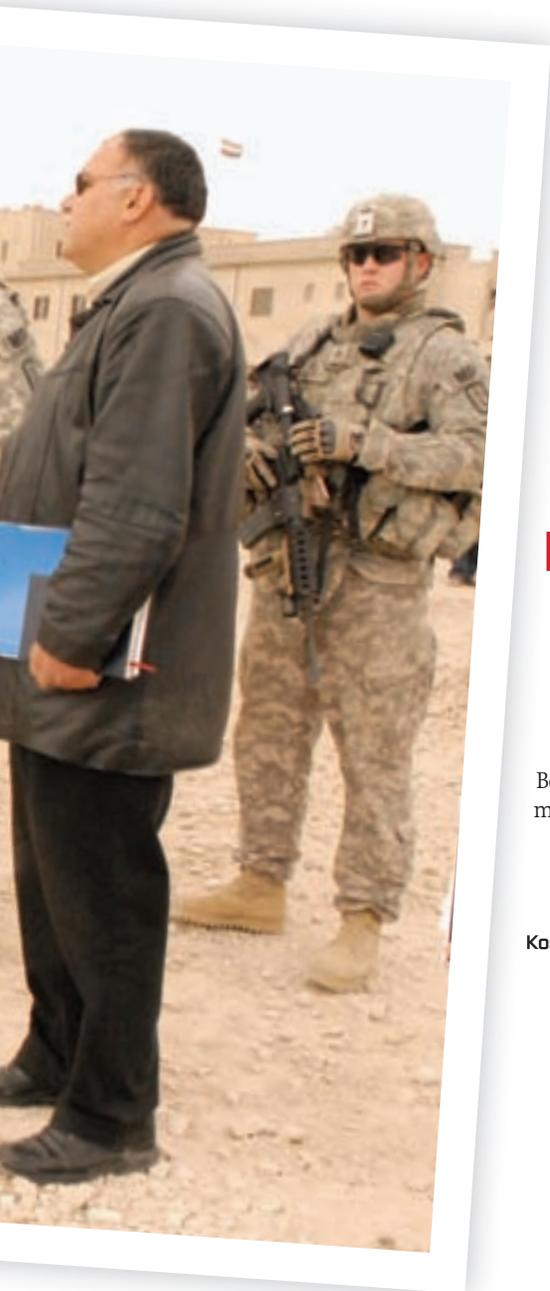
I feel my confidence grow with every mission. I am more knowledgeable and aware of my role as an MP, and the tasks that I am expected to carry out.

I'm a proud member of 3rd Platoon, 3rd Squad. Our platoon is tasked to do Personal Security Detail (PSD) for the 8th MP Brigade PTI. I feel confident in my abilities to provide security for the brigade personnel. I have had extensive training that prepared me not only physically but also mentally.

I live in the greatest country on earth and am a part of the strongest military organization ever created. Throughout this deployment, it has become more and more evident that as Americans we have so much. America can't be described in just one word. America represents freedom, unity and love.

Being a Guard Soldier means I love Tennessee, and I am overwhelmed with knowing that I'm not only defending American values but my state as well.

>> PFC Brandon Haugen, Memphis, TN



The defining moment for me was the first mission we ran during our Relief in Place (RIP). Loading our weapons at the clearing barrels and combat locking the doors meant this was finally for real.

My mission is being the PTT Chief for Rurat Police Training Academy for the 8th MP Brigade. Rurat Police Training Academy is where all enlisted Iraqi Police recruits go for basic recruit training. I assist and advise the leadership at the academy on running a professional facility designed to provide the best training possible.

Yes, I feel pride in being an American and being a part of the most powerful and advanced organization in the world. America is a model many around the world would benefit from following, and we are going above and beyond in assisting Iraq in becoming a sovereign nation.

I am very proud of being a Guard Soldier representing my state and community while being a citizen at the same time allows me to give back in more than one way. Knowing I can respond and assist to help those in need in my region was one important reason why I joined the Tennessee National Guard.

>> 1LT Robert Conner, Memphis, TN

The defining moment of our trip, for me, was when we touched down in Iraq. The bus ride to the forward operating base was long and quiet. We got to see Iraq in person for the first time. That was an eye-opener. I was truly proud and happy to be here finally.

We are security escorts for the 8th MP Brigade Police Transition Team (PTT) personnel. I feel good doing this mission; however, I wish we could get out more—get involved and interact more than we do. I think there is still a threat present and would like to contribute more than I have been.

There is no greater honor than serving your country and doing your part for the War on Terrorism. Being a Guard Soldier, to me, is a really great service as well. In that aspect, I have great honor and pride in my state as well our nation.

>> SGT Troy Kelly, Camden, TN

We want to give you the chance to talk about what is going on during your time in Iraq, Afghanistan or Kosovo, so drop us a line at editor@GXonline.com.



SERVING AND PROTECTING
1LT Robert Conner, third from right, briefs an Iraqi official on the progress of the 8th MP Brigade Police Transition Team in Baghdad, Iraq.

The defining moment for me was my first time outside the wire. Being in our armored vehicles, weapons mounted and loaded. Seeing the city and its condition, the population crowding the streets. Before that day, I had never been so alert or attentive in my life.

I feel confident and prepared performing this mission of escorting and providing security for the 8th MP Brigade PTT personnel. I have had great training from many qualified individuals. I learn more and more every day from my platoon and its leaders.

The Guard has changed my life for the better. I am very proud of my fellow Soldiers who have served and are serving now. I am proud of the families and people who support us and make our job worthwhile.

I take great pride in being an American. I love my country and serve so others don't have to.

>> SPC Cheyenne Maddy, Nashville, TN



» WORKING HAND IN HAND

[Fargo, ND]

A united team of civilians and North Dakota Guard Soldiers passed sandbags to stop a leaking levee south of Fargo, ND, March 27. This team was one of the first quick-response Guard teams to assist in flood relief.

Photo by Clint Wood









» CURBSIDE DELIVERY

[**Kabul, Afghanistan**]

A Soldier assigned to 2nd Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group, West Virginia Army National Guard, pulls his gear across a landing zone after arriving at Forward Operating Base Morehead, Afghanistan.

Photo by SSG Russell Lee Klika





» ARMED AND DANGEROUS

[Camp Shelby, MS]

A squad of M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles from the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, North Carolina Army National Guard, conducts patrols at Camp Shelby, MS, in January.

Photo by Adam Livingston









» MODERN DAY WARRIORS

[Al Taqaddum Air Base, Iraq]
The Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Platoon, 81st Brigade Combat Team, Washington Army National Guard, gathers for a photo behind the Shadow UAV prior to launching on Al Taqaddum Air Base, Iraq.

Photo by SGT Amanda Gauthier







» **HONOR ON THE TRACK**

[Talladega, AL]

LTG Clyde A. Vaughn, Director of the Army National Guard, stands with Dale Jr. and the No. 88 team at Talladega, April 26. LTG Vaughn celebrated his retirement as director May 6. Since June 2005, the general has led our Guard Soldiers. His remarkable vision and dedication brought dignity and inspiration to the total force.

Courtesy of Hendrick Motorsports



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KY Soldiers aid civilians after storm.

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Aaron Tippin salutes Guard heroes.

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SFC Brandon Cabanilla and PFC Michelle Almeida laugh as they prepare the frames for the windows in the new classroom facility at the Ban Nong Buatong School in Thailand.

Instilling Hope

HAWAII ENGINEERS REACH OUT TO RURAL THAI COMMUNITY

Story and photos by SPC Joanna N. Amberger, 117th MPAD, HIARNG CHANTHABURI, THAILAND

From morning to evening on the grounds of a small elementary school in rural Thailand, 30 Soldiers from Hawaii and 19 Thai Marines work diligently through the strong heat of the day. When they leave, in place of an unformed mound of dirt, the school children will have a brand new classroom facility.

While the Soldiers from the Hawaii National Guard, 230th Engineer Company, Vertical, are here on a specific humanitarian mission to construct a 26-by-77-foot classroom with the Royal Thai Marine Engineer Battalion as part of a larger mission known as Cobra Gold, the Soldiers will leave behind much more than cinder blocks, mortar and clay roofing tiles.

On these school grounds, the engineers continue their legacy improving the lives of communities.

“For us, whenever we go other places, we always do a little more,” said SFC Catherine Kula

handing out the gifts, you could just see this warm fuzzy feeling spreading back through the room. It was like Christmas morning.”

“I am so excited about the new school supplies,” said Jirawan Akaratchat, a 9-year-old student at the Ban Nong Buatong School here.

“I liked the designs on the pens and pencils because I’ve never seen them before,” Jirawan continued.

“I got more than everyone else, so I am sharing with my friends,” she added.

During the first days on the job site, the Soldiers and Thai Marines were busy starting the main project and getting to know each other. As the rhythm on the job site settled and the Soldiers began to feel more at home, they began to notice the school’s lesser needs, and the engineers stepped in to help.

A small crew came together to repair the

“I LIKED THE DESIGNS ON THE PENS AND PENCILS BECAUSE I’VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE. I GOT MORE THAN EVERYONE ELSE, SO I AM SHARING WITH MY FRIENDS.”

>> Jirawan Akaratchat, 9,
Ban Nong Buatong School student

“WE ALWAYS TRY TO GIVE A LITTLE MORE TO THE PROJECT, PLUS SOME EXTRA.”

>> SFC Catherine Kula, Hawaii Army National Guard

of Waipahu, HI. “We always try to give a little more to the project, plus some extra.”

Within the first few days, the engineers introduced themselves to the schoolchildren by presenting the children with new school supplies.

“The whole unit that came up here brought school supplies to give the kids and to bond with the Thai people and the community,” said 1SG Michael Lacno of Makawao, HI.

The children gathered in the open-air cafeteria. As they sat quietly in rows by class, the children peered shyly at the Soldiers. The stage at the front of the room was stacked with pencils, pens, crayons, notebooks and much more. Once formal introductions were complete, Soldiers carried armfuls of supplies and delivered them to the waiting children.

“There was so much that we were able to go through the rows of kids four or five times,” said PFC Michelle Almeida of Kihei, HI. “It was cool because we hadn’t seen the kids really smile ear-to-ear before. When we started

basketball court.

On arrival, the children played the game with a clothesbasket held by a teammate standing on bleachers with rotted wood platforms. The backboards were broken, or missing altogether, and only one rim without a net was left. The two backboards were mounted on a metal frame set on wheels that would shift during a game. A swarm of bees had its nest underneath one of the wheeled platforms.

After a week, the Soldiers and Marines repaired the backboards and put in two rims with nets. The bees’ nest was removed and the frame fitted with a solid, steady concrete foundation. They ordered wood to repair the bleachers and donated a few balls and a pump to the teachers.

“It was a good project,” said SSG Leif Andersen of Haleiwa, HI, one of the crewmembers working on the basketball project.

“It was good that we could do something like this for the community and the kids,” he continued. “It’s always rewarding to build something that is going to last.”

Late in the afternoon, two Soldiers painted the faded playground equipment a bright red. SFC Brandon Cabanilla of Kahalui, HI, one of the Soldiers and father of two young children, personally bought the supplies for the project.

“It’s really nothing for us, but it’s something that will last a long time for the kids and make a big difference for them,” Cabanilla said. “Back in the States, a gallon of paint and some chains aren’t really a big deal, but for these kids, it’s a new swing set,” he added.

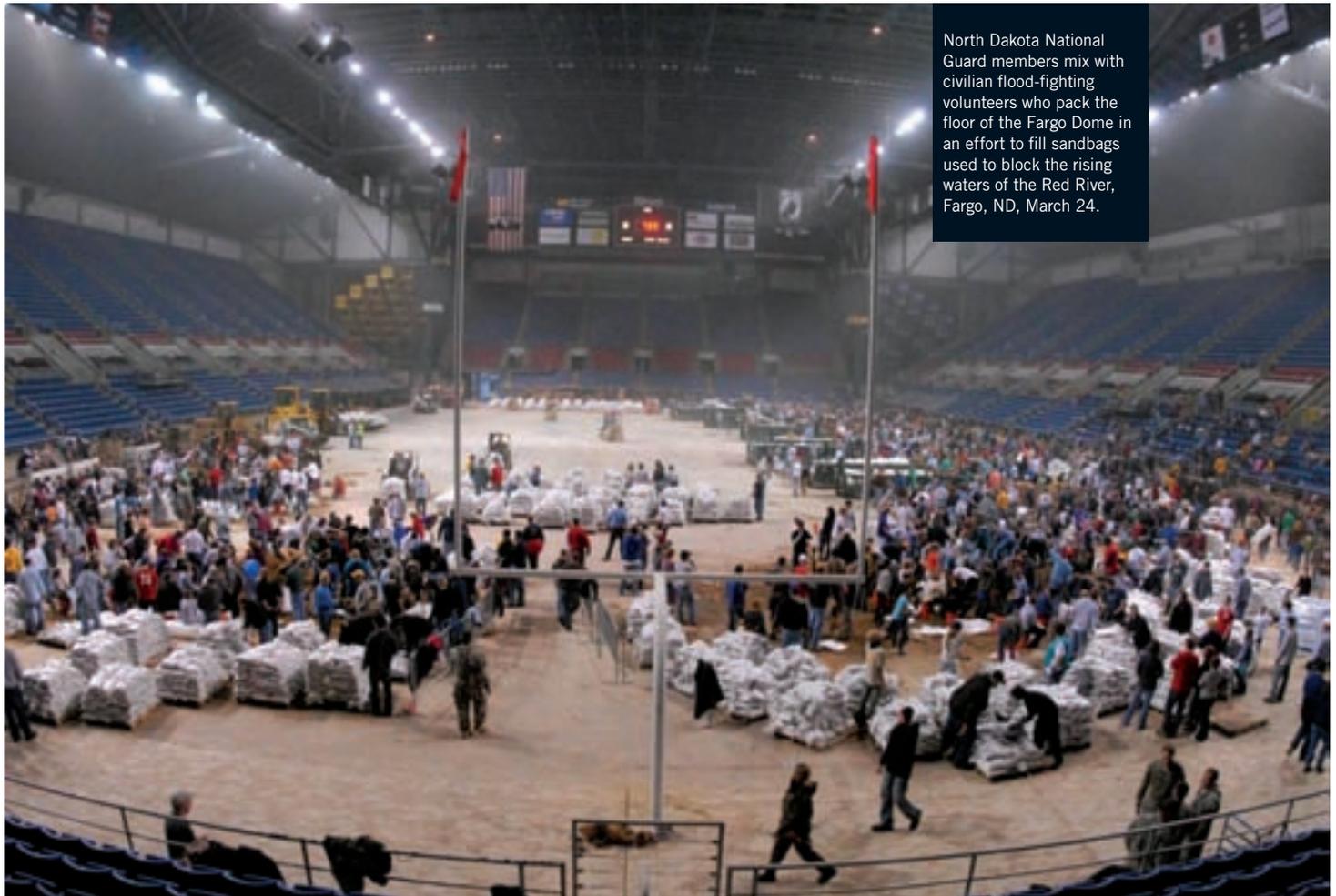
When the children came to school the next day, they were so excited to use the new swings they couldn’t wait to hop on. Four young boys laughed as they pumped the swings back and forth.

“I think the reason we do these other little jobs is because we are trying to do something good all the way around,” said SPC William Cook of Hana, HI.

“We come from a place that is very family-oriented, where everybody knows each other,” Cook continued. “I see the Soldiers don’t hesitate to help these children. We do this at home for our own communities and families, and we do it here for these people, too.” **GX**



Thai Marine 1st Sgt. Sudtay Preawdang describes “Thai shaved ice” to SPC Jonathan Rico during a break in construction of the new classroom facility at the Ban Nong Buatong School in Thailand.



North Dakota National Guard members mix with civilian flood-fighting volunteers who pack the floor of the Fargo Dome in an effort to fill sandbags used to block the rising waters of the Red River, Fargo, ND, March 24.

Guardians in War and Peace

DEPLOYMENT-HARDENED SOLDIERS BATTLE FLOODWATERS

SFC David Dodds, North Dakota Army National Guard | FARGO, ND

While deployed in Iraq, SPC Ryan L. Karsky became used to the towering HESCO-brand barriers surrounding his base. These large modular steel baskets, lined with a fine meshy material, held compacted desert sand, gravel and chunks of concrete. They served as an effective shield against hostile fire and shrapnel.

Now back home in North Dakota, Karsky, a member of the 817th Engineer Company of the North Dakota Army National Guard, has found a different use for the trusty barriers. He was among about 50 Guard Soldiers and Airmen constructing miles of HESCO barriers along low-lying parts of Fargo, which is dealing with major flooding.

The HESCOs are all that stand between the rising Red River and many of south Fargo's most flood-prone neighborhoods.

"I saw them all the time in Iraq," Karsky said, "but I never ever thought we'd be using them to fight a flood. I thought we'd be over here throwing sandbags."

Sandbag dikes were the protection of choice back in 1997, the last time the Red River seriously threatened the Fargo area and before many of the Citizen-Soldiers and Citizen-Airmen working the dike lines today were even members of the Guard.

1SG Curtis W. Kaseman, also of the 817th, is one Soldier who remembers the 1997 flood fight well. And as a Veteran of the war in Iraq, he's

another Soldier who learned to appreciate the HESCOs for the protection they provided him in a combat zone.

Kaseman of Jamestown, ND, said the HESCO barriers in Iraq were much larger, sometimes as high as 20 feet, compared to the three-foot-tall versions being used in Fargo this week. The emplaced barriers are lined with plastic to help hold back the impending wall of water.

"They are not new technology as far as fighting floods is concerned, but they definitely are new around here since 1997," Kaseman said.

DUAL PURPOSE

In fact, HESCO Inc. representatives say that the barriers actually were designed primarily for flood control and to impede hillside erosion. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan opened up a new market for the company.

SENIOR MASTER SGT. DAVID H. LIPP

HESCO Inc. is based in Hammond, LA, just north of New Orleans and Lake Pontchartrain, another area of the country that is accustomed to massive flooding.

What makes their barriers so beneficial is the speed at which they can be constructed compared to traditional sandbag efforts. Company specifications claim that what would take a crew more than 70 hours to do with sandbags can be done in 30 minutes with HESCO barriers.

STATEWIDE RESPONSE

SPC Brett M. Steele and Karsky, both of whom live and work in the Bismarck area, quickly cleared a path and laid down a plastic

base ahead of the rest of their crew, setting up and filling the HESCOs.

For them and the other Soldiers of the Jamestown-based 817th, it was a race against the clock and the swelling river. The unit has been placed on active-duty orders and sent to Fargo to fight the flood.

They join more than 800 North Dakota Guard Soldiers and Airmen, most of whom volunteered, for the statewide flood-fighting efforts. All are working alongside civilian contractors, businesses and homeowners to hold the high ground.

Before his unit was activated, Steele already was a Guard volunteer involved in flood fight-

ing in central North Dakota, near Beulah. He said it was hard to just pick up and leave.

"But, this is where we need to be now," Steele said. "My only hesitation in all of this is that I had to move from one spot in need to another one."

FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS

SPC Jordan J. Nygaard, Jamestown, also with the 817th, was amazed by the rapid-fire pace of the dike work going on around him. The Soldiers kept the HESCO assembly line humming, as a parade of dump trucks supplied fresh clay and dirt to the site near Fargo's Lindenwood Park. A fleet of Bobcat loaders, driven by civilian contractors, filled the HESCOs as quickly as they were set up.

"It's kind of intriguing to see nine Bobcat loaders working so quickly within a distance of one city block," Nygaard said. "There's a lot of moving parts. You have to watch out."

Gary Boatman, a Fargo resident whose mother lives near Lindenwood Park, was in the area and saw the work being done by the Guard. He wanted to help, so he brought his own Bobcat loader to the fight, complete with a crude cardboard sign that read, "Tell me what to do!"

"It's not just these neighborhoods that appreciate what the Guard is doing for us—it's the whole city of Fargo," Boatman said, between hauling loads.

THE NORTHERN FRONT

On Fargo's north side, flood fighting was in full effect between 14th and 15th Avenue North.

Because of the terrain in the area, HESCO barriers could not be used, according to LT John W. Peyerl, a volunteer from 136nd Combat Service Support Battalion in Grand Forks.

Peyerl said about 130 Guard Soldiers and Airmen were forming a chain to move sandbags and place them about two feet high.

"They're a little sore out there today, but I don't think any of them are sorry they signed up for this," Peyerl said. "This is what they want to be doing, and they are out having a good time."

Staff Sgt. Elliot Steinbrink, with the North Dakota Air Guard's 119th Wing, had a little more on his mind than some of the other volunteers on the sandbag line who had come from other parts of the state. His home is only blocks away from the river.

"It makes me nervous, but everyone needs the help, not just me," Steinbrink said. "When you're working as a National Guard Soldier, it means something. People recognize that, and it feels good." **GX**



"IT'S NOT JUST THESE NEIGHBORHOODS THAT APPRECIATE WHAT THE GUARD IS DOING FOR US—IT'S THE WHOLE CITY OF FARGO."

>> Gary Boatman, Fargo resident

A North Dakota Army National Guard dump truck gets a load of clay to haul to low areas where earthen dikes will be created in an effort to block rising floodwaters of the Red River in Fargo, ND, on March 24.

The Fight for Western Kentucky

SEVERAL DAYS OF REPORTING ON THE KENTUCKY ICE STORM

Story and photos by Clint Wood, Kentucky Army National Guard

Before Jan. 30, the only city I knew of in western Kentucky was Paducah. That is where current NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver Dale Earnhardt Jr. is a co-owner of the Paducah International Raceway.

Thanks to the Kentucky Army National Guard (KYARNG), I now know where all these western Bluegrass State cities are—Paducah, Murray, Mayfield, Benton, Bardwell, Bandana, Columbus, Clinton, Dixon and Fort Campbell.

These are the cities that my Guard job as a print journalist for the KY ARNG 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment took me to in order to cover Winter Storm 2009. This ice storm hit most of the state and was classified as the worst natural disaster in the state's modern history.

So much so that, for the first time, the entire Kentucky National Guard was activated.

I spent 12 days on state active-duty orders and seven days on the road.

>> FRIDAY, JAN. 30

MY FIRST MISSION took me to Murray, Benton and Mayfield. En route, power lines were coated with ice, including some with icicles hanging from them. Several branches were snapped from ice-covered trees, some of which were lying across the road.

A highway worker south of Cadiz, KY, summed up the storm the best. He said it looked like a tornado. I added it looked like an ice-covered tornado.

At Murray, I walked into its armory. Soldiers sitting down to my left and right greeted me. I interviewed SGTs Klinton Kelley and Jennifer Burrow. Kelley was the assistant day-shift non-commissioned officer-in-charge or supervisor.

He said most of the Soldiers who were at the armory, about 25, were there because this was one of the first places they came to post-storm. They stopped at the armory to see if they were needed and stayed after realizing there were hardly any communication capabilities. The main cellular phone service was knocked out.

Most of the Soldiers were with the 438th Military Police Company that returned from Iraq in November 2008.

Cots were set up in two of the armory's classrooms. In the first few days, there was no water or heat. Water was turned on Thursday afternoon. "We're pretty much running on body heat and a

couple space heaters," Kelley noted.

He said one of the first missions for these Soldiers was to provide a Humvee escort for civilian ambulances. A civilian paramedic rode in the Humvee.

Their other missions included a trip to S tone Clear Spings in Vanleer, TN, and delivering a full-size pickup truck load of firewood to a Soldier's family.

Kelley, Burrow and another Soldier delivered the firewood because a fireplace was the only source of heat for this Soldier's family. By the time they arrived, Burrow said the family was down to their last pieces of firewood.

Burrow said several family members came to the house because of the fireplace. The Soldier originally thought his family would have had enough firewood to last until Friday.

Kelley said when he brought three armloads of wood into the house, the Soldier's mother thanked him several times. But he wasn't done.

"We just kept bringing the wood in," he said.

Burrow added they also brought candles, matches, hot chocolate and sodas to the family, who were almost in tears.

Kelley also checked on his mother who lived in Mayfield. He learned that she had gone to his aunt's house because she had a generator. He said Mayfield was mostly without power except for Lowe's and Wal-Mart, which were "lit up like the Fourth of July."

"I could see people in their homes with candles," he added.



MAN ON A MISSION

Ice-covered branches provide a fitting background as SSG Erick Duncan of the KYARNG walks down a street in Mayfield, KY, during a road-clearing mission.

102
OF THE
STATE'S 120
COUNTIES
WERE
DECLARED
A STATE OF
EMERGENCY
DURING THE
STORM.



"WE'RE A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION—WE'RE ALL ONE FAMILY."

>> 1LT Adam Speece, Kentucky Army National Guard

NO MATCH FOR A CHAINSAW

Ice-covered branches explode as SGT Thomas Kelly of the KYARNG uses a chainsaw to cut them on a road-clearing mission in Mayfield, KY.

GUARD BECOMES "SMALL WORLD"

A few hours later, my next stop was the Benton Armory. This is where the Guard became a "small world."

Minutes into my interview with CPT William Rice, commander of A Company, 149th Brigade Support Battalion, we realized that we were deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) together with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division. His company, C Company, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Armor, was attached to the 1st Squadron, 167th Cavalry. The 1/167th was among the battalions assigned to the 1/34th BCT.

Rice told me that about 30 of the 70 Soldiers who were in his company were on duty. He said he gave his Soldiers a choice—to come to the armory or stay and help their families.

"That is my call," he noted. "As long as I have the people to do what they need to do, I'm going to let them tend to their families as best as I can."

The Soldiers who chose to assist at the armory executed two missions in western Kentucky, working with road crews in clearing roads and security missions.

He said his Soldiers completed these missions in most of the western Kentucky counties except for ones that had armories.

Finally, relief was in sight. The 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery, or Task Force Morgan, was on its way with reinforcements. This meant that Rice's company would be responsible now for only two counties—Graves and Marshall.

I left Mayfield around 4 p.m. and headed back to Nashville.

>> **SATURDAY, JAN. 31**

I WAS CALLED by the MPAD's first sergeant, 1SG John Kibler, at mid-morning. He notified me that the Kentucky National Guard had been activated.

Minutes later, 1LT Andrea Hahn of the MPAD called me and ordered me to Paducah. I arrived at the Armed Forces Readiness Center in Paducah that afternoon. I decided to ride with LTC Benny Richardson, the 1/623rd FA commander, to visit his Soldiers throughout the area.

Our first stop was in Bandana, where Soldiers of the battalion's B Battery were distributing water and meals to residents. The residents drove up to the distribution point and were asked how many family members they had. This determined how much water and how many meals they received.

SFC Jon Emberton, an OIF Veteran who also responded to Hurricane Gustav, told me, "It's gratifying to be able to help these citizens out."

Our next stop was Bardwell's Emergency Operations Center. We meet CPT Jimmie Warinner, commander of the battalion's C Battery. We observed a crisis action meeting in the Emergency Operation Center's (EOC) kitchen that was lit by only one lamp.

Earlier missions of these Soldiers included assisting in the unloading and delivering of about 5,000 meals to a shelter in the Bardwell Baptist Church. This shelter was among the 220 set up during the storm.

Concern for the Soldiers' warmth was one of the issues discussed at the meeting. Warinner's more than 30 Soldiers were staying in a windowless building at the Carlisle County Park outside of the town. Because of carbon monoxide concerns, a heater connected to a generator could be turned on for only about 30 minutes.

"We didn't run it after lights out until wake-up," the battery's first sergeant, 1SG Richard Wood, said.

Providing a kerosene heater to Wood and his Soldiers was one thing mentioned at the meeting.

After this meeting, we drove out to where the Soldiers were staying. The building was crammed full of cots. Hamburger buns, a pan of BBQ beef and bags of chips sat on a table near the door.

Wood told me this was the first "real" meal in two days. A local church provided the meal. Before, the Soldiers were living on three Meals Ready to Eat daily.

continued on page 28



MISSION UPDATE
CPT Jeremy McCleese fields a phone call in the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability center at the Benton, KY, armory.

continued from page 27

They arrived in Bardwell, which had a population of 799 in the 2000 census, Friday morning.

The living conditions didn't bother Wood. He said when he responded to a hurricane in Louisiana, his Soldiers slept in jails, firehouses and city halls. "Anywhere we could find a floor," he said.

>> **SUNDAY, FEB. 1**

I RETURNED TO BARDWELL to photograph Wood's Soldiers in action. They were clearing roads and doing health and welfare checks on the residents.

He was impressed with his Soldiers. "These boys go 100 percent and get things done," he commented. "They get a lot done for being such a small group."

And they do it with pride.

"I feel good about it. That's what we are here for," said SPC Marvin Anderson after he and SSG Joshua Matlock checked on a resident's well being.

Wood's Soldiers were rewarded for their hard work, too. Ken Weichert or "SGT Ken," the senior military advisor and master fitness trainer for GX, visited them.

Weichert and his wife, Stephanie, were en route to drop off donations to the Baptist church. He gave a motivational speech to the Soldiers and thanked them for their service.

The Weicherts delivered 12 shopping carts of donated goods from their Nashville church, Grace Center. The items included packs of water, non-perishable foods and blankets.

The pastor, Rodney Bice, expanded on how hard this county was hit by the storm. He said it

took one family three days to reach the church. The church members had served about 1,200 meals in the last five days. I left Bardwell around dusk and stayed overnight in a Gilbertsville, KY, hotel. The next day, I drove to the MP AD's headquarters in Frankfort, KY.

>> **TUESDAY, FEB. 2**

MY MISSION WAS TO DRIVE to Fort Campbell's Sabre Army Heliport, where there were several Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) generators. The mission of the Soldiers was to transfer the FEMA generators to establishments, including shelters, nursing homes and water treatment plants.

The convoy of a 5-ton truck, two Heavy Mobility Tactical Trucks (HMTTs) and one HMMT wrecker left the base late afternoon. Each of the HMTTs was hauling a tall generator.

The Soldiers were definitely concerned about the height of these, especially when it came to driving beneath overpasses. The bridge over

the Tennessee River also was a concern. They discussed this issue while eating at a local fast-food restaurant. It was getting late, so I asked one of the Soldiers if they were going to wait until the next day to deliver the generators.

He shot back "no" because it was going to be a cold night, and the nursing homes needed heat.

Their first destination was the Benton Armory where they would get refueled.

I asked one of the HMTT drivers, SFC Gregg Blakeley of A Company, 149th BSB, what it was like crossing the bridge. He said it was like walking across a trampoline while other people are jumping on it.

"The wind was blowing against us like a ship at sail," he said. "If the wind had been a constant blow, then it would have been fine, but no such luck. We had to compensate for every push and pull the wind threw at us."

PV2 Chris Jordan of the same company said he could feel it when his truck hit the bumps.

The first large generator was delivered to an EOC in Hickman. The second large generator was never delivered because the original destination already had one.

The last generator was delivered to the Columbus fire hall. The Soldiers left this city of about 229 people around midnight. Six hours later, they returned to Sabre to deliver more generators.

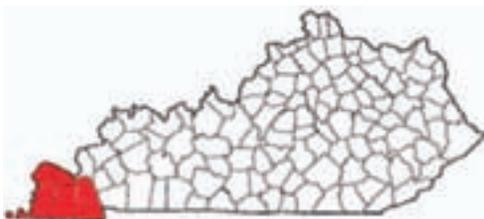
>> **WEDNESDAY, FEB. 3**

I RETURNED TO THE BENTON armory to do a story on a Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISCC) team. Deployed in each state by the National Guard Bureau, the JISCC is able to arrive at an incident site and provide global communications within about an hour. The satellite link is sent to Camp Roberts, CA.

CPT Jeremy McCleese, the team's commander, said his contingent of Soldiers had the armory's land-line phones working within the



The Purchase The cities of Bardwell, Murray, Mayfield, Benton, Clinton, Columbus, Hickman and Paducah were among the region of Kentucky known as the Jackson Purchase. This purchase comprises eight counties and is bordered by the Mississippi River to the west, Ohio River to the north and Tennessee River to the east. President Andrew Jackson and former Kentucky Gov. Isaac Shelby negotiated with the Chickasaw tribe to purchase the land in 1818.



first hour upon its arrival. In about another five hours, they set up a satellite system, and the armory had both data and voice connectivity.

The team's equipment, which weighs about 10,000 pounds, comes packed in 10 hard plastic cases. It is transferred to sites by a 16-foot towed trailer. The equipment includes 15 computer stations, 24 Voice-Over Internet (VOIP) phones and two televisions for video teleconference (VTC) capability.

McCleese said his original mission was to provide services for the Emergency Management Emergency Operation Center set up in the armory. Agencies in the EOC included Kentucky Fish and Game and Kentucky State Police.

He said the mission involved more than expected since it was "bigger than anybody realized." His support also included a battalion Tactical Operation Center and military liaison officers (LNOs). "We're here to support civil authority," he pointed out.

This support also included all of these agencies having the ability to communicate with each other on one system.

McCleese was also quick to give credit to CW4 David Barker of the KYARNG for the overall success of the JISC. Barker is the wireless communications manager for the KYARNG. He noted that Barker's expertise with the system during Hurricane Katrina led the way for the system's popularity.

He added that he also had support from Barker and the KYARNG's J6, or technology division, in this mission.

So what will McCleese take back from this mission?

"One of my NCOs said it best on the way down here: We never thought we would deploy with this system in our own state," he answered. "A disaster this big."

>> THURSDAY, FEB. 4

MY NEXT MISSION took me to Dixon, northeast of Benton, in Webster County. The county is 360 square miles.

A push was on to check the health and welfare of all of the county residents in one day. More than 400 Soldiers from as far away as Harlan and Louisville and local authorities deployed to this town in order to do this. Almost 100 Humvees were used.

LTC Wendell Calhoun, commander of the 149th BSB, said the Soldiers identified homes that had elderly or sick residents in order for local authorities to follow up and check on them. Soldiers also identified people who

"THESE BOYS GO 100 PERCENT AND GET THINGS DONE. THEY GET A LOT DONE FOR SUCH A SMALL GROUP."

>> 1SG Richard Wood

needed food and water. This information was disseminated back to the EOC, and the Dixon Fire Department and local authorities brought food and water to these individuals.

When I arrived at the EOC around 1:30 p.m., more than 25 percent of the county residents had been checked. The mission started at 9 a. m. as counties were sectioned off.

When each team of Soldiers finished checking their assigned sections, they reported back to this building at an assigned time because there were no communication capabilities except for cellular phones.

I rode in a Humvee driven by SSG Terry Centers, Detachment 1, 1/149th Infantry, whose team included SGT Devan Maxwell, Det-1, Headquarters and Headquarters Company,



MEMORABLE MOMENT SGT Devan Maxwell of the KYARNG shares a moment with a Dixon, KY, resident during one of the many health and welfare checks by Guard Soldiers in the community.

1/149th Infantry, and PVT Ronnie Hubbard.

I also photographed SSG James Vandy, Company A, 1/149th Infantry, checking residents with the assistance of detective John Komar of the Kentucky State Police.

Vandy enjoyed this mission. "Just getting to talk to the people shows we're making a difference," he commented.

Calhoun said the residents were happy to see the Soldiers, welcomed them and complimented them on the effort they were making.

During the activation, this day was the largest area covered in the shortest amount of time. By

the time I left after 5 p.m., only one or two sections were left.

>> SUNDAY, FEB. 8

MY FINAL SOLO MISSION took me to the First Methodist Church in Clinton. This is where more than 60 West Virginia ARNG Soldiers, mostly engineers, set up their headquarters. Every one of them from six different units volunteered for this mission.

Some of these Soldiers will begin mobilization training early this summer at Fort McCoy, WI, in preparation for a deployment to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In their first mission, they cleared more than 700 tons of debris from primary and secondary roads in Ballard County.

In this county, Hickman, they cleared more than 250 tons of debris from the primary and secondary roads. They also checked all the water basins in both counties.

According to Ivan Potter, publisher of the Mississippi River Journal in Clinton, the power went out at 10:10 p.m., Jan. 26, and was turned back on at 9:50 a.m., Feb. 4.

1LT Adam Speece, officer-in-charge of the Task Force Mountainair and a former noncommissioned officer, was very proud of his Soldiers.

"Some of these folks had less than four or five hours notice, so I couldn't feel better to be the leader of this outfit right now supporting this emergency crisis we've got right now," Speece said. "We're a community-based organization—we're all one family."

PFC Melanie Sturm, who will be deploying to Iraq this summer, said she volunteered to "help out another community."

They traveled to Kentucky in a 30-vehicle convoy, including 12 5-ton dump trucks, from Huntington, WV, and an estimated distance of more than 850 miles one way.

The Soldiers were from the 115th Engineer Company of Clarksburg, Det-1, 115th Engineer Company of Kingwood, the 601st Engineer Company of Buckhannon, the 821st Engineer Company of Weston, the 193rd Embankment Support Platoon of Moundsville, and the Forward Support Company, 1092nd Engineer Battalion of Point Pleasant.

Speece summed up the overall mission: "As always, we're just here to help." **GX**

>> **SEE ADDITIONAL PHOTOS OF THE GUARD IN ACTION AT MYSpace.com/myNationalGuard.**

Iraqis Work Closely With Guard Engineers

Story and photos by CPT Maggie White, 56th SBCT, 28th ID, MND-B | CAMP TAJI, IRAQ

NATIONAL GUARD Soldiers from Pennsylvania are providing expertise and assistance to the Iraqi army and civil engineers here.

The engineers from 56th Stryker “Independence” Brigade Combat Team (SBCT), 28th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division Baghdad, recently assumed control of the battle space north of Baghdad, and are working with Iraqi civil and military personnel to carry on the security and reconstruction missions of the engineers.

“The 56th SBCT engineers are responsible primarily for route clearance and sanitation, force protection, and restoration of essential services,” said CPT Phil Benner, assistant brigade engineer for the 56th SBCT and a native of Tucson, AZ. The engineers work closely with the Iraqi ministries and their Iraqi army partners to accomplish these tasks.



CPT Phil Benner shows a Soldier what needs to be done to make a pump operational at the Khark Water Treatment Plant south of Tarmiyah.

Soldiers from the 856th Engineer Company and the 1st Battalion, 108th Field Artillery Regiment, conduct route clearance and sanitation. The brigade works with the 2nd Field Engineer Company, 9th Engineer Regiment, 9th Iraqi Army Division, during route clearance efforts, Benner said. The 9th Engineers have a route clearance trained element and now conduct autonomous route-clearing operations. Independence Brigade engineers are helping the Iraqi army expand that capability and more.

“We want to make sure the Iraqis have the tools they need for success on their own,” Benner said.

A school on Camp Taji teaches the Iraqi army basic combat engineering, and the brigade builds on those skills on a daily basis.

Brigade engineers oversee the force protection mission at many of the remote joint security stations in the Independence Brigade’s operational environment. The Iraqi security forces are gradually taking command of these locations, so the engineers from 56th SBCT are preparing them for the task of fortifying the

“WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THE IRAQIS HAVE THE TOOLS THEY NEED FOR SUCCESS ON THEIR OWN.”

>> CPT Phil Benner, assistant brigade engineer for the 56th SBCT



Engineers from the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team inspect the currently inoperative Tarmiyah Drainage Pump Station. American and Iraqi engineers are working to restore service to the Tarmiyah area.

bases, said CPT Curtis Drake, brigade engineer for the 56th SBCT, of Brookville, PA.

“We conduct vulnerability assessments, and quality control and quality assurance at the security stations,” Drake noted.

Their work on restoring essential services for local Iraqi citizens, such as power, sanitation, and the availability of water for drinking and irrigation is an ongoing effort. The anticipated opening of the North Baghdad Power Plant is an example of a project where Iraqis are rebuilding the local infrastructure, according to Drake.

The brigade engineers work full-time with three Iraqi nationals who are civil and electrical engineers by trade. They conduct all work and planning through the government of Iraq ministries, with the 56th SBCT serving as mentors, but working alongside experienced Iraqis.

“We don’t want coalition forces to make the primary decisions in these processes,” Drake added. “We want to support the Iraqi leadership as they step out in front during this process.” **GX**

C-17 REFUELED Soldiers of Echo Company, 3rd Battalion and 142nd Aviation, refueled this C-17 Globemaster III at Al Kut, Iraq.



**THE C-17
GLOBEMASTER III CAN
HOLD MORE THAN
35,000
GALLONS OF FUEL.**

Echo Company: Overcoming and Adapting

NEW YORK UNIT AT FOB DELTA TO REFUEL PLANES *By Clint Wood*

A new base and a new mission. This sums up what several Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard's Echo Company, 3rd Battalion and 142nd Aviation, discovered when they stepped off the plane at forward operating base (FOB) Delta, Al Kut, Iraq.

Before these Soldiers arrived at the FOB in January, they were stationed at Camp Striker, near Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), where they refueled UH-60 Black Hawk and AH-64 Apache helicopters.

Now, the Soldiers are also refueling airplanes on this base, which is located southeast of Baghdad on the Tigris River. One of these planes includes the C-17 Globemaster III.

I will always remember my first ride in a C-17. About 100 of us from the Minnesota Army National Guard rode in one from a huge Kuwait air base to Iraq in March 2006. You knew you were in a combat zone when the lights in the plane were shut off and the red lights came on.

SFC Hadrian Dailey, the group's safety non-commissioned officer-in-charge and Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants Section Chief, said the C-17 his Soldiers refueled was originally intended to refuel at that Kuwait base en route to Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

"They asked if we could fuel it and save them a cycle on the airframe," Dailey noted.

His Soldiers pumped about 14,000 gallons of fuel into this plane, which can hold more than 35,000 gallons. The plane took six loads of fuel from a M978 Heavy Expanded Mobility



SFC Hadrian Dailey, Echo Company, 3rd Battalion and 142nd Aviation, refuels a C-17 Globemaster III at Al Kut, Iraq.

Tactical Truck (HEMTT). One of these HEMTT tankers holds about 2,500 gallons of fuel.

"It was at the very limits of our capabilities and took almost three hours," Dailey recalled. "Part of that was conducting quality control on every load of fuel we drew from the fuel farm. I don't take any chances."

As far as refueling helicopters—hot and cold—Dailey said he has

observed more Black Hawks than Apaches on FOB Delta. "Hot" refueling is done when the helicopter's engines are still running.

He said his Soldiers are refueling the Black Hawks from the two companies stationed there.

Refueling C-17s could become common for these Soldiers. Dailey said the FOB serves both military and civilians, and is expecting more troops to move from BIAP to there.

He noted that the two C-17-capable runways would assist in this decision.

A Feb. 7, 2009, *Stars and Stripes* article reported that since last May, the U.S. military has pumped \$70 million into construction on the base, which once had a perimeter so easy to penetrate that Iraqi farmers and their goats had to be chased off the grounds. But the biggest change is the number of Americans at this former Iraqi Air Force base.

About 2,000 U.S. troops are stationed here today—up from just 200 last spring.

Echo's Soldiers aren't as busy as they were at Striker, though, despite this increase. They are pulling eight-hour shifts with one personal day per week.

On this day, the Soldiers' options are a coffee shop, gymnasium, Morale Welfare and Recreation building, and a recently opened movie theater.

"We are a lot more isolated than at Striker, but this FOB is growing," said Dailey. **GX**

Tennessee Guard to Train Afghan Farmers

By Mark E. Johnson / NASHVILLE, TN

▶ **IN FEBRUARY**, the Tennessee Army National Guard mobilized a unit of 64 Citizen-Soldiers for a yearlong tour of duty in Afghanistan. But, unlike so many other deployments, the objective is not to engage the Taliban or chase Osama Bin Laden through the snowy peaks of Tora Bora.

The 15 core members of the specialized unit, officially the 1/16th Agribusiness Development Team, who deployed in late February, will be relying on their expertise in agronomy; fruit, vegetable and livestock production; civil engineering; water management; beekeeping; and other aspects of farming to revitalize agriculture in one of Afghanistan's high mountain provinces.

"Part of the rebuilding concept in Afghanistan involves renovating the economy," said COL Jim Moore, commander of the unit that is currently training at Camp Atterbury in south-central Indiana. "Before the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in the late 1970s, the country's economy was 80 percent agriculture. Our mission is to help fill the gap left by an entire generation of Afghans who have been fighting wars for the past 30 years."

The Tennessee contingent is part of a cooperative effort initiated three years ago by

the U.S. State Department to improve the local Afghan economy and help stabilize the region, COL Moore said. Similar National Guard units from Missouri, Texas and Nebraska have already served one tour, and Tennessee, Indiana and Kansas are among states slated to follow.

Among the goods and crops traditionally produced in Afghanistan are wheat, apples, grapes, almonds, pine nuts, wool and silk. But 30 years of war have not only interrupted the natural transfer of agricultural knowledge from one generation to the next, but have also damaged the country's infrastructure, deforested large tracts of land, and caused severe erosion where small family farms once thrived.

The Guard unit plans to train local farmers on techniques ranging from grapevine and

"THIS MISSION IS REALLY WHAT THE NATIONAL GUARD IS ALL ABOUT."

>> COL Jim Moore, commander, 1/16th Agribusiness Development Team



apple tree pruning to irrigation. Team member SGT Bob Moore, an Austin Peay State University agriculture professor, says it's critical that the practices put into place by the unit be sustainable long after the U.S. military has left.

"Our goal is to improve lives for years to come," said SGT Moore, whose responsibilities on the team include forage agronomy, apple and grape production, sheep and goat production, and beekeeping.

"For example, a successful beekeeping operation may help empower Afghan women. This could provide the mother of a household with money to spend on food and clothes for her family," SGT Moore said. "A typical family there earns \$200 to \$300 per year; and they could conceivably add \$20 to that with income generated by a single beehive."

COL Moore explained that it's difficult for most American farmers to imagine the primitive level of agriculture.

"Think [of] the typical American garden before the Great Depression," he said. "The average Afghan plot size is less than half an acre. They broadcast seed by hand. They harvest wheat with an old wooden scythe. They have very few tools and probably no tractors at all. Our goal is to get these folks up to the level of our grandparents back in the 1930s and '40s when they had a milk cow, a few chickens and a small garden."

Also in the tradition of mid-20th-century American agriculture, the team intends to set up demonstration farms where Afghan villagers can come see the farming techniques in action before utilizing them on their own properties.

SSG Donald Novotny, who was raised on a row-crop farm and earned a degree in agronomy from the University of Tennessee at Martin, said he was shocked but pleased when the opportunity to join the unit arose.

"This mission is really what the National Guard is all about," COL Moore added. "We are, literally, Citizen-Soldiers. We are farmers, engineers and managers of businesses, and we are bringing that extra knowledge and experience that no one else can provide. And we're honored to be able to serve our country in this capacity." **GX**



"Our goal is to improve lives for years to come."

>> SGT Bob Moore

TENNESSEE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



MAJ Michele P. Harper, a pilot with the North Carolina Army National Guard's 449th Theater Aviation Brigade out of Morrisville, NC, prepares for takeoff in Iraq. Harper is the only female Black Hawk helicopter pilot in the North Carolina Army National Guard.

Guard Pilot Hopes To Share Pioneer Role

PFC Jasmine N. Walthall | **CAMP STRIKER**

If a pilot ever finds himself in the cockpit of a North Carolina Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter with a female aviator, he will have no doubt who she is—there's only one.

MAJ Michele P. Harper became a pioneer of the sky when she graduated from flight school in Fort Rucker, AL, 16 years ago, becoming the only female Black Hawk pilot in the North Carolina Army National Guard. She's held onto the distinction ever since, but is hopeful that will be changing soon with some up-and-coming female pilots.

"It makes me feel good to have done something that many females have not done," said Harper, a Hendersonville, NC, native. "But at the same time, I wish more females would go for a nontraditional military role."

Harper may fly Black Hawks now, but she got interested in flying with her eyes on a much bigger "bird."

"I have always and still want to be an astronaut," said the mother of a 17-month-old son, Soren. "Before you apply to the space program, you have to be a pilot first, and I was always

at the airport getting on any aircraft that they would let me."

Harper is deployed to Iraq as Task Force 449 Aviation Brigade's administrative officer. Her job consists of overseeing all personnel actions for the Task Force, including pay issues, awards and orders.

"It's the best job," she said. "I have an awesome staff. I love to help people, because I am a people person."

However, for Harper, there is no better experience than the time she spends in the sky.

"I get to see the world," Harper explained about her love of flying. "I get to see so many different things that others may never see. Last night, when everyone else was sitting in their rooms or walking around their office, I was flying over Babylon. How many people can say that? I get the same feeling at home flying over the Blue Ridge Mountains or on the coast. All those places that are inaccessible in a vehicle, I see." **GX**

>> WATCH VIDEO OF BLACK HAWK PILOTS IN ACTION AT YOUTUBE.COM/NATIONALGUARD.

VICTORY MAP



COLORADO

Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the Colorado National Guard 8th Civil Support Team (Weapons of Mass Destruction), based at Buckley Air Force Base in Aurora, conducted water survival training at a local pool, Jan. 14. Two Special Forces divers assigned to 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Colorado Army National Guard, trained the CST members in making flotation devices, swimming with an unconscious victim and jumping in the water with their weapon.

LOUISIANA

The Louisiana National Guard closed the books March 1 on its "precedent-setting" law enforcement mission in New Orleans. The last 100 Louisiana Soldiers and Airmen supporting Joint Task Force Gator completed operations and returned to their communities across the state. The Louisiana Guard had been conducting the mission in support of the New Orleans Police Department since June 2006.

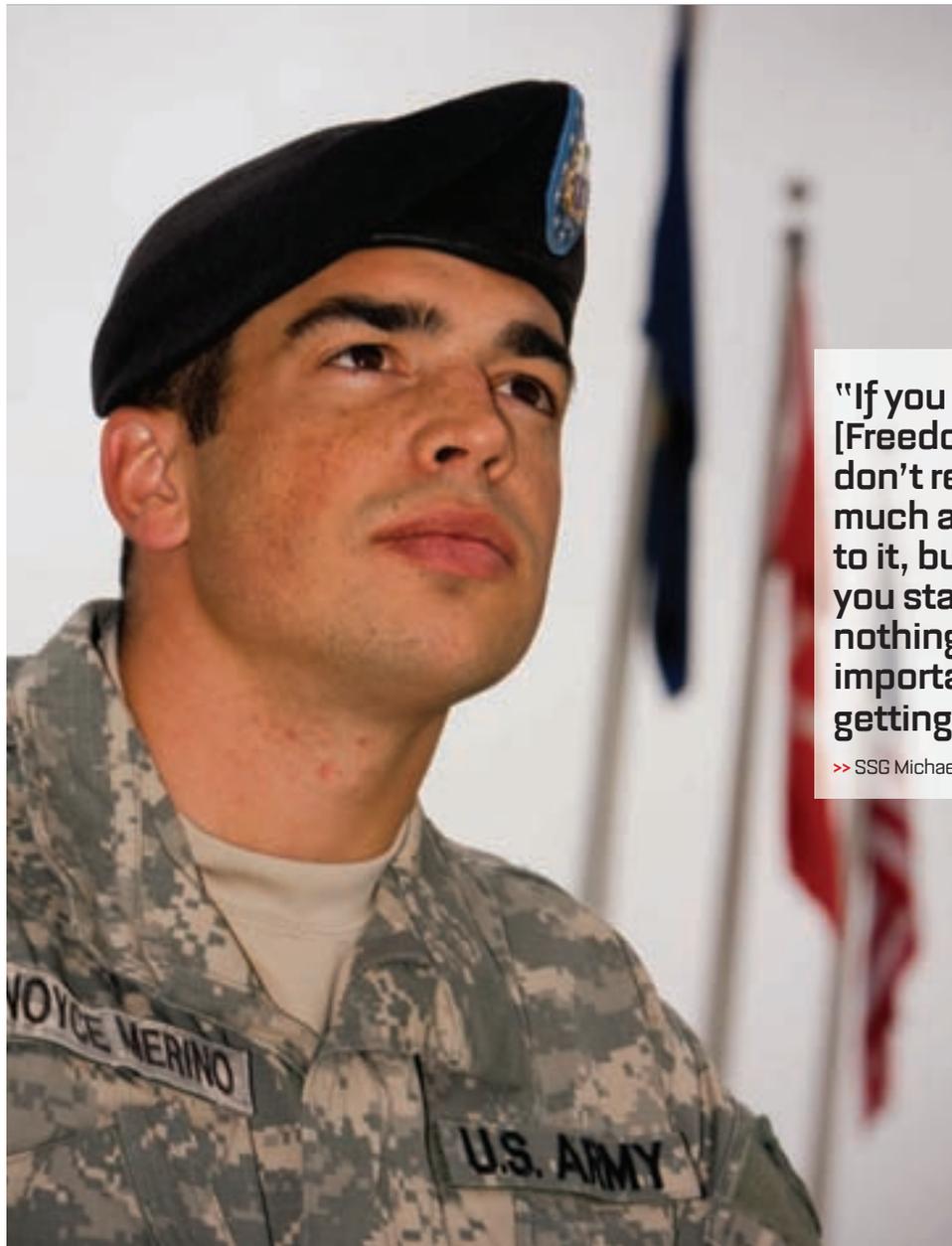
MARYLAND

GEN Craig McKinley spoke to about 700 leaders in Baltimore attending the National Guard's 2009 Domestic Operations Workshop a day after he returned from visiting National Guard troops in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan in early March. He said the National Guard is playing an essential role domestically and overseas.

UTAH

SPC Kevin Nielsen of Glenwood, currently deployed with the Utah National Guard's 142nd Military Intelligence Battalion, received the Bronze French National Defense Medal in a ceremony Dec. 7 in Afghanistan. COL Jacques Aragones, commander of the French Army's 8th Marine Infantry Parachutist Regiment, presented the award to Nielsen for his support as a French linguist to Task Force Chimera, the French unit responsible

continued on page 35



"If you have [Freedom], you don't really pay much attention to it, but once you start losing it, nothing is more important than getting it back."

>> SSG Michael Noyce Merino

GX: What was it like to fly in Air Force One with President George W. Bush?

NM: Meeting President Bush and flying with him in Air Force One was one of the most exciting experiences of my life. Seeing the leader of the country and my commander in chief was both an honor and a humbling experience. He was so friendly and respectful toward me—I felt like I had known him for a long time. He said that the thing he would miss most about being president is that he would no longer be the leader of the military.

Everyone on Air Force One was so great. I got a tour of the entire plane and even had a chance to be in the cockpit during the flight. When it was all over, I felt that not only had I met this great man, but also that I had made a friend.

GX: Many people consider you a role model. Who are some of your role models?

NM: Two of my greatest heroes are MSG [Gary] Gordon and SFC [Randy] Shughart, the two Special Forces operators [and Medal of Honor recipients] who gave their lives to save a downed Black Hawk pilot in Mogadishu.

These men exemplify not only the greatest military dedication and personal sacrifice, but also the best qualities any human has ever displayed—that of selflessness for the sake of another. I only hope that I can reflect even one of the superior traits these two great men possessed.

GX: What makes Guard Soldiers unique from the other forces?

NM: Guard members have to be both Soldiers and civilians, requiring them to constantly balance their priorities based on need.

We learn to be flexible and to rely on the support of families and employers to enable us to serve our state and country when called.

I am proud that there are so many men and women who sacrifice their civilian jobs and time with their family to fill the need for service, both at home and abroad. Without people like this, our country could not survive. **GX**

Defending Freedom

ARMY'S TOP NCO TALKS TO **GX** *By Camille Breland*

Still serving his term as the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year after winning the Department of the Army's 2008 Best Warrior Competition, SSG Michael Noyce Merino chats with **GX** about meeting former President George W. Bush, role models and the people he most respects.

GEN McKinley Visits Guard Soldiers in Balkans

Story and photos by MSG Mike R. Smith / PRISTINA, KOSOVO

The National Guard's support of NATO peacekeeping operations in southeastern Europe is making an important contribution in helping the citizens of Kosovo, the chief of the National Guard Bureau said Feb. 4.

GEN Craig R. McKinley visited Missouri Army National Guard Soldiers deployed in support of Multi-National Task Force (MNTF) East at Camp Bondsteel after walking the streets of downtown Pristina, the capital city.

"I can't tell you how impressed I was walking through those streets and seeing the faces of the men and women of Kosovo, who appreciate what you are doing here," McKinley said in a town hall meeting with the Soldiers.

American forces have conducted peacekeeping operations in Kosovo since Operation Allied Force in 1999.

Nearly one year ago, the U.S. and other European nations formally recognized Kosovo as an independent nation.

McKinley walked a few miles in a presence patrol with Missouri military policemen. He was greeted by Kosovars as he passed markets, shops and schools.

"It's a great thing when our leaders come out here to talk to the Soldiers," said CPT Shannon Dean Holiday, commander for MNTF Thunder Bravo Battery.

Holiday, who is deployed from Bernard, MO, said the Soldiers who make up the American task force serve nine-month deployments. Their missions are to ensure a safe and secure environment and assist in a transition to civil authority.

Missouri's Soldiers patrol one of the more populated areas in Kosovo. Holiday said they have a great relationship with the Kosovo police forces, which are growing.

"We come from so many walks of life back home. Whether you are in education or law enforcement, we can directly relate to some of the problems they are dealing with," he said. "That's one of the great things the Guard brings here."

The Missouri Guard assumed command of MNTF in November 2007. They will hand the mission over to the California Guard in a few months. **EX**



GEN Craig R. McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, right, and Army CPT Shannon Dean Holiday, commander for Multi-National Task Force East, Thunder Bravo Battery, walk the streets of downtown Pristina, Kosovo, during a presence patrol with the Missouri Army National Guard.

"I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW IMPRESSED I WAS WALKING THROUGH THOSE STREETS AND SEEING THE FACES OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF KOSOVO, WHO APPRECIATE WHAT YOU ARE DOING HERE."

>> GEN Craig R. McKinley

VICTORY
MAP



for the battle space in Kapisa Province, Afghanistan.

VIRGINIA

Approximately 180 Soldiers from the Richmond-based 1710th Transportation Company, 329th Regional Support Group returned to the United States Feb. 22 after serving in Iraq and Kuwait since May 2008. The Soldiers conducted a number of different administrative activities at Camp Atterbury, IN, to transition from active duty back to traditional National Guard status before returning to Virginia.

Soldiers from the Canadian Army Reserve conducted their ninth major field training exercise at the Virginia Army National Guard Maneuver Training Center at Fort Pickett Feb. 13-22. Exercise Southbound Trooper IX, commanded by LTC Rob Knapp, Commanding Officer of the Princess Louise Fusiliers, involved 450 Soldiers from the 36 Canadian Brigade Group from across Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The purpose of the Exercise Southbound Trooper IX is to prepare Canadian Army Reserve Soldiers for possible mobilization and deployment to Afghanistan.

IRAQ

On Feb. 18, The 287th Sustainment Brigade civilian military operations team, Kansas Army National Guard, introduced its "Read Iraq" program to the students and teachers of Al Ansam school, located in the town of Al Ager, in the Dhi Qar province. The "Read Iraq" program uses Soldier volunteers to read children's books to young Iraqi students who are learning English as a second language. At the same time, the children learn about Western culture from the readers. The Guard unit is overseeing sustainment operations in southern Iraq.



CALLIN' THE SHOTS

CPT Michael Riley, commander of Alpha Co.1-185th Combined Arms Battalion (CAB) and **BG Keith Jones**, Assistant Deputy Adjutant General for California's Army National Guard, get front row action as they observe the Bradley Table 12 Live Fire by 1-185th CAB from Bakersfield, CA. The live fire was held at Camp Shelby, MS, as part of their preparation for deployment to Kosovo where they will serve as Kosovo Forces 11 in the spring of 2009. BG Jones will serve as the Task Force Falcon Commander while in country.

A New Attitude

SOLDIERS SWITCH MISSION FROM COMBAT TO PEACEKEEPING

By *Dave Melancon, U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office* / **HOHENFELS, GERMANY**

Just three months after returning to the U.S. from a 15-month tour in Iraq with the 29th Infantry Division, SPC Sean Evans of the California Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 185th Armor, jumped at the opportunity to deploy again.

However, instead of shipping out for another tour in Iraq, the infantryman joined about 1,300 other members of the California Guard's 40th Infantry Division for a 10-month peacekeeping mission in Kosovo as part of KFOR-11, the 11th iteration of the Kosovo Force mission.

TASK FORCE FALCON FLIES

KFOR-11, aka Task Force Falcon, also includes Guard members from Alaska's 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation; Maryland's C Company, 1st Battalion, 169th Air Ambulance; West Virginia's 753rd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company; and the Army Reserve's 176th Medical Group from Garden Grove, CA.

Task Force Falcon prepared for their deployment during a mission rehearsal exercise

at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Germany from Jan. 22 to Feb. 15, and deployed to Kosovo shortly afterward. The task force is scheduled to assume responsibility for the KFOR mission from the Missouri Army National Guard in mid-March.

While the basic mission in Iraq and Kosovo is the same—to help people build their country in a safe and secure environment—the attitude and stance Soldiers carry with them to Kosovo require them to remain alert, but they will not always be on edge.

"I am going from straight-legged [infantry] to a completely different mind-set in a non-violent area," Evans said. "You're not expecting mortar attacks, so you do not have to keep your IBA [interceptor body armor] on all the time. You'll keep your weapon slung on your back. You're out there in the towns with the civilians, talking with them."

Evans said his unit's change in perspective began during the task force's training at Camp Atterbury, IN, in December. Simulated street patrols were less confrontational and more relaxed, he said. Instead of looking for improvised explosive devices and snipers, he and his fellow

Soldiers learned to observe a community's day-to-day routine and to prepare reports on those observations for their leaders. The Soldiers also trained for detainee operations, learning personal defense—including unarmed self-defense—and familiarizing themselves with the Albanian and Serbian languages.

Evans' change in outlook is typical for many KFOR-bound Soldiers who train at JMRC, and his attitude reflects the Task Force Falcon mission, said COL Philip Butch, the task force's deputy commander for civil and military operations.

"The mind-set we give these Soldiers right off the bat is to treat everyone with dignity and respect," Butch said.

One reflection of that new reality is that Butch's 16-Soldier CMO team will work with international community organizations such as the Office of Security and Cooperation Europe, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, local civic and political leaders, and non-governmental and private humanitarian organizations.

Soldiers are in the country in a supporting role, Butch said. They will use Kosovo's institutions and help local leaders to support the nation-building process.

JOB ONE: BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

The bottom line, Butch said, is that Soldiers will keep safety and security in mind, but their primary focus will be on helping people.

"We come from Alaska, and when you come from the Last Frontier, you come out ready to help people," said SPC Steven Ernst, an aviation fuels specialist with Anchorage's 1/207th Aviation. "Up there, we help each other."

Ernst's unit also prepared at home with monthly drills focused on Soldier Warrior tasks, humanitarian aid training and classes on the region and its language, politics and current affairs. During December's training at Camp Atterbury, the Alaskans concentrated on aviation missions they may encounter in Kosovo and the special role the battalion will play.

"We were glad to get together for this training, especially for something as awesome as this," he enthused. "We're going on a peacekeeping mission, and that is something to be proud of."

Evans said regardless of home stations, job skills or titles, the Guard troops' bottom line is pretty simple: help the people of Kosovo in a positive way. "We are there to provide a safe and secure environment for the locals," he said. "Seeing us in that positive role has got to be a

SPC DARRIEL J. SWANIS

Staff Sergeant Leads Enduring Freedom 'Rock Stars'

MSG Mike Smith, National Guard Bureau | KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

As a squad leader deployed with the Illinois Army National Guard's 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, SSG Henry Baez Jr. leads a dismount element of Soldiers who operate independently in presence patrols, humanitarian assistance drops and in training the Afghan police outside the security of Camp Phoenix.

Baez was recently recognized for his service as a non-commissioned officer in the face of the nation's criminals and insurgents.

"I have a small group of rock stars," said Baez of his squad and after being recognized by GEN Craig R. McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, and CSM David Ray Hudson, senior enlisted leader of the Guard Bureau, during their recent visits.

Baez's squad of Citizen-Soldiers walk presence patrols through the Afghan villages surrounding Phoenix. "We do it every day," he said of the dangerous work. "During the week, we also conduct mounted patrols on Humvees and walk through other villages."

Before heading out on a patrol that afternoon, Baez's squad and peers applauded him as he joined other Guard NCOs in the camp's dining facility for an award ceremony. Then he quietly geared himself up with body armor, a weapon and a radio to lead his squad.

"It's embarrassing to be up there when I know I'm doing a small percentage of the work," he said as he watched his fellow Guard members gear up. "It's just a great squad."

Hudson spoke about the Army NCOs of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. "This is the Year of the NCO, and we have a lot of great NCOs here and those who are going to be NCOs," he said.

When asked what makes a good NCO, Baez said, "Everything. You have to be stern, and you have to admit when you're wrong," he said. "But it doesn't work without the whole body, including our officers," he added.

"It helps when the Soldiers working with you own the mission as much as you do," he

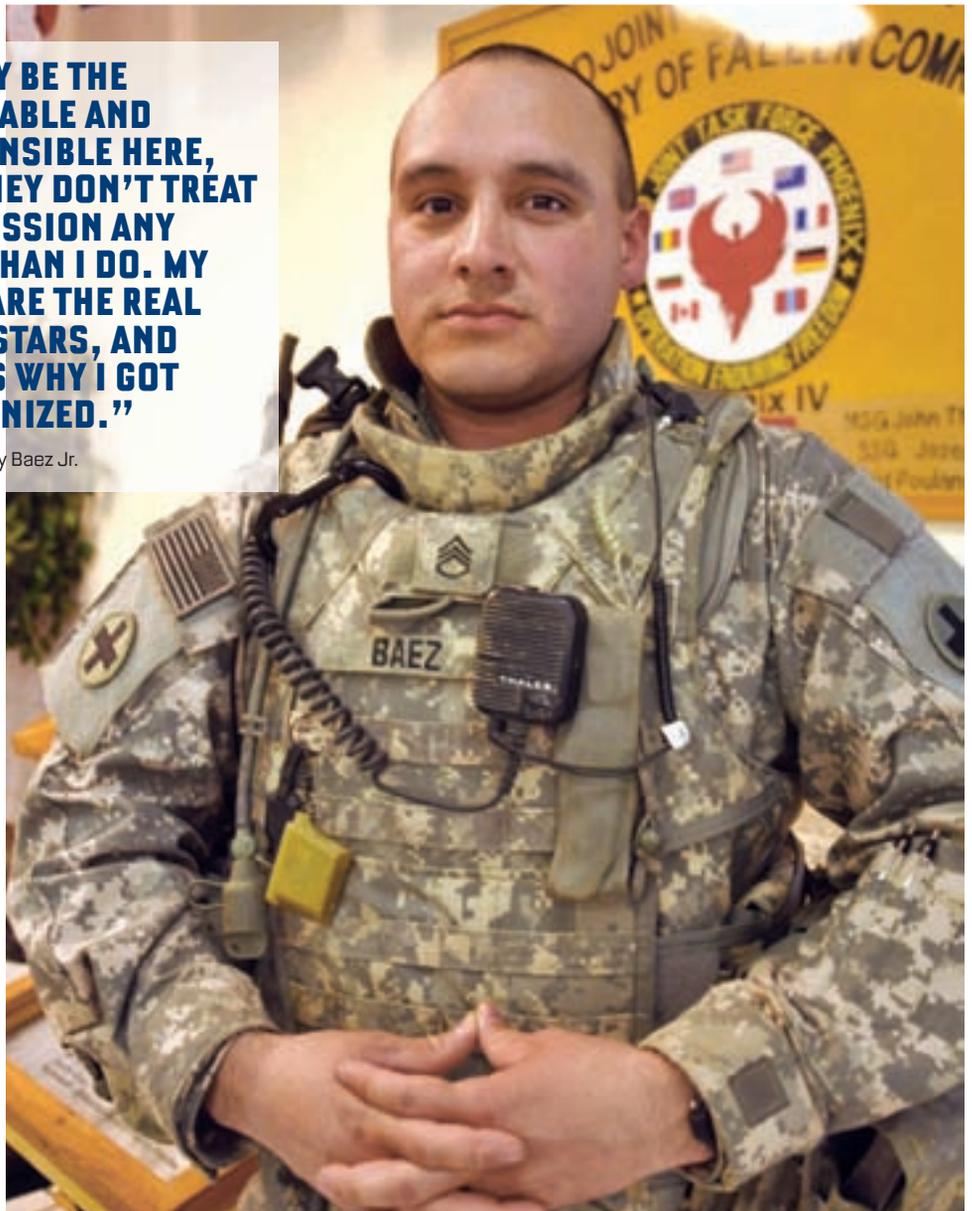
said. "I may be the one liable and responsible here, but they don't treat the mission any less than I do. My guys are the real rock stars, and that's why I got recognized."

Camera flashes followed him as the squad exited the chow hall. **GX**

READY FOR DUTY SSG Henry Baez Jr. is deployed to Camp Phoenix on the edges of Kabul, Afghanistan, with the Illinois Army National Guard's 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. As a squad leader, he leads a dismount element of Soldiers here that operate independently in presence patrols, humanitarian assistance drops and in training the Afghan police.

"I MAY BE THE ONE LIABLE AND RESPONSIBLE HERE, BUT THEY DON'T TREAT THE MISSION ANY LESS THAN I DO. MY GUYS ARE THE REAL ROCK STARS, AND THAT'S WHY I GOT RECOGNIZED."

>> SSG Henry Baez Jr.



Keep On Keeping On

AARON TIPPIN SALUTES HIS OPEN-ROAD HEROES *By Ben Warden*

RECENTLY, GX HAD THE CHANCE to sit down with Aaron Tippin, country music singer and friend of the military.

Tippin's latest album, "In Overdrive," is a collection of classic trucker tracks celebrating life on the open road. This is perfect timing for an interview with *GX*, because 88Ms—truck drivers—are needed now more than ever.

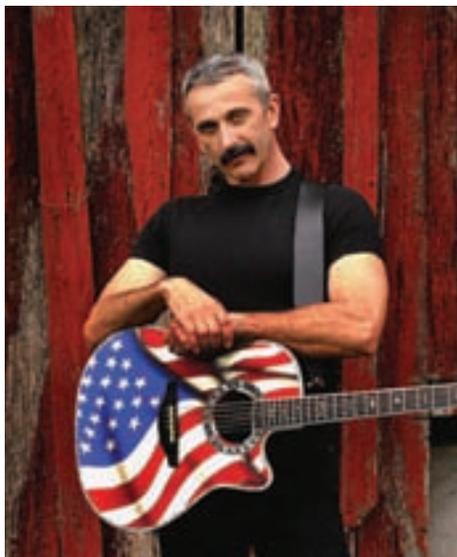
We chatted about Tippin's new album, performing for the troops, and Bob Hope.

GX: How did you come to record an album of truckin' songs?

AT: Where it all starts is that I used to be a truck driver, so I feel like I have the license to do this. This isn't just something I dreamed up to sell records. I want to pay to tribute to the guys and gals who do this for a living. The songs that are on this album are what I sang along to on the radio [while I was driving]. I always thought it would be cool one day to record these songs. Well, guess what? I got to!

GX: When was the last time you performed in Iraq for the troops?

AT: Thanksgiving [2008] was my last time over there. They loved the new songs. Truck driving is such a big part of the mission over there, so that's exactly why they dig it. You figure it's 40 percent truck drivers in the audience singing along. If not that, then a tank driver or something. (Laughs.) They're sing-along songs, and I just have a great time singing them.



STILL TRUCKIN' Aaron Tippin goes back to his truck-driving roots with a new album.

the Special Forces guys are, we'll generally just do an acoustic set because we don't want to cause a scene flying three helicopters in.

The acoustic shows are cool. I know I'm out there performing for the men and women standing on the frontline to defeat the enemy. There's a lot of privilege in being out there with those guys, and I consider it an honor. But it's also cool when you're at camp and you play a plugged-in [version of my song] "Stars and Stripes," and you watch those guys and gals come to their feet showing their pride.

"I KNOW I'M OUT THERE PERFORMING FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN STANDING ON THE FRONTLINE TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY."

>> Aaron Tippin

GX: How do you decide whether to do an acoustic show or a full band show over there?

AT: If we're going to an area where the risk is pretty high, then we'll try and trim it down to where there aren't so many of us in a target situation. If we go to forward operating bases, where

GX: Does any particular base or area feel like home to you?

AT: It all starts with Kuwait. It's where you launch from to go north to the battlefield. So it is the place where troops are coming and going, so it's cool to play for them since they are

Dale Jr.'s not the only driver who represents the number 88. The MOS for truck drivers in the Guard is 88M.

>> 88Ms operate all-wheel vehicles and equipment over varied terrain and roadways to support combat operations. They also manage the loading and unloading of personnel being transported and oversee the proper loading and unloading of cargo on vehicles and trailers.

>> 88Ms are knowledgeable about the operation of radios and weapons mounted on the vehicle. They have to perform and be proficient in vehicle self-recovery and field expedients, towing a vehicle if necessary, and preparing a vehicle for movement by air, rail or sea.

These tasks and many more make up what the 88M is all about.

Find out more about becoming an 88M at: www.NATIONALGUARD.com.

greenhorns and seasoned Vets as well. They're all mixed up in the same crowd.

I've just been really blessed to have the opportunity, right after the Marines secured Fallujah, to go in there and see our guys and gals at their finest.

I've been to Mosul when it was really calm and under control. I've seen so many things our troops have done to improve [Iraq]—stuff that doesn't seem to get much press—but that's how it goes.

GX: Tell me about the first time you went overseas to perform for the troops.

AT: The first Americans to ever hear me sing [my 1991 single] "You Gotta Stand For Something" live were in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The song had been released to country radio, and Linda Hope, Bob's daughter, had heard it and thought it would be a great song to take to the troops. So they contacted my manager and asked if I wanted to go.

Just to let you know how powerful Bob Hope was—I didn't have a visa or a passport. The next morning they flew me to California and took me straight to a doctor who pumped me full of shots. The next morning, I was on my way to Saudi Arabia. That was a shocker for this ol' hillbilly kid—there I am with Bob Hope. When he called and said let's get something done, it got done. He was a powerful man.

GX: What message would you like to send to Guard troops serving in Iraq now?

AT: I'll see ya soon, either on a battlefield or maybe on this side. Hope it's on this side, but I'd love seeing you over there, too. **GX**



PATRIOTIC DUO Montgomery Gentry's Eddie Montgomery (L) and Troy Gentry.

Montgomery Gentry Share Stage With Operation Homefront

DAYTONA'S "BEAM BASH" BENEFITS SOLDIERS *By Lynne York*

Since 1959, NASCAR's season has roared out of Florida with racing's biggest event, the Daytona 500.

And for the past two years, Jim Beam and country music headliners Montgomery Gentry have teamed up the Friday before the race for "Beam Bash," a spectacular speed and sound event honoring the troops.

Held at Bruce Rossmeier's Destination Daytona, the Beam Bash benefit supports Operation Homefront, a non-profit organization that provides emergency assistance and boosts morale of Soldiers and their families nationwide.

This year's concert took place Feb. 13. Halfway through Montgomery Gentry's set, a check was presented to Operation Homefront, followed by a rousing toast to the troops.

"It's an honor to be asked to headline [the Beam Bash] a second year in a row," said Troy Gentry, co-star of the million-selling duo. "We've always been big supporters of our military, going way back to the late '80s or early '90s, when we were playing our local VFWs."

From counseling to financial aid to holiday toy drives, Operation Homefront serves more than 40,000 troops annually.

According to Amy Palmer, Operation Homefront's Chief Operating Officer, the organization first collaborated with Jim Beam for a 2008 campaign featuring Operation Homefront's logo on select Beam bottles.

"Because of the success of the bottle sales ... Jim Beam decided to do Beam Bash as a fundraiser for Operation Homefront," Palmer said.

Operation Homefront is funded entirely through private donations. "We don't take any federal or government funding," Palmer stated.

The majority of the Bash's proceeds goes directly to the Florida chapter. Last year's concert raised almost \$20,000.

"A MESSAGE WE OUGHT TO SING ABOUT"

One of the songs Montgomery Gentry performed during the Bash was "Roll With

Me," the duo's recent number one hit. "The second verse [of that song] really caught my attention," said Gentry, referring to a lyric about a mother laying her son to rest. "It reminded me of all the men and women who served to protect our freedom. I think it's a message we ought to sing about."

According to Palmer, financial aid—payments for rent, mortgage, utilities and car insurance—is the biggest request Soldiers make. The group is also seeing a rise in food and fuel assistance. "We have had so many [Soldiers] who were job hunting and didn't have enough gas to get to interviews, or to and from doctors appointments," she noted.

A new component to Operation Homefront is the distribution of PDAs, GPS units and computers. "If a service member is deploying and the family doesn't have a computer, we provide one so they can stay in touch during the deployment," Palmer said.

"WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN BIG SUPPORTERS OF OUR MILITARY, GOING WAY BACK TO THE LATE '80S OR EARLY '90S, WHEN WE WERE PLAYING OUR LOCAL VFWs."

>> Troy Gentry

For Montgomery Gentry, playing in support of the troops is always high on their to-do list. In 2006, Troy and his showman sidekick, Eddie Montgomery, visited troops in Kuwait, Iraq and Germany as part of a USO tour.

"We try to do as much as we can in the States for our service men and women based here at home, and also for the families of the Soldiers that may be abroad," Gentry said.

Operation Homefront has 30 chapters nationwide. Service members who may not have a chapter in their community can request assistance through the national office. **GX**

To learn more about **Operation Homefront**, or to request assistance, visit OperationHomefront.net or call (800) 722-6098.



WELCOME BACK
Members of the 27th Brigade Combat Team and their spouses view a welcome-home message from New York Gov. David A. Paterson during the New York Army National Guard Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program meeting at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, Feb. 21.

Family Matters

RETURNING SOLDIERS, SPOUSES BENEFIT FROM REINTEGRATION PROGRAM *By Eric Durr | ROCHESTER, NY*

MORE THAN 700 SOLDIERS and family members filled the Riverside Convention Center in Rochester Feb. 21, as the New York Army National Guard launched an intensive reintegration effort.

About 1,700 members of the 27th Brigade Combat Team who returned in December and early January from a 10-month long deployment in Afghanistan will go through the program, as will their spouses and children. The process will run March through May.

“This is the largest unit reintegration we’ve conducted since we launched our Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program a year ago,” said MG Joseph Taluto, the adjutant general and commander of the New York National Guard. “We want to incorporate everything we’ve learned running smaller units through the process, and add new programs.”

In September 2007 and January 2008, the New York Army National Guard mobilized nearly 1,700 members for service in Afghanistan to train the Afghan National Army and police. It was the largest deployment since 2004–2005, when about 3,500 New York Guard members served in Iraq.

Now these Guard Soldiers are home and trying to fit back into civilian life.

The goal of the Yellow Ribbon program is to help them do so, said COL Curtis Williamson, director of human resources for the National Guard. “We help them find the new normal.”

To accommodate these Soldiers, the New York National Guard is holding reintegration events in Rochester, Albany and Westchester County.

“The way this is organized, put together and carried out is phenomenal,” said CSM John Gipe, who attended the Rochester event. “I am so impressed with the content of the program and the number of people here—it’s just incredible.”

“You’ve done something most Americans could not do and would not do,” Chaplain LTC Eric Olsen told the Soldiers during the opening session.

But while their year in Afghanistan should shape their lives, it should not define their lives, Olsen said. There are Vietnam Veterans who, 40 years later, are still stuck in that war, Olsen told them.

“We don’t want you to be stuck in Afghanistan or some other emotional place. We want you to come home,” Olsen added.

“WE HELP [RETURNING SOLDIERS] FIND THE NEW NORMAL.”

>> COL Curtis Williamson, National Guard director of human resources

For SPC Peter Phillips, coming home meant getting reacquainted with his fiancée Danielle Fry, whom he has dated since high school.

“We’ve been together for seven years now—high school sweethearts—and then I leave for a year. You don’t know where to start. You don’t know exactly where you left off,” he said.

For 1LT Frank Washington, a member of the 427th Brigade Support Battalion, coming home meant dealing with feelings of being left out of the family. His wife, Alicia, was now making decisions he used to make, and he wanted to re-enter the family circle. The program helped him understand what his wife went through while he was gone, Washington said.

Alicia said being with other military families and her husband’s colleagues helped her understand what he went through in Afghanistan.

Taluto urged the Guard members and their families to do the hard work it takes to process the issues of separating and coming home again. “This is about you individually,” he emphasized. “Behind every face, there is a story.”

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program mandates that all Soldiers be present for paid assemblies at approximately 30 and 60 days after their return from a combat deployment. The events are held in non-military settings at hotels paid for by National Guard Bureau. Families are encouraged, but not required, to come.

The National Guard Bureau committed \$2.4 million to New York to fund the fiscal 2009 program.

At the 30-day event, Soldiers and their spouses are greeted by the adjutant general, view a welcome-home message from the governor, and get basic briefings on stress indicators and how to reintegrate into home life and civilian jobs. They also participate in a “Provider Fair,” where they learn about available military, non-military and Veterans’ services.

At the 60-day event, each Veteran will see a non-military Veterans Affairs counselor to identify any issues they have or help they need. Also at this time, the New York State Department of Labor will hold a career fair for Soldiers.

At a 60-day session held in January, 67 of the 150 Soldiers present asked for some form of assistance, which indicates that there is a need for these services, Taluto said.

The goal is to keep changing the program to make it more relevant to the new combat Veterans, Taluto said.

“New York has this wrapped up solid,” Gipe said. “They have done a tremendous job, and I’m very glad I had the opportunity to see this firsthand.” **GX**

SSG KEVIN ABBOTT, JOINT FORCES HEADQUARTERS-NY



'Mission First, Family Always'

PENNSYLVANIA'S STRYKER BRIGADE MEETS CHALLENGES OF DEPLOYMENT

By CPT Cory Angell and SGT Doug Roles, 56th SBCT Public Affairs

SOLDIERS OF THE 56TH Stryker Brigade Combat Team keep a mind-set of "Mission First and Family Always" as they work with Iraqi Security Forces to better conditions in the region of Taji, north of Baghdad.

The Pennsylvania National Guard unit—part of the 28th Infantry Division and the only Stryker Brigade in the Reserve Component—has met attacks by insurgents while focusing on aiding Iraqis in the rebuilding of services and infrastructure. The brigade arrived in Iraq in the last week of January and will be deployed through late summer.

"We are still conducting full-spectrum operations and our Soldiers will maintain an offensive mind-set," said COL Marc Ferraro, commander of the "Independence Brigade," headquartered in Philadelphia.

"I do think that operations here are shifting," Ferraro added. "I expect to see more and more emphasis put on our non-lethal targeting as we shift from offensive operations to stability operations."

Ferraro said that some non-lethal operations include assisting the Iraq government in iden-

tifying the greatest need for essential services, such as power, water and waste disposal.

"All our operations are joint operations," Ferraro said. "We work very closely with the Iraqi Security Forces in both our lethal and non-lethal targeting and Iraq is continuing to grow and take on a greater role in day-to-day operations."

Ferraro says the Stryker is a great platform that offers the capability of moving a full squad of infantry. He said though that it's the Soldiers who make the difference.

The Guard Soldiers are using their patrols as opportunities to get to know the locals. One leader said that's something that can't be done riding in an armored vehicle.

"It's about establishing relationships," said 1LT Patrick Smith, commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry.

"My Soldiers don't just see Iraq from their Strykers," he said. "They stop and buy sodas at the shops. They get invited into these people's homes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. My guys stop and talk to the regular people in our A O [area of operations]."

Smith pointed out one recent patrol, in the village of Kem, near Camp Taji, as an example of the teamwork developing between the brigade Soldiers and the Iraqi Security Forces. The Soldiers were primarily looking for pos-

>> 1LT Patrick Smith (left), commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, leads a patrol through a portion of Kem village, north of Taji, March 3 as Iraqi schoolboys greet his Soldiers.

sible weapons caches following an insurgent attack in the area a few days earlier. They also used the mission as an opportunity to meet locals and get a feel for service and infrastructure needs, Smith said. No weapons caches were found.

"The significance of it was the planning and execution of the mission by the Iraqi Army. That was the success," Smith said. "It was their idea and we coordinated concurrent planning."

SSG Mickey Stormer, a combat engineer with the brigade's 856th Engineer Company participated in that mission. Stormer, who as a civilian is a police officer, said his Soldiers are doing a good job and the deployment so far has been what he's expected. Stormer said he has worked with Iraqi Army personnel previously.

"I'm very impressed with them," he said. "I get along with them. They have a good attitude and a good sense of humor."

The brigade was mobilized in September 2008. The pre-deployment training took place at Camp Shelby, MS, and Fort Polk, LA. Just over 4,000 Soldiers were mobilized.

Ferraro said the Soldiers are relying upon their training and the experience of Soldiers who have been deployed before. Roughly half of the Soldiers have already deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.

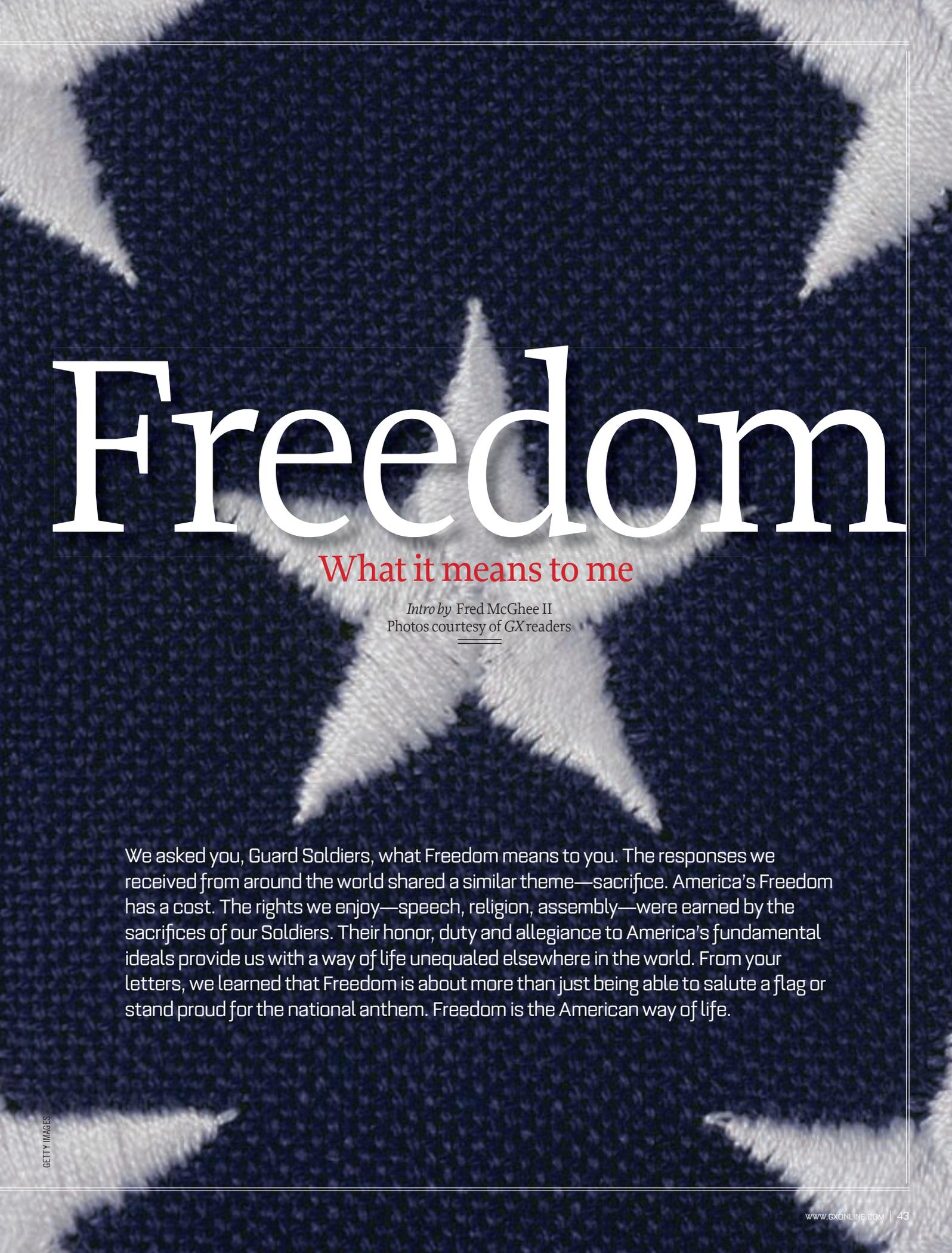
Ferraro said the one thing that will remain constant in the coming months is change.

"The Security Agreement calls for some forces to move out of the cities by June, and we operate in a constantly changing environment," Ferraro said. "For this reason, some units have been realigned, and we expect that other changes will occur, but the mission overall will stay the same: Provide a secure environment and foster the continued growth of the government of Iraq." **EX**



SGT Bryson Yarbrough,
Kentucky Army National Guard

“Freedom is the opportunity of choice without constraints. What Freedom means to me is the ability to live your life without persecution. Freedom is the difference between living and just existing.”

A close-up, high-resolution photograph of the stars on the American flag. The stars are white and set against a dark blue background. The texture of the fabric is visible, and the lighting creates a sense of depth and focus on the central star.

Freedom

What it means to me

Intro by Fred McGhee II
Photos courtesy of *GX* readers

We asked you, Guard Soldiers, what Freedom means to you. The responses we received from around the world shared a similar theme—sacrifice. America's Freedom has a cost. The rights we enjoy—speech, religion, assembly—were earned by the sacrifices of our Soldiers. Their honor, duty and allegiance to America's fundamental ideals provide us with a way of life unequalled elsewhere in the world. From your letters, we learned that Freedom is about more than just being able to salute a flag or stand proud for the national anthem. Freedom is the American way of life.

Caroline Edwards, Soldiers' Angels

“Freedom” is one of the unique words that have more connotative meaning than denotative. While the dictionary explanation includes ideas such as exemption and independence, to me, it has an even deeper meaning. Freedom is not only the allowance of liberties, but the right to them. Those who experience true Freedom are not only permitted, but invited to generate ideas and then put them into action.

The very ability to think liberally is a privilege. Limitless creative expression, unbridled passion for a cause and the opportunity to embark on any mission represents true Freedom.

For me, Freedom is being able to assert my own agency and voice, and lend it for the help of others.



PFC Jacob Johnson,
Alaska Army National Guard
(pictured left)

Freedom means the ability to live your life the way you want.

LTC (ret.) Douglas D. Trender,
Minnesota Army National Guard

It is the idea that with hard work and commitment, you can fulfill your dreams. It's easy to cite examples, especially prominent figures such as sports professionals, musical greats or political frontrunners. But Freedom is really showcased every day, everywhere in our country: When a young man or woman becomes the teacher, pilot, businessperson, fireman, police officer, mother or father they always wanted to be because some role model in their life inspired them to succeed—that is truly Freedom.

I fight for the Freedom of my children and my children's children.
—SPC Benjamin Ward,
Tennessee Army National Guard

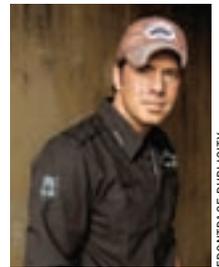
SSG Elizabeth Robinson, Alaska Army National Guard

Freedom to me means being afforded the opportunities that weren't available to our forefathers of this country.

Rodney Atkins,

Recording artist *(pictured right)*

I think to have Freedom is to have the right to pursue and achieve our dreams and aspirations.



FRONTPAGE PUBLICITY

SSG Joshua Clark,

Alaska Army National Guard

Freedom is the ability to make choices without persecution because of your thoughts or beliefs. It's also the ability to make changes that serve the greater good.

SGT Matthew Lentz, Tennessee Army National Guard

Freedom to me is to sleep soundly at night knowing my family and I are safe from tyranny and dictatorship. Freedom to choose and live and know we have the promise of tomorrow.

SPC Benjamin Ward, Tennessee Army National Guard

To me, Freedom is exemplified by the inalienable rights our forefathers promoted and fought for, and is always paid forward by the previous generation. As a Soldier, I don't fight for my own Freedom; my grandfather and his brethren paid for it in blood, sweat and tears years ago.

I fight for the Freedom of my children, and my children's children, because Freedom is not gained or lost so quickly that I will see the fruits of my efforts before I pass on.



SSG Mathew Smith, California Army National Guard

Freedom is a word that is used far too often and too easily by many. Freedom carries one of the longest histories of suffering and struggle. Freedom is self sacrifice with a direction and purpose. To me, Freedom is the ability to do, say or act in any way that your community allows within reason. We as guardians of Freedom have given up portions of our Freedom so that our country's citizens can enjoy all of their Freedoms. Freedom to me means a better place in the future for my son. Freedom means America is still where God is who we trust and the people's voice is not only heard but acted upon.

Freedom is not gained by force of arms, either. It is paid for in the examples of men and women who volunteer to place their own Freedom second to that of their country, and are willing to place their body in harm's way to defend it. A Soldier sacrifices his Freedom so that others may keep theirs.

It is a Soldier's example that is the true currency with which America purchases its Freedom from generation to generation.

MAJ Beth Sharp, 30th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion Q-West, Iraq

Freedom is being able to choose in all aspects of your life without fear of repercussions.

SPC Nicole Frohlich, North Dakota Army National Guard

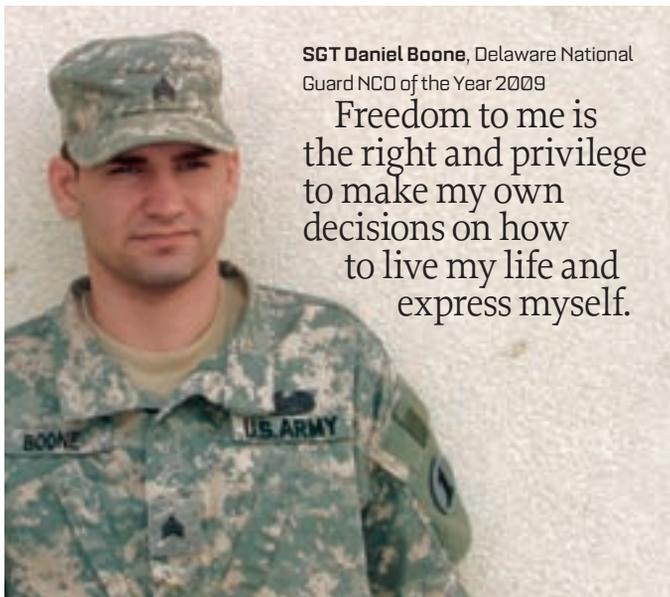
Freedom, to me, is the ability to walk or drive down the street without fear of getting gunned down by a terrorist or blown up by an IED. The right to vote. To be able to voice my opinion without retribution. To be able to show my face and not have to cover it up, and to have the same rights as a man. The power to think and feel as I please and to be myself. That is what Freedom means to me.

CW3 Theresia M. Hersch, North Dakota Army National Guard

Freedom to me now means being able to wake up every morning without living in fear.

SGT Jamie Johnson, Missouri Army National Guard

Freedom to me means living every day to the fullest.



SGT Daniel Boone, Delaware National Guard NCO of the Year 2009

Freedom to me is the right and privilege to make my own decisions on how to live my life and express myself.

SGT Austin Sigg, Kansas Army National Guard

Freedom to me is a right that so many men and women have sacrificed everything for. Freedom is something that should not be taken for granted, because for so many it's out of reach. Freedom is what many Americans fought to give us in the beginning, and what we fight to give the rest of the world now.

SGT Alyssa Vasquez, Tennessee Army National Guard

Freedom to me has always been the ability to speak up openly. To live in a country where you are innocent until proven guilty. To live in a world where we care about humanity, and believe in the human spirit.



SPC Vireak Sok, Washington Army National Guard

In Colorado, next to the mountains, a beautiful spring day transitions into summer. I get off work and start heading toward my car. I will see my wife and kids at the dinner table. My life, my Freedom.

Cathy Cabrey, Fisher House Foundation and military spouse

Freedom means accepting a commitment that sometimes takes priority over my marriage—the one between my husband and the country he volunteered to defend more than 23 years ago. Freedom means moving to a new location every two years—setting up a home, making new friends, creating new roots. Freedom means using my education to create a better world for my children, my family and the military community—not necessarily in pursuit of the career for which I was trained. Freedom means seeing a uniformed Soldier in an airport, knowing where he is going and quietly saying a prayer for his family. Freedom is a concept greater than the combined efforts of the people who defend it. It makes the equation $1 + 1 = 3$ true.

Dave Murphy, Founder, Thank a Soldier

Freedom to me means being able to walk down my street to the corner store without having to dodge rockets or IEDs and being able to speak my mind when I choose to do so.

SPC Thomas Smith, Delaware National Guard Soldier of the Year 2009

Freedom is to live without tyranny. Freedom is the ability to choose your path in life.



SPC Michael Rainwater, Washington Army National Guard

Freedom to me equates to the manifestation of the ability to forge my own path, form my own opinion. It means being given the opportunity to challenge my own beliefs as well as the beliefs of those who govern.

SPC Barbara Hagood, Delaware Army National Guard

Freedom to me is having and being permitted to enjoy any and every opportunity to obtain an adequate level of happiness.

SPC Mark Reid, Delaware Army National Guard

To me, Freedom means choice. I can live where I want. I can work where I want. I can go to school where I want. My life is my choice; that is my Freedom.

SSG Charles Bart, DoGtag drummer, Missouri Army National Guard

Freedom is having the opportunity to make individual choices that, in turn, determine the quality of one's life. Which is given through selfless service of others, that has been bought with the loss of life.

SGT Jeffrey B. Mackie, Delaware Army National Guard

Freedom is being able to choose your own destiny.

SSG Larry Collier Jr., Michigan Army National Guard

Freedom defined to me is the ability to come and go as one pleases. Freedom from having to have permission to walk the streets, drive your car or even whom to fall in love with. Freedom is roughly defined as the quality of life that allows you, as a person, to be you and not have to be what someone else wants you to be or thinks you should be. Freedom is that image you can portray within the mirror and know, I have molded this image, this person ... I am free, and Freedom is within me.

SGT Cristina Fernandez, Delaware Army National Guard

Freedom means being able to make my own choices without disturbing someone else's Freedom.

Chrisette Michele, 2009 Grammy-award winner

Freedom is being able to say things without being apologetic.

Patti Patton-Bader, Founder, Soldiers' Angels

Color TV and indoor plumbing ... and the ability to do what I want when I want.

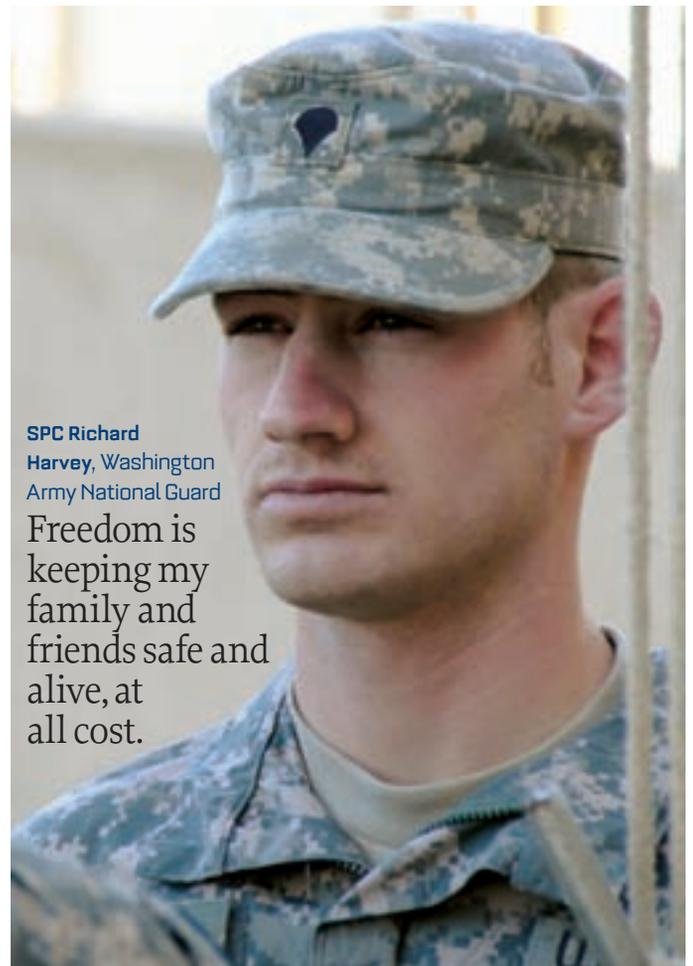
SPC Jaquita Reed, Delaware Army National Guard (pictured right)

Freedom: to live in a democratic society.



SGT Susan Mumau, DCSEN Secretary

What Freedom means to me is the right to do what you want, when you want and how you want. It's what many people take for granted and some hardly ever appreciate as much as they should. Freedom isn't just given to you—you have to earn it. It's like when you're a young child and you have to prove to your parents that you can obey them when they're not around. They give you your Freedom.



SPC Richard Harvey, Washington Army National Guard

Freedom is keeping my family and friends safe and alive, at all cost.



SSG Michael Noyce Merino, 2008 Army NCO of the Year, Montana Army National Guard

Freedom is one of the greatest of ideals and one of the most costly. To be free is to live your life as you see fit, to pursue opportunities, and to make something out of nothing. It is a human need, just like air. **If you have it, you don't really pay much attention to it, but once you start losing it, nothing is more important than getting it back.**

Unfortunately, history has shown over and over that there will always be those people who are willing and ready to take others' Freedom. For this reason, there must always be defenders of Freedom, willing to preserve this essential human right.

PFC Christina Dewitt, North Carolina Army National Guard

Freedom means being free and doing what you want.

SGT Nic Ashby, California Army National Guard

I get to build the cars I want to and design them the way I want to because of the sacrifice Soldiers make for Freedom.

SGT Michal Janik, Michigan Army National Guard

To me, Freedom is the ability to make my own decisions and choices about how I want to live, what I want to believe, and the opportunity to follow my own ambition free from overbearing influence and regulation on the part of government. I feel these principles are what American Soldiers have fought for since Lexington and Concord.

SSG Ronald Hart, 63rd Brigade PBO NCO,
Deployed OIF 3 18th Airborne Corp 238th Aviation

What does Freedom mean to me? I have always felt that it means waking up in the morning and feeling safe. Freedom is also the ability to make major decisions in your life and getting the chance to try to accomplish them on your terms.

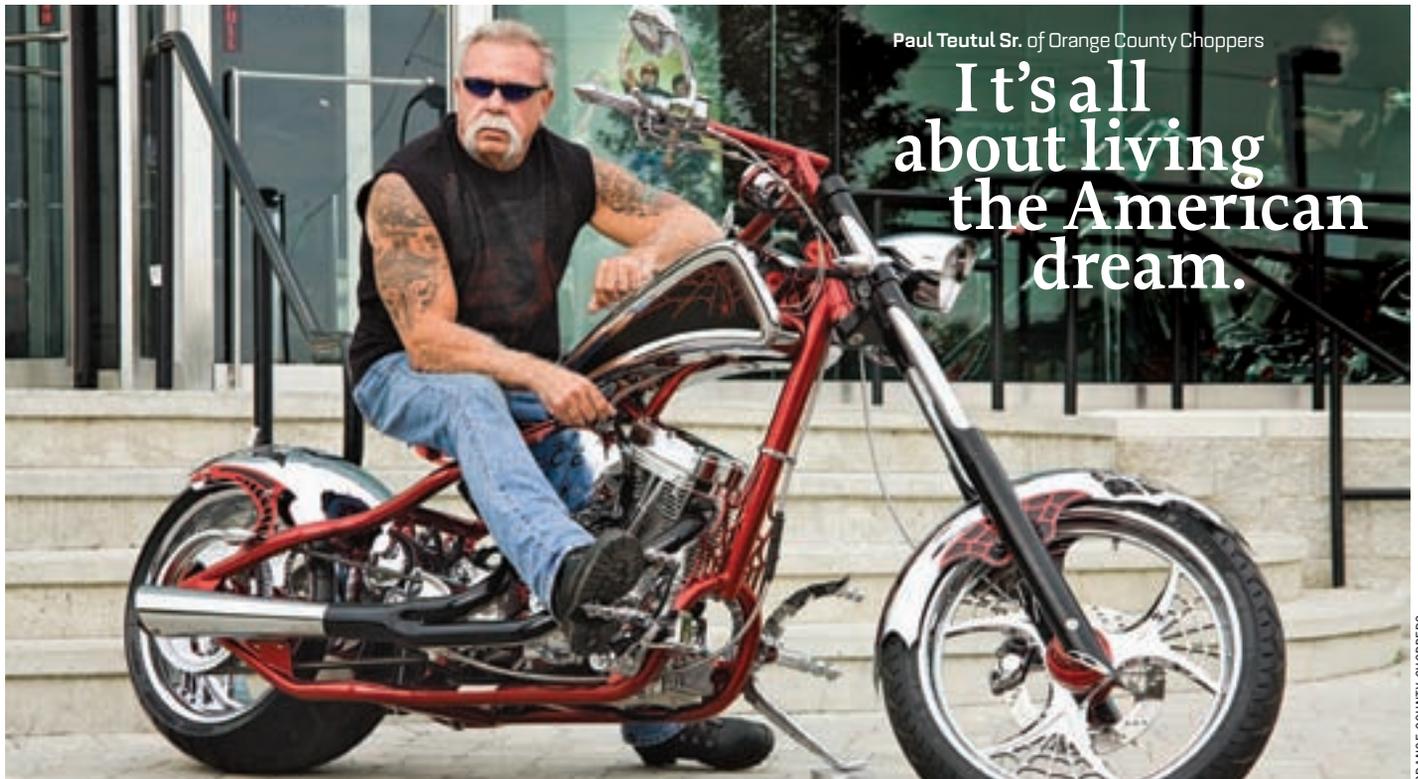
SPC David Childers, Kansas Army National Guard

I've given some deep thought to what Freedom means to me, the definition of patriotism, and what I think Warrior Spirit is. There is only one way to sum this up, it's a slogan we had in basic training that has stuck with me. It speaks for itself. "I am an American fighting man. I serve in the forces which guard our country and our way of life. I will give my life in its defense, duty, honor, country." **GX**



SSG Stan Hampton Sr., Nevada Army National Guard

Freedom means a lot of things to me. It means being able to say what I want without fear of arrest or reprisal; having the ability to follow a religion of my choice without coercion. It means a lot of things, some of which are not easily expressed.



Paul Teutul Sr. of Orange County Choppers

It's all about living the American dream.

ORANGE COUNTY CHOPPERS

CASSY GADDIS

ALYSSA GADDIS



THE PRICE OF PEACE

PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL GUARD

TO VIEW THIS VIDEO OR DOWNLOAD THE SONG FOR FREE
visit www.NATIONALGUARD.com/PriceofPeace



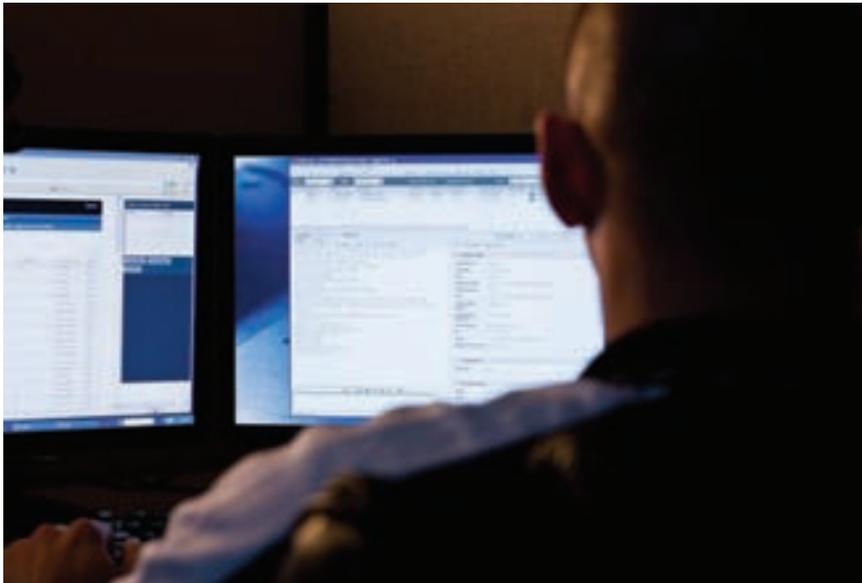
The Bugler

STRENGTH MAINTENANCE



The Bugler is a tool to help Soldiers in all aspects of recruiting. From the Recruiting NCOIC to the Recruiting Assistant (RA), all new information about the latest and greatest recruiting tools and programs can be found right here in GX.

Info and photos courtesy of NGB-ASM



>> PATH TO HONOR

Path to Honor (PTH) has made tremendous progress in FY09 and has blown initial expectations out of the water. PTH was launched in FY08, and the program saw great success, with 33,285 applicants and 2,161 contracts. Not even halfway through FY09, the program has already seen 60,302 applicants and 2,539 contracts. For more info on Path to Honor, recruiters can log in at www.NATIONALGUARD.com/rrportal and check out the resource tab.



>> HERO ON CALL

Hero on Call (HOC) continues to pioneer the way the National Guard recruits Warriors. HOC is adding a new aspect to its forum, which will allow top users to become moderators in the online discussions, which are mostly run by recruiters and high-speed Soldiers. The new forum will be user-driven, where Soldiers and recruits can discuss all things concerning the National Guard. To check out the new forum, go to www.NATIONALGUARD.com/guardtalk.



>> **SOCIAL NETWORKING**

Recently, the National Guard has hit the social networking scene via Facebook, MySpace and YouTube. With daily posts of videos, stories and user comments of National Guard Soldiers going above and beyond the call of duty, these sites are changing the way the National Guard connects with Soldiers and recruits. Check out these sites now to become a member. To get connected, go to:

- MySpace.com/mynationalguard
- YouTube.com/nationalguard
- Facebook.com, search "Army National Guard"



>> **TOP GUARD CAREER VIDEOS**

Check out the new career videos at www.NATIONALGUARD.com/careers! These videos capture the excitement of Guard service with action-packed footage and testimonials from real Guard Soldiers.



5,000 Contracts and Counting

ONLINE ENLISTMENT APPLICATION ACCELERATES GUARD RECRUITING

By Christian Anderson

In March, the National Guard celebrated a monumental moment for NGB-ASM, the Strength Maintenance Division at National Guard Bureau: 5,000 enlistment contracts, generated from the revolutionary enlistment program called Path to Honor (PTH).

With these 5,000 enlistment contracts, PTH is a very integral program that has greatly assisted the National Guard in surpassing its end-strength objectives.

LESS PROCESSING, MORE PROSPECTING

PTH makes processing easier for the Recruiting and Retention NCO (RRNCO) and the applicant by initiating the “click to contract” concept, eliminating the traditional pen and paper application process. Overhauling the way a traditional field RRNCO works, PTH removes the first two steps of generating and investigating leads and streamlines qualifying and processing them. The applicant goes to www.NATIONALGUARD.com and fills out the necessary enlistment forms and

the Path to Honor Call Center, then collects the information and begins the process. Initiating online background checks, viewing applicant aptitude and establishing a convenient testing time for applicants is made possible through PTH.

PTH is not intended to replace the recruiter, just decrease processing time with each applicant, so the recruiter can spend more time prospecting.

The program also eliminates “cold calling,” which can be time-consuming. With PTH, the recruiter spends more time calling individuals who are already interested in joining the Guard.

In addition, PTH’s accessibility is a strength that cannot be denied. So long as there is a computer with an Internet connection, PTH can be utilized anywhere, anytime.

PTH’s backbone is strengthened by a call center staffed with 79T-qualified personnel who have extensive experience in Recruiting and Retention. The call center has ensured the success of the program by providing both applicants and RRNCOs support.

LET THE NUMBERS SPEAK

PTH has produced more recruits than other Web-based programs in the Guard, with a ratio of one enlistment for every 18.6 applicants. This is phenomenal considering that the traditional recruiting method yields one enlistment for every 70.1 applications.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

It is safe to say PTH has transformed the face of Guard recruiting, and there is no evidence that the program and the recruiters who use it will slow down in the near future.

PTH’S SUCCESS IS EVIDENT IN THE NUMBERS

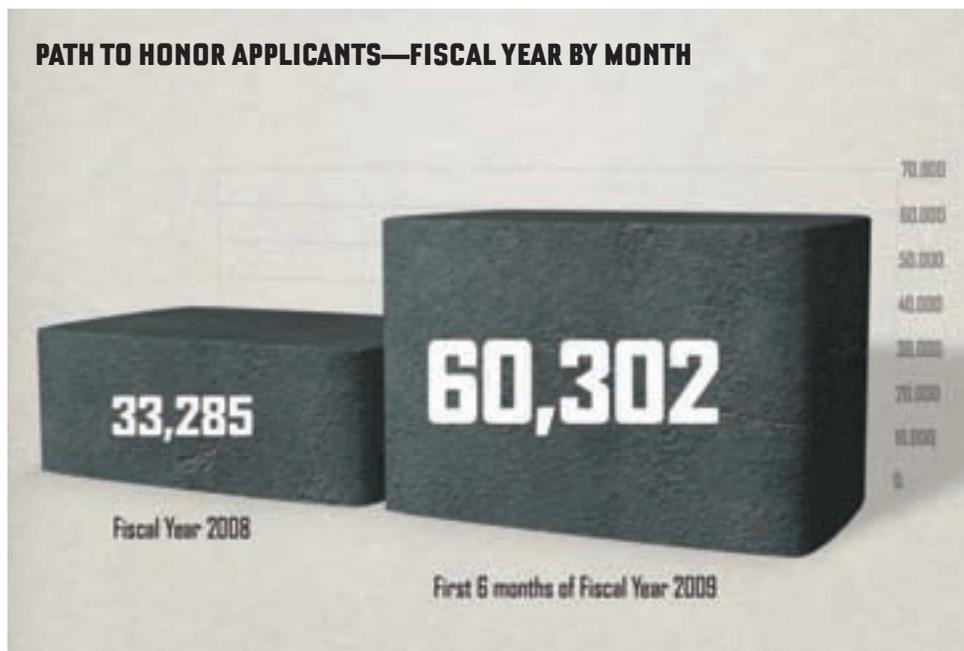
16 enlistments in the program’s first month, October FY08.

485 enlistments in October FY09.

More than **100,000** applicants since inception.

For more on PTH, go to www.NATIONALGUARD.com/explore/index.php

To reach your local RRAC Ambassador, contact Jennifer Edwards at Jennifer.edwards@nationalguard.com.



Full Spectrum Attack

NATIONAL GUARD REORGANIZES STRENGTH FORCE

By Keith Kawasaki

One of the great strengths of the American military is its ability to adapt to a changing target. The National Guard has championed the world of recruiting and retention like no other military force in the world.

In June 2005, the Guard was faced with what seemed like an impossible task (to some)—facing shortages 20,000 below required numbers.

On March 30, 2007, the Guard completed the long climb back to its full 350,000. (See GX 4.5, available for download at GXonline.com/pastissues.)

LTG Clyde Vaughn proudly declared, “[W]e’re at full strength and continuing to grow.” The general was confident that the Guard wouldn’t settle at 350,000 and could reach 360,000. “What I’m saying is, don’t let up,” LTG Vaughn said.

The general knew what he was talking about. Today, the Army National Guard stands above end-strength. How did it happen?

Through innovative and aggressive programs like G-RAP, Path to Honor, Hero on Call and College First—in conjunction, of course, with quality RRNCOs putting in long hours and invaluable face time with potential applicants.

Typical to the tenacity and proactive nature of our Guard Soldiers, the Guard is not resting for a minute. In fact, a massive restructure is under way for its Strength force. This restructure, referred to as the Guard Strength Command (GSC), will enable the Guard to better meet demands of today’s economy and recruiting market.

“The Guard Strength Command will be invaluable to streamlining the logistics associated with the many issues facing the ARNG’s strength force,” said 1LT Robert Phifer, NGB-ASM. “The GSC will bridge the gap between current operational support for today’s mission and the vision for future accession and retention efforts.”

The GSC draws on insight from the Department of the Army, as well as battalion



architecture. One notable addition is the Manning Initiatives Group (MIG).

This division is similar to the Army’s Strategic Initiatives Group in that it looks beyond the immediate future. While the recruiting and retention team tackles the day-to-day and, at best, can project a year or two out, the MIG will forecast seven or eight years out. This group of seasoned staff brainstorms new programs and explores growth potential in current ones.

COL Michael Jones is the acting GSC Commander receiving direction from the Director of the Army National Guard and Deputy Director of the Army National Guard. COL Jones has nearly 20 years of service with the Guard, which has afforded him priceless experience navigating the highs and lows of recruiting, retention and attrition management.

“I’ve never been more proud of our strength force than I am today. We’re at the top of our game! But, now is not the time to get comfortable. We must always be refining our attack,” Jones shared.

WHAT’S THE MISSION OF GSC?

>> To man a ready force.

HOW WILL THIS IMPACT THE STATES?

>> GSC is conducting a comprehensive review of the Recruiting and Retention Command Table of Distribution and Allowances.

>> GSC will create a true battalion command structure with embedded organic resources at the team level.

>> GSC will evaluate where functions belong and what is the required manning to perform missions.

WHAT’S THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

>> A smaller but better resourced force

>> Joint operations with the Air National Guard

>> Joint operations with the Active Component and Army Reserve

>> More power at the team level (marketing, incentives, ADDS, events, etc.)

>> A shift from face-to-face processing/scheduling to online processing/scheduling

“I’m looking forward to how the Guard Strength Command will prepare us for the future and very excited about the progress of Path to Honor. It is important to note that an end goal for all this is to clear more time for our RRNCOs to manage a unit’s strength and spend less time behind a computer. There will always be a place for good RRNCOs willing to hit the streets, strengthen our ranks and serve as role models in our communities.” **GX**



Recruit Sustainment Program

PREPARING TODAY'S WARRIOR FOR TOMORROW'S BATTLE

Courtesy of NGB-ASM

▶ **THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD (ARNG)** Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) prepares ARNG Warriors for the successful completion of Basic Training (BT) and subsequent Military Occupational Skill Qualification. It instructs them in the military way of life and ensures attention on being mentally prepared, administratively correct and physically ready (M.A.P.), upon leaving the comforts of home, for their new life as a Warrior.

GOING THROUGH A PHASE—OR SIX

The new Warrior begins his relationship with the RSP by partaking in a multi-phased training environment—Red, White, Blue, Green, Purple and Gold.

Red Phase training features RSP's first drill. Red Phase teaches the basics that trainees need to know right away. This training is mandatory for all Warriors assigned to RSP. The **White Phase**

teaches Warriors what they need to know to succeed in BT. Participants attend this phase from their second drill until their second-to-last drill prior to shipping to Initial Entry Training (IET). The bulk of the curriculum is taught in this phase, and its length depends on the Warriors' ship date.

The **Blue Phase** provides cadre a final chance to physically and mentally prepare trainees for success at BT. Like Red Phase, Blue Phase is mandatory and must be conducted during the last drill, no less than 15 days prior to ship.

The purpose of Blue Phase is to provide expectations of the reception Battalion/IET environment and provide cadre a final chance to ensure Warriors are on the IET M.A.P. to success. Blue Phase modules include preparation for BT and administrative packet review and check.

Green Phase reintegrates BT graduates into the RSP through advanced training and sustains Soldiering skills learned at BT. Green Phase Warriors will return to Blue Phase prior to shipping to AIT, and the phase also provides Warriors an opportunity to develop leadership skills by serving as a student leader. Green Phase training offers additional instruction in leadership and

physical readiness for BT-qualified (Split Training Option) Phase 2 Warriors (STO-2) who will attend AIT the following summer.

The **Purple Phase** was designed to accommodate the quick-ship Warrior who will have only one initial Battle Drill Weekend prior to shipping to BT. Red Phase is the initial introduction of military structure to the Soldier. Blue Phase is designed to get Warriors prepared for BT. The classes presented are mandatory to build a solid foundation for a Soldier to be successful in BT and AIT. This is scheduled in a MUTA 4 or MUTA 5, as applicable. MUTA stands for Multiple Unit Training Assembly.

Gold Phase is the final phase for returning military occupational specialty qualified (MOSQ) Soldiers and is also the final drill with the RSP before transitioning into their enlisted unit. This phase covers what MOSQ Soldiers should expect when joining their units and culminates in the Battle Hand-Off (BHO) ceremony, initiating the unit sponsorship process. Gold Phase also gives the Warriors a chance to evaluate the training they have received. The Warriors will join their unit of assignment as an MOSQ-prepared Soldier.

SET FOR SUCCESS

SSG Allison Ephraim Rogers III, NGB-ASM-RSP Operations NCO, states, "The RSP is sometimes the first view of the Army National Guard for the newly recruited Warriors. Not only does the RSP prepare Warriors mentally, administratively and physically, but it links all of those together to ensure the new Warrior can react positively to challenges and roadblocks they'll face in reception and Basic Training."

While the RSP concentrates on the Warrior's state of preparedness, it is this accomplishment of mission that can be seen in the number of Honor and Distinguished Honor graduates from both BT and AIT. TRADOC SGM John Mayo states, "Honor Graduates from initial military training reflect the depth of immersion in a Recruit Sustainment Program."

It is not a guarantee that if you go through RSP you will be an Honor Graduate. However, adds

"The mission of the RSP is not just to develop Warriors prior to Basic Training. It is to prepare them to exceed their own expectations."

>> MSG Gregory Algarin, NGB-ASM-RSP

Mayo, “The Recruit Sustainment Program is the trigger mechanism influencing successful transformation of Citizen Volunteers into Warriors.”

It’s this foundation that the RSP is built on. “The mission of the RSP is not just to develop Warriors prior to Basic Training. It is to prepare them to exceed their own expectations—to challenge themselves beyond where they believe they are,” states MSG Gregory Algarin, NGB-ASM-RSP Operations NCO.

The RSP also promotes the integration of Warriors into their new ARNG family. By learning about their Guard heritage and the Soldiers who came before them, the RSP prepares the Warriors to achieve and accomplish all goals set for them. It’s that basic idea of taking care of Soldiers and ensuring that Warriors know their heritage as fighting men and women that LTC Gregory S. Snapp, the Recruiting and Retention Commander (RRC) of the Delaware ARNG (DEARNG), takes to another level.

TIME PASSAGES

Programs like the one Snapp leads relate the illustrious military history of the Delaware National Guard from the inception of the Guard to the current day battles in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As a right of passage, Snapp leads the Warriors on a march where he “enhances their understanding of who they are as Soldiers and establishes, through historical vignettes, how other Citizen-Soldiers like themselves have accomplished great feats of heroism and honor”

In linking the old with the new, Snapp explains, “The RSP experience trains from a lessons-learned perspective.” DEARNG RSP continues this line of training by having Soldiers who have completed the battle handoff (BHO), in which they have returned from BT and AIT and are assigned a unit, come back and speak to new Warriors about what they can expect when they arrive at the reception station.

SSG Rogers, an alumnus and former cadre of the DEARNG RSP, continues to support the program that gave him his first exposure to the military.

“From my first drill at the RSP,” Rogers says, “I wanted to be a part of it. When I finally had the chance to go to the RSP as a cadre member, it was almost a full circle of training. It was great to finally set the example the way my cadre had to me when I joined the ARNG RSP”

There are RSPs in each one of the 54 states and territories of the United States. Each has its own nuances and emphasis on making the best Warrior.

THE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Several times during the year, the RSP members get the opportunity to test their skills in a competition with each other. This year, Ohio will host a Warrior Challenge, in which the 10 RSP companies within the state can compete for bragging rights on who is No. 1.

The Warrior Challenge of April 24–26, 2009, tested participants in basic Warrior skills, the confidence course and land navigation. Warriors who competed successfully were eligible for promotion based on the Stripes for Skills program.

RSP pride is contagious, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the leadership of LTC William Dones, NGB-ASM-RSP Branch Chief.

“I am so proud to be a member of this team,” Dones says. “The relevance of the RSP associates a hands-on approach that is tailored specifically to meeting the challenges of preparing today’s Warrior for tomorrow’s battlefield.

“We have the opportunity to affect a generation of Warriors,” he continues, “and it is my intention to do everything possible to ensure these young men and women are ready” **GX**

“Training in all the phases must be intensive and intelligently directed so that every individual, including the last private in the ranks, can understand the reasons for the exertions he is called upon to make.”

>> Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th U.S. president and former General of the Army



Each RSP Company provides three five-man teams for a total of 150 personnel and makes way for some muddy, dirty, fun and fast Soldiering. The winning Warriors who complete the Warrior Skills portion of the Challenge are promoted in front of an RSP statewide formation. The winning company receives a streamer for their guidon and a plaque. The best five-man team is flown back to their home-station armory in a Chinook. The entire event celebrates teamwork and camaraderie, and gives Warriors the opportunity to let RSP pride shine.



Where Boss Meets Broadway

SOLDIERS BRING CIVILIAN EMPLOYERS INTO THEATER TOGETHER

By MAJ Elaine M. Gullotta

A LONG TRADITION of “Entertainment for the Soldier, by the Soldier” is getting a lift. Not a face-lift—a “Boss Lift”

Historically, Boss Lifts were opportunities for National Guard and Reserve members to invite their civilian employers to spend time at their military duty location to experience what it’s like to be a Soldier. A typical Boss Lift included a ride in a military vehicle or aircraft, and a visit to a shooting range or a military museum.

What’s not a typical Boss Lift is when a Soldier invites their civilian employer to a Broadway-style military show. But that has changed.

The 2009 U.S. Army Soldier Show opens in May with a national tour. Members of the Guard and Reserve are encouraged to attend—and to bring their civilian employer.

This unusual Boss Lift opportunity is part of the military and employer outreach efforts of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). A Department of Defense (DoD) organization based in Washington, DC, ESGR encourages military members to look for and create “win-win situations” with their employers. Doing so can make things a lot easier when Soldiers need their employer’s understanding due to a mobilization.

“Guard and Reserve members should consider their employers as strategic partners who support their efforts to serve our nation,” said CPT Ted Fessel, Director of National Operations and Plans, National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (NCESGR). “The show is exciting and patriotic, and is a great way to educate employers about the military culture.”

ESGR has been sponsoring Boss Lifts for years. After attending, most employers say they understand the military better. More importantly, many say they feel like members of the team that supports our nation. An employer feeling like a teammate can go a long way for a Soldier who wants to volunteer for a mobilization or is called up for a second, third or fourth time.



“THE SHOW IS EXCITING AND PATRIOTIC, AND IS A GREAT WAY TO EDUCATE EMPLOYERS ABOUT THE MILITARY CULTURE.”

>> CPT Ted Fessel, Director of National Operations and Plans, NCESGR

IN THEATER

The Army Soldier Show was established during WWI by SGT Israel Berlin, soon to become better known as composer Irving Berlin. He conceived and directed the very first Army Show—“Yip, Yip, Yaphank”—on Broadway in 1918.

Berlin reinvented the show during WWII under the title, “This is the Army.” The cast of the 1943 film version included Ronald Reagan, Joe Lewis and Gene Kelly.

The Army Soldier Show is a high-energy musical review with a cast composed entirely of Army personnel from active duty, the Army Reserve



and the Army National Guard. The production is directed by a team of entertainment professionals, many with years of experience on Broadway

The show tours the U.S. from May 1 through mid-November. All shows are free and open to the public. Members of the National Guard and Reserve are encouraged to attend with their families, military units and especially their civilian employer.

The mission of ESGR is to develop and promote a culture in which employers support and value the military service of their employees. The organization does so by recognizing outstanding employer support, increasing awareness of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and resolving conflict through mediation.

For additional information or to view the Army Soldier Show tour schedule, visit Army Entertainment at ArmyMWR.com. **GX**

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a Department of Defense agency established in 1972. The mission of ESGR is to gain and maintain employer support for Guard and Reserve service by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law and resolving conflicts through mediation. ESGR volunteers provide free education, consultation, and if necessary, mediation for employers of Guard and Reserve employees.

For more information about ESGR Employer Outreach Programs and volunteer opportunities, visit ESGR.mil or contact Tom Bullock, Chief, Employer Outreach, National ESGR Committee, at (703) 696-1386, or tom.bullock@osd.mil.

WE ALL SERVE



BOB BARRETT, VICE PRESIDENT OF HAWAII BASED COASTAL WINDOWS WITH EMPLOYEE AND U.S. ARMY RESERVE SERGEANT MICHAEL ECHIVERRI.

**ARMY NATIONAL GUARD ★ ARMY RESERVE ★ NAVY RESERVE ★ MARINE RESERVE
COAST GUARD RESERVE ★ AIR NATIONAL GUARD ★ AIR FORCE RESERVE**

We all serve. Whether serving our communities or our country, members of the National Guard and Reserve depend on their military units, families, and employers for support. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is a Department of Defense agency that seeks to promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law and resolving conflict through mediation.



READY, SET, GO
Soldiers and cadets start the 5K run as they strive for excellence.



Striving for Excellence

ROTC CADETS SEEK COVETED GERMAN BADGE

For the third consecutive year, the German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency competition took place at Camp Atterbury, IN, and the Indiana University campus in Bloomington, IN. The competition, hosted by Indiana University and the German Armed Forces Liaison Office, was held Feb. 20–22. It tested 328 Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadets from 36 universities on their ability to swim, run, jump, shot-put, shoot, ruck march and perform Combat Lifesaver tasks.

Story and photos by SFC Ken Suratt

Swim Event

The events took off on Friday evening with the swim. Cadets were tested on their ability to swim 200 meters using any stroke desired. Male cadets were allotted six minutes and female cadets were given seven minutes.

Distance Runs

Saturday morning at 7:30, Cadets started their 3K and 5K distance runs. At start time, the thermometer read nine degrees! Male cadets had to cover the 5K course in under 23 minutes, and the female cadets had to run their 3K in 18:30 or better.

Combat Lifesaver

Cadets had to take a Combat Lifesaver First Aid test, which included questions on hot- and cold-weather injuries and treating for shock, trauma and

fractures. All personnel had to score 70 percent correct on this test to pass and continue in the competition.

Marksmanship

The marksmanship event consisted of five shots on three targets at 25 meters with the M9 pistol. Focus and concentration were paramount in this event, as any missed shot would drop them out of the running for a gold medal. A 5/5 engagement would make you eligible for the gold level award, 4/5 for silver, and 3/5 for bronze.

Immediately after shooting, cadets moved to the track and field events at Indiana University campus in Bloomington.

400 Meter & 75 Meter Sprints

The first event of the track and field portion of the competition was the sprints. Male cadets had to set a blistering pace in the 400 meters of 68 seconds or less, and the women had to dig out 75 meters in 12.4 seconds or

STEADY FIRE A cadet fires on targets during his 9 mm pistol qualification.



faster to stay on pace for the gold medal. Should a competitor fail this event, the 1,000-meter run was the alternate event. The qualifying time for the 1,000 meters was 3:50 for the men and 5:30 for the women.

Shot Put

From the sprints, cadets moved directly to the shot put event that required the males to throw the 16-lb shot 26'2" and the women to throw their 8.9-lb shot 22'1". Should the cadet fail to make this standard within the allotted three tosses, they had the opportunity to qualify by using an alternate event. In this case, the alternate event was the stone throw. The stone throw consisted of throwing a 33-lb square stone with both their left and right hands. The total distance of both throws must have equaled 28'7" or greater, or they were eliminated from the competition.

High Jump

Upon completing the shot put or stone throw, the competitors attempted the high jump event. The standard was set at 4'4" for the men and 3'6" for the women. Again, three attempts were allowed, and if a person could not clear the qualifying height, they were again at risk of being eliminated if they could not qualify using an alternate event.

The participants, who needed an alternate event to qualify, were required to do the long jump. A jump of 14'7" was required for the males and 11'4" for the females.

Entering the last day of competition, all cadets knew where they stood. Those who had passed all events and fired a perfect five-for-five on the pistol range were on the path to a gold medal. Those who shot four out of five were competing for silver and those who hit three out of five were competing for bronze. The only event left that stood between the cadets and a medal was the rigorous road march. What you scored on the 9 mm pistol range determined how far you had to ruck march with a 25-lb rucksack.

Those male cadets still vying for gold medals had to complete the full 30K (18.7 miles) in five hours or less. Distance for the female cadets still in the running for gold was 24K (15 miles) in four hours or less. The silver medal standard for the men was 25K (15.6 miles) in under 4:10 and ladies silver was 20K (12.5 miles) in 3:20. The bronze medal distance was 20K (12.5 miles) for male cadets and 16K (10 miles) for female cadets.

Upon completing the road march, cadets were awarded their respective badge from German SGM Grenzebach of the German Armed Forces Liaison Offr. **GX**

"Indiana University ROTC was proud to once again serve as host for this event. It's great to see the cadets go out and compete to earn a foreign award—one they can wear for their entire military career. It's also wonderful to have great allies like SGM Grenzebach from the German Army. He has given up his weekend for our cadets and the German Army has purchased these badges at great expense. The German Army really asks for nothing each year we do this badge. The event just keeps on growing from 136 participants two years ago to 210 last year to 328 this year. That really shows me just how in-demand events like this are among our cadets, and it also shows me that we have an enormous number of cadets who want to achieve and to exceed the standard and set themselves apart."

>> LTC Eric D. Arnold, Professor of Military Science from Indiana University

Fast Track to Success

EDUCATORS BRAKE TO ADMIRE NASCAR CARS AND THE PATRIOT CHOPPER

Story and photos by Scott J. Farrell

AT A TIME WHEN nearly a third of the fastest growing occupations require an advanced degree or certificate, getting the right education is more important than ever. Formerly known as vocational education, career and technical education (CTE) puts students on the path to post-secondary education and careers.

Founded in 1926, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) is the largest national education association dedicated to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers. The organization has more than 28,000 members, including school administrators, guidance counselors and CTE teachers.

Each year, ACTE holds a convention and career tech expo, the premiere professional development event for career and technical educators. In 2008, it was held in Charlotte, NC, with more than 4,000 school, career and technical education professionals from across the country attending.

Educators at the convention attended numerous professional development workshops designed to help them return to school with fresh ideas and renewed energy. Conference exhibitors offered attendees the latest information on products and curricula available for CTE educators.

With approximately 75 percent of the NASCAR industry's employees and drivers based within two hours of downtown Charlotte, the convention had a racing theme and was in a prime location for the Army National Guard (ARNG) to showcase its cars and motorcycle.

The ARNG's display of the No. 88 NASCAR vehicle, driven by Dale Earnhardt Jr., and the No. 4 Indy car, driven by Dan Wheldon, was a hit. Along with the Patriot Chopper, these vehicles created a buzz, and educators stood in line to get their picture taken with the cars and the motorcycle. When it was explained to educators that they



SHOWSTOPPER ACTE convention attendees visit the ARNG booth, where the No. 88 NASCAR drew a big crowd.

Dale Jr.'s No. 88 car and Dan Wheldon's No. 4 Indy car were two of the Guard's vehicles on display.

could request a vehicle like this to be brought to their school, based on availability, they could not sign up fast enough. By the end of the convention, there were more than 300 requests for ARNG vehicles to be brought to schools.

Convention attendees also learned about the career mentor database available through the Partners in Education Web site. Educators and students can use the database to learn more about the diverse civilian occupations held by members of the ARNG by calling on local ARNG members registered in the database to share their career stories.

The event was a major success and increased awareness of the ARNG as a valuable partner for the CTE community; more than 600 educators visited the Partners in Education booth to learn more about ARNG school programs. In fact, ACTE has offered the ARNG additional space to display a helicopter and Humvee at next year's convention in Nashville, TN.

"The National Guard understands that attendees always look



RED, CHROME & BLUE Educators at the ACTE convention in Charlotte, NC, check out the Patriot Chopper motorcycle.

While signing up to bring the vehicles to their schools, educators were also informed about the ARNG Partners In Education program, which connects schools, teachers and students with free ARNG educational resources, from classroom presentations to programs for at-risk youth.

The Partners in Education classroom presentation is just one of the many resources the ARNG has to offer. This two-part presentation uses dynamic slides, videos, discussion points and handouts to help prepare students for life after high school.

for interactive and exciting displays, and they set up one of the best and most fun displays I have ever seen at an ACTE career tech expo," said James Waterhouse, ACTE's Sales & Exhibits Manager. "The National Guard gave our attendees a wonderful, exciting and interactive experience." **GX**

For more information about the Partners in Education program or to sign up to be a career mentor, visit PartnersInEducation.com.

Enlisting at Last

SOLDIER CHASES DREAM, ENLISTS IN GUARD

We all have dreams. Unfortunately, the way life pans out, many of us never get to live out our dreams. There are a few lucky people, however, like Ian Reynierse, who get a second chance to pursue their goals and succeed.

By Christian Anderson

▶ **TWENTY-FOUR YEARS AGO**, then-PV1 Ian Andrew Reynierse swore himself into the Pennsylvania Army National Guard while in high school. He attended Basic Combat Training at Fort Benning, GA, the summer before his senior year.

Reynierse's vision was not conceived in front of the television or by reading war novels: He comes from a lineage of American patriots, and his joining the military seemed to be part of his destiny.

"As a child, I remember staring at their uniforms and counting the days until I would be able to wear one," Reynierse explained. "My father, Peter James Reynierse, served in the Navy during Vietnam, continuing his service in the Naval Reserves until he retired as a commander. My mother, Julie-Ann Blyth Reynierse, also served in the Navy during Vietnam, which is where they met. And my uncle, Michael George Reynierse, also served in the Naval Reserves and retired as a captain."



BROTHER IN ARMS OC Reynierse's brother, LTC Peter M. Reynierse, serves in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

Life was going along nicely, Reynierse said, until he broke his leg in a horrible accident, requiring extensive surgery. Doctors installed a rod in his leg extending from the knee to the ankle. Since his injury wasn't a waiverable condition in 1986, Reynierse received an honorable discharge on April 4. Needless to say, he was disappointed.

But he "soldiered" on, eventually landing a job at Boeing Integrated Defense Systems on Sept. 21, 1987. He married and had four beautiful children. Life was good for Reynierse, but the call to serve remained in his heart and mind.

Call of the Guard

Fast-forward 20 years. After going through a divorce, Reynierse felt the itch to serve his country again. He wondered if his chance had passed, but seeing the continued



LIKE SON, LIKE FATHER PFC Ian A. Reynierse Jr. is currently stationed at Camp Casey in South Korea.



LEADING BY EXAMPLE
OC Reynierse's mother and father (retired Commander and Ensign Julie-Ann B. Reynierse) instilled their sense of service into their children. Julie-Ann was a U.S. Navy Hospital corpsman (E-3) and later was an Ensign (O-1) in the U.S. Navy Sea Cadet Corps. There has been a Reynierse serving on Active Duty since 1958.



A BOND OF SERVICE
OC Reynierse and his wife, CW2 Watkins, stand proudly on the front porch of their home.

station overseas," Reynierse said. "Never once has he complained of anything. He is very proud to be a Soldier and I couldn't be more proud to be his father."

The biggest motivator for Reynierse to join the Guard was love. He met the woman of his dreams, and she provided him with the inspiration needed to pursue his dreams. SGT Teri Watkins, who lived upstairs in his apartment complex, had just finished her deployment to Qatar when the two began dating. Watkins, a fourth and fifth grade school teacher at Benchmark School in Media, PA, encouraged Reynierse to pursue his ideals.

In 2006, he proposed to Watkins, who was a sergeant in the Army Reserves. She was recently promoted to Chief Warrant Officer 2 and deployed to Iraq in April.

"With two of my children gone, my daughter preparing for college and my youngest doing well in school with his mother, I began to inquire about enlistment," Reynierse explained.

After speaking with recruiters, Reynierse, now an officer candidate, swore in on Jan. 9, 2009, at Fort Dix, NJ. "The support received from these people and great companies like the one I work for, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems, have given not just myself, but many people the opportunity to serve their country." **GX**

success of his brother in the military kept the candle burning.

"My brother, Peter, also joined the Pennsylvania National Guard and continued on with his military carrier," Reynierse said proudly. "He has now reached the rank of lieutenant colonel and has kept my military aspirations close to my heart."

Ian Reynierse's sons both heard the Liberty Bell ringing and looked for ways to contribute to the military and their country.

In 2007, his oldest son, Nicholas, became the second generation of the Boeing Defense team. Nicholas currently serves as an aircraft electrician and works on CH-47 Chinooks in Ridley Park. His second son joined the U.S. Army in 2008. Currently stationed at Camp Casey, South Korea, PFC Ian A. Reynierse Jr. loves every minute of his service.

"I have written to him and communicated with him by phone from the time he went to Basic Training at Fort Sill, OK, to his current



THROUGH HARDSHIPS TO THE STARS

THE STORY OF THE KANSAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



Story by Jason Hall

The land known today as Kansas was first inhabited by nomadic Native American tribes who spent most of their time hunting migrating buffalo.

The first European settlers arrived in the 1830s. Though this immigration was slow at first, it increased exponentially due to the issue of slavery. A battle was being waged in the U.S. Congress between “slave states”—those that allowed slavery—and “free states”—those that didn’t.

New states added to the Union, especially those considered “border states” between the North and South, threatened to tilt the scales in Congress. Thus, when the U.S. government officially opened Kansas for settlement in 1854, abolitionists from New England and pro-slavery settlers from nearby Missouri rushed to the territory intent on shaping the future of Kansas.

With so much at stake between the two groups, it was only a matter of time before the ideological clash would lead to violence.

HISTORIC DEDICATION The Kansas City Armory was dedicated in 1956. During the 1950s, all states built Guard armories, used today for both training and civic activities.



THE ART OF CAMOUFLAGE

Members of the 69th Infantry Brigade, mobilized for the Vietnam War, train in camouflage face paint at Fort Carson, CO. Many from the 69th fought in theater.

BY 1895, KANSAS' MILITIA WAS THE LARGEST NATIONAL GUARD ORGANIZATION ON THE GREAT PLAINS, WITH MORE THAN 1,800 SOLDIERS.

THE KANSAS MILITIA IS FORMED

As was normal in a newly created territory, one of the first organizations to be formed was the militia.

Originally conceived to protect settlers against Native Americans, the role of the Kansas militia quickly turned to fighting the free- versus slave-state battle that would ultimately embroil the entire country in the massive and costly Civil War.

The bloodiest fights occurred along the Kansas-Missouri border. Raiding parties of both sides would cause the territory to become known as “Bleeding Kansas.”

JAYHAWKERS TAKE OFF

One Kansas militia unit, the 7th Kansas Cavalry, conducted such a vicious guerilla war against pro-slavery supporters that the unit became known as the “Jayhawkers.” The name combines two birds—the blue jay, which is known to pilfer other bird’s nests, and the sparrow hawk, a proficient hunter.

According to the University of Kansas, the message of the name Jayhawker is: “Do not turn your back on this bird,” and the term was soon associated with the entire Kansas militia.

On Jan. 29, 1861, the abolitionist Kansans saw victory when its territory was admitted to the Union as a free state. This event helped light the powder keg that would explode on April 12, 1861, with the bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston, SC, which sparked the Civil War.

Kansas quickly answered President Lincoln’s call for troops by providing 19 volunteer regiments and four artillery batteries. This

force comprised approximately 21,000 men, of which two regiments and one artillery battery were African-American.

MASSACRE AT OSCEOLA

Sterling Price, a pro-slavery supporter from Missouri and veteran of the “Bleeding Kansas” days before the war, concocted a plan to retake both Kansas and Missouri for the pro-slavery Confederate States of America.

Under the command of Price, the Missouri state Guard defeated a Union Army at the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, MO, on Aug. 10, 1861. Emboldened by the victory Price led his forces into Kansas. About 1,200 Kansas militiamen, led by James H. Lane, responded to the threat.

The first clash between Price and Lane resulted in a defeat for Lane’s Kansans at the Battle of Dry Wood Creek near Fort Scott. Lane retreated farther into Kansas, regrouped and waited for the right time to strike Price.

In September 1861, Price and his army were occupying Osceola. Lane and his force of Kansas militia and U.S. Regular Soldiers were poised to attack and drive out the Southern invaders. The fight that became known as the Massacre at Osceola saw indiscriminate carnage and looting. The entire town was set on fire, and at least nine of its citizens were killed. The events there would later inspire the 1976 film *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, starring Clint Eastwood.

What happened at Osceola so angered the Southern forces that, later in the war, the infamous Confederate guerilla fighter William Clarke Quantrill would lead a raid on Lawrence as revenge.

By the war’s end, the term “Jayhawker” had turned into a patriotic symbol that embodied the spirit of those who kept Kansas a free state. Today, every native Kansan proudly claims the title of Jayhawker.

BUFFALO SOLDIERS

After the Civil War, the Kansas militia was federalized in 1867 for service in protecting citizens against hostile Native American tribes. The 18th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry formed a force with the Regular Army 10th U.S. Cavalry—the famous African-American cavalrymen known as the “Buffalo Soldiers.”

On Aug. 21 of that year, at Prairie Dog Creek, approximately 300–400 warriors of the Kiowa and Cheyenne tribes attacked the combined force. The members of the 10th got separated from the Kansans and quickly became overwhelmed. Members of the 18th Kansas charged through the fray, and with the 10th, successfully fought off the tribes.

The victory at the Battle of Prairie Dog Creek enabled the U.S. government to pressure the tribes of the Southern Plains into signing peace treaties, enabling further dominance over the West.

KANSAS MILITIA GETS A NEW NAME

In 1885, the Kansas legislature passed a law that, in addition to other initiatives, changed the name of the Kansas militia to the Kansas National Guard. By 1895, it was the largest National Guard organization on the Great Plains, with more than 1,800 Soldiers. Three years later, four regiments of the Kansas National Guard entered federal service for the



RAPID FIRE Battery C, 130th Field Artillery (formerly the 1st Kansas Field Artillery), 35th Division, fires their 155 mm Howitzers on a mission during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in October 1918.

Spanish-American War. Of those, the most famous was the newly formed 20th Kansas Infantry. Many of the old Kansas regiments' Veterans requested that the new regiment be called the 20th because Kansas had provided 19 regiments during the Civil War.

Originally destined for Cuba, the 20th was redirected to the Philippines. After the victory over the Spanish, relations between the American military and local Philippines citizens were tenuous. In 1899, this tension became open rebellion against the Americans, in what became known as the Philippine Insurrection.

COL FUNSTON UPS THE ANTE

During the insurrection, COL Frederick Funston, commanding officer of the 20th Kansas, and two of his men, would put their lives at risk for their fellow countrymen. Under heavy enemy fire, they swam across a river with a rope that would ultimately be used to pull rafts that transported U.S. Soldiers across the river. Funston and his two fellow Kansans received the Medal of Honor for disregarding their safety and braving enemy fire to establish a crossing of the river.

Funston would later rise to the rank of major general and, in 1916, become influential in mobilizing National Guard Soldiers in response to incursions by Mexican rebel Pancho Villa.

Michael Anderson, curator of the Funston Museum, states that: "Funston not only supervised and supported Pershing's 'Punitive Expedition,' but also maintained security

along the entire length of the Mexican border from the Gulf of Mexico to the California line. Although Pershing gained the headlines, Funston pioneered what was to become a future pattern of high-level military command (and oversaw the federalization of 150,000 National Guard members).

"In addition to GEN Pershing, Funston's subordinates during this time included CPT Douglas MacArthur, LT George Patton and LT Dwight Eisenhower."

Along with Funston, approximately 2,000 Kansas Guard members were mobi-

lized for federal service to patrol the Mexican border. Not long after returning home to Kansas from their service on the border, the entire Kansas National Guard, approximately 10,000 Soldiers, was called up for the U.S.'s entry into WWI. The Kansans were assigned to the 35th Infantry Division and participated in several campaigns in France, most notably, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive of 1918.

2LT ERWIN BLECKLEY MAKES HISTORY

During the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, one Kansas National Guard Soldier—2LT Erwin Bleckley—made history for making the ultimate sacrifice to help his comrades. A field artilleryman of the Kansas Guard, Bleckley had been assigned to the Army Air Service as an aerial observer for the artillery. On Oct. 6, 1918, he and his pilot were flying low over the treetops in search of 1st Battalion, 308th Infantry, 77th Division (the famous "Lost Battalion"), which had been surrounded and cut off by the Germans. Spotting the Lost Battalion, Bleckley quickly noted its location on a map.

As the pilot turned the plane homeward, the Germans opened fire from the ground and a hail of bullets rained up. Both Bleckley and the pilot were hit, and their plane badly damaged. Miraculously, they were able to land near a French outpost, but the pilot died before the French troops reached them. Bleckley was able to hand off the map to the French before he died, helping the Allied Forces narrow their search for the Lost Battalion.



TAKING CARE SGT Kevin J. Hammer, a Kansas National Guard Soldier from the 137th Transportation Company, treats a child with a severe burn during a humanitarian aid mission in Jorfa Al Melleb, Iraq.

CHARLIE RIEDEL / NATIONAL ARCHIVES

AS THE KANSAS PILOT TURNED THE PLANE HOMEWARD, THE GERMANS OPENED FIRE FROM THE GROUND WITH A HAIL OF BULLETS.

Bleckley was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions, becoming the first National Guard aviator to earn the decoration, and one of only three to earn it in the 20th century.

As was the case in WWI, the entire Kansas National Guard was mobilized for federal service in WWII. The Kansans were part of the 35th "Santa Fe" Division, of which several units distinguished themselves, including the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion, which fought its way through Normandy.

The 137th Infantry Regiment also fought bravely in the battle to capture the town of St. Lo, France. Fighting across France and Belgium as part of Patton's 3rd Army, the Kansans participated in the Battle of the Bulge, the crossing of the Rhine and the invasion of the German Ruhr Valley, ending their march just outside of Berlin.

KANSAS IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

Several Kansas units were mobilized during the Korean War, including the 130th Field Artillery Group and the 174th Military



SWEARING IN Kansas National Guard Adjutant General MG Tod M. Bunting conducts a re-enlistment ceremony for SPC Robert Hale and SGT Brian Unzicker, who are both infantry Soldiers for the 2nd Battalion, 137th Combined Arms Battalion, during his visit to Saudi Arabia, Feb. 27. Hale and Unzicker deployed to Saudi Arabia to participate in the Friendship One 2009 bilateral field training exercise with the Royal Saudi Land Forces.

Police Battalion. In 1961, nearly 450 Kansans were called up for service in response to the Berlin Crisis. In May 1968, the 69th Brigade was mobilized for the Vietnam War. Though the 69th was not deployed as a unit, more than 2,000 of its Kansas members volunteered for deployment to Vietnam, fighting in other units.

During the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the 170th Maintenance Company was deployed to Saudi Arabia. Kansans would return to this

part of the world following the 9/11 attacks. One such Kansan, SPC Loren Stinebaugh, returned home on Oct. 13, 2008, after serving in Iraq since December 2007.

Prior to departing for duty, Stinebaugh had worked for Alorica Inc., a customer service management firm in Manhattan, KS. On Oct. 20, 2008, a special ceremony was held at Alorica's office, where Stinebaugh presented his employer with an American flag flown in Iraq.

Stinebaugh's service to his state and country, along with the support of his employer, exemplify the community spirit of today's Citizen-Soldiers of the Kansas National Guard. They have truly lived up to their state motto: *Ad astra per aspera* (Through hardships to the stars). **GX**



HONORED WARRIOR

★★★★

SPC Anthony Tonasket

SPC Anthony Tonasket is awarded the Purple Heart by 2/137 IN Battalion Commander COL James Trafton during a September 2006 awards ceremony. While he was conducting a combat patrol to emplace barriers around a guard tower, locate barriers around Baghdad and provide security for detail personnel, an improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated. Despite being knocked out temporarily, Tonasket regained his composure, manned his weapon and continued to scan his sector and provide spot reports as the convoy moved into the camp. By maintaining his bearings under fire, Tonasket likely prevented his patrol from being subject to a secondary attack and possible casualties.

SILVER STAR

★ **SYMBOL OF HONOR** ★

INFORMATION COMPILED BY **CHRISTIAN ANDERSON**

THE SILVER STAR is awarded for "gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force, or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in armed conflict against an opposing armed force," according to Army Regulation 600-8-22. The decoration is the third-highest medal for valor in the U.S. military, after the Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Service Cross.



NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD

★ **CW3 JAMES B. HERRING** ★

DEC. 23, 2006, TAHRIR, IRAQ

CW3 James B. Herring, North Carolina National Guard, in command of a five-vehicle patrol, came under attack by insurgents with rifles, machine guns and RPGs. Herring ordered his driver to speed forward while his turret gunner opened fire on the insurgents. Herring's driver was critically wounded in the exchange, and the vehicle came to a halt, leaving them like sitting ducks at the location.

With his turret gunner engaged elsewhere, Herring dismounted his vehicle to return fire, taking out two enemy gunners. With complete disregard for his personal safety, CW3 Herring exited his vehicle a second time amid intense enemy fire to move the critically wounded driver to the rear of the vehicle for medical attention. He then took the wheel.

CW3 Herring maneuvered his damaged vehicle through the gauntlet of enemy fire out of the kill zone, and led the combined ground force through the narrow streets of Tahrir to safety at Forward Operating Base Gabe.

CW3 James B. Herring distinguished himself with his heroic, decisive actions and disregard for his own personal safety, which swung the outcome of the engagement in the coalition forces' favor. His actions saved many friendly forces lives and turned the tide of the attack.



CLINT WOOD

★ SSG CHAD MALMBERG ★

JAN. 27, 2007, NEAR BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
SSG Chad Malmberg, a Minnesota National Guard Soldier with 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry, was in charge of a 25-vehicle convoy out of Baghdad International Airport when the convoy ahead of him came under attack by a sizable insurgent force.

Malmberg ordered his troops into a defensive posture. Immediately, his convoy came under assault from RPG and small arms fire from the well-dug-in enemy. Malmberg rallied his force and began to coordinate their fire on the attacking insurgents when the rear of his convoy erupted in an intense firefight.

Malmberg confronted the largest concentration of enemy with an AT-4 rocket launcher and eliminated the threat from that direction.

The battle raged for 40 minutes. Ammunition ran low. When a wave of enemy insurgents again attacked the rear of the convoy, Malmberg tossed a grenade, eliminating seven.

Finally, Malmberg's force gained the upper hand, defeating the enemy, and the convoy continued to safety. SSG Malmberg's professionalism and cool-headedness under fire was a deciding factor in turning the fight against the enemy provocateurs.

On Sept. 22, 2007, Malmberg was presented with the Silver Star for his courage and gallantry under fire. He is without question an American hero and a credit to his unit.



NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

★ CPT JOHN VANLANDINGHAM ★

NOV. 14, 2004, NORTH OF TAJI, IRAQ

A patrol consisting of U.S. Army and Iraqi National Guard (ING) Soldiers were attacked by a sizable insurgent force, resulting in the disabling of two Iraqi vehicles by IEDs and causing several casualties. The remaining six American Humvees and two ING vehicles evacuated the danger zone to rally 200 meters away.

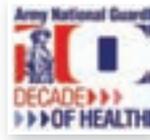
CPT John Vanlandingham of the Arkansas National Guard, 39th Infantry Brigade, 1st Battalion, 206th Field Artillery, regrouped his people. A quick head count revealed that the two ING vehicles and several troopers were unaccounted for.

Vanlandingham spotted two Humvees with Americans firing on the enemy in the background. Vanlandingham sprinted across an open space to several Iraqis taking cover in a ditch as a vehicle exploded close by.

Vanlandingham, under heavy enemy fire, personally evacuated a wounded Iraqi National Guard Soldier, then returned repeatedly to the fray for others, with little regard for his personal safety.

The besieged column, with everyone accounted for, was then able to break contact with the enemy and evacuate the wounded to Camp Taji for medical treatment.

For his meritorious service and courage under fire, CPT John Vanlandingham received the Silver Star.



Revving Up Readiness and Resilience

DECADE OF HEALTH LAUNCHES NEW CAMPAIGN

MG Patrick Sculley, Ret., presents an NGB certificate of appreciation to Cortney Nicolato, American Heart Association.



By Ann M. Stark, ARNG Decade of Health Correspondent

THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD (ARNG) launched the fourth campaign of its Decade of Health program—Ready & Resilient—on January 27 at the Joint National Guard Family Program Professional Development Seminar in Houston, TX. Seminar host, COL Martha Wong, Chief of Family Programs, National Guard Bureau (NGB), highlighted the 2009 campaign goals and encouraged Family Program Group Leaders to take full advantage of the user-friendly online support resources at DecadeofHealth.com.

This campaign will empower both Army and Air National Guard communities with real-life

messages, resources and tools, and provide quick links to other information, resources and tools that will strengthen resiliency and encourage planning and preparation to ensure operational readiness.

The Decade of Health is a 10-year strategic deployability and readiness media and outreach program supporting personal awareness and responsibility for health and wellness.

Featured speaker, COL Louis "Tod" Guernsey, Assistant Surgeon General for Mobilization, Readiness and National Guard Affairs in the U.S. Army Office of the Surgeon General speaking on behalf of LTG Clyde A. Vaughn, Director of the Army National Guard, said, "I am honored to join the Decade of Health Team in forging yet

another 'first' within the Department of Defense community by initiating our 2009 health promotion campaign to maximize the capabilities of our National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, their families and communities to cope with the many stresses of our current operational environment."

Emphasizing the importance of community health, he went on to say that, "as many healthcare systems have shifted their focus to the prevention and reduction of health risks in their populations—so has the Army National Guard—that is why we developed the Decade of Health Program.

This year Ready & Resilient will continue to focus on wellness and prevention with an emphasis on Soldier/Family Support and Health Literacy, just as in prior campaigns."

COURTESY OF DECADE OF HEALTH

Previous campaigns include the 2006 ARNG Dental Bytes outreach that resulted in an increase in ARNG dental readiness from 55 percent in 2006 to 86 percent by mid-June 2008. Hypertension awareness was the 2007 ARNG Get Cuffed! Campaign focus that was strengthened by an alliance with the American Heart Association (AHA) to battle the silent killer, high blood pressure. The alliance joined forces in 2008 to address healthy weight management as the 2008 Decade of Health ARNG Lighten Up! Campaign debuted with AHA support.

Cortney Nicolato, AHA Senior Manager, Strategic Alliances/Health IT, was presented a certificate of appreciation recognizing her contributions to the National Guard and to the ARNG Get Cuffed! Campaign. As cited on the certificate, "Her shared vision with the National Guard Bureau's leadership to provide world-class, scientifically sound guidance to develop blood pressure awareness education resulted in the distribution of more than 1 million co-branded AHA brochures to National Guard consumers."

Sculley continued, "Ms. Nicolato and her team have committed to the full utilization of AHA media and cause-related resources nationally to highlight the mission of the ARNG Decade of Health program: "Always Ready, Always There ... Always Healthy."

In accepting her award, Ms. Nicolato praised the health and wellness efforts of the ARNG and pledged AHA's continued support during 2009 with consumer education and a special alliance icon day the first week of June to challenge members of the National Guard, families, friends and communities to "Be ... One of the Million" armed with lifesaving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training this year.

For more information on the ARNG Ready & Resilient 2009 Campaign, please visit DecadeofHealth.com. Learn more about Decade of Health resource partners, NG Family Program at GuardFamily.org and ARNG Soldier/Family Support Services Division accessible via the Guard Knowledge Online Portal. Join the AHA's tireless efforts to fight heart disease and stroke at Heart.org. **GX**



COL Martha Wong, Chief of Family Programs, National Guard Bureau, Joint Staff.

This campaign will empower the National Guard communities with tools that **will strengthen resilience and encourage planning and preparation** to ensure operational readiness.

2009... ARNG Ready & Resilient!



»»»
**Soldier
2
Soldier**



«««
**Family
2
Family**



»»»
**Leader
2
Leader**



Always Ready, Always There...
Always Healthy.

www.decadeofhealth.com





For every scholarship you are awarded, you'll have to apply for 10.

- >> Professional organizations (e.g., Project Management Institute, Public Relations Society of America)
- >> Colleges and universities

SEARCHING THE INTERNET

The keywords that you use for your Internet search are very important and can help you find funding that fits your criteria. For example, as a Guard Soldier or spouse, you might want to search using terms like “military scholarships,” “military spouse scholarships,” “scholarships + military” and “military foundation scholarships.” Each keyword you use will return slightly different results. Don’t limit your search to Google; there are many free scholarship search Web sites available, including: Peterson’s Scholarship Search, Scholarship Resource Network Express, Military Spouse Resource Center and Scholarships.com.

STEER CLEAR OF FEE-BASED SERVICES

Paying for a service to find scholarships that meet your criteria is “nice to have” if you have the extra money and lack the time to devote to a search, but it isn’t necessary. The reality is that the fee-based service is going to give you the same results you’d find by using a little elbow grease and completing the search yourself.

APPLY FOR MULTIPLE SCHOLARSHIPS

Does the phrase, “don’t put all your eggs in one basket” sound familiar? Finding and applying for scholarships is a numbers game. The Web site StudentScholarshipSearch.com recommends using the rule of 10. For every scholarship you receive, you’ll have to apply for 10. The bottom line is, the more applications you complete, the better your chances of winning money for college.

SEARCH EARLY AND OFTEN

Just as the qualifications for scholarships vary, so do the application deadlines. Beginning your search early will give you time to submit the application, write a winning essay (if one is required) and gather your letters of

SIMPLIFY YOUR SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH

By Johanna Altland, Grantham University



AS A GUARD SOLDIER OR A GUARD SPOUSE, there are many scholarship opportunities available to help you fund your college education. You’re probably thinking that you’ll never win a scholarship, so why bother applying, right? The fact is that someone will be awarded the scholarship, so why couldn’t it be you?

Here are some tips to help you simplify your scholarship search.

MAXIMIZE YOUR RESOURCES

There are so many ways to find scholarships for college, but don’t rely solely on the Internet for your search. While it’s a great way to find information with a few clicks of a mouse, there are many other places to look for scholarship opportunities such as:

- >> Your local library
- >> Community organizations (e.g., American Legion, Knights of Columbus, Lion’s Club)

recommendation. It will also give you some cushion between when the scholarships are awarded and your tuition is due. Be sure to search for scholarships year-round because you may be able to secure funding for future semesters.

DON'T SKIP THE SMALL STUFF

Apply for every scholarship for which you are eligible, regardless of the award amount. Winning five \$1,000 scholarships is the same as winning one \$5,000 scholarship because it's money that you won't have to pay out of pocket for tuition. You could also increase your chances of winning, because smaller scholarships tend to be less competitive than the larger ones.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE DETAILS

Now that you've found several scholarships for which you are eligible, don't blow your chances by not following the application directions. The No. 1 reason applications don't make it past the initial review is because of

preventable mistakes such as: missed deadlines, misspellings/incorrect information, required fields left blank and not following directions. By starting your scholarship search early, you'll have time to pay attention to the details.

AVOID SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS

It seems that no matter what we do, there is always some type of scam to avoid, and searching for college funding is no different. Here are a few things to watch out for during your search: required application fees, guarantees that you'll win, organizations that have limited contact information, applications that require banking information or Social Security numbers, solicitations from individuals who claim to represent the government and letters about an award for which you did not apply. It is important to do your research and go with your gut instinct. Don't become one of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who are the victims of scholarship scams each year. **GX**

Get the TRAINING You Need

NEW ARMY PROGRAM PAYS FOR TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION

By MAJ Robert A. Lee

THE PURPOSE OF the Army Vocational/Technical (AVOTEC) Soldier Pilot Program is to offer a short-term program that provides training in high-demand career fields to help Soldiers find employment after they transition out of the Army. Congress has selected the Army to participate in an education pilot program designed to provide expanded education opportunities for Soldiers, officers and wounded Warriors serving on active duty—to include Army National Guard (ARNG) and Reserve Soldiers on extended active duty (Army National Guard Soldiers coming off of Federal Mobilizations T-10/T-32).

Army Education is working with technical and community colleges throughout the United States to build upon existing programs and develop new pilot retraining programs in high demand career occupations, such as rehabilitation, nursing, medical technology and other healthcare occupations.

Programs of study must lead toward licensure or certification at a state or national level. Programs that are part of an academic program (semester- or quarter-hour based) will not qualify. The Army already gives Tuition Assistance (TA) for those programs. However, students do qualify if the program is vocational, and some of the classes can be used for dual credit. Traditional TA will not be used for this program.

The AVOTEC Program was announced Jan. 15, 2009. The Army Education Centers (ACE) and Soldier Family Assistance Centers will begin assisting Soldiers with enrollment beginning Feb. 1. All costs for instruction, certification, or license must be paid by Sept. 30, 2009. No additional funds will be available after the ending date for this pilot program. Programs of study can be no longer than 18 months in length and should not exceed the maximum cost limit of \$4,500 per fiscal year.

Soldiers can go to GoArmyEd.com to enroll. For more information, go to Hrc.Army.mil/site/education/VOTEC_Program.html. **GX**

Make Your Essay Shine

Writing a scholarship essay is a lot like writing a research paper, which means that it is more than just putting pen to paper. You need to brainstorm, conduct research, write a draft and spend time reviewing and revising. Follow these tips to make your essay stand out above the rest:

Answer the Question

This is a simple enough rule to follow, but it can be easy to forget when brainstorming and writing your essay. Throughout the writing process, keep the essay question in the forefront of your mind to ensure that you are responding appropriately. If you don't address the question, you won't win the scholarship.

Stay True to Yourself

Be open. Be honest. Be yourself. Write about

something that is meaningful to you, so the committee can better understand who you are and what is important in your life. This will make you stand out and be more than just a name on a piece of paper. Also, avoid the temptation to use the thesaurus, because using big words won't impress the committee and could distract them from what you are really trying to convey.

Adhere to the Guidelines

The first thing any scholarship committee looks for is whether or not your essay meets its requirements. If they asked for 500–750 words, and you wrote 400, your essay and application may be rejected.

Emphasize Your Strengths

While it is generally frowned upon to brag about

yourself, it is entirely appropriate to focus on your strengths, abilities and accomplishments in your essay. Tell the committee why you are the best choice for the scholarship.

Read Sample Essays

Reading sample application essays will give you insight into the topics that other students have chosen and the best way to format your essay (if you haven't been given any guidelines). You may even gain an idea or two for the focus of your essay.

Get a Second Opinion

After you've written, reviewed and revised your essay to your satisfaction, give it to a friend or colleague to review. Ask them for their honest feedback, and what they liked and didn't like. They may even catch grammar errors that you missed. **GX**



As corporate goods prices rise at their fastest pace for more than 27 years, heightening expectations that the Bank of England will raise rates before the end of 2008.

Andrew economist at time noted that while

...inflation, fighting interest to have moved back to the top of the policy agenda for central banks during the past week, the risk of policy error was now high and investment uncertainty was likely to remain elevated.

"The risks to global growth for 2008 now lie clearly to the downside," Mr. Case said.

On the currency markets, the euro briefly dipped below the \$1.20 after Mr. comments but quickly recovered to stage a two-day rally for the dollar.

US and European equity markets had a grim session as investors watched the oil price shoot back towards record levels and fretted about the outlook for the financial sector.

By mid-afternoon in New York, the Dow was down 1.3 per cent. In Europe, the Eurofirst 300 index fell 1.7 per cent - its sixth consecutive

tailers hit by

patterns until earliest," said which said its net were 11 per cent market conditions.

dropped 14.7 per 691p as both. Churn Partners "sell" pattern.

How the EXPERTS Handle Their Money



Survey Shows Financial Planners Keep Cool Through Tough Times

During economic downturns, the constant stream of advice from financial pundits flows even stronger than usual. With so many voices coming from every direction, investors may have a hard time separating helpful information from biased hype or “Chicken Little” scare tactics. It leads one to wonder: What are the real experts doing with their own money in these turbulent times?

USAA polled more than 50 certified financial planner practitioners to ask how they were handling their finances as one of the wackiest years on Wall Street came to a close. All of USAA’s planners work on a “fee-only” basis and do not earn commissions on clients’ investments.

The responses were mixed, but in general, planners were optimistic about the future while staying mindful of current economic challenges. More specifically, several important trends came to light that could help investors keep their own goals in perspective.

Open Season on Stocks

When asked what movie title best represents their view of the current financial environment, the No. 1 pick of USAA planners was *Open Season*. Two-thirds of the respondents have bought more stocks in the last few months, and some planners even called the down market “the opportunity of a lifetime.”

Why the rosy outlook in the midst of a nationwide financial crisis? “When stocks drop like they have across the board, it’s a great opportunity to buy at bargain prices,” said USAA financial planner J.J. Montanaro. “It’s like everything is on sale right now, and when the market recovers, investors who took advantage of the downturn will profit greatly.”

Montanaro cautioned, however, that proper diversification and knowing your time horizon are as important as ever.

“The standard rules of investing still apply,” he said. “If you’re close to retirement age, it’s best to keep the bulk of your portfolio in traditionally low-risk assets.”

Staying the Course

The survey also revealed that this year’s financial roller coaster hasn’t shaken the long-term plans of USAA’s advisors.

Two out of three said they haven’t changed their outlook on retirement, and only 5 percent have moved money out of stocks and bonds and into cash. Moreover, the majority of planners said they aren’t checking their retirement accounts more often than they did last year.

Experienced investors know that history and time are on their side. The stock market has always experienced ups and downs; some declines worse than others, but in general it has risen steadily over many years.

So the odds are good that a well-structured investment portfolio will recoup its losses and continue to increase in value over the long term.

“The message to investors is to stay involved and aware of your portfolio, but don’t panic,” Montanaro said. “Focus your energy on what you can control, not checking your account balance every day.”

Playing It Safe

Most USAA planners said they haven’t changed their approach to daily money management in response to economic conditions. But those who have are focused on being prepared for surprises.

“At a time when many companies are struggling and laying off workers, it’s even more important to keep a cash reserve to cover three to six months of expenses,” Montanaro said.

Ultimately, every family has a unique set of financial circumstances. But the survey of USAA planners offers one lesson that fits any budget or portfolio: The financial pros base their decisions on facts and long-standing principles, not emotional reactions.

“The worst thing to do is to make big financial decisions based on emotion,” Montanaro said. “That’s why tough times like these are often the best times to get professional advice—for the objective opinion.” **GX**

“The message to investors is to *stay involved and aware of your portfolio*, but don’t panic. Focus your energy on what you can control, not checking your account balance every day.”

>> J.J. Montanaro



A FINE DAY FOR A CLIMB Soldiers tackle the march up Mount Mansfield.

Diary From the
Army Mountain
Warfare School's
Mountain Walk

VERTICALLY CHALLENGED IN VERMONT

Story and Photos by
Clint Wood

On the Road

▶ DISPATCHES FROM THE FIELD





UPHILL CLIMB SPC Charles Wesley of the RIARNG, left, Cadet Matthew Closson, SSG Jason Teribery of the COARNG, PFC Francisco DiNunzio of the VTARNG and SSG Robbi Stanton leave the first resting area on Mount Mansfield.

On a cloudy morning with the temperatures flirting with freezing, I'm climbing up the snow-covered mountainside of Mount Mansfield, the tallest peak in Vermont, with my climbing boots and crampons digging into the icy slope.

Several feet ahead of me, a line of men with rucksacks on their backs climb up the mountain, which gets steeper with each step. Most are dressed in Army-issued cold weather gear: green camouflage Gore-Tex jackets and pants, climbing boots and crampons, and Kevlar helmets. They are prodding the deep snow with ice axes, either following steps carved into the snow from earlier climbers or chipping away at their own.

I, too, am wearing all of this Army-issued cold weather gear, except for the estimated 45-pound rucksack. Instead, strapped to my back is my camera backpack. I'm cradling my camera in my right hand, and my ice ax is tethered to my left.

A few more steps up the mountain and I begin sucking air—so much that I stop, rip off my mountaineering goggles and pull down my balaclava mask. It feels like when I had just run two miles in a 20-degree windchill during one of my Army Physical Fitness Tests at Camp Ripley, MN, several years ago. And it would get more challenging.

Needless to say, I “sucked it up” and continued on several hundred more meters, until the group of mostly Army National Guard Soldiers finally took their first break.

Welcome to the Mountain Walk, the Army Mountain Warfare School's “culmination exercise” for the 14-day Basic Military Mountaineer course.

TAMING THE MOUNTAIN

The Mountain Warfare School is located at Ethan Allen Firing Range, Jericho, VT. School commander LTC Jeff Abeling's course prepares Soldiers to take care of themselves and, with some supervision from level two or three mountaineers, assist in establishing systems, or act as a second or follower.

The school also teaches an Assault Climber Course and Mobile Training Teams in the summer, and until recently, students had to graduate from both the winter and summer Basic Military Mountaineer courses to be awarded the Special Qualifications Identifier (SQI) “E” Mountaineer. Now, graduating from either qualifies the student for the SQI “E.”

Soldiers here learn a lot in a short time. And I was about to get a taste of it.

Noon

ON TOP OF THE ICE WALL

We've moved on. I'm lying on my stomach, hanging over the edge of the school's 40-foot ice wall for my first series of photos for this story. This test was among several held the day before the Mountain Walk.

I'm lying so far over the edge of this wall that I have to be belayed. Uneasy with the precarious position I'm in, I nervously ask SFC Mike Heth, who is my belayer, “Have you got me?” He replies, “Absolutely!”

Seconds later, the helmet of PVT Michael Wilson appears along with the distinct sound of one of his ice axes chipping away at the hard ice.

I lean even farther over the edge to get a better angle of Wilson climbing the wall with an ice ax in each hand.

About a minute later, Wilson has reached the top of the ice wall and yells to his belayer “Off belay” as he is lowered down from the wall.

The students have 15 minutes to climb the wall. The test includes proper commands like “off belay,” “ready,” “on belay” and “climbing.”

Heth, one of the school's instructors, noted that 15 minutes for the tying-in process and climbing is “pretty generous.”

Army Mountain Warfare

School Mission: To develop and conduct training for selected individuals in basic and advanced mountain warfare skills and tactics to be employed by combat units during all climatic conditions.

3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) was formed in 1982 as the Army's only battalion fully trained in military mountaineering.

It is headquartered adjacent to the Army Mountain Warfare School, which opened in 1983.

The 37-year-old Wilson, who has been in the Guard for only five months, admitted that climbing this ice wall was hard. But he remarked that in everything he pursues, he doesn't stop.

The wall can leave a mark. I saw Wilson later, and he told me that a piece of ice had once cut his nose. He showed me the small scar.

Despite this minor injury, the ice wall test was his favorite part of the school. He noted that he has been a rock climber as well.

"You don't see ice walls in Oklahoma," quipped Wilson, who drives an 18-wheeler when not serving his country.

The students were also tested in fixed ropes, rappelling and hauling techniques on this day.

2:00 p.m.

MEET THE VETERAN INSTRUCTOR

While photographing the students loading rucksacks into the trucks, I started talking to one of the instructors, SSG Steve Jennings.

Jennings has been at the school as an Active Guard Reserve instructor for the last seven years. He will be leaving soon because he is being promoted and transferring to the Army's only Mountain Infantry Battalion, the 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry (see sidebar).

Since arriving at the school, I kept hearing people talk about "the Notch," so I asked Jennings some questions about it. He told me that the students would be gaining about 1,000 feet in elevation on their Mountain Walk to the Notch the next day. The Notch usually has colder weather and stronger winds, he said.

"It opens a lot of people's eyes, and it's what mountaineering is all about," he said.

CRUCIAL RIGGING 2LT William Knox of the KYARNG prepares a Basic Mountain CASEVAC rigging during testing.



He added that he is glad the Army is starting to concentrate more on mountaineering skills for Soldiers, since Soldiers in mountainous terrain "need to use their feet and ropes to get up to their observation posts or secure ridgelines."

SSG Martin Crawford of the Virginia Army National Guard knows all too well about climbing mountains without gear in Afghanistan.

"We had to drag a mortar team and crew-served weapons up this mountain with nothing," he noted.

And yes, his team was wearing gear like Interceptor Body Armor and the Ammunition Basic Load (see next page).

"My guys were smoked after that," said Crawford, who works for Lockheed Martin.

2:10 p.m.

LEAVE SCHOOL EN ROUTE TO THE NOTCH

I climbed into the passenger seat of a 15-passenger van loaded with students, driven by the school's first sergeant, 1SG Casey Gomo. We were headed to an area near the Notch. From here, the students would walk about a mile to their base camp at an elevation of 2,232 feet up Vermont Route 108—a narrow road that stays closed during the winter because it's too difficult to plow. The road has no white lines, and rocks line its sides.

Gomo, who has been an instructor here since 2002 and the school's first sergeant for more than a year, knows all about training in high mountains. His first mountaineering experience was in 1993, training with the Marines at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Pickel Meadow, CA. The elevation at the center is more than 6,000 feet, rising to just under 12,000 feet in the training areas.

At 2:17 p.m., I caught my first glimpse of the landmark, as Gomo informed me that off to our right was Smugglers' Notch. To the right of the gap is Mount Mansfield, and on the opposite side are several more mountains, including Madonna, Sterling and Spruce.

Gomo said climbing up the Notch is like "stepping into a whole 'nother world."

2:44 p.m.

DISMOUNT

We reached the parking area and the students unloaded their rucksacks and prepared their 38-pound ahkios, or Alaskan sleds. These fiberglass sleds, usually pulled by four Soldiers, are capable of carrying 200 pounds of equipment. The Soldiers' equipment includes 10-man arctic tents that weigh 70 pounds, and stoves.

I lifted one of the students' rucksacks by its top-carrying strap. I could barely lift it past my ankle. I would later learn that these rucksacks average between 66-68 pounds.

Strapping these heavy packs on their backs wasn't the only thing that added stress to the students. Because of the tents, the class was broken down into teams of 8-10 men, instead of the usual 16-man groups they had been in throughout the course.

As any Soldier knows, breaking up teams like this can create challenges to the concept of teamwork.

The students, with a ski pole in each hand, hiked up to the base camp about a mile away. They took turns, in groups of four, towing the ahkio for a quarter-mile each. The first group left around 3 p.m.

I climbed into the backseat of a tracked Small Unit Support Vehicle, or SUSV, and we followed the last group up the trail.

In the passenger seat was MAJ Steven Lamos, the school's training chief, and in the other backseat was Gomo.

SINGLE FILE Soldiers hike up the mountain daily, even in extreme weather.



A Soldier's Ammunition Basic Load (ABL) can include:

- * 120 rounds, plus 30 tracer rounds for an infantryman armed with an M16 or M4 rifle
- * 800 rounds for a Soldier armed with a Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW)

It wasn't long before Gomo asked for the driver to stop and let him out. He wanted to walk with the students. I stayed in the vehicle in order to open the top hatch and shoot some photos.

Minutes later, I got out of the vehicle to photograph the students trudging up the trail. They seemed pretty exhausted. The last group arrived at 3:47 p.m.

Crawford, who has been in the Guard for about 15 years, said, "Having an extra 200 pounds pushing against you is really rough."

And like Jennings had warned, the wind was very strong in this area. I was like we stepped into a good ol' Minnesota blizzard.

I photographed the students unfolding their tents and preparing stoves.

As he was assembling one of the stoves, with the wind whipping around him, SPC Aaron Smith of the Maine Army National Guard said that he thought the course was good.

He said the most challenging thing up to that point was the testing, because the students were tested on almost everything they studied.

These tests included knot-tying, land navigation (two-man teams had to find five points), fixed ropes, high lines and climbing techniques.

He was impressed with the school's high standards. The students were given a 50-question written test in a multiple-choice format. It wasn't an open-book test.

There was an evaluation over rappelling in mountainous terrain,

which consisted of seven performance measures or tests (see next page).

SFC Mark Scott of the Maryland Army National Guard said he and his fellow Soldiers studied after dinner. He showed me his notebook crammed full of notes and knot-tying diagrams.

5:36 a.m.

SECOND DAY

The next day, I arrived at one of the instructor's rooms in a separate building from the school in order to change clothes. The temperature was in the high 20s, and it had snowed about 2 inches overnight. I put on dress socks, a pair of thick socks issued by the school, boots and liners, long wool underwear pants and shirt, the Army-issued black fleece jacket and a Gore-Tex jacket and pants.

At 6:04 a.m., we departed from the school in an Army Chevy pickup, with the 15-passenger van following us. Along the way, our pickup started to slide as we climbed a road near the parking lot. Our driver let the van pass us. We got to the parking area, switched vehicles and arrived at base camp at 7:17.

I spent several minutes in the Notch Command Post—which is the park ranger's headquarters during the summer—being briefed on the day's activities by MSG Corey Burnor. Burnor is the school's training non-commissioned officer in charge.

The students had about a four-hour ordeal ahead of them. And this would include a casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) test either before or after they participated in the Mountain Walk.

For the CASEVAC test, the students had to correctly rig a rescue system in a certain amount of time. If they failed the first time, they were shown what they did wrong and the correct way to do it. They were re-tested when they felt they were ready. If they failed the re-test, they were sent home.

Scott said his team practiced rigging the CASEVAC system in their tent the night before. He said some teams did this test outside, too, to become used to tying the knots outside.

[Fast Facts]

The Basic Military Mountaineer Winter course has averaged about 60 students. The school can billet up to eight females at any given time. Of the 56 officers and enlisted cadre, 26 are full-time Guard Soldiers.

The Mountain Walk included about a half-mile climb up to a big rock named “BFR” using crampons and an ice ax. The students carried this ax tethered to their wrist and used it as a third point of contact during the climb up the hill.

Once they reached the BFR, they climbed a steeper part of the mountain using the complex fixed ropes section. Burnor said that some of the instructors set this section up the day before.

Knox said the ropes course required the students to be patient and maintain a high level of awareness of the surrounding environment.

“It also provided me, as a junior leader, a better understanding for movement of my unit in rugged terrain,” said Knox, who has been in the Guard for five years and is an advisor for a grant-writing and program-consulting firm focused on improving health care in rural areas.

After this section, the students glissaded down the hill. Glissading is nothing more than sliding down a hill in either a sitting or crouching position without skis. The ice ax is used as a brake in case the student loses control during the descent. As he slides down the hill, he has the ax in his left hand. If he loses control, he digs the ax into the mountain and turns his body toward it, holding onto the ax.

Crawford said glissading is similar to bobsledding. “[It’s] a good way to get down the mountain,” he said.

The walk ended with about a 300-foot rappel down a cliff

SFC Scott, who has been in the Guard for 14 years and served with the active-duty Army in Desert Storm and Somalia, said the rappel was not that difficult.

The combat engineer said that overall, the most challenging thing was the wet snow. “Everybody’s Gore-Tex is getting wet,” he noted. “So you have to regulate that.”

The cadre, or instructors, also regulates safety at all times.

Lamos pointed out that the instructors check each student’s gear before every climb. There are two instructors per team.

Burnor added that some instructors have 15 years of mountaineering experience. When not teaching at the school, they could be climbing other mountains or on other expeditions.

“Their experience is one of our biggest safety factors,” he said.

Lamos added, “These guys live and breathe this type of thing, not only in the military, but as civilians, too.”

The instructor’s list of achievements reads like a “Who’s Who” in the mountain-climbing community. They include: Rigging for Rescue Course; Mount Everest; personal summits of Mount McKinley, North America’s highest peak; and several peaks over 18,000 feet in Peru and Ecuador.

8:42 a.m.

THE TREK UP TO THE BFR

Burnor and I left the building and fell in at the end of the next group up to the BFR. Burnor followed the instructor, and I followed Burnor.

As I mentioned earlier, I was struggling to catch my breath about five

minutes into the walk. We reached the rock 15 minutes later at 9:09 a.m.

Burnor and I stayed at this somewhat flat spot until the next group climbed to it. And then we began the descent. Before we did, he demonstrated how to use the ice ax to survive a fall. This was the same procedure used for glissading.

So I looked down the steep hill and wondered to myself, “How am I going to do this without sliding down the hill either face-first or on my seat?”

I resorted to sidestepping down the hill—and it worked. It took awhile though. Burnor was way ahead of me, but I finally made it down the hill unscathed and with a sense of great accomplishment. My ankles hurt because they continuously rubbed against my boots. But I’d only had two days to break in these boots compared to the students’ 13 days.

12:10 p.m.

BACK UP ANOTHER HILL

Not yet having enough of this mountain, I decided to climb up to the base of the cliff that the students rappelled down. Burnor escorted me again. This was an estimated 200-meter walk.

“It is the vertical gain that makes it seem so far,” said Burnor.

Several feet into the trek, we were greeted with a student emerging from a narrow opening between two huge rocks. It was barely wide enough to fit his body through. The students had to drag their rucksacks behind them as they crawled on their hands and knees through the opening.

I snapped several photos of the students emerging, and then it was our turn. It wasn’t quite as bad as I expected. I dragged my camera backpack behind me like the students did with their rucksacks, though I nearly ripped the pack with my crampons.

Once I emerged from this cave, I was facing another steep uphill climb to our destination. But on this climb, I had to squeeze through some rocks instead of having wide-open spaces, like I did in my first climb.

Once we reached the base, I took several photos of the students rappelling down the cliff. It really didn’t look that challenging. It appeared as if they were walking down at a 60–70 degree angle.

Crawford, an experienced rappeller, said thinking about rappelling down a cliff that high was a “little nerve-wracking,” since just one piece of webbing was holding his lifeline.

“Once you went down, it was no problem,” he said. “But 300 feet—that’s a long way to go.”

For me, the thought of walking down to base camp from the base was “a long way to go,” too. Not only was it steep, but also the addition of a few rocks scattered on the hillside definitely concerned me.

And this time, I left my camera backpack on my back and crawled on my hands and knees through the narrow opening. It worked.

Thinking back on those two days I spent at this one-of-a-kind school, I would sign up for the course in a heartbeat. But wait, I have a hard time tying a square knot.

Otherwise, I’m pretty sure I could do everything else, especially climbing up the mountain. **EX**

ATTACHED AT THE HIP A Soldier relies on his harness and safety rope to rappel down the mountain.



TO PASS THE “RAPPELLING IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN EVALUATION PERFORMANCE,” STUDENTS MUST:

Establish a pre-equalized anchor in the assigned direction using two anchors and tied stopper knots in the end of the rappel ropes (10 minutes).

Demonstrate a Hasty Rappel (30 seconds).

Rig for seat hip rappel using a locking carabiner (1 minute).

Score 80 out of 100 points and complete the test in 15 minutes.

CAMP SHELBY

GX TAKES YOU BEHIND THE SCENES OF THIS NATIONAL TREASURE

By Ben Warden

Members of the North Carolina National Guard's 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team were surrounded by gunfire and artillery as they cleared buildings in an urban area on an impossibly hot day

It wasn't Mosul, but Mississippi. Camp Shelby to be exact.

The 30th is just one of many units doing one of many training exercises done every day at Camp Shelby.

Chances are if you're reading this you've either been to Camp Shelby or know someone who has. It's the largest state-owned training facility in the country and has trained Soldiers for combat

The **first troops** to arrive for training at Camp Shelby were **6,000 National Guard Soldiers** from Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia, later to become the **38th Division**.

FIRED UP A Soldier breaches a door to a house while training at Camp Shelby.



FIRST STRYKER Soldiers from the 112th Stryker Brigade run a training exercise at Camp Shelby, MS.



A QUICK REACTION Soldiers participate in an extraction exercise at Camp Shelby, MS.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF MSARNG

A WIDE RANGE OF TRAINING GOES ON AT THE CAMP, BUT ITS OBVIOUS ADVANTAGE IS THE AMOUNT OF SPACE IT HAS FOR LIVE AMMO TRAINING.

overseas since World War I. The camp's mission is to serve as a major, independent mobilization station of the U.S. Army Forces Command, both for active and reserve forces.

Camp Shelby and Camp Atterbury in Indiana are the two main mobilization centers for Guard Soldiers going overseas.

Covering more than 136,000 acres, Camp Shelby is the largest reserve training facility, allowing everything from individual to battalion level training all in one place. It's also the Annual Training (AT) location for Guard units from Mississippi, Tennessee and Alabama.

TRAINING

The Camp Shelby Training Site (CSTS) was established during World War I and has served as a continuous training site ever since, not only for the National Guard, but for all branches of the military as well. A wide range of training goes on at the camp, but its obvious advantage is the amount of space it has for live ammo training.

Known as the impact area, this is one 17-square-mile area you would not want to

accidentally walk into. The impact area is used for training on all sorts of weapons, from 9 mms to Abrams M1 Tanks, the latter of which obviously need a lot of open space.

The impact area is used around 190 days a year, with an average of 170 Soldier-firings a day. Other weapons used for training in the area include Bradleys, mortars, laser-guided missiles and towed artillery.

HISTORY

As America's involvement in World War I became more inevitable, a group of local

business and civil leaders in Mississippi urged the Army to build a training site in the DeSoto National Forest.

The site was approved and workers began building the camp in July 1917. More than 1,200 buildings, including a hospital, were built by approximately 4,500 civilian contractors that year.

As the building was going on, the Soldiers lived in crude tents. The first troops to arrive for training at Camp Shelby were 6,000 National Guard Soldiers from Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia, later to become the 38th Division.

In 1918, World War I ended and Camp Shelby was deactivated. Thus began the pattern that would continue throughout the rest of the century: Global conflict meant a massive buildup at Camp Shelby, and afterward the Camp would be deactivated.

After the Korean War, the Department of the Army approved an overall plan to make Camp Shelby the model for all future training sites, thus ensuring its full-time use from then on. Having continuously trained Soldiers since then, Camp Shelby's role in our national defense is critical. **GX**

FAST FACTS

Commander:

COL Earnie Shows, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center (CSJFTC)

Camp Shelby Mission Statement:

- Support pre-mob training, IDT and AT for ARNG and USAR C/CS/CSS Units
- Serve as a FORSCOM power projection platform for the mobilization mission

Present Status:

- One of the largest National Guard and Reserve Training Sites in the United States.
- Became Mobilization Center Shelby June 6, 2004; currently is Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center
- More than 700 Soldiers and 200 civilian staff for the installation/garrison
- M-RSDI (formerly Soldier Readiness Process SRP)
- TSB trains units
- Trained 10 large units-1 RCT and 9 BCTs
- Deployed and demobilized approximately 120,000 Soldiers

since June 2004

- Repaired and shipped more than 70,000 pieces of equipment for the deploying units
- Demob the 278th TN NG Regimental Combat Team, 155th MS NG BCT, 28th PA NG BCT, 39th AR NG IBCT and many smaller units.

Training Facilities:

Support DOD training requirements for the following:

- U.S. Army
- U.S. Air Force
- U.S. Marine Corps
- U.S. Navy Seabees
- Special Operation Forces
- National Guard and Reserve units
- Joint Operations

Troop Support Capability:

- Current bed capacity: 7,280

Movement Capabilities:

- Rail Head to load equipment, vehicles and supplies for shipping



Location:

- 68 miles from Gulf Coast
- 110 miles from New Orleans
- 22 miles from Hattiesburg/Laurel Regional Airport
- 15 miles from Bobby Chain Airport

Services:

- Consolidated Dining Facility, plus mess halls in each battalion area
- Troop Health Clinic
- Lake Walker and Dogwood Lake

- Boat/ Canoe rental
- Fishing
- 2 - 3 rooms VIP Cabins
- All Ranks Clubs (2)
- Gymnasium/ Fitness Facility
- Weight Room
- T readmills
- Softball Complex
- Running Track

Other attractions:

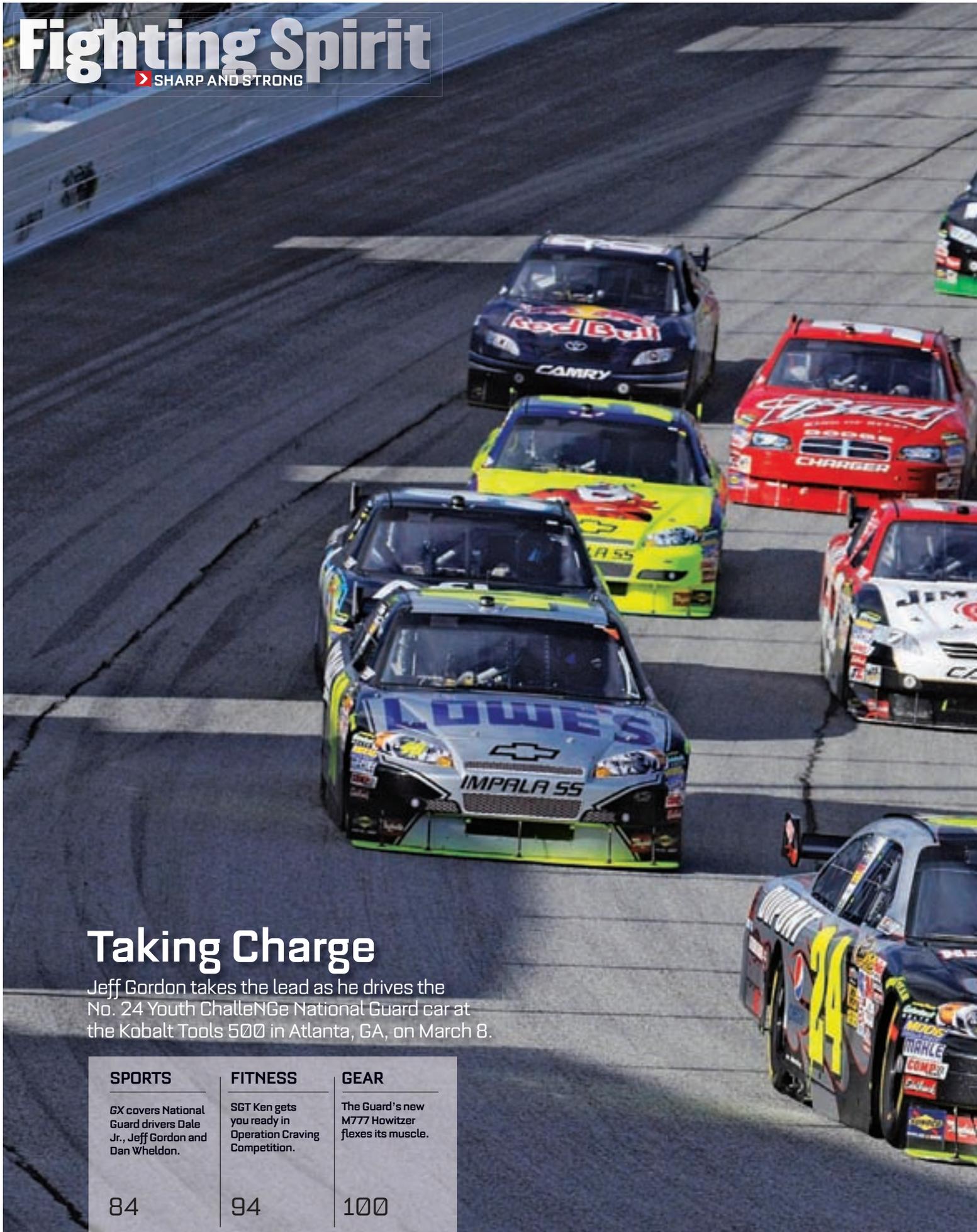
- Greer Chapel
- State-of-the-art Armed Forces Museum with hundreds of displays outside and inside
- C-17 Assault Strip

Future:

- Demobilize units
- Mobilize 48th GA NG BCT; 155th MS NG BCT; other units
- Continue annual training and other support for Guard and Reserve units

Fighting Spirit

▶ SHARP AND STRONG



Taking Charge

Jeff Gordon takes the lead as he drives the No. 24 Youth Challenge National Guard car at the Kobalt Tools 500 in Atlanta, GA, on March 8.

SPORTS

GX covers National Guard drivers Dale Jr., Jeff Gordon and Dan Wheldon.

84

FITNESS

SGT Ken gets you ready in Operation Craving Competition.

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GEAR

The Guard's new M777 Howitzer flexes its muscle.

100





STAY LOW Dale Earnhardt Jr., driver of the No. 88 National Guard/AMP Energy Chevrolet Impala SS, maintains his inside line.

RACING 101

THE INS AND OUTS OF NASCAR

By Clint Wood

DALE JR. NEVER FAILS to fascinate his fans.

Let's face it, racing itself is fascinating—and so is NASCAR. This month, *GX* wanted to find out more about the origins and traditions of the sport. So, we did a little digging.

In some cases, we found facts. In others, only theories, where the truth is lost in time. But it's all fun—so climb in for a ride through racing history.

First, do you know what NASCAR stands for? That would be National Association for Stock Car Racing. It was formed in 1949.

Do you know what the Sprint Cup Series was originally called? Answer: Strictly Stock.

That was the same year that the No. 88 was raced for the first time in NASCAR Cup-level competition. This number—driven by Ralph Earnhardt (Dale Jr.'s grandfather), Bobby Allison, Buddy Baker, Ernie Irvan and Fireball Roberts, to name a few—has been to victory lane 65 times.

No. 88 also ranks ninth among car numbers on the all-time win list, 10th in all-time starts and 12th in all-time pole positions.

POLE POSITION

Q: You probably know that it's the starting position on the inside of the front row. But do you know where this term came from?

A: Legend has it that "pole position" comes from horse racing, where the No. 1 starter starts on the inside, next to the inside pole.

CHECKERED FLAG

Q: And what about the checkered flag?

A: Theories abound, but some historians think the most likely explanation dates back to the days when tracks were just dirt. Dust would have limited drivers' visibility, and a flag with a design would have been easier to see than one with a solid color. NASCAR traditionally has a special version of the checkered flag sewn for victory circle bearing the name and date of the race on it.

TRACKS

Q: On which track has Dale Jr. posted the most wins in the Cup Series?

A: Dale Jr. has five wins at Talladega Superspeedway, formerly named the Alabama International Motor Speedway. The Superspeedway is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. The first of two Cup Series races there this season was April 26. In 18 starts at Talladega, Dale Jr. has racked up eight top-5 finishes and 11 top-10 finishes (as of April 27, 2009). He swept both the Sprint Cup and Busch Series' races in 2002. His five victories rank him third in victories among drivers at the 2.66-mile oval. He also posted his 300th Series start at this speedway last spring.

Q: Where and when was the first track built?

A: Darlington Raceway in South Carolina, created in 1950. It's still known as the track "Too Tough to Tame."

So, now you know a little more about racing. Check back in future issues for answers to other questions like "What is a track bar adjustment?" and "What is it like being Dale Jr.'s spotter?" **GX**

To get up to speed with Dale Jr., go to DaleJrGuardGarage.com.

Fast Track to a Second Chance

JEFF GORDON RACES GUARD YOUTH CHALLENGE CAR, MEETS THE KIDS

By Clint Wood

Everyone who watched the Kobalt Tools 500 at the Atlanta Motor Speedway March 9 saw the Army National Guard's Youth Challenge Program logo. Even though it was going nearly 200 mph.

This was the first race of eight in which Jeff Gordon's No. 24 National Guard/DuPont Chevrolet had the Army National Guard's special programs painted on its hood.

Jeff Gordon successfully raced his way from the 16th position to a second-place finish that day, but it was his sponsor's off-the-track triumphs that ruled the day.

The Youth Challenge program takes at-risk teens and provides them with job training, life skills and the confidence to face the world successfully, as well as a glimpse into the life of a National Guard Soldier.

The program focuses on the yearly 1.2 million high school dropouts who are at risk for drug use,



Champions Gala in Washington, DC. More than 100 Youth Challenge cadets attended the event. Other celebrities at the gala included country music singers Julianne Hough and Kellie Pickler.

GRINNING WITH GORDON Cadre and cadets of the Georgia National Guard's Youth Challenge program pose for photos with NASCAR driver Jeff Gordon (back row, fifth from left) outside Atlanta Motor Speedway's National Guard Mobile Recruiting Display.

"All the kids were absolutely enjoying it."

>> SFC Roy Henry on the Youth Challenge cadets

gang violence and abusive relationships, according to its officials.

Twelve cadets from the Georgia National Guard's Fort Stewart Youth Challenge Academy and two of the cadre attended the race. They, along with several deploying Georgia Army National Guard Soldiers, were the first to see Gordon's Guard car.

This wasn't the first time though that Gordon met Youth Challenge participants.

Gordon, along with fellow Guard racers Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Dan Wheldon, driver of the No. 4 Panther Racing/National Guard IndyCar Series car, attended the fourth annual Challenge

But the youth who were there at the Atlanta race certainly got "the best of the best."

Not only were they among the more than 65,000 fans who experienced a NASCAR race, but they also toured the garage area and pit road. They watched the race from the second deck of the Guard's Mobile Recruiting Display in the infield.

SFC Roy Henry, a public affairs specialist for the Georgia Army National Guard, said the cadre told him these cadets were chosen based on their performance, attitude and evaluation records.

Henry shared that Gordon told the cadets that Youth Challenge offers them a second chance

at life, and that the driver was very friendly and shook everyone's hand.

"All the kids were absolutely enjoying it," Henry said. "They loved being there."

Gordon will continue to race the Guard car at select races this year, hoping to continue his winning season.

The Guard can attribute his achievements on the track to consistency and perseverance—the same traits the Youth Challenge hopes to instill in its participants. **GX**

For more on Guard Racing, go to
www.NATIONALGUARD.com/guardracing.

For more information on the Youth Challenge,
visit NGYCP.org/site.

How's Your Indy-Cred?

GET IN GEAR FOR THE SEASON WITH THIS FUN REFRESHER

By Ben Warden

The 2009 Indy 500 is just around the next turn.

What makes this event so special? Why have its traditions endured over the years? Who'll win this year?

Everyone's got questions, and *GX* has the answers—well, most of them.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I must tell you: I'm biased. I grew up 10 minutes from the Speedway. The distant rumble of the engines from my backyard meant summer was near. Some things just feel tied to our DNA—for me, it's the Indy 500.

A LITTLE BRICKYARD BACKGROUND

In 1909, ground was first broken on what would become the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Few could imagine the legacy and lasting power of what those men started to build that day. Two years later, in 1911, the first 500-mile race was run. The rest is history.

The Indianapolis 500 is one of the few sporting events that has not only stood the test of time, but has flourished. Through wars, recessions, natural disasters—you name it—Indy has held its ground. Year after year, the Indy 500 is the biggest single spectator sport in the country, with upward of 500,000 fans in attendance.

One aspect of the race that sets it apart from the others is that it's essentially one big month-long event. The "Month of May," as it's known, encompasses everything from a rookie orientation around May 1 to the race itself, the Sunday

before Memorial Day. This year, the main event falls on May 24.

In between, there's qualifying, bumping, pit stop competitions and much more. Whether you're a newbie or an old pro, here's a breakdown of a few essential Indy facts.

ROOKIE ORIENTATION PROGRAM / OPENING DAY

First-year drivers who wish to compete in the 500, regardless of their team, equipment or previous racing experience, must participate in and complete the Rookie Orientation Program.

This period marks the public opening of the Speedway, when spectators first fill the grandstands to watch the action. And there's always plenty of it, as over-confident rookies attempt to tame what's known as the "World's Greatest Race Course" for the first time.

FAST FRIDAY

After three days of practice, it's time for all the drivers and teams to work out the final kinks



IN FOCUS The No. 4 National Guard car pulls in to pit road during the tire test at Miami's Homestead Speedway.

EAGLE EYE Dan Wheldon prepares to ace a tire test at the Homestead-Miami Speedway.



>> DAN WHELDON

NATIONAL GUARD DRIVER AND RACING CHAMPION

Dan Wheldon is beginning his eighth season in the Indy Racing League the same way he began his first: as a member of the Panther Racing team. His record includes a 2005 win at Indy and overall series championship.

Wheldon has made it clear that he wants to bring another Indy 500 victory and IRL series championship to the team that gave him his start. As he and the No. 4 National Guard crew gear up for victory in the 93rd running of the Indianapolis 500, *GX* thinks it's a great time for a fun refresher on America's premier racing event.

Wars, recessions, natural disasters—you name it and the Indy 500 has withstood it.

before qualifying time. Rookies have hopefully shaken out their nerves and begun comfortably turning laps at increasing speeds.

Last year, fans saw more than they bargained for when a pit lane miscue resulted in Andretti-Green driver Danica Patrick hitting a Dale Coyne Racing crew member, sending him hurling through the air. Luckily, all involved were OK, and the incident served as a reminder of why there is a month of preparation for the 500.

POLE DAY

The first day of qualifying sets the starting order of the top 11 cars in the race. Teams spend all day tweaking the cars in hopes of gaining a few hundredths of a second over the competition.

Pole Day sets the pace—literally—for the rest of the field. It lets teams know exactly how much

slower they are than the competition, and thus how much work they need to do. Smaller teams usually opt to watch Pole Day from the sideline and attempt to qualify later.

QUALIFICATIONS

Positions 12–33 are determined over two qualifying days, one week apart. The day after Pole Day is known as Second Day Qualifying, which sets positions 12–22. On the following Saturday, Third Day Qualifying sets positions 23–33.

BUMPDAY

Here's where it gets interesting. The Sunday after Third Day Qualifying is known as Bump Day. Cars that have yet to qualify for the race can make another attempt to “bump” themselves into the field by qualifying into the 31st, 32nd or 33rd spot.

The most famous example of bumping happened in 1995. After dominating the 500 the year before, Penske Racing decided to forgo tire-testing coming into the new season—which turned out to be a big mistake. After Brazilian driver Emerson Fittipaldi barely qualified on its cars, it was bumped out of the field with 15 minutes to go. No Penske car would be in the race that year.

CARB DAY

Although carburetors haven't been used in IndyCar racing since 1962, Carb Day has been the long-standing term for the final practice before the 500-mile race.

While the goal in qualifying is to set up the car to go as fast as possible, Carb Day is the last practice for drivers to set up their cars for the race itself. The difference is vast, since cars run a bit slower when they are by themselves and speed up when they are in traffic and drafting one another.

Nowadays, Carb Day is much more than just practice. Following the practice, the IndyCar development league, called the Indy Lights series, has a 100-mile race early in the afternoon. There's also a timed pit crew competition between all the cars racing in the 500, followed by a concert. Past headliners include Kid Rock, The Black Crowes and Stone Temple Pilots.

After a month of activities, just one remains: the race. Thirty-three cars doing 200 laps at around 220 miles per hour. Need I say more? **GX**

For more on Dan Wheldon and his race prep for the Indy 500, go to www.NATIONALGUARD.com/guardracing/irl

Minimize the Threat, Win the Battle

Story and photos by SSG Liesl Marelli

IT'S A WORST-CASE SCENARIO for Soldiers in combat to have close-quarter encounters with enemy forces; however, it may very well be a reality for deploying Colorado Army National Guard Soldiers.

Because of this fact, the leaders of Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery of Aurora, CO, are taking no chances with their Soldiers' lives. They are kicking up the required training a notch by including world champion fighters as combatives trainers.

Recently, more than 30 Colorado Guard Soldiers turned out for free combatives training with A1 Boxing and Fitness in Aurora, dressed in their Army combat uniform, individual body armor (IBA) and a mouthpiece.

Joe Montalvo, a certified mixed martial arts instructor for A1 Boxing and Fitness, said donating his time to train Colorado Guard Soldiers was his way of serving his country.

Other instructors included Jeff "Big Diesel" Ford, Paul "Chino" Sanchez, George "The Tower of Power" Ashauer, Josec "Panda" Robles, Luke "Skywalker" Johnson, Nate "The Blade" Earley and brothers Joaquin and Andrew Aldaco. Most are renowned fighters whose wins range from statewide to international competitions.

On the first day of training, the Soldiers were divided between Montalvo and Ford, with each group receiving hour-long sessions.

Montalvo's training focused on grappling techniques, which included weapons training (a dummy knife), foot traps and double-leg takedowns. He also stressed to his Soldiers to train in the gear they will wear.

"Wear your [IBAs] and use the plates," he said. "Get used to wearing it and moving with it."

Meanwhile, Ford taught his group about proper fighting stances and methods to keep combatants at bay.

"[Training] like this should be a part of our regular routine," said SGT Tyrone Short of Aurora, while vowing he'll begin incorporating this training into his daily routine immediately. "It just shows us how we need to condition our bodies much more."

Day two's training incorporated more advanced techniques for the Soldiers and was completed as one large group—led by Montalvo and Ford.

The session culminated in a five-on-five man battle consisting of two teams, Alpha and Bravo. Allowed to move only on their knees, Soldiers had to incorporate the training methods Ford and Montalvo taught them to defeat the opposing team. The rules were simple: Soldiers could cause one another to submit with arm bars and chokes; striking was off-limits. Once



BLOCKED SGT Tyrone Short (right) blocks PFC Robert Coe's attack and counters it with a left hook during combatives training at A1 Boxing and Fitness in Aurora, CO, Jan. 11.

someone tapped out, they had to get out of the ring. Teaming up against the other team was allowed.

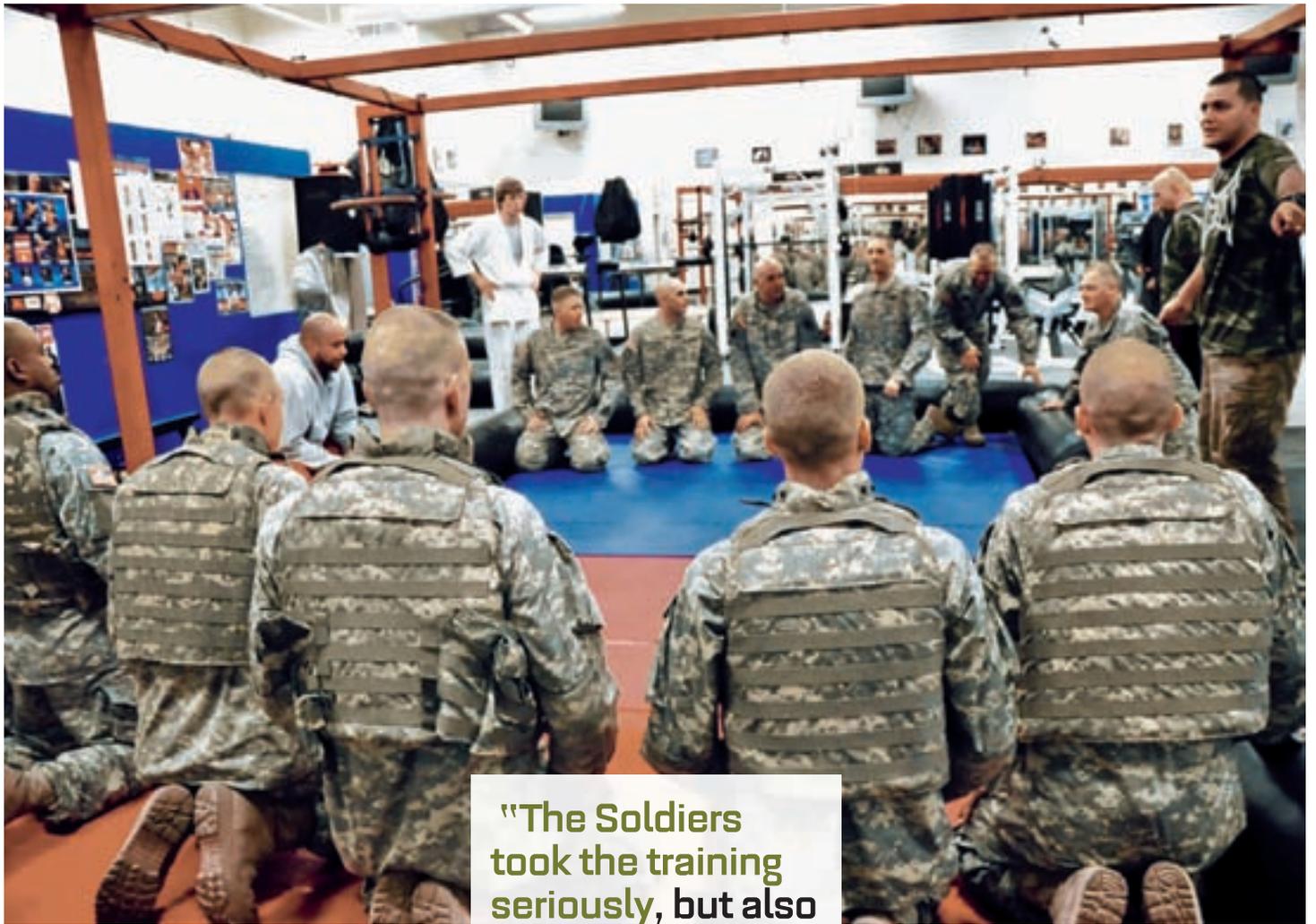
That scenario worked against the Bravo team, which had only one remaining Soldier, SFC Warren Baker. The four remaining Alpha team Soldiers tried to get Baker to tap out. However, Baker, crediting the neck guard on his Individual Body Armor (IBA), managed to escape Alpha team member 1LT Matt Jester's attempted rear-naked chokehold. And before the four men were able to force Baker to submit, Montalvo ended the round.

"The Soldiers took the training seriously, but also had fun with it," said Battery B Commander CPT Jim Forester. "I could tell the instructors had our best interest in mind and cared about us learning what they had to offer before we go to war."

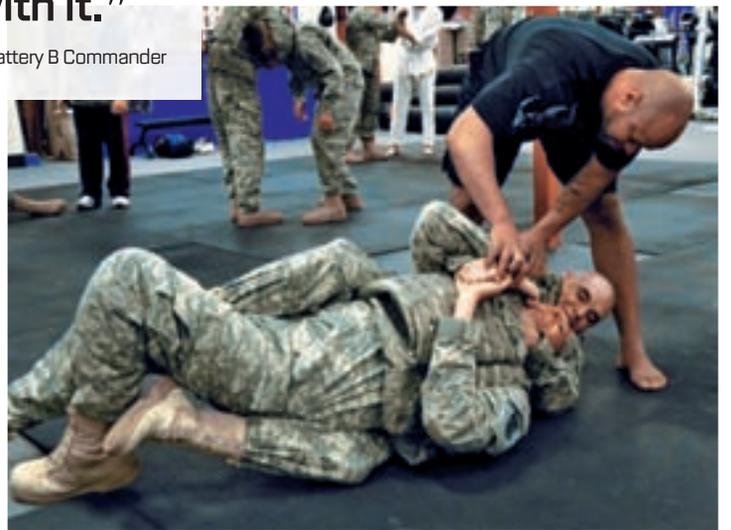
The unit began its mobilization training for Operation Iraqi Freedom in early February.

Although they will have conducted a minimum of 24 hours of combatives training before deploying to Iraq, many Soldiers, like PFC Steven Gerdjikian, will continue using the services of A1 Boxing and Fitness until they deploy.

Gerdjikian is the Soldier responsible for the unit's training with the club. "Private Gerdjikian had excellent initiative," Forester said. "He and Lieutenant Jester were responsible for coordinating the combatives training, which resulted in a successful weekend of lifesaving tactics that I hope the Soldiers will rely on when in combat." **GX**



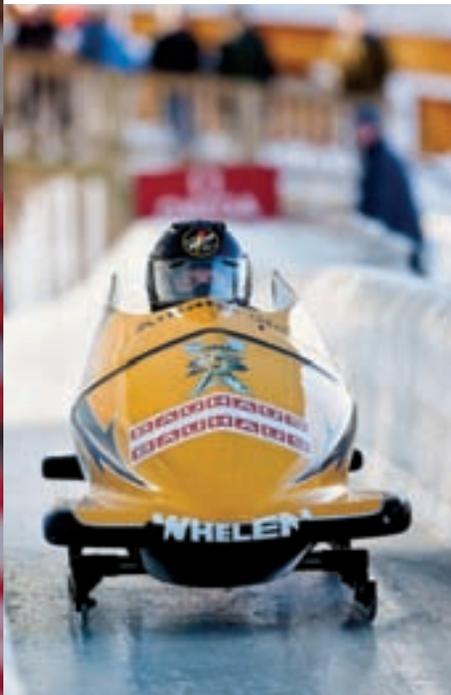
“The Soldiers took the training seriously, but also had fun with it.”
 >> CPT Jim Forester, Battery B Commander



[From top, clockwise] RULE TIME Two five-man teams get ready to rumble in a final combatives match in Aurora, CO. | **TAP OUT** CPL Benjamin Kassaw of Montrose, CO, performs a rear-naked chokehold on SGT Matthew Blum, who fights to escape. | **POISED POSITION** Soldiers assigned to Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, received free training courtesy of A1 Boxing and Fitness in Aurora, CO, Jan. 10–11. Jeff “Big Diesel” Ford (front) and Paul “Chino” Sanchez (rear) instruct the Soldiers about basic positions, beginning with a proper fighting stance.



DOWN THE HILL Shauna Rohbock (front) and Elana Meyers push down the start ramp for the first run at the women's Bobsled World Championships at the Olympic Sports Complex in Lake Placid, NY, Feb. 20.



SLIDING The USA 3 sled driven by PFC John Napier and brakeman T.J. Burns slides through the "chicane" during the second run of the two-man Bobsled World Championships at the Olympic Sports Complex in Lake Placid, NY, Feb. 21.

Seeing Silver

NATIONAL GUARD BOBSLEDDERS WIN MEDALS AT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

By Amanda Bird
U.S. Bobsled and Skeleton Federation

▶ **LAKE PLACID, NY**—On Feb. 21, Utah Army National Guard Soldier SGT Shauna Rohbock and her teammate Elana Meyers added World Championship silver medalists to their resume. The two competed together in the World Championship women's bobsled event held at the Olympic Sports Complex in Lake Placid, NY.

run combined time of three minutes, 48.60 seconds. Rohbock had navigated her Bo-Dyn sled down the 20-curve course in 57.12 and 57.43 seconds on the third and fourth runs.

"It's really hard to have four consistent heats," Rohbock said. "This track changes a lot, so you have to constantly change your driving."

She added, "My goal was to be on the podium here, so I'm happy. This is my home track, and I wanted to be on the podium more than anything."

Meyers and fellow push athlete Valerie Fleming have alternated places in Rohbock's sled throughout the season. In 2006, Fleming claimed the Olympic silver medal with Rohbock; Meyers and Rohbock recently won gold on the 2010 Olympic track in Whistler, British Columbia. Because of their talents, deciding which teammate would be placed in Rohbock's sled for the February World Championship event was difficult for the coaches.

In the lead entering the day's final two heats, Team Rohbock nabbed the silver medal with a four-

run of 55.41 seconds.

The teammates dug their sled out of the start with a push time of 5.16 seconds in the final heat, keeping the crowd on edge.

Holcomb was four-hundredths of a second out of top medal contention exiting corner 14, but made up a tenth of a second before crossing the finish line in 55.79 seconds for his first World Championship medal.

"This was huge for us, and I'm really happy," he said. "I knew I needed to come out and give it my all to stay in the mix."

In other action, Vermont National Guard PFC John Napier teamed with T.J. Burns to finish 17th with a combined time of 3:45.17 after runs of 56.25 and 56.37 seconds. Napier, who had been battling the flu throughout the week, managed push times of 5:37 and 5:33 seconds.

"My legs aren't under me yet," Napier said. "T.J. did as much as he could to help me, but I had nothing left. I'm hopeful for next week, and I think [the] four-man [run] will go well. I'm starting to feel better, so my first goal is to get healthy."

In the team event, the U.S. men and women combined forces Feb. 22 to claim bronze. **GX**

"It's awesome that we have this kind of depth of push athletes," Rohbock said. "It will be a fight for the four or five push athletes we have to be in the two sleds going to the Olympics."

And though Fleming wasn't in the bobsled, she still cheered on her team. In fact, she strained her vocal chords screaming with excitement as team USA I crossed the finish line in the final heat.

Two-Man Teams

In the men's competition, former Utah Guard Soldier Steven Holcomb teamed with Curt Tomasevicz to claim the bronze in the two-man bobsled event.

"I just won my first World Championship medal," said Holcomb. "I'm really excited, but of course I wish it was gold."

Holcomb moved into medal position in his first heat with a

'Scrumming' for the Guard

RUGBY PLAYERS GET TOUGH AT THE NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

By CPT Kimberly Holman, California National Guard

▶ **SAN DIEGO, CA**—The National Guard was prominently featured for the second year at the USA Sevens Rugby Tournament recently held here at Petco Park.

It is the largest rugby event in North America and the fastest-growing rugby event in the world.

The National Guard and USA Rugby collaborated two years ago to ensure educational and athletic benefits are afforded to young people interested in pursuing the core values shared by USA Rugby and the National Guard.

"It seemed like a very natural partnership," said Kyle Judah, National Guard account manager

"Our core values are parallel—camaraderie, leadership on and off the field, quick decisions, selflessness, and working toward a common goal as a team."

>> Kyle Judah, National Guard account manager for USA Rugby

for USA Rugby. "Our core values are parallel—camaraderie, leadership on and off the field, quick decisions, selflessness and working toward a common goal as a team—these are foundational values of both organizations. Rugby players love to get dirty, and they have courage and fortitude."

The National Guard commanded a strong visible presence at the two-day tournament, which included teams from 16 countries competing in a total of 44 matches.

California National Guard and USA Rugby tents were side-by-side in the Fan Zone within Petco Park, which included a rock-climbing wall, a padded jousting arena and other physical challenges.

Rugby fans learned about National Guard opportunities while visiting the attractions and talking with Guard members at the event. The National Guard logo was embossed prominently on the end zone turf and on the goalpost padding.

As the tournament officially began, the California governor and adjutant general's own Color Guard presented the colors, and TSgt. Dan Plaster of the Air National Guard's Band of the Southwest sang the national anthem. F-18s roared overhead just as it concluded.

Recruiters introduce the opportunities of the National Guard to young rugby players while they are still in high school and form what often matures into an eight-year one-on-one relationship between recruiter and rugby player.

Rugby is not a varsity or collegiate sport, and therefore no scholarships exist. The National Guard offers rugby players options to help pay for college and allows them to continue in their rugby careers, while receiving personal and professional training through ROTC programs.

"These athletes are highly motivated leaders who possess a selfless and team-oriented mentality that is perfectly suited for the National Guard," said Joanna Hoffman, 2009 Guard Rugby Program campaign manager. "Our players are extremely physically fit as well as mentally prepared to make split-second decisions in the heat of battle." **GX**



GUARD RUGBY For the second year, the National Guard sponsored the USA Sevens Rugby Tournament recently held at Petco Park in San Diego.

Follow Guard rugby at www.NATIONALGUARD.com/guardevents/rugby.php

"TODAY, DURING THE GAME THEY'LL SAY, 'PLEASE RISE FOR THE NATIONAL ANTHEM.' AND I'LL FEEL LIKE I'M ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO HELP PROTECT OUR COUNTRY."

>> PFC Christina Dewitt



Scoring with the Guard

UNC BASKETBALL PLAYER EXCELS AS A SOLDIER

Story and photos by Camille Breland

> IT WAS A RAINY DAY MARCH 15 at the Dean E. Smith Center in Chapel Hill, NC. Fans in raincoats spilled into the basketball stadium, eager to see the University of North Carolina's last regular-season women's basketball game against the South Dakota Coyotes.

But GX wasn't there just to cover a sporting event—we were there to meet PFC Christina Dewitt, a basketball forward and truck driver for the Army National Guard.

"I've been playing [basketball] ever since I could walk," Dewitt said with a grin before the game. "It runs in my family. Everybody plays, and since I was going to be tall, I didn't have much of a choice."

Now standing at 6'2", Dewitt found her talent before she even hit kindergarten. While in class during preschool, she snuck past her teacher, out to the basketball goal and threw her first shot. While the ball got stuck in the middle of the rim, Dewitt, now 21, had found her passion.

She continued to play ball in her hometown of Little River, SC, eventually being named an all-state and all-region player every year of her high school career. By her senior year, she averaged 28.9 points and 18.9 rebounds a game.

PREPPING FOR PROFESSIONALISM

It was during those years that Dewitt's coach-to-be, Sylvia Hatchell, first noticed her.

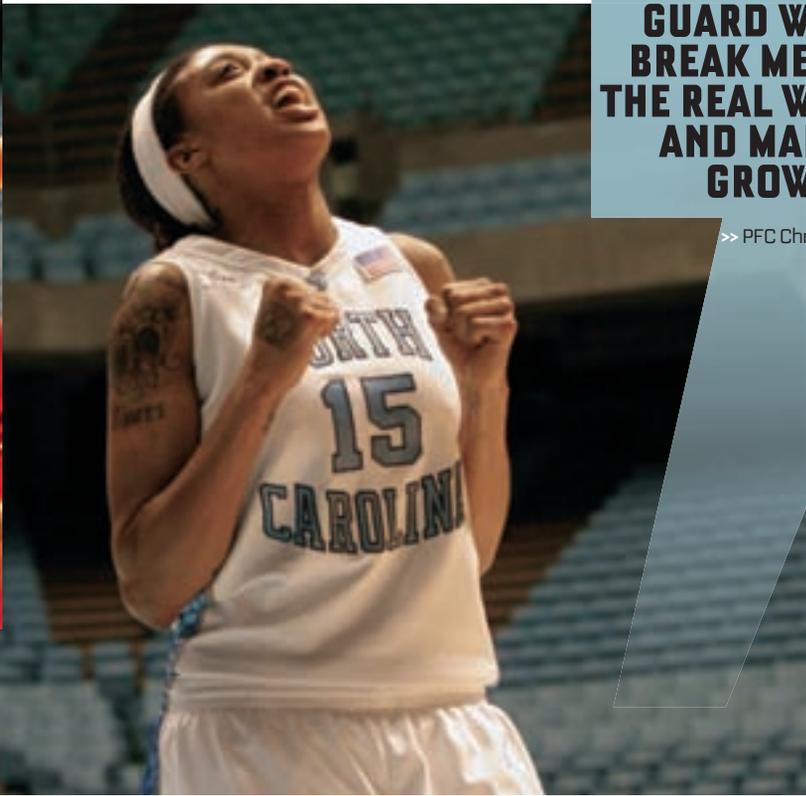
Hatchell began watching Christina play as early as eighth grade and ultimately landed her to play for the Tar Heels.

Though Dewitt was an amazing player, Hatchell quickly noticed something missing from her game—and her life.

"She had so much potential and could just be one of the greatest players," recalled Hatchell, a two-time national coach of the year. "We recruited her, but like a lot of kids, she needed a little more structure, discipline and focus in her life."

After playing the 2005–06 season, Dewitt came to a crossroads. She wanted to continue playing basketball, but needed to get her personal life in order. With Coach Hatchell's help, she began talking to an Army National Guard recruiter, SSG Bruce Hall, about her options in the Guard.

"The military and the National Guard have so much to offer," Hatchell said. "I really think



"I FIGURED GOING INTO THE NATIONAL GUARD WOULD BREAK ME INTO THE REAL WORLD AND MAKE ME GROW UP."

>> PFC Christina Dewitt

"What the National Guard has done for Christina is unbelievable."

>> Coach Sylvia Hatchell, University of North Carolina Tar Heels

it gives [young people] more grounding and stability and really helps with the maturity process."

Dewitt eventually met with Hall at a café in downtown Chapel Hill. There she learned about how the Guard could help her—financially, physically and emotionally.

She enlisted June 30, 2008, and chose an 88M MOS—motor transport operator—so that she would be back from Advanced Individual Training (AIT) in time for basketball season.

"Joining was something I wanted to do. I was taking a year off from basketball for personal issues, and I didn't want to waste my time lying around. I figured going in to the National Guard would break me into the real world and make me grow up," Dewitt confessed.

Last summer, Dewitt shipped off to Basic Training—and physically conquered it, since she was already in shape from basketball.

After that, she went to a seven-week AIT course in St. Louis, MO, where she learned to

drive the Guard's big rigs.

"I got to drive 18-wheelers and the 5-ton, which was my favorite to drive. It's huge!" she exclaimed. Another favorite moment? Driving the trucks at night with night vision goggles.

And when she came back, Dewitt had changed. Like her coach had hoped, she returned with a higher maturity level, an optimistic outlook and a greater appreciation for, well, everything.

"Her entire attitude and demeanor—it was so much more positive," Hall, her recruiter, said. "You could tell she really enjoyed her entire experience with the military."

"What the National Guard has done for Christina is unbelievable," Hatchell agreed. "She has goals. [Joining the Guard] was probably the best thing that has ever happened to her."

ON THE HORIZON

Now, Christina is thinking about her future with the Guard: She hopes to go to

Officer Candidate School and become a lieutenant. But for now she's taking life one day—and one game—at a time.

Inside the stadium, as the warm-up buzzer sounded and fans rose for the national anthem, Christina's face lit up with pride and excitement.

"Today during the game they'll say, 'Please rise for the national anthem.' And I'll feel like I'm one of the people who help protect our country. I feel like a totally different person," Christina shared.

The anthem ended, and the two teams shot off, blocking, bouncing and shooting for 40 minutes, vying for the win. Christina went on to score 10 points that night, helping the Tar Heels claim their 75-69 victory over the Coyotes.

As the players huddled after the game for their school's alma mater, Christina looked as if she wasn't just on the team; she was part of the team, something she said she learned from her battle buddies at Basic.

"The National Guard has changed my life a lot," Christina said. "It made me look at life differently—like not taking things for granted. Now, everything I do is something I can learn from." **EX**

OPERATION

CRAVING COMPETITION **PART I**

Training the Tactical Athlete

By Ken and Stephanie Weichert



**TRAIN LIKE A PRO
IN 60 MINUTES!**

[RECEIVED]

SGT Ken and Stephanie,

I need some advice! I have a competition in two months that includes trail running while carrying my own gear in a backpack for 30 kilometers. Other than hitting the trails, what else do you suggest? Thanks for what you two do!

Best Regards,
**1LT Spencer J.,
California Army National Guard**

[RECEIVED]

SGT Ken and Stephanie,

I love your workouts! I followed the APFT workout calendar in Pushing for Points and nearly maxed the test. In fact, it was the best score that I have ever gotten in the APFT! Thanks! My question is how to train for Special Forces tryouts? I heard it is really competitive. I want to make sure that I do my best! HOOAH!

Sincerely,
SGT Bill S., Indiana Army National Guard

Dear 1LT Spencer and SGT Bill,

[SENT]

We're thrilled that the fitness programs are working for you! We've had a tremendous response to our 30-day APFT workout calendar in Operation Pushing for Points. By following this program, many Soldiers have achieved the best scores they've ever had.

We're pleased that there is such a huge interest in athletic, competitive training! We believe that in both of your cases, the answer to meeting your goal is to develop functional strength and build a strong core. Too often, we train in one plane of motion and work toward keeping our arms and legs strong without starting with a strong trunk/core. The core is where all movement originates.

This program also will cause you to move in various directions or different planes of motion. Although your body naturally moves across many planes of motion, many of us focus on the frontal and sagittal planes. Some of us simply sit

or stand in one spot while exercising. How effective will this be for you when you need explosive power to get up from a crouched position and run? Will your body have a natural response pattern due to your consistent training?

We call this particular program Operation Craving Competition. Due to the length and volume of information we'll be delivering, we've decided to break it down into two features. In this issue—Part One—we'll focus on intermediate-level exercises choreographed to increase your core strength, agility and stamina. We look forward to watching you progress into highly trained, tactical athletes.

Let's get started!
HOOAH!

SGT Ken and Stephanie



“You will never do anything in this world without courage. It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor.”

—James Lane Allen

WARM-UP PHASE

Foam Rolling: Perform 3–6 minutes of foam rolling, or self-myofascial release techniques, in order to improve flexibility and sports performance, and to reduce potential injuries.



UPPER BACK FOAM ROLLING

↳ (1–2 minutes)

START: Balance your body on a foam roller aligned against the back of your shoulders, feet shoulder-width apart, hips slightly elevated and palms resting on the ground.

ACTIONS: Maintain a neutral spine and slowly push your body with your legs, allowing the foam roller to massage the area between your shoulders and mid-back. Return to the start position and repeat. Breathe naturally.



LOWER LEG FOAM ROLLING

↳ (1–2 minutes)

START: Balance your body on a foam roller aligned above your ankles, feet 12 inches apart, hips slightly elevated and palms resting on the ground.

ACTIONS: Slowly push your body with your arms, allowing the foam roller to massage from bottom to top of the calves. Return to the start position and repeat. Breathe naturally. *Note:* An option would be to apply pressure to one leg at a time by bending one leg and positioning it on the ground behind the foam roller.

AEROBICS

↳ (not pictured)

Perform 5–8 minutes of aerobics exercises, such as running in place, side-straddle-hops “jumping jacks” or high steps/knees.



UPPER LEG AND HIP FOAM ROLLING

↳ (1–2 minutes each side)

START: Balance your body on a foam roller aligned with your lower left thigh above the knee, left leg straight, slightly elevated and foot flexed. Bend your right leg and position your foot on the ground behind, or in front of the left leg. Turn your body to the left and balance your upper body with your hands on the ground slightly more than shoulder-width apart.

ACTIONS: Slowly push your body with your arms, allowing the foam roller to massage the left iliotibial band and gluteus. Return to the start position. Repeat until you have reached your goal. Switch sides and repeat. Breathe naturally.

STRETCHING

Perform 3–6 minutes of flexibility exercises.



BENT-OVER CALF STRETCH

↳ (30 seconds each leg, 1–2 times each)

START: Balance your body on your hands and feet with your hips slightly higher than your head, hands shoulder-width apart and knees bent 90-degree. Elevate your left foot and cross it over the back of your right ankle.

ACTIONS: Raise your hips and straighten your right leg. Push your right heel down toward the ground and hold this position until your goal is reached. Return to the start position. Switch legs and repeat. Breathe naturally.



TRUNK TWIST

↳ (30 seconds each leg, 1–2 times each)

START: Lie down on your back, arms extended and level with your shoulders, palms on the ground. Bend your legs 90 degrees at the knees, feet together and placed on the ground.

ACTIONS: Slowly twist your trunk to the left and hold your legs on the ground, or as close to the ground as possible, until your goal is reached. Return to the start position. Switch directions and repeat. Breathe naturally.



SCORPION STRETCH

↳ (30 seconds each leg, 1–2 times each)

START: Lie down on your front side, arms extended and level with your shoulders, palms on the ground, feet together and straight.

ACTIONS: Slowly twist your trunk counterclockwise, bend your left knee, curl your leg behind you and place your left foot on the ground to the right side of your body, or as close to your right hand as possible, and hold it there until your goal is reached. Return to the start position. Switch directions and repeat. Breathe naturally.

CORE TARGETING PHASE



SUSPENDED BODY LEG LIFTS

START: Using a sturdy bench, lift your body up and position your arms through a pair of abdominal straps. Have the bench removed and hang still, with your legs straight.

ACTIONS: Tighten your abdominal muscles, bend your knees and lift your legs until your knees reach or exceed hip level. Return to the start position and repeat. Continue until your goal is reached. Have the bench returned when you have reached your goal. Perform the actions slowly to prevent a rocking action. Exhale through your mouth as you lift your legs and inhale through your nose as you return to the start position. *Note:* This exercise can be performed while suspended against an abdominal bench.

Basic: 10–30 seconds
Intermediate: 31–60 seconds
Advanced: 61–90 seconds

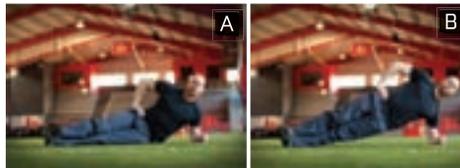


PLANK HOLD

START: Balance your body on your forearms, feet together or up to 12 inches apart, back and legs straight, chin tilted upward slightly.

ACTIONS: Tighten your abdominal muscles and hold this position until your goal is reached. Breathe naturally.

Basic: 10–30 seconds
Intermediate: 31–60 seconds
Advanced: 61–90 seconds



LATERAL PILLAR BRIDGE

START: Balance your body on your left forearm and left leg, right leg on top of your left, right arm bent and placed on your right hip. Feet flexed and left hand made into a fist.

ACTIONS: Tighten your abdominal muscles and raise your hips until your back and legs are straight. Hold this position until your goal is reached. Switch positions and repeat. Breathe naturally.

Basic: 10–20 seconds
Intermediate: 21–30 seconds
Advanced: 5–10 seconds (with top leg elevated)



SWIMMER

↳ (Prone Alternating Arm and Leg Lift)

START: Lie down on your front side, arms extended straight over your head, palms facing inward, legs straight and feet 12 inches apart.

ACTIONS: Tighten your lower back muscles and lift your left arm and right leg. Return to the start position and lift your right arm and left leg. Return to the start position and repeat until your goal is reached. Breathe naturally.

Basic: 10–30 seconds
Intermediate: 31–60 seconds (continuous movements)
Advanced: 61–90 seconds (continuous movements; lower back arched with gluteus muscles engaged)

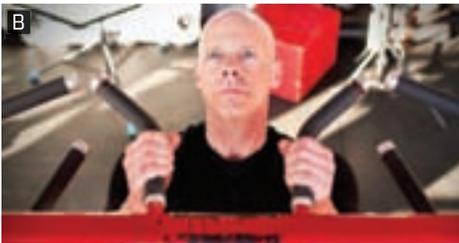
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You must do the thing you think you cannot do.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

“Avoiding the phrase ‘I don’t have time ...’ will soon help you to realize that you do have the time needed for just about anything you choose to accomplish in life.”

—Bo Bennett



JUMPING PULL-UPS

START: Stand with a neutral spine, arms at your sides, feet shoulder-width apart.
ACTIONS: Squat down until you reach 90 degrees at the knees. Maintain your weight directly over the middle of your feet and heels. Keep your knees aligned with your feet. Jump up and grasp the horizontal bar or hand grips and perform a pull-up, pausing in the “up” position for a few seconds. Return to the start position slowly. Repeat until your goal is reached. *Note:* The objective is to return to the start position as slowly as you can and to jump up quickly.

Basic: 5–10 seconds
Intermediate: 11–20 seconds
Advanced: 21–30 seconds

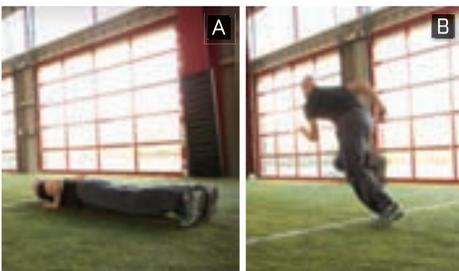


COMPETITIVE SPRINT DRILL

START: Assume a “standing start position” by placing your toes behind the start line with one leg 12–18 inches behind you. Shift your weight on the front leg and bend your lead knee 90 degrees. Bend your trunk forward with opposite arm in front and slightly elevated.
ACTIONS: Run forward 50 yards as fast as you can. Rest 30–60 seconds and repeat. Continue until your goal is reached. Breathe naturally. *Note:* This event is more challenging when running against a more advanced contestant.

Basic: 1–2 sprints
Intermediate: 3–6 sprints
Advanced: 7–14 sprints

AEROBIC CONDITIONING PHASE



FOXHOLE PUSH-UP SPRINT DRILL

START: Lie down on your front side, arms bent and hands placed on the ground beside your chest, feet flexed and together or up to 12 inches apart.
ACTIONS: Using your arms, push off of the ground quickly, bend your legs and sprint forward 10 yards. Crouch your body, turn toward the direction you came, lower your body to the ground and perform a push-up. Repeat the actions and sprint in the opposite direction toward the start position. Repeat until your goal is reached. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

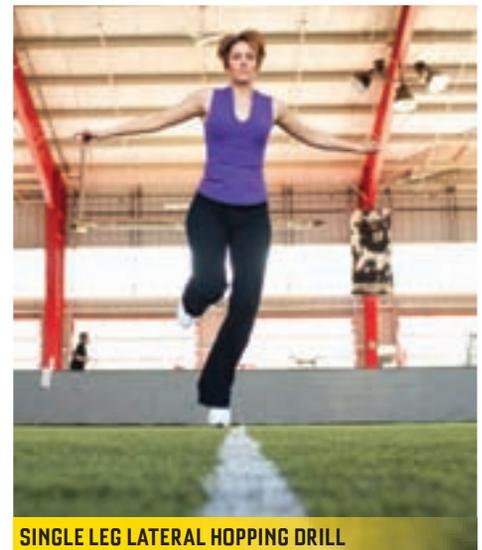
Basic: 30–60 seconds
Intermediate: 61–90 seconds
Advanced: 91–120 seconds



GRAPEVINE AEROBIC DRILL (Karaoke)

START: Stand with arms slightly elevated to the sides, feet shoulder-width apart.
ACTIONS: **Step 1:** Stand with your feet together. Using your left foot, take one step to your left. **Step 2:** Step behind your left foot with your right foot and place your right foot behind and slightly to the left of your left foot. *Note:* Your right foot should be pointing toward your left heel. **Step 3:** Step to the left with your left foot. *Note:* Your feet will be aligned left heel to right toe. **Step 4:** Step in front of your left foot with your right foot and place your right foot across and slightly to the left of your left foot. **Step 5:** Step to the left with your left foot. *Note:* Your feet will be aligned left toe to right heel. **Step 6:** Repeat until your goal is reached. Switch directions and repeat.

Basic: 30–60 seconds
Intermediate: 61–90 seconds
Advanced: 91–120 seconds



SINGLE LEG LATERAL HOPPING DRILL

START: Stand with a neutral spine, elevate your arms slightly to the sides and bend your right knee, elevating your right foot behind you.
ACTIONS: Bend your left knee slightly and jump 6–12 inches to your left. Leap to the start position. Repeat until your goal is reached. Switch legs and repeat. Breathe naturally.

Basic: 20–30 seconds (each leg)
Intermediate: 31–45 seconds (each leg)
Advanced: 46–60 seconds (each leg)



LATERAL LEAPING DRILL

START: Stand with a neutral spine, arms at your sides and feet together.

ACTIONS: Bend your knees 90 degrees and jump up and to the left 24–36 inches, knees and arms raised while in mid-flight.

tire until it flips forward. Jump forward and repeat until your goal is reached. Exhale through your mouth as you stand, and flip the tire and inhale through your nose as you squat downward.

Advanced: 60–90 seconds

COOL-DOWN PHASE

Perform the warm-up exercises.

STAMINA STOPWATCH

Bronze Medal: 1 full set = approximately 45 minutes

Silver Medal: 2 full sets = approximately 60 minutes

Gold Medal: 3 full sets = approximately 75 minutes

Note: The warm-up and cool-down phases are performed only once.

Equipment Needed:

1. Foam Roller
2. Abdominal Straps
3. Pull-up Bar
4. Large Tire (if performing the Bonus Exercise)

Watch fitness videos and download workouts at www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fitness or email sgtken@GXonline.com.

Warning: Always seek the advice and guidance of a qualified health provider with any questions or concerns you may have prior to commencing a fitness program. This article should not be relied on or substituted for professional medical diagnosis or treatment. The exercises presented are for suggestion only. Participate at your own risk. Stop if you feel faint or shortness of breath.

7-DAY SCHEDULE

MONDAY

Operation Craving Competition

TUESDAY

Running Long Distance 3–6 miles

8-min Abs x 1-2 sets

Note: Download "8-min Abs" on www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fitness

WEDNESDAY

Operation Craving Competition

THURSDAY

Rest

FRIDAY

Running Interval Training x 2–4 miles

8-min Abs x 1–2 sets

SATURDAY

Operation Craving Competition

SUNDAY

Rest

NUTRITION ADVICE:

1. To lose additional body fat, try reducing your intake of breads and pastas, dairy products and sugar.
2. Check with your physician before making any changes to your diet or exercise plan.
3. Want to read more diet advice? Go to www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fitness, Get Healthy, and read Operation Diet Dissection.

REMARKS:

1. Repeat 7-day schedule x 4 sets to complete the month.
2. Rest periods may be adjusted, as needed. However, be certain to include 1–2 rest days per week for rest and recovery.
3. Perform no fitness training 24–48 hours prior to a competition.



BONUS EXERCISE

TIRE FLIPPING DRILL (Advanced)

START: Place a large tire 12 inches in front of you and stand with a neutral spine, arms at your sides, and feet shoulder-width apart.

ACTIONS: Squat down until you reach 90 degrees at the knees. Maintain your weight directly over the middle of your feet and heels. Keep your knees aligned with your feet. Bend forward at your hips and grasp underneath the tire with your hands, keeping your arms straight. Stand up and push the



EVAN BAINES

KEN AND STEPHANIE WEICHERT

A six-time Soldier of the year and Veteran of both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Desert Storm, Ken Weichert and his wife, Stephanie, a certified personal trainer, founded the START Fitness® program, a San Francisco-based group exercise and hiking business that delivers military-inspired, boot-camp style workouts to Soldiers and civilians. The program now trains and certifies basic, senior and master instructors. Ken is currently a staff sergeant in the Tennessee Army National Guard.

Relationship Survival Guide

Laying groundwork for a healthy relationship *By Stephanie Weichert*

WHEN MY HUSBAND WAS deployed the day after we were married six years ago, I was devastated. He had been given three days official notice. Hours after our wedding, I stood there wondering how would I handle it. I didn't even have any relatives nearby.

Back then, there weren't many options for support for military spouses. Today, couples facing deployment have many.

I have recently found two programs that address the emotional aspects of life during deployment. These are programs I would have used during and after deployment. From conferences to live counseling sessions, they have a lot to offer, all at no cost to you.

MILITARY AND FAMILY LIFE CONSULTANT

SIX FREE COUNSELING SESSIONS

Military and Family Life Consultant (MFLC) is an Army program run by a subsidiary of Health Net, designed to provide anonymous, confidential support to Soldiers and their families. This program uses licensed clinicians with a master's degree or Ph.D. and at least five years experience in social work, counseling or a related clinical discipline.

According to Health Net's Web site, Hnfs.net, the mission of the MFLC program is to provide education and information on family dynamics, parent education, and available support services, and to help the individual, family, or other groups to develop positive coping mechanisms.

"Military Family Life consultants address issues that occur across the military lifestyle spectrum and help



service members and their families cope with stressors related to deployment, war and reintegration," says Steve Read, State Family Program Director for California.

Soldiers and families are entitled to six pre-paid, face-to-face counseling sessions. This means the Soldier and his or her spouse may attend counseling together or separately. They are both entitled to the benefits. MFLC counselors help with problems including:

- + Marriage and relationship issues
- + Family issues
- + Stress and anxiety
- + Depression
- + Grief and loss
- + Anger management

To sign up, call (888) 755-9355, anytime, 24/7. You will speak to a live agent who will assign you a case number. To protect your privacy, the agent won't ask for any personal details. You can select a therapist in your area either during the call or online at Mhn.com/member/start.do. To find a local therapist once on this page, click on the employee

assistance program and then enter your state, therapist preferences and ZIP code. Once you make an appointment, call the toll-free number and provide your case number, your therapist's name and your appointment date.

STRONG BONDS

FREE MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT CONFERENCES

Run by chaplains, Strong Bonds is a preventative program committed to the restoration and preservation of Army families, according to the Strong Bonds Web site, StrongBonds.org.

WHERE STRONG BONDS STARTED

The Strong Bonds program originated from the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), created by Scott Stanley, Ph.D., Howard Markman, Ph.D., and Susan Blumberg, Ph.D.

Research for the program included teaching PREP skills to select couples. These couples were then compared to couples who did not receive the PREP education.

After observing, testing and tracking couples over a period of years, researchers determined steps couples can take to avoid marital distress, and used the information to create a relationship enhancement program steeped in empirical research.

THE STRONG BONDS PROGRAM

Purchased by the Army in 1996, Strong Bonds features options for single and married Soldiers.

The Army National Guard offers free weekend marriage seminars, commonly called Marriage Enrichment Seminars. The seminars give practical advice on how to make and keep your marriage strong by addressing:

- + Root causes of marital problems
- + How to speak to one another
- + Event, issues and hidden issues
- + Listening techniques
- + Problem solving techniques
- + Supporting each other

DEPLOYMENT AND REINTEGRATION

In addition to the two-day seminar, food and hotel accommodations are also free to participants.

After being approved by their supervisor, Soldiers can use the weekend as a drill. Spouses of Soldiers driving more than 50 miles to the conference can be put on orders so that they can receive mileage reimbursement. Parents cannot bring children to the seminar, but the program does help pay child-care costs.

Couples interested in signing up can find an event online at StrongBonds.org. Click on "Find a Strong Bonds Event" and select Army National Guard. You can also call your local Army National Guard chaplain for more information. **GX**

FIRE - FOR - EFFECT

GUARD'S NEW M777 HOWITZER RULES THE FIELD

By Christian Anderson

When Guard Soldiers find themselves in a pinch, they often have a wide array of support weapons to choose from. Air support often takes care of the nuisance, usually at the mere sight of the Black Hawk, Kiowa or Apache. However, there is another tool in the Guard's inventory that proves to be equally effective, and tends to instill fear and respect in the hearts and minds of America's enemies.

Artillery. This single word supports the old adage: "It is better to give than receive."

Originating as a system of slinging stones over castle walls with a trebuchet in the

medieval ages, the modern day artillery piece can make a bad guy's day especially bad in a matter of seconds. But like all weapons, some are much more effective than others. Enter the big and bad 155 mm artillery shell.

This particular round has been around for some time, kicking butt in every conflict since WWII. Proven in the trials of warfare, the 155 mm has become a favorite for Soldiers on the front line who need devastating firepower in little time.

There is a new artillery piece for Guard Soldiers to deliver this awesome firepower. Brought to you by the Army National Guard, the M777 is a lethal combination of machinery and

engineering that delivers the tried-and-true 155 mm round on target faster and more effectively than ever before.

A MODERN MARVEL

Picked to replace the aging and overweight M198 Howitzer, the M777 is a highly advanced artillery platform that is built upon the standing principles in war that overwhelming force often yields victory.

Frederick the Great once said, "Do not forget your dogs of war, your big guns, which are the most to-be-respected arguments of the rights of kings." I'm pretty sure when ol' Fred said that, he envisioned something like the M777.



ANDREW HOUSE

ARTILLERY

- 1: Weapons (as bows, slings and catapults) for discharging missiles
 - 2: Large bore crew-served mounted firearms (as guns, howitzers and rockets)
 - 3: A branch of an army armed with artillery
 - 4: Means of impressing, arguing or persuading
- From Merriam-Webster.com

But the M777 isn't just any old piece of brass like the first Guard artillery pieces in the American Revolution. This weapon was built with some of the most cutting-edge engineering and design qualities. The titanium casings and components shave a gargantuan 7,000 lbs off the total weight of its predecessor, the M198. This weight savings allows the Howitzer to be moved around easily and specifically allows easier transport by helicopter. Its lighter weight increases its effectiveness since the modern day battlefield requires many units, particularly the artillery, to be able to move quickly at a

moment's notice. Gone are the days of super-heavy artillery pieces that are cumbersome and best left in a single place. The M777 was designed and built for mobile warfare.

FLEXIBLE WARRIOR

Not only is the M777 lighter and smaller, but it also packs a very deadly and accurate punch. With the standard High Explosive (HE) shell weighing a round 100 lbs, the M777 can sling a 155 mm round up to 24 miles at three times the speed

of sound. Since the M777 is so much lighter than the previous models, the trucks that pull this menacing behemoth can carry up to 40 percent more ammo and gear than before. What does that mean? More shock-and-awe firepower that continues to save and protect American Soldiers on the front.

The 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard is the first Guard unit to deploy with the M777 and put this awesome weapon to the test. The M777, like the 56th SBCT, is designed to lead America into a new age of warfare. Just like a Guard Warrior, the M777 can adapt and excel in the fight, anywhere, anytime. **GX**

GUN SPECS

Length in tow:	30.4 ft (9.275 m)
Length firing:	33.5 ft (10.21 m)
Width in tow:	9.1 ft (2.770 m)
Height in tow:	7.4 ft (2.26 m)
Weight:	9,200 lbs (4182 kg)
Max effective range w/conventional projectile:	15.3 miles (24.7 km)
Max effective range w/rocket-assisted projectile:	18.6 miles (30 km)
Max rate of fire:	four to eight rounds per minute
Sustained rate of fire:	two rounds per minute
Emplacement time:	three minutes or less
Displacement time:	two minutes or less
Crew:	7



DEVASTATING FIREPOWER

Soldiers from the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team fire the awesome M777 155 mm artillery piece in Iraq.

SSG NICOLAS STERNER



THUNDER

DOWN IN

DIXIE

SFC Tony Shackelford Helps Soldiers Through Ride

»» By Christian Anderson ««

There's nothing like it on this planet. The sight of 200 motorcycles traveling side-by-side down the highway at 60 miles per hour for close to 150 miles. The convoy rolls for a great cause. They're all here to support National Guard Soldiers and their families. As they pass by, it sounds like thunder rolling through Dixie.

It began as a motorcycle ride to raise money for families of National Guard Soldiers. The brainchild of SFC Tony Shackleford, it was just a few friends getting together, picking a route, planning the logistics and reaching into their wallets to make a small sacrifice for people who had made a larger one.

Little did they know that, over the next few years, it would evolve into a major event.

Shackleford is a humble man. He believes in freedom and patriotism, and recognizes that some have to give a little for the greater good. But just as Soldiers stand up for their fellow Americans, he believes civilians should be there for military families in every way possible.

Born and raised in Tupelo, MS, Shackleford heard the call to join the Mississippi National Guard in the 1980s and has since re-enlisted twice. But it was not until 2002 that he became a part of the history-rich 155th Brigade Combat Team (BCT). The 155th became one of the first units from Mississippi to deploy to Iraq in Feb. 2005.



SUPPORT THAT MATTERS

Dixie Thunder Run president SFC Tony Shackleford presents a check for \$10,000 to MG William L. Freeman Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, during a ceremony at Freeman's office July 13.

Shackleford deployed with the 155th to Iraq in 2005 and embarked on a life-changing experience—a pledge, with a few fellow Soldiers, to help military families when they got back to America. “The ride started as an idea and we kind of kicked it around,” Shackleford said. “I started emailing several Harley shops back home and got the ball rolling.”

They named the event the Dixie Thunder Run and would give its proceeds to wounded Soldiers from Mississippi who had fought overseas. The response was larger than expected. Mississippians came

from all corners of the state to support the troops who had served to preserve their freedom.

Shackleford was amazed at how successful the first event was and how responsive Mississippians were in supporting their Soldiers. “On the first ride, we probably had 200 bikes and raised somewhere around \$8,000,” he recalled. So he and SSG (ret.) David Bland, who had helped organize the event, began plans for a second ride.

Sandy Ates of the Mississippi National Guard public affairs office worked as the event’s media coordinator to get more attention for the Dixie Thunder Run. She was not only drawn to the cause of the ride, but to the fact that Shackleford is so caring and genuine toward his troops.

“Tony Shackleford is more than a patriot,” she said. “He is an angel on wheels. He carries the Soldiers in his heart wherever he goes. He is a big brother to them. NCOs take care of their troops, and he’s a wonderful example of that.”

To help with distribution of the funds for the second ride, Shackleford decided to look for a charity to help decide where the money should go and who should be eligible to receive it.

At first, it was just a few friends getting together. They picked a route, planned the logistics and reached into their wallets, making a small sacrifice for people who had made a larger one.

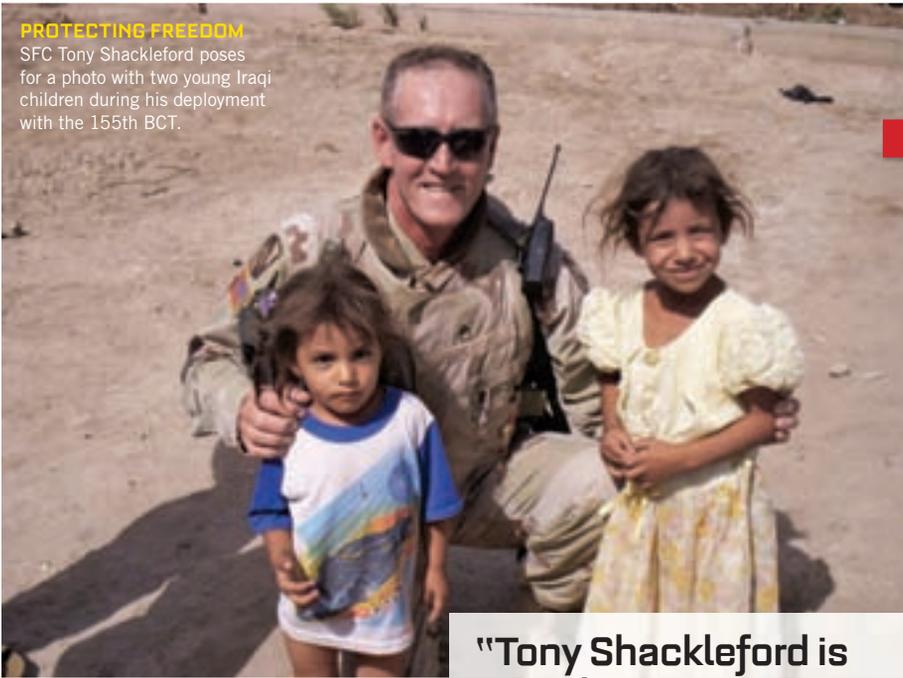
PARTNERS IN SUPPORT SFC Tony Shackleford and SSG (ret.) David Bland have worked hard over the past four years to make the Dixie Thunder Run possible.



SFC TONY SHACKLEFORD

PROTECTING FREEDOM

SFC Tony Shackleford poses for a photo with two young Iraqi children during his deployment with the 155th BCT.



“Tony Shackleford is more than a patriot. He is an angel on wheels.”

>> **Sandy Ates**, Mississippi National Guard public affairs office

“People will get up on bridges, waving flags and [cheering us on],” Shackleford chuckles.

To make it official, the Mississippi Highway Patrol escorts the bikers along the whole route, not only to ensure their safety, but to show their support as well.

Seeing all the supporters reminds Shackleford of why he organizes the event in the first place. And he feels his patriotism swell as he mounts his bike and rolls out on the ride.

“It’s a good feeling to know that you are actually doing something to help somebody that you might never see,” he explained. “It’s a good patriotic feeling also.”

“The Dixie Thunder Run involves a lot of work, but I know it’s going to help somebody down the road,” Shackleford continued. “All the hard work is worth it in the end, because I found out that if you don’t put a little work into something, it is usually not worth doing.”

So again, Shackleford will saddle up to lead another Dixie Thunder Run from Tupelo to Meridian. The ride is set for September 2009. **GX**

+ For more info on the Dixie Thunder Run, visit DixieThunderRun.net.

155th Armored Brigade

Headquarters – Tupelo, MS

IN SEPTEMBER 2004, the 155th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) was mobilized for deployment to Iraq. Soldiers from Mississippi, Arkansas, Vermont, Utah and the 2nd of the 11th Armored Cavalry regiment trained for four months at Camp Shelby, MS, prior to shipping out in January of 2005 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), where they served with the 1st and 2nd Marine Expeditionary Forces.

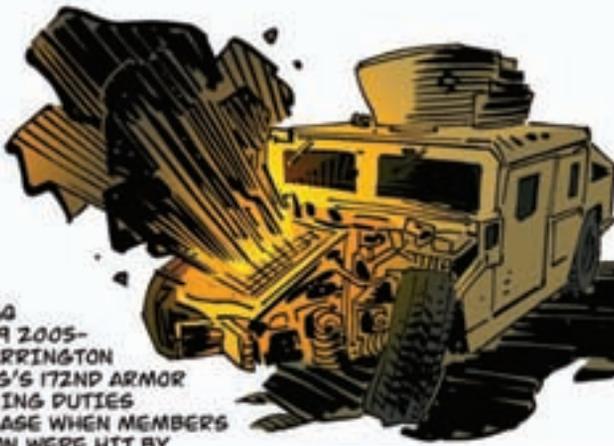
Under the leadership of BG Augustus Leon Collins, the brigade performed beyond all expectations. In more than 500 combat missions, they detained more than 1,500 suspected insurgents. They also located and destroyed more than 6,000 small arms, 10,000 mortar rounds, 25,000 artillery rounds, 84,000 pounds of propellant, 71,000 rounds of ammunition and nearly 5,000 miscellaneous weapons in more than 400 explosive ordnance disposal missions.

This unit facilitated three national-level free elections in Iraq, helping to ensure the democratic process with an 83 percent voter turnout rate in the brigade’s area of operations.

In addition to its war missions, the 155th conducted numerous humanitarian projects, including rebuilding schools, clinics, hospitals, police stations and critical infrastructure systems such as water, sewer and electrical. Due to their involvement in local communities, almost \$100 million was committed to these vital construction projects.

On Jan. 1, 2006, the 155th turned over its authority to the U.S. Army’s 4th Infantry Division, signaling an official end to a year of combat for these brave Soldiers. With the Brigade’s return home, the Mississippi National Guard has the most combat Veterans in its ranks since the end of WWII.

The 155th Armored Brigade was recently notified of its impending deployment in support of OIF in 2009. **GX**



ENGAGING THE ENEMY

BAGHDAD, IRAQ
SEPTEMBER, 19 2005—
SPC JASON HARRINGTON
OF THE PAARNG'S 172ND ARMOR
WAS PERFORMING DUTIES
AROUND HIS BASE WHEN MEMBERS
OF HIS PLATOON WERE HIT BY
AN IED WHILE OUT ON PATROL.

RELYING ON HIS EXPERIENCE
AS A MEMBER OF A LONG-RANGE
SURVEILLANCE AND SNIPER
TEAM, HARRINGTON QUICKLY
ASSEMBLED HIS GEAR AND
VOLUNTEERED TO BE PART OF THE
QUICK REACTION FORCE (GRF).



HARRINGTON'S HUMVEE WAS STRUCK BY
AN IED AS IT NEARED THE AMBUSH SITE.
DISORIENTED FROM THE BLAST, HE LET HIS
TRAINING TAKE OVER AND BEGAN TO CHECK
EVERYONE IN HIS HUMVEE FOR INJURIES.



AFTER ENSURING EVERYONE WAS
SAFE AND SOUND, HARRINGTON
EXITED THE HUMVEE AND BEGAN
ENGAGING THE SURROUNDING ENEMY.
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIREFIGHT,
THE SECOND HUMVEE OF THE GRF WAS
ALSO HIT BY AN IED.



HARRINGTON IMMEDIATELY WENT TO HELP
ADMINISTER FIRST AID TO THE WOUNDED. ONCE
THE WOUNDED HAD BEEN PULLED FROM THE HUMVEE,
HE CALLED FOR BACKUP AND THEN RESUMED HIS
MISSION OF ELIMINATING THE ENEMY, EVENTUALLY
CLEARING THE ENTIRE AREA.



ON DECEMBER 27, 2008, SPC JASON HARRINGTON
WAS AWARDED A SILVER STAR FOR HIS HEROIC
ACTIONS, BECOMING ONLY THE THIRD 28TH INFANTRY
DIVISION SOLDIER IN HISTORY TO RECEIVE THIS
MEDAL. ACCORDING TO HIS AWARD CITATION,
"SPC HARRINGTON'S CALM UNDER FIRE AND PERSONAL
COURAGE WERE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SAVING
LIVES ON A DAY WHEN MANY MORE LIVES COULD HAVE
BEEN LOST."

END

There are two **PRIMARY** choices in life:

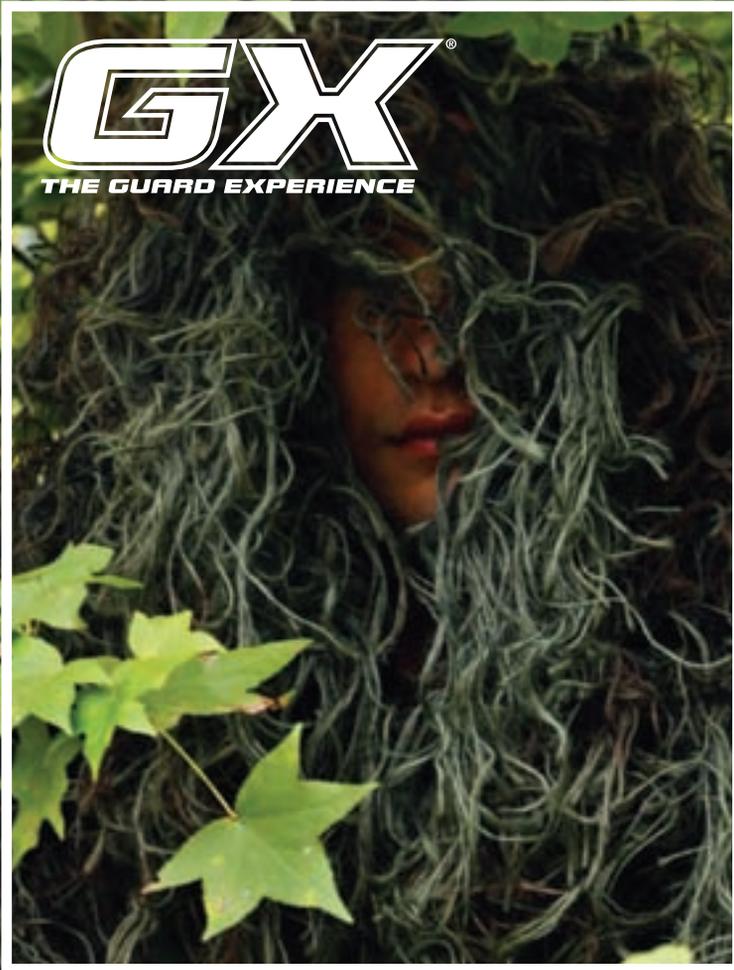
Accept conditions as they exist,
or accept the responsibility
for changing them.



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