

GX

THE GUARD EXPERIENCE

JULY 2007
VOLUME FOUR ISSUE SIX



WHY WE ARE PATRIOTS

**OPERATION
PUSHING FOR POINTS™**
SGT KEN™ HELPS YOU TRAIN FOR THE APFT

**INTRODUCING
BAD VOODOO PLATOON**
pg. 60



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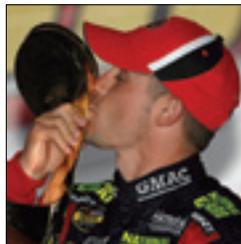
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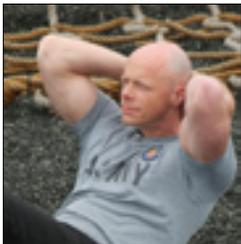




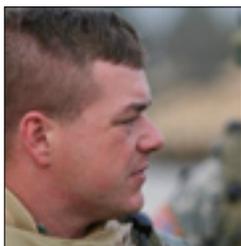
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LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP



CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20318-9999



Fellow Warriors,

For 370 years the National Guard has served as the first line of defense for this great Nation. From that first muster, to storm-torn neighborhoods throughout the Gulf Coast, to the streets of Baghdad, the National Guard continues to support the freedom of Americans and peace seeking people around the globe. Your dedication, sacrifice and patriotism are writing a new chapter to the proud heritage of citizen-soldiers that future generations will emulate.

Many positive changes are on the horizon for the National Guard. The transition from a strategic reserve to a more operational partner in the Total Force will change traditional relationships within the Department of Defense. Some of these changes will happen in the near future, and will ensure the National Guard remains at the forefront of America's self defense.

The National Guard has answered the call in support of the Global War on Terror at an unprecedented rate not seen since WWII. With over 100,000 men and women deployed overseas right now, and more than double that mobilized and deployed since 9/11, the National Guard has proven to be more than a partner, but an integral facet of our Armed Forces. We quite simply could not defend this Nation without you!

The voice of the National Guard in the decision making processes has never been greater. I value and respect the leadership within both Army and Air National Guard, and rely on them for timely advice every day. I have the deepest admiration and respect for all citizen soldiers and the communities that support you. It is certainly true, now more than ever, that when you call out the Guard, you call out America.

The Joint Chiefs join me in thanking our dedicated National Guard personnel, your families and your employers for your selfless sacrifice during these historic times. With your dedicated and steadfast support, we continue to have the finest military in the world. America values your professionalism, character, and sense of duty.

Respectfully,

PETER PACE
General, United States Marine Corps
Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs of Staff



We want to hear from you!
Send your questions or comments to:
feedback@GXonline.com

ANTICIPATION

THANK YOU for following the Red Bulls through their long deployment. Each month, I put the newest *GX* on a shelf, behind the previous edition. It is a simple ritual, but it marks the passing of time for me; a wife, waiting with great anticipation for my husband to return home. Keep up the awesome work, *GX*! And to the Red Bulls, we are so VERY PROUD!

Thanks a million!
Jamile Shirley
Ames, IA

HEROIC COVERAGE

Heather,
I just got my copy of *GX* in the mail and the story that you did on Patti was absolutely wonderful!! You painted her and the organization as vivid as ever and it really means a lot to me that this story was done. The experience that you place in the story of being an adopted soldier really adds dimension to this and, I must admit, I think this is one of the best stories I have read about Patti! It is solid. And, like you stated, had I never heard about the organization—after reading this—I would go seek more info for sure. Keith, huge kudos again for an amazing issue.

Shelle Michaels, APR
Soldiers' Angels
National Public Relations Director
Tri-State Regional Manager

NEW ERA

I am the proud daughter of a 34th Infantry Soldier of World War II. Dad recieved the Silver Star and two Purple Hearts. He was stationed in Africa and Italy. Having listened to all of the old stories of the division as a child, seeing the pictures, and reliving the tales thru his eyes, I was very pleased to read of the division's honor, integrity and heroism in this, the new millennium. Thank you for your work, and bringing these honored soldiers to light.

Sincerely,
Karen Kimble McMahel
Nashville, TN

Red, White and You

I've been on edge for months. Ever since the idea of this issue's feature (p. 30) popped into my head, I've been anxious for it to hit the printer—and finally, it's here. To date, I'd have to say this is my favorite. Maybe it's because this one isn't only dear to my heart, but I know it's dear to you, as well. See, there's a bit of guesswork that goes into choosing a feature. And when an issue ships, I'm left biting my nails, hoping you guys can get into it, get what we're saying and appreciate it. Well, this time, I knew we were spot on. See, this time, the feature is entirely written by you, the readers.

A while back, via GXonline.com, we asked you to answer the question, "Why are you a Patriot?" My inbox exploded. Moms, dads, sons and daughters, supporters and Soldiers from across the country (and some across the world) responded. We then packed 'em all into our biggest feature yet (thanks to the mad skillz of our Design Director, Andrew Nixon).

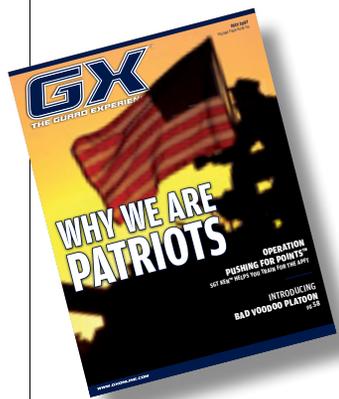
I want you to know, I read each and every statement and each one left a lasting impression. I can't thank you enough for the time and consideration you took with this. This collection of statements—these words of faith, honor and duty—is a shining example of the heart that runs this country, that keeps us on top and keeps us together. You are all heroes and my daily inspiration.

May God continue to bless this nation and all the fine folks in it!

Thanks!



Keith
Managing Editor



ON THE COVER

A Soldier from Tennessee's 278th RCT takes a moment for reflection in the shadow of Old Glory.

PHOTO BY SSG RUSSELL KLIKA



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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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FLAG RAISING

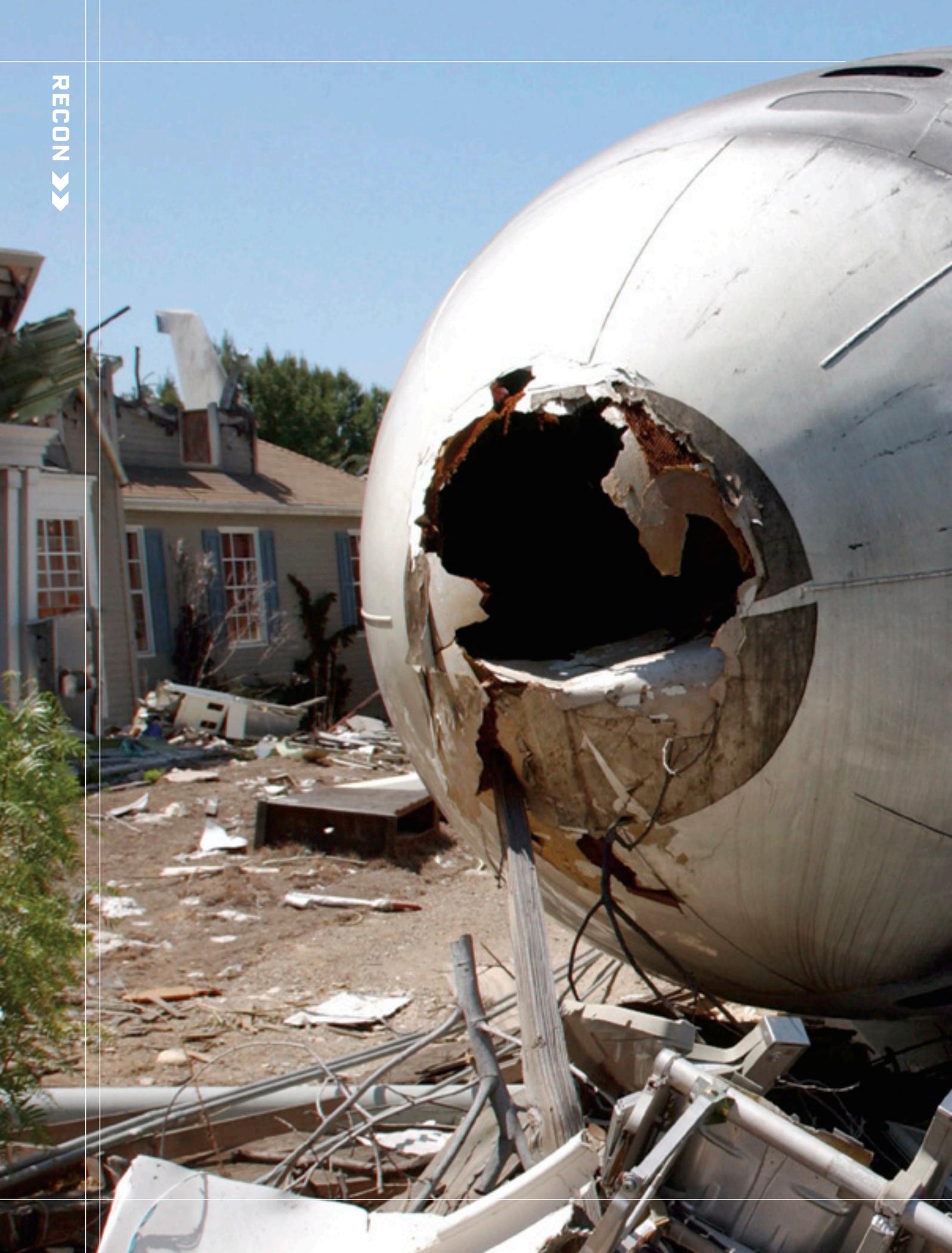
Greensburg, KS

Members of the KS NG and postal inspectors raise an American Flag over the rubble of the U.S. Post Office in Greensburg, KS, Tuesday, May 8, 2007. A 1.7-mile-wide Category F-5 enhanced tornado, with wind estimated at 205 mph, destroyed about 95 percent of this farming town.

Photo by Karen Wagner









HOLLYWOOD HELP

Los Angeles, CA

A member of the COARNG Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear High Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERF-P) team searches for “victims” at Universal Studios airplane crash set for Steven Spielberg’s “War of the Worlds.” The set was used for disaster training during Operation Vector in Los Angeles, CA.

Photo by SFC Steven Segin





TRAINING MISSION

Butlerville, IN

U.S. Army Soldiers from the OHARNG head toward a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during an air assault training mission May 14, 2007, during exercise Ardent Sentry at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in Indiana.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Robertson





RECON >>



RECON >>



EXTINGUISHING New Jersey

SGT Simon Debran looks out from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter May 16, 2007, during a mission to drop water from a Bambi Bucket onto wildfires raging in New Jersey.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Stephenson





PERSERVERANCE Laura and Rodney Prosser with their daughter Heidi, 11, and son Keith, 13, sit in front of what remains of their Greensburg, KS, home after it was destroyed by a category F5 tornado.

FIRE, WIND OR WATER, THE GUARD STANDS READY

Intro by SSG Heather G. Allen

National Guard Soldiers are seen in their communities as heroes. Whenever there is a natural disaster of any proportion, the Guard is there. Soldiers are ready and willing to assist in any way necessary to help their fellow citizens . . . even when their own lives have been affected by the disaster.

TORNADO

By 1LT Shannon Parks and MSG Greg Rudl, NGB PAO

It's hard to describe the immensity of the destruction in Greensburg, KS. Ninety-five percent of the town is destroyed, including 961 homes. Major damage was done to 136 businesses. Standing in the center of town and looking in all directions, it's an endless scene of carnage—houses ripped apart, vehicles crushed, garbage strewn everywhere and the trees left standing are stripped of all but their main limbs.

What's easy to describe in the unfortunate town of Greensburg are the efforts of hundreds of National Guard members helping the residents recover from this disaster.

After this small Kansas town was leveled by an F5 tornado on the evening of May 4, Kansas National Guard Soldiers and Airmen were called up and reported for duty. Soon after arriving, they provided crews for debris removal, security, transportation, damage assessment, power generation, communications and fresh water.

Their training prepared them for the difficult tasks at hand, but not for the complete and total devastation they witnessed when their trucks rolled into Greensburg.

VICTORY MAP >>>



UNITED STATES



38 00 N, 97 00 W (North America)
Capital: Washington, DC
Population: 301,139,947

ALASKA

Rescuers from the Alaska Air National Guard successfully hoisted a man off of Eagle Glacier on May 3 and safely brought him to an area hospital for treatment. The 210th and 212th Rescue Squadrons from Kulis Air Base in Anchorage were dispatched by the Rescue Coordination Center (RCC), af-

ter a call from state troopers reported a man crashed his plane and required medical assistance. Troopers called the RCC indicating that a man needed immediate assistance after they were notified by six hikers. An HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter arrived at the scene and para-rescuemen successfully hoisted the man into the helicopter.

They arrived to find streets littered with family photos and children's toys, large kitchen appliances hanging from tree branches, and cars and trucks overturned and lodged inside staircases and bedrooms.

"This is the worst destruction I've ever seen. I've never seen anything like this in my entire life," said SFC Derwin Worcester of the 891st Engineering Battalion in Iola, KS.

PVT Jonathan Belosic, also from the 891st, had similar sentiments.

"I was in total shock. It was mind-boggling and still is. I feel sorry for this town. I'm glad we are here to help," he said.

Helping is exactly what the nearly 500 members of Kansas' Army and Air National Guard are doing. With their joint capabilities and equipment, they were able to clear more than 560 loads of debris within three days, launch command and communications within minutes, and establish themselves as an integral part of joint agency operations with local law enforcement, FEMA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the American Red Cross (ARC) and a slew of volunteer agencies deployed to assist with tornado response and restoration.

"Our coordination with partner agencies has been seamless," said LTC James Culp, the commander of the involved Guard forces. "Everyone on scene is motivated and has really paid attention to the safety and security concerns of this operation."

WILDFIRE

Courtesy of American Forces Press Service

National Guard troops responded to wildfires in Florida, Georgia, Minnesota and California, using air assets to deliver water and providing logistics and communication support.

In Florida, 84 Army National Guard troops were activated in response to fires in Flagler County. Florida National Guard assets flew 67 hours, 445 sorties and dropped 379,360 gallons of water. A 32-member ground force conducted mop-up training and three helicopters assisted with the Dairy Road fire in Bradford County.

The Georgia National Guard provided 42 troops in response to fires in the southeastern

part of the state. Georgia National Guard assets, including two CH-47 Chinook helicopters and two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, flew 302 hours, delivering more than 5 million gallons of water. Twelve Army National Guard personnel with two Humvees, three 2.5-ton trucks, and one water buffalo assisted with logistics support. In addition, three Air National Guard troops with one pickup truck provided communication support.

In Minnesota, the National Guard deployed two UH-60s along with crews, and two fuel trucks with drivers and fuel handlers. The troops dropped water to prevent continued flare-ups of a previously contained fire.

The California National Guard provided eight troops in response to a fire on Catalina Island. Between May 9 and 13, two CH-47s with eight personnel on annual training status were used to fly 103 civilian firefighters to the island, and two CH-47s were on standby to deploy again if needed.

FLOODING

Courtesy of American Forces Press Service

In Missouri, more than 100 National Guard members assisted in flood-response efforts. About 40 Soldiers worked overnight to protect a water plant in the town of Craig from rising waters. An additional 60 Soldiers mustered in Lexington and Richmond to form a quick reaction force to respond to any communities in need. These mobilizations were a result of

an executive order signed by Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt on May 7 in preparation for storms. "As always, these Soldiers are anxious to help their neighbors through this crisis," said MG King Sidwell, adjutant general of the Missouri National Guard.

In South Dakota, 47 Soldiers were ordered to state active duty in support of local emergency management agencies in ongoing flood-relief efforts in eastern parts of the state.

"The community knows the Guard is there to help," said MAJ Bruce Carter, commander for Task Force 2-147, with headquarters in Watertown, SD.

South Dakota Guard members hauled non-military generators and water pumps to relieve pressure on local water treatment plants in the towns of Groton and Warner, placed about 700 sandbags to save a resident's home in Redfield, and built a 1,000-foot-long wall to protect lift-stations, which pump waste water to treatment plants and electrical substations in Aberdeen.

At the peak, MAJ Carter said, 75 Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, the 665th Maintenance Company and the 740th Transportation Company were involved in the relief effort.

"Guardsmen have left their own [flooded] homes . . . to help others," said MSG Todd Rose, NCOIC of Task Force 2-147. "This shows the quality of the South Dakota National Guard. They put the needs of the community before their own." **GX**



PFC MICHAEL BALTZ, 107TH MPAD

The pilot was safely delivered to the hospital for medical care. The six hikers who administered assistance were also transported after expending their survival gear while helping the injured pilot. The RCC awarded the 210th and 212th Rescue Squadrons one save and six assists for this mission.

ARKANSAS

An explosion to the right of a van carrying Governor Mike Beebe didn't stop the convoy that was escorting VIPs and Guard Leaders on May 14. A second explosion hit on the left front side of the vehicle followed by small arms fire to the right as insurgents came out of hiding. Returning fire, Arkansas'

142nd Fires Brigade Headquarters moved through the ambush and set out to take care of a Soldier who was injured in the firefight. As one Soldier radioed aerial support for a MEDEVAC, others secured the perimeter while the injured Soldier was evacuated. Thankfully, the Soldier was not really injured and the VIPs were never really

in danger. The event was an exercise at Fort Sill, OK, designed to create an environment for the Soldiers to train as they would fight. The Governor joined his adjutant general, MG William D. Wofford, on the trip for a first hand look at Soldiers training for an upcoming deployment.

PREPAREDNESS A Soldier with the 144th Chemical Company, Illinois National Guard, assists an injured victim to a medic during Operation Vigilant Guard at Muscatatuck Urban Training Center.



GUARD PROVES SUCCESSFUL DURING HOMELAND SECURITY EXERCISE

By SPC Ryan Twist, 139th MPAD, ILARNG

MUSCATATUCK URBAN TRAINING CENTER (MUTC), IN—Collapsed buildings trap casualties in a mountain of rubble and debris. Survivors cry out in a state of panic. The devastation of the attack is too much for first responders to handle alone, and the National Guard is called in.

This is the scenario that played out during Operation Vigilant Guard, a massive joint training exercise at Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in Indiana, May 10–15. The National Guard-sponsored event brought first responders together with military agencies to respond to a simulated 10-kiloton nuclear device detonation in Southern Indiana. The attack was made to be as realistic as possible, involving hundreds of mock casualties, dilapi-

dated buildings, and simulated chemical and nuclear contamination.

In an emergency situation of this magnitude, the cooperation of multiple states is invaluable, and Vigilant Guard demonstrated this by making use of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a process that allows the governor of a state in need to reach out to governors of surrounding states for help. This exercise involved units

VICTORY MAP >>>



FLORIDA

The Florida Army National Guard was recently recognized for excellence in logistics by the Chief of Staff of the Army, placing among the best in areas such as mobilizing for deployment and supply activities. Florida won three first-place awards and one runner-up award in the Chief of Staff of the

Army's 2007 Combined Logistics Excellence Award (CLEA) program. The awards were: Deployment Excellence Award for Large Deploying Unit - 53rd Infantry Brigade; Deployment Excellence Award for Supporting Unit - Joint Force Headquarters; Supply Excellence Award (Tactical Unit Category) CWO Richard Kaiser, 1st

Battalion, 265th Air Defense Artillery Regiment; Supply Excellence Award (Garrison Unit Category - runner-up) MSG Stephanie Gumm, Joint Force Headquarters.

INDIANA

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway is helping make adaptive homes avail-

able to disabled Veterans through support for a group called Homes for Our Troops. The group builds or adapts homes to meet the needs of service members severely injured while serving in the Global War on Terror. The group has completed 17 homes to date, and it will receive the proceeds of T-shirt and dog tag sales

SPC AUSTEN HURT

from Illinois, Ohio and Kentucky, with the Illinois Army National Guard (ILARNG) playing a large role in simulated reconnaissance, search and rescue, decontamination and medical-treatment missions, as well as providing public affairs support for the event.

The 5th Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team (5th WMD CST), headquartered in Bartonville, IL, performed initial reconnaissance at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center to react to the nuclear detonation and assess the nuclear, biological and chemical effects.

“We will identify the hazards, monitor the environment and take samples,” said SFC Roger L. Ristow, Survey Reconnaissance NCO of the 5th WMD CST. “We send a three-man team for a photo reconnaissance along with instruments to get readings around the perimeter and then make entry.”

After the initial assessment, the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Enhanced Response Package (CERFP) of Illinois demonstrated its capabilities by completing search and rescue missions in man-made rubble piles at MUTC.

“If an incident occurs and we are called to the site, we would begin with the search and extraction team. After they are done, we would begin breaching and shoring the rubble,” said 1SG Julie R. Jones with the 444th Chemical Company out of Monmouth, IL. Shoring is the process in which disaster zones and the structures within them are reinforced and stabilized to prevent further casualties.

After rescuing survivors from the rubble piles, units along with the Illinois CERFP provided decontamination and initial medical triage. They also prepared the scene for evacuation by military and civilian responders after the situation had stabilized.

As large a role as the ILARNG played in the simulations of Vigilant Guard, they also performed real-world missions to support the event as a training exercise. Members of the 139th MPAD covered the events as they

unfolded, supporting the National Guard Bureau (NGB) with printed stories and video footage. Soldiers also escorted members of the civilian media throughout the exercise, enabling them to get as close to the action as possible.

More than 300 Illinois Guard members took part in the exercise, making up more than 10 percent of the military forces.

“The scope is truly one we haven’t seen before,” said MAJ Mike Ladd, the exercise commander of Vigilant Guard, “And I think we would be well-served to continue to reinforce our capabilities.”

At the conclusion of the exercise, Soldiers and civilian emergency responders agreed that the exercise was beneficial for everyone involved.

This exercise tested the Illinois National Guard’s capabilities on a grand scale...and [they] proved its outstanding support to civil authorities.—MG Randal Thomas

“It was a resounding success,” added MAJ Ladd.

“This exercise tested the Illinois National Guard’s capabilities on a grand scale, partnering our skills with other National Guard units, NGB and NORTHCOM for a simulated national emergency,” said MG Randal Thomas, adjutant general of the ILARNG, “and the Illinois National Guard proved its outstanding support to civil authorities.”

By conducting exercises such as Vigilant Guard, the Guard and local, state and federal civilian authorities can practice working together as a fluid force to effectively and efficiently react and assist with homeland security incidents and natural disasters. **GX**

STRENGTH OHARNG troops rescue a woman, a simulated victim of a nuclear detonation, during the National Guard’s training exercise Vigilant Guard at the Indiana National Guard’s Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in southern Indiana.



CAMP ATTEBURY PAO / TSGT MIKE R. SMITH

in the weeks leading up to the Indy 500 race. Though the total amount of funds raised has not been calculated yet, the racetrack estimated that they will have raised at least \$16,000 to help the group.

MISSOURI

Nearly 200 Citizen-Soldiers from the

Missouri National Guard’s 735th Quartermaster Company (force provider) were honored during a deployment ceremony in May before they begin their mission in OIF. “I was impressed at the outpouring of support from this community,” said MG King Sidwell, adjutant general of the Missouri National Guard. “The yellow ribbons along Main

Street speak to me about what is good and right with America.” The Soldiers are now at Fort Dix, NJ, for about two months of training before deploying to Iraq for about a year. The anticipated mission is to serve as a military police force, performing duties such as patrolling and conducting area security.

LINKS TO SUPPORT OUR SOLDIERS

By SSG Heather G. Allen

Ask your friends to do their part for the Global War on Terror! We're not talking about enlisting (well, actually, that's a great idea, too), but participating in a program called America Supports You (ASY). This organization has helped support thousands of service members in every aspect of military life, so start spreading the word!

ASY is a nationwide program launched by the Department of Defense that recognizes citizens' support for the United States Military. On the ASY Web site, AmericaSupportsYou.mil, your friends can find numerous ways to give back to military service members who have given so much for their freedom. Think of it as one-stop shopping for support efforts.

You can also locate important events, find activities honoring the troops and request a guest speaker! **GX**

Spread the word! Tell your friends to visit:
AmericaSupportsYou.mil



CHARLIE DANIELS RELEASES "LIVE FROM IRAQ"

By Christian Anderson

The Charlie Daniels Band just released a new album titled "Live From Iraq," which was recorded entirely in Iraq. The album is an explosion of patriotism, which is no surprise since Daniels has made several visits to Iraq and is very supportive of the Soldiers. The album also contains a bonus DVD, which was filmed in Iraq as well. We here at GX are excited about the new album and will include a CD and DVD review soon! **GX**



SSG RUSSELL KLIKVA / COURTESY OF CHARLIE DANIELS

VICTORY MAP >>>



IRAQ



33 00 N, 44 00 E (Middle East)
Capital: Baghdad
Population: 27,499,638

IRAQ

A training facility to help service members react and recognize IEDs was recently named in honor of a Soldier killed on the road last year. SGT Germaine L. Debro was a laid-back father figure, a stand-up Soldier and a prankster for members of his Nebraska National Guard unit, 2nd

Platoon, B Troop of the 1st Squadron, 167th Cavalry Regiment (Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition). SGT Debro, who was a large man, would tell his fellow Soldiers that he could wear a neck gaiter as a miniskirt and then proceed to prove it, SPC Shawn P. O'Neil of Omaha, NE, said. "He could squeeze into it," SPC

MARCH FOR FALLEN HEROES

By SSG Heather G. Allen

LEBANON, TN—What started as one man doing something great is quickly turning into an event for the record books. SFC James “Jim” Williams, a member of the Tennessee Army National Guard, walks with a purpose.

Annually, three years running, he has pushed himself to do a nine-mile road-march. He marches in remembrance of the National Guard heroes that have given their lives fighting the War on Terror.

In an interview with GX, SFC Williams said, “This all started when I returned from Iraq, I felt the need for my fellow Soldiers to show respect for their comrades [who] died in combat.”

He went on to explain, “I was in a Humvee that was involved in an ambush and my 19-year-old driver lost his elbow. By the grace of God, he survived. The first two years this march occurred it was mainly just me marching, with limited support. Due to the huge response from fellow Tennessee Soldiers and their desire to participate, I decided to open the march to all Guard members and supporters.

“Most civilians have a grandiose view of war, especially the younger generation. Desiderius Erasmus once said, ‘War is delightful to those who have had no experience of it.’ This is a way for us to bring the reality of war home.”

After the 2006 march, SFC Williams told local news media, “The Tennessee Army National Guard has lost 16 Soldiers to date in combat zones. The sad reality is, one of them could have just passed away when I was marching, and we’d never even know it.

“I will do this until the war is over,” he said. “This could be a long annual event. I will keep supporting the troops no matter how long it takes. I hope people can take time out

I will keep supporting the troops no matter how long it takes.—SFC Jim Williams



VICTORY MARCH SFC James Williams, TNARNG, carries the American Flag as he marches for his fallen comrades in August 2006.

of their day to think about the sacrifice of the Soldiers.”

SFC Tim Mann, a fellow unit member said, “I believe this event brings positive exposure to our most noble Americans, the Fallen Soldiers. These Soldiers paid the ultimate

sacrifice defending not only Americans’ freedom, but Iraqi and Afghani freedom as well.”

His thoughts were echoed by SSG Bud Wallen. “I think it is a great way to honor these Soldiers and I am very proud to participate in this march.”

This year’s march will commence at noon

CST on August 17 at the 278th ACR Armory at 1010 Leeville Pike, Lebanon, TN. The carrying of the United States Flag will rotate between Soldiers. The Soldiers urge you to participate if you can. **GX**

For further information, please contact SFC Williams: james.williams48@us.army.mil

A separate fund is set up for building a Fallen Soldier Memorial on the armory grounds in Lebanon, TN. Please send your donations to:

**Wilson Bank and Trust
Attn: Fallen Soldier Memorial Fund
623 West Main Street
Lebanon, TN 37087**

SSG HEATHER ALLEN

O’Neil said. “It wasn’t a very pretty sight, but it brought a smile.”

Coalition Forces raided a series of buildings southwest of Baghdad seeking to capture high-level associates of al-Qaeda in Iraq senior leaders. The ground force detained seven individu-

als on the scene for their alleged ties to al-Qaeda senior leaders.

Three synchronized raids targeted senior leaders of an al-Qaeda cell in Iraq, based in Baghdad. Coalition Forces detained four suspected terrorists for their alleged involvement in the cell, which is responsible for

vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks.

“We’re continuing to crack down on al-Qaeda’s influence in Baghdad,” said LTC Christopher Garver, MNF-I spokesperson. “Removing the influence of these terrorists is key to Iraqis being able to choose their own future.”



PURPLE MOUNTAIN MAJESTIES
Upper St. Mary Lake, Wild Goose Island looking to Divide Mountain and the Blackfoot Reservation.

MONTANA NATIONAL GUARD, CITIZENS HOST VETERANS' RETREAT

Courtesy of Keith Heavyrunner and Operation Glacier Warrior

MT—The Montana Army National Guard and Montana citizens, particularly of the Blackfoot Nation, are hosting an open retreat for Veterans July 27–29, called Operation Glacier Warrior.

Operation Glacier Warrior is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization of Veterans helping Veterans, Veterans with disabilities and families of fallen Veterans. Help for this special group of people is available through the Veteran's Administration and other resources, but Soldiers are often unaware of such resources.

Operation Glacier Warrior is being set up as a three-day affair of outdoor activities on the Blackfoot Reservation and in Glacier Park, MT. It is honoring all Montana families who

are serving, or have served, in any military branch. Resources range from professional counseling and talking to fellow Veterans or non-denominational clergy, to traditional healers and sweat lodges. Boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, motorcycle rides or just relaxing in the "Last Best Place" are available to all.

This program is lifting the spirit of Gold Star families who've lost a family member. Additionally, it helps support service members returning home from war to provide a smoother transition back into civilian life. Most importantly, Operation Glacier Warrior provides the opportunity for Veterans to speak with fellow Veterans and families who've dealt with similar difficulties.

Opening ceremonies will begin at 7 a.m. with breakfast. The three-day event will close on July 29 after a full day of activities. **GX**



If you would like to attend or can help this group help others, please contact Keith Heavyrunner at: **(406) 388-7521/450-3811**

or SSG Earl Heavyrunner at: **(406) 450-4911**

Although this is a non-profit group, it incurs expenses that are hard to cover. You can make a donation to:

**Operation Glacier Warrior
Northwest Montana Veterans Stand Down
132 Elm Avenue
Kalispell, MT 59901**

36TH CAB PILOTS RECEIVE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS



By SSG Lorin T. Smith, 36th CAB PAO

DISTINGUISHED SOLDIERS From left, 1LT Matthew Salo, CW2 Moore, CW4 Stacy and CW4 White display their Distinguished Flying Crosses and accompanying certificates in front of an AH-64 helicopter at LSAA, Iraq.

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA (LSAA), IRAQ—Four pilots from Company B, 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment (Attack), 36th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), have received the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism and extraordinary achievement while flying a combat mission in Ramadi, Iraq. The award was presented to the pilots at Hardened Aircraft Shelter 9 on April 16.

Basically a Texas Army National Guard unit, the 36th CAB includes some 2,500 National Guard Soldiers from 44 states.

Earning the award were 1LT Matthew Salo, CW4 Robert Stacy, CW4 William “Dub” White and CW2 Marcus Moore, who distinguished themselves by their actions on Dec. 19, 2006. The mission was to provide air cover for Coalition Forces (U.S. Marines working with Iraqi army soldiers) establishing an observation post within the city.

The AH-64 Apache helicopter pilots searched for insurgents from the air while forces on the ground moved from building to building, clearing the way and looking for the best location to set up an observation post. Within seconds of one Coalition Force squad entering a building, the pilots heard over the radio that an improvised explosive device (IED) had detonated. 1LT Salo said several Iraqi soldiers were injured, and most

of the squad’s communications equipment had been damaged or destroyed.

The ground troops continued clearing the building, and set up a perimeter around it. About 40 minutes later, another IED went off. The Marines on the ground needed to move the casualties out of the building and call in a casualty evacuation. A third IED exploded and the enemy began firing at the Marines still inside the building.

With the Coalition Forces having limited communications, the troops on the ground had no way of letting the tactical operations center back at Camp Ar Ramadi know the situation. So the Apaches became a radio relay between the ground forces and the command post many miles away.

1LT Salo said enemy fire seemed to be coming from everywhere. “We couldn’t identify where the fire was coming from . . . but we thought we could draw some fire away from the ground guys . . . and keep the bad guys’ heads down,” 1LT Salo said. “That’s when we started getting shot at the first time.”

Low on fuel, taking fire and providing a vital communications link, the Apaches

stayed long enough to allow the Humvee convoy to evacuate the wounded troops before heading back to Camp Corregidor, Iraq, to refuel. While assessing battle damage, CW4 White and CW2 Moore discovered their aircraft had taken enemy fire. 1LT Salo and CW4 Stacy sustained damage to their helicopter’s flight systems. All four pilots could have determined their aircraft unsafe to fly and headed back to LSAA, but they headed back to the firefight.

Upon returning, the Apaches again took fire from the insurgents. 1LT Salo and CW4 Stacy saw a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) coming at them. They banked away, saw the airburst miss them, and flew back into the flight to continue monitoring the radios for the ground guys.

“The Marines were obviously in the middle of it,” CW2 Moore said. “Since we were able to talk to them, we could relay the situation to their command post, which was finally able to dispatch a patrol to get out there and establish a relay station for them, providing additional support.”

Once the wounded Coalition Forces members were headed to safety, the Apaches left their station to return to the Forward Area Refueling Point at Corregidor to refuel and assess the damage to their aircraft.

Since the mission was not complete and Coalition Forces were still in harm’s way, the 36th CAB Soldiers returned to the heart of the battle. With more casualties incurred, the Marines needed to leave the area. Making a run for it on foot, the Apache pilots providing cover, they safely made it back to their base.

The Apache pilots never fired a shot during the entire mission. About the only thing we could do was provide cover for the Marines by getting over the top of them,” 1LT Salo explained.

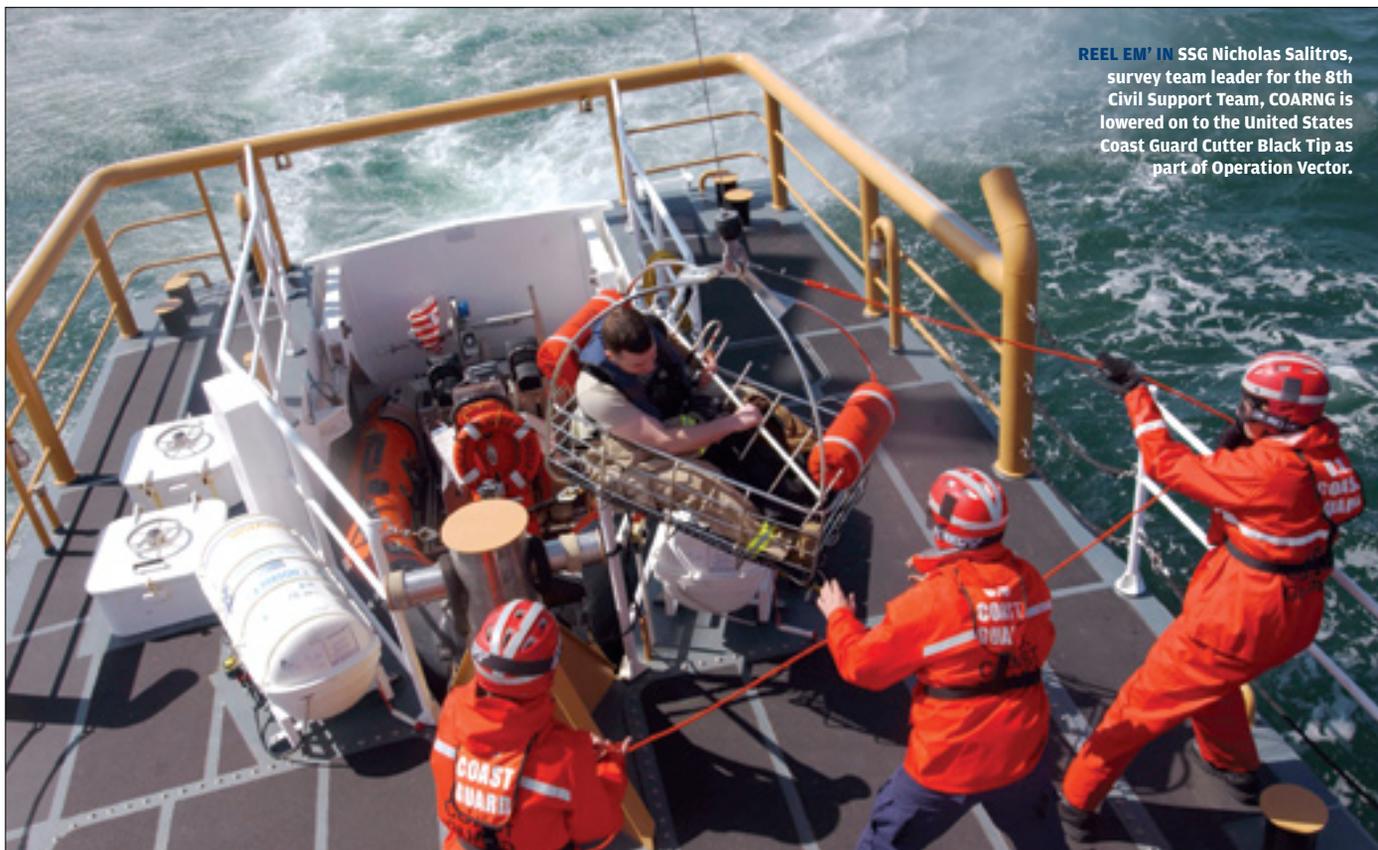
CW4 Stacy said the toughest part of the mission was actually identifying the people doing the shooting.

“The enemy doesn’t have any dead giveaways or fire any tracer rounds,” CW4 White said.

1LT Salo added, “The enemy doesn’t move in columns out in the middle of the desert; this is urban warfare, everyone and no one is a target.”

These Apache crews have worked on several occasions with the same Marines they supported on that particular day. They know each other very well. Email excerpts from the Marines involved said that if the Apache pilots hadn’t been there, many more casualties could have been incurred.

A few days later, the same aircrews were back in Ramadi, providing the same type of air coverage for the ground troops there. **GX**



REEL EM' IN SSG Nicholas Salitros, survey team leader for the 8th Civil Support Team, COARNG is lowered on to the United States Coast Guard Cutter Black Tip as part of Operation Vector.

CERF'S UP IN LOS ANGELES

Story and photos by SFC Steve Segin
Det 1/128th MPAD, COARNG

LOS ANGELES, CA—A 7.9 magnitude earthquake hits L.A. causing widespread destruction. With the first responders and emergency workers busy handling the “quake,” a terrorist cell seizes the opportunity to launch a chemical and biological attack on the vulnerable city.

This may sound like the latest Hollywood action flick, but on April 17th, it was not a movie; they were the scenarios for Operation Vector.

Operation Vector was a three-day multi-agency, multi-state exercise designed to enhance the interoperability of Civil Support Teams (CST) and first responders in the L.A. area. More than 120 members from the Army and Air National Guard from California, Colorado, Washington and Nevada National Guard participated in this major disaster exercise, dubbed “Operation Vector.”

The exercise brought together the National Guard and hazardous materials (HAZMAT) first responders from the L.A. County Sheriff, Federal Bureau of Investigation, L.A. Police Department (LAPD) and L.A. County Coroner's

office. The National Guard was represented by the 8th CST from Colorado, 9th CST from California, and 60 members of the Colorado Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear High-yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERF-P). The 92nd CST from Nevada provided evaluators and observers for the exercise.

MAJ William Lee, medical officer for the 9th CST and exercise planner, said the scenarios were designed to challenge, as well as enhance, the training for first responders and the CSTs. To do that, the scenarios had to be as realistic as possible. In addition to the earthquake, the participants had to deal with a biological weapons lab, an attack on a cruise ship and an attack on a 747 commercial airliner that caused it to crash into the Hollywood Hills.

“This operation was designed to be as realistic as possible,” said LTC Michael Tapia, commander of the 9th CST. “We wanted to challenge our abilities to work with other states and Operation Vector did that.”

The first day's events involved an attack at the Museum of Tolerance in L.A. With the LAPD HAZMAT team in the lead, the 9th CST responded and neutralized a biological

weapon. At the same time, the terrorist weapons lab was found at the Veterans Administration Hospital in West Hollywood and the 8th CST and CERF-P had to respond.

“We found a damaged lab that the terrorists were using to make weapons,” said Army SSG Louise Johnston, Survey Team Chief with the 8th CST.

In addition to the lab, the 8th also found victims of the weapon inside, and that's when the CERF-P went into action.

With a multitude of tents, washing stations and plenty of warm blankets, the CERF-P was able to arrive on scene, set up and “decon” the victims of the blast.

The training did not end there. Day two involved an attack on a cruise ship. “Simulated special operations forces cleared the ship of terrorists and found a device spraying a fog,” said SSG Barry Stern, reconnaissance non-commissioned officer (NCO) for the 9th CST Survey Team and simulated SEAL Team leader on board the ship. The “device” required CST members to board the ship from Coast Guard Helicopters while at sea. The “cruise ship” was the 87-foot United States Coast Guard cutter Blacktip. As the cutter rolled under rough seas, the CST was lowered from

a metal “basket” onto the swaying deck. “I’m afraid of heights, but the trip down from the helicopter was quick, so I didn’t have time to be scared,” said Army SSG Mike Gomez, Reconnaissance NCO for the 8th CST.

Once on the ship, the CST and CERF-P were able to contain the agent and extract any victims. Once on shore, the victims and team members went through a “decon” station set up pier-side.

Wrecked cars, children’s toys and the burned fuselage of a 747 marked the site of the third day’s scenario, Universal Studios and Steven Spielberg’s “War of the Worlds.” This day’s scenario involved a small plane carrying nuclear material crashing into a 747, causing it to crash.

“The ‘War of the Worlds’ crash set is as realistic as it gets,” said CWO Troy Skaggs, program manager for the Colorado CERF-P.

The crash-site scenario started with an aerial entry of the teams by L.A. County Sheriff’s Office and National Guard helicopters. In full-protective equipment, the 8th

and 9th CST’s conducted a “recon” of the crash looking for the radioactive material as the 92nd CST set up a “decon site.” Once the radioactive material was discovered, the teams mitigate the source and remove the danger. Using sledgehammers, pry bars and raw muscle, the CERF-P moved in to extract the “survi-

vors,” while also providing a “mass decon” operation.

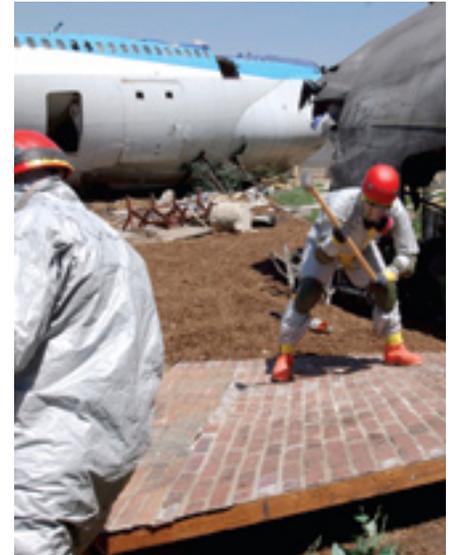
L.A. County Sheriffs Deputy SGT Mick Kelleher explained that as a first responder HAZMAT unit, they can be easily overwhelmed, and they rely heavily on the CSTs to assist them. “We have a great professional and personal working relationship with the CST . . . and in a scenario like this, we would rely on them to help us out when we get overwhelmed.”

“Getting to come to a different state and work with another CST is the best kind of training we can get,” said LTC Mark Riccardi, commander of the 8th CST. “Walking into a venue that is a total unknown adds real-world

stress and challenges the team to find solutions just like they would on a real incident.”

“Vector challenged us with things we are not use to at home,” said 8th CST rSG Patrick Lease. “We don’t have an ocean in Colorado, so landing on a ship provided a unique opportunity. We could not have asked for a more realistic and challenging mission.” **GX**

We don’t have an ocean in Colorado, so landing on a ship provided a unique opportunity. We could not have asked for a more realistic and challenging mission.—1SG Patrick Lease



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NC UNIT SAVES LIVES IN AFRICA

Story and photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Sunday Williams, U.S. Navy CJTF-HOA

CAMP LEMONIER, DJIBOUTI—Clean water is scarce in Africa. However, the 1132nd Engineer Detachment, Well Drilling, North Carolina Army National Guard, is changing that one well at a time.

The 1132nd, named the “Mud Hogs” by their training unit out of North Dakota, is the first National Guard well drilling unit created and deployed. The unit arrived in Djibouti January 24 to clean and decontaminate water to make it drinkable, drill wells and save lives.

SSG William Brown explained the unit is currently working on their first project in the Yoboki District.

“We are fixing a well that was put in the district two years ago,” said SSG Brown. “It was put in by the 747th Army Reserve Well Drilling unit out of Montana as a hand-pump well.”

SSG Brown said not long after the 747th put in the well, they had to go back to the site and convert it to solar-powered. “We heard through the villagers that the well was broken . . . so we went [back].”

Due to climate and the area, SSG Brown said, the well stopped working and people passing through the site who tried to fix it damaged it beyond use.

Because the well was broken, people were drawing water from a local oasis. An oasis is a stream of water that comes up from the ground. The people dig through the ground surface and the water seeps up through the dirt. The oasis is the only source of water for travelers and their animals now that the well is damaged.

He went on to explain the process involved to fix the well. The team surveyed the site in order to determine what type of equipment they would need, how many people the project required and to test the water in the area.

“When we tested the water at the oasis, there were multiple types of E. coli and the location is where a recent outbreak of cholera was traced back to,” said SSG Brown. “It becomes about saving peoples lives more than doing a job.”

According to SGM William Lee, the Mud Hog’s project manager, the oasis runs through an ancient camel trail that spans from one side of Ethiopia to another, with Djibouti being in the middle.

“The problem with the oasis is that it is open to the environment. There is nothing to protect the water from bacteria,” said SSG

Brown. “The animals use the bathroom in the water and their feces sit there and create all sorts of bacteria. Travelers bathe and drink from the water because they have no other choice. They then continue on their journey, spreading disease that they contract from the oasis.”

The 1132nd set up camp at the well site in late March. With its nine well-drillers and 11 force protection Soldiers, provided by Charlie Company, 294th Infantry unit out of Guam, they began their mission to fix the well.

First, the well drillers had to clear old fencing and debris from the site. They put 20 parts per million of chlorine in the well to clean the water. They then put a submersible pump down the well to pump out the water until the chlorine broke down and became three parts per million, so it was drinkable. But the intense heat of the day also helped to burn off the chlorine, as well as burn up the drillers.

“It is not easy working in this environment, where the heat is 120 degrees,” said PFC Brandon Holt. “It does help with the mission

though because the heat helps burn off the chlorine that treats the water.”

After the water was clean, the well-drillers decided it would be more convenient for people using the well if they installed it as a hand pump instead of going back to a solar-powered pump.

“This way, we’ll be able to fix the well a lot easier if it [breaks] again,” said SSG Brown. “The people will not have to wait very long to have clean water.”

With the well complete and the water clean, people will go to the well for water instead of the oasis. The team also created a trough that runs down away from the pump on the well so that any excess water will run down and fill a trough for animals to drink from. Although SSG Brown and his team of drillers successfully bettered the lives of thousands of villagers, the work doesn’t stop here.

“We are always out and about throughout the area and we plan on checking up on the wells one way or another,” said SSG Brown. **GX**



H₂OWOAH! SSG Brown takes a water sample from a broken well in the Yoboki District outside Djibouti, April 27. The water temperature tested at 106 degrees Fahrenheit and multiple forms of E. coli were found in the water.

ND SOLDIER INSPIRES STUDENTS, FELLOW SOLDIERS AND FRIENDS

By Lisa Martinez and Laura Novotny
School of Communication, University of North Dakota

ND—In the middle of a busy airport, a young woman sits near her young child with a phone pressed to her ear. Dozens of people file in and out of glass doors. A man sits with newspaper in hand while friends chat on a nearby bench. Overhead, a loud voice calls out flight numbers to a wide array of passersby. In an instant, dozens of people stop dead in their tracks, the man looks up from his newspaper and conversations are halted. It seems time has stopped. The loud voice is drowned out by the sound of thunderous applause at the sight of our nation's bravest men and women returning home from war. The message is simple: "Thank you!"

It's a commercial MSG Rob Keller, public affairs director of the North Dakota Army National Guard, has seen many times, but on April 20th, his emotions got the best of him. Standing in front of a classroom of students at the University of North Dakota in Shelle Michaels' Principals of Public Relations class (Michaels is also the public relations director for Soldiers' Angels, www.soldiersangels.org), MSG Keller desperately tried to maintain his composure. Humbled, he dabbed his eyes and slowly began to speak. MSG Keller discussed the importance of supporting our troops and showing our appreciation for the sacrifices they have made for our country.

In the master sergeant's eyes, it was a moment of weakness; but in the eyes of those in the classroom that day, it was a moment of passion and inspiration, a moment they will never forget. Lincoln, NE-native Kyle Bertsche, a senior at the University of North Dakota stated, "I will remember his emotion. It is real humbling to see a grown man so passionate about his work. I think it is something special."

"[MSG] Keller is an amazing mentor to me with keeping me in checks and balances with the military protocol, which in my role in public relations has been essential to maintain relationships with the military,"

commented Michaels. "I have the utmost respect for [MSG] Keller—and he told me to call him Rob! He is one of a kind and I have been blessed to have him in my life, in the professional capacity and as a friend."

During the presentation, MSG Keller put in a call to his boss, MG David Sprynczynatyk, adjutant general of North Dakota, on his cell phone and placed the general on speakerphone. MG Sprynczynatyk has a public affairs background and graciously shared his wisdom with the students for 10 minutes.

MSG Keller ended his visit with some simple reminders to the students:

"Always be accurate, honest, and open. Tell your story, be confident. Talk about what you know and maintain your professionalism."

Those close to MSG Keller were not surprised by the passion he showed that day. "MSG Keller has an energy and drive for service to his country and it is my pleasure to work with him," said rLT Dan Murphy, a friend and colleague currently deployed to Qatar with the 29th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment. "MSG Keller, from the day I met him nearly six years ago, has been one of my greatest teachers and mentors. He truly is a great individual."

"He's the definition of integrity. He's an inspiration to me every day," added Keith Kawasaki, GX managing editor.

In 1997, MSG Keller served as the assistant public affairs representative during the flood of the century that paralyzed towns along the North Dakota-Minnesota border. Throughout this time, MSG Keller worked closely with MAJ Pat Richards, North Dakota National Guard public affairs officer, in writing press releases and escorting local and national media in and out of flood-ravaged areas.

MSG Keller has earned several prestigious awards and accolades throughout his career, including the "Master Badge," which is a permanent award for recruiting production. He is an expert in desktop publishing equipment and an excellent public speaker, as well as a great mentor. SGT Chris Keller, also of



the North Dakota Guard, praises his father's wonderful work ethic, saying, "He has played a major role in the North Dakota Public Affairs realm and has set the standard for public affairs in North Dakota," he said.

MSG Keller also has a great passion for working with children. He is an active member of the Evangel Temple's Drama and Youth Department, where he and his wife JoLynn serve as sponsors for the 150-plus youth group. MSG Keller also serves as chair for the Youth Council, which is a seven-member group that overseas the youth program. As chair, MSG Keller established a Fine Arts Program for junior high and high school students. He mentors the students in drama, mime, human video, photography and graphic arts. MSG Keller's philosophy is to encourage them at a young age to believe in themselves and to increase their self-esteem and leadership within their church, schools and communities.

"He is man of integrity, character, morals and vision. The work ethic I have reflects directly to him. I could have not asked for a better father growing up," concluded SGT Keller.

MSG Keller plans to retire from the Guard in January. **GX**

Always be accurate, honest and open. Tell your story, be confident. Talk about what you know and maintain your professionalism.—MSG Rob Keller



Why We Are

PATRIOT



IOTS

Intro by SSG Heather G. Allen
Comments and photos courtesy of GX readers



What makes a person a Patriot?

Is it love of country? Is it the pride a person feels when “The Star-Spangled Banner” is played or the “Pledge of Allegiance” recited?

We asked you, Guard Soldiers, Guard moms and dads, friends and supporters—our readers—to tell us what makes you a Patriot. Here’s what you had to say . . .

SSG Marcus Golczynski paid the ultimate price for our freedom during combat operations in Anbar Province. He knew what was right. The depth of the true patriot is memorialized in this picture of SSG Golczynski’s young son Christian. I pray that the heart of a patriot beats within the chest of this brave young man and that he understands the words that his father wrote shortly before his death: “We fight and sometimes die so that our families don’t have to. Stand beside us. Because we would do it for you. Because it is our unity that has enabled us to prosper as a nation.” A salute to warriors everywhere. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.—Doc



I answered this due to the fact that I believe that fighting for the freedoms of another is a uniquely American trait. Regardless of the political storms in Washington over the causes, and reasons behind our efforts here, we have the potential to do some real good here in Iraq. I am the father of four young children in South Carolina and I want them to have the same values that I have. I hope that through all of this, they will know that I am living what I teach.—SGT Lovegrove, Iraq

I could start this story out by being a smart aleck, as the high school that my youngest son graduated from happens to be the Parkway South Patriots . . . but, I would like to be more serious. My son, PFC Derek Smith, recently received a call from his sergeant (he is currently awaiting orders to begin advanced individual training) explaining that he had been asked to become an Honor Guard. Never in my life had I dreamed that Derek would hold such a position! I have watched the Honor Guard with the utmost respect. These are Soldiers that carry our American Flag in special ceremonies and assist in the funeral of our fallen Soldiers. That is why I am a Patriot!—Kimberly L. Stevens, mother of two American Soldiers



Eighteen months ago, I enlisted in the Florida National Guard as a 36-year-old, single mom. After people recover from shock and ask me, “Why?” I tell them, “It’s because I wanted to step outside my comfort zone and to give back what so many fellow Soldiers have given our country.”—PFC Lysa M. White, 779th Engineer Battalion, FLARNG

I am a Patriot because I love this country. I take great pride in being the fourth generation of my family to defend this nation on the field of honor.—SGT Larry R. Klein, Det B-1 140th AVN, NVARNG

Isn't it obvious? We live and serve the greatest country on this planet. Others try, others say they are, others don't care. I don't care what others say. The U.S. stands in the gap between tyranny and freedom. We are that guardian. We take risks that others are too afraid to even contemplate and we do it so that the idea of freedom can grow and take hold. We are a free society, who has enjoyed an unprecedented run of history. We have never backed down, we have never capitulated and we have never allowed any other foreign government to lord over us. We have looked communism in the eye and communism blinked. We are taking on tyranny in another form, so that our great republic can continue to survive. We must be truthful with ourselves: if we don't stand against this new form of tyranny, it will once again visit our cities and families. My children have access to the greatest medical system in the world. We choose where we want to live, where we want to worship and where we want to go without asking anyone's permission. We choose. To me, the choice is simple. I choose to be a sheep dog. I choose to stand watch and stand in harm's way for others who won't or can't. It is an honor and privilege. I have served my country and my state in uniform for 17 years and if asked to do it all over again, I would without thinking twice. Every day when I look in the mirror, I am happy with what I see. I am comfortable with knowing that I have answered my country's call and walk a road that has been paved by much greater men and women. The answer is simple: I serve something greater than any one person and it is an honor.—SSG Patrick Sloan, Medic-Trauma Specialist, TXARNG

I love this country and everything about it. I believe I have a duty to my family, friends, and everyone else to serve and do my part to defend this great nation.—SGT

Jean-Paul Borda, 2nd Platoon, B Co., 1/160th Infantry, CAARNG



I believe I am a Patriot. I have had a husband deployed since September '05 as part of the Minnesota National Guard. But, I am no different or special than any other family in my situation. Every Soldier away from his family, every family missing a Soldier is a Patriot. Anyone, anywhere, who just plain supports the men and women no matter how they feel about the reason for it all, is a Patriot. The children from the smallest to the oldest are Patriots. My two girls who were nine months old and three years when he left (now two-and-a-half and five years old) do not know the definition of the word Patriot, but they are every bit of that definition. I do not need to be showcased in the article. I just wanted to make the acknowledgment that you have a monumental amount of Patriots to showcase. You will have a full feature. Thank you for your ongoing support of the Soldiers.—Paula Bergeman, Mankato, MN

I HAVE TWO LITTLE GIRLS, AGES 5 AND 9. THEY'LL BE ON THIS PLANET FOR PROBABLY ANOTHER 80 YEARS. WHILE I AM STILL BLESSED WITH STRENGTH, I NEED TO DO WHAT I CAN TO MAKE IT A GOOD PLACE FOR THEM.

—SPC Kevin Smith, HSC, 38th Special Troops Battalion, 38th ID, INARNG



I believe my wife, Joy Hansen, [is a Patriot] who joined this last January, shipped to Basic Combat Training on Jan. 25 and started training Jan. 30 and is currently at advanced individual training at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. [My wife] turned 42 Jan. 31, [is a] mother of four, currently projected to graduate training on June 11. Her 2-mile run time is down to 15:57 and is now wearing size SPT pants.—SFC Matt Hansen, NEARNG

I believe that I am a patriot because every morning, I wake up not knowing whether or not I'll be leaving to Iraq or not; and I'm fine with that.—Sean Caven



I am a Patriot because I believe in the “Mother Land.” I have utmost pride and always put the interest of the nation above anything. My sacrifice extends to my own life in battle, if need be. I strongly believe in her and my moral standards will never let me down. Strictly speaking, I promote Patriotism to all with a desiring attitude. My basis of thinking is that “I LOVE AMERICA.”—SSG Mendez

I have been in the U.S. military for 27 years now. Here are my thoughts on why I am a Patriot . . . “All it takes for evil to triumph . . . is for good men to do nothing.” Doing the right the thing is not always easy or everyone would do it. Doing the right thing may cost you life, but you lay it down to pave the [road] for others to follow. In the past being a Patriot was not cool. There were signs like, “Dogs and Soldiers keep off the grass.” But, now almost everyone supports us. In the last five years, more people have come up to me and said, “Thanks for all you do!” That makes your chest swell out and [makes me] glad to serve this great country.—SFC Marcus E. Duval, FLARNG

I am SGT David Lee McCown and I am an American Patriot. I serve the people of the United States as my father and my grandfather have before me. I joined the military at the age of 34 after the 9/11 incident as so many others did. I felt that I should do what every American that breathes free air should do, and that was to support what makes us free: our military and the blood that has been shed that has made this country a good place to live and raise our children. My Patriotism comes from the blood that courses through my veins from the men and women in my family who have served so proudly before me.—SGT David Lee McCown, 1032nd Transportation Unit, VAARNG

I’m Patriot because I was deployed several times during my Guard career and now because of medical reasons, [I was] forced to retire. I cried. My wife is a Patriot also for her support for my time served locally and overseas.—John and Debbie Fleming, Natchez, MS



I’m a Patriot because of the values intilled in me by my grandparents—they were both WWII officers. I want to give back so that future generations have the same freedoms that were bestowed on me.—1SG Andrew Blore, C Company, 3rd Battalion 297th Infantry, AKARNG

I’m a Patriot and I love my country because my country is all I know; I’m loyal to her and faithful. I believe in democracy, which is the heart and soul of my beautiful nation and I will sacrifice my life to defend freedom and human rights.—SGT Alexander Maldonado Acosta, HHC, 1/296 Infantry Battalion, PRARNG



Because sacrifice is part of who I am and who I was meant to be. “Here I am; send me.”
Isaiah 6:8b—1LT Phil Majcher, chaplain candidate, KYARNG



I think that it will be hard for you to pick out one outstanding individual as a “true Patriot,” because so many of us have served and returned to our jobs and so many haven’t. Every individual who has served has made that ultimate sacrifice and has paid the ultimate price. Returning home or not, we are all true Patriots in my eyes. Remember the families who have paid the sacrifice with loved ones; they honored their God, flag and country and still stand behind their Soldiers 100%. Every family past, present and future will make that ultimate sacrifice realizing it or not. God bless those who continue to serve and honor their God, flag and country. May they serve with honor, courage, strength and commitment to represent this great country. To give their lives for the FREEDOM of the AMERICAN people no matter cost or sacrifice. GOD BLESS AMERICA! I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND TO THE REPUBLIC FOR WHICH IT STANDS ONE NATION UNDER GOD INDIVISIBLE, WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL !!!!! OOOH RAHHHH!!!!—Anonymous

Every bone in my body is Patriotic. I got it from my dad and you can hear it loud and clear in the song, "He Believed," which was inspired by my father's strong beliefs.—Aaron Tippin, country music artist

Because I love my country, I wouldn't want to live in any other country in the world. I am proud to serve and honor all those who served before me.—SGT Jason P. Pierce, Det 1 191st Military Police Company

For the men and women who have given their lives, it is my duty to keep the freedom going; and, of course, this is the greatest nation in the world.—SSG Robert A. Peters, A Troop 1-153rd Cavalry (RSTA), FLARNG

I've always wanted to serve my country since I was a kid. But, it all hit me suddenly why I'm a Patriot one day while I was watching twin girls play with their dad in a park. They were little, must have been four or five. They had the biggest smile on their faces, having fun with their dad. They were too young to remember 9/11, so they didn't know how it felt to be afraid in your own country on that day. Then I realized why I'm a Patriot, so those little girls' smiles never go away. So they can always laugh and play without ever fearing that someone might blow themselves up or crash a plane into something. So they can live free without fear. I'm a Soldier so that father doesn't have to be one. Let the Nation's fears and threats lie on my shoulders, not his. So the only thing he has to worry about is his twin girls getting into kindergarten. Not, "Am I going to be deployed or am I on the next list of the draft?" HOOAH!—Anonymous

Why am I a Patriot? Because of those that serve our country I have:

- P - Protection
- A - America
- T - Today
- R - Riches
- I - Inspiration
- O - Optimism
- T - Tomorrow

It is my privilege to serve those that serve. To our service members that stand in front of me for freedom: I have your back. Thank you! —Shelle Michaels, National Public Relations Director, Soldiers' Angels

I am one of the luckiest people in the world because I get to visit our troops deployed overseas on a regular basis. It is impossible to visit with these fine young men and women and see the sacrifices they are making on a daily basis in defending our freedoms and not love America and all it stands for.—Judy Seale, President, Stars for Stripes



I'm a Patriot so that my kids and generations to come can have a future.—SPC Joseph Robinson, 207th Infantry Brigade, AKARNG

I'm a Patriot because of the people I serve with.

—SPC Robert Bishop, 1/207th Combat Support Aviation, AKARNG





After the tragic events of 9/11, and seeing firsthand the horrible surroundings at ground zero, I enlisted into the Guard in New York City. Twenty-eight of my friends and relations died on that horrific day along with 2,800 others. I worked down at ground zero for the first three weeks as part of the search and rescue, and then the recovery effort. I am neither a hero, nor a Patriot. I am, though, an American! —CPT John Francis O'Rourke, 88th Brigade, NYARNG

We are true patriots no matter what; our job is to defend our country from anyone who tries to hurt her. Even if it's from her own, that's a true patriot—you defend her NO MATTER WHAT.—SPC Juan Santiago Jr,

369TH Sustainment Brigade



Because I love and believe in my country and state enough to sacrifice whatever it takes to protect them from harm. Keep up the Fire, Arctic Warriors!—COL Mike Bridges, INARNG, Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team 5-Baghdad

It's simple; the definition of a Patriot is "one who loves, supports, and defends one's country." I am an Army National Guardsman's wife, sister and friend; I am a Patriot because: We ALL love our country, THEY defend it, and WE support them.—Mrs. Mayda Boone, Proud Army National Guard wife, sister and friend

My twin brother and I are both stationed in Kuwait with the WIARNG's 1/121 FA. Patriotism is just being able to stand firm and protect the laws, traditions, rights, and freedom of your nation and community. My brother and I do this everyday as police officers in our communities and as Guardsmen. HOOAH!!
—SSG Ben Hurley, WIARNG

I recently re-enlisted in the Georgia Guard for six years at the age of 48. When I look at my 18-month old daughter, the decision to continue to serve was an easy one!—SSG D. Simpson 178th Military Police Company, GAARNG

I feel I am a Patriot because I love the country that I defend. I really and truly believe in what we do. I have been deployed to both Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom with the National Guard and currently I am a recruiter for the National Guard. I don't sell the National Guard; I live it and believe in it. God bless all National Guard members because you are the premier land force.
—SSG Robby Johnson, TNARNG

I am a Patriot because it is my way of giving back to my family, friends, neighbors, communities and states where I have lived, for the support they have provided me. I am so very blessed to live in a state and country where I am free to worship as I want, free to work where I want, travel where I want, vote as I want and speak as I want.—MAJ Paul West, ALARNG/Contractor-Auburn Univ Army ROTC

I'm really not too sure why I am a Patriot. I just know that every morning when I get up, put on my uniform and go to work, that I am doing something great for our country and that makes me feel good.—SPC Deandra L. Barra, 1744th Trans. Co. Rear, ILARNG

I would like to explain the reason for being a Soldier in the Oregon Army National Guard to you. I am a Soldier because I heard a calling to serve our country and I answered that call by joining >>>

I'M A PATRIOT BECAUSE I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE SACRIFICES OTHERS HAVE MADE. I DON'T WANT MY LIFE TO PASS BY WITHOUT MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

—2LT Jon D. Wymer, 3/B/1-167 RSTA, LSAA, Balad, Iraq

I am a Patriot because ever since I was a Cub Scout and then all the way through Boy Scouts, I have always gotten goose bumps and felt a swelling of pride whenever I see our Flag or hear our National Anthem and I have always known that being a Soldier was my destiny when I graduated from high school. After 23 years of dedicated enlisted and commissioned service to this great Nation, I am proud to be a Soldier and an American, and will continue to serve in the U.S. Army until I reach my MRD (mandatory removal date). God bless America, our Soldiers and their families.

—MAJ Eric M. Pless, 46th MP Command, MIARNG





» the best fighting force on the face on this world: the United States Army! In being here, I have learned exactly what that means. In basic training, we are taught the seven Army Values: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, Personal Courage. The Army taught me to think of others above myself and to serve my country without thinking of myself first. This is the key to making a Soldier. I love the Army because of the courage and fortitude that it gave me. The Army shaped me into the model citizen that I am today. I have people question my age due to the fact that I present myself five to even 10 years above my age (I am 19 years old by the way). In closing, I am a Patriot because I want to carry on a tradition in my family that was lost for a few generations and show my family that I am much more than they thought I was. Thank you for your time. God bless!—PV2 Matthew P. Barretta, 186th Infantry, ORARNG



The stakes are too high not to bel!
—ILT Peter Fluker

I am a Patriot of the United States of America because my father set the example himself to me by serving in the U.S. Army during WWII; and him doing other such Patriotic things while I was growing up—like flying the U.S. Flag on all national holidays! He also sent me to a great private high school, called St. Thomas Military Academy, which instilled even more patriotic values in my life. I presently am serving overseas in Iraq with Minnesota's Army National Guard Unit: 1st Brigade Combat Team "Red Bulls!" I have served over 22 years with the Minnesota Army National Guard and am still going strong, in much respect to the Patriotic values I've picked up along the way from my family, friends, school teachers and fellow Soldiers in our great USA!! That's why I am a Patriot. Hoooaahhh!!
—MSG James Bussen, HHC, 1/34th BCT, 34th ID MNARNG



We are patriots to make up for those who are not, because not enough are willing to share the load, and because it is the least we can do!!!—Larry and Karen Bahr, Breckenridge, MN

The reason I am a patriot is because freedom is a part of my DNA, making it my responsibility to protect.—SPC Aaron Byrd, 3/297th Infantry, AKARNG

Why I am a Patriot? I am proud to be a Patriot as there have been so many women and men before me who have done the same thing I am doing. We take an oath to defend our country, to do what is asked of us and help bring peace to our world.—MAJ Jocelyn Baker, NDARNG

I have been a civilian police officer since 1995. I volunteered to go to Iraq in 2005 and served with the 42nd Infantry Division and 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment. I am the NCOIC of the Maine State Select Honor Guard, which is an all-volunteer cadre of the "best of the best," performing Veteran's Day and Memorial Day functions year-in and year-out. During 2003–2005, I volunteered to be the NCOIC of Force Protection for HQ, Maine Army National Guard and took a leave of absence from the police department. I AM A PATRIOT.—Christian J. Behr

I am a Patriot because I support the War on Terror by committing my son and myself to the fight. We both went to OIF3, just as my three uncles went to WWII.—Daniel Seney, Schodak, NY

I'm a Patriot because I have seen my father, my sister, my husband, all in all, my family, fight to make this world a better place. I represent those who cannot fight; I protect those who cannot protect themselves; I serve those who burn our flag, but I do it because a free world, a better place to raise children, and all the other outcomes of being a patriot are worth my service and possibly my sacrifice. I am a patriot because I have the right to be one and I have the devotion and courage to do it well—just like all Soldiers.
—2LT Rachael Walters, NDARNG





I'm a patriot simply because I love my country, and I feel that it's my responsibility, to the extent I am able, to do whatever I can to protect my country. I am 26, married, and hold a full-time job, and I just joined the National Guard.—SPC Brian Burgi, 4/133d FA, 36th ID, TXARNG



I don't know what makes me a Patriot, maybe it's that I love my country, I believe in what our president is doing, I believe in our troops and what they are fighting for, maybe it's that I have a boy in Iraq right now, and a daughter that is in the National Guard. I fly the American Flag outside of my house, and I got the bumper stickers and magnets on my cars. I love the song "God Bless the U.S.A.," by Lee Greenwood. If this makes me a Patriot, then I guess that I am.
—Steven from Iowa



I'm third-generation Army, my grandpa was in WWII, my dad was in Vietnam and I deployed to Afghanistan and am getting ready to deploy to Iraq this fall. I believe it's the greatest honor to serve your country.
—SGT Edward Jones, C Company, 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry, AKARNG

My country's needs are bigger than my own. And to quote George Orwell, "People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf."
—SGT Leo Hollingsworth, 3153rd Finance Detachment, FLARNG

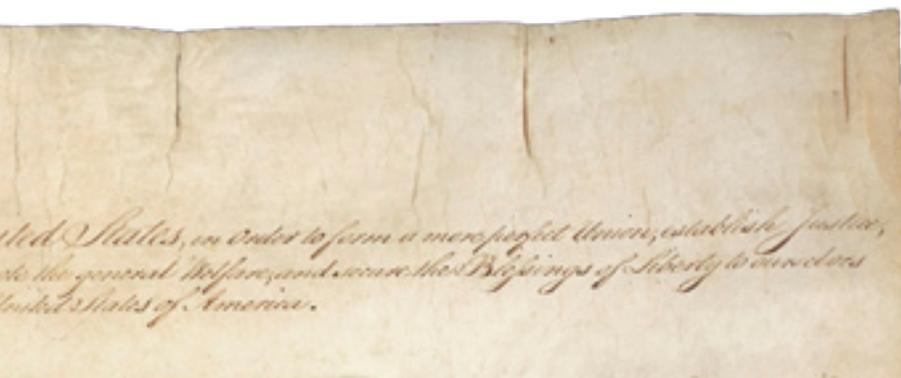
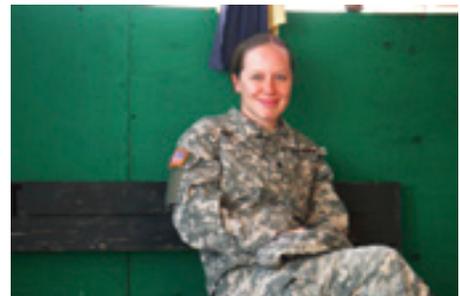
The reason I'm a Patriot is because I live in the greatest country the world has ever known and I want it to remain free and strong.
—Charlie Daniels, legendary country music artist and major troop supporter

Why am I a Patriot? With almost 300 years vested in this nation, my family has stood by to ensure the continuity of freedom and liberty to its progeny; how could I do any less? Furthermore, I do not know what my parents put into our food, but all five of my father's children are in the service today.—2LT Adam Blocker, Semper de caelo—Airborne!

I am a Patriot because I still believe we are one nation "under God" and that is a privilege. I may not always agree with what the leaders of this country do, but no one is in a position of leadership unless God allows it and, I figure, He has the big picture and the plan.
—Mary Hoffman, Ellensburg, WA

Patriotism is standing tall during the good times and standing strong during the bad times. Understanding the word is to realize, not rationalize, that it comes with a price. This price is, at its best, the freedom of choice, of worship and of life or destiny; these are the things we, as Americans, set our sights upon. The other price is of a very tangible nature; it is ourselves. This country was forged in fire and shaped on the anvil of sacrifice. The pursuit of these liberties has been paid for dearly for over 200 years. We must not sell our lives cheaply, but if required, a patriot understands that this is the measure, this is the price of freedom. This debt is not just in lives lost; the human bill is calculable, but, what of families? The sacrifice that mom or dad makes; the father or mother to their daughter or son. This equitable time is lost forever, never to be regained. What of communities and of work places? They, too, feel the burden and share in the responsibilities of showing patriotism. To make a person who serves our country feel missed when they are gone and needed when they return. In conflict or in peace; to willingly give the individual time and space to shoulder their burden, do their duty and then allow time to shed this responsibility and re-enter their community, their job and their life. Patriotism is not an easy road, it is not lip services, and it is not indecisive or idle. It is the uphill climb, the watch word, and the shoulder to the wheel. Patriotism is not a quick fix; it is a slow grind. It is not a blind follower or a "yes" man. It is the courage to agree and then to have the intestinal fortitude to see it through. Patriotism for this country was but a whisper, a word, until men and women stood up, grabbed the reins and made it free. We should all strive to be patriots.—CPT Richard Moran, LAARNG

Why am I a Patriot? For college benefits, to defend freedom . . . sure. But, when it comes down to it, I do it for the Soldiers fighting alongside me.—SPC Heather Shue, B Company 134th Brigade Support Battalion, MNARNG





“Mom, how can I look my wife and my daughter in the face and not tell them I defended their freedom? This way, Mom, the world will be safer and it keeps my brother from joining and putting himself in harm’s way.” These are things my son, SPC Evern Dorn, Skagway, AK, told me when I asked him why he’d want to join the National Guard at age 25 when our world is in such a mess. After Evern received his deployment notice, his wife decided she would not wait around for him while he was deployed. They were divorced seven days after their son was born and seven months before Evern shipped out. Evern has a 4-year-old daughter, Skye, and a 16-month-old son, Dylan, and is currently serving in OIF.—Darla and Carey Dorn, Proud Parents of an AKARNG Soldier

Ever since 9/11, I knew I wanted to serve my country and community, so I joined the New York Army National Guard. The training I received will better prepare me to serve my country when duty calls. HOOAH!!!—PFC Brandon Figueroa, 1/69th Infantry, NYARNG

I am a Patriot because I believe in the American way of life and continuing our freedoms for future generations.—SGT Sara F. Messmer, Afghanistan

As a National Guard Soldier, not only do we fight for the country and the ideals that we stand for, but we also fight for our communi-

I am a Patriot because I am doing everything I can to support and encourage my man who is in the Alaska Army National Guard and serving in Kuwait right now. I do my best to take care of everything at home while he is gone, so that he does not have to worry about me or anything back home, and can focus on doing his job right and safely.

—Sarah Billings, (Cpl. Ken Dunn), Kodiak, AK

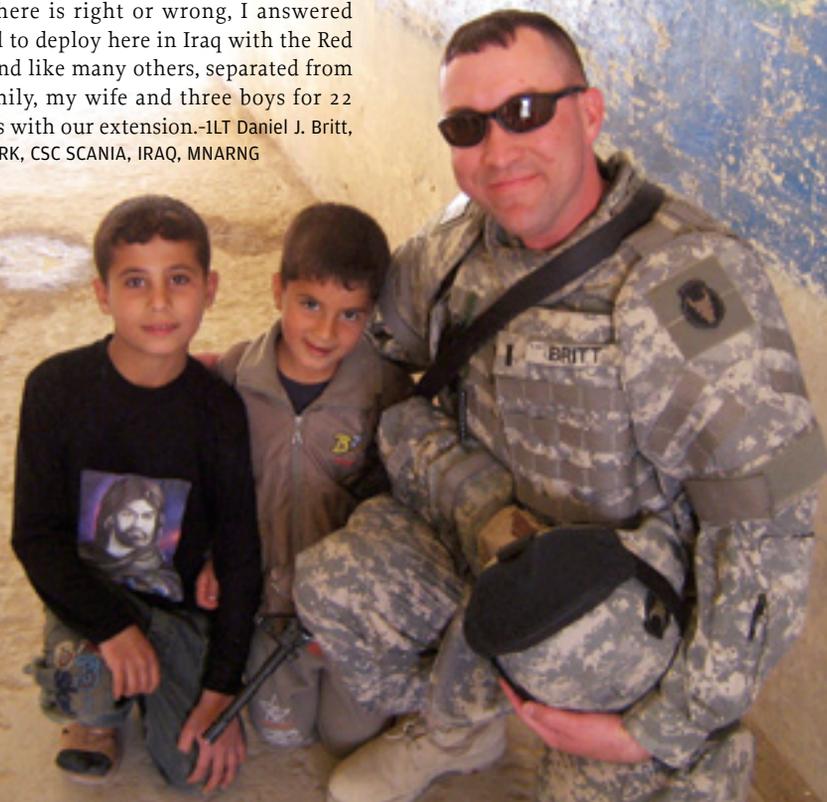


ties, and in their time of need, we come to the rescue. Serving this great country and the people that stand for it makes me stronger, gives me pride and makes me feel like a true American, a real Patriot. HOOAH!—PFC Gabriel Botero, UConn Sophomore/ROTC Cadet

I feel that I am a patriot because I feel the need to uphold the values and freedoms passed down to me by my heritage. I feel that the same values taught to me during my life by my family parallel the values that I share with my brothers and sisters in arms. Despite all of the controversy in our current world engagements, I am proud to serve with my extended family in Iraq over the next months. —Josiah Mott, Walgreens, Danville Help Center

I believe we are warriors, not pacifists. I believe we are given missions to complete. I believe we are Soldiers with a values system. I believe we are professionals. I believe we are protectors of this country’s freedom. I believe we are willing to give our lives in this country’s defense. I believe we do the hard right instead of the easy wrong. I believe when called to duty, you fulfill your duty. I believe in one shot, one kill. I believe we make friends of our enemies or destroy them. I believe we train like we fight. I believe that someone with a bomb strapped to them is a combatant. I believe that I will help all those in need. I believe Soldiers are trained to win wars, not referee them. I believe in our “Pledge of Allegiance.” I believe we are peacemakers not peacekeepers. I believe that we should do whatever it takes to keep this country safe!—SFC James Williams, TNARNG

I’m a Patriot since I decided to be a part of the military and do my part as a citizen to make a difference. Regardless of politics, whether being here is right or wrong, I answered the call to deploy here in Iraq with the Red Bulls and like many others, separated from my family, my wife and three boys for 22 months with our extension.—1LT Daniel J. Britt, 1/125 STRK, CSC SCANIA, IRAQ, MNARNG



Here's another one of the likely thousands you received, thanks for what you're doing . . . Patriot. Why have I roamed the world while serving my country for the last 20-something years? My family and the families of my fellow Americans need and deserve the protection my comrades in arms and I provide 24/7/365. Without our diligence, how long would America remain a safe place to live, work and play?



Two months? Two years? How long before the cowardly, senseless attacks of 9/11 become just the first of many? We have troops overseas fighting the Global War on Terror, those in the states readying to deploy, and more who are this very day protecting our great land with boots still on American soil. I swore an oath and I take this mission to the highest degree of seriousness. So for my years of service, Ann and the kids: a heartfelt thank you for your support of me and our country through the moves, separations and trials of being a military family. America, you are welcome . . . and thank you for the opportunity to serve and protect our homeland!
 –MSG Garrett L. Piehl, 176th Air Control Squadron, AKARNG



I am a Patriot because I have enjoyed the prosperity derived from being a free American. I believe that serving my country in the Tennessee Guard expresses my true faith and allegiance to our Nation in a tangible way that goes beyond words and manifest with deeds and service.

I volunteered to serve in the Army National Guard at a time of war and I was running a successful business providing for my family. [I wanted] to do my part and set the example for what I hope others would follow.

After 9/11 and the start of OEF and then OIF, I looked for a way to get in the fight so-to-speak. Tennessee Guard offered me the opportunity to serve as an officer, fulfill my second degree, and serve my country in a tangible way while continuing to operate my business and support my family.

There became two of me, both striving at 100 percent—the citizen and the Soldier. I graduated OCS Class 48 from the Tennessee Military Academy 117th RTI, completed my second degree, Airborne School, IOBC and Ranger School all within 30 months at 35+ years of age.

I also achieved a personal goal of 300+ APFT scores, OCS – IOBC and today, at the 17–21 level. I not only wanted to serve, but be my best and give my best to my country.

The burst of emotion I felt when our foundations of security and prosperity were attacked on 9/11 was not a momentary spark, but the stoking of a flame of continued dedication building on my previous six years of active duty service and the desire to continue to dedicate myself as a Soldier. I love God, my family and the Army, and I love the United States of America. Am I a Patriot? I am a Citizen-Soldier and I cannot thank the Tennessee Army National Guard enough for allowing me the opportunity to serve my country. The 278th ACR motto is “I volunteer, sir!” I hope to embody that always.
 –2LT Keenan W. Ellison, TNARNG

I am a Patriot because I believe in serving my country in any capacity she will allow me. Also, my dad set the example for me by serving 21 years.—SFC Patrick Smith, 164th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, FLARNG

A Mother's Patriotism

SSG Heather Allen, TNARNG; News Editor, GX

My mom's father and uncle were both in the United States Army. She was very Patriotic until her daughter decided that she wanted to join the military. Then it was like pulling teeth trying to even get her to listen to my reasons for wanting to join. I asked her now, five years later, why she is a Patriot. Her answer surprised me.

I can remember the day you told me you were “thinking” about joining the Guard. I strongly discouraged you because I thought the training would be difficult and because I didn't have a clue what you were getting yourself into. As is your way of doing what you set your mind to, you joined anyway.

Then came 9/11. I did not realize how your decision to join the military would impact you and those who love you. You left for boot camp the following January. Still fearing the unknown but also living in denial, I worried mostly that I wouldn't see you for a few weeks. Finally, boot camp was over and the family made the trip to watch you graduate. My naivety was still very much intact—I just wanted to see my “little” girl and have things get back to normal.

We were seated in the auditorium when the graduates marched in. They were so serious—it wasn't like any graduation I had ever attended. It was clear [the graduates] were already Soldiers, ready to defend our country without hesitation. As I write these words, my eyes fill with tears at the memory of these young men and women—some of whom may have fought and died in Iraq—and at the pride and Patriotism that began to grow inside of me. When finally I spotted you marching in with the others, what a changed person you were! I began to realize then that things would never be the same, that you had chosen a profession requiring much courage and sacrifice. During the few days I spent with you before you left for Fort Huachuca, President Bush announced that troops would be sent to Iraq. I didn't know at the time that eventually it would mean deployment. I did realize it meant more fear of the unknown and real fear for your safety. I also knew the training you received, as difficult as it was to hear about, had prepared you for the challenge. That was five years ago. I managed to “live” through your deployment and thank God that you returned home safely.

I don't know what lies ahead and I still fear the unknown. After all, a mother's instinct is to protect her child. In this situation, I have had to control that instinct and let you do your job. And, I hope I make you feel that I no longer question your decision to serve our country just as you don't question when asked to serve. YOU are what makes me a Patriot.

–Tammie Allen



I feel that everyone that wears the uniform is a Patriot in once sense or another. However, one individual that I have just recently come into contact with goes above and beyond more than any person I have met. He goes simply by the name "Q." He is a veteran in the Pacific Northwest that attends virtually every memorial service for service members and provides pictures to the family. He maintains a Web site, www.iraqwarheroes.com, which has numerous pictures from the service and a picture of the service member that is approved by their family. Q is just one man, not backed by any organizations, has no commercial banners on his site, pays for cost of fuel out of his own pocket to attend these events. —SGT Chris Moore, ORARNG

I am a Patriot because I believe the Constitution of the United States is one of the best documents of its kind in the world. Although I have taken no oath of office, I believe it is worth defending against enemies, both foreign and domestic. I believe in the America I know we can be when we are at our best.—Sherilyn Siegmund-Roach, proud wife of an AKARNG Soldier

The day before leaving Iraq, a well known Sheik invited my entire team to a lunch table covered with roasted lamb, baked chicken and smoked fish. I asked my year-long friend, "Sheik, why on this day have you used so much of your money to feed your invited guests?" He simply replied, "Mr. Ken, because this is the first day that I have ever enjoyed freedom!" It was at this moment of my life when I realized that the call for liberty to be returned to people that could not easily liberate themselves was the defining factor of our own Patriotic cause.—SSG Ken Weichert, aka "SGT KEN," CAARNG

I'M PROUD AND BLESSED TO BE AN AMERICAN, BORN IN THIS COUNTRY THAT IS DIVERSIFIED AND RICH IN CULTURE. "I AM A PATRIOT" WHO LOVES, SUPPORTS AND WILL BE LOYAL TO MY COUNTRY UNTIL MY DEATH.—SFC Petra Gonzalez

We are more than 1,800 Patriots at the Puerto Rico Guard, training, supporting and working with honor and pride for the Puerto Rico National Guard "Federal Command" and for our state government on voluntary bases.—CPT Miguel Reyes, training officer, PRARNG

I am a Patriot because of the Patriots before us who led, by example, the way to establish our freedoms. We must protect them, establish new ones, and, continue to be ever grateful to those who sacrifice for them.—Diane Fairben

It seems that many Americans have forgotten 9/11. There were many people saying they were Patriots, but were have they gone? I joined the Army after 9/11 because I felt it was my duty to the country that

has given me so much. When I was deployed to Iraq in 2004, I felt I finally could give back to my country. People need to learn a Patriot isn't someone who waves a flag, it's someone who is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for his/her country and for the freedom some take for granted.—SPC Darrel Ferreira, RIARNG

I would like to tell you about one of my co-workers who is certainly a Patriot. She would be very mad if she knew I was even sending this email. Kat has been a volunteer with the FRG for seven years and two years as a paid staff with the Family Assistance Center. Kat is involved not only with her unit's Soldiers and families, but the National American Legion, the VFW and Walter Reed. She is actively involved in the Landstul project, the USO and many other awesome organizations. She is the mother of five, including 9-year-old twins. She recently became a grandmother and continues to give 150 percent to the Virginia NG Family Assistance Centers. Her husband is a Veteran and still proudly serving in the National Guard. Kat is certainly a Patriot and deserves to be recognized.—Tricia L. Riggs, Sandston Family Assistance Center

SGT Stephen Register of the TNARNG is a Patriot. In July of 2005, SGT Stephen Register responded with his fellow students of Belmont University to aid tsunami victims at Banda Aceh, Indonesia. He spent the month rebuilding and purifying wells and other fresh water sources contaminated by seawater and sewage. After his return, SGT Register deployed to aid Katrina victims by conducting law and order operations. He is planning to spend this summer in St. Petersburg, Russia, on a humanitarian mission.—CPT Darrin Haas, TNARNG

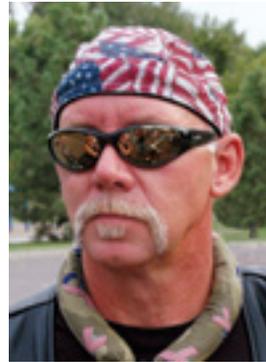
My husband is currently deployed overseas in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is in the Alaska National Guard full time, and [this is his] first deployment (has 20 years in the Army National Guard). I am a wife who proudly supports our country. I have made a huge sacrifice to keep my family and home in place while my husband is deployed overseas. Our men are fighting for our freedom and our country, so our children and their children can keep the freedom. My thoughts and prayers go out to all Soldiers, and their families left at home, who are fighting for our country! God bless.—Fannie Woods, Nome, AK





The reason I serve—it makes me feel like I am giving back the most that I can to my family, fellow citizens and country.—SPC Joe Heck, NDARNG

I've been a Patriot my entire life. I served for six years as a Guardsman, during the Cold War years. When my son, who was also a member of the Guard, deployed to Iraq, my Patriotism grew ever stronger. None of the freedoms we enjoy in this country would be possible without the service and sacrifice of Soldiers and the families who support them. We are a free country due strictly to the fact that we, as a people, have been willing to fight for and defend our freedom when necessary. Our Soldiers have always been, are now and always will be the backbone of our freedom. I do not



take my liberty and freedoms for granted, and my appreciation for those I owe them to, goes beyond words. My family and I are involved in activities and organizations that support our Soldiers, Veterans and their families, including the Patriot Guard Riders. My wife serves as a Ride Captain, and I serve as the State Captain for the North Dakota Patriot Guard. We are forever indebted to the brave men and women of our armed forces.—Randy Lindborg, PGR, State Captain, Dickinson, ND

I have been to several third world countries in my military career and have found that we, as Americans, enjoy more rights and privileges than many other societies. I believe in the Constitution in its purest form and that without the brother/sisterhood of the military, we wouldn't have those rights outlined for us by our forefathers.—SFC Kristine B. Revak, HQ Det, JFHQ-WIARNG



I am a Patriot because it gives my family the opportunity to do things like my wife becoming the 2006 Alaska State Semi-pro Champion at North Star Speedway (northstarspeedway.com) in Palmer, AK. I'm her crew chief.—TSGT Steven P. Bills



I am a Patriot because of my family. I was first influenced to serve based on my father's and siblings' service. My next inspiration is from my family (spouse and children), which by [the] photo, you can see is slightly unique. Without freedoms brought by Patriotism and the willingness to fight for freedom, we may never have had the opportunity to be such a unique family.—MAJ Grant D. Wilz, State Family Program Director, NDARNG



I'm a Patriot so that I can remain free and help to ensure other people live the way we've become accustomed to living.

—SPC Shawn Francis, 1/207th Aviation/Military Funeral Honors NCOIC, AKARNG



Guard PRISM Game Puts You in the Action

PRISM GUARD SHIELD

By CPT Tim Irvin

The new Guard PRISM video game is available for download now at the Army National Guard's Web site, 1-800-GO-GUARD.

PRISM is a first-person shooter with a unique blend of stealth ops and fast-action game play. The core PRISM experience focuses on the use of advanced weapons and tech geared for the War on Terror.

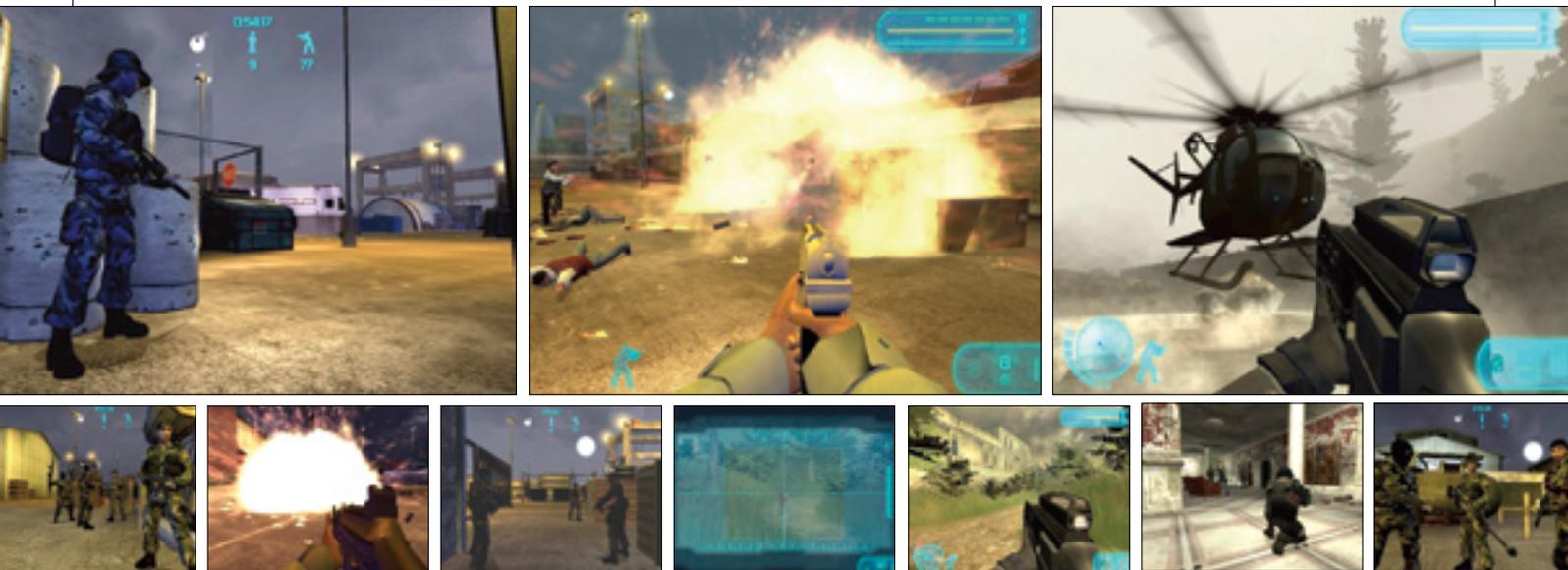
PRISM takes place in the very near future with the player becoming the newest member of a highly secretive homeland defense unit that uses PRISM (Pre-emptive Reconnaissance and Identification Security Mainframe) to wirelessly hack into video surveillance equipment across America to identify and stop terrorists from attacking the U.S. **GX**

Download PRISM today at:

1-800-GO-GUARD.com/PRISM



COURTESY OF NGB



THE FUTURE IS NOW

The ARNG Title 10 AGR Program offers jobs that can truly make a difference in your future and the future of the Guard.

In the past, many Soldiers have been overwhelmed by the complexity of the application process to attempt to obtain one of these outstanding positions. All that's about to change.

The ARNG Human Capital Management Division [formerly Human Resources Division (ARZ-T)] is developing cutting edge technology to recruit the best for Title 10 positions. Through a single Internet based system you will be able to:

- Search for T10 positions by job type and location
- See immediate results for the requested positions coming available for the next 6 months
- View an assessment of the likelihood of your appointment to the position
- Review tips on how to improve your chances of obtaining your desired position
- Receive help in building your application packet

In the coming months *GX* Magazine will offer an insiders view of how this remarkable new system can help you take your Guard career to the next level.

Not sure exactly what the Title 10 Program is or just want to know more?

We are compiling a list of the most frequently asked questions, getting answers from the people who know and will publish them in an upcoming issue of *GX*. Send your questions to:

T10@GXonline.com





Mobile Event Teams: GX Crew Gets Schooled by the National Guard MET

Story and photos by Chris West

3...2...1...GO!!! The GX team sprinted away from their base, dashing in a mad scramble for the nearest cover. As they ran, they spewed a constant stream of florescent plastic balls at their opponents, charging them from the other end of the field. The paintballs erupted everywhere—liquid clouds of eye-searing yellow, pink and blue exploded from almost every conceivable surface. Unfortunately, the surfaces catching the most paint were the GX writers and the Guard Soldiers they were playing alongside.

It was brutal. Some of our guys didn't make it a half dozen steps before being lit up by an insanely accurate crossfire. Others would make it to cover, only to catch a paintball in the melon as soon as they peeked out. A few seconds later only GX editor CPT Tim

was still standing . . . well, cowering anyway. He was pinned down by three different opponents who fired so fast, their semi-automatic paintball guns were doing fine imitations of fully automatic crew-served weapons. CPT Tim had, turtle-like, retracted every part of his body behind his cover to stay clear of the wave of paint that was passing by only millimeters away on either side. In the end, it didn't do much good. With our last guy fully suppressed, it was only a matter of moments before he was flanked and the game was over. Team GX was wiped out and our opponents hadn't so much as broken a sweat.

Of course, we were playing against the top-ranked paintball team in the country, so it's not like we expected to win. But still, this was embarrassing. At least it was at first, but as we watched the University of Tennessee (UT) Paintball Team decimate opponent after

opponent, we started feeling a little better. It became clear, just how outclassed we were when they took on three teams at once. Outnumbered three-to-one, they destroyed the opposition with almost casual grace and ease.

Despite the crushing defeats, everyone present had a great time. The crowd, primarily students at UT, along with a couple of local teams, had shown up at a National Guard Mobile Event. They had come to have a good time, compete with their friends and show off their mad skills (or lack thereof in our case) with a paintball gun. It was huge fun—everyone was smiling, bragging about victories, commiserating over their defeats and comparing paintball-inflicted bruises like badges of honor. And in the middle of all of this, they were learning something about the Army National Guard.

BATTLE MODE (Above) CPT Darrin Haas, TNARNG MP Officer, battles hard for the *GX* Team in Knoxville. **TEAM PLAYERS** (Far Right) *GX* editors: SSG Heather Allen, Keith Kawasaki and Jason West; with a participating Guard Soldier



This competition was staged by one of the Army National Guard's Mobile Event Teams (MET). These teams consist of young men and women who travel around the country and stage various events in order to support the local recruiters. Driving customized vehicles, they bring mobile obstacle courses, replicas of the #25 NASCAR vehicle, a "Special Forces" laser shot simulator and much more, turning every event they attend into a mini theme park. It's a fun way to get the National Guard's message in front of high school and college students. The students have the opportunity to learn about the benefits of serving with the Guard in a relaxed, non-threatening environment.

This makes these events great opportunities to meet potential recruits. On this particular day, we could clearly see tournament competitors warming to the recruiters

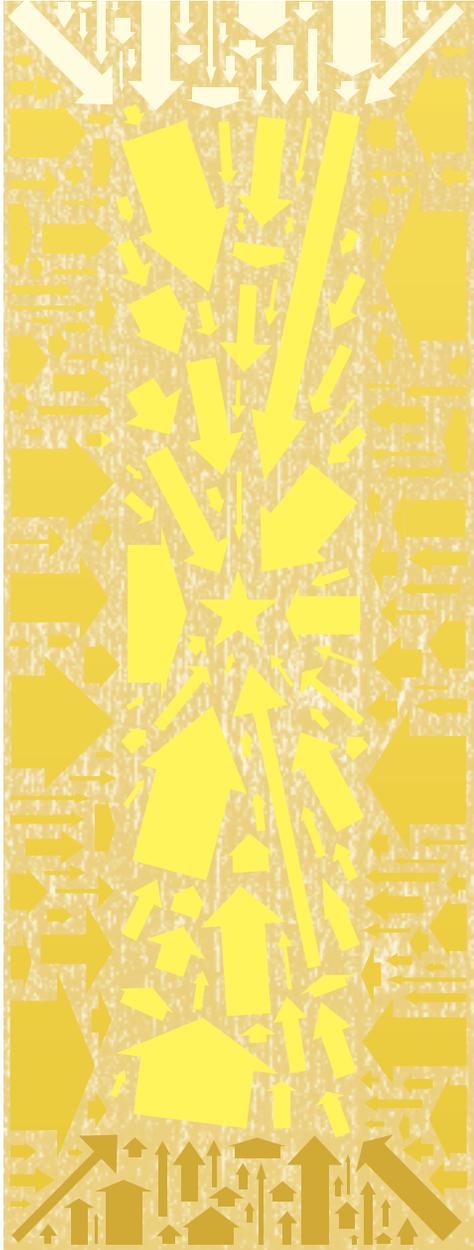
after having the opportunity to pelt them with paintballs. The back-slapping and friendly heckling after each round led to a lot of in-depth conversations. One recruiter told us that by noon, he had connected with six solid leads and was confident at least three of them would sign.

MET consist of 15 separate teams that are deployed to an extensive collection of events in the lower 48 states. If you are a recruiter and would like to have a MET take one of your recruiting opportunities to the next level, you can contact your state marketing NCO—and don't forget to invite *GX!* ***GX***

To find an MET in your area, go to:

**1-800-GO-GUARD.com/
guardevents**

DIRECT COMMISSION:



DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

By 2LT Lisa Menck
INARNG

Anybody who has spent a day in the Army knows that our best leaders come from within the ranks. No training curriculum can provide the knowledge you gain as a trained and experienced Soldier.

While good enlisted Soldiers are needed in the ranks, the nation is currently at a critical shortage of those willing to join the officer corps. There's no better place to look to fill this shortage than to you—our prior service Soldiers.

Because experience can't be taught in a classroom, the Army National Guard Bureau offers a direct commission to properly credentialed Soldiers in lieu of traditional commissioning programs such as ROTC or Officer Candidate School. A direct commission is sometimes associated with doctors or lawyers fresh off the street, but that's a common misunderstanding. While specialty branches do rely on direct commissioning for many of its officers, it can be an equally beneficial commissioning source for the basic branches of the Army.

Some general qualifications you need for a direct commission into a basic branch include a bachelor's degree, two years of service with at least one year the Army National Guard, a GT score of 110 or higher, and the ability to obtain a secret security clearance.

You need to be 35 or younger and actively drilling in either the National Guard or Reserves as an E-5 or higher. Preferably you'll have both Warrior Leader Course and Basic Non-commissioned Officer Course completed. E-4s will be considered only with completion of Warrior Leader Course. You must have documented leadership through non-commissioned officer evaluation reports, civilian job evaluations, biographical summaries and certain other credentials. Deployment experience is also a major factor. With the high operational tempo, any overseas experience you can share will be critical to the troops you'll lead into combat.

Each state has officer strength managers (OSM) in its recruiting force. Their job is to inform, qualify and process those who want to take the challenge of joining the officer corps. Once you are qualified, direct commission begins with a packet process. You'll work with your OSM to complete a packet that's sent to National Guard Bureau (NGB) for review by the federal predetermination board. Following its acceptance at the predetermination board, you'll sit at a state-level federal recognition board, which reviews the packet and asks you a series of questions regarding your desire to become an officer. Your credentials and how you present yourself are imperative. The packet ensures that you hold the skills and experience all other officers learn in traditional training sources. The verbal interview ensures that you're taking the challenge for the right reasons and are exceptional enough to surpass the Phase I training and be offered a direct commission into the officer corps.

Branch assignment for a direct commission is based on the needs of the state, your preferences and your background. The OSM will work with the officer branch of the state to find a slot within your desired branch. You'll know and have accepted the unit you're slotted for prior to going in to the federal recognition board. A portion of the board interview is based on the slot you intend to fill.

After accepting a direct commission, you're responsible for completing two additional phases of training. With the new training curriculum, there are three training phases in becoming an officer. The first is the officer's commissioning source. This includes ROTC, Officer Candidate School and direct commission. For phase II, the newly commissioned officers are sent to Basic Officer Leaders Course II (BOLC II). BOLC II is a seven-week course at Fort Benning or Fort Sill that all basic branches and JAG officers must attend. It requires

three weeks of mission-based field time at a simulated forward operating base. Here, warrior tasks are reinforced based on today's wartime mission. The entire cadre has recently returned from theater and are there to prepare the new platoon leaders to successfully lead their troops into war. Weapons qualification, land navigation, physical fitness and modern Army combative training are also included in the curriculum.

Next, you'll move on to your branch-specific training, called BOLC III. This third and final phase was once known as Officer Basic Course (OBC), but has been renamed and redesigned to fit in with the new BOLC phases of officer training. BOLC III will consist of classroom and field training necessary to successfully lead as a platoon leader. At the completion of all three BOLC phases, officers from all commissioning sources are trained to the same standard as an officer and are ready to lead troops.

Depending on their background, prior service direct commissions have an advantage at BOLC II and BOLC III. Experience such as deployment, warrior leader course and platoon sergeant time will make them and their team members more successful in training. Cadre and peers frequently look for prior service to help lead immediately by assisting in leadership positions and training events.

Troops need great leadership—senior noncommissioned officers and officers alike. The knowledge of a prior service Soldier is a huge asset to the Army National Guard.

Become educated on career opportunities. Becoming an officer can be beneficial in both the professional and military career fields. Financial benefits exist both now and into retirement. Training opportunities can

supplement a civilian education and management experience adds to any resumé. Most importantly, there is the opportunity to selflessly serve your troops. If you qualify to become an officer, challenge yourself and step up to the plate. Every Soldier needs and deserves a great leader.

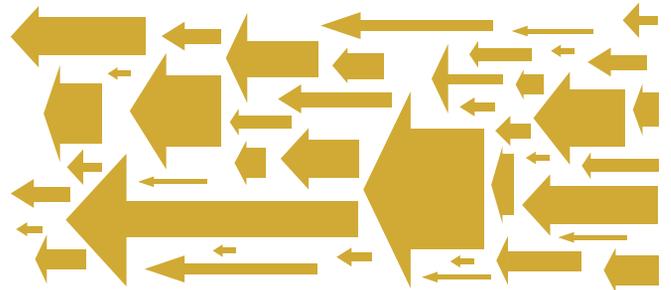
Do you have what it takes?

Contact your local OSM to find out the how to start the process of becoming an officer in your state. **GX**



For more information, go to:

1-800-GO-GUARD.com/DirectCommission



Dealing with Demobilization



By Chris West

Coming home can be as hard as going to war if you aren't prepared.

Going to war is one of the most difficult challenges a Soldier and their family can face. Despite the fact that they knew deployment was possible, the stress of sending a loved one into danger can be difficult for even the strongest families to bear. Families constantly have to deal with the worry that their Soldier is facing daily threats to their well being. This anxiety is magnified by the increased difficulty of communication and the unrelenting bad news that scrolls across our televisions every night. The Soldiers have to deal with the stress of entering the battlefield, as well as the worries they have for those left at home.

As tough as this process is on families, it pales in comparison to the difficulties they face on the far side of deployment. Ask almost anyone who's been there and they'll tell you in no uncertain terms, "Coming home was more difficult than going to war."

Yes, that's right. You've been sweating your derriere off in the sand for the last year or more, facing the imminent threat of bodily harm on a daily basis. You are a Warrior, combat-proven, tough as nails, ready for anything. Those at home have stepped up to face the challenges of daily life on their own, without the support and strength provided by their Soldiers. They've become more independent, more resilient and more capable in the last year. You've all worked hard to accomplish your respective missions and you deserve an easy reunion with your family and friends.

Well, let me tell you, it's just not that simple. Without the right kind of help, you aren't ready for this.

There is a serious barrier to understanding that you and your family must overcome. Unless your loved ones have served overseas in a war zone, they simply won't be able to understand what you've been through. They won't have the experience to be able to grasp what the last year of your life has been like. By the same token, unless you have sent a loved

one off to war and had to wait nervously at home for them to return, you have no way of understanding what they have been through.

This isn't written with the intent of scaring you or making you nervous about going home. The whole point is to stress the importance of the demobilization training and debriefing the Army will provide you. It's every bit as important as your mobilization training. Pay attention to what they teach you. Be patient and apply the same dedication to coming home as you have to your mission. Despite any initial problems, your relationship with your family will be stronger than ever. Coming home is a difficult transition, but the feeling of triumph, accomplishment and love you get when you sit down on your sofa with your family around you for the first time in more than a year is truly amazing.

Perhaps the best way to understand the importance of this process is to hear it from one of your own. SPC Andrew Qualy of A Company 2-135 IN, 1/34 BCT returned home early due to an injury and wrote the following letter to the Soldiers of the 1/34 BCT:



Dear Soldiers of 1st BCT, 34th Infantry Division,

My name is SPC Andrew Qualy. I deployed in March of 2006 to Iraq as a member of A Company 2/135 IN, 1/34 BCT. While deployed, I was stationed at Camp Adder, Iraq, and participated mainly in convoy security operations. In August of 2006, I was involved in a vehicle rollover in which myself and the two other [S]oldiers also in the vehicle were severely injured.

The result of this was that I was medevaced out of theater to Landstuhl Army Hospital in Germany, and finally back to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, where I underwent critical surgery to my head and nose. I remained at Walter Reed from August 2006 until January 2007 to complete several different tasks and treatments, some of which included physical therapy, speech therapy, surgery to my left ear, and intense [traumatic brain injury] testing. Once I completed all of those things, I was sent back to Minnesota to be REFRAD back to my unit in the rear.

Once that happened, a whole new battle began for me; the battle to reintegrate back into the civilian world. Basically, the plan was that when I left Walter Reed, I would go home and go straight back into civilian life as if nothing happened. That was the plan; but as we in the military all know so well, sometimes things don't go exactly as planned. Unfortunately for me; this was very much the case. The life I left behind me to go to war had indeed not changed. I'm the one that changed, and I learned this fact the hard way.

When I finally got back to Minnesota, I didn't come back with a company, a platoon, or even a squad. I was by myself, which is neat for awhile, but as you all know, when times get tough, it's nice to have your guys right there with you. Things got tough for me, but I didn't have anyone with me, I was on my own. Once I did get back, I became depressed and withdrawn. I felt very alone and very unprepared for the civilian world. Most of my relationships with people I had known before I left began to suffer. My family and friends, while they had good intentions, just simply didn't (and still don't, and never will) understand what I've been through and they didn't know how to help. I, in turn, had unrealistic expectations of them, thinking that they should understand and that they should know what I need. Finally, I spent the majority of the money I built up during the deployment on things like beer, hockey games, a car, and other things for myself and others. Once the money started to run out, I was forced into a reality-check situation.

The reason I am writing this is because I want to stress the importance of properly reintegrating back into the civilian world at the end of the deployment. The training you will receive when you demobilize is extremely valuable. I was fortunate that about three months after I returned home, I attended a MIRT (Monthly Individual Reintegration Training) session, which helped me identify where I went wrong, what I need to do to correct it and who can help me. I think that if I had had this training as soon as I got back rather than three months later, a lot of the problems I had and mistakes I made could have possibly been avoided.

In conclusion, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of proper reintegration back into the civilian world when you get back to the states. I'll admit, it is very difficult to prepare for war, and then cross what I call the "barrier of war." It is crossing this barrier of war that makes us Warriors and Veterans as opposed to being green and inexperienced when we first got into theater. The only thing more difficult than crossing the barrier of war is crossing back over the way you came. I never thought things would be this way, I thought that as a Warrior, I was invincible and that coming back to my civilian life would be simple; unfortunately, it has turned out to be the most difficult part of my deployment. The best thing you could do for yourselves and each other is pay attention to the reintegration training, utilize the vast and outstanding resources that exist, and most of all, look after each other and help your buddies out just as you have done throughout this long deployment. I look forward to seeing you all when you come home!

Sincerely,
 SPC Andrew Qualy
 A Co. 2/135 IN
 3rd Platoon "Hard Hearts Kill!"



INSPIRATION SPC Andrew Qualy during his time in Iraq as a member of A Company 2/135 IN, 1/34 BCT.

The Army, along with various family support groups, can provide you with a great deal of information on what to expect. The list below will give you a good place to start.

The Red Bulls redeployment information page provides an excellent selection of resources that will help prepare you and your family for the challenges that lie ahead. You can access that information at redbullweb.com/54.html.

Additionally, the following may be of help.

- ★ Summary of National Guard Benefits: virtualarmory.com/education/fedbenefits
- ★ Veterans Employment Service: deed.state.mn.us/veterans/index.htm
- ★ Minnesota State Deputy Chaplain's Office: (651) 282-4085
- ★ BCT / 34th ID Chaplain's Office: (651) 268-8900
- ★ Suicide Prevention: suidepreventionhotline.org (800) 273-TALK (8255)
- ★ Defense & Veterans Brain Injury Center: dvbic.org or (800) 870-9244
- ★ Transition Assistance Advisor: (651) 282-4667
- ★ Department of Veteran Affairs / Minnesota
- ★ Department of Veterans Affairs: va.gov / mdva.state.mn.us/minnesotaveteran.org
- ★ Troops and Family Counseling Services for the National Guard and Reserves: (888) 755-9355 (24/7)
- ★ MNARNG Education Team POC Information: education@mn.ngb.army.mil or (651) 282-4590
- ★ Military OneSource: militaryonesource.com

Minnesota National Guard Improves Roadways in Iraq

By SPC Brian D. Jesness
1/34th BCT PAO

Minnesota Army National Guard Soldiers and Iraqi citizens of Al Batha recently restored 15 kilometers of Al Batha city streets in southern Iraq.

The Soldiers of the 1st BCT, 34th ID's Civil Military Operations (CMO) team, supervised projects to grade the city's streets, which hadn't been maintained in 20 years. Most of the streets were nothing more than dirt trails with deep ruts from vehicle traffic.

"Many of the streets had 8-foot-wide potholes filled with mud, sewage and garbage, making [them] impassable for municipal vehicles, daily routines and commercial transit," said CPT Colin Fleming of Burnsville, MN, 1/34 BCT deputy CMO officer.

The project restored many streets in Al Batha to serviceable gravel roads free of sewage and debris. The repair of the streets inspired Al Batha city officials to work with provincial authorities to pave the streets and complete the project. To date, more than 30 miles of roads have been repaired in Dhi Qar province by these CMO projects.

The 1/34 BCT CMO teams have completed several other road projects throughout Iraq. Since April 1, 2006, south-central Iraq has seen improvement of more than 540 kilometers of roadways through a highway maintenance program employing local workers to clean up highways. The program removed debris along highways to provide routes safe from roadside bombs for civilian traffic and Coalition Forces. Roadside bombs

are the biggest threat to supply convoys of Coalition Forces throughout Iraq.

Last fall, the 1st Battalion, 125th Field Artillery CMO team constructed a new bridge over a canal in the rural date-farming village of Bahkan in Babil province near Camp Scania. The project, coordinated by 1LT Stephen Hall of Austin, MN, deputy effects officer for 1/125 CMO team, selected a contractor and workers from Bahkan.

"I picked a contractor [and workers] from that community . . . so they took pride in the work. Now the main access to their village is open again," said 1LTHall.

The old bridge, made of concrete only 1-foot thick, was the only access across canals surrounding the village, home to more than 100 families. It had degraded to the point that the underlying support beams were showing as travelers passed over it.

In Dhi Qar and Babil provinces, civil transportation offices are rare. Many roads are

left impassable year-round from heavy erosion during the winter rainy seasons. Residents are left to find alternate passage to basic necessities of agriculture, clean drinking water and schools.

After more than one year in Iraq, more than 270 projects have been completed by 1/34 BCT CMO teams throughout the country to assist the provinces and gain support for Coalition Forces.

The Minnesota National Guard 1/34 BCT has more than 2,600 Guard members in Iraq, plus Soldiers from Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, New Jersey, Georgia and California, and several active-duty units. **GX**

GREETING A Minnesota National Guard Soldier shakes hands with an official from Bahkan, Iraq, on the newly constructed bridge to the village.

SURVEYING A Minnesota National Guard Soldier speaks with a resident of Al Batha, Iraq, last summer before the new construction of the city's roads.



YOU DESIGN IT. OCC WILL BUILD IT. THE GUARD WILL RIDE IT!



**Always wanted to design your own custom chopper?
Think you've got what it takes to design one for the Guard?**

Orange County Choppers and the Army National Guard are teaming up to build the Patriot Bike. And one lucky Soldier will be chosen to design it! The winner heads to Orange County, NY to meet the gang at OCC and watch the design come to life.

Think you've got what it takes?
Check out details and submit your design at:

www.1-800-GO-GUARD.com/ARNGbike
www.VirtualArmory.com/ARNGbike



ORANGECOUNTYCHOPPERS™



Value of Education—Priceless



By Johanna Altland

From the day we are born until the day we die, we are learning. From the alphabet to geometry, the learning process plays an important role in our lives. We learn to walk, talk and listen; laugh, cry and think. No other activity stimulates and stays with us as long as the learning process. Each day, we learn something new that serves as a basis for decision making and ultimately shapes us into the individuals we are today.

Time and again, we overlook the value of an education because we often take school for granted. But, there are millions out there who have not even received the fundamentals of an education, let alone have the opportunity to go to college.

For an impoverished family, a child going to school to learn to read and write may be the only member of that family who can read. When he brings that skill back to his

family, he can now help keep track of family expenses or help out by reading medicine labels. He might even be able to bring about change in his community by voting on important issues. Knowledge provides the power of freedom and instills the ability to make better decisions, be it for better medicine or better career opportunities.

The benefits of a higher education are quite rewarding. Besides being more well-rounded and skilled, your living situation can greatly improve. On average, someone with a bachelor's degree makes at least \$18,000 more annually than someone with just a high school diploma (source: Bureau of Labor Statistics). Those with master's degrees make nearly \$10,000 more than those with bachelor's degrees, and the growth does not stop there.

The advantages for those who have spent the time and energy to pursue a higher level

of education is incredible:

- Better pay
- More opportunity for advancement
- Lower unemployment
- Personal satisfaction

By continuing your education, you are giving yourself the opportunity to learn new skills and information that you can apply to your life and career. Education will help you succeed and stand above the rest.

Knowledge is power. We have heard this dozens of times before, but those words couldn't be any truer today. You may be able to put a price tag on a degree, but the value of an education is priceless. It doesn't matter if you return to school for professional or personal reasons, never stop learning.

"If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest." — Benjamin Franklin **GX**

The Additional Income Equation

By earning a bachelor's degree, your additional income potential over the course of one year could be \$18,000. If you earn a master's degree, it could be \$28,000. Obtaining any advanced degree is worth the time and expense.

$$\text{\$937} - \text{\$583} = \text{\$354} \times 52 = \text{\$18,408}$$

Median weekly earnings for skilled workers with a bachelor's degree *

Median weekly earnings for unskilled workers with only a high school education *

The difference in weekly earnings multiplied by the number of weeks in a year

weeks

Additional Income Potential

*Earnings as listed from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

4 Easy Steps to Getting Your G.I. Bill Benefits

As a National Guard Soldier, there are a few options you can use to pay for your college education: tuition assistance, employer reimbursement programs, scholarships and the G.I. Bill. Applying for your G.I. benefits may seem tricky, but don't be put off by the application process. If you follow the four easy steps below, you will find the process is simple and effortless.

Step 1

Find and apply to a college or university that is approved for Veteran's Administration (VA) training or education. Most regionally and nationally accredited colleges and universities are approved by the VA.

Step 2

Complete VA Form 22-1990, Application for Education Benefits. This form can be accessed through the Veterans Online Application Web site (VONAPP). Visit vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/about_vonapp.asp.

- ✓ If you are active duty, you can now complete and sign Section II of the VA Form 22-1990 after consulting with your Education Office. In addition, you should speak to a counselor in your Voluntary Education Services Office to determine if you are eligible to participate in the G.I. Bill Buy-up program before you start using your GI Bill.
- ✓ If you are a Veteran, you will need to include a copy of your DD 214 discharge paperwork for your college or university's admissions office.
- ✓ If you are a member of the Selective Reserve, you may need to include a copy of DD Form 2384-1, Notice of Basic Eligibility, which was given to you by your unit when you became eligible for the MGIB-SR.

Step 3

In most cases, the school will send your application along with their paperwork to the appropriate VA regional office with jurisdiction over the state or area where you will train. This will expedite the process. However, if you have not found a school yet, you can still apply for your VA Eligibility Determination by mailing your completed VA Form 22-1990 to your VA Regional Office. Visit va.gov to find the address for your VA Regional Office. Within four to eight weeks, you should receive a declaration of eligibility, Certificate of Eligibility and a letter explaining your VA benefits.

Keep in mind that it is not unusual to get a letter from the VA requesting more information. You will have to answer the VA's requests to be determined eligible and complete the process.

Step 4

Once you have begun to receive your benefit payments (direct deposit), you will have to complete the VA's Web Automated Verification of Eligibility (WAVE) each month to continue to receive your monthly benefits payments. WAVE is a simple process that requires you to either log-on to gibill.va.gov/wave/default.cfm or call their toll-free number at (888) GIBILL-1.

It only takes a couple of minutes, but you will not get your monthly payment until you do.

3 Ways to Snag a Scholarship

Scholarship Resource Network Express

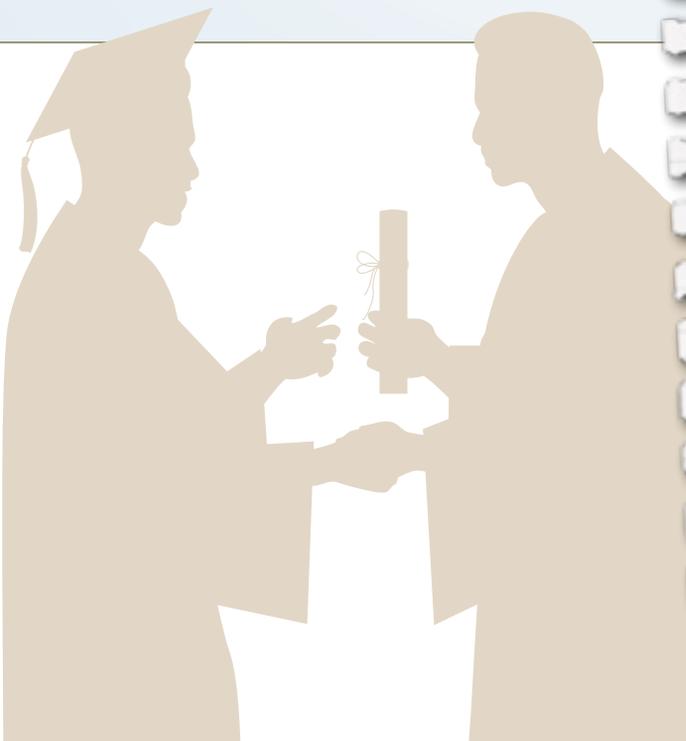
Scholarship Resource Network Express (SRNExpress) contains a database of over 8,000 programs with over 150,000 awards for undergraduate and postgraduate students.
srnexpress.com/index.cfm

Scholarships.com

Scholarships.com is a free resource for college scholarships and financial aid information. Its scholarship database is updated regularly—every visit to Scholarships.com provides new opportunities. You can sort scholarships by deadline, dollar amount and relevance.
scholarships.com

CollegeBoard.com

CollegeBoard.com created this online tool to help you locate scholarships, internships, grants, and loans that match your education level, talents and background. A brief questionnaire and Scholarship Search will help you find potential opportunities from a database of more than 2,300 sources of college funding.
apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp



Guard Family Program Builds Readiness Through Outreach

Courtesy of Thomas Mylin
National Guard Family Program

Nowhere, perhaps, are the life-changing demands of full-time military duty felt more than in the families of our National Guard members who are called to serve.

As Guard Soldiers transition from community life to serving on the lines in the War on Terror, this has created some challenges for our Soldiers, their families and extended family members alike. To further compound the issue of deployment is geographic separation. Therefore, the Guard must engage the communities at large to bring services and support closer to our families during deployments and mobilizations.

To meet this challenge, the National Guard Bureau Family Program office created the National Guard Outreach Program with the intent of enhancing already existing military programs to offer support, regardless of geographic location.

THE OUTREACH GOAL

The purpose of the Guard Outreach Program is to organize initiatives to influence effective participation of diverse support, including government and non-governmental organizations, Veterans service organizations, volunteer service organizations, community-based entities and non-profit agencies to gain broader access to support Guard families.

The Guard Outreach Program was formed December 2004 at the direction of COL Anthony E. Baker, Sr., Division Chief, Family Programs, National Guard Bureau. COL Baker's approach is very simple—to rally every organization and agency by informing, activating, and then coordinating their services and activities with National Guard initiatives and programs to connect with and assist our Soldiers and their families in their local communities as needed.

HOW IT WORKS

There are two underlying principles that guide this effort, according to COL Baker. The first is enhancing the existing service and support to our Soldiers and their families, and the second is supporting and maintaining Soldier and family readiness. It is very important to strengthen and sustain the inner workings of our Guard families and their networks of support.

COL Baker stated, "It is critical for Family Programs to focus on linking families to constructive and strength-building services due to their ability to offer families more security in the face of potential challenges." So, we're encouraging families to use all resources available to them as a force multiplier.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF OUTREACH SUCCESS

Since its inception, the Guard Outreach Program has led to numerous signed memorandums of understanding, from the AMVETS in March 2005 to the American Red Cross in June 2007, among others.

We've also garnered full-time VFW and AMVETS representatives on the Guard Family Program staff to serve as liaisons between their organizations, Guard Bureau, Army National Guard, Air National

Guard, states and territories on programs they offer in support of mobilized Soldiers and their families.

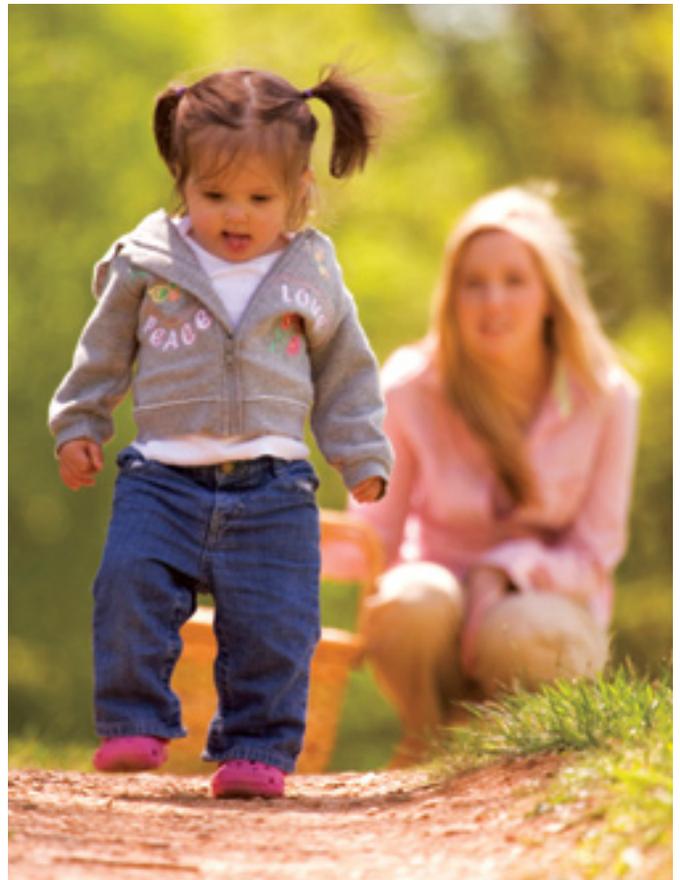
Over \$1.5 million in resources has been given to the National Guard from VFW and AMVETS. \$625,000 was also allotted to the VFW National Veteran Service Officers in support of mobilizations, deployments, briefing support, family support briefings and VA claims.

According to COL Baker, these are just a few of Family Program successes in the outreach program and there are many others at the national level as well as the state and territory levels.

"We are going to continue to collaborate, communicate and reach out to other organizations and agencies that want to become part of a world premier organization, the National Guard," COL Baker said. "This is about America; because when you call out the National Guard, you call out America." **GX**

For more information, please visit the National Guard Family Program Web site:

www.GuardFamily.org



COURTESY OF ISTOCKPHOTO

How to Save for Your First Home



Courtesy of USAA

Some say it's the "American Dream." Home ownership has long been a sought-after status among single Americans and families alike. And no matter where you are in life, saving for a first home can seem like an impossible feat. But, around 2.5 million homes sell to first-time buyers each year, so it is doable.

USAA members Angela and Brian Kargus worked hard, saved hard, and shopped hard for a new home and, for now, they're still renting. Angela, a 27-year-old trade association manager, and Brian, a 26-year-old Army captain attending law school, have socked away enough to put down 7 percent even in pricey Williamsburg, VA, where three-bedroom homes cost \$270,000 to \$310,000. "But, it's not just the down payment," Angela says. "It's closing costs, homeowner's insurance, title insurance—the extra things people don't think about. That made us think maybe we shouldn't be buying a house just yet." Renting isn't always a bad idea, at least for a while. Among other things, the Karguses expect Brian's first duty station following law school to be somewhere with lower home prices. Meanwhile, here are tips they (and you) can follow to make saving for a first home a dream within reach.

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Decide on location, price, time frame and other variables of the dream before pursuing it in earnest. If you're married, before anything else, discuss homebuying hopes with your spouse.

KNOW YOUR TARGET

Buyers can put down anywhere from zero to 100 percent of a home's purchase price. Costs from title fees to interest rates are also negotiable. But, nothing is free. Talk to brokers and lenders to develop realistic totals for down payment, closing costs, renovation expenses, and contingencies. Then, you'll have a specific savings goal.

TRACK EXPENSES

Use personal finance software (or just a piece of paper) to track all your expenses for a few months. Scrutinize categories like dining out, clothing and entertainment to spot opportunities for savings. This exercise will help confirm that your dream home fits into your monthly budget.

PINPOINT PRIORITIES

Are you willing to give up movies but not takeout? Can you forgo some things for a specific period of time? If you're married, you and your spouse must be willing to compromise on wants and needs that drain your budget. The bottom line: You may be able to turn a few wants into additional savings for your new home.

PREPARE A BUDGET

Once you've tracked expenses, you've done the hard part. It'll go even easier if you keep spending targets psychologically and emotionally realistic (can you really restrict yourself to one meal out a week) as well as financially sound.

PAY YOURSELF FIRST

Before paying bills, set aside some cash for savings. Don't let the lights get cut off, of course. But, it's easier to find money for saving if you do it before paying everybody else.

MAKE IT AUTOMATIC

Set up an automatic deposit into your savings account. Your employer or bank may do this, or you can set up personal finance software to transfer funds from checking to savings after every payday. After awhile, it'll happen almost without you noticing it. And one day, you'll wake up and see you have what it takes to buy that first home of your dreams. **GX**

Troops Turn to Web.com for Secure, Personal Web sites



By Jeff Stibel

For centuries, the only connection Soldiers had to their loved ones back home were letters—the pen and paper variety—a bond as powerful and important to war fighting as a good supply of ammunition. In more recent wars, these intermittent morale-boosting tethers have expanded to include bundles of copper wire laid across the bottom of oceans and light-speed signals bounced off satellites. Today, the Internet allows for a broader, more real-time communications with friends and family via email, video and photo-sharing sites, social networks and more.

However, unlimited access to a handful of these communication channels has recently ceased. In May, a new Defense Department (DoD) policy went into effect, under which U.S. troops, including thousands stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan, were declined several online links to family and friends. The DoD has blocked worldwide access to MySpace, Facebook, YouTube and nine other popular video-sharing and social-networking sites on its computers and networks, which Soldiers, particularly those younger enlisted men and women, have been using to offer their loved ones some sense of what is happening with them.

According to the Pentagon, troops can no longer use the military's computer systems to socialize via these sites, citing security concerns and bandwidth limitations as key reasons.

As a result, enlisted personnel are creating their own Web sites and maintaining them through non-DoD Internet connections, such

as those in Internet cafés overseas. One company, Web.com, is making it easy for troops to work around this online blockade with easy-to-use and affordable Web site creation tools.

A leading destination for Web sites and Web services, Web.com's Site Builder Web site publishing tool requires little or no technical skill and makes it easy for military families to create and manage personal, multi-page Web sites, with the ability to add photo albums, multimedia and blogs. These sites minimize bandwidth usage by avoiding social networking and Internet linkages that can slow systems. This way, Web.com's secure, password-protected sites provide a "virtually home" experience and a communication portal through which families can easily stay in touch, view and post pictures and short videos, and share daily experiences—among other popular Web 2.0 activities that would quickly and easily eat up bandwidth on social networks.

Web.com has built more than 4 million Web sites for a host of military personnel, consumers and small businesses since 1995, and has already helped more than 150,000 individuals establish a secure online presence. In December 2006, the company saluted our troops with a free, one-year give away of secure Web sites to military personnel to kick-off the holiday season and continues to cater to military personnel with discounted services. **GX**

To take advantage of Web.com's 20-percent military discount, call: **(800) WEBHOST** (ask for the military discount).

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT
SGT Jean-Paul Borda stands ready at the firing range at Camp Shelby, MS.



Introducing Bad Voodoo Platoon

Carrying on California's Long Tradition of Courageous Infantry

Story and photos by Keith Kawasaki

Back down at Shelby. We ought to put a satellite office down here. Had to make this trip, though. A few weeks prior, I got a call from my ol' pal, JP, aka SGT Jean-Paul Borda. He was mobilizing to Camp Shelby, MS, training for Iraq with his new unit, B Company of the 1/160th Infantry, California Army National Guard—more specifically, 2nd Platoon, or as they like to be called, Bad Voodoo Platoon. Bad Voodoo? I admit, at first I was like, “What kind of hokey . . .” And when JP told me, “This is the most high-speed unit out there,” I thought, “Man, I heard that a thousand times.” But, at the same time, JP and I go back so I knew I had to see what he was up to. He'd only been home for a little over a year and a half. He served as a 60mm mortarman with A Company, 3/116th, Virginia Guard back in '04-'05. After returning, he accomplished a family dream and got his wife and two little kids moved across the country to California, swore in with the California Guard, and . . . BAM—he was shipping out! He then had to move his wife and two little kids back across the country to Virginia, so they would have extended family around. JP, of course, is proud to go. The way he sees it, he's a Soldier. It's his duty. Of course, for us (the friends and family), when a Soldier comes home, we think, “Thank God, you're home,” and we go about our business and don't really expect you to go back, at least not anytime soon. Part of me wanted to knock his block off, though really, I can't help but admire his dedication. So, I packed the Jeep and trucked down to Shelby.

Cell phone rings. “I just found out I'm having a baby,” calmly states SSG Toby Nunn. SSG Nunn and I were sitting in a Shelby van when he got the call. I'd just met him, so I wasn't sure whether to say, “Congratulations!” or just sit in an awkward silence. I went with, “Congrats,” and hopped out to get my billeting. I'd later find out that SSG Toby Nunn at 31 years old is undeniably one of the most hard-core and top-notch Soldiers I'd have the honor to meet. He cares deeply for his family, is in fact excited about the new baby, but cares almost as (or just as) deeply about his military brothers—the boys of Bad Voodoo. SSG Nunn is their platoon sergeant—the caring dad and the mean-as-all-hell football coach, all rolled into one (i.e., during my visit, a young private said something to the staff sergeant starting with “I think . . .” SSG Nunn quickly yelled, “Who thinks between me and you?!” The private paused and replied nervously, almost as a question, “You, Sergeant.”). He explains to me that these boys are defining their individual legacy. He wants to do everything he can to preserve that, hence the creation of Bad Voodoo. He's marketing this platoon. They're not just a number and an acronym.

SSG Nunn, other than an energy-drink junkie (or “go juice” as he calls it, NOS being the preferred brand), is a Canadian citizen. He joined the Regular Army in the early '90s to “earn” his American citizenship. Well, almost 10 years in the military later, he's still trying to find time to actually get the citizenship. After a recent deployment in Iraq (“It was kick @\$%!” said SSG Nunn of his tour in the Army's first Stryker brigade), he left the Army, thinking he'd be able to get that paperwork done.

“It's one of those weird things when you start serving,” explains SSG Nunn in his dry, gravelly tone, “you kind of feel a need to continue serving. I don't want to say you feel like less of a man, but . . . I tried sitting at home and watching CNN for a while. Got accepted to University of Central Florida in Orlando and ended up joining the Florida Guard. Shortly after that, due to some family issues . . . I transferred to a unit in the Bay Area. After a couple months, they pulled our names out of a hat (laughs) and we ended up getting sent down south. I deliberately picked that unit because they just got back—and I just got back. It'd give me a chance to go back to school. I had two drills. But, it's all working out.”

SSG Nunn runs the platoon with 1LT Ricardo Ferrell. Sort of an odd pair, these two guys are vastly different in many ways. 1LT Ferrell is the platoon leader, though at 24, his experience level compared to SSG Nunn is minimal. Don't get me wrong, though, this Soldier is smart. He's got a sharp mind and warm nature that matches up perfect with SSG Nunn's grit. Both are hip to marketing their men and actually hand selected this bunch. See, each member of Bad Voodoo hails from the San Francisco area. Their regiment otherwise hails from Los Angeles. They're the odd men out,

purposely, which fords their incredible unit cohesion.

1LT Ferrell likes to think of himself as the “morale guy.” He's quick to smile and quick to set the standard. He makes sure he's the first to go anywhere or through anything to show his men there's nothing to worry about. 1LT Ferrell joined California Guard from the Washington Guard where he served as an enlisted Soldier. He commissioned through ROTC in 2005 after three years of service and sings the praises of the program (read 1LT Ferrell's testimonial at 1-800-Go-Guard.com/ROTC).

Though he mobilized with the Washington Guard in 2003, this will be the young lieutenant's first deployment. He's very much looking forward to it.

“I enlisted as a transportation guy,” said 1LT Ferrell. “I had an overwhelming desire to be an infantryman, though. Now that I am one, it's one of these things you have to do. I'm very, very fortunate to be an infantry lieutenant who was given a platoon to lead. In



LOVE FOR COUNTRY
SPC Jason Shaw,
one of the youngest
Soldiers in Bad
Voodoo Platoon.

my mind, there's no greater honor, at least for the officer corps. I'm honored because I'm sharing in a tradition—George Washington, Douglas MacArthur, Colin Powell, Norman Schwarzkopf, so many great leaders all started their career as infantry platoon leaders during very, very turbulent times.”

The mission of Bad Voodoo will be convoy escort. Not a usual job for infantry, though these are not usual times. MOS-crossovers are happening more rapidly than ball players get busted.

The rest of the platoon is eager for the mission and confident of its success. And they have every reason to be. They're bringing experience from the famed Big Red 1, 3rd Infantry Division, 82nd Airborne, 10th Mountain, 2nd Ranger Battalion, 101st Airborne, 29th Infantry Division and many more of the military's finest. Most of the men have already served in Iraq or Afghanistan—some, multiple times.

One of the youngest, SPC Jason Shaw, 22, left high school as a sophomore. The day he turned 17, he joined the Army. Signed on with the 3rd Infantry Division. Now with Bad Voodoo, this will be his third trip to Iraq.

“I went to Iraq my first time '03 to '04,” shared SPC Shaw. “Went again . . . from '05 to '06, again with the 3rd ID. When I got back, [I] signed up for California Guard and moved to California . . . and signed up again to go to Iraq. I can't see myself doing any other job than infantry. It's the backbone of the Army. I know it's the best job in the Army. It's hard. It's mentally tough; physically tough. I love my job. I love going out there, doing raids. I just love it.”

“Civilian job?” SPC Shaw adds, “I actually work at a hotel as a front desk guy (laughs).”

The Bad Voodoo Soldiers will no doubt continue to hammer their mark on the War on Terror. I was impressed by and honored to meet each and every one of these men. Not only for their words, but their actions, as well.

Just one example—I trudged along with them on a four-mile march where we were then hit by a simulated IED with a loud blast of white smoke, triggering the men to firing positions and target practice—while I was left wondering, “Huh? What the @\$&! was that; where'd everyone go?!” And scrambled to catch up. Bad Voodoo moved with determination and enthusiasm. In fact, they moved too fast for the trainers, often waiting for the different stages to be ready and the team ahead to finish. Maybe it was the “go juice,” but I believe it's really the Bad Voodoo vigor in full effect. It's all that experience and training and proactive leadership coming to a head. It gave me confidence when I saw JP's family a month later at the Milblogging Conference in Arlington to tell them that their son and brother is traveling with, in fact, “the most high-speed unit out there.”

Throughout the deployment of Bad Voodoo, we'll be spotlighting their accomplishments and featuring profiles of the individual Soldiers. In conjunction, expect big things at BadVoodooPlatoon.com—the platoon's Web site. There, you'll find videos, current events, bios, instructions for support and more. **GX**

MEN ON A MISSION (below) A Bad Voodoo Soldier sprays lead from his M249SAW at Camp Shelby, MS. 1LT Ricardo Ferrell (top right), platoon leader for Bad Voodoo. SSG Toby Nunn (bottom right), platoon sergeant for Bad Voodoo.



AT TIMES LIKE THIS IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THERE'S A STRONG NATIONAL GUARD IN YOUR COMMUNITY.



Natural disasters do more than make headlines. They affect the lives of millions of Americans every year. And so does the National Guard. Whether it's a wildfire, tornado, hurricane or earthquake, the Guard is there. Always has been. And with the support of dedicated Americans, the Guard will always be the force America's communities count on.

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The Birth of the Star-Spangled Banner

By Jason Hall
Director National Guard Education Foundation (2003-2007)

At some point this Fourth of July, you'll hear "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Anyone who has been to a baseball game is familiar with the song, but do they know the meaning behind the words, or the history of its composer?

GX readers, take pride. Our national anthem has deep ties to the National Guard, and its composer was a Guard Soldier.

The national anthem was born during the War of 1812. Neither the United States nor Great Britain wanted this war. The U.S. knew its small Regular Army was inadequate for a large war, and militia forces were mostly poorly trained and lacking in supplies.

Engaged in the Napoleonic Wars, Great Britain didn't want the war either. Unfortunately, many Americans believed England hoped to limit U.S. growth and was scoffing at its legitimacy. Adding fuel to this fire was the practice of British naval vessels regularly stopping American ships and impressing Yankee sailors into the Royal Navy. When diplomacy failed to improve relations, Congress reluctantly declared war on England on June 18, 1812.

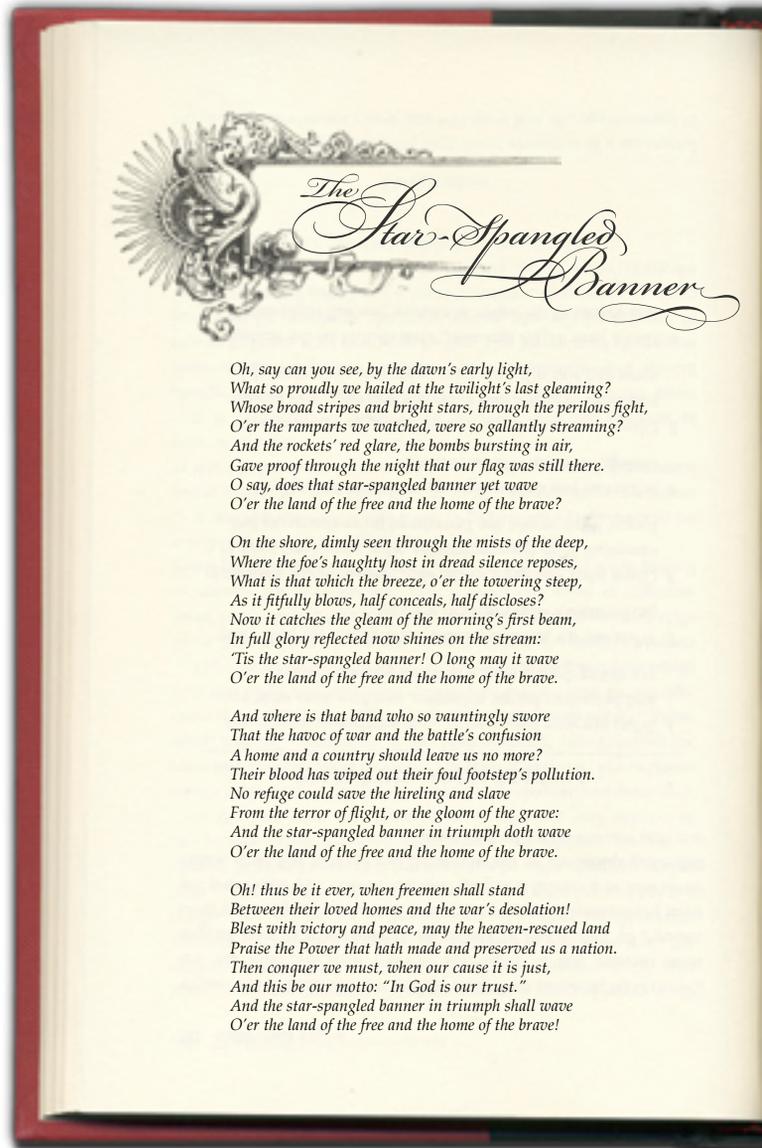
At this time, Francis Scott Key, 33, was a lawyer in DC. A committed Federalist and devout Episcopalian, Key opposed war with Great Britain and refused to fight. It wasn't until the British landed their fleet in the Chesapeake Bay in 1814 that Key became a supporter of the war. He became an officer in the local Georgetown Light Artillery, District of Columbia Militia. Key would later write that he wasn't a very good artilleryman.

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars, England invaded the United States. On August 19, 1814, 4,000 British soldiers landed on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay and marched on Washington, DC. The alarm went out across Maryland, Virginia and DC. A force of Regular Army Soldiers, Marines and militiamen gathered at Bladensburg, MD, to repel the invasion.

During the Battle of Bladensburg, August 24, 1814, Francis Scott Key assigned field positions to American Soldiers, a duty for which he had no experience. The American force attempted to hold their ground, but was overrun. Some of the poorly trained militia forces retreated so quickly, the battle became known as the "Bladensburg Races."

The victorious British then marched unopposed into DC. President James Madison and first lady Dolley Madison were about to sit down to a formal dinner when the British troops arrived in the city. Hearing of the invasion, they fled rapidly, food still on the table. The British entered the White House, found and ate the dinner, and then torched the White House and several other government buildings in retaliation for the sacking of York, Canada (modern day Toronto), by American military forces. Key witnessed the destruction from the heights above Georgetown. He returned to his home after the British withdrew on August 25, 1814.

The British fleet, carrying more than 5,000 soldiers, arrived near Baltimore, with the plan of capturing the city and burning its dock-



yards and naval stores. Instead of despairing about their humiliating defeat at Bladensburg, American forces instead prepared for the defense of Baltimore. This time, the British would be met by properly trained and fully prepared militiamen and Regular Soldiers.

The British attack on Baltimore was a two-prong assault. A land attack against the Americans would occur concurrent with a naval attack on Fort McHenry.

On the morning of September 12, 1814, a British force of 9,000 men landed at North Point, MD, intending to march inland and capture Baltimore. Meeting the British at North Point was an army composed almost entirely of Maryland militia units. The 5th Regiment of Infantry, Maryland Militia, was assigned the task of holding the American right flank. Despite two hours of intense artillery and rocket fire, the 5th Maryland stood their ground. After inflicting some 300 casualties, the 5th was ordered to fall back to a new position in front of the Baltimore trenches. Today's 1st and 2nd Battalions, 175th Infantry, Maryland Army National Guard, carry on the courageous lineage of the 5th Maryland.



FRANCIS SCOTT KEY.

The British Army was exhausted by the fighting and surprised by Maryland's determined defense. During the Battle of North Point, British commander Maj. Gen. Robert Ross, victor of Bladensburg, was killed. The British army forces withdrew. Around the same time, the British Navy was beginning their seaborne attack on Baltimore with the bombardment of Fort McHenry. A strange twist of fate would put Francis Scott Key, the unassuming young lawyer with a poor military resumé, in the middle of the bombardment.

At home in Georgetown, Key discovered that his good friend, Dr. William Beanes of Upper Marlboro, MD, had been captured by the British. As British forces were withdrawing from the town of Upper Marlboro, two drunken British stragglers were causing disturbance to the local citizenry. Dr. William Beanes took it upon himself to arrest the soldiers and have them jailed. One escaped, caught up to his unit and reported what had happened. A detachment of British soldiers returned to Upper Marlboro to free the imprisoned soldier and arrest Dr. Beanes. The British placed Dr. Beanes on a ship in Baltimore Harbor called the HMS Tonnant.

Francis Scott Key went to President Madison to request permission to speak to the British about releasing the doctor. The president gave permission and insisted Key bring COL John Skinner, a government officer who worked to free prisoners of war. On September 13, Key and Skinner sailed down the bay toward the British fleet. There, they asked Rear Adm. Sir George Cockburn to release Dr. Beanes. Adm. Cockburn agreed, but the British wouldn't let the Americans return to shore right away because the Americans' newfound familiarity with the strength and position of the British fleet and their intention to attack Baltimore.

Key, Skinner and Dr. Beanes left the British ship and returned to the truce ship, eight miles from Fort McHenry. The three men were unable to do anything but stand by and watch the bombardment of Fort McHenry. The attack continued day and night for over 24 hours. Key feared the small fort would not hold out against the powerful British fleet.

The 1,000 men who defended Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore were members of three different fighting units. The first unit was members of the U.S. Army Corps of Artillery stationed at the fort. The second unit was members of the Maryland Militia. The third was Sailors from Commodore Joshua Barney's Flotilla, formed in 1813 to provide naval protection for the Chesapeake Bay.

During the night, the exploding shells and rockets revealed that the American Flag still flew over the fort. However, Key went to sleep assuming the fort would fall before morning. As dawn rose over the fort on September 14, Key looked to see if the flag was still flying. He could see a flag, but couldn't discern if it was American or British. He asked a sailor on board if he could tell which flag it was, to which the sailor exclaimed that it was American. Imagine Key's amazement and joy at realizing that this small American force, which included National Guard Soldiers, had repelled the British fleet.

Key quickly wrote a poem to celebrate this historic event. His poem starts with the same question he asked that morning: "Oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early light / What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?"

That night, Key showed the poem to his brother-in-law, who took the poem to a printer with a request to set the words to the music of the popular English drinking song, "To Anacreon in Heaven." Originally the poem was entitled "The Defense of Fort McHenry." But by October, the tune was being sung across the country and had been renamed "The Star-Spangled Banner."

On January 11, 1843, Francis Scott Key, a National Guard member, died of pleurisy while visiting his sister in Baltimore. Today, he rests in Mount Olivet Cemetery in Frederick, MD. Our nation's flag flies day and night over his grave and over Fort McHenry, now known as Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine.

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson made "The Star-Spangled Banner" the official song of the U.S. Armed Forces. On March 3, 1931, an Act of Congress made it America's national anthem.

As long as there are men and women prepared to serve and defend our country, we can always answer "YES!" to Francis Scott Key's fateful question: "O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave, O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" **GX**

Combatives vs. Martial Arts

And Breaking Grips With More Submissions

By SFC Donnie Moseley
NM NG CATC

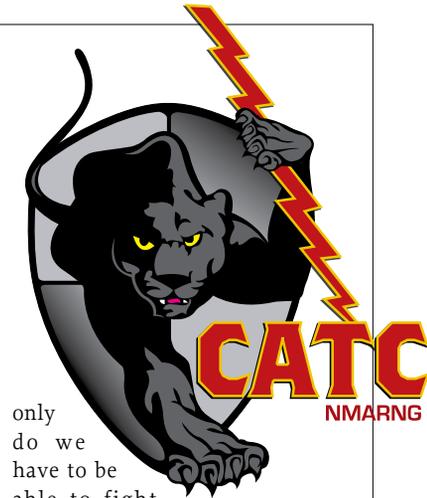
I was recently asked if I could go over how to finish an Arm Bar if my opponent defends, by grabbing with the opposing hand. I just so happen to have a handful of techniques for such an occasion. Before we do, however, I want talk a bit about the Modern Army Combatives Program (MACP).

I was asked by one of my Level II students, which martial art I thought was the best for fighting. That is a very common and fair question. A tough question, too, so I hope I convey my thoughts correctly. A good friend

of mine had a shirt that said, "If fighting was easy, they would call it karate." I thought that was pretty funny. After some thought however, the same could be said about almost anything (boxing, kick boxing, judo and tae kwon do).

I train at a Gracie-Barra school on my personal time, so everyone expects me to say Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is the best. Well, I'm not going to say that. What I am going to say is it all depends on how good you are at what you do. Seventy-some odd UFCs have proven that. It's important to train on all ranges and aspects of fighting. Being a well-rounded fighter is the important thing.

Boxing is great for learning how to punch; judo is great for learning how to throw people; tae kwon do is great for kicking and punching. What does any of this have to do with MACP? Well, again in my opinion, the MACP is a program that gives our Soldiers tools to train at all ranges of the fight, and cares about their actual fighting ability. All the way from kicking and punching, grappling and submission fighting, to stick fighting and electric stun guns! Because in our business, there is no referee to stop the fight. MMA fighters, as much respect as I do have for those guys, our fighting skills are far tougher than any of them could ever imagine! Not



only do we have to be able to fight and react to "man-to-man contact" (Battle Drill #32, by the way), we still have to know how to patrol, call for fire, enter and clear a room, react to ambushes near and far, the list goes on and on. So, to answer the question, the most noble, honorable, humble, toughest, most fierce fighters are in the United States Military. That's my answer.

So, let's train! **GX**

Straight Arm Bars are pretty common submissions. A very common defense is to grab on with the free hand. So, here are a couple of techniques to either break the grip or transition to another submission.

PHOTO 1

If he has an opposing thumb grip in a typical defense, I don't want to expend a lot of time and energy trying to break his grip.



PHOTO 2

I'm going to reach across and pull his opposite elbow toward me, while maintaining a trap on the arm I'm attacking. Once the grip breaks, lean back and finish.



PHOTO 3

For a stronger grip, I'll take the leg that's across the body and place my foot on the opposite bicep, toes pointed out, and shake my leg like a dog when you scratch his belly. Grip breaks and finish.



PHOTO 4

Now, I'll go for another submission. I'll drape my far-side leg across the forearm that I have trapped, then figure-four my other leg, causing intense pressure on his bicep, for the tap!



PHOTO 5

Or, I'll put my far-side leg through his arms, hooking my ankle behind his head.



PHOTO 6

Next, I'll grab his head with both hands and lock my leg over the other for the triangle choke!



Now, you should have a good set of tools to beat those defenses. Some suggested reading on the history of martial arts: FM 3-25.150 and "Mastering Jiu-jitsu" by Renzo Gracie.

See you next month. Train hard!

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Mears Wins Coca-Cola 600 While Honoring Fallen Heroes

Story and photos courtesy of Hendrick Motorsports

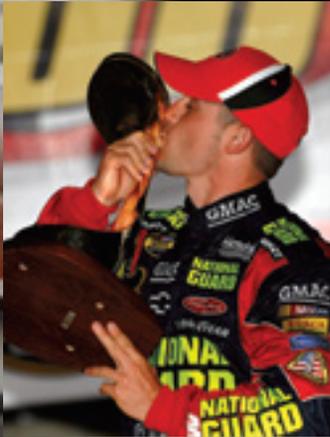
In his 156th NEXTEL Cup Series start, Casey Mears, driver of the No. 25 National Guard/GMAC "American Heroes" Chevrolet, won the Coca-Cola 600 on May 27 at Lowe's Motor Speedway to earn his first victory at NASCAR's highest level.

The 29-year-old driver hightailed his way to Victory Lane after running in the top 10 for much of the 400-lap race. With less than 10 laps to go, crew chief Darian Grubb made the call to stay out as the leaders pitted, and Mears was able to stretch his fuel to the finish line—just barely!

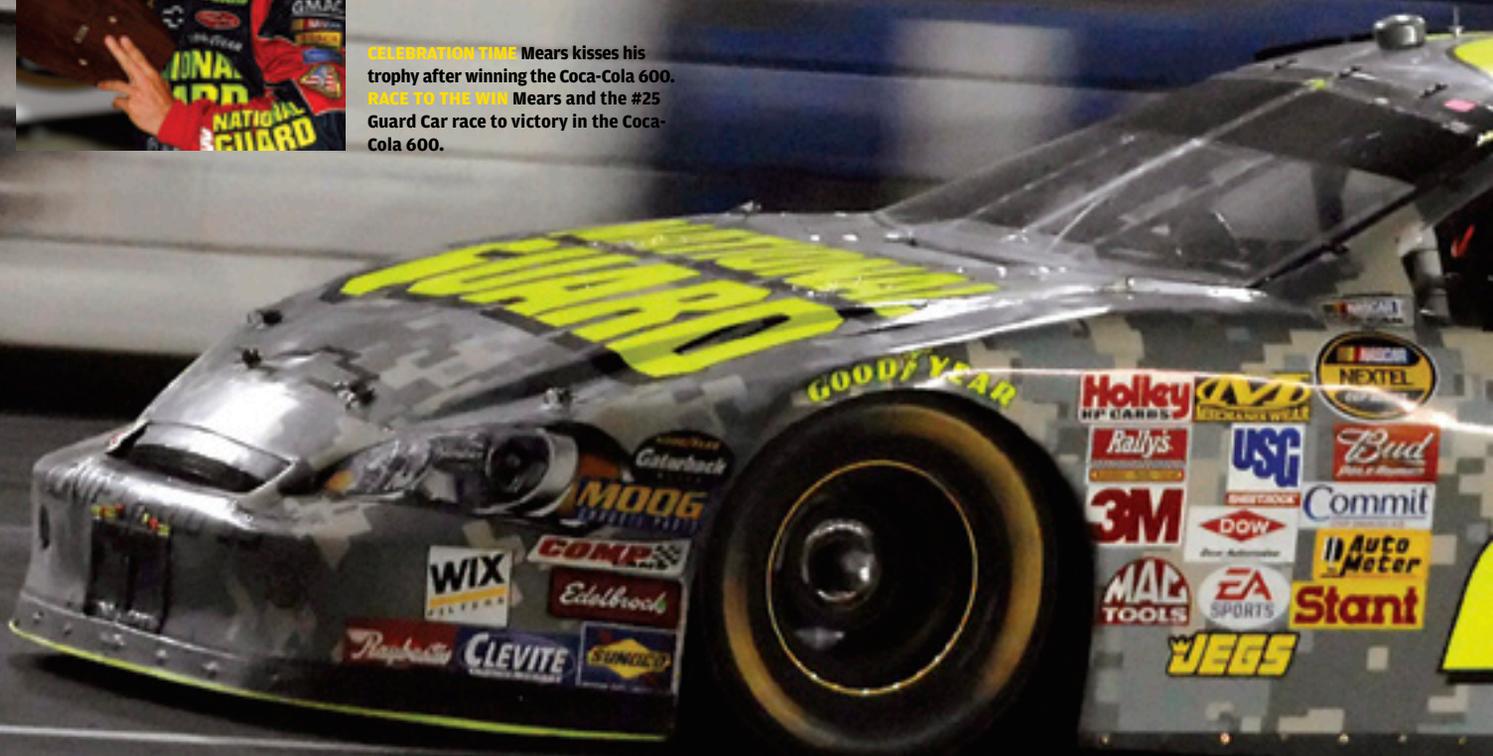
"This win is unreal. It's been a long time coming, and I'm so proud of the team," said Mears, who ran out of gas on the cool-down lap after taking the checkered flag. "Darian made a great call and told me to conserve fuel. That was the call that won it for us, and turned our third or fourth-place car into the winning car."

Mears, who qualified 16th-fastest for the event, was especially satisfied with the end result after his team fought through a race riddled with various challenges.

Early on, Mears struggled with a tight race car and just missed being involved in several significant wrecks. He was able to drive through a multi-car accident that happened after Jimmie Johnson lost



CELEBRATION TIME Mears kisses his trophy after winning the Coca-Cola 600. **RACE TO THE WIN** Mears and the #25 Guard Car race to victory in the Coca-Cola 600.



a tire tread in traffic on Lap 53 and avoided a Lap 63 accident involving teammate Jeff Gordon.

Mears' No. 25 National Guard/GMAC "American Heroes" Chevrolet featured a special paint scheme as part of the American Heroes Memorial Day salute to the Armed Forces at Lowe's Motor Speedway. The No. 25 car featured an ACU pattern (camouflage) paint scheme with the names of National Guard Soldiers who lost their lives in the Global War on Terror displayed on the car's deck lid.

Mears said the win was also meaningful since his uncle, Rick Mears, won the Indianapolis 500 on Memorial Day weekend in 1979, 1984, 1988 and 1991.

"This is a special weekend for me . . . because it's Memorial Day weekend and we have the privilege to represent the National Guard," Mears said. "It was an honor for me to have those names on our car, and to win with them onboard is amazing. I'm so glad we could get it done for the Guard, GMAC and everyone who supports us every weekend at the track."

After the race, Mears jumped six spots in the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup point standings to move into 29th.

Keep up with Mears and Guard Racing at:

1-800-GO-GUARD.com/guardracing





Born to Fish: The True Story of a Guard Fisherman

By SPC Adam Lock

I grew up in the small town of Altamont, IL. As a kid, there wasn't much to do other than hunt, fish and play sports. Lucky for me, I grew up in a subdivision that was a family-owned campground before it was subdivided. There were seven different ponds that I could choose to go fishing in . . . the best one in my own back yard.

As a youngster, I remember hopping on my bicycle with a tackle box in one hand and a fishing rod in the other, and navigating my way to one of the ponds that two older gentlemen fished in every evening. These men taught me about bass fishing and would praise my abilities to cast and catch fish at such a young age. At this point in my life, I knew I was born to fish. Every chance I got, I would fish and hone my skills of casting and catching more and bigger fish.

When I was 11, I competed in the Illinois State Fair Casting Contest and won first place. After that, I continued to fish and played many sports. When I started high school, my love of sports had grown to the point that I decided I wanted to be a physical education teacher and basketball coach. I knew that I would have to go to college and figure out a way to pay for it. The summer before my senior year, while thumbing through a fishing magazine, I saw an ad for the National Guard. The ad said the Guard would pay for all my college. I called the number on the ad and joined the Guard the next week.

After I completed basic training, I went to Lakeland College, where I was a member of the men's basketball team. After that, I transferred to Southern Illinois University Carbondale where I got my degree in physical education, courtesy of the Guard. I took a job as a P.E. teacher and head basketball coach at a small school in southern Illinois, roughly a half-hour from Kentucky Lake. Living in such a great fishing area, my passion for bass fishing exploded. I started fishing the FLW Outdoors Wal-Mart Bass Fishing League (BFL) and won my fourth BFL tournament out of Paducah, KY.

The following year, I won the Ranger Cup in an event at Kentucky Lake. As much as I liked teaching and coaching, I decided my passion for fishing outweighed it. By this time, I had served my time in the Guard and was in the Inactive Ready Reserve. I heard a rumor that the Guard was going to be sponsoring a fishing team with FLW Outdoors. I decided to come back into the Illinois Army National Guard as a recruiter and at the same time, hoped that I might have a shot to fish on the Guard Team.

After sending my resumé, keeping my fingers crossed and many prayers, the good Lord answered them with a co-angler spot on the 2007 National Guard Fishing Team. Since then, I've been living a dream, the same dream I've had since I was knee-high to a grasshopper.

Our first stop on the 2007 FLW Tour was in February in Austin, TX. I was so anxious and nervous to have the chance to fish alongside some of my heroes. I made the top-10 cut in my first FLW Tour event.

I am currently in contention for FLW Tour Championship at the end of the season and look forward to the upcoming events. While I have had a great time fishing the tour, I have also have enjoyed a successful year in recruiting. I have always believed in what the Guard has to offer. I can use myself as an example for this in that the Guard has given me excellent training, a college degree and the opportunity to live out my dream. I love the sense of pride that I get when wearing my uniform and the even greater sense of pride when I see new recruits wearing theirs. **GX**

To learn more about the Guard fishing team, visit:

1-800-GO-GUARD.com/guardevents/fishing.php



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OPERATION PUSHING FOR POINTS™

From APFT to Promotion
Part 1 of 2—The First 30 Days

By SSG Ken and Stephanie Weichert



HOOAH! askthetrainer@startfitness.com
Let us hear from you.

Stephanie and SSG Weichert,

Hello. I am presently eight weeks out from an APFT. I am a long time Guardsman who is training seriously for the first time in a long time. I read GX magazine frequently and in the past couple of months have become more familiar with START Fitness. Your articles are great! Right now, I am running, doing full sit-ups and push-ups. How do I put it all together in order to MAX the APFT? Thanks.

Dave A.
MAARNG

RECEIVED

SSG Weichert and Stephanie,

RECEIVED

Hello. I am at the top of the promotion list, but I am really out of shape. I have to pass a PT test in about eight weeks in order to be promoted. Do you have any advice on how to optimize that time so that I can perform well on the APFT? Thanks for what you do!

SPC James H.
TXARNG

SSG Weichert and Stephanie,

Hello. I am hoping to receive a little bit of help from the two of you. I am looking for a really good program that can help me achieve a better score in the APFT. No matter what I do, it seems like I cannot get any faster on my run, nor do more push-ups and sit-ups since my last test. I run two miles a couple of times a week and weight lift, but apparently not enough or not doing it right. I really could use some help in this area. Thank you.

SSG Shane A.
MIARNG

RECEIVED

Fellow Guard Soldiers,

Hello! Thanks for reading GX! About 75 percent of the emails Stephanie and I receive are from Guard Soldiers who are concerned about passing the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). We understand and would like to address your concern with a two-month training program. Many of us lead very busy lives, which can sometimes lead to a horrible diet and putting off regular exercise. Sometimes, the only exercise we manage to fit in our schedule is on drill weekends.

Bottom-line, the higher the score we achieve on the APFT, the more points we receive for promotion. Whether you're a Guard Soldier trying to better your previous APFT score or a reader who simply wants to reach a higher level of fitness, we challenge you to utilize our 60-day Diet and Exercise APFT summer challenge—Operation Pushing for Points™!

For those of you who are avid weight lifters or athletes with advanced training needs, be advised that this program will specifically address effective training strategies for the APFT only. This program is designed to help you maximize results. Although results will vary, many recruits in our private program have seen a tremendous reduction of body fat as well as an increase in strength and stamina after utilizing the Operation Pushing for Points™ program, which we will be presenting over the ensuing two months. When the goal is to score as high as possible on the APFT, it can be counter-productive to engage in heavy weight training. The Operation Pushing for Points™ program has been tested and proven to be effective. Are you ready for the challenge? HOOAH! Let's get started!

WEEKS 1 AND 2: OPERATION WAKE-UP CALL™

MONDAY Muscle Exploitation Day

SET #1

Warm-up: 10-15 minutes (see past issues for suggested warm-ups.)

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes

Close-grip push-ups: 45 seconds

Rest: 45 seconds

Normal-grip (hands shoulder-width apart) push-ups: 45 seconds

Rest: 45 seconds

Wide-grip push-ups: 45 seconds

Rest: 45 seconds

½ Sit-ups: 2 minutes

Remarks: The ½ sit-up is also called the abdominal crunch. Start: Lay down on your back with both legs together and bent 90 degrees at your knees. Place your heels on the ground and point your toes upward. Interlock your fingers and place your hands behind your head. Action: Raise your upper body until your shoulders blades lift off of the ground and return to the start position.

Warning: Do not pull on your neck with your hands. Keep your elbows wide and your chin pointing toward the sky during the entire exercise.

Note: Full sit-ups are not performed during weeks 1-2 of the Operation Pushing for Points™ training plan.

SET #2

Close-grip push-ups: 35 seconds

Rest: 35 seconds

Normal-grip push-ups: 35 seconds

Rest: 35 seconds

Wide-grip push-ups: 35 seconds

Rest: 35 seconds

½ Sit-ups: 2 minutes

SET #3

Close-grip push-ups: 25 seconds

Rest: 25 seconds

Normal-grip push-ups: 25 seconds

Rest: 25 seconds

Wide-grip push-ups: 25 seconds

Rest: 25 seconds

½ Sit-ups: 2 minutes

10 Minutes aerobics (choose one: treadmill, elliptical machine, running, cycle)

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes (cool down)



Proper hand position for close-grip push-ups.

Energy and persistence conquer all things.

—Benjamin Franklin

Intermediate Level — 1 round = approximately 45 minutes *

Advanced Level — 2 rounds = approximately 90 minutes *

*Depending on repetitions per set and rest periods

Note: Diet plan available by going to www.GXonline.com.

Each running period should be the best sprint possible. I like to time my sprints. That way I can challenge myself to achieve a better run time the next day that I attempt the same lesson plan.

WEDNESDAY (Repeat Monday lesson plan)

THURSDAY (Repeat Tuesday lesson plan)

FRIDAY Practice Push-up Test Day

SET #1

Warm-up: 10-15 minutes (See past issues for suggested warm-ups)

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes

Push-up test #1 (Complete the most push-ups possible in a 2-minute period)

½ Sit-ups: 2 minutes

Rest: 2 minutes

SET #2

Push-up test #2 (complete the most push-ups possible in a 1.5-minute period)

½ Sit-ups: 2 minutes

Rest: 2 minutes

SET #3

Push-up test #3 (complete the most push-ups possible in a 1-minute period)

½ Sit-ups: 2 minutes

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes (cool down)

Rest: 2 days

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

Light stretching and plenty of rest.

Stick to the diet plan and you will notice a tremendous increase in your energy after the first week!

Go for Muscle Failure!
—SGT KEN

Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.

—Robert Collier

Winning isn't everything, but wanting to win is.

—Vince Lombardi



TUESDAY

Warm-up: 10-15 minutes (see past issues for suggested warm-ups)

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes

½ Sit-ups: 90 seconds

Sprint 1 lap around a ¼-mile track or the same distance around your street block, or run ¼ mile on a treadmill at a good pace.

Fast walk 3-5 minutes

Repeat the sequence 5 additional sets (total 6 sets = 1.5 miles of running)

Stretching Exercises: 8-10 minutes (cool down)

WEEKS 3 AND 4: OPERATION DOUBLE-TIME™

MONDAY Belly Buster Day

SET #1

Warm-up: 10-15 minutes (see past issues for suggested warm-ups)

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes

Sit-ups: 90 seconds

Rest: 60 seconds

Sit-ups: 75 seconds

Rest: 60 seconds

Sit-ups: 60 seconds

Rest: 60 seconds

Sit-ups: 45 seconds

Rest: 60 seconds

SET #2

Box and reach: 50 repetitions

Rest: 45 seconds

Box and reach: 40 repetitions

Rest: 45 seconds

Box and reach: 30 repetitions

Rest: 45 seconds

Box and reach: 20 repetitions

Rest: 45 seconds

Remarks: The Box and reach is a two-movement exercise. Start: Lay down on your back with your arms and legs pointing upward and your feet flexed. Elevate your shoulders slightly.

Action: Start the exercise by reaching over the outside of your left thigh with both arms. Next, return to the start position and reach over the outside of your right thigh with both arms. Reaching on both sides completes one repetition of this exercise.

SET #3

½ Sit-ups: 2 minutes

Freeze in the up position on the 30th repetition for 10 seconds, and then continue

Rest: 45 seconds

½ Sit-ups: 1.5 minutes

Freeze in the up position on the 30th repetition for 10 seconds, and then continue

Rest: 45 seconds

½ Sit-ups: 1 minute

Freeze in the up position on the 20th repetition for 10 seconds, and then continue

Rest: 45 seconds

½ Sit-ups: 30 seconds

10 minutes aerobics (choose one: treadmill, elliptical machine, running, cycle)

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes (cool down)

Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.
—Robert Collier

The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack in will.
—Vince Lombardi

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

TUESDAY

Warm-up: 10-15 minutes (see past issues for suggested warm-ups)

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes

Track: Sprint the stretches and jog the curves: 8 laps

In other words, sprint the straight sections of the track and jog the curves until you reach 2 miles

This can also be achieved by sprinting the long sections of city blocks and jogging the ends for the same distance, or

Treadmill: Sprint .075 miles on a treadmill and immediately reduce the speed of the treadmill to a jogging pace for .05 miles: 16 consecutive sets

Note: You may choose to sprint .15 miles and jog for .10 miles: 8 consecutive sets

Rest: 5-minutes

Push-up test (the best performance of push-ups for a 2-minute period)

½ Sit-ups: 3 minutes

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes (cool down)

Note: Interval training simply prepares you for faster speeds when it's really needed during testing periods.

You will see your stamina and endurance improve every week that you endure this strategy. Simply increase the sprinting distances and decrease the jogging distances in future exercise periods. You can also adapt this routine by running against a colleague for every sprint period.

WEDNESDAY (Repeat Monday lesson plan)

THURSDAY (Repeat Tuesday lesson plan)



JONATHAN MILLER

FRIDAY Mini-Test Day

SET #1

Warm-up: 10-15 minutes (see past issues for suggested warm-ups)

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes

Push-up test #1 (complete the most push-ups possible in a 1-minute period)

Sit-ups test #1 (complete the most sit-ups possible in a 1-minute period)

Running test #1 (achieve the best time possible in a 1-mile run)

Rest: 10 minutes

SET #2

Push-up test #2 (complete the most push-ups possible in a 1-minute period)

Sit-ups test #2 (complete the most sit-ups possible in a 1-minute period)

Running test #2 (achieve the best time possible in a 1-mile run)

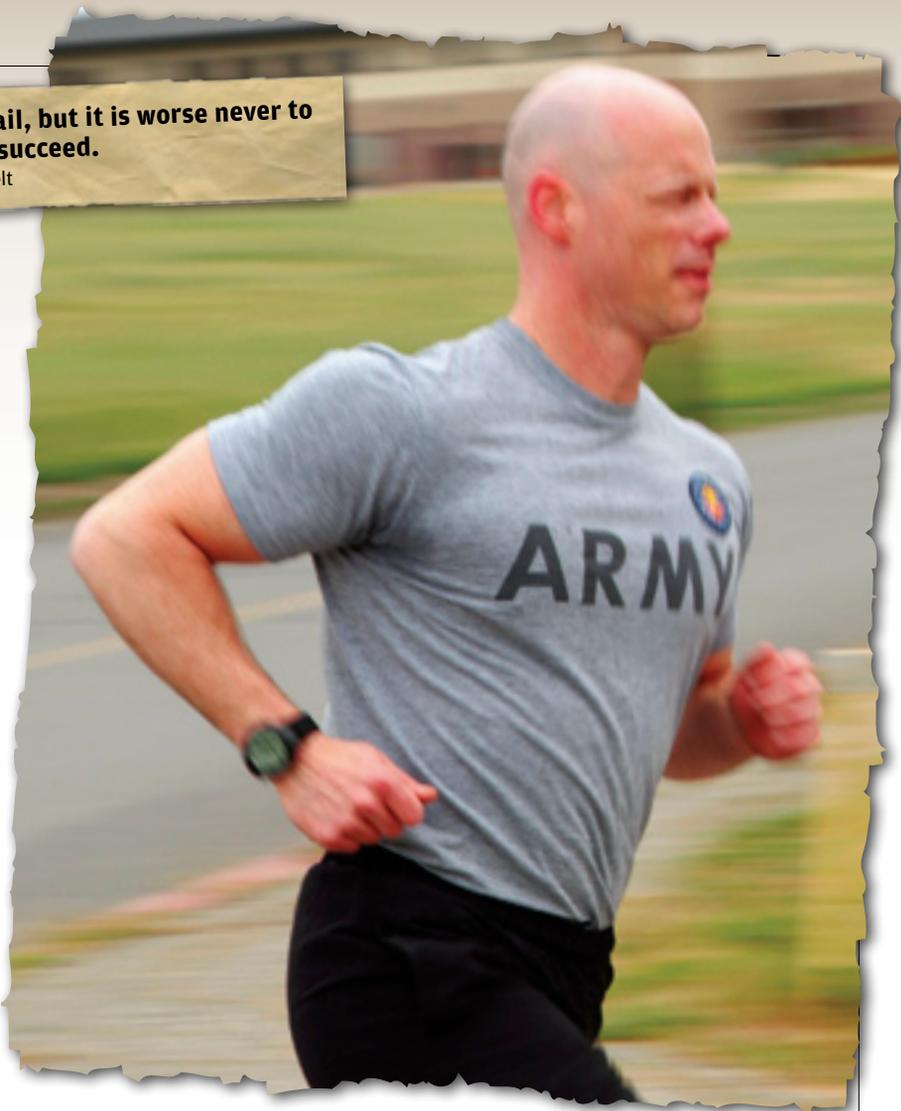
Rest: 5 minutes

Stretching exercises: 8-10 minutes (cool down)

Rest: 2 days

It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed.

—Theodore Roosevelt



SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

Light stretching and plenty of rest.

Next month, we will be taking it to the next level with **Operation Stay the Course™** and **Operation Fit to Fight™**.

For more information, go to www.GXonline.com. **HOOAH!**

START eFITNESS™ NOW ONLINE!

SGT Ken™ and Stephanie are now providing quick and simple health and fitness tips on GXonline.com! As this section develops, you'll be able to view short fitness videos, download workouts and more.

Go to: GXonline.com/fitness



SSG Ken Weichert, six-time Soldier of the Year and Veteran of both Iraqi Freedom and Desert Storm, began the START Fitness™ program in 1997. Now partnered with his wife Stephanie, strategic director of START Fitness™ and a certified personal trainer, the Weicherts are conquering the fitness industry.

SPECIAL REMARKS: We encourage you to send your questions or requests additional information by emailing us at askthetrainer@startfitness.com. You can experience our workouts at home with our **Operation Living Fit—Boot Camp Fitness Toolkit™** DVD series. You can purchase our DVD set at STARTFitness.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 short of breath.

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Smoke on the Front Lawn; Fire in the Sky

How the Brothers West do the Fourth of July



Story and photos by Chris and Jason West

If there's one hackneyed cliché we hate, it's "Less is more." Less is NOT more; MORE is more. And frankly, more is rarely enough in the world of the Brothers West.

For years now, we've been perfecting our Fourth of July fireworks show. Every year, we tweak our setup a little more, with no detail of the production being too small to warrant attention. This year, in preparing for the Fourth, we decided to test our long-held assumptions about the best available ordinance by conducting a side-by-side comparison of the three best available (to us anyway) brands of fireworks: Black Cat, Cherry Bomb and the newest, Black Mamba.

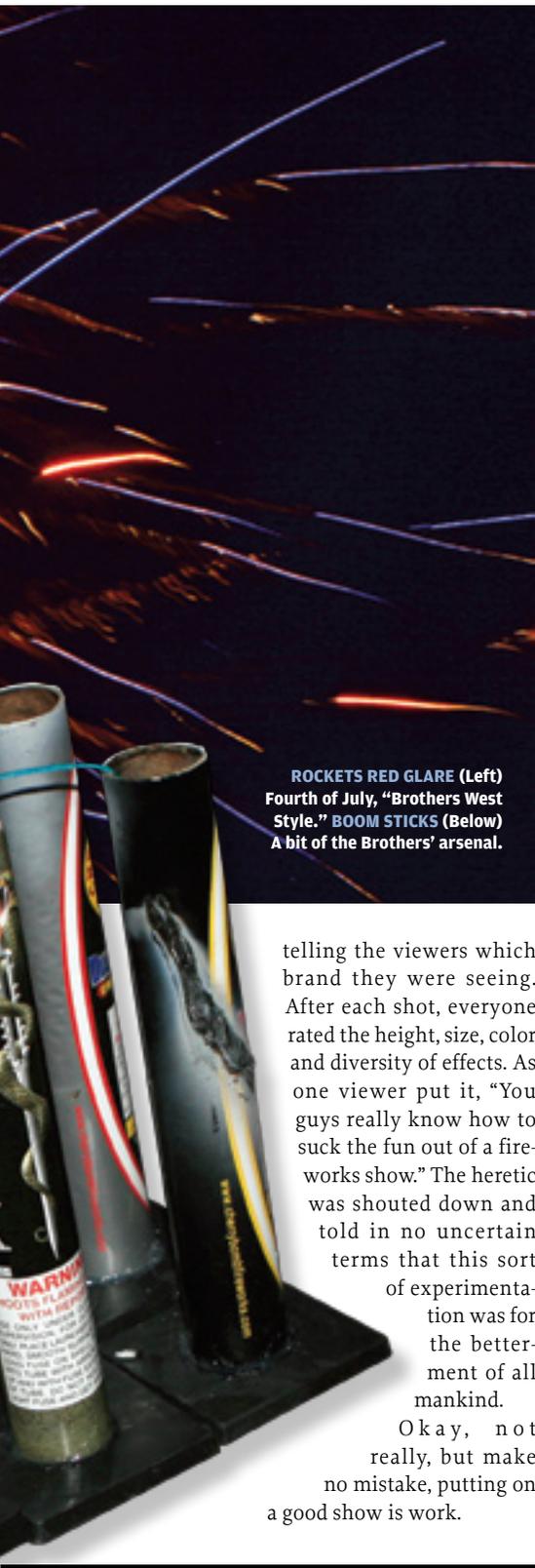
First, we should tell you that we long ago gave up the use of anything except re-loadable "mortar" type fireworks. These are small rounds (usually in packages of six

or 12) that are placed one at a time into an included tube. You light a HUGE fuse and step quickly away. A resounding "WHUMP" follows and the shell shoots skyward, bursting into a nearly professional-looking effect. Although these products tend to be on the pricey side compared to cones and roman candles, they are much more cost-effective than large "multi-shot" fireworks.

As part of our reviews, we purchased a number of other types of fireworks and we can safely say they SUCK. We were embarrassed to have put them in the air. If you're trying to put on a show, don't waste your time. Stick with mortars—they're the best bang for your buck.

We began by gathering a small group of experts (folks who've watched our show for years) and sending up rounds without





ROCKETS RED GLARE (Left)
Fourth of July, “Brothers West
Style.” **BOOM STICKS (Below)**
A bit of the Brothers’ arsenal.

So, cutting to the chase, what is the best brand of fireworks? The hands-down winner was the West family favorite: Black Cat. If you want to wow a crowd, accept no substitutes. You pay for the quality, but what the heck—you only pick up the tab every 12 months, but the neighborhood bragging rights last all year.

The Black Cat rounds were quieter (not quiet by any stretch, just less ear-concussing than the competition), had a wider range of colors and effects, and showed a more consistent level of performance. None of the brands were bad visually, but we had some dangerous malfunctions with some of the Cherry Bomb rounds (hair-charringly low bursts) and the Black Mamba were inconsistent in quality and the fuses kept burning us when lit. This may sound like a whiny complaint, but if you’re putting a lot of rounds in the air, having your thumb repeatedly scorched by fuse sparks gets old.

Interestingly, Black Cat has introduced some variations in their “mortar shell” line of products, including some smaller and significantly less expensive versions. If you’re interested in seeing what these kinds of fireworks look like, you should check these out. Although they don’t quite stack up to the more expensive full-size rounds, they’re still excellent quality for the money.

PUTTING ON A SHOW

The three most important elements to putting on a good show are: safety, safety, safety. Having burning phosphorous rain over them really cuts into a crowd’s enjoyment, so through every step of this process, we work to minimize the danger levels. We do NOT recommend trying to recreate our show.

telling the viewers which brand they were seeing. After each shot, everyone rated the height, size, color and diversity of effects. As one viewer put it, “You guys really know how to suck the fun out of a fireworks show.” The heretic was shouted down and told in no uncertain terms that this sort of experimentation was for the betterment of all mankind. Okay, not really, but make no mistake, putting on a good show is work.

Work on our show begins early in the day. In recent years, our productions have grown to consist of anywhere from 125 to 150 rounds, so some prep work is necessary to keep it from taking all night. We use dry wall screws to secure eight mortar tubes to a heavy board. Securing the launchers to a solid base is critical because the sight of one of these tubes with a lit round tipping over toward your loved ones is not the kind of thing want. The board ends up tilted slightly outward on a smooth flat rock next to a lake. We separate the shells into groups of eight, creating visually pleasing mixes of colors and effects. Each group of eight has its fuses taped in a staggered order (to create a slight delay between rounds) to a single piece of safety fuse. When showtime comes, the clusters are loaded, one shell into each tube, and only a single fuse (with plenty of delay) has to be lit. With the inclusion of shells that have two and three effects, a single cluster generally

has 16 or more bursts, guaranteeing that ever-so-satisfying “Oooooooh! Aaaaah!” from the audience.

So what lessons have we learned over the years at the cost of singed eyebrows, scorched fingers and pulse-pounding fear that might save you from the same? Besides always following the manufacturers warnings, here are our top advanced safety tips:

1 Have a fire extinguisher and a bucket of water close at hand. Sometimes a firework just won’t go off and the only safe way to deal with it is a thorough dunking (after plenty of delay).

2 Have your audience well away from your launch area; ideally twice the blast radius of your largest bursting round (50–100 feet). We’ve had rounds burst six feet off the ground, creating an immediate need to change undergarments.

3 Be sure you can easily and quickly clear your launch area. If something goes wrong, you don’t want to be slipping in gravel as you sprint for cover. (Don’t try to look manly, once you light a fuse move QUICKLY away.)

4 If you are using mortar-type fireworks, regularly check your tubes as the heat and compression can weaken them and the glue that holds them to the base. Make sure they have a good seal at the bottom and nothing is obstructing the opening. We’ve had countless tubes blow apart over the years or, worse, leak just enough so that the round doesn’t get a full launch (see #2). We actually reinforce the bases of our tubes with hot melt glue.

5 Since you’ll be working at night, have an assistant with a flashlight standing by to help out or light an escape route should you need one.

6 Be aware of possible ignition risks. Curious bystanders with lit cigarettes or kids with sparklers too close to your live rounds can create a dramatic and potentially tragic “everything at once” version of your show. Keep everything you’re not currently igniting well away from your launch area and ideally in a non-flammable container.

So remember: always buy Black Cat, don’t do any of the crazed things we do, and don’t use a cigar to light your fuses—the powder ruins the taste. However you choose to celebrate the Fourth, please do so safely. **GX**

Paintball Gear to Fit Any Budget

By CPT Tim W. Irvin

So what if I remember when paintballs came in a plastic tube of 10? Big deal—I started playing paintball with a Splatmaster. I've seen the transition from pump to autos then to electronics. But the one thing I am sure of in this war of commercialized paintball gear is that the gear doesn't make the player. I've seen teams with pumps slaughter teams using

full autos. It all comes down to teamwork and player skills. So, don't think you can go drop \$2,000 on a gun and be Rambo. You'll get spanked, holding a very expensive gun.

With that said, we at *GX* tested several paintball gun systems at one of the Army National Guard paintball events. For more on our experience at the event, see page 44.

We tested complete paintball packages, meaning each package comes with a paintball

gun, mask, CO2 tank, hopper and barrel plug or sock. Basically, everything you needed to hit the field and start spraying liquid hate.

All of these guns are quality products and will improve your chances of surviving your next paint war. But remember, it all comes down to teamwork and player skills. If you are not careful you'll get spanked, holding a very expensive gun, just like I did. Read page 44 for my glorious demise. **GX**



If you think we got something wrong or (gasp!) got something right, we want to know. Tell us what you think, let us know what products you'd like to see reviewed, or even post your own product reviews—you just might end up in a future issue of *GX*.

Visit our new online forum at:

www.gxonline.com/forums

KINGMAN SPYDER SONIX VALUE PACK

If your budget is a little thin, check out Kingman's Sonix pack. It comes with the Sonix gun, 12-ounce tank; Java mask and hopper. All this for fewer than 100 bucks! We got two guns for our testing. One may have had a weak L connector because during one very important point in a game (I was the only one still alive), the connector gave way and spewed out all my CO₂. The second gun didn't have the same problem, no matter what I did to it. I can only assume it was a defect. The centered hopper was good and bad. It was easier to avoid hopper hits, but made aiming a little more difficult. Overall, the Sonix was a great gun for the price. If you upgraded the barrel and the trigger, you would have a really good gun for pretty cheap.

TIPPMANN MODEL 98 CUSTOM POWER PAK

The 98 has been the choice of fields for years. It's a well-built gun but it's difficult to upgrade. So, get a 98 Custom (98C). The power pak features a 98C gun, mask and a 9-ounce tank. It comes with a Hypershot trigger system, a removable front grip and a semi-automatic receiver. The 98C is Tippmann's entry-level, fully customizable gun. The 98C accepts the Flatline Barrel System, the Response Trigger System, the E-Bolt Electric System and the Comp-Air Low Pressure System. These systems can be installed with the tools that come with the kit. We found the additional money we spent on the 98C well worth it. It was more accurate than the Sonix and the mask was of better quality and more comfortable. This gun goes for approximately \$190.

TIPPMANN A-5 POWER PAK

The A-5 is a high performance paintball gun with the Cyclone Feed System. The Cyclone System links the feeder sprocket to the air system. The faster you shoot, the faster it feeds. Pull the trigger 20 times a second, and the A-5 feeds 20 balls per second. The A-5 is also easy to clean and maintain with its no-tool field strip feature. The mask is slightly better than the 98C, but the gun is where the extra money goes. Innovative technology, maximum firepower, unsurpassed accuracy and Tippmann durability are the core foundations of the all-new Tippmann A-5. This is a sweet gun and goes for approximately \$280.

GX Hero: MAJ Jacob Kulzer

Worldwide Inspiration, American Hero

By CPT Colin Fleming, 1/34th BCT

FORCE OF NATURE

I was a 2nd lieutenant waiting to meet him for the first time. He burst in with his hat in one hand, a stack of manila folders in the other and the intensity of a professional wrestler. He flung the hat onto his desk as he shot the folders to other people in the room like a blackjack dealer in an Atlantic City casino. He issued a few rapid instructions to the recipients and then turned to me.

With his twisted smile and spark that you never forget, he said, "Hey, LT! Forgot you were coming today (he hadn't). Nice job at OCS. What do you know about JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center]? What do you know about Fort Bliss? Ever been to Hawaii? Ever thought about air assault school? What are you doing next weekend? How about going to Fort Bliss to watch the Soldiers fire Stinger missiles? We leave Friday. Next month, I am going to take command of the battery up in Duluth and you are going to be one of my platoon leaders. Welcome to air defense; let's go meet the battalion commander."

MAJ Jacob (Jake) Kulzer is a Soldier who is best described as a force of nature. Like attending an NHL game for the first time, nothing prepares you for the live energy. In a matter of seconds, I was following him down the hall. Over the next nine years, I was there to share or cheer his accomplishments: best performance in a JRTC rotation by an air defense battery in several years, leading a goal-busting regional recruiting team three years in a row, S3 of a nationally ranked air defense battalion, graduating from the MBA program at the Carlson School of Management in the top-10 percent of his class, the most successful JRTC Civil Military Operation based on 33 previous rotations and—according to the Iraq Office of Reconstruction and the U.S. State Department—the most effective Civil Military Operation (CMO) in Iraq between March 2006 and July 2007.

BUILD THE TEAM

MAJ Kulzer began his military career in 1989 as a field artillery private following his senior year in high school. His father and four uncles had served in the military and he was looking for a way to pay for college. "Looking back, my decision to enlist was just a good match for me in my life. It was important for me to be able to pay for college [myself], and the National Guard gave me that opportunity," MAJ Kulzer says.

MAJ Kulzer combined his athletic ability, work ethic and drive into a successful enlisted career in the Guard while earning an undergraduate degree in business from Hamline University in St. Paul, MN. He excelled on the football team and served on the student congress.

Upon completion of his degree, MAJ Kulzer attended the federal Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Fort Benning, GA. Reflecting on his decision to become an officer, he says, "I looked around at the officers I was working for and thought, 'Hey, I can do that better; I want to be in charge.'"

COL Neal Loidolt, MAJ Kulzers' first commander as an officer, said, "One of Jake's finest attributes is his dedication to the NCOs and Soldiers he serves with. [H]is units always have the highest morale.

"I can recall a training exercise where his Soldiers removed the hinges from the door to his room and then the bugler blared reveille and out came 2LT Kulzer, charging right through the door, and into the waiting applause of his platoon. In true Kulzer fashion, he laughed with the Soldiers at the audacious prank and then grabbed his shaving kit and headed to the shower as if nothing unusual had happened. 'See you all later for some bonus PT,' he announced.

"No repercussions flowed to the Soldiers and his platoon was even stronger because of the reaction from an extremely caring, completely revered leader."

This enthusiasm for his Soldiers and a pit-bull determination has helped MAJ Kulzer rise rapidly through the ranks. His in-brief for new team members always starts with, "Feel free to do an excellent job here. What we are doing is important." The spirit and fire he infuses into each new team also demands 100-percent commitment. Loyalty to each other is the defining value and there is no use in even considering anything less than excellence.

A THROW BACK

MAJ Kulzer is honest and direct—not the kind of person you ask, "Is this project good enough?" More than once, I have heard him say, "Don't tell me why it can't be done; it's the right thing to do, so figure out how to get it done." Too often, the letter of the field manual is used to violate the spirit of the publication: doctrine is quoted to excuse mission failure.

There is no gray area with MAJ Kulzer. You know exactly where you stand at all times, and you are welcome on the team as long as you



can execute and remain loyal to the cause. Repeated ineptitude or one single instance of betrayal gets you the exit.

In 1998, then-CPT Kulzer was commanding an air defense battery and was finalizing preparations for a rotation at the JRTC. The preparations had gone very well, and he was focused on transforming the battery into a cohesive team.

With a month to go before the rotation, he called the battery together in the dining hall. There were two Soldiers who still had not committed to re-enlisting and joining for the rotation. MAJ Kulzer had both stand and asked them to commit one way or another.

The first Soldier stood, thought a minute, and re-enlisted to the wild applause of the battery. The second Soldier stood, but tried to stay on the fence. MAJ Kulzer spoke, “Commit now or leave. The Soldiers to your left and to your right need to know if you are on their team or not.”

There was complete silence in the room. MAJ Kulzer said again, “I am serious; I need to know right now.” In an age of political correctness and “retention at all costs,” he asked the hard question. Whether or not you agreed with the delivery, the message was clear; “It’s time to get on the team, or get out of the way.” The Soldier wavered another few seconds and—sensing the hesitation—MAJ Kulzer dismissed him.

The team ended up knocking out more OPFOR (opposing forces) aircraft at JRTC than any other previous rotation and rendered the Red Air ineffective in the battle. MAJ Kulzer was awarded the “Hero of the Battle” and quickly shared the honor with the rest of the battery. That experience set the tone for the future of the air defense battalion.

The core leaders and Soldiers from that first JRTC rotation went on to lead the battalion to success in following rotations, recruiting and retention, two battery-level deployments to Iraq and a battalion-level Iraq rotation.

After you have achieved some success, the next step is to help others have success.—MAJ Jacob Kulzer

EMPIRE BUILDING IN IRAQ

In March 2005, MAJ Kulzer received a call from his former battalion commander COL Dave Elicerio—now commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division (1/34th BCT)—to schedule a breakfast meeting the next day.

As MAJ Kulzer explains, they sat down to eat and COL Elicerio said, “Jake, I’m taking the brigade to Iraq and you are going to be my civil military officer.”

MAJ Kulzer took a deep breath, paused and said, “Okay, boss, what are your expectations of me?”

COL Elicerio replied, “Well, I am not sure at this point. Everything I know about the environment in Iraq tells me that CMOs are critical to this fight, but I have never been satisfied with the civil affairs attachments I have had in the past. I want you to go to the school and find out what the doctrine is, and then build a team to be the best.”

During the next seven months, MAJ Kulzer completed the Civil Affairs Qualification Course at the JFK Special Warfare School in Fort Bragg, NC, said goodbye to his pregnant wife and two daughters, and reported to the brigade headquarters at Camp Shelby, MS, to build another team for his most important mission yet.

The final piece of the Iraq mission fell into place the night before Thanksgiving at Shelby at a team-building barbeque. MAJ Kulzer had invited 1/34th BCT Deputy Commander LTC Paul Zimmerman, who had commanded a battalion in Kosovo. LTC Zimmerman would

be responsible for overseeing the CMOs and was to speak about the upcoming mission.

LTC Zimmerman outlined the concept by saying, “Build an empire for the commander: establish relationships with the Iraqis on behalf of the commander, so that we can influence the population to cooperate or at least not interfere in this fight.”

Recently, LTC Zimmerman reflected on that speech and MAJ Kulzer’s time in Iraq. “You know, when you look at what he has accomplished, it’s exactly what he set out to do: build a team and, based on the team, build an empire. He and the team function like the hub of a wheel, almost everything that goes on in this province for the coalition goes through his CMO section.”

“Wasta” is an Iraqi term that translates into a combination of influence and positional power. “Wasta” is earned by spending time on personal relationships with important Iraqis and demonstrating commitment to those relationships. MAJ Kulzer’s team established its “wasta” in Iraq through innovative programs to provide clean drinking water, improve employment for Iraqis, and building capacity within the Iraqi government, army and tribal leaders on what they needed for their area.

To earn “wasta,” MAJ Kulzer’s team has conducted more than 400 missions outside the wire in support of these projects and relationships. The result is an information and influence network spanning the whole province and recognized by leaders at the Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Multi-National Division-South East, the U.S. Ambassador for Reconstruction, and the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force, among others.

This influence network provides an inroad to the province for organizations representing the spokes of the wheel. MAJ Kulzer says, “The projects we have completed and relationships we have built provide the building blocks for larger, long-term capacity building projects,

which our partners have started. From the U.S. State Department and the Italian Foreign Ministry to the Australian Army, the British-led Multi-National Division (South), the Romanian Army, the Italian Army, the Army Corps of Engineers and the United Nations, each one has leveraged and built upon the work we have started here.”

MAJ Kulzer’s drive to inspire excellence has generated accolades from his leaders, peers and subordinates, and members of the coalition. His success can be attributed to a simple idea: challenge others to rise to the next level and make them want to be on the team. According to MAJ Kulzer, “After you have achieved some success, the next step is to help others have success.”

THE HOME TEAM

MAJ Kulzer’s leadership and heroism starts with his devotion to family. During July of this year, our time in Iraq will come to an end after 16 months in country. MAJ Kulzer is looking forward to joining his wife Wendy and three daughters Madie, Jacki and Jillie (born between his first trip into Iraq and the brigade’s arrival) at their home in Minnesota. He has been away for two years, including time spent at the Civil Affairs Qualification Course at Fort Bragg, seven months at Shelby for training and 16 months in Iraq.

MAJ Kulzer will transition from a hard-charging leader to a living gymnasium where his little girls will cling to him with love and adoration. It’s the day he has imagined every day for the last two years. To his family, he is the biggest hero of all. **GX**

"...SO PROUDLY WE HAIL..."



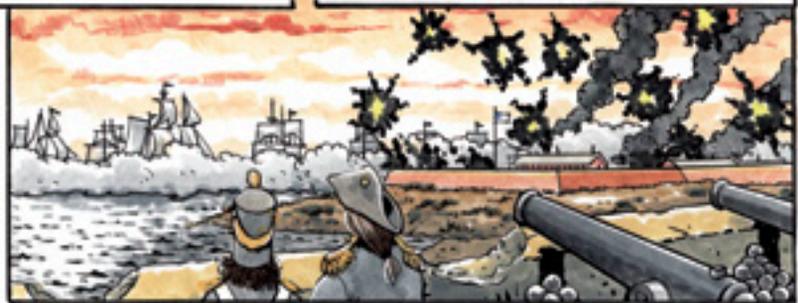
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA WAS A YOUNG COUNTRY IN 1812, STILL SMARTING FROM ITS BLOODY WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE THREE DECADES PRIOR. WAR WAS AGAIN DECLARED BY THE U.S. AGAINST ENGLAND, THIS TIME ON ISSUES OF FREE TRADE.



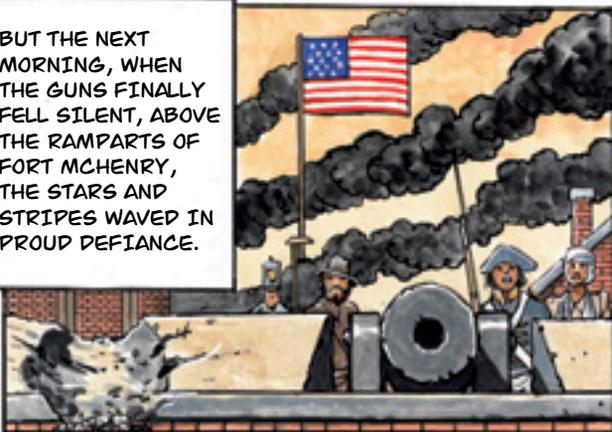
BY THE FALL OF 1814, OUR WAR-WEARY NATION WAS STRUGGLING AND THE CAMPAIGN WAS NOT GOING WELL. A SPARCELY DEFENDED WASHINGTON, DC, HAD JUST FALLEN TO THE BRITS AT THE BATTLE OF BLADENSBURG AND THE U.S. DEFENDERS WERE PUT TO ROUT.

ENCOURAGED BY SUCCESSES, THE BRITS SET THEIR SIGHTS ON BALTIMORE AND FORT MCHENRY, ITS DEFENDER. ON SEPTEMBER 12, APPROXIMATELY 5,000 BRITISH TROOPS LANDED AT NORTH POINT, MET BY A SMALL AMERICAN FORCE COMMANDED BY GEN JOHN STRICKER. THE AMERICANS INFLICTED CASUALTIES, INCLUDING THE DEATH OF BRITISH GEN ROBERT ROSS.

ON THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 13, BRITISH WAR SHIPS BEGAN THEIR BOMBARDMENT OF FORT MCHENRY. FORT MCHENRY'S 32-POUND CANNONS RESPONDED AND BOTH SIDES SLUGGED IT OUT FOR SOME 25 HOURS.



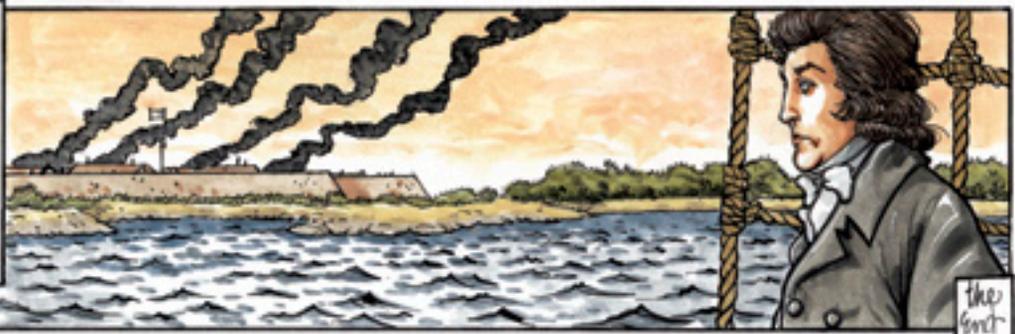
BUT THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN THE GUNS FINALLY FELL SILENT, ABOVE THE RAMPARTS OF FORT MCHENRY, THE STARS AND STRIPES WAVED IN PROUD DEFIANCE.



REINFORCEMENTS FOR THE ENGLISH WAR SHIPS WERE BLOCKED FROM THE CHANNEL BY SUNKEN BRITISH SHIPS AND DESTROYED BATTLE BARGES. REALIZING THEIR ATTACK HAD FAILED, THE BRITISH FLOATILLA RETREATED. A DEAFENING CHEER ROSE FROM THE BESEIGED AMERICANS DEFENDING FORT MCHENRY.



THE BATTLE OF BALTIMORE AND THE ATTACK ON FORT MCHENRY OBSERVED BY FRANCIS SCOTT KEY INSPIRED HIM TO PEN "THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER," WHICH MUCH LATER, IN 1931, BECAME OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM.



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