

CHRONICLING THE 460,000+ MEN AND WOMEN OF THE NATIONAL GUARD

ON GUARD

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COMBAT CONTROLLERS

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That Others
May Live'

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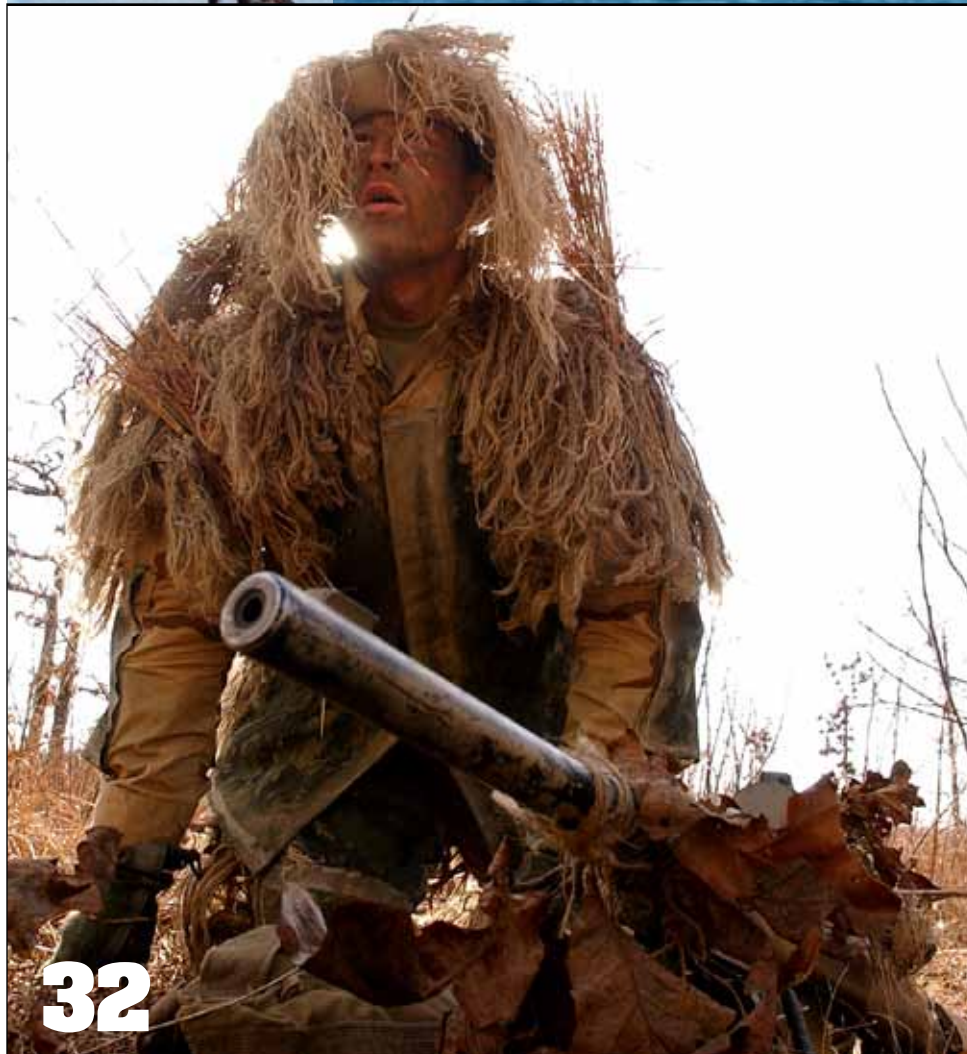


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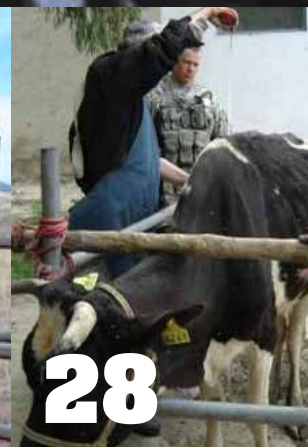
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COVER: Night vision gear helps Air National Guard combat controllers from the Oregon Air National Guard's 125th Special Tactics Squadron (STS) and Kentucky Air Guard's 123 STS navigate past cactus and thorn bushes at night in the Arizona desert, outside Tucson May 7. (Photo by Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith)

From the editor:

If Staff Sgt. Dennis Rayos Jr. didn't give what Lincoln called "last full measure of devotion," he gave something very close May 4 on the road to Balad. It was then that this Guardsman's convoy was attacked and his lower back badly injured by the IED blast.

He now lies on his stomach in a hospital bed in Walter Reed wondering how long his recovery will take, whether he'll ever walk again or throw the football around with his son.

This "clean kid" by his father's admission resisted taking painkillers and the promotion to sergeant first class leaders presented to him May 16, feeling that he wanted to earn it the conventional way. Guardmembers continue to serve willingly on the front lines in the Global War on Terrorism, many giving their "last full measure," or something painfully close.

It's that devotion to duty that inspires us here, and for which I dedicate this issue to Staff Sgt. Rayos.

This, our second issue, gives you a glimpse into what the Guard does now and what it did years ago. Before there were the post-disaster site surveys in Black Hawks and aerial fire fighting of MAFFS-equipped C-130s, there was 1st Lt. Daniel F. Kearns of the Colorado National Guard flying a Douglas O-2C biplane dropping packages to stranded residents of Silverton, Colo., in 1927 (see our history section).

Don't escape from reading about aircrew training on how to survive and elude capture in Key West (yes, I wouldn't mind training there either). No wind corrections are necessary when you read how Arkansas Guardmembers train Army snipers to move stealthily through the high grass. Go behind-the-scenes with the chief as he visits troops in Iraq and Afghanistan in a reporter's-journal format. We dig up the facts and uncover a unique program well suited for the Guard's citizen-soldier roots – the Agri-business Development Teams in Afghanistan.

Your curiosity will be well-supplied after reading "Carrying the Load," where C-130 pilots and loadmasters prepare for a Southeast Asia mission that cuts down on the number of convoys on the road, and with it insurgent targets.

So enjoy the issue – Guardmembers, family and everyone else who wants to know what's happening in the most interesting and diverse organization in all the armed forces.

If you see something that you like or dislike, drop us a line. But read and remember that the thread that ties all this together is spun from the stuff that makes a Texas staff sergeant dutifully guard a convoy in Iraq.

-Master Sgt. Greg Rudl

ON GUARD

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ABOUT

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SUBMISSION

E-mail your stories and photos for possible inclusion. We prefer that photos be high-quality digital (300 dpi or more) and e-mailed to: **Editor.OnGuard@ng.army.mil**



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Meet the staff



Master Sgt.
Mike Smith
Writer/Photographer

... started his military service in the Navy in 1986. Following 9/11, he joined the New York Air Guard's 109th Airlift Wing and earned two media contest awards for his coverage of the unit's airlift missions in Greenland and Antarctica. He served as an editor of the Guard Times and PA specialist at the joint forces headquarters in Albany. He holds a BS in Communications from the State University of New York.



Master Sgt.
Greg Rudl
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... has over 20 years in the Guard, coming to NGB by way of the 121st Air Refueling Wing in Columbus, Ohio. He also edits content for the Guard's Web site, NGB.Army.mil, and runs the Guard's media contest. Skis and shoots for the Ohio Guard biathlon Team.



Alonzo Ruiz
Webmaster

... Alonzo Ruiz is currently the senior webmaster for the National Guard Bureau. He obtained an Associates Degree in Electronic Graphic Design from The Northern Virginia Community College in 2002. He enjoys photography and outside activities.



Staff Sgt.
Jon Soucy
Photographer/Writer

... taught photojournalism at the Defense Information School. He has deployed to and photographed operations in Iraq and Kosovo as well as covered the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. He holds a BA in photography from the University of Maryland and has won several awards in the Military Photographer of the Year competition, the Army's Keith L. Ware Awards, and in civilian photojournalism contests.



Staff Sgt.
Jim Greenhill
Writer/Photographer

... graduated from Army basic training and advanced individual training at 38 and started his Guard career as a truck driver. He has been a civilian newspaper reporter since completing college. He served at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he worked with Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Airmen.



Lt. Col.
Ellen Krenke
Managing editor

... worked as sportswriter for several newspapers before joining the Air Guard. Was a press officer in OSD Public Affairs. As the division chief of command information, she manages the staff and assigns stories. She also writes and edits content for the Web site.



Jose Weeks
Webmaster

... joined the staff in December and helps run NGB.Army.mil, voted the best Web-based publication in the Army's 2008 Keith L. Ware Media Contest. Earned a BA in 2003 from George Mason University. He attended DoD schools as his father was in the Air Force. He likes to ride a motorcycle and watch movies — not at the same time.



Staff Sgt. Sean
McCollum
Photographer/Writer

... has covered the U.S. Military from Japan to Germany to Baghdad during nine years with the Maryland National Guard's 29th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment and 58th Brigade Combat Team. He has contributed to two award-winning publications, and holds a BA in History.

Letters

Fitting cover

I'm not sure if your magazine is aware, but your name is our Regimental/ Battalion Motto on our unit crest, "On Guard." We are the 168th Infantry Regiment (more specifically, I belong to the 1st Battalion, the only current battalion of the regiment). We are part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry "Red Bull" Division, Iowa Army National Guard.

For your first issue, you selected a picture of Soldiers from the company that I command, Alpha Company 1-168th IN, as the cover. I'm sure it wasn't planned, but very ironic that you chose Soldiers from the "On Guard" Battalion as the cover for the "On Guard" magazine.

This has been sent all around the battalion already. Thanks for your support.

-1st Lt. Kyle W. Obrecht, Iowa ARNG, Alpha Company 1-168th Infantry

Dear reader:

You're right, we didn't realize this interesting fact when we chose the photo for the cover.

Real hit

Thanks for providing this info and online access -- you've really hit a home run here. Terrific program and format/easy to look up articles and lots of good human interest, leadership, and guard-focused stories and info. My bet is that you'll be seeing an incredible increase in audience and readership via this format. Good on you and your folks for doing

so, providing this format, making this possible for access to so many.

-Col. Richard B. Howard, commander, ANG Training & Education Center, Knoxville, Tenn.

Great job

Just to let you know how much I am enjoying reading the online version of the On Guard. I really think you have a good staff of writers and editors and I enjoy reading what's going on with the National Guard. My father spent 36 years with the Guards in Maine so I am very familiar with military life.

Sergeants Smith, McColllum and Greenhill make it easy for the nonmilitary layman to read. Great job guys. Thank you for what you do.

-Sandy Damren, Maine Reader



combat controllers

Guard's elite force
tests its mettle
in war, peace

Photos and story by Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith



The brute of a sergeant could pass for any of “those guys” in the military with whom you would not mess around.

Dressed from helmet to boot in battle gear, he races the night through desert brush and finds a guarded building set inside the curve of a hill. At its doorway, he catches his breath, and then

runs inside to an eruption of gunfire and shouts.

What sets him apart from other “commando” types are the white CCT letters on his uniform, the antennas protruding from his rucksack and his status as a Citizen-Airman.

“When I deploy or do a mission I am among a team whose cohesion is good, but I’m the extra guy, I’m the combat controller,” Air Force Tech. Sgt. Steffano Guadagnuolo says about serving in the Oregon Air National Guard’s 125th Special Tactics Squadron (STS).

Guadagnuolo and a dozen other Air Guard combat controllers from Oregon and the Kentucky 123rd STS were training and testing equipment here in early May. They used combat scenarios to test new technology in a multitude of missions, and much of what happened was classified. But that’s their clandestine nature.

The Army has Rangers. The Navy has SEALs. But few outside the military can recall an Air Force combat controller when speaking of special operations. But in the Global War on Terrorism world of covert battles, to move offensively without a combat controller would be folly, officials say.

In the Air Guard, there is Guadagnuolo, a.k.a. “the Italian,” and about 50 more highly trained battlefield Airmen.

Day after day, Army, Navy and Marine Corps units embark on missions with these combat controllers in tow. These Airmen juggle a mastery of tactical prowess with the ability to control the flow of air traffic into and out of a battle space. Their moments unfold in direct enemy contact, sometimes under attack, but more often as the aggressor.

As is evident from war reports, they are in high demand. Guadagnuolo, 38, came to America in the ‘90s after serving as an officer in the Italian military. It took him eight years as a U.S. Army infantryman and special operations diver to earn his citizenship and gain the skills needed to apply for a combat controller position.

He would settle for nothing else. “There’s no other job that compares,” said Guadagnuolo.

Whether high-altitude-parachuting with oxygen and a 100-pound pack or flying unmanned aerial vehicles, fielding ques-

tions from ground commanders for close air strikes, or infiltrating an area to mark out a runway, Guadagnuolo works an endless array of missions and problems.

After those are accomplished, he still faces endless proficiency training and adaptation to technology.

It takes the Air Force two years to train a combat controller. Less than 25 percent make the grade.

Those who “arrive” gain the physical resilience and knowledge to roll into a tactical employment with any Special Forces unit in the world. They are Federal Aviation Administration certified air traffic controllers with a deadly expertise in satellite- and laser-guided bombs, strafe and other air-to-ground weaponry. If that’s not enough, they are proficient in diving, parachuting and rappelling. And tasks they practice to a muscle memory change with the latest piece of technology.

Guadagnuolo is a new guy on the block, having completed his initial training two years ago. But he already helped advance the profession into emerging, domestic response missions.

Beyond the combat

One would think that an elite fighting force is used only during war – not so.

The concept of a combat controller assisting a state was only fully appreciated after Hurricane Katrina, historians say. There, the Kentucky and Oregon combat controllers responded to the disaster as the levees were still breaking. They managed landing zones and carried evacuees from their flooded homes to waiting helicopters. They controlled the overcrowded air space of one of the largest humanitarian airlift missions in the world.

Guadagnuolo jumped off a helicopter, into the winds of Hurricane Ike. He and a doctor searched a Texas disaster area for survivors. “I spent a day searching and found a football field where I set up a small air traffic control tower and called in air [evacuations],” he said.

Physical standards

Think you have what it takes? See if you can match these entry-level, physical qualifications:

- 2 x 20 Meter underwater swim (three minutes rest in between)
- Ten minute rest
- 500 meter surface swim (under 14 minutes)
- Thirty minute rest
- 1.5 mile run (under 10 minutes, 45 seconds)
- Ten minute rest
- Pull-ups (six repetitions under 1 minute)
- Two minute rest
- Sit-ups (45 repetitions under two minutes)
- Two minute rest
- Push-ups (45 repetitions under two minutes)
- Two minute rest
- Flutter-kicks (45 repetitions under two minutes)

combat controllers



Skill sets

Combat controllers are often called Renaissance men because of their training and skill in a wide variety of subjects or fields. See how many of the skills listed here you have:

Dirt bike riding

Scuba diving

Survival

Swimming

Free fall parachuting

Air traffic control

Armament

Hand-to-hand combat

Boating

Counter-terrorism

Foreign languages

Horseback riding

Surveying

Airfield marking

Rescue

Land navigation

In another disaster response mission, he and his team waded through neck-deep water in Oregon and brought Zodiac boats into the Pacific Northwest town of Vernonia to rescue 300 residents stranded by flooding and landslides. “We put our gear together in a matter of hours and were rolling.”

“More and more agencies and officials know of our capabilities in a disaster, and that role will increase,” said Maj. Dan Schilling, commander of the 125th STS, about special tactics squadrons, which can include pararescue and special operations weather team Airmen. Schilling said demands from the war and state missions are a “constant balancing act.”

As traditional Guardmembers, Schilling said their areas of operations are the states and territories, and they are proactive in their hurricane season planning, but they also play a vital role in the war.

“We make a very concerted effort to put guys in the war, and it’s all on a voluntary basis,” he said. He added the squadron “never runs short of volunteers.”

The all familiar

Upon his arrival in Afghanistan in 2005, Tech. Sgt. Russ Lemay from the Kentucky Air Guard’s 123rd STS was greeted with bullets.

He supported a Canadian Special Forces unit in his first mission outside the wire. Bad people were gunning for him, but he managed to keep his cool, he said.

It turns out, the two-year pipeline, four-months of additional training and the combat-seasoned veterans at his squadron had him prepared.

He was where he worked so hard to be. “I was ready,” said Lemay. “I joined with the idea that combat controllers were affecting the war.”

In the Air Force, only a handful of combat controllers started with initial Guard enlistments like Lemay; the larger percentage served on active duty first. Most are highly decorated Airmen with

washboard-size ribbon racks that often include Silver Star Medals and multiple Bronze Star Medals with Valor. If that’s not distinctive, their scarlet berets are.

Last summer, one of the Air Guard’s Airmen of the Year attended his award ceremony in Washington wearing his beret, but he also had a beard. The Oregon combat controller was on his way to Afghanistan. The beard would help him blend with the locals, he said.

Just desert

Training in Arizona, Schilling, Lemay, Guadagnuolo and the others navigated past cactus and thorn bushes using their night vision gear. They infiltrated another enemy position.

One Airman was calling in close air support on a radio. He called for a simulated laser-guided bomb to flatten the enemy position. Two A-10 attack aircraft circled overhead.

“Thirty seconds to impact,” said the field commander, squatting behind a cement barrier. They acted as an Army unit to train the radio operator in Joint Terminal Attack Control (JTAC).

Only qualified JTACs can call in aircraft for offensive, air-ground strikes, and they are in great demand overseas, said Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Nicholas Lowe, a seasoned combat controller at the Air Guard and Reserve Test Center in Tucson, Ariz.

“What we do here is find better ways to integrate air and ground forces so we can find targets, protect ourselves and support the units,” he said.

Lowe manages JTAC and its emerging technologies for the field. He said there are reasons few know about Air Guard combat controllers.

“They’re a small group, and the Air Force is not known for its ground mission,” he said. There’s the solo nature: “He is one guy who gets absorbed into missions,” he said.

But Lowe noted their massive effect. “Look into the war’s battles, and you will find a combat controller there,” he said.

By the end of the night, the cactus and thorns the Airmen wandered through here had scraped up several arms and legs, but no one here was worse for wear.

A combat controller can take it. 🧑🏻‍🚒

It takes the Air Force two years to train a combat controller. Less than 25 percent make the grade.

History

Combat Control Teams originated during the airborne campaigns of World War II. Major parachute assaults fell well short of expectations, resulting in some cases with personnel being air dropped as much as 30 miles from their intended targets. The shortcomings of these operations identified the need for effective guidance and control of air transported combat forces. Thus, a small parachute scout company of Army pathfinders was organized and trained. Their mission was to precede the main assault force to an objective area and, through the use of high powered lights, flares and smoke pots, provide visual guidance and critical weather information to inbound aircraft.

Want to join the team?

The 123rd STS and the 125th STS are the only two locations in the Air Guard to serve as a combat controller. Call the unit’s recruiters to schedule a try out: Master Sgt. Wes Brooks (123rd STS) at (502)413-4170; Senior Master Sgt. Adam Monticelli (125 STS) at (503) 335-5170.

combat controllers

Traveling with the chief



a behind the scenes >>



Reporter's notebook: Traveling with the chief

Earlier this year, Chief of the National Guard Bureau Gen. Craig R. McKinley visited Guardmembers on the front lines in the war on terrorism. Writer and photographer Master Sgt. Mike Smith went along with him and kept a daily journal. Behind the many visits, the handshakes, the pats on the back and the town hall meetings, Smith observed a chief who's committed to staying in touch with the troops – wherever they may be.

Day 1 Maryland>Ireland>Kuwait>Balad

After a 15-hour flight from Andrews Air Force Base, Md., to Kuwait, including a short layover in Ireland for fuel, we arrive at Ali Al Salem Air Base. We have only 45 minutes to drop off our overnight bags and clean up before heading off in vehicles to our first destination: Camp Arifjan and the U.S. Army Forces Central Command there. We drive there after a sand storm foils our plans to travel by Black Hawk helicopters.

Next stop: Balad Air Base, Iraq. With improved weather, we board a C-17 Globemaster at Ali Al Salem that afternoon.

As we wait to exit the aircraft, I can't resist taking a photo of the National Guard's first four-star general in full battle rattle. We are quickly escorted to the air control



tower where 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing officials brief us. I interview a chief master sergeant who tells me more than 180 Air Guard members there are operating the joint forces control center that manages Iraq's air space. The general gives a video interview to Air Force News.

We spend a couple of hours visiting patients and servicemembers working at Balad's joint theatre hospital – the largest medical and critical care facility in Iraq. The chief learns of medical teams trying to save the lives of a U.S. Soldier and an Iraqi insurgent, both in critical condition from the wounds they received in a battle against each other. The Soldier eventually dies of his wounds while the insurgent lives. The chief tells this story to Guardmembers at a later town hall meeting.

Day 2 Bagdad>Kuwait

We start the next day with a town hall meeting, and then visit Washington National Guard Soldiers from the 81st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment, who showcase their up-armored equipment. Next, we climb aboard a C-130 Hercules bound for Bagdad International Airport. Sharing his seat in the cargo bay with military police and security forces, the chief learns from the Airman sitting across from him that he is a distant relative of Army Lt. Gen. Russel Honore.

I interview Texas Army National Guard Cpl. Larry Patten, a team leader in the 124th Cavalry of the 56th IBCT. Today is his 37th birthday, and he said that he has been in Iraq for nearly two years through back-to-back deployments. Back in Texas, he works as a deputy sheriff, but here he provides escort security for missions inside and outside the wire. Having 10 years experience in law enforcement helps him out, he said.

Our last stop today is back in Kuwait via

"I feel it's important to visit the Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard in theater. To see how they are doing, talk to their commanders, and visit as many of their organizations as I can to see what the conditions are and to answer any questions they may have of me."

-Chief McKinley

a C-130 flight. There, I interview Command Sgt. Maj. Edgardo Coronado, 47, who is the brigade sergeant major for the 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Hawaii Army Guard. The 29th IBCT's 1,300 Soldiers provide convoy security for the sustainment convoys that bring supplies and equipment across Iraq and as far as Mosul. Over a meal at the dining facility, he tells me a story of junior ranking NCOs charged with the safety of millions of dollars of equipment, driving thousands of miles a day into the desert and combat areas. Officers are absent and serious decisions are made by E-6s in trips that take days out on the road. The ability to think calmly under great stress and duress is one of the many qualities they look for in choosing convoy commanders, he said.

Day 3 Kuwait>Kabul

Flying into Kabul the next morning, we dine on a breakfast of fresh fruit, French toast, yogurt and coffee. On the ground we visit the U.S. Embassy and then get 15 minutes before our second morning meeting with military leaders to look through some nearby shops filled with cultural wares. I follow the general into a carpet shop where he strikes up a conversation with a merchant. His shop is packed to the ceiling with beautiful hand-stitched rugs priced in the thousands. He accepts credit cards, he tells us. The gentleman pulls out a dozen rugs with tight, intricate patterns and rich colors. We exit only with his well wishes on our journey.

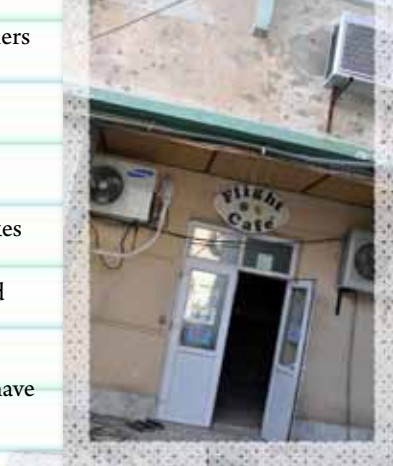
I interview Army Staff Sgt. Henry Baez Jr., at Camp Phoenix. He tells me his group of deployed Illinois Guardmembers of the 33rd IBCT do presence patrols outside the wire. Two weeks later I will hear the tragic news that three of the unit's Soldiers were killed in a roadside bombing.

Day 4 Kabul>Bagram Air Base

What seemed like a massive explosion wakes me up during the night followed by a voice over the loudspeaker system telling everyone it was a planned detonation.

In one of the many rooms we pass through today, I notice that Air Guardsmen from Wyoming have hung letters and cards from children back home in their main hallway. They cover the wall. Writes one fourth grader: Dear Heroes: Thank you for fighting for the people that live in Afghanistan. I hope you are okay. Love Maleehah.

In a vehicle tour around Bagram, I spot three men working at an incinerator called the "burn pit." To my astonishment, one man seems to walk within feet of the mountain of burning



ash that's twice his height. Further down the road, the gutted remains of Soviet-era military equipment sit rusting in the dirt.

Tonight we have our final two town hall meetings before returning to Kabul in the morning by helicopter. The general talks to as many Soldiers and Airmen as he can and asks to hear what's on their minds. I hold as many as a half-dozen personal cameras at once as troops want photos with the chief. Over dinner, we discuss the amazing deserts in Bagram's main dining facility, where we found soft ice cream with all the toppings and a four layer cake with 1-inch thick frosting, topped with and fresh berries.

Day 5 Kabul/Home

After breakfast, we hop back on the Black Hawks and fly out of Bagram back to a sunny Kabul to catch the C-40 home. On our arrival in Kabul, I notice what looks like bullet holes that pock mark the entrance to the terminal waiting area. They've been patched with fresh mortar, but without a fresh coat of paint to cover these scars, they reveal a struggling nation.

We take a group photo with our security escorts on the Kabul flight line, and then begin our trek home via Shannon, Ireland. I learn later that a bomb went off near the front gate soon after we departed Kabul.

As I begin to go through the more than four gigabytes of recorded interviews and photos on the plane-ride back, I reflect on our whirlwind tour. In just five short days, we have flew a dozen flights on four different aircraft; traveled tens of thousands of miles through four countries; rode inside and outside the wire on cars and busses; all so that our chief could meet the thousands of dedicated Guardmembers and other key civilian and military leaders in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.





GUARDING THE OIL. Maj. Shane Rauh (center) with the Louisiana Army National Guard's 225th Engineer Brigade of Pineville, La., stands in front of the more than 40-foot tall oil storage container located at Al Daura Oil Refinery in southeastern Baghdad, March 30. Protecting the refinery's operations is a vital step in stabilizing the increasing production of oil in Iraq. At the request of the senior Iraqi commander for Baghdad, the force protection section of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 225th have started security assessments to strengthen defenses for one of Iraq's largest oil refineries. (Photo by Scott Flenner)



BEST WARRIOR: Command Sgt. Maj. Bradford Quigley, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, holds the feet of a "Best Warrior" competitor during the sit-up portion of the Army Physical Fitness Test. Alaska National Guard Soldiers at Fort Greely competed in the two-day "Best Warrior" competition in April to determine Soldier and NCO of the Year. Staff Sgt. Duane Ostrowski went on to win the title of NCO of the Year for the Alaska Army National Guard. (Photo by Sgt. Jack W. Carlson III)



DRAGGED: While being dragged, Louisiana National Guard's 225th Engineer Brigade Soldier Sgt. Kasandra Deutsch demonstrates the power of the Talon robot, during a training exercise with the 9th Iraqi Army Engineer Regiment. The Talon robot system is used to help clear improvised explosive devices. (Photo by Maj. Pat Simon)

FIRE POWER: Soldiers assigned to 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard, light up the range with tracer rounds as they fire the M-240B medium machine gun with the help of night optics at Fort Hood, Texas, April 25. The battalion, which arrived at its mobilization station April 18, is deploying this summer in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli)



HE'S FLIPPED: Tech. Sgt. Derrick Brooks, a pararescue jumper with the 304th Rescue Squadron, back flips from an Oregon Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter at 7,200 feet, during a joint operation High Altitude-Low Open jump demonstration for the Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2's community appreciation open house April 23, in Pendleton, Ore. (Photo by Army Sgt. Eric A. Rutherford)





WATER HIGH: Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve units converged on Tucson, Ariz., in May to take part in MAFFS certification and training 2009. The Modular Airborne Firefighting System is an important and effective tool used to fight wildfires nationwide and is placed onboard the C-130 Hercules aircraft. Four units across the country continue the MAFFS legacy which began in the early 1970s; the 153rd Airlift Wing, Cheyenne, Wyo., ANG, the 145th Airlift Wing, Charlotte, N.C., ANG, the 146th Airlift Wing, Channel Islands, Calif., ANG, and the 302nd Airlift Wing, Air Force Reserve, Colorado Springs, Colo. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Koenig)



HIGH WATER: Army Staff Sgt. William Griffin, with the 136th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, drives a Humvee on a flooded road in Fort Ransom, N.D., April 15. Griffin and Spc. Jessica Sandberg, with the 132nd Quartermaster Battalion, made a welfare visit to a rural civilian whose home is surrounded by water. (Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp)



CENTER OF ATTENTION: Air Force Staff Sgt. Nicholas, a crew chief assigned to DET 2, 20th MOS with the 169th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at McEntire Joint National Guard Base, inspects the exhaust of an F-16. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Caycee Cook)



STAYING CLOSE. Soldiers with Troop C, 1-108th Cavalry of the Georgia Army National Guard, prepare to clear a building during Mouted Combat Patrol Training at Camp Shelby. (Photo by Sgt. Sheila Holifield)



HIGH ROPES: Officer Candidate Travis Trudgeon, of the 1107th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group of Springfield, Mo., slides across a rope during Officer Candidate School training at Fort Leonard Wood. More than 20 Missouri National Guardsmen took on rope bridges and rappelling, as well as a physical training test, during their second drill weekend in a grueling 18-month program to become an officer. The Soldiers are part of the Guard's 2nd Battalion, 140th Regiment Missouri Regional Training Institute Officer Candidate Class 48 and will train at least one weekend a month, most of that on post. (Photo by Matthew J. Wilson)

Iditarod = + + + 1,159 miles

First Alaska Guard Soldier to compete in Iditarod finishes 37th

By Spc. Paizley Ramsey

In an effort to celebrate and restore its ties to the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, the Alaska National Guard selected one of its own to run this year's race held in early March.

It turned out to be a good choice.

Staff Sgt. Harry Alexie of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1/297th Cavalry and his dog team finished the 37th annual Iditarod that travels from Anchorage to Nome in 12 days, 14 hours, 40 minutes.

It was also the first time that an Alaska Army Guard Soldier took part.

"We're going back to our roots," said Lt. Col. Joseph Lawendowski, 38th Troop Command, Recruiting and Retention commander. "The Guard was founded by the efforts of people like 'Muktuk' Marston, who recruited nearly 4,000 individuals using sled dogs as a means of transportation to remote villages to bolster the Alaska Territorial Guard during the World War II era.

We're getting back to basics, and Alexie represents all that this organization was founded on and how we started."

The rookie finished the 1,000-plus mile race 37th out of about 65 starters.

Leadership chose Alexie, 31, because he represents what every Guardsman should. With high moral character, tenacity, and perseverance in the face of adversity, he also has roots firmly planted in the culture of Alaska, the Alaska Army Guard and sled dog racing.

This Kwethluk native trained for months with one of the Last Great Race's best – veteran musher and two-time Iditarod winner Lance Mackey at his kennel outside of Fairbanks.

How did you train?

I did not train in the weight room, but doing all the chores around the dog yard every morning like carrying six-gallon buckets of feed around and cleaning up the yard and hitching and standing behind the sled for hours during training runs prepared me.

How do you pass your time on the trail?

I had an iPod during training runs that I listened to but forgot to bring it along during the race. The scenery was amazing and going through new country made the time pass quickly.

What is the name of you lead dog(s) and why did you choose him/her?

My main lead dog that stood out was a young two-year-old named Dribble, but I had others that contributed and their names are Hansel, Stormy, Muskrat and Rizben. Without Dribble I would have a hard time going up the Yukon and into the wind.

How much did you sleep during the race?

I had at least two to three hours every time we stopped for a rest since I was running the race conservatively in hopes of finishing with a happy, healthy dog team.

Will you compete next year?

No plans.

Did you ever read "Call of the Wild" by Jack London?

No, being born and raised in Alaska and having a father who grew up having a dog team as the only form of transportation and having heard his stories is more interesting than reading fiction.

What was the hardest part?

Of all the race, the Yukon river portion of the trail was the most challenging for me mentally and physically. We faced head winds from the Grayling checkpoint up to Kaltag (about 130 miles). There was a group of 17 of us that negotiated that trail for two days due to wind blown trail (Alaska had a lot snow this year).



KC-135 pilot scratches to save fellow musher's dog; starts charity for kids

By Spc. Paizley Ramsey

Lt. Col. Blake Matray, a 168th Air Refueling Wing KC-135 pilot and weapons and tactics chief, raced this year's Iditarod as a rookie and scratched just 402 miles from the finish.

His story could have ended there, but actually it's just beginning.

Matray made the decision to scratch after pausing to help a fellow Iditarod rookie who had stopped on the trail after one of her dogs looked hypothermic. With temperatures quickly plummeting past 20 below zero, deep snow drifts covering the trail, and fierce winds causing limited visibility, Matray made the only decision he felt was right: he stayed with the musher and her dogs, thus ending his lifelong dream of finishing the Iditarod.

"The most important thing to me in this race was to get to Nome safely and with healthy dogs," Matray said. "I could not just leave her there with her dog in serious trouble to finish the race.

"I expected this race to be a challenge in which I would face many hardships," Matray said. "I ran this race for many reasons: my love of Siberian Huskies, sled dog racing,

the thrill of finishing the 'Last Great Race on Earth,' but mostly to garner visibility for children with developmental disabilities."

Matray and his wife, Erin, started The Sled Dog Fund Inc., a non-profit organization founded in 2007 that combines the adventures of sled dog racing with raising awareness of and funds for children with disabilities. He hosted a charity banquet and silent auction called "Tales from the Trail" April 24 that raised \$3,000.

After donating to the Special Olympics for many years, Matray said he always felt like he wanted to do more.





"But with being a musher, a pilot for the Alaska Air National Guard and working a full time job it did not leave me much time," Matray said.

"In my book the challenges faced every day by special-needs children and their families is much harder than anything I faced on the trail," said Matray, who has made the decision that this year would be his last attempt to finish the Iditarod. "Their strength and inspiration is what continues to drive me to finish the work I have started with The Sled Dog Fund Inc."






Lt. Col. Blake Matray at the start of the 2009 Iditarod in downtown Anchorage. (Photo by Spc. Margaret J. Moonin)

Iditarod Facts

-  The first Iditarod race to Nome started March 3, 1973.
-  In 1986, Susan Butcher broke Rick Swenson's record, set in 1981, by completing the 1049+ miles in 11 days, 15 hours and six minutes, and this was done on the longer 'Northern' Route.
-  Carl Huntington won the 1974 race with the slowest winning time, 20 days, 15 hours, 2 minutes and 7 seconds.
-  The teams average 16 dogs, which means over 1,000 dogs

leave Anchorage for Nome.

-  There are 26 checkpoints on the northern route, the first in Anchorage and the last in Nome. On the southern route, there are 27 checkpoints.
-  The closest finish was in 1978. Dick Mackey finished one second ahead of Rick Swenson. Mackey's time was 14 days, 18 hours, 52 minutes and 24 seconds. The winner was decided by the nose of the lead dog across the finish line.
-  The most mushers to finish a single race was 77 in 2004.

A TIME TO SOW

Agribusiness
development teams
improve yields in Afghanistan

Story by Capt. Michael Greenberger

Afghan farmers get help from Nebraska Agribusiness Development Team

As the noon sun crept toward the mountains west of Janquadam, Afghanistan, children ran from all corners of the village, greeting the group of Soldiers from 28th Forward Agribusiness Development Team (ADT).

On this warm February day, the team was on a mission to help a blind farmer develop his fields and build a new vineyard to eventually grow grapes in. The ADT, a National Guard unit deployed from Nebraska, has come to Afghanistan to assist, teach, train and educate the farmers on better farming techniques and introduce the farmers to grasses and alfalfa for better animal health.

After exchanging hellos with locals, the Guardsmen set to work measuring and marking the field for the new vineyard as well as taking soil samples.

While the Soldiers worked, children swarmed all around them offering homemade sling shots for a dollar each. Some troops paid the children for their wares, while others offered up whatever they could – candy, gum, pens and gloves. Soon, smiling children played in the field and some even assisted them in their tasks.

No strangers to this village, Soldiers from the 28th have visited several times before.

“On previous mission we assessed the farmer’s fields,” said Sgt. 1st Class Eldon R. Kuntzelman. “Then we got a letter of agreement from the land owner and later presented our plan to him.”

“Marking and measuring the field was our primary mission,” said Army 1st Lt. Eric Sattelberg, ADT chief. “Our goal on every mission is to improve relations with the locals. In the long run, this type of mission will strengthen the bond between Afghanistan and the United States because they know that we are here to help grow this nation rather than destroy it.”

The 28th has more plans for Janquadam including install-

ing grain storage bins, planting fruit and nut trees, working with animal health, water management, tractor maintenance training and education, setting up green houses and underground storage for vegetables.

Sattelberg said the future of ADT operations is simply to allow different fruits and vegetables to thrive. And the goal is a continuation of the projects from one ADT rotation to the next,” he added. “Several teams are either on the ground or being identified for a potential rotation. We are here doing one field at a time through demonstration farms as well as with other projects.”

The demonstration crops afford the farmers an opportunity to learn a variety of methods for growing crops and then allow the local farmers to try different techniques for growing crops in their own fields.

About half the unit has been deployed before and all of the 52-member team volunteered for the deployment. The 28th works in four provinces – Bamyan, Panjshir, Parwan and Kapisa. Four other ADTs operate across Afghanistan with more on the way.

After the work was done the children shared more than sling shots and gum with the group of agricultural specialists – they shared themselves. They talked, they gave high-fives and they smiled and laughed ... a precious commodity in a time of war.

“The locals are becoming very familiar with the ADT and our mission since we have conducted numerous missions to the same locations,” said Sattelberg. “We are respectful toward the locals and I think as long as we continue to respect them, they will continue to welcome us in their village.”

-Capt. Michael Greenberger works with the 5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

Afghanistan agriculture facts

- ▶ only 12 percent of the land is arable
- ▶ agriculture accounts for 45% of the Afghan gross domestic product and employs over 70% of the population

ADT current projects

- ▶ Enhancing existing soils lab
- ▶ Improving feed mills, cotton, nursery, greenhouse, poultry, rice
- ▶ Enhancing animal slaughter and production facilities
- ▶ Establishing experimental/learning farm
- ▶ Coaching and mentoring Ministry of Agricultural representatives

The farm field and the battlefield

Since the program started in 2007, no ADT has suffered casualties. The Texas team has had some minor contact with enemy forces, with some members receiving the Combat Infantry Badge. The Missouri ADT lost one vehicle to a vehicle-borne IED.

"The ADTs don't *play ball* with the enemy – they defend themselves and extricate as fast as possible when attacked," said Col. Martin Leppert, the special assistant to the Army National Guard director for ADT operations, describing their rules of engagement.

Partners

To date, multiple universities are committed to supporting the ADT initiative. Participating schools include: University of Missouri, Texas A&M, University of Nebraska, Purdue, Kansas State University, University of Tennessee, California Polytechnic, Clemson, Indiana University, University of Tennessee, Oklahoma State, and the University of Florida.

ADT facts

- ▶ Receive up to 45 days of training at Camp Atterbury, Ind.; they deploy for an 11-month rotation on the ground and are then replaced with a follow-on team
- ▶ Include Army and Air National Guard personnel with agricultural expertise; this 58-Soldier team is made up of 12 agricultural experts, 34 security forces personnel and 12 headquarters personnel
- ▶ Its goal is to build habitual, long term, trusted relationships between a state and the partner province

ADTs in Afghanistan



ADTs started as an initiative by then director of the Army Guard Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn (a Missouri native) working with the Missouri adjutant general Maj. Gen. King Sidwell, Missouri Farm Bureau and University of Missouri Dept. of Agriculture. The first ADT team to deploy was from Missouri to eastern Afghanistan (Jalalabad) in 2008.

Guard teaches the art of stealth at

Sniper

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy

The sun filtered through tall, golden-brown grass as the wind brushed past, making the grass gently sway. The blowing of the wind made the field of grass resemble a shimmering lake. An animal stirred somewhere, and was the only sound heard other than the rustling stalks of grass.

Then, without warning, the sharp crack of rifle fire rang out.

The sniper had struck with one shot. The round, in this case, was a blank.

The target was instructors from the sniper school, who were seated in the bed of a pick-up truck. They were scanning the area with binoculars on the lookout for the 16 students, who were heading toward them, intent on firing off a round without being seen or heard by the instructors.

For those aspiring to receive the additional skill identifier of U.S. Army sniper, there are two places to go: the Infantry School and Center at Fort Benning, Ga., and the National Guard Marksmanship Training Unit at Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Ark., run by the Arkansas National Guard.

Though for many, there is no distinction between the two locations.

"I figure they're instructors at the sniper school, so they're among the best," said Pfc. Christopher Moon, an infantryman assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 508th Infantry Regiment. "So I'll be getting taught by some of the best. I was pretty confident coming in here."

During the four-week course students learn how to camouflage and conceal themselves, move undetected over terrain and engage targets at long-range distances, among other stealthy skills.

For many, it's a tough course to get through with an attrition rate of roughly 50 percent, according to instructors.

For many students, the stalking exercise is where they run into trouble.

Can you stalk the stalk?

"It's an exercise where they have to move from point A to point B and eliminate a target without being detected," said Staff Sgt. Matthew Gomberg, an instructor at the school. "The target is us, as snipers,

looking for them. They usually find that very difficult."

And there is a lot more that goes into advancing undetected onto a target than many realize.

"There are a lot of steps they have to take," said Gomberg. "Such as land navigation, going from A to B, moving there undetected, ranging the target, engaging the target and then ex-filling (leaving the scene) without us seeing them. There's a lot that goes into it and these guys have to operate totally independently and it's usually quite a challenge for them."

For some Soldiers, it wasn't the stalking exercise that gave them trouble, but other areas of the course.

"One of the most challenging parts for me was the unknown distance shooting," said Moon, who was a first-timer on the stalking exercise. "I'd say that was the hardest part. You have to be able to identify targets out to 800 meters just using your scope and your spotter. So, it's not so much the shooter, but also your spotter that's going to get you qualified there."

School for the highly-motivated

The marksmanship training unit offers eight courses a year in Arkansas in addition to sending out mobile training teams to outside locations.

"We've gone to Iraq four times now, (and have done) several in Germany," said Gomberg. "Wherever (a unit) has a request, we try and fill that requirement and train as many Soldiers as we can."

And that training also includes trigger time on the M-24 sniper rifle as well as the M-107 Barrett .50 caliber sniper rifle, which can shoot through walls as well as take out vehicles up to a mile away.

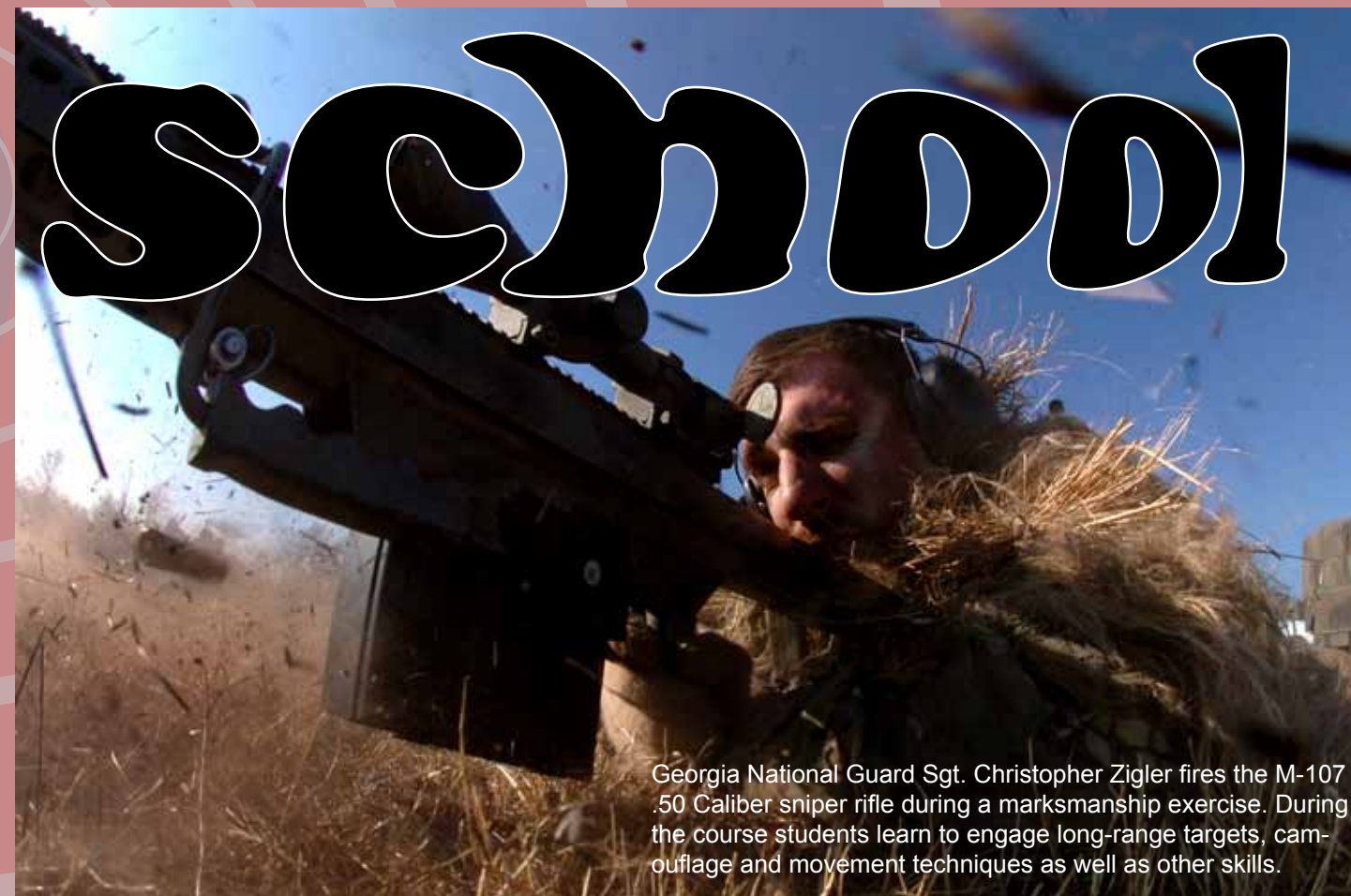
"You can feel (the recoil), but it's not near as bad as I was expecting it to be," said Georgia National Guard Sgt. Christopher Zigler, and infantry-

man with HHC, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, on firing the M-107.

"I think the funniest part about it is after you shoot it, it takes a second or two for the bullet to get down 1,200 meters or so. So, you're sitting there waiting to see your impact, but the buffer spring is right up against your chin so all you hear is this rattling."

And many of the students find the training rewarding.

"It's great training," said Sgt. Christopher Rush, from HHC, 2nd Battalion, 507th Infantry Regiment. "We usually do some sort of target



Georgia National Guard Sgt. Christopher Zigler fires the M-107 .50 Caliber sniper rifle during a marksmanship exercise. During the course students learn to engage long-range targets, camouflage and movement techniques as well as other skills.

detection or range estimation each day. Or we'll come out and do stalks. About everyday we go to the range and shoot.

"We do road marches, they're pretty challenging and pretty quick. There are a lot of classes. We're always in the classroom learning new things and then we come out to the field and apply it and see how it works. That really helps."

And it's just as rewarding for the instructors.

"It's a great job," said Gomberg. "It's a great place to be as a sniper as it does give you that opportunity to try and learn new things,

learn new techniques and keep making the course better."

But for many, the best part is proving you can do it.

"The best part has been today, passing the stalk on my first try," said Moon, whose grandfather was a sniper in Vietnam. "It's pretty fun, it's a challenge. First off, you've got snipers looking for you with binoculars. The terrain, the way the sun was out here today, made it tough."

And for Gomberg that's no surprise.

"Generally, when you have snipers, they're the highly-motivated Soldiers."

Snipers – did you know?

THE LONGEST: The longest range recorded for a sniper kill in combat currently stands at 2,430 meters (2,657 yards, or 1.51 miles), accomplished by Cpl. Rob Furlong, a former member of the Canadian Forces, in 2002 in Afghanistan.

SOUND MASKING: A skilled sniper will use loud sounds in the environment, such as artillery shells air bursting or claps of thunder, to mask the sound of their shot.

TARGET: Snipers can target personnel or materiel, but most often they target the most important enemy personnel, such as officers or specialists.

SHOT SELECTION: Military snipers, who generally do not engage targets at less than 300 meters (330 yards), usually attempt body shots, aiming at the chest.

RELOCATING: After firing a few shots, snipers are known to move unseen to another location. An experienced marksman will make it seem as if an entire squad of snipers is engaging the targets.





During water survival training in March, members of the 201st Airlift Squadron of the 113th Wing, District of Columbia Air National Guard and National Guard Bureau swim 150 yards to a raft.

DC Guard trains in Key West on land, sea

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Adrienne L. Wilson

When air crew members do their annual survival training, they don't do it to learn new things, they do it to remember old things.

That's according to Tech. Sgt. Kevin Gallagher, flight attendant with the 201st Airlift Squadron of the District of Columbia National Guard. "You forget when you don't do them," he said. "I relearned the things I already know. It was a really good refresher."

Gallagher and about 40 others from the D.C. Guard ventured to Naval Air Station Key West, Fla., in March for water survival and urban evasion training.

Describing it as "better situational awareness" in "an emergency situation," Master Sgt. Donald Humphreys, 201st air crew training NCO-in-charge and flight attendant, said practice makes perfect.

"Instead of just reading about it or seeing a slide show, you actually get the hands on," he said. "Instead of seeing the sea spray in the picture, they taste the salt in the water."

Although the training is required every three years, 201st members rotate through the training biannually, said Capt. John J. Campo, 201st training chief.

Airmen on the run

The first day began with a four-hour Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape High-Risk-of Capture/Conduct After Capture (SERC) course taught by Staff Sgt. Jonathan McGrath and Senior Airman Nathan Indorf, both 89th Operations Support Squadron SERC specialists.

"[Our people] need to know how to conduct themselves in any environment," McGrath said.

He said he wants to provide the air crews with the most realistic training and have them enjoy it. "If I can put them in a scenario, and they can learn everything they need to know and thoroughly enjoy themselves, then I've done my job."

Evading capture

After SERC came urban navigation training. Guardmembers were dropped off in Key West with a map detailing off-limit areas. They would have to contact the simulated embassy to find out where to go. If captured by hostiles, it was back to the starting point.

"The airplanes are very reliable (the unit flies dignitaries on C-22s and C-38s), but you never know when you're going to need a plan," said Lt. Col. Kevin Prom, the National Guard Bureau's mobility forces

Lost in enemy territory?

Here's what to do:

- ▶ Seek a concealed site and assess your situation
- ▶ Treat yourself medically if necessary
- ▶ Sanitize your clothing for any potentially compromising information
- ▶ Sanitize the area around you. Hide equipment, trash, etc.
- ▶ Apply personal camouflage if necessary
- ▶ Use the terrain to your advantage for concealment & communications
- ▶ Find a hole-out site and remember **BLISS** (Blend, Low-silhouette, Irregular shape, Small, Secluded)

-SERC online training (https://golearn.csd.disa.mil/kc/main/kc_frame.asp)

branch chief. "You have to know the countries you go to and the history and the culture you may encounter when you're outside the wire."

Maj. Louis Campbell IV, 201st C-flight commander, said he learned several valuable lessons from the exercise. "This is the most likely scenario any of us may find ourselves in the future," he said.

Once evading Airmen got to their destination, they were flown to a simulated safe area by a UH-1H helicopter from the D.C. Army National Guard. The helicopter crew, assigned to the 121st Medical Company (Air Ambulance), flew 10 hours to be there and check off some training squares themselves.

"(We are) expanding our rescue hoist operations capabilities, and this was an excellent opportunity to train in an open-water environment," said Chief Warrant Officer Brian Gillespie, an instructor pilot with the unit.

On the second day, Guardmembers trained on self aid and buddy care, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, water survival and hand-to-hand combat.

The hand-to-hand can help air crew defend themselves and others on the plane, said Staff Sgt. Robert Ade, a Raven from the 113th Security Forces Squadron of the D.C. Air National Guard. It can also help them to remove someone from an aircraft if necessary.

Ravens fly with the 201st on overseas missions acting as mobile security.

That sinking feeling

For water survival, the participants donned life preservers and swam about 150 yards to a raft. They also dealt with role players who were injured and needed assistance getting to the raft.

"The water rescue was harder than I thought," Campbell said. "This is the first real-world exercise in which I not only had to consider an entire crew's welfare, but also the welfare of untrained passengers."

Campbell said he also had to use self aid and buddy care techniques. "Thinking about what you would do and actually doing it are two very different things," he said. "This scenario allowed us to 'practice-doing' instead of 'thinking-about-doing.'"

Click here to watch a movie of this story



Air crew members resuscitated their self aide & buddy care skills in Florida as well. Here, Col. Gary L. Akins, 201st Airlift Squadron commander, performs rescue breathing on a CPR dummy, while Col. Kurt Vogel, National Guard Bureau AF/A8 advisor, monitors his progress on a machine.

Campbell said that the most important lesson learned was handling untrained passengers. "Non crew members will likely be terrified and incapable of helping themselves," Campbell said. "Bringing non crew members on this exercise and putting them in the same scenario graphically demonstrated how difficult it can be to help people, who truly cannot swim or are incapacitated."

Once back on land, some of the participants went back out into the surf and were extracted by the Huey with a cable.

"When you're trying to connect [the latch], the water spits up at you, but you can't really see," said Gallagher. "If it's at night time, you really have to feel for it."

Campbell has completed this training before, but never this in-depth. "The water training was much more realistic than even the training I received as a former [civilian airline] pilot," he said.

Attending as observers were a handful of pilots from the National Guard Bureau and three members of the Jamaica Defense Force Air Wing. The D.C. Guard is partnered with Jamaica in the Guard's State Partnership Program.

"Hopefully, I will never need to use this training, but it makes me more prepared ... during an emergency," Gallagher said. "Anyone can read in a book and memorize, but I'm more of a hands-on person."

CARRYING THE LOAD

C-130 crews describe thrill of dropping cargo on target

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy

The aircraft rocked and shuttered as it turned into position. The rear cargo ramp lowered letting in a rush of chilly air as the C-130J passed over the snowy landscape.

As the pilots angled the Hercules' nose slightly upward, the other crew members released retaining straps securing the palletized cargo and it smoothly rolled out the back of the aircraft, parachutes billowing open as it dropped to the ground.

While the airdropped cargo was simply weighted plastic containers dropped into an open field at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md., the training exercise was no less important.

Members of the 135th Airlift Group at Warfield Air National Guard Base in Middle River, Md., have been preparing for an upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. They're flying training missions, focusing on airlifting and dropping cargo as well as other essential skills.

With several deployments in recent years under their belts, to include a rotation in Afghanistan, this sort of thing is nothing new to many of the pilots and crew. Still, they train hard knowing how critical



Tech Sgt. Matt Wright, a loadmaster with the 135th Airlift Group, checks on a cargo pallet.

their mission is.

"When we air drop cargo, we're keeping convoys off the roads," said Lt. Col. Mike Mentges, a weapons officer and pilot with the unit. "IEDs are the number one cause of combat deaths in the Global War on Terrorism ... we're saving Soldiers lives."

The recent training mission in March over Aberdeen was somewhat different than some of the missions that Mentges flew in Afghanistan. There, it wasn't uncommon to fly up to four missions each day, to multiple locations, and have them change while in-flight.

And for Mentges, one, four-mission day stands out.

Dangerous drop

"We proceeded to the second drop zone and when we got there, it turns out the Army guys on the ground are actually engaging enemy forces as we arrived in the vicinity of the drop zone," he said. "We coordinated the clearance to the drop zone. We got in there with the troops in contact, dropped the ammunition to them and as we were escaping off the drop zone the (fighter pilots) immediately resumed dropping bombs, supporting the troops on the ground."

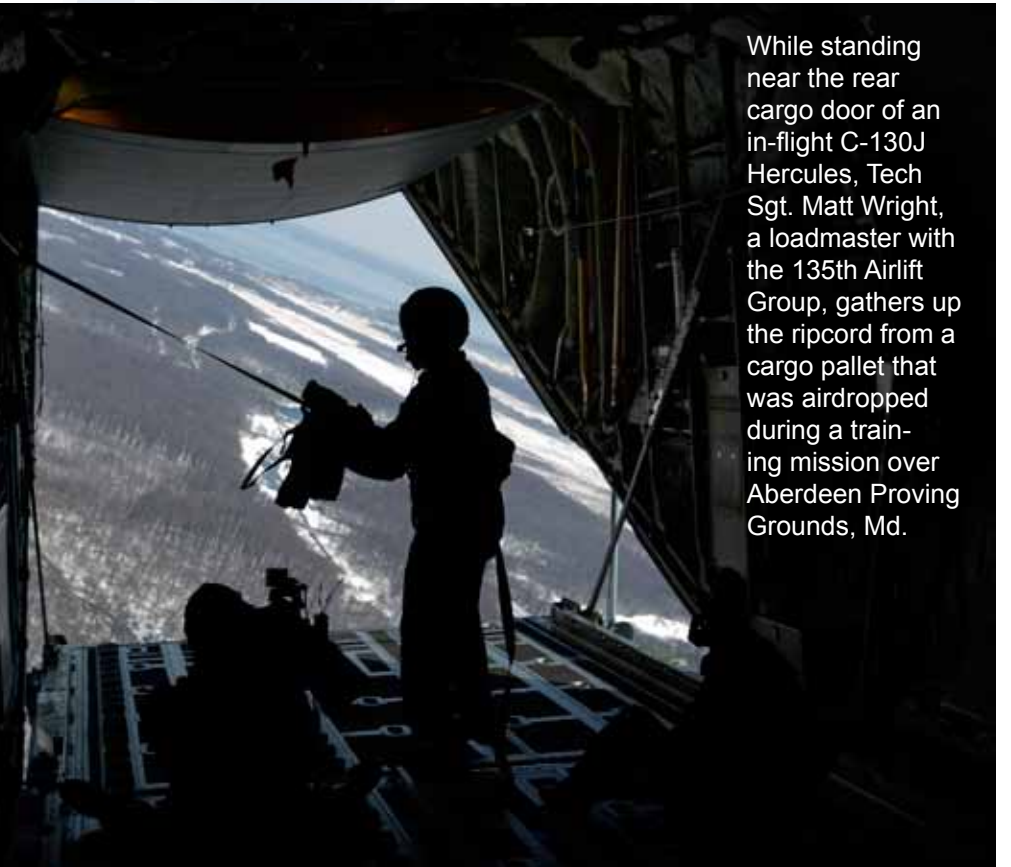
And because of experiences like that, unit members focus heavily on preparing to go, especially those that have not deployed before.

"We try to make it as realistic as possible," said Master Sgt. Scott DeMarco, the chief standard evaluation loadmaster with the unit, "which is sometimes hard because of some of the things we'll encoun-



Lt. Col. Mike Mentges, a pilot and weapons officer with the 135th Airlift Group, peers out from the cockpit.

"When we air drop cargo, we're keeping convoys off the roads,"
-Lt. Col. Mike Mentges



While standing near the rear cargo door of an in-flight C-130J Hercules, Tech Sgt. Matt Wright, a loadmaster with the 135th Airlift Group, gathers up the ripcord from a cargo pallet that was airdropped during a training mission over Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md.

ter (while deployed). We'll take that and tailor our training so the guys have a general idea of what they're going to see so there are not too many surprises for them."

And their mission is one they take seriously.

"Basically, overseas, our main job is the supply of forward operating bases and the troops out in combat," said Tech Sgt. Matt Wright, a loadmaster. "We do anything. We can go into small airfields to give them what they need or we can stick to the air and drop it to them. No matter what, we're going to get it to them, no matter how we have to do it. They're the mission, and we're here to support them."

And that's what many in the unit find rewarding about the job.

"The most rewarding part is making sure the guys on the ground get what they need," said DeMarco. "Because they're our customer. For them to get all the material and food or supplies they need - that's the biggest rewarding factor, peacetime or wartime, whoever needs our help."

Technological assistance

But dropping supplies to those on the ground isn't as simple as opening a door and dropping it out the back. There is more that goes into it to ensure the cargo lands where it's needed.

Mentges described how a computer program helps make that happen: "We put in the type of load, the weight, the type of parachute, weather conditions and it calculates where that load should be released and where it's going to hit on the ground."

During the actual flight, the computer system is constantly updating that information and provides a readout of the projected track of the cargo as it falls, he said.

Computer-aided drop solutions combined with satellite receivers and steerable parachutes mean that flight crews can drop cargo just about anywhere, said Mentges.

Though computers may help with plotting where and when to release the cargo, it's up to the flight crew in the back to make sure it gets loaded correctly.

"We have a really small [margin of error] for our center of balance," said Wright. "It's a matter of inches that we have to keep up to 35,000 or 40,000 pounds of cargo [stable]."

And while in flight, the crew continually keeps tabs on the cargo and other systems of the aircraft, said Wright, who added that it's not easy while being bumped and jostled around during flight.

"It's a matter of experience," said Wright. "When you start off, you're holding on to everything. Eventually, you get to the point where you do it enough, and you just walk back and forth and ... you know when you feel the bumps coming."

And for Wright that's one of the things he likes best about the job.

"I love the mission," he said. "I love flying low and getting bumped around. It makes a lot of people sick, but I really love it. I get a thrill out of it."

C-130 Airdrops-by the numbers

10 is the number of miles from the drop zone cargo can be maneuvered using a satellite location receiver and a steerable parachute

700-25,000 feet is the range in altitude that drops are made

16-24 cargo bundles can be dropped at one time

55 feet is the length of the cargo floor in a C-130J-30 Hercules

Rounding up the The Army's NCO of the Year

Since winning the Army's NCO of the Year competition last fall, Montana Staff Sgt. Michael Noyce Merino has been traveling around the country representing the Army and the Army Guard at pre-eminent Soldier events, not to mention meeting the president and riding on Air Force One. He's attended congressional hearings, Youth ChalleNGe events, the All-American Bowl in San Antonio, Texas, the Future Farmers of America convention in Montana, and met both Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Jeff Gordon at a NASCAR event. This combat veteran and cattle rancher is the first Guardsman to achieve the prestigious title. As busy as he is, he took time to answer a few questions from On Guard.

How many times in the past six months have you explained that your last name isn't hyphenated?

More times than I can count. Believe it or not, I have actually considered hyphenating my name to make it easier to explain to people. I am holding out because I'm stubborn and because I want to preserve my unique way of mixing my white and Hispanic heritages.

What has been your favorite moment so far?



Of course it would be the moment I stood on the stage at the AUSA convention, holding the trophy and watching the standing, applauding crowd through blurry eyes. It felt like reaching the top of Mount Everest and looking out at the clouds. It was very validating for a man who had questioned himself many times through his military career.

Can you recite the NCO Creed by heart or do you need a cue sheet?

I can recite it by heart and have been able to do so since before I was an NCO. I believe that anyone wanting to become a NCO should not only memorize the creed, but also internalize it and make it a large part of his leadership strategy. I believe that whenever the creed is recited, NCOs should stand and recite it, much like the Pledge of Allegiance. The creed is and should be the code by which NCOs lead their soldiers.

What was the most interesting thing on Air Force One, besides the president?

Probably that everything, and I mean everything, had the Presidential Seal on it. Napkins, playing cards, notepaper, matches, cups, even the miniature Tabasco bottles. Being a big hot sauce fan, I had to acquire one of those bottles for my collection.

Has your wife gotten over being called by the president while riding aboard Air Force One?

Every now and then we still look at each other and say, "Wow, that really happened." We both feel blessed and honored to have had the opportunity to experience this amazing series of events.

Did you get any White House M&Ms?

I did, actually, but I haven't decided when to eat them. My sister used to hoard candy for months, while I ate all mine on the first day. I am trying to find some balance in my life through these M&Ms.

Will you try for two-in-a-row?

Fortunately, I am not allowed to compete ever again. Even if I could, I wouldn't compete, for two reasons: I want other NCOs to have the opportunity to match their wits and skills against each other, and also because I feel a great deal of pressure, mostly self-inflicted, to live up to everyone's expectations for me. It was hard enough last time, I feel as though it would be nearly impossible now. I do believe in quitting while you're ahead.

Any advice for Soldiers competing in SOY/NCOY?

Just go ahead and do it. No matter what the outcome, you will be better off for participating. You will gain knowledge, experience and confidence, and it will help you identify your strengths and weaknesses. Some people do not believe in the value of competition, but as Soldiers, competition is what we do. On every mission we conduct we are competing. Competing against the limitations of time, manpower and equipment; competing against the terrain and environment; and ultimately competing against our adversary. It is the Soldier's will to win that triumphs in each one of these situations.

What's harder: winning NCOY or throwing calves around on your ranch?

That depends on the age of the calf. I just got done helping my sister brand her calves and I feel like I fought my way through Combatives School. Her calves are only two or three months old, but I have branded calves that were as much as six and seven months old. Those feel more like trying to subdue Brock Lesnar (heavyweight mixed martial artist).

Has the Army's perception of the National Guard changed? If so, how? If not, why not? Will it ever?

I hope that the active component's view of the National Guard has changed and is continuing to change. I know that coming from AD into the Guard changed my perception. I think that the problem is that the components see each other as separate forces, when in real-

ity, a large part of the National Guard came from AD, and Soldiers from all three components fight alongside each other overseas. In the end, one unit or component can say whatever it wants to about another, but the test comes in performance – in training, competition and during deployments. Ultimately, performance will change the Army's and the country's perception of the National Guard.

Are you scheduled to deploy next year?

I am not currently scheduled to deploy, but the option always exists to volunteer with a unit that is going. I am torn between wanting to join my fellow Guardsmen overseas and looking after my family. After six years of active service and three deployments, I feel that my responsibility now is to take care of my wife and my sister for a little while.

What is the biggest issue for enlisted personnel in the National Guard today?

From my experience, the biggest problem for Guardsmen is keeping themselves physically fit. Using my own life as an example, I had two jobs and full-time school in addition to my traditional Guard position. It was very difficult for me to find the time and energy to constantly maintain a level of physical fitness that I was satisfied with. In the end, the only way I was able to reach my fitness goals was by having a workout buddy who gave me the motivation I needed to push myself to be fit.

What are some upcoming events you plan on attending?

I have numerous events planned and expect to attend many more unplanned. Without going into great detail, I will be doing some events with the Guard's GED Plus program, as well as with the Montana Youth ChalleNGe Program. I will also be attending this year's round of competitions as I look forward to handing the torch off to another Guardsman. There are a few more events that I am purposefully leaving out, because I don't want to spoil the surprise.



Aviators supported civil authorities during '20s & '30s

By Susan Rosenfeld, Ph.D., C.A.

Drifts 60 feet high isolated Silverton, Colo., in March, 1927. The snow began piling up in November and by late February trains could no longer come into the town. Although the residents still had food and water, they feared a disease outbreak. Help was needed.

No plane had ever flown over the Continental Divide in that part of the Rockies before and an attempt March 3 to fly in supplies from Denver failed. Two days later, 1st Lt. Daniel F. Kearns of the Colorado National Guard's 120th Observation Squadron accompanied by his mechanic, Master Sgt. Clyde Plank, answered the challenge in their unit's Douglas O-2C biplane. Despite an open cockpit, no bottled oxygen, and "an under-powered 400-horsepower Liberty engine," they flew as high as 18,000 feet, braving high winds to cross the mountains. Kearns claimed he never encountered a safe place to land if the plane experienced trouble. After five hours, they arrived over Silverton and dropped their medicine, mail and newspapers onto a snow bank near a crowd of 1,000 cheering residents. Many of the townspeople had never seen an airplane before. They later showed their gratitude by sending Kearns and Plank \$150.

Considered by the Denver Post, "the most daring feat in the aviation history of the state" to that time, this "mercy flight," portrayed one type of support for civil authorities that National Guard aviators per-

formed during the '20s and '30s. They also assisted states and localities during other disasters like floods and fires, and civil disturbances like labor strikes. In addition, they helped law enforcement hunt fugitives and even collected air samples for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Melting snows in the Western mountains added to unusually heavy rains that had started in late summer 1926. By the end of the following April, floods affected some 27,000 square miles in 10 states along the Mississippi River and its tributaries, from Illinois to Louisiana. The 1927 flood produced one of the worst natural disasters in American history. Approximately 700,000 people were displaced and 246 individuals died; over 130,000 homes were lost and property damage ran more than \$350 million (approximately \$5 billion today).

Reputedly, Arkansas suffered the most when crevasses opened up in levees. For example, one opened in Pine Bluffs that inundated over 150,000 acres. The Arkansas governor called up 10 officers and 50 enlisted members from that state's 154th

Observation Squadron. With their Curtiss JN-4 and JN-6 aircraft, they began performing relief duties April 18. Besides looking for crevasses, the Guardsmen airlifted food, medicines and supplies for workers filling sandbags and bolstering levees. In some instances, Guard aviators provided the only reliable communications and command and control to the governor. The planes flew over 20,000 miles before the 154th ended its active duty on May 3. The '27 floods represented the first time that a governor mobilized an entire Guard flying unit using its own aircraft to assist civil authorities in a major natural disaster. In the remaining years of the interwar period, Guard aviation units helped their states contend with devastating floods.

During the interwar period, several states experienced civil unrest associated with labor disputes in their mines. Those episodes sometimes prompted governors to call upon the National Guard either

to help keep the peace or to subdue miners when they turned militant. Guard observation squadrons performed strike duty in several states during that period. For example, in 1932, unrest persisted off and on for several months in Ohio coal fields despite the efforts of pro-miner Gov. George White to prevent violence. During strikes that June, 2nd Lt. Karl E. Bushong of the Ohio National Guard dropped tear gas on two occasions from his Douglas O-38. The first time, June 7, 1932, he dispersed approximately 100 pickets, from the Wolf Run Mine using some 25 tear gas bombs as well as firing his machine gun at a nearby hillside as a warning. The local sheriff requested Bushong's services because the demonstrators, mostly women, threw stones at the working miners. In response, the striking miners began shooting and throwing rocks at the plane, forcing it to return to its base for repairs.

In contrast, Bushong's second tear gas assault targeted strike-breakers. The previous month, Gov. White ended a series of strikes with a 10-point plan meant to pacify the miners while not antagonizing mine operators. His plan included a fair wage for the miners without accepting union recognition and collective bargaining. In addition, Brig. Gen. Frank D. Henderson, Ohio's adjutant general, produced a memorandum allowing only miners who lived "a reasonable distance" from the picketed mines to work during strikes. Despite continued strikes in June, many mines reopened, like Wolf Run, scene of the first tear gas bombing. One operator, at Powhatan, brought strike-breakers in from West Virginia. On June 30, Ohio strikers intercepted the West Virginians as they crossed the Ohio River to the mine. According to one account, 15 boatloads carrying 60 men fought each other with oars and clubs. The mine superintendent then called in Bushong to drop tear gas bombs on the West Virginians while Guardsmen on the Ohio riverbank fired warning shots at the strikebreakers. By supporting the strikers, the mine superintendent made it clear that the Guard would only assist operators who cooperated with the governor's program and the Henderson memorandum.

National Guard aviators also aided the states by locating and reporting information regarding fires. Most fire duty involved wildfire reconnaissance, as Minnesota's 109th Observation Squadron did in 1922. However, a fire on a cruise ship provided a unique opportunity for a governor to actually command his aviators. In the early hours of Sept. 8, 1934, the cruise ship S.S. Morro Castle caught fire returning to New York from Havana. New Jersey Gov. A. Harry Moore had been vacationing in nearby Sea Girt, N. J., and called upon every military and private vessel available to brave strong winds, rain and high seas to rescue passengers and crew who fled the burning vessel, many by jumping directly into the water. The state's 119th Observation Squadron answered his call in their Douglas O-38E biplanes.



2nd Lt. Karl E. Bushong

In addition to the wind and high waves, the low-flying aircraft also battled smoke rising 200 feet high. Capt. John A. Carr carried a special passenger as observer – the governor himself. Allegedly without protective goggles in order to see better, Gov. Moore, like other National Guard observers, searched the waters for people. When an observer located someone, the pilot circled his plane around the nearest rescue boat and led it to the stranded person. Sadly, many of those they found had died; but according to one account, Moore found at least four people alive, including two who had floated beyond the rescue area. That rescue was achieved "with the governor standing up in the cockpit, leaning over the side, and waving encouragement." In the end, at least 130 of the 318 passengers and 244 crew members died, but the toll could have been greater had not the 119th directed rescue boats to survivors.

Although relatively unknown, Guard aviators established a solid record of helping state authorities deal with natural disasters and civil unrest during the interwar period. As a byproduct of preparations for their federal mission, they were able to furnish valuable aerial reconnaissance, communications and transportation capabilities that were not otherwise readily available to civil authorities.

Holding down the Home front

The families of a deployment servicemember are under stress too, especially those of Guard-members who until recently were not accustomed to having spouses gone for long periods of time. Some research shows that family members can demonstrate more psychological symptoms of stress, especially depression and anxiety, than the deployed family member does.

Research also indicates that family members are more likely to use health care services for help with their stress than are military personnel. While many of them recognize it's viewed as stigmatizing within the military, spouses don't necessarily have the same attitude. Undoubtedly, the pressure of single parenting and keeping the family functioning provides incentive for getting care in a timely manner.

The reserve components are at a disadvantage compared to the active, in that their families are usually isolated from military services. So, even though they gain entitlement to most of the same benefits as active-duty families once their servicemember deployed, access can be an issue, which only compounds the stress of coping with the deployment.

The National Guard and other reserve components are working hard to help these families be prepared, ready and resilient. The National Guard Family Program offers training with the goal to "increase family self-reliance, which will promote individual and unit readiness, family readiness, and well-being."

Among other resources, the Family Program Web site, www.guardfamily.org, provides online Guard family training. Its 10 modules cover everything from Guard history to stress



management, resources, deployment and reunion. There is also a very cool animated child and youth section called Youniversity Mall. While parts are still under construction, there are great activities available now. The site offers links to state family program offices as well.

A new Army National Guard division that is focused specifically on Soldier and family well-being is the Soldier/Family Service Support Division. Within the communities where Soldiers and their families live, the division is forming alliances with community organizations to make more mental health services available. They call on police and firefighters, chaplains, religious groups, and local outlets of the Tragedy Assistance Program (TAP), all of whom are ready and willing to help. In the deployment setting a behavioral advocate is assigned to each unit to monitor

Soldiers' mental health and conduct training in stress reduction and resilience. The family back home gains added peace of mind knowing that these professionals are keeping a watchful eye out.

And, as always, the Decade of Health (www.decadeof-health.com) offers both Soldiers and families numerous support resources. Check out **SPA HOOAH**, your destination for virtual R&R. There you will find information on maintaining a healthy mind and body – always essential to resilience – and family-specific goodies in the family Room, hosted by military comic and Army spouse and mother, Jan Donahue. Visit often for weekly new physical and mental health updates and resources for you and your family. Don't you deserve a little R&R?

-Judith S. Harris, BSN, BA and Certified Health Educator

Stress Busters

- Make connections – social ties are critical to reducing stress. Accept support when it's offered.
- Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable – try looking beyond the present situation to the future day when it will be better. Recognize each small step that moves you through it.

- Accept that change is part of living – shift your focus from what you can't change to what you can.
- Set and move toward some realistic goals – take small, achievable steps.
- Take decisive actions – like seeking help with stress for whomever in the family needs it.
- Take care of yourself – be aware of your own needs and feelings and how best to handle them.



2009 The Year of the Noncommissioned Officer

