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Newspaper of the National Guard



Bosnia and Herzegovina emulates National Guard

By Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill
National Guard Bureau

SARAJEVO, Bosnia and Herzegovina – Military leaders in this formerly war-torn country look to the National Guard as a model for reform.

A match with Maryland in the National Guard's State Partnership Program has helped Bosnia and Herzegovina step closer to NATO membership. The country was selected for "intensified dialogue" in recognition of its continued progress on the path to alliance membership at an April 4 NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania.

During an April 9 bilateral meeting with Bosnia and Herzegovina's joint staff, LTG H Steven Blum, the chief of the National Guard Bureau, was asked for his advice as the nation

continues to reform its armed forces.

The National Guard is an all-volunteer force, helping citizens is a key part of its mission and it is in every community across the

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Population: 4,590,310
Government type: Emerging federal democratic republic
Gross Domestic Product: \$14.2 billion (2007 est.)
Military branches: army, air and air defense
Military expenditures (percent of GDP): 4.5% (2005 est.)

Source: CIA World Factbook

United States, Blum said, speaking at times in Bosnian, suggesting that Bosnia and Herzegovina look to that model.

"I used a phrase that means 'seen as a force for good'," Blum explained afterwards. "I explained to them the dramatic recruiting turnaround that the Guard has seen post-Katrina. Certainly bonuses and benefits have a role to play, but there's a tremendous sense of pride in belonging to an organization that can save 17,000 American lives in the wake of a hurricane and can send 50,000 troops from every state and territory on a moment's notice, truly the 21st century Minutemen and -women. People want to be part of something that is a force for good and not seen as a threat, and the Guard is your world-class model of that."

Among Guard leaders visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina: Maj. Gen. Frank Grass, U.S. European Command director of mobilization and reserve component affairs, and Maj. Gen.

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Photo by Staff Sgt. Russell Klika

Guardmembers prepare to take a simulated patient through a decontamination site during Vigilant Guard '08 in Tennessee. More photos on pages 8-11.

Vigilant Guard '08 a success; serves participating states well

By Staff Sgt. Dan Heaton
South Carolina National Guard

BEAUFORT, S.C. – Residents along the Atlantic Coast in South Carolina know they could one day be in the path of a major hurricane. As the manager of emergency services in Beaufort County, William Winn can't do much about the weather. But he can rest easier knowing the National Guard is just a phone call away and ready to assist his local fire departments and police agencies respond to "the big one."

"Over the past three days, we've learned how to better communicate, how to better respond to an emergency and how to serve our local population in a time of crisis," Winn said as Vigilant Guard 2008 was winding to a close.

Vigilant Guard was one of the largest disaster response training exercises in the history of the National Guard. The exercise responded to a major notional earthquake

VIGILANT GUARD continued on: Page 8

Nevada marks end of an era for the BDU

By Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka
Nevada National Guard

CARSON CITY, Nev. – Soldiers in the Nevada Army National Guard marked the end of the Battle Dress Uniform era by reaching deep into their closets to wear the iconic woodland-camouflage fatigue one last time before its wear-out date of April 30.

Dozens of Soldiers across the state pressed their BDUs and polished their black leather boots for the final days of wear April 29-30 during "BDU retro-days" at Nevada's 19 armories.

"It was hard to let go of the BDU uniform," said Staff Sgt. Elias Perez of the Counterdrug Task Force at the Plumb Lane Armory in Reno. "One could always see the pride of a Soldier reflected in their BDU uniform. If you saw a pressed uniform and highly-polished boots, you knew the Soldier was a professional and took pride in his job."



Nevada Soldiers mark the end of the Battle Dress Uniform era in late April.

Photo by 1st Sgt. Carl Adams

Counterdrug Sgt. Eric Hintermeyer said the day generated opinionated discussions about past and present Army uniforms.

"The BDUs was a landmark uniform that we will never see again," Hintermeyer said. "Some people prefer the ACUs (Army Combat Uniform) while others felt the BDU was a more professional uniform. The BDU was the standard uniform everyone associated with the Army for decades."

The idea to pull the BDU out one last time came from Lt. Col. Jeff Hansen, the commander of the 422nd Signal Battalion in Reno. The public affairs office marketed the idea and the informal BDU retro-day was created.

BDUs served as the standard Army field uniform for about 30 years. They were first issued to recruits in 1978 and later

BDU GOODBYE continued on: Page 16

New team champion at Guard Marathon: Page 14



Look alive: It's the dreaded 101 days

ABOUT THE ON GUARD

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E-mail your stories by the first day of each month for possible inclusion in next month's issue. We prefer that photos be high-quality digital (300 dpi or more) and e-mailed to:

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My friend who is a partner in the prestigious law firm Litigations R Us has advised me to be careful what I say here, but I must confess that the Saturday I intended to write this piece I was involved in an automobile accident. Ironically, I was planning to write about working and playing safely during these 101 days of summer.

It was a glorious Kentucky Derby day here in northern Virginia when my Camry and I had a sudden and unexpected midday encounter with a large blue car driven by, as it turned out, a gracious lady named Linda. I will spare you the rest of the sordid details other than to tell you that no one was hurt; both drivers were insured; it appeared that both cars could be repaired; and that it would have been a pleasure to meet Linda under just about any circumstances other than in the middle of the busy street near where I live.

Regaining my composure and thinking about what I could have done and should not have done to avoid the accident consumed the rest of my day. Then it hit me the next morning. Surviving the 101 days – or any day for that matter – is mostly about paying attention to what you are doing and not taking stupid chances. My learned lawyer pal advised me to stop right there – to “keep your mouth shut,” in his words – when it comes to further discussing the details of my case, which, by now, should be closed.

So now I'll tell you how I



By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
Senior Editor

originally intended to start this column. We are into what I call this country's patriotic season, the long month that encompasses Memorial Day, Flag Day and the Army's birthday, and the Fourth of July. It is the midyear mark between the traditional holiday seasons of Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Years. Someday, when I am king, the patriotic season will be just as important as the holiday season. But that's a subject for another time.

Anyway, if you intend to enjoy the next holiday season with your families and friends, you have to make it through the 101 days of summer which begin with this patriotic season.

OK, so much for the timeline.

By now, we all should know

what we should and should not do to be safe during the summer when we are inclined to train hard and play hard, especially in the north after another long and confining winter.

• What idiot wouldn't wear a helmet while riding a motorcycle? Hell, I wear a helmet when I ride a bicycle.

• Who among us has not been told to not drive after consuming alcoholic beverages? It's gotten to the point where I won't drink and walk.

• How hard is it to fasten a seat-belt? If I can do it in five seconds, you can probably do it in three.

• How long does it take to put on a life preserver? Not nearly as long as it will take the divers to fish your body out of the lake.

• Do you have a fire extinguisher close to the grill? No? Perhaps

you'd rather watch your home go up in flames.

Those are some of the obvious things. But there are others that can turn a good summer into a bad season for you and your family.

Get the sleep you need so you

don't drive when you're fatigued. We've all driven when we were a little too tired. But remember that fatigue has the same affect as alcohol. They both dull the senses and let down your guard so you take chances that you wouldn't if you were wide awake or sober.

Give yourself enough time to

get there. Roll call is at 0700? Time it so you get there at 0630. Hurrying to get there on time might mean you don't get there at all.

Watch yourselves and your buddies on the last day of annual training. Breaking your leg because you jumped, rather than climbed, off a truck is a lousy way to begin the rest of the summer.

Sometimes it's the little things that can bite you, such as being in too much of a hurry to bother with a ground guide and then backing the five-ton into a portable toilet. (And then hoping that no one is in there.)

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We've heard all of this, and a lot more, before, especially the one about drinking and driving. It's like being told for about the thousandth time to keep your weapon pointed down range. Or that speed kills. Or that haste makes waste.

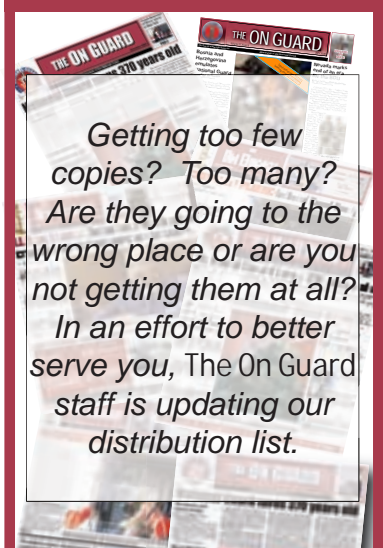
There is a little voice in most of us that says “It can't happen to me.” A lot of smokers, for example, hear it about getting lung cancer every time they light up. It's the same with safety. We all believe we're going to be OK, and see the next Christmas with the family, even if we do push the envelope now and then.

We'll get away with it most of the time; but I can tell you from firsthand experience, not all of the time. I learned that lesson, again, on the first Saturday in May. Yes, I watched Big Brown win going away a few hours after my accident. I was saddened by the loss of Eight Belles. But all the while I was watching the Derby I was saying to myself: “You & *%#@! idiot.”

101 CRITICAL DAYS OF SUMMER



Getting your On Guard?



Please e-mail us with any changes to:
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Army, Air Guard enlisted leaders seek common ground at conference

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. – The “stars” of the National Guard’s Army and Air Force enlisted force gathered near one of this country’s pivotal battlegrounds to explore ways to work in closer harmony in mid-April.

Eighty Army Guard state command sergeants major and Air Guard command chief master sergeants, whose stripes are punctuated with stars, from 46 states and territories took part in the first Senior Enlisted Leaders Conference sponsored by the National Guard Bureau. The New York Guard hosted the event.

The intent was to bring the state senior enlisted leaders from the two distinct military cultures closer together at a time when they are expected to work together as a joint force, explained Command Sgt. Maj. David Ray Hudson, the senior enlisted leader for the chief of the NGB. Hudson organized the event.

Both Guard forces share the same goal, to support their states and defend their country when they are needed. But they do that in considerably different ways.

LTG H Steven Blum has been stressing the importance of a joint National Guard force since becoming the NGB chief five Aprils ago. But some places are joint only in name, in the form of joint staff signs on the wall, Hudson observed, because the Army and Air cultures and funding procedures remain so disparate.

The four-day conference that began April 18 in this historic city north of Albany was intended to narrow the cultural gap or, at the very least, create a better understanding of “how the other half lives” among the senior sergeants and chiefs who are mentoring the younger enlisted people in their states.

In all, about 135 Guard people took part in the conference a few miles from the Saratoga battlefield where, in October 1777, an American Army soundly defeated a British



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

New York Air Guard Staff Sgt. Thomas McCauley, left, from the 109th Airlift Wing, presents Command Sgt. Maj. David Ray Hudson with a jet-assisted takeoff bottle during the National Guard Bureau’s first Senior Enlisted Leaders Conference in mid-April.

army during the Revolutionary War. That victory led to French recognition for the fledgling United States and prompted France to provide financial and military support.

It was hoped that this conference more than 230 years later would be a similar kind of turning point in the relations between the Army and Air Guard’s 457,000 enlisted members.

“We’re learning about each other because we do have different ways of doing business. The ranks are different. The way we get paid is different. The way we travel is different,” said New York’s Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Van Pelt during a press conference at the state’s military museum, near the conference center. “The best way to understand your counterpart

is to sit next to him and train with him.”

The enlisted leaders spent the first day exploring 22 of their services’ fundamental differences – rank structures, physical fitness standards, how the Army Guard’s platoons and the Air Guard’s flights are organized, uniform wear, and how troops are evaluated yearly.

They spent the final day contemplating the Guard Bureau chief’s message about their roles in making the Guard a truly joint force.

“If we’re really going to make this joint force work, you have to be the bricks and mortar to hold it together for us,” Blum said. “You’re going to have to get the young noncommissioned officers to understand what you’re living.”

New mission for Penn. Air Guard unit

By Capt. Renee T. Lillis
Pennsylvania National Guard

WILLOW GROVE AIR RESERVE STATION, Pa. – The most coveted uniform item at the 111th Fighter Wing is no longer the new Airman Battle Uniform—it’s a red cap.

On April 5, more than 100 Guardmembers sported the red caps for the first time and cheerfully yelled “To the HORSE” during the 201st RED HORSE Squadron, Detachment 1 activation ceremony here.

“What a proud day for this unit and the Air Force. Today is a historic day as the 201st, Det. 1 begins to write the next chapter,” said Maj. Geno J. Rapone as he accepted command of the new detachment.

RED HORSE stands for Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer. These units are self-sufficient, 404-person mobile squadrons that provide major force bed-down, heavy damage repair and heavy engineering operations in remote, high-threat environments worldwide. They are the Air Force’s equivalent of the Army Corps of Engineers or Navy Seabees.

RED HORSE squadrons possess special capabilities, such as water-well drilling, explosive demolition, quarry operations, concrete mobile operations, material testing, expedient facility erection and concrete and asphalt paving.

“Basically, our job is to go out to the middle of nowhere and build an air base in two weeks and leave,” said Rapone.

It’s this capability that makes this highly mobile force the elite of Air Force engineers.

“What a vital group out there – a global asset. It’s extremely exciting to bring home this mission and see all the positive energy out there,” said Col. Paul W. Comtois, 111th FW commander.

Also significant is the fact that Pennsylvania is now the only state to have a full RED HORSE squadron.

Oldest Air Guard unit turns 100

WEST HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. – The New York Air National Guard’s 106th Rescue Wing celebrated its 100th birthday April 30, making it the oldest Air National Guard unit.

On April 30, 1908, the First Company, Signal Corps, a New York Guard unit of 100 men belonging to the 71st Regiment organized to operate observation balloons, held its first training session at the regimental armory in New York City.

Today, the descendants of that company operate state-of-the-art HH-60 Pavahawk rescue helicopters and HC-130N Hercules surveillance aircraft designed to locate and rescue downed Airmen. 106th Airmen have served in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Horn of Africa. They also provide rescue support during NASA space shuttle launches.

Airmen of the 106th were first on the scene after TWA Flight 800 blew up in midair off the Long Island coast in July 1996, and conducted the longest over-water rescue mission ever in 1998. In 1991, HH-60s of the 106th launched to rescue a yacht crew which was featured in the movie “The Perfect Storm.” And the first woman officer in the Air National Guard belonged to the 106th.

Minnesota wing earns rare OSHA distinction

By Capt. Audra Flanagan
Minnesota National Guard

DULUTH, Minn. – Minnesota’s 148th Fighter Wing in Duluth has earned Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Star status, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) announced April 30. The 148th is the first unit in the Air Force to accomplish this goal.

The VPP provides a measurable process to show excellence in occupational safety and health. VPP participants are recognized based on their written safety and health management system, sustained superior performance and a commitment to effective employee protection beyond the requirements of OSHA standards. In addition to reviewing extensive documentation, OSHA conducts an on-site evaluation.

The wing’s chief of safety, Lt. Col. Charlie Nelson, stated that the “148th Fighter Wing succeeded at earning the VPP Star Rating as a result of the strong safety culture in the wing.”

On March 3, 2006, Secretary of the Air Force Michael W. Wynne made improving safety and health part of Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century (AFSO21). Tasked with building a culture of continuous improvement to enhance combat effectiveness, AFSO21 has outlined safety as a key area for process improvement to help guide initiatives throughout the Air Force. VPP is a program aligned with this initiative.

The 148th began the VPP process 18 months ago when they began working with a local, civilian mentor from Minnesota Power. They submitted their official VPP application to OSHA in October 2007. In February 2008, a team of OSHA-VPP experts performed an on-site assessment of the 148th and recommended the wing for a “Star” rating.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jason W. Rolfe

148th Fighter Wing members head to Hawaii in November on a C-17 Globemaster to support an Air Sovereignty Alert.

In addition to preparing for the VPP during the past 18 months, the wing supported a variety of missions to include deployments and inspections. The 148th deployed to Balad Air Base, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., in support of Operation Noble Eagle; and to bases in Hawaii and Alaska to support Air Sovereignty Alert after the Air Force grounded the F-15 fleet. The 148th also received an “Excellent” Alert Force Evaluation rating; “Outstanding” ACC COMSEC inspection rating and an “Excellent” Phase I Operational Readiness Inspection rating.

Guarding America

California

After seven months in Iraq, Golden State Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 143rd Field Artillery Regiment, attached to the 1st Sustainment Brigade, completed their tour of duty. The unit officially relinquished its force-protection mission to an Indiana Guard unit during a transfer of authority ceremony April 17. The 1-143rd was responsible for operating the Area Defense Operations Cell and providing security at Camp Taji.

Illinois

About 150 Soldiers of the Prairie State's 106th Aviation Regiment were to deploy to Kosovo in May as part of the United Nation's mandated and NATO-led peacekeeping force. The unit's UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters flew to Charleston, S.C., to be loaded on a military cargo vessel traveling to Europe.

Indiana

Hoosier State Soldiers at Camp Atterbury and other sites were visited by the Panther Racing Team which races a Guard-sponsored car driven by Vitor Meira in the Indy Racing League. Race team members were shown how an M-16 rifle works and saw Company F, 151st Infantry return from a year-long deployment to southwest Asia in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Louisiana

The Pelican State's 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion arrived at Camp Taji, Iraq, April 16 to assume responsibility for the battle space currently controlled by Alabama's 1103rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. "Being the command staff of the most robust sustainment battalion in theater means that our performance will be critical to the success of the overall mission in Iraq," said the 165th's commander, Lt. Col. Randall "Beau" Bradford.

Maine

A forum committed to highlighting the importance of commitment and service to families, communities, the country and the world took place in the Pine Tree State May 7. This event was named for Capt. Patrick D. Damon who died in Afghanistan while serving as a company commander in the 240th Engineer Battalion. Panelists for the forum included Gov. John Baldacci and Maj. Gen. Bill Libby, Maine's adjutant general.

New York

Empire State Soldiers and Airman trained with members of the New York City Fire Department at a firefighters' academy on Randall's Island in early May. The purpose was to strengthen the coordination and procedures for employing the Guard's special domestic

emergency response teams to assist civil authorities. The response training exercise, known as Operation Civil Support, prepared Guardmembers to better support civilian authorities with hazardous material assessment, casualty extraction, decontamination and medical triage.

North Dakota

All 182 Soldiers of the Peace Garden state's 191st Military Police Company arrived in Iraq in May. The unit, which is based in Fargo with detachments in Mayville and Bismarck, mobilized in January. The company will conduct military police operations, such as area security and maneuver support. Soldiers in the company come from more than 40 communities in North Dakota and neighboring states.

South Dakota

The Mount Rushmore State's Guard officially kicked off a new program in April designed to improve maintenance safety. Called the Voluntary Protection Program, it is designed to reduce accidents and injuries in the workplace. The Defense Department program combines OSHA safety standards with improved standards developed by workers.

Texas

Lone Star State Soldiers are participating in Beyond the Horizon 2008, a multinational joint services military exercise that includes humanitarian and civic assistance projects in Trinidad and Tobago for most of the summer. Sponsored by the U.S. Southern Command and planned, organized and supervised by U.S. Army South, BTH 2008 missions are designed to foster goodwill and improve relations among U.S. and Caribbean nations in support of Southern Command's Partnership for the Americas program.

Virginia

The Old Dominion Army Guard held a special enlistment ceremony April 29 to celebrate an end strength milestone. The state ended April with more than 8,000 Soldiers for the first time since 1994. The adjutant general conducted a special enlistment ceremony at the Military Entrance Processing Station at Fort Lee to celebrate the achievement. The state offers full college tuition assistance for any Soldier who joins.

West Virginia

The Mountain State won the top 2008 Army National Guard Army Communities of Excel-

lence (ACOE) award May 7 and \$750,000. The ACOE encourages states to adopt each other's best practices in a constant effort to improve. The ACOE is a program of the Army's chief of staff. West Virginia represented the Army Guard at the Army level. The program assesses excellence in customer service and satisfaction at Army installations, according to National Guard Bureau officials.

Wisconsin

The Badger State's 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment replaced Louisiana's 241st MPAD in April at Joint Task Force-Guantanamo in Cuba. Based in Madison, the 112th has assumed the mission of telling the story of the task force which conducts safe and humane care and custody of detained enemy combatants.

Wyoming

The Equality State Air Guard dedicated the second of four C-130s at the Wyoming Air National Guard Base in Cheyenne. The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations paved the way for four additional C-130s at Cheyenne to support an active-duty air mobility squadron. These four aircraft join eight other C-130s dedicated at Cheyenne, Sheridan, Cody, Riverton, Laramie, Casper, Guernsey and Rock Springs.



Photo by Senior Airman Julianne Showalter

Good with a wrench

Iowa Guard Staff Sgt. Marshall Lantz, Detachment 1, 134th Security and Support Battalion crew chief, inspects an OH-58 Kiowa April 20 at Balad Air Base, Iraq. The helicopters were shipped to Balad and then flown to Camp Taji, Iraq, to be used for Iraqi Air Force pilot training.

Guard answers calls in battered states

By Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – National Guard members in four states were called out by their governors to assist civil authorities May 12 after tornados crossed the Southwest May 10 and flooding on the Delaware coast left communities in need of emergency assistance.

Since May 7, the National Weather Service has confirmed at least 42 tornados in the southern Plains and the southeastern and middle Atlantic regions of the nation with the strongest tornado recorded May 10 as an F-4. It developed from a super cell storm that tracked through three states.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency reported that Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma and South Carolina were all affected by severe weather during that weekend with at least 22 confirmed deaths, many homes destroyed and thousands of people without power. The Guard also responded to flooded areas in Delaware after heavy rains on Mother's Day.

In Oklahoma, Gov. Brad Henry called out the National Guard to assist emergency responders after five confirmed tornados touched down in the state. At least 25 Army Guard members provided security support in the town of Picher after

a F-4 tornado churned up a 63-mile swath of damage from Oklahoma to Missouri.

Soldiers reportedly assisted local law enforcement in securing the area, which included routes in and out of the town four miles south of the state's border with Kansas. An Army Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew also flew aerial assessment missions for the governor.

In Arkansas, where at least two tornados touched down and tracked through the central part of the state May 10, homes were destroyed in the town of Stuttgart. "We've deployed 50 Guardsmen from the Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion," said Maj. Keith Moore, a National Guard spokesman.

Moore said the Soldiers traveled from their station in Jonesboro and provided security support at traffic control points and conducted patrols to prevent looting. The Soldiers worked two shifts during a round-the-clock operation and were expected to be on station through May 14. The Army Guard flew Gov. Michael Beebe and emergency management agency personnel on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter out of Camp Robinson to assess damaged areas.

"This is one of the key roles of the Guard, being a dual mission force, that we are here to support our local communities, respond to the governor," said Moore.

After severe storms and tornados swept through southwest Missouri, nearly 20 Army Guard Soldiers deployed on state active duty to support Gov. Matt Blunt in his emergency response efforts for the towns of Newtonia and Grany. The Soldiers assisted local law enforcement agencies with security. Eight Soldiers and two military vehicles deployed to each town.

In Delaware, tidal flooding and heavy rains led to Guardmembers deploying in six light medium tactical vehicles (LMTVs) and one 2.5-ton truck to assist in flood evacuations at South Bowers Beach, Kitts Hummock Beach, Woodland Beach and Slaughter Beach.

"The LMTVs can carry up to 15 people and have a high ground clearance which allows them to operate in up to four feet of water," said Lt. Col. Len Gratter, Delaware National Guard spokesman. Gratter said the state's Guardmembers are deployed from the 262nd Maintenance Company, the 261st Signal Brigade and the 72nd Troop Command.

The Delaware Guard coordinated emergency assistance through the state's emergency management agency with its Joint Operations and Emergency Operations Centers. A shelter area was also setup in Kent County.

-Army Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill contributed to this report



Arkansas National Guard photo

Arkansas Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Lucas Jennings discusses tornado response missions May 12 with other Citizen-Soldiers and local law enforcement representatives in a central Arkansas area affected by a May 10 tornado.

For more National Guard news, including stories, photos and video, visit: www.ngb.army.mil

Expect aerial firefighting pace to increase, Guard told at training event

PORT HUENEME, Calif. – Expect a lot of aerial firefighting by California and others states' National Guard forces this year, said Neal Hitchcock, deputy operations director of Fire and Aviation with the U.S. Forest Service.

Hitchcock made that prediction May 5 to commanders and flight crews from federal and state organizations, including several Air National Guard units, at the welcome session of the 2008 Modular Airborne Firefighting System (MAFFS) training at Channel Islands Air National Guard Station, Calif. His comments indicate firefighting crews might begin fighting actual fires earlier, more often and for longer periods than in previous years.

The week's MAFFS program provided training and qualification of military navigators, pilots, loadmasters and ground crews that might have to fly firefighting missions around the nation this year.

Several media outlets from California and Colorado participated in a May 8 media day. The event began with a morning briefing by California Air Guard Master Sgt. Michael Drake on the MAFFS system and its part in the firefighting mission, and also featured tours of static displays of the MAFFS systems, a C-130 Hercules J-model aircraft and a U.S. Forest Service lead plane; and a live MAFFS

water-drop demonstration. Media were also granted several interviews with civilian and military subject matter experts concerning the MAFFS system and the interagency and interstate cooperation involved in firefighting missions.

Distinguished visitors included Maj. Gen. William H. Wade II, adjutant general of California, and his counterpart from the Nevada National Guard, Maj. Gen. Cynthia Kirkland. Representatives from several U.S. congressional offices also attended, as did National Guard Bureau officials.

Personnel from a variety of federal and state agencies, including CAL FIRE, Air National Guard and Reserve units from Wyoming, North Carolina, Colorado and California, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Interagency Firefighting Center joined the men and women of Channel Islands' 146th Air Wing in the MAFFS mission, now in its 35th year. The operation has continued with an unblemished safety record and constantly improving technology, which leaders hope will increase the operation's effectiveness.

MAFFS was created in 1974 in response to devastating forest fires which ravaged Southern California and much of the southwestern United States. The concerted effort by several states' firefighting agencies and National Guard units led to the flying of C-

130 aircraft equipped with a special apparatus designed for the aerial delivery of flame retardant. The program has proved successful in addressing large forest fires.

Hitchcock says ocean temperature, precipitation anomalies and mountain snowpacks are among the factors considered in predicting the dryness and flammability of forest regions throughout the nation.

"We're setting new records for heat intensity," Hitchcock said of the most recent fires, adding that the potential exists for 2008 to be a very active firefighting year, based on those indicators.

That's why the crews were in Southern California, said Kathy Allred, MAFFS 2008 training director. Allred said by conducting training that simulates dropping flame retardant over seven areas of the Los Padres and Angeles forests, they were preparing for any interagency, real world response to the upcoming fire season.

"Every fire is different," said Chief Master



Photo by Tech Sgt Brian E. Christiansen

A C-130 Hercules cargo plane assigned to the North Carolina Air National Guard drops 3,000 gallons of water in the Los Padres National Forest, Calif., at an annual certifying event.

Sgt. Mike Annas of North Carolina's 145th Airlift Wing.

Annas, now wing command chief and former chief loadmaster who leads the MAFFS enlisted component at his unit, said that crews can become more proficient at what they do, but due to variations in winds, conditions, topography and a variety of other factors distinguishing every fire, it is always necessary to make corrections.

MAFFS leaders said the aim of the training operation was to encourage or seek the best operational procedures in accomplishing the firefighting mission with concerns for economy, efficiency and safety.

- NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

From page 1:
BOSNIA

Larry Shellito, the adjutant general of Minnesota.

The visit was intended to solidify Bosnia and Herzegovina's partnership with Maryland, lay the groundwork for a regional security cooperation conference scheduled to be held in Sophia, Bulgaria, later this year and assess the next steps for Bosnia and Herzegovina's participation in the National Guard's 59-nation State Partnership Program (SPP).

Future SPP activities could include Maryland troops deploying alongside those from Bosnia and Herzegovina, noncommissioned officer development, civil security cooperation, joint engineer projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and military police exchanges.

The Guard leaders congratulated Bosnia and Herzegovina on its selection for intensified dialogue in its quest for NATO membership. "That's the next step on their journey toward full NATO membership," Blum said.

"They admire and respect the National Guard greatly because we have been the force that they've seen wearing the American flag over here for about the last eight years and they've really developed a tremendous respect and admiration for the Citizen-Soldier," he said.

"They also understand the huge capability it brings to our nation back at home, and they're looking for a way to emulate that. So it would not surprise me that they adopt that for their own system. First of all, it's cost-effective. And second of all, it would then overcome one of the greatest barriers this nation has. It has in the past feared its army and the army has actually turned on its citizenry. With the Guard, they see ... that people respect us and know that their lives are either going to get saved or their lot will be made better because of our presence. They want to move to a system that allows them to have Citizen-Soldiers with the professional capabilities the Guard has developed and have the respect and admiration and support of the community and the government that the Guard enjoys."

In a glass case at the Sarajevo War Tunnel Museum, which celebrates an 800-meter tunnel that helped the city survive a four-year siege by Serbian forces, Blum found three of his own coins.

A one-star coin dated to his time commanding the Virginia Army Guard's 29th Infantry Division during a peace enforcement rotation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A two-star coin reflected his service as commanding general of the Multinational Division (North) SFOR-10 in the West Virginia-sized nation. And a three-star coin told of his continued interest in the country in his time as chief.

"When you fly in here and see buildings with roofs on them and children playing and people walking the streets and businesses that are thriving and commerce that is pretty robust, it's quite rewarding from the hollow shell and the bombed-out houses and the hopeless looks on the people's faces just a short few years ago," Blum said.

—The CIA World Factbook contributed to this report

Israel's biggest war drill offers lessons for National Guard

Photos & story by
Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill
National Guard Bureau

NAZARETH, Israel — A first-ever national level civil defense exercise offered insights the National Guard could apply in the United States.

Members of the Israeli Defense Force's (IDF) Home Front Command (HFC), the New Jersey-sized nation's equivalent of the National Guard, searched the wreckage of a collapsed three-story building here on April 8 as Defense Minister Ehud Barak; LTG H Steven Blum, the chief of the National Guard Bureau; HFC leader Maj. Gen. Yair Golan and other Israeli and U.S. leaders observed.

"The HFC has very similar duties and responsibilities to their citizens in Israel as the National Guard has to its citizens in the United States," Blum said. "We're both facing common security challenges. We both have democratic forms of government which require close cooperation of the military and the civilian sector and agencies at the local and national level. We have common interests in providing for the safety and security of the citizens of our nations. It's only right that we should share techniques and expertise and experiences so that we can both be better able to accomplish our missions."

Turning Point 2 (TP2), Israel's biggest-ever war drill, tested emergency response capabilities to large-scale missile attacks. The exercise included nationwide air raid sirens, school bombardment drills, emergency broadcasts, recall of reserve troops, rescue operations and simulated chemical attacks.

Watching HFC soldiers and civilian authorities search the rubble pile for 50 dummies that had been hidden before the building was collapsed for the exercise, Maj. Gen. Larry Shellito, the adjutant general of the Minnesota National Guard, reflected on rescue efforts after the Aug. 1, 2007 collapse of the Interstate 35 West Mississippi River bridge in Minneapolis.

"Safety and time are two critical aspects of making sure that it's done right and efficiently," Shellito said.

The exercise reinforced things the Minnesota National Guard is doing right, such as its command and control procedures, Shellito said. It also prompted the adjutant general to reflect on how to create exercises back home with the same level of realism and how to continue to promote seamless cooperation between federal, state and local agencies in the aftermath of disaster.

Searchers quickly found about 20 of the dummies. "What you find out in the rubble



Above: Members of the Israeli Defense Force's Home Front Command and civilian authorities search the rubble during Turning Point 2, a first-ever national level civil defense exercise. Left: LTG H Steven Blum talks with Israeli officials in the rubble of a collapsed three-story building in Nazareth, Israel, April 8. National Guard Bureau officials observed the exercise.

over the years, since Katrina especially."

Lt. Col. Kimberly Sencindiver's responsibilities at the National Guard Bureau include training Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen assigned to the Guard's CERFPs.

Sencindiver compared Israeli and U.S. training and operation methods during TP2. She was intrigued by an area decontamination vehicle participating in TP2 at the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Kirya.

"It's very different than what we do in the CERFPs," Sencindiver said. "CERFPs strictly decontaminate individuals, with a secondary target of equipment or personal items that the individuals might have with them. We've never addressed decontaminating an area or a landscape or large articles before."

The Israeli vehicle is designed to decontaminate an area such as a runway or a large object such as a building or vehicle. The decontamination bleach solution includes a chalk additive that marks the treated area so that it's easy to see what has been processed and what hasn't.

"It's going to be very interesting to take that back to the decontamination working group and say, 'OK, is this something we might want to look at in terms of our own operations?'," Sencindiver said.

The vehicle wasn't the only possible lesson Sencindiver took away from TP2. "The way that they handled their medical operations validated a lot of our thought-process," she said. "They had a couple of things that we could learn from. Their patient and evacuee tracking system uses digital photos, which is something that we're trying to incorporate."

The HFC's medical command center uses a central database linked to each of Israel's 24 hospitals with digital photos of patients and evacuees that make it easier for authorities to help families reunite in the wake of a disaster.

"Safety and time are two critical aspects of making sure that it's done right and efficiently"



—Maj. Gen. Larry Shellito, the adjutant general of the Minnesota National Guard, reflecting on rescue efforts after the Aug. 1, 2007 collapse of the Interstate 35 West Mississippi River bridge in Minneapolis

AMBUISHED

AND HOW FIVE SOLDIERS PROVED: DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

Weapons used in the fight



M-2 .50-CALIBER MACHINE GUN
Primary function: antipersonnel and antiaircraft weapon. Dimensions: Length 5 ft., 1.41 in. Weight: 128 lbs. Bore diameter: .50 in. Maximum effective range: 6,547 ft. Cyclic rate of fire: 550 rounds per minute.



M-240B GENERAL PURPOSE MACHINE GUN
Primary function: antipersonnel. Dimensions: Length 4 ft., 1 in. Weight: 27.6 lbs. Bore diameter: 7.62mm. Maximum effective range: Area target, 5,906 ft.; point target, 2,625 ft. Cyclic rate of fire: 650-950 rounds per minute.



M-203 GRENADE LAUNCHER (ATTACHED TO AN M-4A1)
Primary function: antipersonnel. It is a single shot 40mm grenade launcher that attaches to the M-16 assault rifle or the M-4 Carbine. It can fire explosives, smoke, illumination, buckshot, High Explosive Dual Purpose, CS gas and training grenades.



IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICE
Primary function: designed to cause death or injury by using explosives alone or in combination with toxic chemicals, biological toxins or radiological material. An IED can be made from any type of material and initiator.

By 2nd Lt. Adam Musil
Texas National Guard

Feb. 23 began as a typical night for Staff Sgt. Shane D. Lindsey and the Texas Army National Guard Soldiers of A Company, 3rd Battalion, 144th Infantry Regiment.

Lindsey was a trained infantryman, but like the majority of his unit, he had spent his tour in Iraq providing convoy security in and out of various military installations. His primary duty was that of assistant convoy commander and vehicle commander for his Combat Logistics Patrol (CLP). On this Iraqi evening, the men of his battalion were transporting fuel from a convoy support center to a logistical support area.

It was a cool night, and visibility was high, allowing gunners such as Spc. John A. Armstrong to better spot any enemy activity. Of course, this also gave any would-be attacker the same advantage. Traveling south of Baghdad International Airport, Lindsey's convoy entered a highly populated area and was struck by an improvised explosive device (IED). The IED detonated near the first vehicle, stopping the convoy, and was immediately followed by a hail of bullets from enemy forces firing from well-fortified positions on the north and south sides of the road.

Without hesitation, Armstrong began firing his M-240B machine gun at the source of enemy fire. The convoy commander ordered the CLP to push the fuel tankers out of the line of fire and the military vehicles to engage the enemy. Armstrong focused his fire and began relaying the locations of the enemy to the convoy commander. As Armstrong focused his fire at the rear of the convoy, gunner Cpl. Tanerrius D. Robinson did the same, identifying two insurgents and eliminating them with his M-2 .50-caliber machine gun.

The firing continued, and Lindsey ordered his vehicle to the right side of the road to engage the enemy. He soon noticed the fuel tanker in front of him was disabled and quickly ordered his vehicle to be positioned in front of the immobile tanker. His vehicle was immediately bombarded by gunfire from both sides of the road. Lindsey radioed Robinson's vehicle and requested fire support. Robinson adjusted fire and engaged an estimated six insurgents firing from a group of buildings 75 meters south of the road. His vehicle was then rocked by a second IED detonation approximately 50 meters behind his vehicle. This did not deter

Robinson, who emptied his M-2, transitioned to his M-240B and continued the fight.

Near the front of the convoy, Lindsey's vehicle continued to be pinned down by intense fire. His gunner, Spc. Anthony D.

Cooke, did his best to lay down a high volume of effective fire as his turret was peppered with an endless assault of enemy bullets. Cooke emptied his M-2 and transitioned to his M-240B, continuing to fire without pause. This allowed his staff sergeant to exit his vehicle and enter the battle. Lindsey, now exposed to enemy fire, began engaging targets with his M-203 grenade launcher.

As Cooke provided cover for Lindsey, the battle was joined by Sgt. Anthony Robbins, a truck commander for a vehicle that escaped the impact area with little

damage. When told by his driver that Lindsey's vehicle was pinned down, Robbins immediately ordered his vehicle back into the fight. His vehicle maneuvered through a maze of oncoming vehicles

into the ambush site. Nearing the kill zone, his gunner experienced a weapon malfunction. Hearing this, Robbins grabbed a spare automatic weapon from the rear of the vehicle and exited, exposing himself to enemy forces on the north side of the road. He took up a firing position on the hood of his vehicle and began to fire on enemy positions in an attempt to draw fire away from Lindsey's vehicle. During this time, Robbins' gunner corrected his malfunction and engaged the enemy. Robbins then noticed that one of the contract drivers was out of his truck attempting to repair his vehicle. Robbins ordered his vehicle to cover the driver. As his vehicle moved out,

Robbins walked alongside providing fire support. Slowly the enemy gunfire lessened.

At the rear of the convoy, Robinson was now illuminating the area with flares in search of additional attackers. Armstrong did the same from his position. With the immediate area clear, they established security to allow for the recovery of the disabled vehicles. Enemy fire subsided, and Lindsey returned to his vehicle to assist in the recovery efforts of the downed vehicles and check on his men. When the vehicles were secured, the convoy moved out to its

objective.

For these actions of heroism these men received the following awards: Robbins and Lindsey, Bronze Stars with Valor Devices; Cooke, Armstrong and Robinson, Army Commendation Medals with Valor Devices. *The descriptions of events in this story were drawn from Soldiers' statements and award narratives.*



HEADS UP!

Commissary sales

The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) is hitting the road to bring the commissary benefit to members of the National Guard and Reserve living in areas where DeCA does not have brick and mortar commissaries.

www.commissaries.com

AW2 program

April 30 marked four years that the Army Wounded Warrior (AW2) Program has been serving the needs of severely wounded, injured and ill Soldiers and their families. AW2 provides individualized support for Soldiers throughout their lifetimes wherever they are located – regardless of their military status.

<https://www.AW2.army.mil>

Joint credit

Officers can now apply for credit toward Joint Officer Qualification. The JQS process is administered by the Guard's Joint Officer Management Program Title 10 staff. Officers can accumulate joint points by working on "joint matters" in joint assignments. "Joint matters" has been expanded to include interagency and coalition operations. The key is to meet program requirements about "What You Do" as well as "Who You Do It With."

Lt. Col. Lisa Traynor
(703)607-0950

Quick naturalization

Non-U.S. citizens who have honorably served or are serving in the U.S. Armed Forces since Sept. 11, 2001, are eligible for a waiver of the entire waiting period and for expedited citizenship. Legal permanent resident status is required. All other requirements for naturalization apply, and the filing fee for servicemembers and veterans has been waived.

www.uscis.gov/files/pressrelease/MilitaryNat102407.pdf

Free admission

Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks are offering complimentary admission to active-duty military representing all five services, active members of a reserve or National Guard unit and up to three direct dependents.

www.herosalute.com

VA volunteer

The Department of Veterans Affairs is encouraging more Americans to join its corps of 85,000 volunteers. The volunteers are involved in helping VA medical staff in hospices, outpatient clinics and home-based programs. Volunteers are also active at many of the 125 national cemeteries managed by the VA where they place flags on grave sites, provide military honors and help with landscaping.

www1.va.gov/volunteer



VIGILANT
GUARD
2008



South Carolina

Masters of disasters

More than 3,000 Guardmembers from several states work alongside local first responders

From page 1:
VIGILANT GUARD

centered in Beaufort County, S.C. Over three days, April 21-23, more than 3,000 Guard Soldiers and Airmen from more than a dozen states worked side by side with firefighters, police officers, Red Cross volunteers and representatives from numerous other local, state and federal agencies to rescue people “trapped” under collapsed buildings, clear rubble, airlift injured people to various hospitals and deliver food, water and other emergency supplies to survivors.

Aviation milestone

The Guard even made history by landing a C-130 Hercules cargo plane at the Hilton Head Municipal Airport – which features the nation’s shortest commercial runway – to simulate an emergency evacuation.

Beaufort County is home to more than 140,000 people, many of whom live on islands that front the Atlantic Ocean. A hurricane is possible – as is another earthquake like the 1893 trembler that rocked this region.



Photo by SMSgt Edward E. Snyder

Such possibilities are why Beaufort County was more than pleased to serve as the host site of VG08, said Weston Newton, chairman of the Beaufort County Council.

“You could look at the local economic benefit of having all of these Soldiers and this operation

come to the Beaufort area, and that certainly is a benefit,” he said. “But that pales in comparison to the long-term benefit of developing the relationships and being able to test and improve our plans for what to do in an emergency situation.

“We are able to measure, coordinate and fix the kinks in the system in ways that would simply not be possible in a table top discussion exercise,” Newton said.

VG08, the 11th such annual exercise designed to test the National Guard’s ability to work with local emergency responders, set the new gold standard in disaster training, said Maj. Gen. Steven D. Saunders, director, Joint Doctrine, Training and Force Development at the National Guard Bureau. Saunders’ office oversees the development of Vigilant Guard exercises.

“We expect continuous improvement,” the general said, standing at the Hilton Head airport moments before the historic C-130 landing. “This exercise brings together a great number of units from different states and puts them together with the local first responders.”

“Watching all these people, [who are] wearing a variety of uniforms, working

together, not getting in people’s hair, but working cooperatively together – that’s pretty powerful stuff,” Saunders said.

Other players

While the exercise brought together numerous military and government agencies, it also allowed non-governmental agencies to test their plans. Among those participating in the exercise were agencies such as the Salvation Army, the Southern Baptist Convention’s Disaster Relief Team and the American Red Cross. The exercise also had an international flavor. Small military contingents from Denmark, Canada, England and Moldova were invited to observe various parts of the operation.

“An exercise like this stretches and flexes our volunteers,” said Debbie Szpanko, director of the Palmetto Chapter of the American Red Cross which services Beaufort and neighboring counties in southeast South Carolina.

“Our volunteers have experience responding to smaller, local emergencies, such as a house fire,” she said. “This helps us better prepare to be ready for a major event.”

In addition to Red Cross volunteers learning how best to communicate and interact with the National Guard and other agencies, Szpanko said she was pleased that other agencies learned more about the capability of her volunteers.

“We have several retired doctors and nurses who are among our volunteers,” she said. “When they identified themselves at some of the scenarios, they were put to use, utilizing their medical skills. Our mission is to help in whatever way we can.”

At the conclusion of the exercise, the various parties reviewed what went right and what needs to be improved, said Brig. Gen. Les Eisner, deputy adjutant general for Army in South Carolina and commander of troops

for VG08.

“We will be updating our plans, protocols and procedures based on what we learned this week so that we are better able to serve the citizens of South Carolina,” Eisner said.

For many of the Soldiers, VG08 involved long days and plenty of hard work. Still the troops in the field saw the value and purpose in the exercise, said Capt. Samone McNeil

Chapman, Alpha Company commander of the 118th Mechanized Infantry Battalion of the South Carolina Army Guard.

“We are Citizen-Soldiers,” Chapman said. “Missions like this put the focus strongly on both sides of that. We are citizens using our skills as Soldiers to help citizens. That’s a mission that we take a great deal of pride in.”

The positive attitude expressed by VG08’s senior leaders was echoed by one of the exercise’s most junior Soldiers, Pvt. George Green, an infantryman in Charlie Company of the 118th based at the Florence Armory. He enlisted in the South Carolina National Guard just about a year ago and VG08 was his first major exercise.

“This gives me a chance to help out, which is why I joined the Guard in the first place,” Green said.



Danish soldiers observe exercise

By Staff Sgt. Dan Heaton
South Carolina National Guard

BEAUFORT, S.C. – After serving with South Carolina Guardsmen in Afghanistan, 40 soldiers from the Army of Denmark spent two weeks in Beaufort County, S.C., observing Vigilant Guard 2008.

“Our commander and the officers from South Carolina built a friendship while we were in Afghanistan together and they invited us to come to the state,” said Staff Sgt. Christian Ravn, a soldier from Copenhagen, Denmark.

The 218th Enhanced Separate Brigade from the South Carolina Guard returned home earlier this year after serving for approximately a year in Afghanistan in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

“This is a great opportunity to work with

some of our international partners,” said Brig. Gen. Les Eisner, the deputy adjutant general for Army in South Carolina. “We had the opportunity to serve alongside them in support of the Global War on Terrorism and now they get a chance to see how we posture and prepare for some of the Guard’s domestic responsibilities.”

Participating in a disaster response exercise is familiar training for Denmark soldiers, said Pvt. 1st Class Martin Paaske, who also lives in Copenhagen.

“All soldiers in Denmark learn rescue training and firefighting skills,” he said. “It is an important part of what the Army does in our country.”

The Danish soldiers are assigned to a signals battalion and said they were particularly interested in observing how the National Guard establishes and maintains communications systems during an emergency.



Photo by Spc. Tracey Martin

Photos:



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Edward E. Snyder



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp



Photo by Spc. Erica Knight



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp

- 1 An 877th Engineer Company member from Augusta, Ga., secures a safety rope used to lower survivors from a three-story tower.
- 2 Soldiers of the 877th, in red helmets, work with medical specialists from the South Carolina Task Force for Urban Search and Rescue, in blue helmets, to extricate simulated victims from a mock earthquake rubble pile.
- 3 Pvt. Rene Andersen, a soldier in the Denmark Army that observed the exercise, packs his gear.
- 4 Capt. Dorrie Staal of the 188th Medical Group attends to simulated disaster victim Pvt. Amber Smith of the 351st Aviation Support Battalion.
- 5 A ground crew member guides a 165th Airlift Wing C-130 Hercules to its parking place on the taxiway at Hilton Head Island Municipal Airport. It was the largest aircraft to ever land there.
- 6 K-9 specialist Duane Brock from the South Carolina Emergency Response Task Force waits to join in the search with his dog Dixie.
- 7 Master Sgt. Billy Bean from the South Carolina Air National Guard's 169th Communications Flight works on a commercial satellite antenna.
- 8 Charleston, S.C., in the aftermath of the earthquake that struck Aug. 31, 1886.



Courtesy of South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Vigilant Guard History Beaufort and Charleston, South Carolina: Still making history

By Bill Boehm
National Guard Bureau

Cooled by pleasant breezes and warmed by the ever-present sun, the city of Beaufort is South Carolina's second-oldest city, founded in 1711. Beaufort's marine setting, marshy lowlands and lush vegetation comprise what is known as the "Low Country."

Beaufort also holds the distinction as the site where South Carolinians drafted the Ordinance of Secession, the document that eventually guided the state to secede from the Union in December 1860.

Four months later, in April 1861, the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, 50 miles north. That war, as most know, divided the nation and wounded the southern United States for many years, well beyond the war's end in 1865.

On April 21-24, 2008, however, Beaufort served as host to the site of something representative of this nation's unity, not its dysfunction. The South Carolina National Guard hosted Operation Vigilant Guard to train personnel in a simulated disaster exercise. The local Beaufort community, as well as the government of Beaufort County and other associated emergency management agencies, participated. The disaster in this case was an earthquake centered in the Low Country

near the city of Charleston.

Besides Beaufort, only Charleston is older among South Carolina cities. A fabled Atlantic port city founded in 1670, Charleston became the most important trade center in the southern colonies during British rule, a status that continued after the United States achieved its independence after the end of the Revolutionary War. It remains to this day one of our country's best preserved cities with scores of historic buildings.

The disaster scenario for which the National Guard practiced holds historical precedent. On Aug. 31, 1886, Charleston experienced a serious earthquake that was felt as far away as Boston, Mass., about 1,000 miles north. Ninety-two people died and property damage totaled millions of dollars. Scientists consider this tremor the worst in the modern history of the southeastern United States.

Though the quake took place long ago in relative time, it is important to note that aftershocks from it took place nearly 100 years later. And, according to the South Carolina Seismic Network based at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, many seismic events ranging from the 3.0 to 4.3 magnitude on the Richter scale took place in the area from 2000-05. This underscores the need to maintain a high level of readiness and trained first responders, officials said.

The Low Country region, coincidentally, was also the site of the nation's first hurricane disaster response by the American Red Cross. It assisted after a fierce hurricane pummeled Daufuskie Island and nearby regions in August 1893. Appropriately, the Red Cross also took part in this year's Vigilant Guard.

VIGILANT
GUARD
2008

Tennessee

Communication
system debuts

By Sgt. Lee Elder

Tennessee National Guard

MILLINGTON, Tenn. — A new mobile communications system that allows individuals and agencies to keep talking during the direst circumstances debuted during Vigilant Guard here.

The 230th Signal Company, a Nashville-based Guard unit, set up the Joint Incident Site Communication Capability (JISCC) system to support operations.

“We are on our first trial and everything has gone well so far,” said Sgt. Anthony Henry, a computer systems analyst.

The 230th fielded the \$600,000 system just two weeks after adding it to the unit’s inventory. The system has an array of computer and communications equipment and comes with its own tent. However, the system can also be set up inside a standing structure and can be up and running in an hour’s time. It can be deployed by truck or by C-130 Hercules aircraft, said Henry.

The focal point of the system is a 33-foot antenna, giving it capabilities to communicate over high frequency, ultra high frequency, very high frequency and 800 megahertz channels.

“We can enable fire and police departments to talk to each other even if they have different systems,” Henry said. “We can bring together radio systems, cell phones and land lines.”

This capability is vital in the aftermath of a disaster. Often communications systems are totally knocked out of a fire or an earthquake.

That’s where the JISCC team comes into play. Headed by 2nd Lt. Douglas Long, the 10-member team, including six alternates, is available on a two-hour notice and is designed to be on the scene within six hours of a serious incident.

The team was involved in 24-hour operations supporting the exercise that simulated an earthquake that leveled Memphis and surrounding areas.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Russell Klika

Pfc. Michael Becker with the 230th Signal Company mans the Joint Incident Site Communications Capabilities (JISCC) main desk.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Russell Klika

Guard Soldiers pull a casualty from the rubble of what used to be a hospital and parking garage during Vigilant Guard 2008.

West Tennessee
rocks ... Guard rollsMock earthquake
tests responders

By Spc. Miko Holloran

Tennessee National Guard

MILLINGTON, Tenn. — A fresh cloud of white dust slowly settles to reveal a mangled pile of rubble. Once a hospital and parking garage, wires and rebar now protrude from broken concrete. The deep mud surrounding the building resembles a medieval moat. The weather is pleasant and calm, but on the ground is a motivated, high-speed, joint force military unit made up of Tennessee Air and Army National Guard members: the 45th Civil Support Team.

And they are not leaving a man (nequin) behind.

A mock earthquake rocked a nameless town nestled on the New Madrid fault line near Memphis, Tenn., April 19. The simulated 7.7 magnitude quake was part of Vigilant Guard, an annual exercise testing the National Guard as the first military responder in support of governors and state emergency management agencies during a disaster.

For this year’s Vigilant Guard, Air and Army National Guard units from Tennessee, Illinois, Kentucky, and observers from around the country and the National Guard Bureau trekked to Millington to participate.

Sgt. 1st Class Richard Frost, a member of a special disaster response unit from Hawaii, participated as an exercise controller and data collector.

“My job here is to watch the Soldiers and Airmen while they run through these exercises. I’m not here to yell or critique. I’m just here to make sure it runs smoothly,”

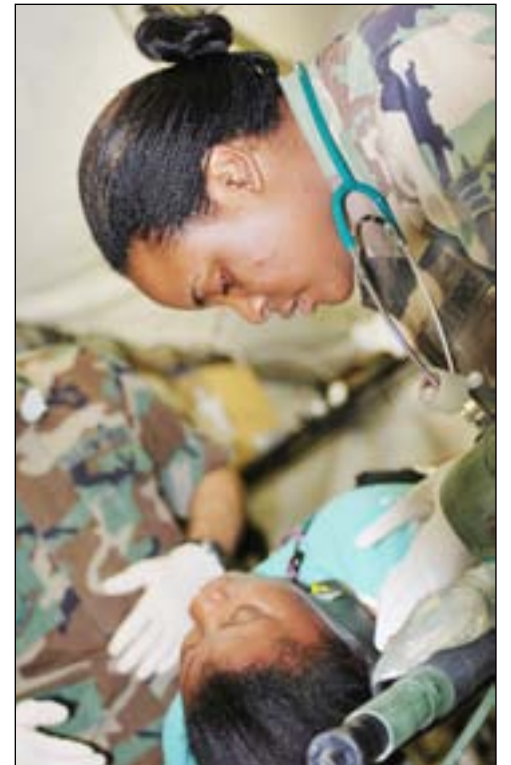
said Frost, a native of Honolulu. “I’m here to let them know how to perform a task if they are unsure of what to do.”

The disaster site was not a typical dump found in a field. It was actually designed and built by engineers who were able to make it a believable obstacle but safe enough for the responders to maneuver around.

“This is a structurally-sound ... mess,” said Ronnie Hayes of the Response International Group based in Oklahoma City, Okla. “We do this kind of thing all the time. If they can dream it, we can build it.”

Army Staff Sgt. Julio G. Wolburg with the 45th CST prepped equipment for the Guardmembers who would be entering the destroyed building dressed in hazardous material suits. The Tennessee native checked and rechecked to ensure they wouldn’t begin with faulty equipment.

Tennessee Army Sgt. Wesley Groves waited patiently for a radio call requesting his assistance.



A Tennessee Air National Guard medical group member tends to the injured.

Before going into the mound of carnage, Groves had to undergo a few medical checks.

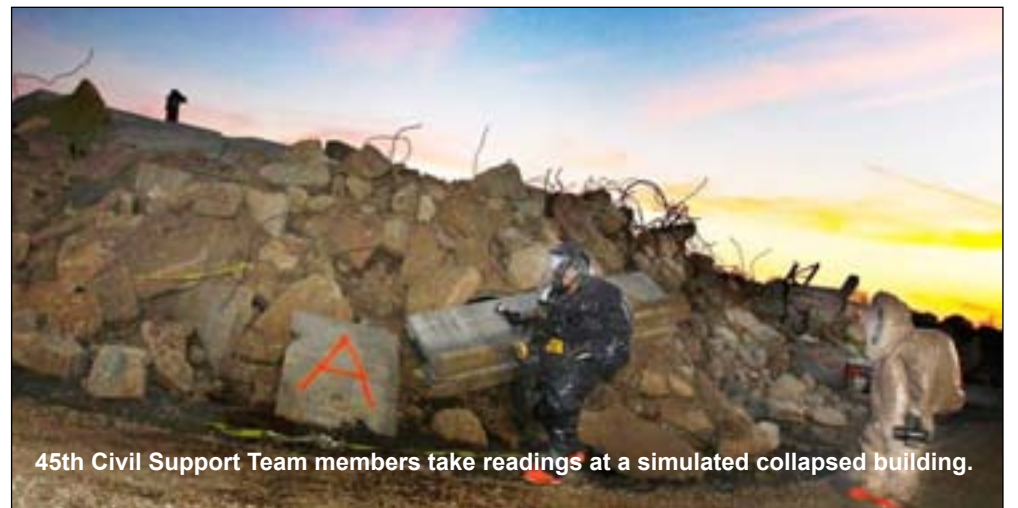
“We have to go through a medical test before and after the rescue mission so that we can compare any changes in our bodies. If there are, we might have been infected with something,” said Groves.

Once Groves was cleared by the medics, he became part of a two-man team that infiltrated the building, searching for the mannequins simulating the dead and wounded.

The 45th CST was given several scenarios to work through. In one a rescuer “slipped and fell injuring” his leg. Unable to walk, his partner had to drive their small rescue truck to his partner and lift him into the truck, driving him to safety.

While this exercise was planned for several months, an actual earthquake occurred a little over 24 hours before this practice one. The real quake was a 5.2-magnitude trembler centered six miles southwest of West Salem, Ill. There were reports that it was felt as far away as Atlanta and Michigan. It was one of the strongest ever recorded in Illinois.

Luckily, there were no major injuries or incidents, but the Illinois National Guard was immediately available for any assistance.



45th Civil Support Team members take readings at a simulated collapsed building.



NLE 2008

Washington

Nerve center

Joint Operations Center unites service components

By Tech. Sgt. Mike R. Smith
National Guard Bureau

CAMP MURRAY, Wash. – When a volcano erupts and discharges half a mountain of ash on your state, you have a major disaster.

For Sgt. Maj. Brian Rikstad, chief of operations for the Washington National Guard Joint Operations Center (JOC) here, the nation's largest volcanic disaster was one reason he joined the Army National Guard.

Rikstad, who has been in the Washington Guard for more than 26 years, enlisted shortly after Mt. St. Helens erupted in 1980. A recruiter visited his school and spoke of the Guard and civilian response to the disaster as an example of how to help the community.

"I was living just north of here ... my community was devastated by the ash," said Rikstad.

In May, Rikstad simulated his community assistance as part of the Washington Guard's JOC team taking part in "National Level Exercise 2008."

Washington's scenarios for NLE-08 called out the Guard for a simulated terrorist attack within Seattle, a tanker truck explosion near the state's northern border and the accidental release of a hazardous chemical at a storage facility in Oregon.

Hundreds of Guard Soldiers and Airmen supported NLE-08. The full-scale Department of Homeland Security (DHS) exercise joined federal, state and local responders May 1-8 in a multistate scenario, which tested their ability to react to domestic emergencies.

The JOC was the Washington Guard's nerve center for the exercise and for real-world operations. The center conducted 24/7 operations for both missions.

With all the state's Army and Air Guard assets at the JOC's disposal, bringing both services into the center allows them to work as one, said Rikstad. "We coordinate right here in the JOC."

The National Guard has joint force headquarters and joint operation centers in all 54 states and territories. Each state's headquarters provides the command and control of National Guard forces for its governor.

As a mission comes in, the JOC works to decide what assets of the Army and Air Guard will best support it. This includes equipment and personnel.

"We are the military support for civil authorities, so it's whatever the emergency management authorities decide the civilian [sector] cannot handle," said Rikstad.

Coordinating exercise support requests and communications here was Army Staff Sgt. Alice Parsells.

"It's busy, very busy," said Parsells, who monitored and posted exercise e-mails to keep all JOC members informed. This was her first major exercise in the JOC.

The JOC also had Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen working with them as emergency preparedness liaison officers. The servicemembers acted as a voice for the JOC in its coordination with other commands in NLE-08. On top of that, the JOC was visited by three emergency responders from the Canadian military.

"We have a lot of players in the game," said Rikstad.

"What's really neat is that we have a simulated news team that is broadcasting at the scene, which is giving us hair-raising footage on what is happening in the exercise.

"The Joint Operations Center is here for the community," said Rikstad. "And we want people to know that we are here for them."

More at www.ngb.army.mil/features/NLE/default.aspx



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mike R. Smith

Washington National Guard Soldiers and Airmen at the Joint Operations Center on Camp Murray, Wash., were among many Guardmembers joining federal, state and local organizations May 3 in the National Level Exercise 2008.

Washington response teams combine efforts

By Staff Sgt. Crystal Tyler
Washington National Guard

FORT LEWIS, Wash. – A joint exercise to prepare for large-scale disasters took place here May 1 - 4. It included the Washington National Guard's multi-role response team called the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP).

Hundreds of Guardmembers joined the CERFP here and in Oregon and the National Capital Region May 1-8 to support the National Level Exercise 2008.

The CERFP's four-day role in the exercise included training for its more than 180 Guard Soldiers and Airmen at Fort Lewis's urban combat training center called "Leschi Town."

CERFPs use their multi-mission training to support incident commanders in real-world emergencies. The teams can respond within six hours of notification to support civil authorities.

"One of our benchmarks is our set-up and tear-down times," said Sgt. Todd Smelcer, a CERFP member from Washington's 792nd Chemical Company. "If we have to re-establish this site elsewhere, time is of the essence. Our standards are 90 minutes; we are averaging around 45 minutes to set up and 35 minutes to tear down."

The state's CERFP is made up of different Guard units from the state. Its officials said the combined groups work together as one team.

"It's an outstanding opportunity to coordinate with the Army to work together toward the same goal," said Air Guard Capt. Graham McGregor, CERFP member and chief nurse from the 141st Medical Group. "The joint theatre is critical to the mission."

The CERFP's decontamination element was led by Soldiers of the 792nd Chemical Company in Longview. The decontamination element was the receiving area for casualties here after they were transported from the event site. In the exercise, the Soldiers managed a casualty collection area for ambulatory patients injured from a simulated terrorist chemical attack. They also decontaminated mock patients before sending them to medical evaluators.

"We have a lot of new Soldiers assigned to the unit that have never dealt with CERFP operations before," said Sgt. 1st Class Kelvin L. Gaut. "They are picking it up really well."

The 141st Medical Group was in charge of the medical element's triage team, which assessed ambulatory patients, provided emergency treatment and monitored patients at a holding area for hospital transport.

"What I hope to gain from this training is to make sure our people are trained and prepared," said Capt. Terese Ulibarri, medical service officer.

Ulibarri said the tools needed to make the exercise successful were the community's cooperation as well as the leadership's and all the support personnel required.

Search and extraction teams included

members from the 141st Air Refueling Wing. The Airmen said that a real event requires them to work with civilian search and rescue personnel to coordinate search, rescue and extractions.

"Our team works with the incident commander, local authorities and the Guard's Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team," said Air Guard Capt. Jason Kesler, civil engineer. "We are the advance [CERFP] team to come in and do our sweep and searches until the main body arrives."

"We have a great working relationship with each other," said Smelcer. "We learn a lot from them and they learn a lot from us."



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mike R. Smith

Also taking part in National Level Exercise 2008 were the Washington Guard's 10th Civil Support Team. Here they prepare to enter "Leschi Town" early May 2 at Fort Lewis, Wash.



Photo by Master Sgt. Mindy Gagne

Washington National Guard Soldiers with the state's special disaster response team care for a mock ambulatory patient.

Newsmakers

Medalist

South Carolina Sgt. James King received the Bronze Star in April for his service with the 201st Central Corps Assistance Group and 3rd Brigade, 205th Regional Corps Assistance Group while deployed to Afghanistan. King deployed from June 2005 to June 2006 and was awarded the medal for his dedication in mentoring members of the Afghan National Army and for his actions when his convoy was attacked by a suicide bomber.



Rescuer

Staff Sgt. Jay Rosenberry, an F-16 Falcon crew chief with Arizona's 162nd Fighter Wing, was awarded the Coast Guard Silver



Lifesaving medal for the heroic rescue of three young children caught in a riptide while vacationing in the Outer Banks of North Carolina in July 2006. "I feel fortunate to have been able to make it to all three children and bring them back in safely. Thank you,

God, for giving me the strength to do what needed to be done," said Rosenberry.

Career move

Texas Guardsman Jose Morales, 24, is currently going through the Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, N.M. He picked the career after serving on the border for Operation Jump Start. While there, he monitored surveillance cameras at the Paso Del Norte Bridge and was part of many drug seizures. Customs and Border Patrol officials said that at least 51 Guardmembers who participated in OJS have applied to become agents.

Top shirt

Security forces Master Sgt. Daniel T. Mitchell Jr. of New Jersey's 177th Fighter Wing was chosen as the top Air National Guard first sergeant in April. He will contend against active-duty Air Force first sergeants in the U.S. Air Force's 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year competition this summer.



Texan takes point in recruiting linguists

By Tech. Sgt. Gregory Ripps
Texas National Guard

CAMP MABRY, Texas – Spc. Muhammed Abu Snaineh has a unique role in the Texas Army National Guard. His primary mission is to recruit people with specific language skills – namely those who speak Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi, Dari or Pashto, the primary languages of 23 Arab countries, Iran and Afghanistan.

He also has his own personal mission: He wants the U.S. and Arabic communities to learn from each other.

Abu Snaineh, 32, was born and reared in Hebron, on the West Bank of the Jordan River. At the age of 21, he met a 19-year-old woman whose father was Palestinian and whose mother was American. In short order they were engaged and married.

"She felt there were more opportunities for us in America, so we applied for a visa," he said. "We immigrated to America, moving to Austin, Texas, in 1996."

While the future Guardsman said he always had an interest in joining the military – his grandfather had served in the British army – his first interest was in flying. After holding a variety of jobs, including a position at Dell for five years, he moved in 2004 to Big Spring, Texas, to pursue flying lessons. During this period in his life, he thought of becoming a military pilot. But then he discovered the U.S. military was looking for Arabic speakers to assist where Texas Military Forces were serving. Ultimately, he joined the Texas Army Guard in 2005 and signed up for the program in linguists.

Training

During Abu Snaineh's nine weeks in basic training, he was surprised to meet about 30 other Arab language speakers, representing a number of Middle Eastern and South-west Asian countries, who were going into reserve components and the active Army. From basic training, he went into six weeks of Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at the Defense Language Institute on Fort Jackson, S.C. He was among 64 trainees with separate classes for Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi, Dari and Pashto speakers.

"Usually, they are deployed to the Asian or African countries whose language and culture they are most familiar with," said Abu Snaineh. "The Army Reserve attaches one or two to an active component. The National Guard attaches [whatever number is] needed to any National Guard or active unit deploying to Afghanistan or Iraq, depending on its size."

At Fort Jackson, he practiced his interpretation skills and learned how to be a communicator-interpreter-translator and how to communicate with military leaders and local leaders in operational areas. The class practiced in mock villages where he translated for commanders or medical personnel with the local populace played by Arabic-speaking contractors. Sometimes there were

scenarios with tense confrontations in which he would have to determine the locals' demands or needs.

"We learned that we must win the hearts and minds of the people," said Abu Snaineh. "When we gain people's trust, we will succeed in our mission."

He also found this to be true after he deployed. Two weeks after graduation, while in Soldier Readiness Processing at Camp McCrady, S.C., he received mobilization orders in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom beginning in September 2006. After



Spc. Muhammed Abu Snaineh with a .50-caliber machine gun in front of an up-armored vehicle while deployed to Iraq.

Courtesy photo

three months of training at Fort Dix, N.J., he was deployed overseas where he put all of his training into use and gained a wealth of experience.

First assignment

Snaineh's first assignment was to the Al-Anbar province, where he drove an up-armored Humvee for a brigade headquarters staff that dealt extensively with Iraqi police. There he performed his duties within a company attached to the U.S. Marines that recruited, trained and supplied Iraqi police.

Working with the Iraqi police helped the community open up to the U.S. forces, he said.

"There were many cases when older men or children came up to tell us about weapons caches or insurgent activities," said Abu Snaineh. "These [reports] ... resulted in [our forces] being able to capture weapons and material used for explosives."

Back in the states in October 2007, Abu Snaineh underwent additional training before moving into his unique recruiting role, in which he approaches and reaches Arabic-speakers in Texas.

"Actually, I expected more rejection," he said. "I find it a positive challenge to tell people what we in the National Guard

do and what I've seen. We are trying to help people ... We're doing some amazing things in Iraq and Afghanistan."

He wants people in the Middle East, Southwest Asia and in the United States to learn about each other and to appreciate each other's culture, behavior and traditions.

"I have seen negative attitudes change to positive after teaching people from the Middle East about America and [vice versa]," he said.

Back home

In the few months since he has returned from overseas, Snaineh said he, with the help of the Texas Army National Guard Recruiting Battalion, has been contacting unit commanders and sergeants major about the linguist recruiting program.

"Texas is in the beginning stages," he said. "But the National Guard Bureau is putting in more effort to expand the program within every state."

Abu Snaineh has been identifying Arabic news and advertising media in Texas and areas in the state where there are higher concentrations of Arabic speakers. Much of his effort has been on the personal level. For instance, he said that when he attends Muslim religious events, he introduces himself as a Soldier-interpreter for the National Guard.

"A lot of people become interested when they see me in uniform," he said. "But sometimes I wear a business suit and carry business cards." In either case, he added, people want to know how the linguist program works for Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi, Dari or Pashto speakers.

The biggest incentive, according to him, is the offer of expedited U.S. citizenship: The recruits can begin processing their citizenship during their AIT. The expedited process narrows the wait time for citizenship from the five- to six-year average to less than two years.

The recruits also come into the Texas Army Guard as an E-4 (specialist) and receive a \$20,000 bonus. Arabic speakers also receive an additional \$500 a month, and Farsi

speakers can receive an additional \$1,000 a month. And there are the usual educational and medical benefits of belonging to the Texas Army Guard.

"Recruiting is always a challenge," Abu Snaineh observed. But he won't be easily discouraged. His enthusiasm for the linguist program and the Texas Army Guard is genuine.

"I have a 5-year-old son," he said. "I want to set an example for him. I hope he becomes interested in joining our team in the future."

Anyone interested in learning more about the linguist program may contact Abu Snaineh at (512) 422-8391 and check out www.1800goguard.com/linguist.



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

Tennessee Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Ken Weichert leads the Army and Air Guard senior enlisted leaders through a strenuous workout in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., in April. He is better known as “Sgt. Ken” in GX Magazine.

Fit to Fight

Sgt. Ken urges enlisted leaders to stress fitness

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. – The Army Physical Fitness Test would be a lot more demanding if Sgt. Ken was in charge. It would, in his world, gauge Soldiers’ ability to do a lot more than perform a mandatory number of pushups and sit-ups and run two miles within a required time. The APFT would determine Soldiers’ fitness for combat, if Sgt. Ken had his way.

“The battlefield is no place for those who fatigue quickly,” Sgt. Ken told the Army and Air National Guard’s state enlisted leaders here in mid-April.

Who is Sgt. Ken? He is Staff Sgt. Kenneth Weichert of the Tennessee Army National Guard. He has gone to war in Southwest Asia twice – during Operation Desert Storm as an active Army Soldier in the early ‘90s and again during Operation Iraqi Freedom as a California Army Guard Soldier in 2003-04.

At 41, he may best be known in Guard circles as the fitness guru for GX (Guard Experience) magazine. That magazine, which focuses on Army Guard Soldiers, has included his feature “Start Fitness” for the past three years. He has also created workouts in video, audio and print products as the fitness director for AmericanSoldier.com. He has, in short, become the 21st century’s Jack LaLanne for the Army Guard.

He enlisted in the Army in 1988 and then joined the Louisiana Army Guard in 1992 after serving during Desert Storm. He was a traditional Soldier and full-time recruiting and retention NCO with the California Guard from 1997-2007 before transferring to Tennessee to join the Iostudio team that publishes GX in Nashville. He has been a master fitness trainer since 1993 and has trained servicemembers and civilians for nearly 20 years. The man who was partially paralyzed for four weeks from a football injury during his senior year in high school has made physical fitness his lifestyle and career.

Weichert is as much showman as he is Soldier. With his Schwarzenegger-like body, he’s polished and outgoing in word and manner, having studied theater in college.

He was clearly the celebrity at the National Guard Bureau’s first Senior Enlisted Leaders Conference here April 18-21. He barked encouraging commands, sang inspirational songs and counted cadence like a seasoned drill sergeant during nonstop, half-hour morning workouts that were not for the faint of heart.

He attended the conference, however, not to promote

Current standards

The minimum Army standard for a 30-year-old active duty or reserve Soldier is the following:

- 39 pushups in 2 minutes (17 for females)
- 45 sit-ups in 2 minutes
- 2-mile run in 17:00 (20:30 for females)

www.army.com/enlist/APFT.html

Sgt. Ken’s standards

Sgt. Ken Weichert says Soldiers should be able to:

- Carry a 160-pound person in full combat gear on his back for 30 meters, as if he were carrying his injured buddy to a landing zone
- Sidestroke the length of an Olympic pool in full uniform, holding a rifle above the water, to be fit enough to swim across a flooded river
- Be prepared to hit a hill in full gear to help fight wildfires or respond to other natural disasters



himself but to advocate physical fitness among Guardmembers who could find themselves in combat during the Global War on Terrorism or engaged with wildfires or floods domestically.

Soldiers should train as if they are athletes year-round to be physically fit for those challenges, Weichert told attendees, and said that traditional troops have to be encouraged to work out when not at drill.

“They don’t call out the Guard when things are going good. They call us out when things have gone bad,” he observed. “We have to be ready – mentally and physically. Fatigue makes cowards of us all.”

Ohio Airman receives state award for bravery

By Maj. Laura Powers
Ohio National Guard

Apprehending an armed gunman and contributing to the apprehension of another earned Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Robert T. Bragg of the 178th Fighter Wing the Ohio Cross during a ceremony April 6.

In August 2007, Bragg, a security forces journeyman, took action after seeing two suspicious men fleeing a crime scene from his Dayton home. The two men earlier had robbed a market and coin laundry and two people were killed.

“I had seen the two men about a half hour earlier,” said Bragg. “They had asked for directions.”

The same two men were running down the street wearing ski masks and gloves and carrying semiautomatic weapons, said Bragg.

“He grabbed his personal weapon and told me to call 9-1-1,” said Bragg’s mother, Barbi Byrd.

Bragg has a concealed-carry license for his 9mm pistol.

“When he ran off the porch, I was behind him,” Byrd said. “I couldn’t believe he was running after those guys.”

“I challenged them with my personal weapon,” said Bragg. One of the men complied and the other fled. However, Bragg was able to find out his name, place of residence and that both men had robbed the store.

“There is no doubt my military training helped me take action,” Bragg said. “When I came off the front porch, I was crouched low to the ground and remained tactical even though I was running at full speed. I knew when to draw my weapon and when I was legally allowed to shoot if needed.”

Bragg’s family, friends and co-workers recognized his heroism during a ceremony.

Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland, Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Gregory L. Wayt and Col. Mike Roberts, commander of the 178th Fighter Wing, spoke about Bragg’s actions.

“He didn’t receive an order. He wasn’t detailed by a supervisor. He saw his duty and took action,” Roberts said. “Sergeant Bragg recognized the inherent principle that makes this country great—one person can make a difference.”

Bragg also received the Miami Valley Crimestoppers’ “Citizen of the Year” award in November.

In addition to being a traditional Guardsman, Bragg is a student at Wright State University in Ohio. He plans to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in financial services in the spring of 2009.

“You may only be paid one weekend a month, but you’re an Airman 24/7,” said Chief Master Sgt. Christopher E. Muncy, the state command chief master sergeant for the Ohio Air National Guard. “Like it says in the Airman’s Creed: ‘sentry and avenger.’”



Photo by Maj. Laura Powers

Staff Sgt. Robert T. Bragg used a 9mm pistol and security forces skills to apprehend an armed gunman and contributed to the apprehension of another.



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Team Oregon triumphs at Guard's big race

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Nebraska National Guard

LINCOLN, Neb. – After a three-year hiatus, the Oregon National Guard is once again sitting at the top of the National Guard running world.

Competing in the annual Lincoln/National Guard Marathon held May 4 in Lincoln, Neb., the Oregonians cruised through the 26.2-mile course under picture perfect skies to win this year's team chase over the Utah National Guard Marathon Team by a slim 7-minute, 11-second margin.

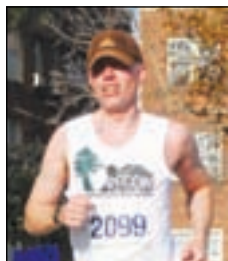
According to Oregon team captain, Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Vandervlugt, it felt good to win the team title after finishing second in 2006 and fifth last year.

"We're happy because it's a big deal for us to win," said Vandervlugt, who also won the Guard's Master's title with a time of 2:50.06. "It's something that I can take back to my state and say, 'Hey sir, look at what we did. We got you another trophy.'"

"We couldn't do this without the support of our commands in Oregon," he added.

This year's Guard Marathon team competition attracted 18 teams from across the United States. The team results were determined by combining the overall times of the top three declared members of the team.

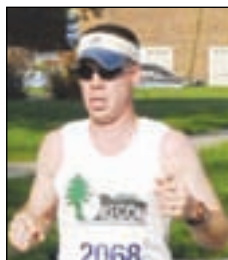
The Oregonian team, which consisted of Vandervlugt,



Nixon



Vandervlugt



King

Edward King (2:52.06) and Sean Nixon (2:58.09), defeated the Utah Guard team made up by Eric Peterson (2:59.46), Glen Tucker (2:47.08) and Raymond Workman (3:00.16) by the score of 8:40.21 to 8:47.32.

Wisconsin finished third with an overall time of 8:50.13. The Wisconsin team consisted of Jason Kirch (3:02.53), Michael Western (2:47.04) and Mike Zeigle (3:00.16).

The Oregon team also won the Military Team Division title at the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon.

Vandervlugt, who has been a part of several Oregon Guard national championships over the years, said it's always been difficult to maintain the level of talent and consistency needed to maintain a championship team. That's even more the case now, especially considering the nature of overseas conflict the National Guard is currently engaged in.

"Two of the guys who were on the team this year were deployed last year ... and one of the guys who was on the team last year is deployed now. Two of the guys who are here now, they're going to be deployed next year. And I'm going to be deployed the following year," said Vandervlugt, adding that the runners know where their priorities have to lie. "It's part of our job. We're Soldiers first, runners second. That's always a given."

The key, said Vandervlugt, is planning for those deployments and developing a group of runners to fill in when vacancies occur.

"I've got a good pool," he said. "Next year is going to be even harder ... there might be three of us who are solid runners here next year, but with the deployments, you really just don't know. If I get my unit alert notice before ... I might not be here." 🏃

Miss Utah earns berth on All-Guard marathon team

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Nebraska National Guard

LINCOLN, Neb. – Even by conservative standards, Sgt. Jill Stevens admits "it's been a weird year."

Being named Miss Utah. Competing in the Miss America Pageant. Being named the pageant's "America's Choice" winner. Speaking to youth audiences around the country about what it's like to be both Miss Utah and a Utah Army National Guard Soldier.

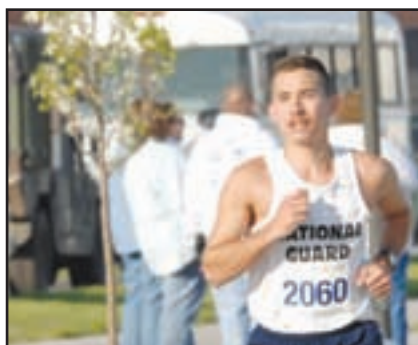
The year, she says, has simply been a whirlwind.

On May 4, Stevens added another "diamond" to her tiara-like list of achievements when she was named to the 2008 "All Guard Marathon Team" after placing fourth

in the National Guard Women's race during the National Guard Marathon Trials with a time of 3:22.21. That time was also good enough for 15th place overall among women who competed in this year's Lincoln/National Guard Marathon.

"It's exciting," said Stevens, shortly after being named to the All Guard Team, made up of the Guard's elite long-distance runners from across the country.

"I would probably rate this about a nine," Stevens said, when asked how this accomplishment compared to others this year. "Being a Soldier is probably a 10 for me. And this, being a Soldier and a part of the All Guard team ... it's right up there." 🏃



Top Guardsman

While cruising over the Lincoln, Neb., streets for 26.2 miles, first place Guardsmember Staff Sgt. Troy Harrison, 32, of Pennsylvania had one thought in mind: win the 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon. He serves as an infantry instructor for the Pennsylvania Army Guard's Regional Training Institute at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa. "I really wanted to win the overall (race) ... it didn't happen, but I still improved by over seven minutes on my best time."

Galloping to glory: Kentucky Soldiers put on Derby in Iraq

By Spc. Elvyn Nieves
Multi-National Division – Baghdad

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Soldiers of Multi-National Division-Baghdad (MND-B) and the 4th Infantry Division got a taste of Triple Crown horse racing when Soldiers of the Kentucky National Guard's 138th Fires Brigade put on their own Kentucky Derby May 3.

Each section within the MND-B headquarters building was represented by a "jockey" who had to "gallop" one lap around the building on a creatively decorated stick horse.

The event was held the first Saturday of May – just like the classic American horse race held in Kentucky. Three races made up the event: The Baghdad Mile, The Quarterback Cup and the main event – the Kentucky Derby.

"This is the most painful week for me to be away from home," said Louisville resident Capt. Jake McKinney of the fires brigade.

"It's a way to pay honor to the state and the tradition of the horse racing industry," said Col. Billy West, commander of the 138th. "Kentucky Guardsmen take the safety and security of the Commonwealth of Kentucky seriously, and anything we can do to bring honor to the state is a good thing."

Kentucky 1st Lt. Jessicah Garrett was charged with bringing the Derby to Iraq. She held close to the event's traditions by having Derby pies, mint julep mix, bourbon balls, and Derby-themed T-shirts, balloons, plates and cups sent from home by families, friends and the unit's Family Readiness Group.

Before the race, participants paraded with their stick horses and there was the traditional playing of "My Old Kentucky Home," performed by the 4th Infantry Division Band.

"The key to victory was the horse, and you can see it's a natural thoroughbred," joked 1st Lt. Aaron Zwirner, winner of the Baghdad Mile.

Sgt. George Martinez, winner of the Derby, said his strategy was to change horses at the last minute. He paraded around with a big, stylish horse, but just before race time, he changed it for a swifter, lighter steed.

To conclude the event, Martinez was brought to the winners circle and the horse was presented with a wreath. Although this was just a celebration of the 138th running of the Kentucky Derby, the Soldiers who participated will always be able to say: "I was once a jockey, and I ran the Kentucky Derby – in Iraq." 🏇



Photo by Spc. Elvyn Nieves

Soldiers in Iraq get a taste of Kentucky culture as Blue Grass State Guardsmembers put on the Derby.

Angels with hammers

DC-area volunteers join Rebuilding Day projects

By Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith
National Guard Bureau

LA PLATA, Md. – “If you want to see what angels look like and a blessing looks like, just drive by and see,” said Michelle Samuel, witnessing her home getting a makeover by a group of National Guard volunteers. “I could kiss and hug everybody all day long, but they have to work, so I have to leave them alone.”

That’s exactly what at least 60 Airmen, Soldiers and civilians did April 26 as they brought Christmas early to this disabled Maryland resident by repairing her home on what was called a “Christmas in April” event. The volunteers sacrificing their Saturday were from the National Guard Bureau, the Air Guard Readiness Center and the DC Guard.

Known nationally as National Rebuilding Day, the annual event’s community projects are planned and organized for the last Saturday in April. This was the 20th year for the event that was orchestrated by the nonprofit Rebuilding Together organization.

Across the country, more than 200,000 volunteers planned 10,000 home and community center projects for the day. The volunteers rehabilitated homes for low-income residents at no cost. Many residents were elderly, disabled, veterans or needy families.

Samuel, a disabled, retired federal worker for the U.S. Army, said her fixed income did not allow her to make needed repairs. She was chosen by the county’s chapter after a



Photo by Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith

Airmen, Soldiers and civilians with the National Guard repair the home of Michelle Samuel April 26 in La Plata, Md., during National Rebuilding Day.

review of many applicants.

“It needed lots of attention, from top to bottom, the roof, everything,” said Samuel through a din of pounding hammers and buzzing saws.

The volunteers shingled her roof, repainted the interior and exterior, installed a new stove, washer and dryer, repaired the ceilings and bathroom, installed a new storm door and made many other repairs.

“It’s a great cause,” said Army Sgt. 1st Class Regina McDonald from the National Guard Bureau Inspector General office in Arlington, Va. It was McDonald’s first time volunteering at this event. She and her cleanup team helped plant flowers and picked up shingles and other construction debris from the yard while other volunteers measured or painted or ran to the hardware store for materials in a rush to finish the home before sunset.

What some Guard volunteers here may have not known is that their support for National Rebuilding Day here indirectly supports fellow servicemembers.

“It’s not just for folks who are over 65 and disabled,” said Ray Detig, a retired federal worker now employed as a contractor with the Air National Guard. “The organization helps servicemembers who are overseas: for instance, if some servicemember is deployed and his wife says ‘the roof is leaking—what do I do?’.”

Thomas J. Cantwell, the organization’s national director for Veterans Housing, said Rebuilding Together is assisting more than 150 veterans and their families this spring through their “Heroes at Home” program, and they hope to assist many more in the years to come. This includes modifying veterans’ homes to accommodate disabilities or making home repairs. 🏠

Indiana Soldiers build homes for locals

By Spc. Elizabeth Gorenc
Indiana National Guard

CAMP ATTERBURY, Ind. – “We did not help build a house, we helped build a home,” said Col. Barry Richmond, the base commander for Camp Atterbury, describing the efforts of a group of volunteers that included Indiana Guardmembers. “A place of hope where family may be cherished and dreams nurtured. Now that is a legacy to be proud of.”

Rachael Goodwin, a single mother of two, fit the criteria needed to have a house built by volunteers and Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit, ecumenical Christian housing ministry that seeks to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness from the world.

“Soldiers just jumped right on board and had someone out there almost every day of the build,” said Jason Gorman, the superintendent of Gorman Homes, the main builder for the project, which lasted from April 10 to May 10.

“It shows great character that leaders are willing to sacrifice Soldiers for a couple of days, and fellow Soldiers are able to cover down to fill positions so we can show that we care about the community,” said Staff Sgt. Sean Elliott, small arms team leader for the armament shop at Camp Atterbury. “This way, we are able to keep the mission going and help out communities and families in need.”

Volunteers were not the only people working to build the house. Goodwin contributed to the build every day as part of her responsibility to the program. In accordance with receiving the house from Habitat for Humanity, Goodwin completed 300 hours divided



Photo by Sgt. William Hill

Soldiers and other volunteers work together for Habitat for Humanity April 10 in Edinburgh, Ind. The group built a house for an Edinburgh family over a span of a couple of weeks.

into build time for her house and other projects and community service.

“Hopefully we can be involved in future missions for Habitat for Humanity,” said Camp Atterbury 1st Sgt. Dave Portish. “The partnership was very fulfilling to both our Soldiers and the homeowner.” 🏠

Kansas Coyotes assist homeowner

By Angela Deines
The Capital-Journal (Kansas)

TOPEKA, Kan. – Lynn Margien believed angels were in her house April 26. Actually, they were members of Kansas’ 190th Air Refueling Wing, but to her they might as well have been from heaven.

“This is amazing,” she said. “I’m so fortunate to have all these folks in my home. I love each and every one of them. God bless them.”

About 16 members of the Kansas Coyotes repaired Margien’s house as part of the annual Rebuilding Together initiative.

Chief Master Sgt. Danny Roush said he and the 190th have been involved with Rebuilding Together, Topeka Area Inc., since 2000. He said it is important that the Kansas Coyotes give back to the community.

“Whenever the 190th deploys, the city is always behind us,” he said. “We’re here only one day, but we make improvements that help the homeowner.”

Roush said the 190th was in a unique position to make all the repairs to Margien’s house in one day, given its members are trained carpenters, plumbers and electricians. When deployed, they often make massive repairs quickly.

Senior Master Sgt. Scott Humphrey agreed that the skills he and fellow members of the 190th’s civil engineering unit possess are important to share with the community.

“It’s rewarding to help people out who don’t know how to do this themselves,” he said. “It’s also rewarding to see the satisfaction the homeowners are receiving.”

Vern Failor, founding president of Rebuilding Together, Topeka Area Inc., said Margien’s house required the most work of the 12 homes several dozen volunteers fixed up across Topeka.

The work on Margien’s home included rebuilding the basement staircase, replacing the kitchen floor, painting three rooms, replacing a kitchen wall and storm windows, and patching holes in the basement floor.

Failor said in order for homeowners to qualify for repairs, they have to first apply in the fall, be 60 years of age or older, be deemed low income by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development standards, and agree to live in their homes for at least three more years.

“But we can’t repair everything on a house,” he said. “Our purpose is to keep the folks safe and warm.” 🏠

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Guard puts sting into drug bust

Troops from three states aid local law enforcement

By Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly D. Snow
Ohio National Guard

Greensboro, N.C.: The package appeared innocuous enough. It was wrapped in a red tarp and secured to a pallet with yellow canvas tie-down straps with two green blowers resting on top, all in the shades you might find in a crayon box of primary colors. The image taped to the side displayed an inflatable “jumper,” the kind normally seen at carnivals or festivals, with youngsters bouncing and playing inside.

Columbus, Ohio: Maj. Mitchell Gargac answered the phone in his Ohio National Guard Counterdrug Task Force office at Rickenbacker Army Enclave around 10 a.m. April 14. On the other end of the line was an agent from the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI). Could the Ohio National Guard lend assistance in a major sting operation?

The BCI agent had been contacted by a counterpart in North Carolina after local law enforcement officers intercepted and confiscated a shipment containing nearly 1,000 pounds of marijuana that originated in Texas and was bound for Jackson, Ohio. After discovering the narcotics, they called in the state bureau of investigation, which began coordinating a joint task force with Ohio. The resulting joint sting operation would result in the largest drug bust in Jackson County, Ohio, history.

Avoiding suspicion

The plan was to attempt a controlled delivery to the Jackson address to nab the suspects, but the package had to arrive on time in order to avoid suspicion. The only way to get the product to Ohio on time was by air, so they called Gargac.

After collecting information from the BCI agent, Gargac quickly determined the requirements for Guard involvement had been met. The operation was ongoing, time-sensitive and included a counterdrug connection. He immediately called the National Guard Bureau's Joint Emergency Operations Center to submit a formal request for assistance.

“The process is really streamlined,” Gargac said. “We literally got approval for this mission in about 15-20 minutes.”

In that time, an aircrew and C-130 Hercules cargo airplane from the Charleston-based 130th Airlift Wing, West Virginia Air National Guard, was identified as available



Photo by Sgt. First Class Kimberly D. Snow

Chief Deputy James Ephlin of the Jackson County Sheriff's Office escorts a package containing nearly 1,000 pounds of marijuana aboard a West Virginia Air National Guard C-130 cargo airplane April 16 enroute to a controlled delivery in Columbus, Ohio.

and had offered to fly the mission. They would even fly to Columbus first and pick up the local law enforcement officers and Ohio Guardmember who would take the quick, one-hour flight to Greensboro to take delivery of and escort the package back to Ohio.

Transportation snag

Meanwhile, Gargac received a call from North Carolina law enforcement officers who identified a snag in transportation – they had no assets to transport the package to the airport. Gargac called his counterparts in the North Carolina Counterdrug Task Force and requested their assistance in transporting it to the airport and loading it on the aircraft. They quickly agreed.

“Guardsmen are all over the country working the counterdrug mission, so we can reach out and touch them,” Gargac said. “We’re all trying to take the drugs off the street. It goes with our community mission. And it’s great when you’re training and supporting these kinds of operations at the same time.”

Around 11 a.m. April 15, the West Virginia C-130 arrived at Rickenbacker International Airport to pick up the passengers. Among them was Chief Deputy James E. Ephlin, a 38-year veteran police officer, with the last eight at the Jackson County Sheriff's Office. Ephlin would be assisting in the controlled delivery and subsequent raid. He was excited.

“I’ve never had a bust this big,” Ephlin said. “This is way over what we normally see – 30 to 40 pounds is normal, but nothing like this.”

The flight down and back took less than three hours. By 2 p.m., the brightly-colored package containing the drugs disguised as an inflatable carnival ride was on the back of a truck and back on track for delivery to its original destination. But this time, the package was being delivered by sheriff's deputies.

The following day, Jackson County officers along with the Columbus Police Department South Central, BCI, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Customs agents conducted the controlled delivery. Three men at a Jackson home met the truck carrying the package.

The men were taken into custody. While executing a search warrant at the home, officers received an unexpected but welcome windfall.

“In the afternoon, we had a second truck arrive with a second package,” Ephlin said. “It looked just like the first one. In addition, we were lucky to catch two of the Texas guys sitting at [a hotel] here in Jackson. We now have them in jail also.”

The men are being held at the Jackson County Jail. All suspects are awaiting trial on charges of conspiracy and aggravated drug trafficking. The operation ultimately netted an estimated \$4.4 million in marijuana.

Army,” Perez said.

Although now nearly just a memory along with the olive drab “OD” uniforms and Ike's jackets, there are still a few opportunities for authorized wear of the woodland camouflage pattern. Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets may wear BDUs through April 2009, and the cold weather woodland field jacket is authorized through Sept. 30, 2010.

Next up on the Army endangered uniform list is the Army Green service uniform. The new blue Army Service Uniform is set to replace the Class A green uniform and the Army white uniform, and will be adopted Army-wide in 2011.

More news at www.ngb.army.mil

Enlisted leaders get a lesson in nonlethal weapons

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. – It was 20 times more painful, more debilitating, than any electrical shock she had ever experienced. Yet, a few minutes later, Arkansas state Command Sgt. Maj. Deborah Collins was walking and talking as normally as if she had never had a shocking encounter with one of the newest weapons available to the National Guard.

Collins took part in a demonstration of nonlethal weapons during the National Guard Bureau's (NGB) first Senior Enlisted Leaders Conference. She let herself be zapped, or “tased,” for a single second by a Taser X26 Electrical Control Device that is one of the tools the Guard now has for controlling unruly people without causing them physical harm.

Nonlethal weapons, Guard senior enlisted leaders were told, give suitably-trained Guard personnel the ability to protect property after a hurricane or tornado, for example, without resorting to deadly force.

Every state Guard organization now has a nonlethal weapons kit that includes heavy plastic shields, Tasers and weapons that can fire blunt force rounds and tear gas grenades designed to control crowds without inflicting serious injuries. The kits are stored in green, mobile containers.

“The policies and practices are still being developed, and our Guard people still need proper training,” explained Maj. Tom White from NGB. “All but six states have nonlethal weapons instructors,” added White about just how seriously the Guard is subscribing to this idea of alternative force.

“Under United States law, the National Guard of each state is the only entity that can employ military force in support of civil authorities unless the president declares martial law,” the group was reminded.

“These nonlethal weapons are not a substitute for firearms. You don’t take a Taser to a gunfight,” White observed. “But if they are used early enough, we can prevent the escalation to violence.”

Collins discovered that for herself when she was tased with the X26.

“It was immediate, intense pain,” she explained. “For that one second I don’t remember anything but that pain. ... You know how you get shocked sometimes? Multiply that by at least 20 times.”



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

Arkansas Command Sgt. Maj. Deborah Collins reacts to her shocking encounter with a Taser X26.

From page 1: BDU GOODBYE

distributed to all Soldiers in late 1981. The Army announced it would replace BDUs with the ACU on the Army's 229th birthday, June 14, 2004, and subsequently began distributing ACUs in April 2005. In the transition period, Soldiers have been authorized to wear either ACUs or BDUs.

April 30 also marked the wear-out date for the brown T-shirts, black leather combat boots, black rigger belts, and green and black jungle boots.

“Saying goodbye to BDUs is like saying goodbye to the old