



THE ON GUARD

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The National Guard stood tall during Memorial Day weekend

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OPERATION JUMP START: Hardening the southern border

By Sgt. Jim Greenhill

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – National Guard troops jumped into Operation Jump Start in early June to help federal authorities stem the flow of illegal immigrants into this country and support efforts to reform the immigration system.

Operation Jump Start is intended to strengthen the U.S. border with Mexico in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

Fifty-five National Guard members from Utah were sent to the Arizona-Mexico border on June 3. They were expected to begin their border missions as early as June 5.

Their mission had already been scheduled as Innovative Readiness Training prior to President Bush's announcement that the Guard would be assisting civil authorities on the border.

"The National Guard is superbly suited for this mission," said LTG H Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau. "We've been doing it for over three decades, just at a much smaller scale. We have the skills, the capabilities and the available, highly-trained people."

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Photo by Maj. Hank McIntire, Utah National Guard

Utah Army National Guard Sgt. Tina Frame, left, and Staff Sgt. Doug Mecham began measuring and building a new fence during June's first week after reporting for duty along the U.S.-Mexico border in southern Arizona. Fifty-five Utah Guard members were among the Guard troops who are supporting efforts by federal authorities to stem the flow of illegal immigrants into this country.

New logo for National Guard equipment

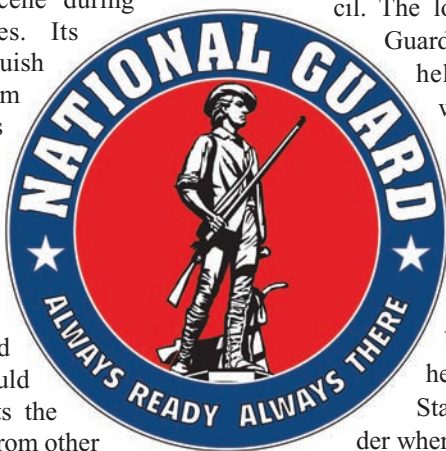
By Dominic Morales

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – The National Guard has designed and produced a new logo that will help inform citizens that National Guard troops are on the scene during domestic emergencies. Its purpose is to distinguish the National Guard from other agencies that it is serving with or supporting.

After devastating hurricanes hit the Gulf Coast last year, LTG H Steven Blum, chief of National Guard Bureau, felt there should be something that sets the National Guard apart from other agencies.


Sgt. Michael Dann, National Guard Bureau – Public Affairs, was part of the team tasked



to "brand" Guard assets in states and cities where the National Guard would be assisting. "Always Ready Always There" is the motto printed on the logo. It comes in three forms: a sticker, magnet and paint stencil. The logo can be attached to all

Guard and equipment including helicopters and vehicles within the United States.

Guidance will be available for properly placing the logo should the states choose to participate, Dann said. The logo is not intended for everyday use but, rather, for "neighbor helping neighbor" missions.

States along the southern border where National Guard troops are expected to be deployed and states that could be hit by hurricanes will be among the first to receive the new logos. 

Lt. Gen. McKinley: 12th Air Guard director

By Sgt. Jim Greenhill

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – A lieutenant general with 32 years of service has been named the 12th director of the Air National Guard.

Lt. Gen. Craig R. McKinley was confirmed as director by the U.S. Senate effective May 20 and pinned to three-star rank on June 5.

"I look forward to supporting the chief of the National Guard Bureau, working closely with the adjutants general in our Global War on Terrorism and the governors protecting our homeland," said McKinley who served as the Air Guard's deputy director from January 1998 to February 2001.

McKinley succeeds Lt. Gen. Daniel James III who officially retired June 5, three days after his appointment as Air Guard director ended.

A member of the Florida Air National Guard, McKinley most recently served as assistant deputy chief of staff for plans and

programs at Air Force headquarters in Washington. In that position, he managed the \$682 billion Air Force Future Years Defense Program and the Air Force Long-Range Plan to support national security objectives and military strategy.

McKinley's numerous previous assignments have included command of the Air National Guard Readiness Center at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland when he was the Air Guard's deputy director.

Other assignments that have helped prepare him for his duties as Air Guard director have included director of the Mobilization and Reserve Affairs Directorate for the U.S. European Command in Germany; commander of the 1st Air Force Air Combat Command at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida; and deputy inspector general of the

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Water, water everywhere: How the National Guard waded in | PAGES 4-5

ABOUT THE ON GUARD

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E-mail your stories to us by the first of each month. We prefer that photos be high-quality digital (200 dpi or more) and e-mailed to:

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A Gold Star mother for all seasons



WASHINGTON — Anne Comeaux became America's iconic Gold Star mother in the shadow of the Capitol on the eve of Memorial Day 2006. She embodied all mothers who have lost children in any war. And she did not have to say a single word.

The story of this solid Louisiana mother and of seven Army National Guard Soldiers who died in Iraq probed into America's heart during the tribute to the National Guard that punctuated the 90-minute National Memorial Day Concert televised live by the Public Broadcasting System.

Renowned actors Dianne Wiest and Gary Sinise told of how Anne's son, Sgt. 1st Class Kurt Joseph Comeaux, and six of his "Black Sheep" comrades from the Louisiana Army National Guard's 256th Infantry Brigade were killed Jan. 6, 2005, in Iraq when a roadside bomb destroyed their Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

They also told of Anne's commitment to help other parents deal with the tragedies of war.

Kurt Comeaux of Raceland, La., was 34, a husband and the father of three young sons, when his commitment to his comrades and his country and the freedom of another land cost him his life.

Anne Comeaux has promised she will never forget. Her promise resonated throughout this country during the first weekend of our annual patriotic season — the month or so from Memorial Day at the end of May, when America honors its wartime heroes, to the Fourth of July, when we honor the men who had the courage to sign the Declaration of Independence and set the course for what has become the United States of America. It includes June 14 — Flag Day and the U.S. Army's birthday.

She remembers her son as a man who was determined to support his family and who refused to take the easy way out of military service after he was diagnosed with testicular cancer while he was in basic training. He beat

the cancer and stayed in the Guard because he wanted to finish college, Anne said.

But there is more to the story of Anne Comeaux. It is always Christmas in her home. It is why this mother of a deceased National Guard Soldier is the Gold Star mother for all seasons. The Gold Star being the symbol for mothers whose sons or daughters have been killed in a war zone.

She has promised that her artificial



By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
Senior Correspondent

Christmas tree will remain standing in her Raceland home until all U. S. Soldiers are back from Iraq. It was standing when Kurt Comeaux died. It still stands today. The flowers that decorate the tree reflect the seasons of the year. There are always, however, small American flags at the top, beside an angel, and there is a special ornament that her friend Marlene gave to Anne in memory of Kurt.

It is a small heart with a dove of peace set into its center.

"My Christmas tree was up when my son died, and I made myself a promise that I would leave it up as long as we have a war in Iraq; as long as our Soldiers are still there," Anne explained.

Her commitment, however, transcends that tree.

"We've sent care packages, my daughter Susan and I, and we place wreaths on graves when it's the anniversary of the death of any Soldier who got killed in my son's unit," Anne said. "I've gone to memorials, and I've gone

to funerals to help parents bury their dead."

It would have been so easy for Anne Comeaux to surrender to despair.

Curtis Comeaux, her husband of more than 44 years, died of a heart attack in May 2004, the day her son left his family and his job as a Louisiana probation and parole officer to begin training for the mission in Iraq.

Kurt, the youngest of her three children, was killed less than eight months later.

Furthermore, Anne lives in the part of Louisiana that juts its chin into the Gulf of Mexico, just asking to get punched by a hurricane. Two of them, Katrina and Rita, did that late last summer.


Nothing about the tough times, however, has dissuaded Anne Comeaux from honoring her commitment to her son and her adopted National Guard family.

"It meant a lot because we have all of the people who came back home, and they have to know that they're never going to be forgotten and that they're always in our hearts and prayers," said Anne about the opportunity to have the Black Sheep's story told during the national concert.

Comeaux, Wiest and Louisiana Army Guard Staff Sgt. James Scaruffi, another of the Black Sheep, lit seven candles in their memory.

"I have to remember that other sons and daughters who went over there have come home," Anne said, "and they're part of my life now — because they were with my son when I couldn't be there with him."

Yes, she remembers the six who died with her son — Sgt. Christopher Babin, 27; Spc. Bradley Bergeron, 25; Spc. Huey Fassbender, 24; Spc. Armand Frickey, 20; Spc. Warren Murphy, 29, from Louisiana; and Pfc. Ken Von Ronn, 20, from New York.

But regardless of the season, no matter what is decorating the eternal tree in her home, Anne Comeaux is a Gold Star mother for the living as well as for her son and the six other Soldiers who were with him and who did not live to come home. 

"Freedom Calls" video encourages students to make right choices

By Staff Sgt. Cheryl Hackley

National Guard Bureau

ROCKVILLE, Md. — Motivational Productions, in partnership with the National Guard Counterdrug Program, has unveiled its latest video, "Freedom Calls."

Senior Defense Department, National Guard and substance abuse prevention leaders were on hand here May 10 to watch the 40-minute presentation that addresses the concerns of separation for military families as well as youths making the choice to be drug-free, even in the absence of their parents.

Beginning in August, Motivational Productions will take the video on the road and work with the National Guard in schools to continue spreading their messages.

"Freedom Calls" tells the story of a teenaged boy named Josh whose father is serving in the National Guard and gets deployed. Through e-mail, Josh communicates to his father the difficulty his mom, sister and he are experiencing during his

absence. They talk back and forth as other stories of youth drug abuse and ambition are told.

The National Guard approached Motivational Productions creator and producer Tony Overman in 2005 to collaborate on the product that has evolved into "Freedom Calls." The non-profit organization uses a unique three-screen video production that incorporates music, movies and real stories to engage the minds of the youth and then subtly convey a specific message. This video was geared at 7th through 12th grade students.

"The final product is a high impact, motivational and moving production that has the ability to reach the hearts and minds of youths, teachers and parents alike," said 1st Lt. Mark Burns, Arizona Counterdrug Demand Reduction administrator.


Josh's father encourages him to make the right choices through conviction, courage and ambition. Conviction teaches each person they have the opportunity to make the choice to be strong. Courage means saying

no even when others laugh at you. Ambition is finding out what you want and going for it.

A real-life example of overcoming adversity is depicted in the film. Ashley, a teenage girl, loses both her parents to cancer when she is young. Despite this, she raises herself alone and goes on to become the valedictorian of her class.

"She is proof to students her age that no matter what obstacles happen in your life, if you make the right choices and set goals, you can truly achieve anything," Burns said.

Overman said, "We make each film on the basis of four things that I believe each kid is looking for: feelings of being wanted, needed, accepted and loved. If we don't provide that for them, they will go looking for someone or something that will."

Working together, Motivational Productions and the National Guard hope to teach students that drugs and alcohol are not the answer to anyone's problems. 

Gun truck battery gets a boost from Maine

By Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux

207th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

LOGISTICAL BASE SEITZ, Iraq – Some 50 mountain infantry Soldiers from the Maine Army National Guard have become part of Operation Iraqi Freedom by augmenting an 18th Corps artillery battery which is operating gun trucks.

The men from Maine's B Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) have joined B Battery of the 1st Battalion, 377th Field Artillery Regiment.

B Battery itself has not deployed in the traditional field artillery role. They are a gun truck company providing security for combat logistics patrols, and now they have some infantrymen in the same boat – or same gun trucks – with them.

The new platoon from Maine is learning the roads and the ever-changing tactics, techniques and procedures, said Capt. Bryan Babich, battery commander. "We had to plan how we were going to receive, train, equip and ultimately certify them so they could conduct combat patrols in the Baghdad area of operations," Babich said.

The battery was proactive in training the new arrivals.

"The battery commander sent me and two of my other noncommissioned officers to Kuwait to give them a briefing on how things work," said Sgt. 1st Class William McGovern, who was originally an infantryman but who was attached to B Battery on June 1, 2005.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux, 207th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
Maine Army National Guard Pfc. Nike Whitmore checks out a vehicle before going on a mission in Iraq. He is serving with B Battery, 1st Battalion, 377th Field Artillery Regiment.

"The training in Kuwait doesn't quite fit what we do here," McGovern said. The three NCOs told the Maine Soldiers how things are done in Iraq.

The platoon appreciated the help. "They actually received us very well," said 1st Lt. Todd Abbott, the platoon leader. He said his platoon was already well-prepared for the deployment because of the training they received at their home station and at Fort Dix, N.J., before arriving in Iraq and getting their gun trucks.

The battery commander kept the new platoon together to maintain unit integrity but housed the Maine Soldiers in the same area as the rest of the battery and put their vehicles on the same vehicle line. "We are one big happy family, all in the same area," Babich said.

The Soldiers in the battery welcomed the new platoon with open arms. The number of personnel in the battery is nearing 200. "They received them well," said McGovern. "More people meant that they would have to spend less time on the road themselves."

Babich has a high opinion of the Maine platoon. "They have exceeded our expectations in every single way. They have been nothing but absolutely motivated," he said.

The Maine platoon learned the harsh realities of war firsthand on May 6 when two men were killed and a third was seriously injured during an attack. Staff Sgt. Dale Kelly Jr. and Staff Sgt. David Veverka were killed, and Pvt. Christopher Fraser was wounded.

Illinois Airman making her mark in Iraq

By Master Sgt. Andrew Gates

407th Air Expeditionary Group

ALI BASE, Iraq – Soon after arriving at Ali Base, a small group of firefighters decided to leave their mark on the base. Literally.

The group led by Senior Airman Katherine Maglia decided to paint a mural outside the fire department. Maglia is a member of the Illinois Air National Guard's 183rd Fighter Wing in Springfield. In Iraq, she is a firefighter with the 407th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron.

"I've been working on the mural since the day I got here – May 18," said Maglia who calls Tinley Park, Ill., her home and who is majoring in art at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

"My supervisors noticed the huge 'canvas' and mentioned it to me. We took off from there," she said. The canvas is a piece of concrete protective wall.

Maglia works on the mural four to six hours a day, early in the morning and late in afternoon – when it's cooler, she said. But this has been far from a solo task for the Illinois airman.

"The whole department has been extremely helpful with ideas and suggestions," she said. "They have done manual labor and used their connections to get the necessary supplies. It has really been a wonderful collaborative project. Some of the folks, like



Photo by Master Sgt. Andrew Gates, 407th Air Expeditionary Group
Illinois Air National Guard Senior Airman Katherine Maglia works on the background of a mural in front of the Ali Base fire department in Iraq. Maglia is from the 183rd Fighter Wing in Springfield, Ill.

Senior Airman Joseph Fox, have volunteered to help paint. Staff Sgt. Christein Savard, who is a text expert, will be doing all the lettering. We have a department of talented people."

"I thought this would be a great project to give the fire department a sign for people to appreciate as they drive by," said Fox, another Illinois Air Guardsman. "It is an opportunity to show that the fire department people

care about the beautification of Ali Base."

The design – a Maltese cross with silhouetted aircraft surrounded by firefighting vehicles – originated with members of the fire department.

"The cross was already planned out," said Maglia. "I finalized the rest of the design through much input from other folks in the department. I decided to put the P-19 fire apparatus on the left side, because that is the truck I drive. On the right side of the mural are a heavy rescue truck and the rescue air mobility squadron vehicle."

She started working on the mural because she enjoys art, but the mural is not her only project.

"I began taking painting classes in fourth grade. Now I am a student and take classes occasionally at the Art Institute in Chicago," Maglia said. "Art is a huge interest of mine. I want to leave the fire department a little better than when I got here. Moreover, it helps pass the time."

Leaving her mark on Iraq will give her a sense of accomplishment.

"It is amazing to think about leaving something permanent like that for future deployed units to see," Maglia said. "I want people to see the mural and see how dedicated, professional and proud the fire department is at Ali Base."

Massachusetts, Maine troops help neighbors weather May's storm

By Maj. Winfield Danielson

Massachusetts National Guard

MILFORD, Mass. — Citizen-Soldiers across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts were at home with their families celebrating Mothers' Day on Sunday, May 14.

It was raining. A lot. It had been for days. The hardest and most consistent rain fell along the North Shore of Massachusetts, up the New Hampshire coast and into Maine. The rivers swelled.

Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, aware that rivers across Essex County were filled to the brim, declared a state of emergency and activated the National Guard.

"This is one of our primary missions," said Brig. Gen. Oliver Mason Jr., adjutant general. "Whatever comes our way, the men and women of the Massachusetts National Guard are be ready to lend a hand to the first responders."

Members of the Maine National Guard were also activated.

In the first Massachusetts response, about 100 Soldiers from the 1058th Transportation Company in Hingham, 1164th Transportation Company in Leominster, 1166th Transportation Company in Worcester and 972nd Military Police Company in Reading were placed on state active duty.

The units had all-wheel-drive vehicles to

help carry people and equipment through flooded areas and experienced personnel to staff roadblocks and checkpoints, freeing police and fire personnel for emergencies.

Early missions included helping the highway department deliver and stage sandbags, staffing roadblocks and evacuating residents from high-risk and flooding areas.

The joint operations center at the joint force headquarters in Milford was activated to provide command and control.

Additional units were activated over the next four days as rivers overflowed their banks across the North Shore. State officials estimated the flooding was the worst the Bay State had seen in more than 30 years.

"The Massachusetts National Guard is no stranger to waist-high flood waters," Mason said. "Many were called to assist with relief operations in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Their experience was clearly evident. Some of the Soldiers were also activated in response to the Taunton Dam crisis in October.

By May 18, 851 Soldiers and Airmen had been placed on state active duty in Massachusetts.

The units activated included cavalry, communications, engineer and infantry outfits. As more units were activated, Soldiers and Airmen helped fill and place sandbags, removed debris and monitored potential trouble spots, including dams and other infrastructure.

Thatcher Kezer, Mayor of Amesbury and a member of the Massachusetts Air National Guard's 253rd Combat



Massachusetts National Guard photo

Soldiers from the Massachusetts Army Guard's A Company, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry relay sandbags to build a barrier around a resident's home in Methuen, Mass., near the Merrimack River.

Communications Group, said his town had three major concerns.

There was flooding all over town, and the first responders were starting to tire. "Our police officers and firefighters had been on for 30 to 40 hours, so we needed the Guard to relieve the pressure on them and give our people some downtime," Kezer said.

Second, the Pow Ow River runs into a dam 100 yards from downtown, then zig-zags through the town, passing under buildings and a major bridge in the town center. The river had risen so high that it overflowed a bank. Guard members helped reinforce the bank and mitigate flooding.

The fast-running Pow Ow had also begun to wear away at its earthen and stone banks, threatening to dislodge boulders and trees and send them into the town below.

"The fear was that trees and boulders would either knock the supports out from under the buildings over the river, or, more likely, they would dam up, the water would rise and it would blow through the restaurants and businesses downtown," Kezer said. "The water was moving so fast, it would overflow in a matter of minutes, so we used the Guard members to maintain a watch and alert us immediately if anything collapsed into the water that might be a threat."

Rain in the region finally began to subside, and the number of Soldiers and Airmen drew down to about 450 by the morning of May 18.

There was some concern that rains would shift to the central region of the state and

some units were maintained as a precautionary measure until May 20, when it was clear the crisis had passed and the Citizen-Soldiers became citizens once more – until the next call for help.

Mason said it was somehow fitting that the Guard members responded during Massachusetts National Guard Week, proclaimed annually by the governor.

"Our Citizen-Soldiers answered the call, as they have for nearly 370 years," he said. "They are true patriots, and I'm proud to serve with them."

Maine Guard members also responded to the effects of the heavy rain. From May 16-28, 35 Soldiers from the 1136th Transportation Company and the 133rd Engineer Battalion helped communities and state and federal agencies with relief efforts in southern coastal regions.

Portions of Route 1 in Wells collapsed. The Wells police chief requested National Guard help. Guard members conducted engineer reconnaissance and traffic management in the towns of York, Wells and Ogunquit.

An estimated 1,000 homes sustained water damage during the storm, while 500 residents were evacuated and 50 sought refuge in shelters.

The hardest-hit town was Wells, which reported \$2.4 million in damage. York and Ogunquit each reported damage of about \$1.3 million. The totals do not include private property damage.

The Maine National Guard contributed to this report.



Photo by Sgt. June Norton, Massachusetts National Guard

The Massachusetts Army National Guard's 379th Engineer Company from Bourne used its heavy equipment to remove debris from Plum Island beaches in Newburyport, Mass., following the May floods.

Bay State Soldiers save one of their own

By Pfc. James Deady

Massachusetts National Guard

MILFORD, Mass. – Three Massachusetts Army National Guard Soldiers saved the life of a comrade who collapsed May 15 at Camp Curtis Guild in Reading, Mass., while on duty because of the floods.

“He asked someone for a deck of cards, took a deep breath, and went down,” said Spc. Patrick Hayden, of the 379th Engineer Company from Bourne who is an emergency medical technician with the Boston Fire Department.

Hayden was the first to aid Spc. Thomas Sellers, also of the 379th. “Everybody was calling my name because they knew I was an EMT,” Hayden said.

Soon after Hayden began cardiopulmonary and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, 1st Sgt. Daniel Lafrance, a New Bedford fireman and member of the 379th, and 1st Sgt. Douglas Farquharson, a Natick fireman and member of the 101st Engineer Battalion out of Whitinsville, arrived and provided assistance.

“Hayden had full control of the situation. He was calm and very professional,” Farquharson said.

While the three Soldiers provided aid, other Guard members called paramedics. Once the Reading Fire Department arrived, they continued what the Soldiers began and transported Sellers to Winchester Hospital in Salem.

The fire department responded quickly, Lafrance said. “Hayden did an outstanding job. He assisted the paramedics and stayed with his patient the entire time – all the way to the hospital.”

“It’s an excellent example of what being a Citizen-Soldier is all about,” said 1st Lt. Jay Burgo, commander of the 379th Engineer Company, who was nominating the Soldiers for awards. “We are taking the situation as a

learning experience and plan on certifying everyone in our unit on CPR, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and the [automated external defibrillator].”

“He probably would’ve died if the Soldiers weren’t there to help him,” said Sellers’ father, Thomas Sellers Sr. “It was incredible that they were there.”


Sellers was in stable condition at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston in June. 



Photo by Pfc. James Deady, Massachusetts National Guard

1st Sgt. Douglas Farquharson, Spc. Patrick Hayden and 1st Sgt. Daniel Lafrance at Camp Curtis Guild in Reading, Mass., where they provided medical aid to a fellow Soldier while on duty during the flooding in May.

Guard wades into New Hampshire flooding

By Sgt. Andrew Schwab

New Hampshire National Guard

CONCORD, N.H. – Nearly 800 New Hampshire Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen deployed to help 15 communities socked by almost a week of record-breaking rainfall and flooding in May.

The New Hampshire National Guard supported local police, fire and other emergency personnel by controlling traffic, evacuating people and filling and delivering tens of thousands of sandbags.

Gov. John Lynch activated the Guard on May 14 for the second time in seven months. Last October, more than 300 Guard members responded to severe flooding. Almost 800 Guard members were directly involved in the latest disaster response. Many more were on stand-by.

“This has been great,” said Jim Taylor, assistant director of public works for the town of Merrimack, who was overseeing flood control at the water treatment plant.

“Many of our guys are tired,” Taylor said. “They’ve been working 12 and 16-hour shifts, and it’s giving them a break by having the National Guard here. It’s been a real blessing to have them here.”

“These are our neighborhoods, and we are helping people out,” said Spc. Joseph Tessier, a law student from Nashua and a Soldier with the 1st Battalion, 172nd Field Artillery.

Tessier, who last fall was part of a New Hampshire Guard contingent that deployed to Louisiana for hurricane relief, was on a team guarding a flooded section of Route 3 in Hooksett. He spent much of his time watching for suspicious activity in a shopping center and at neighboring businesses.

Working together, local authorities and Guard members helped motorists in dangerous areas. Spc. Chris Weinard, a



Photo by Master Sgt. Mike Daigle, New Hampshire National Guard

Members of the New Hampshire Air National Guard filled sandbags at a bridge in Newmarket as floodwaters rose on May 17. Almost 800 Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen augmented emergency operations in as many as 15 communities socked by record-breaking rainfall and flooding.


Manchester resident from the artillery battalion, staffed a traffic control point near a damaged bridge in Goffstown.

Flood waters around the bridge used to be a stream, but it’s more like a river now, Weinard said.

A section of road leading to the bridge collapsed as swelling waters tore at the road’s dirt foundation. Traffic control points kept vehicles from dangerous or flooded roadways while still allowing residents to reach their homes.

In Somersworth, Soldiers from the 744th Transportation

Company helped evacuate 25 people. Airmen from the 157th Air Refueling Wing helped local personnel install a generator at the town’s water treatment plant after a power outage. Airmen also positioned spotlights to keep close watch on the rising waters at the Milton dam.

It was the worst flooding in New Hampshire in more than 60 years, state emergency officials said. Thousands of homes were evacuated. Damage to homes, businesses and roads was estimated to be well into the millions of dollars. 

VA data loss may affect Guard members

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Active-duty service members and members of the National Guard and Reserves may be affected by the recent personal data loss by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the VA has announced.

The VA announced that the records stolen from the home of a VA representative in May might include personal information of people currently in the military, according to a VA news release. Initial findings from VA indicated the personal information on about 50,000 active duty, National Guard and Reserve personnel may have been involved.

As the two agencies compared electronic files, VA and the Defense Department learned that personal information on as many as 1.1 million active-duty service members, 430,000 National Guardsmen, and 645,000 members of the Reserves may have been included in the data theft, according to the

release.

In May, the VA learned that an employee took home electronic data without authorization, in violation of established VA policies. The employee's home was burglarized and the data were stolen. Included were names, Social Security numbers, and dates of birth for up to 26.5 million veterans.

The VA receives records for every new accession and military enlistee because active-duty personnel and National Guard members and Reservists are eligible to receive certain VA benefits, according to the release.

“VA remains committed to providing updates on this incident as new information is learned,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson.

Nicholson said VA is currently in discussions with several entities regarding credit-monitoring services to determine how veter-

ans and active-duty personnel potentially affected can best be served. The VA has received no reports that the stolen data has been used for fraudulent purposes.

Several resources are available to service members and veterans who may have been affected by this data loss:

- The VA has set up a special Web site and a toll-free telephone number: www.firstgov.gov and 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636). Each features up-to-date news and information on the data compromise. The Web site provides steps on how to check credit reports, how to guard against identity theft and who to call if an individual believes any fraudulent activity is occurring with his or her personal information.

- Information relating to the defeat of identify theft also is available at www.military-onesource.com.

FROM PAGE 1

Lt. Gen. McKinley

Air Force in Washington.

He has also served in numerous flying and command positions at group, wing, sector and field operating agency levels.

McKinley graduated from Southern Methodist University where he was the Air Force ROTC distinguished graduate in 1974. He has master's degrees from Webster College and the National Defense University.

A command pilot, McKinley has flown more than 4,000 hours in eight types of aircraft including the C-130 Hercules, F-106 Delta Dart, F-16 Fighting Falcon and F-15 Eagle.



Lt. Gen. Craig McKinley
12th director, Air National Guard

FROM PAGE 1

Operation Jump Start

About 2,500 troops were expected to be on duty by the end of June, and as many as 6,000 are expected to support the two-year mission at the request of President George W. Bush.

The president has asked the Guard to play a temporary role in reinforcing border security while civilian law enforcement agencies build up their own resources. The U.S. Border Patrol, for example, is adding 6,000 officers to its force by the end of 2008, the president announced in May.

Guard members are assisting the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency. An element of the Department of Homeland Security, the agency secures the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada.

The agency has asked the National Guard to conduct surveillance, reconnaissance, linguistic, air and ground transportation, engineering, and logistical missions to include providing medical, food and sanitation services.

The operation has been meticulously planned so it will not affect the National Guard's commitment for overseas operations, and state governors will retain the

Guard forces they need for state missions and domestic emergencies.

“We are better prepared today than we were last year for Hurricane Katrina,” a Guard official said. “We are constantly applying lessons learned, and we have more troops available, more equipment and a wealth of more experience.”

Operation Jump Start also creates training opportunities because most of the Guard troops will be performing annual training while serving along the border. Others will be part of a longer-term force.

Guard members will not perform law enforcement duties. As in any operation, Guard members will be operating under consistent rules of force in the four states. The rules govern how Guard members can react if they must protect themselves or the lives of others.

The Guard members are commanded by the governors, and the federal government is funding the operation. Each state has a joint task force for the operation.

About 445,000 Soldiers and Airmen are assigned to the National Guard, and about 71,000 are deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

Of the more than 51,000 Guard members

in the four border states, some 7,200 are engaged in the Global War on Terrorism and about 750 are conducting counter-drug operations. Those missions will not be affected by Operation Jump Start, and Guard members still will be available for other missions.

The National Guard is no stranger to border duty. Guard members are engaged in counter-drug operations on the borders of the four southwestern states.

“For years, the National Guard has helped federal and state law enforcement agencies counter the flow of illegal drugs across our borders,” a Guard official pointed out.

Also, National Guard engineer units have built many of the current border barriers, walls and patrol roads.

National Guard border operations hail back to 1916, when thousands of Guard Soldiers protected Americans from bandit raiders who had attacked towns and farms, killing people and stealing cattle.

Guard troops applied some of the training they received during that mission while serving in Europe during World War I.

John Listman, a National Guard Bureau historian, contributed to this report.

Heads Up

◆ Blue Army uniforms

Army dress uniforms will be streamlined to one blue Army Service Uniform, the Army has announced.

Introduction in the Army military clothing sales stores should begin in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2007. Introduction in the Clothing Bag should begin the first quarter of 2009. The mandatory possession date is expected to be the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2011. A wear-out date for the Army green Class A and white dress uniforms will be determined at a later date.

Many Soldiers already own an Army blue uniform, now to be called the Army Service Uniform, and may continue to wear it. Improvements will be made to the fabric

and fit. Reducing the number of uniforms will reduce the burden on Soldiers for purchases and alteration cost.

The consolidation of Army service uniforms is part of a streamlining process. In 2004, the Army reduced the number of battle dress uniforms from three to one when it adopted the Army Combat Uniform in place of the winter and summer versions of the woodland green Battle Dress Uniform and the Desert Combat Uniform. That uniform consolidation has been a resounding success in terms of soldier acceptance and reducing the variety of combat uniforms with which they must deal.

◆ Language pay increased

The Defense Department has announced an increase in foreign language proficiency pay for qualified military personnel, effective June 1. The maximum monthly pay for

active duty service members who are proficient in another language will be increased from \$300 to \$1,000. For National Guard and reserve members, a \$6,000 per year bonus will be offered.

This increase comes under the fiscal 2005 National Defense Authorization Act and will be focused on languages that are strategically important to DoD, such as Middle Eastern languages and Chinese Mandarin. The goal of this increase is not necessarily to boost recruiting and retention, but to identify already qualified service members whose skills are untapped.

◆ Tax help for troops

An act signed into law May 29 by President Bush resolves a conflict in the tax code by allowing service members who serve in a combat zone to still contribute to their individual retirement accounts.

The Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunities Act amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow service members to include tax-exempt combat zone pay in determining the allowable income tax deduction for contributions to retirement savings plans.

The Internal Revenue Service will soon issue more guidance for service members who qualify under the Heroes Act.

◆ Weight-loss program

The Army has launched an online weight-loss program. It is a version of the “Weigh to Stay” program. Before the online program, reserve and active duty Soldiers had to attend classes in person. This was not much of a problem for the active duty service members because they receive easier access to dietitians, but it created problems for reservists.

★ Guarding America ★

ARKANSAS: Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Haines of Hope, Ark., was presented the nation's highest award for non-combat gallantry during a ceremony in Prescott, Ark., on May 20. Haines earned the Soldiers Medal for pulling an Iraqi citizen from a burning vehicle in Baghdad, Iraq, on May 6, 2004. Haines was serving with A Company, 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry of the 39th Brigade Combat Team. After getting word of a car bomb explosion, Haines, who was then a staff sergeant, led his squad to the scene and quickly secured the site. Disregarding his own safety, Haines dove into the burning car to rescue the man. He carried the man over 50 yards to safety and medical attention before returning to the incident site to direct his squad.

MICHIGAN: The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of the Army recognized the Michigan Army National Guard for its environmental stewardship at Fort Custer in Augusta, Mich. Fort Custer became a Michigan Neighborhood Environmental Partner as part of a competitive environmental program sponsored by DEQ that acknowledges businesses who work with their neighbors to improve environmental awareness and quality of life. The Department of the Army also recognized Fort Custer for its dedication to environmental awareness and quality of life.

MISSISSIPPI: The Mississippi Army National Guard formally dedicated the 155th Brigade Combat Team Monument on June 1 at Camp Shelby. Maj. Gen. Harold Cross, the state's adjutant general, joined hundreds of Mississippi National Guard Soldiers and retirees for the dedication ceremony in memory of 27 Soldiers and one civilian contractor who died or were killed in action during

Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 155th's monument joins other prestigious monuments, such as those for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 38th Cyclone Division, at the Camp Shelby Armed Forces Museum.

MISSOURI: Two Missouri National Guard members were among four women chosen to represent the National Guard Bureau as Department of Defense Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) role models for a ceremony at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial in Arlington, Va. in March. Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Kimberly Lambert-Head, manager of information technology at the 131st Communications Flight in St. Louis, and Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Shellie Speichinger, an engineering intermediate construction and maintenance technician assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 140th Regiment at Fort Leonard Wood, were selected as STEM role models to help celebrate the 2006 Women's History Month theme of Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams. The STEM role models also visited with nearly 300 middle and high school students who were selected to attend.

OHIO: The Ohio Army National Guard enlisted 235 new recruits in May, continuing

an upward trend in recruiting that began last summer. Sgt. Sonny Hernandez, a recruiter based in Dayton, is leading the charge for Ohio and is currently ranked second nationwide in Army National Guard recruiting. Brig. Gen. Matt Kambic, Ohio's assistant adjutant general for Army, recently presented Hernandez the Army's Meritorious Service Medal for enlisting 10 soldiers in January – the first such award presented since 2001.

OREGON: A self-styled "Army brat," Garry Dean, 49, was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in the Air National Guard on May 31. He became the first African American to be promoted to general officer in the Oregon National Guard. Dean told the more than 150 people present that it was humbling to be recognized and to be given that level of responsibility. Dean is a former commander of the 142nd Fighter Wing, and he was the commander of the Portland Air National Guard Base on Sept 11, 2001. Under his command, the 142nd was the first stateside unit to achieve 100 percent mission readiness immediately after the terrorist attacks. Dean was reassigned in 2003 as the director of operations at the Oregon Joint Forces Headquarters.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Staff Sgt. Brent Cobb, a recruiter with the South Carolina Army National Guard Recruiting

and Retention command, was presented with the Order of the Silver Crescent during ceremonies at the Fountain Inn Armory on May 6. The Order of the Silver Crescent is the highest award that can be presented to an individual by the state of South Carolina. Cobb earned the award for his outstanding contributions, volunteerism and leadership to his community.

SOUTH DAKOTA: The South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing has won the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the sixth time. The award is for the period of July 1, 2003, to June 30, 2005. It is awarded by the secretary of the Air Force to units that have distinguished themselves by exceptionally meritorious service or outstanding achievement that clearly sets them apart from similar units. The 114th received one of 15 awards presented to Air National Guard units. It was one of only four fighter wings recognized and one of nine flying wings. The Air National Guard has 88 flying wings.

UTAH: Army National Guard Sgt. David Mabey, who is serving in Iraq with the 144th Area Support Medical Company, has been inducted into the Army's Audie Murphy Club. Organized in 1991, the club recognizes outstanding leadership by Army noncommissioned officers. The club is named for Audie Murphy, the most highly decorated U.S. Soldier in World War II. Murphy received every combat-related medal and decoration to include the Medal of Honor. Specific requirements for consideration for club membership include being an assigned leader of Soldiers, scoring at least 290 out of 300 points in the Army Physical Fitness Test, firing expert with the M-16 rifle, and displaying a superb knowledge of Army regulations, procedures and traditions. 🇺🇸



Photo by Master Sgt. Andrew Krogermeier, Washington National Guard

Col. John Cromwell cools down quickly following his final flight as an Air National Guard F-15 pilot on May 30. Cromwell retired June 2, ending a 29-year Air Force career including the past nine years as commander of the Western Air Defense Sector, an Air National Guard site at McChord Air Force Base in Washington. 🇺🇸

National Guard Bureau chief announces senior enlisted advisor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The chief of the National Guard Bureau has selected the state command sergeant major for the Alaska Army National Guard to serve as his second senior enlisted advisor.

"I am pleased to announce that Command Sgt. Maj. David R. Hudson of the Alaska National Guard has been selected for the position of command sergeant major for the National Guard Bureau," said LTG H Steven Blum.

Hudson will assume his new duties later this year upon the retirement of Command Sgt. Maj. John Leonard Jr. Leonard is the first person to hold that Guard Bureau position.

Hudson's military career spans some 32 years, including 10 years in the Air Force

and Air Force Reserve. His various assignments include intelligence NCO for the 297th Infantry Battalion and first sergeant, battalion sergeant major, and commandant of the 207th Regiment Regional Training Institute in Alaska. He was the first Alaska traditional Guard Soldier to become the state command sergeant major.

His public service extends beyond his military career. He has more than 20 years of law enforcement experience as an Alaska state trooper. He holds the rank of captain and last served as the commander of the Criminal Investigative Bureau.

Hudson's educational background includes a master's of science degree in organizational management. 🇺🇸

Memorial Day events honor National Guard in nation's capital

By Sgt. Jim Greenhill
National Guard Bureau

WASHINGTON — The National Guard's Soldiers and Airmen were honored during a nationally televised concert at the U.S. Capitol and a holiday parade down Constitution Avenue as America paid tribute to its war heroes during the last weekend in May.

Fourteen current and former National Guard members—and their families and friends—who have been significantly affected by the Global War on Terrorism were guests of honor for Memorial Day activities in the nation's capital. Another 108 National Guard Airmen and Soldiers representing the 54 states and territories participated in the National Memorial Day Concert on May 28 and in the national parade on May 29.

The honorees were clearly impressed with the 17th annual concert that was broadcast live by the Public Broadcasting System from the Capitol's West Lawn.

It was difficult and moving to watch as concert participants paid tribute to seven Guard Soldiers from Louisiana's 256th Infantry Brigade who were killed in Iraq when an improvised explosive device destroyed their Bradley Fighting Vehicle on Jan. 6, 2005, said retired Pennsylvania Army Guard 1st. Sgt. Scott Ostrom.

Ostrom's son, Staff Sgt. Ryan Ostrom, was

killed in Iraq last August.

The father said his chest tightened as he sat a few rows from a candlelight tribute to seven Soldiers, six from Louisiana and one from New York. Actress Dianne Wiest, Staff Sgt. James Scaruffi, a comrade of the dead Soldiers, and Anne Comeaux, the mother of one of the Soldiers, lit the candles.

Ostrom thought about his son and other Guard members who have died while serving their country.

"He would've been very proud," Ostrom said. "He was very proud of the service. I'm just proud of every Soldier and Airman that's served and the ones that are giving a sacrifice to their nation now."

"This is a sobering tribute to the 456,800 Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard now serving and to those who went before us," said LTG H Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau who attended the concert along with members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other military and government leaders.

The Guard's 14 guests were introduced before the televised concert. The tens of thousands of concertgoers gave them a standing ovation. The spontaneous act sent shivers up the guests' spines and brought tears to their eyes.

Members of the public spread blankets, unfolded chairs or just sat on the grass during the perfect evening for the program of world-class music by such luminaries as tenor Daniel Rodriguez and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Co-hosted by Gary Sinise, the actor who portrayed Lt. Dan in the movie "Forrest

Gump," and Joe Mantegna, for 16 years the voice of Fat Tony on television's "The Simpsons," the concert also featured country music stars Lee Ann Womack and Big and Rich, retired Gen. Colin Powell, "Smallville's" John Schneider and many other celebrities and groups such as the U.S. Air Force's Singing Sergeants.

Fifty-four Army and Air Guard members carried the flags of their states and territories onto the stage during the tribute to the National Guard.

"It's important to stop and remember and celebrate the lives of those people who have given so much so we can enjoy the freedom we have today," said Maj. Gen. Terry Scherling, director of the National Guard Bureau's Joint Staff, who welcomed the National Guard honorees to Washington.

Blum and Scherling spoke with each of them. The Guard Bureau chief clasped the hand of Amy Sage, wife of Pennsylvania Army Guard Staff Sgt. Scot Sage whose extreme valor saved the lives of four service members in Iraq.

"Thanks for letting us borrow your husband," Blum said, smiling.

"It's good to have the families be recognized," Staff Sgt. Sage said. "It makes you feel good that someone does honor your sacrifice."

His wife said that many people don't understand the sacrifices made by the families of deployed Guard members.

On Saturday, honorees and those marching in the Memorial Day parade attended a Pentagon picnic and had the chance to tour the Pentagon Memorial for the attack of Sept.



Fifty-four National Guard members carried the flags of the states and territories which have Guard forces during the National Memorial Day Concert's tribute to the National Guard on May 28.



Army National Guard Maj. Tony Quinn and Command Sgt. Maj. John Leonard Jr. led 108 Army and Air National Guard members in the National Memorial Day Parade in Washington on May 29. The 54 states and territories with National Guard forces were each represented by a member of the Army and Air Guard. Leonard is senior enlisted advisor to the chief of the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Va.



Cadets from the New Jersey Youth Challenge Academy helped to represent the National Guard during the National Memorial Day Parade in Washington on May 29. Youth Challenge is a National Guard program for at-risk youth.



LTG H Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, spends a quiet moment with Wisconsin Army National Guard Sergeants Rachel and Charity Witmer before the National Memorial Day Concert at the U.S. Capitol on May 28. The Witmers' sister, Spc. Michelle Witmer, was killed in Iraq on April 9, 2004, the first female National Guard Soldier ever killed in combat.

11, 2001. The memorial is under construction, and few members of the public have seen it.

Sgt. 1st Class Ray Henderson of Enid, Okla., was a guest at the picnic. One of the Guard members chosen to march, Henderson is a full-time recruiter and was Oklahoma's 2004 noncommissioned officer of the year.

"I appreciate the secretary of defense and the senior leadership for inviting everybody here," Henderson said. "I love doing this. It's an honor and a privilege to represent the state. It's a very introspective time for any service member."

Honorees watched Monday's parade from a Constitution Avenue viewing stand, enthusiastically cheering the procession of veterans, Young Marines, high school bands, Scouts, military support groups, and sponsors for more than two hours despite the 90-degree temperature and high humidity.

But the crowd's heartiest enthusiasm was saved for last, when members of the armed forces, including many who have recently returned from combat theaters, marched by.

The crowd gave a standing ovation as 108 members of the National Guard led by Maj. Tony Quinn and Command Sgt. Maj. John Leonard Jr. marched past. Leonard is the chief of the National Guard Bureau's senior enlisted advisor. He will retire in late June. The parade was one of his last hurrahs.

The Guard marchers included Virginia Air Guard Master Sgt. Neil Keane, who was remembering 18 friends from the 203rd Red Horse Squadron. The 18 were flying home after completing two weeks of annual training at Hurlburt Field in Florida on March 3, 2001, when their airplane crashed in Georgia, killing all of them.

"I was selected to march because I was the

outstanding Air National Guardsman for Virginia in 2005," Keane said. "But I knew every single one of those 18 people, and I'm really marching in their memory."

Keane, now a full-time recruiter for the squadron, wore a red dog tag bearing the names of his dead comrades as well as the three Florida Army Guard crewmembers also killed in the Sherpa crash. Keane also wore a black T-shirt with the names of the dead printed on the back.

The weekend gave Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin Remington of North Dakota an opportunity to be reunited with retired Sgt. Brandon Erickson and to meet some members of Erickson's family for the first time. They were among the 14 honorees.

Remington saved Erickson's life in Iraq by delivering the gravely injured Guard Soldier and mortally wounded Spc. Jon Fettig from the kill zone after their convoy was attacked in July 2003. Erickson lost his right arm and now wears a lifelike artificial arm.

They spent one day in Washington visiting wounded service members at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

"Walter Reed was the highlight," Remington said. "Just going in and spending some time with them and thanking them."

Remington said he was struck by the character of the Guard members he met at the hospital.

"They're just as strong as people that went before them in other wars," he said. "Those guys have been through so much. They're not complaining. They're not bitter."

The war has also matured Erickson who is completing work on a master's degree before beginning law school.

By his own account, Erickson lacked focus

and had a mediocre academic record before going to Iraq.

Since returning, he has taught himself to be left-handed, graduated from college and set his sights on becoming a prosecutor.

"I wouldn't go through that day again," he said of the day he was wounded. "That was the worst day of my life, especially with [Spc.] Jon [Fettig's death]."

But, he added, "I would join the Guard all over again. It taught me a lot. It has provided me with a lot of opportunities. I was a bum in school before I deployed. I made a total turnaround."

Erickson sometimes talks to people about his experiences. He tells them Remington was a first sergeant who was hard on his troops; the one they complained about because he had them filling sandbags in 120-degree heat, fortifying their positions and training when other people were not.

"He was always on guard," Erickson said. "He treated every moment as if we were going to get hit."

Erickson said Remington's hard-nosed leadership had an effect on the way his troops performed — especially during their first firefight. "I think that's why my life was saved," Erickson said.

Memorial Day weekend in Washington was a tribute to Guard members who have led, like Kevin Remington; who have fought and been wounded, like Brandon Erickson; who have lost loved ones, like Scott Ostrom; and who have sacrificed at home so family members can serve, like Amy Sage.

Master Sgt. Bob Haskell contributed to this report.



Photos by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell, National Guard Bureau

Actress Dianne Wiest lights the seventh candle honoring six Soldiers in the Louisiana Army National Guard and one New York Guard Soldier who were killed in Iraq on Jan. 6, 2005. The seven members of the "Black Sheep," from the 256th Infantry Brigade, were remembered during the National Memorial Day Concert's tribute to the National Guard on May 28 in Washington. Staff Sgt. James Scaruffi and Anne Comeaux shared the tribute with Wiest. Scaruffi was in the Bradley Fighting Vehicle behind the one in which the seven were killed, and Comeaux is the mother of Sgt. 1st Class Kurt Comeaux, the platoon leader and one of the seven who died.

HISTORY: The United States' Voice in the Sky

By John Listman

National Guard Bureau

Imagine yourself in a fighting position under constant aerial attack. Someone turns on a radio for music to soothe the nerves. Instead, you hear a friendly voice in your language. The Voice says you cannot defeat the forces arrayed against you; that if you approach enemy lines without weapons, your arms up, and waving a white flag you will not be harmed.

The Voice belongs to a unique Air Force unit, the 193rd Special Operations Wing, Pennsylvania Air National Guard.

During the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the Navy planned to broadcast news and instructions to Cubans from ships in the event of an American invasion.

vertical stabilizers on the tail. All they needed was training in their new mission.

On Sept. 16, 1967, the 168th was inactivated with most of its personnel assigned the following day to the newly organized 193rd Tactical Electronic Warfare Group. In 1968, the first of four modified EC-121s were delivered, each capable of transmitting AM radio and black and white television signals over large areas.

The crews consisted of 10 or 11 members, depending on missions; five flight crew, one mission control chief, two radio operators and one or two transmitter operators. The planes could fly for about nine hours. It would not be long before the unit got its first real-world test.

That came in 1970. The war in Vietnam

would fly a mission somewhere over Cambodia or South Vietnam broadcasting via AM radio. The prerecorded messages were delivered daily, and the men had no idea what was being said. One pilot, Maj. Robert E. Harris, joked they instructed listeners to "Shoot down the first three-tailed aircraft you see!"

According to Tech. Sgt. James Bankes, who flew the first mission and stayed with the unit for 90 days, the usual flight time was between seven and seven and a half hours. He said the planes stayed high enough to avoid ground fire, although there is no record of any being directed at them. Enemy fighter aircraft never challenged them. The unit completed its 144 days without a loss. When the last rotation returned home, the

heard the radio messages explaining how to do so without being killed. The unit flew missions over Bosnia and Kosovo in the late 1990s.

In 1995, the 193rd Special Operations Group was reorganized into the 193rd Special Operations Wing, the only such unit in the Air Force. Since the start of the Global War on Terrorism following the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the unit has seen service in Afghanistan and as Commando Solo during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003.

During the early part of OIF, a group of medical personnel from the 193rd Wing volunteered to serve a 120-day tour with the 506th Expeditionary Medical Support unit treating Iraqi civilians in Kirkuk. They



193rd Special Operations Wing photo

From Desert Storm in 1991 through missions in the Global War on Terrorism, the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 193rd Special Operations Wing has depended on the EC-130, seen here flying over the Statue of Liberty.

In 1965, the United States moved into the Dominican Republic to restore order after a coup. Military planners sought some means to inform the populace of U.S. intentions. The Air Force was tasked to find a method to transmit radio and television signals to enemy or hostile populations from an aircraft. The project, code named Coronet Solo, quickly determined that a modified C-121 Super Constellation could fulfill the role as psychological warfare platform.

In 1967, as the costs of the war in Vietnam increased, many in the Air Force doubted a specialized unit for this mission was affordable. Maj. Gen. Winston P. Wilson, the first Air National Guard chief of the National Guard Bureau, volunteered an Air Guard unit.

Pennsylvania's 168th Military Airlift Group was selected. The 168th's flight crews and ground support personnel knew the C-121 a distinctive-looking plane with three

was not going well for the American military. It was thought communist soldiers could be convinced the Americans would never be defeated, that to die in a lost cause was fruitless. A secret plan, code named Commando Buzz, was formulated to deploy two EC-121s near enemy lines broadcasting messages. Rather than mobilize the unit, which would have alerted the press, a call for volunteers was issued.

The final plan saw about 70 men serving for 60 to 90 days before being rotated home and replaced by other unit members. To maintain security, the men were not told where they were going until they were en route.

After a five-day, island-hopping flight, the first detachment of the 193rd, with their two planes, arrived at Korat, Thailand, on July 28, 1970. Once the operation started, it ran daily, non-stop for 144 days.


Each day, one of the two Constellations

193rd received an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for exceeding all mission standards.

In 1977, the 193rd received new EC-130E Hercules aircraft. As technology improved, it became possible to jam one AM or FM channel and play the desired message on an adjacent channel. When the listener adjusted his radio to get clarity, he received the American broadcast.

In the last two decades of the 20th century, the 193rd served on missions where few, if any, other Guard units took part. These included Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada in 1983 and Operation Just Cause in Panama in 1989. As one of the first units mobilized during Operation Desert Shield, the 193rd was soon broadcasting its messages to Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait. After the start of the air campaign on Jan. 16, 1991, which severely punished the Iraqi Army, thousands of its soldiers wanted to surrender. Many said they

proved so effective in their care that they soon gained the trust of the people. The Guard personnel established such empathy with their patients that they offered valuable information about the location of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, soon leading to his capture. Nicknamed the "Kirkuk Seven," those members of the 193rd received special recognition for their success in winning the respect and trust of the Iraqi people they treated.

While in many cases it is hard to determine how effective the 193rd's messages are, interrogations of Iraqi prisoners revealed that thousands of enemy soldiers gave up in part because of these messages. The unit takes pride in its service as reflected in its motto, "Never seen, always heard." 

For more National Guard History visit our "This Day in Guard History" web page: www.ngb.army.mil/features/today

Joint Service Open House: Pilot for a Day kids had the stick

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

ANDREWS AFB, Md. — It would have been oh so tempting to feel sorry for three young men who the District of Columbia Air National Guard took under its wing on May 19, the first day of the annual Joint Service Open House at the home of Air Force One.

The only thing is, the three 7- and 8-year-old boys didn't stop long enough to elicit anybody's sympathy. If anything, you almost had to feel sorry for their parents and other members of their families and their Air Guard escorts who had to keep up with them.

There was a lot to see on Family Day, a cool Friday when the crowd was considerably smaller than it would be when the base was thrown open to the public on Saturday and Sunday. And the young men were determined to see everything — the airplanes and helicopters parked as static displays on the expansive tarmac and the Navy's Blue Angels who they met and who capped the full day with their aerial acrobatics in F-18 Hornets.

Isaiah Horst, 7, from Hagerstown, Md.; Will Ledford, 8, from Cleveland, Tenn.; and Corey Reichenberg, 8, from Boca



Photos by John Thornton

Will Ledford shows his mother, Kim, how he would fly one of the Blue Angels' F-18s during the first day of the Joint Service Open House at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. Will and his family were guests of the District of Columbia Air National Guard after participating in its Pilot for a Day program in October 2004.

Raton, Fla., returned to Andrews as guests of the DC Air Guard after having taken part in its Pilot for a Day program within the past two years.

It is something like the Make a Wish Foundation for youngsters with serious or terminal illnesses. The DC Guard's 113th Wing started the program two years ago and all of the flying units at Andrews, including the Presidential Aircraft Group, have since embraced it.

Isaiah has leukemia and has relied on a motorized wheelchair for mobility since March 2005 when he was paralyzed by chemotherapy, explained his mother, Nanette. Will and Corey have Duchenne's muscular dystrophy, the parents said.

This was the first year that Pilot for a Day guests returned to Andrews for a Joint Service Open House reunion, explained Capt. Susanne Schulz who coordinates the program for the DC Air Guard. A fourth guest, Kyle Knapp, 14, from Port Royal, Pa., could not attend because of another commitment, Schulz said.

The Pilot for a Day program began in December 1994 at Randolph Air Force Base in Texas, the brainchild of one Capt. Rory Blackburn, Schulz explained. Other Air Force bases across the country have adopted the idea.

"We take so much for granted; everything we get to see and experience as aircrew members," she added. "It's nice to share that with people who don't get to experience it, especially with these young people."

"It's a way to give something back to the community and to see joy on these kids' faces," said Col. Linda McTague, the 113th Wing's commander. "It's also good to give the parents a break for a day — to get them away from all of the care and the medications."

"What started as a project by our 201st Airlift Squadron caught on with our entire wing, and now it's an Andrews' community project," McTague added.

The goal is to host two young people a year — in the spring and fall, Schulz explained. "We open up the entire base to them," she said.

People at the Ronald McDonald House in Washington tell the families about the program when they are in town for treatments. Schulz added.

Will Ledford, with his family, was the first Pilot for a Day youngster to visit Andrews, in October 2004.



Isaiah Horst was surrounded by his family and new friends during the first day of the Joint Service Open House at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. One of the members of the Navy's Blue Angels signs Isaiah's program. DC Air Guard Maj. Billy Hutchison, in the green flight suit, was Isaiah's host pilot.

What did he do? "Oh my heavens. He did everything," said his mother, Kim. "We were all so busy. All of the attention was on us. It was so much more than we were expecting."

The red carpet treatment lasts for a full day. It includes a welcoming ceremony, a visit to the control tower, a canine demonstration, a chance to operate a water cannon on a fire truck, a buffet meal aboard an Air Force Reserve KC-135 Stratotanker courtesy of the 459th Air Refueling Wing, a flight in a F-16 simulator, a ride in an Air Guard C-38 passenger plane that taxis across the field, and lots of gifts — model airplanes, plaques, commanders coins, caps, T-shirts, nametags, even a flight suit.

Eight corporate sponsors from as far away as Tucson, Ariz., donate many of the gifts or the money to buy them and the food for the guests, Schulz said.

Each child has a host pilot during the day at Andrews, and no child gets left behind. DC Air Guard Maj. Billy Hutchison saw to that when Isaiah Horst visited last October.


Hutchison carried Isaiah everywhere that he could not get to in his wheelchair. That included carrying him up and down the steps from the elevator to the control room in the tower and up to the tanker for the lunch and lifting him in and out of the boom pod in the tail of the plane.

"It was amazing. They treated us like gold!" Nanette Horst said.

"Isaiah went everywhere the other kids did because Billy carried him," Schulz said.

The name Billy Hutchison is best known throughout the National Capital Region because of 9-11. He was flying his F-16 back to Andrews after completing a training mission on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, when the jetliner slammed into the Pentagon. Hutchison landed and was almost immediately ordered to take off again to fly a patrol mission. He was flying top cover over the building moments later, much to the relief of the people on the ground who had heard a rumor that another jetliner was heading their way.

Last Oct. 24, however, he was the host pilot for Isaiah — focused on the young man with leukemia who needed his help.

"To see a smile on his face made it all worthwhile," said Hutchison who again was Isaiah's host for the Joint Force Open House. "Isaiah has a lot of bad days. But that was a good day for him." 



Corey Reichenberg got into the swing of the Joint Service Open House at Andrews Air Force Base as a Pilot for a Day guest of the District of Columbia Air National Guard.

Tax service giving Guard Soldiers a chance for some NASCAR fame

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — A North Dakota Army National Guard Soldier, who has known the satisfaction and the sadness of going to war, is in the running to have his picture displayed on the hood of a stock car that will race in one of NASCAR's premier division races in 2007.

Staff Sgt. Robbi Smette of Makoti, N.D., was the first Citizen-Soldier to be nominated as the Hero of the Year in a unique national campaign that Jackson Hewitt Tax Service Inc. has initiated to honor this country's Army Guard members.

Smette was the guest of honor when the one-of-a-kind contest was introduced to the National Capital Region by Michael Lister, president and chief executive officer of Jackson Hewitt, and Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, director of the Army National Guard, at the Army Guard's Readiness Center in mid-April.

Jackson Hewitt will honor one Army Guard Soldier each month for the rest of this year, and a panel of judges will select a Hero of the Year from those 10 candidates. Smette is the nominee for March.

The picture of the winner will be displayed on the No. 16 Ford during a NASCAR Nextel Cup Series race next year.

The Army Guard is one of the primary sponsors for the Roush Racing Team's car that is being driven by Greg Biffle for the second season and that was on display at the readiness center when the contest was announced.

Family members, friends or employers can nominate Guard Soldiers for the monthly honors by logging on to www.supporttheguard.com and explaining in 500 words or less how a Soldier exemplifies the time-honored tradition of the Army National Guard.

"Jackson Hewitt is thrilled to have this opportunity to showcase some of America's outstanding National Guard heroes and to give people around the country the chance to play a role in nominating and honoring a Soldier," Lister said. "This campaign is part of our ongoing relationship with the National Guard and our commitment to support all of the many men and women in all branches of service who provide service to our country."

Jackson Hewitt is also honoring a family and civilian employer of National Guard members each month, and a family and an employer will also be selected to attend the same Nextel Cup race next year.

Smette joined the North Dakota Army Guard as a combat engineer in January 2000 and volunteered to serve as a bridge crew member with the 957th Engineer Company during an Operation Iraqi Freedom tour of duty from January 2003 through May 2004.

His older brother, Sgt. Keith Smette, was killed by a road-

side bomb on Jan. 24, 2004, while serving with Robbi in Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Smette remembered his deceased brother on the day that he was the center of attention in Arlington.

"My brother stood for everything that was good about the National Guard and about life in general," Smette said. "After he died, I took it upon myself to try to be a replica of him, to try to be as good as I could be because that's the way he lived his life."


"It's very humbling because I really never thought of myself as a hero," said Smette who was nominated for the honor by his friend Cory Morlock. "There are so many other National Guard Soldiers out there doing the same thing that I'm doing. It's a great honor. I'll accept this on their behalf as well." 



Photo by gvansmith, Department of the Army

North Dakota Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Robbi Smette could have his face featured on car No. 16 during a 2007 NASCAR Nextel Cup race if he is named the Hero of the Year in a contest sponsored by Jackson Hewitt Tax Service Inc.

Guard and university to share new building

By Maj. Toni Truelove

Kansas National Guard

PITTSBURG, Kan. — The weather did not want to cooperate May 6 when the Kansas National Guard, Pittsburg State University and the community broke ground for a historic building.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the \$15 million Pittsburg National Guard Armory and Pittsburg State University Recreation Center was to have taken place outside on the university campus. But the rain refused to stop and the ceremony was moved inside.

"It's a little bit of an improvisation," said James AuBuchon, PSU vice president for university advancement. Two pans of dirt, along with beribboned shovels, were brought into a university gymnasium for the groundbreaking event.

The idea for the new facility surfaced in 1995 when representatives from the Kansas Guard approached the city of Pittsburg to discuss the need for a new armory.

In 1997, Guard representatives started to look into the possibilities of a joint venture with Pittsburg State University. Maj. Gen. James Rueger, former adjutant general, and John Darling, former PSU president, met with Kansas legislators and decided to pursue the project for a joint-use facility.

In 2001, the PSU Foundation purchased 15 acres of former dairy land to house both the joint-use facility and the PSU Veterans Memorial Amphitheater, which was dedicated on Memorial Day 2004.

Since the purchase of the land, the Kansas Legislature, the city of Pittsburg, the federal government and private donors dedicated funds to support this venture.

The new National Guard and university facility is the first of its kind in Kansas and one of few facilities like it in the country.

The 97,000 square foot facility will have 39,000 square feet dedicated to the Kansas Guard and will include offices, a kitchen, locker rooms, training and support spaces, an exterior compound and a maintenance bay.

The remaining 58,000 square feet will be used by PSU to house offices for the health, physical education and recreation and military science-ROTC departments. It will also include a student recreation center and a veterans museum and library. Joint use areas will include an assembly hall, fitness center and classrooms.

"Separately, these projects simmered on the back burner for many years because the money for each was just not available," said PSU President Tom Bryant, thanking city

leaders and state and federal lawmakers who made the project possible. "It will be a testament to the fact that, when we all work together, we all benefit."

"This is a unique project. It was unlikely in America, 30 years ago, that a project like this would be considered," said Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, Kansas's adjutant general.


He thanked the community for their support of the 891st Engineer Battalion, which will be housed in the new building, as well as their support of the Kansas National Guard as a whole.

"Today the community of Pittsburg raises the bar with their support of the Kansas National Guard," he said.

"It took a lot of work and cooperation to be here today," said Gov. Kathleen Sebelius. "It makes me so proud to be a Kansan, to watch a community come together."

U.S. Rep. Jim Ryun said he pushed hard for this in Congress for two reasons.

"It's a great way to say to our National Guard 'We appreciate what you're doing,'" said Ryun. "It is also an appropriate training place for those who stand in harm's way so we can have our freedom."

Construction on the building is scheduled to begin in late fall and is expected to last about 18 months. 

Cadets celebrate Guard's 10th ChalleNGe Invitational

By Sgt. Jim Greenhill

National Guard Bureau

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Selling crack cocaine and methamphetamine in mountainous western North Carolina was easy money for self-styled thug Shane Lundy.

But then the 17-year-old faced legal trouble — and learned his fiancée was pregnant.

Seeking to change direction, Lundy in January enrolled in the Tarheel ChalleNGe Academy, North Carolina's incarnation of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, which helps at-risk youth become productive citizens.

On June 5, he stood in a formation on the Reckord Armory's gleaming wooden floor, left arm extended horizontal, head and eyes focused intently right, as dead set on drill perfection as he is on the altered life course he has planned to follow his graduation later in June.

"Practice, practice, practice!" Ralph Sutton, a member of the Tarheel ChalleNGe cadre exhorted the cadets. "Hooah?"

The armory is on the University of Maryland campus. The Tarheel ChalleNGe cadets were competing with cadets from 11 other states during a week of academic and physical challenges at the 10th Anniversary ChalleNGe Invitational.

Lundy had previously barely set foot outside the Appalachians.

"I was a thug selling drugs on the streets," he said. "I didn't care about nobody else but myself. I was looking for the easy way out."

Lundy said junkies respected him, but no one else did. "The others, they just look at you like you ain't nothing," he said.

In five months, the Tarheel ChalleNGe cadre has helped Lundy pull off what high school did not — a 180-degree change in his life. "It gives you a second chance," he said. "It gets you ready for the real world. It gives you a step above everybody else."

Lundy is intent on becoming a certified mechanic, working for someone else until he can open his own shop and helping to raise his daughter who is due July 23. "I've got a little girl on the way, and this just gives me a second chance to step up and be a man," he said.

He was among about 600 high school dropouts from 12 states competing in basketball, volleyball, softball, GED Jeopardy, chess, dismounted drill, and a triathlon at the week-long ChalleNGe Invitational for the bragging rights of being the nation's top program.

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program operates in 26 states and territories. Wyoming has the newest program, its first class due to graduate at the end of the month.

The first class of the Wyoming Youth ChalleNGe Program started with 43 cadets in January. Twenty-two have made it within sight of the June 23 graduation, and all of them came to the ChalleNGe Invitational.



Photo by Sgt. Jim Greenhill, National Guard Bureau

Cadet Shane Lundy, 17, focuses on being dress-right-dressed as his North Carolina Tarheel ChalleNGe dismounted drill team prepares to compete in the National Guard's 10th ChalleNGe Invitational at the University of Maryland in early June.

Of the 22, only a handful had ever been east of the Mississippi and only two had previously visited the nation's capital.

"If you could have seen them on day one and where they're standing right now, it's just unbelievable," said Donald Przybylski, a Wyoming cadre member. "It's a complete 180." Przybylski is a former corrections officer. "If I can help stop just one kid from going there, that's well worth it," he said.

Cadet James Benson, 16, used marijuana and methamphetamine, robbed houses and was kicked out of a drug rehab program before he enrolled in the Wyoming program.

"I had no idea what to expect," Benson said. His brother is in a youth correctional facility, and he knew he didn't want to

go down the same road. "I just wanted to get my life back on track," he said.

As Benson's head cleared in the program, he discovered that he was capable of better athletic performances than he had ever imagined. He embraced responsibility. He made plans to work in a fast-food restaurant after graduation, help his grandparents and continue his studies. It became important to him to work to pay off outstanding criminal fines. And he was so impressed with the program that he successfully urged two friends to enroll in the next class. He said he'll drop most of the friends he used to hang out with because they were bad influences.

"I feel great," he said. "It's a good program for troubled youth. It's helped me out a lot."

Grady Winders, assistant commandant of the Wyoming program that is based at Camp Guernsey, watched his cadets with pride.


"They have made great strides," Winders said. "They've stepped up to the challenge. They've made a commitment. We owe it to them. We need to provide the best opportunities."

It took a year to stand up the Wyoming program, Winders said. Challenges included working in a building as it was being renovated and getting enough telephone lines. "We've been through a lot of growing pains," Winders said. "It's been challenging. It's been exceptionally rewarding, as well."

Joe Padilla is deputy chief of the National Guard Bureau's Office of Athletics and Youth Development. "The ChalleNGe program gives at-risk youth across the United States a second chance at becoming productive citizens," Padilla said. "The National Guard has traditionally been involved in youth programs designed to help young people become positive and productive members of their communities."

Cadet Nathan Wallace, 19, led Wyoming's dismounted drill team through its maneuvers. Wallace said he was in and out of jail between the ages of 13 and 16. He dropped out of school. He has since earned a GED, and he said he will join the Marines or the Army because he likes the discipline of the ChalleNGe program so much.

The cadets know challenges and temptations face them beyond graduation. But they're determined to try to live better lives.

"I'm just going to keep my family in mind," said Lundy, the ex-drug dealer. "I've got to support them. It's not all about me no more." 

Colorado Guard members judge air meet in Jordan

By Capt. Nicole David

Colorado Air National Guard

MWAFFAQ SALT AIR BASE, Jordan — It's not every day one gets to meet a prince, but that's what 12 Colorado National Guard Airmen did in May.

The 12 traveled to Jordan for three weeks for the first-ever Falcon Air Meet.

The F-16 competition was inspired by Prince Feisal Bin Al Hussein, special assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordanian Armed Forces, and sponsored by the U.S. Central Command Air Forces.

Prince Feisal's vision became reality when the 522nd Fighter Squadron from Cannon AFB, the Turkish Air Force and the Royal Jordanian Air Force competed in Falcon Air Meet 2006.

Members of the 140th Wing were asked to participate as judges for the event because of their state partnership with Jordan, a partnership formally established in 2004.

The National Guard's State Partnership Program links states with partner countries to develop long-term relationships to both parties across various levels of military and civilian activities.

"I think the State Partnership Program is a great program and I can say without any hesitation, 'Colorado Air National Guard, we could not have done the Falcon Air Meet without you,'" said Col. Mohammed Omari, Wing

Commander of Mwaffaq Salti Air Base. "The Falcon Air Meet idea started in Jordan, but the implementation started with Colorado."

Along with the competitors were several observing countries — including Bahrain, Italy, Oman, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia — that plan to participate in the next Falcon Air Meet.

The event was the first of its kind in the Middle East, with the goal of fostering strong relationships between the air forces of the U.S. and Middle Eastern countries and promoting stability in the region.

The concept was to have these countries participate in a friendly competition centered on the world's only multi-role fighter jet, Lockheed Martin's F-16 Fighting Falcon.

"The idea was to get all the F-16 users in the region to exercise and hopefully learn from each other and exchange information," Prince Feisal said. "The nice thing about making it a competition is that you get the best of the teams together and with the smartest and brightest people working together they tend to learn from one another. The idea eventually will be to make this more of a coalition exercise."

Airmen from the 140th Wing provided their best of the best for judges to include pilots, maintenance experts and specialists in weapons and range operations.


The competitive events were considered fundamental tasks for pilots and maintainers: an alert scramble, air-to-

ground attack, air-to-air intercept, bomb loading, formation arrival, large force employment and overall quality assessment.

Although the point difference was small, the Jordanians and the Americans tied for first place in the air meet. When the competition ended, the Americans, Turks and Jordanians spent time learning about each other's countries and customs.

During the closing ceremonies, everyone experienced traditional Arab culture, including food, music and dance. It is experiences like these that Guard members said they would never forget — partnership on a personal level.

"The state partnership with Jordan has been a great benefit for Colorado," said Col. Greg Graf, operations director, joint force headquarters, Colorado Air National Guard. "It's given the state of Colorado an opportunity to be a player in world politics in fostering a great relationship with one of our best allies in the region. Jordan has been instrumental in maintaining regional security and has been a great partner with the United States."

A partnership like Jordan and Colorado's can help pave the way for Prince Feisal's future aspirations of coalition exercises. Leaders from both Colorado and Jordan units believe the partnership is a good fit because of their force size, common equipment and being able to accomplish missions with limited resources. 

Contacting a Family Readiness Coordinator near you

The National Guard Family Program office in each state joint force headquarters (JFHQ) is designed to assist family members of all service members, regardless of the military organization or status, with information and/or referrals. Following is a list of Family Program offices in the 54 states and territories, followed by Wing Family Program Coordinators.

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Army Guard fetes outstanding Soldiers and NCOs

By Sgt. Jim Greenhill

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – When Sgt. Eugene Patton isn’t attending his monthly drills as a traditional Guard Soldier, exercising his carpentry skills in his civilian job, or spending time with his wife and four children, you’ll most likely find him studying Army texts.

The Colorado Army National Guard member joined 15 other Soldiers from around the nation who were honored in the nation’s capital as the 2006 Outstanding Soldiers and Noncommissioned Officers of the Year by the Army National Guard during the week before Memorial Day.

Patton, a member of B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery in Colorado Springs, is the Army Guard’s top NCO for Region 7. He was that region’s Soldier of the year in 2005.

The 16 Army Guard winners joined six colleagues from the Air National Guard who were recognized as this year’s outstanding Airmen and NCOs for a formal banquet at the Washington Navy Yard on May 25.

“This is a yearlong project for the competing Soldiers,” said Command Sgt. Maj. John Gipe, command sergeant major of the Army National Guard. “It takes a great deal of dedication.” Calling this year’s Soldiers “spectacular,” Gipe said.

“This thing just keeps getting better every year.”

The Soldiers were recognized during an awards ceremony at the Army National Guard Readiness Center in Arlington on May 23 as part of a week of activities that included tours of Arlington National Cemetery, Capitol Hill and the Pentagon.

It was the second straight year that Patton won at the five levels of competition that started last October to bring him and his colleagues to the nation’s capital. They won boards at the company, battalion, brigade, state and regional levels.

They face three more levels of competition that will determine who will be the Army’s Soldier of the Year.

Gipe said the Guard competitors are particularly noteworthy because they must balance their civilian jobs with their duties as Soldiers and obligations to their families and still make time to study.

“It takes a lot of effort to participate,” he said. “These are the 16 best Soldiers and noncommissioned officers in the Army National Guard. It is an extreme privilege for us to have them.”

Brig. Gen. David Burford, special assistant to the director of the Army National Guard, said the 2006 outstanding Soldiers and NCOs symbolize how a new generation of Guard members has risen to the challenge of domestic operations and

foreign wars.

“This is a remarkable generation that I’m very proud to turn over the ranks to, whenever that is,” said Burford before giving each Soldier his coin.

The Soldiers also received coins from Gipe and from other Guard leaders. They received hundreds of dollars worth of gift certificates and gifts provided by more than two dozen sponsors including military professional associations and private businesses.

Patton was 31 when he felt a calling to enlist in the National Guard his father served for 22 years. He said studying for the competition has taught him to better manage his time, challenged him and brought him pleasure.

“I’ve gained a lot of [military] knowledge that most people don’t sit down and pay attention to – the stuff you should know that no one takes the time to learn,” said Patton.

To compete, Patton said he does physical training every morning, goes to the rifle range whenever possible and studies a couple of hours a day.

His wife, Dawn, said his focus on the competition has improved her husband. “It’s changed him as a person.”

For photographs of the awardees visit www.ngb.army.mil

2006 Army National Guard Outstanding Soldiers of the Year

Region 1

- Soldier: Sgt. Christopher McWilliams, C Battery, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry (Mountain), New Hampshire.
- NCO: Sgt. Katie McGovern, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 642nd Military Intelligence Battalion, 42nd Infantry Regiment, New York.

Region 2

- Soldier: Spc. Justin Hancock, B Company, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Brigade Combat Team, Virginia.
- NCO: Sgt. Joshua Cozzens, C Company, 105th Engineer Battalion, Vermont.

Region 3

- Soldier: Spc. Stacy Adams, Group Support Company, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Alabama.
- NCO: Sgt. 1st Class Michael Jackson, 154th Regiment Regional Training Institute, Mississippi.

Region 4

- Soldier: Spc. Matthew Small, B Battery, 1st Battalion, 125th Field Artillery, Minnesota.
- NCO: Staff Sgt. Paul Cusick, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 724th Engineer Battalion, Wisconsin.

Region 5

- Soldier: Sgt. Tracy Austin, C Company, 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry Battalion, Arkansas.
- NCO: Staff Sgt. Benjamin Swank IV, 136th Regiment Regional Training Institute (Combat Arms), Texas

Region 6

- Soldier: Spc. Randi Frank, 109th Engineer Battalion, South Dakota.
- NCO: Sgt. Michael Camonayan, C Company, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry, Washington.

Region 7

- Soldier: Spc. Roger Alicea, 3650th Maintenance Company Detachment, Colorado.
- NCO: Sgt. Eugene Patton, B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado.

US Army-Pacific

- Soldier: Spc. Melanie Nesmith, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Guam Area Command, Guam.
- NCO: Staff Sgt. Kevin Q. Dirige, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Guam Area Command, Guam.

Air Guard tips its cap to this year’s top Airmen and NCOs

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – Staff Sgt. Daniel Dierickx felt a bit guilty about seeing the sites in Washington and standing in the spotlight as one of the Air National Guard’s enlisted celebrities during the week before Memorial Day because his heart told him he should be in Iraq.

But three months of duty in Baghdad, where he will be an air traffic controller, was still in the works for the young man from Klamath Falls, Ore., after he took his bows as one of the Air Guard’s top six airmen and noncommissioned officers for 2006. He leaves June 3 for his third tour of duty in Iraq.

Dierickx, 22, was introduced many times to many people as the Air Guard’s noncommissioned officer of the year. That makes him one of the youngest people to ever achieve that distinction. Furthermore, the airman of the year, Senior Airman Saul Soto-Sanchez, is 25.

Dierickx is a member of the Oregon Air Guard’s 270th Air Traffic Control Squadron. He performs his duties in the tower at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls when he is not engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom half a world away.

“It’s the right thing to do,” said Dierickx, explaining he would already have been back in Iraq had he not been in Washington. “I like working with the Iraqis. They’re good people, and they’re learning about freedom bought with blood, just like the people in this country have learned.”

Four other men and one woman from across the country also were honored in the nation’s capital during May’s final full week as the Air National Guard’s premier enlisted members for this year.

They were: Airman of the Year, newly promoted Staff Sgt. Saul Soto-Sanchez from the 156th Logistics Squadron in Puerto Rico; Senior NCO of the Year, Master Sgt. and Bronze

Star recipient Alphonzo Allen from the 168th Security Forces Squadron in Alaska; First Sergeant of the Year, Master Sgt. Mark Wasserbauer from the 148th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron in Minnesota; Honor Guard Program Manager of the Year, Tech. Sgt. Tiffany Kellum from the Southeast Air Defense Sector at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.; and honor guard member of the year, Senior Airman John Baxter from the 184th Finance Office at McConnell Air Force Base, Kan.

Their whirlwind week in Washington, where the days and evenings were comfortably cool, included a reception at the Fort McNair home of LTG H Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, visits to the office of the chief master sergeant of the Air Force and to other Defense Department dignitaries, as well as trips to Arlington National Cemetery, to Andrews Air Force Base, and to RFK Stadium to watch the Washington Nationals defeat the Houston Astros 5-1. The week ended with a banquet honoring the National Guard’s outstanding Soldiers and Airmen of year at the Washington Navy Yard on Thursday evening.

“This has been an awesome week,” said Chief Master Sgt. Richard Smith, command chief master sergeant for the Air National Guard. “You’re the future of the Air National Guard, and, believe me, the Air Guard’s future is in great hands,” he told the honorees.

Dierickx, however, was already preparing to return to Iraq where he had already served twice: in Kirkuk from May to September of 2004 and at the Baghdad International Airport from May 2005 to January 2006.

He has volunteered every time. Why?

“I knew they would be activating Air Guard people, and some of them might have three or four children. I don’t have any children,” Dierickx explained. “I’d go four or five times if it meant that parents don’t have to go. Besides, we young peo-

ple have to pay our dues, just like the generations of young people have before us.”

That helps explain why the young man has become a non-commissioned officer in less than four years after joining the Oregon Air Guard in July 2001 following his junior year at Henley High School. He was 17, and he was in the school’s Air Force ROTC program, Dierickx said.

He initially wanted to become an Army Guard helicopter door gunner, but his mother Ronna refused to give her consent for him to sign up before his 18th birthday, Dierickx explained. A neighbor who was an Air Guard air traffic controller suggested that the young man give the Air Guard a try, Dierickx added.

That was more to Ronna Dierickx’s liking because she had spent two years in the Air Force’s security forces as a dog handler during the mid-70s, Dierickx explained. So his mother signed the papers.

For photographs of the awardees visit www.ngb.army.mil

2006 Air National Guard Outstanding Airmen of the Year

Airman: Staff Sgt. Saul Soto-Sanchez, 156th Logistics Squadron, Muniz Air National Guard Base, San Juan, P.R.

Noncommissioned Officer: Staff Sgt. Daniel Dierickx, 270th Air Traffic Control Squadron, Klamath Falls, Ore.

Senior Noncommissioned Officer: Master Sgt. Alphonzo Allen, 168th Security Forces Squadron, Fairbanks, Alaska.

First Sergeant: Master Sgt. Mark Wasserbauer, 148th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Duluth, Minn.

Honor Guard Program Manager: Tech. Sgt. Tiffany Kellum, Southeast Air Defense Sector, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

Honor Guard Member: Senior Airman John Baxter, 184th Finance Office, McConnell Air Force Base, Kan.