

THE ON GUARD

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Awards



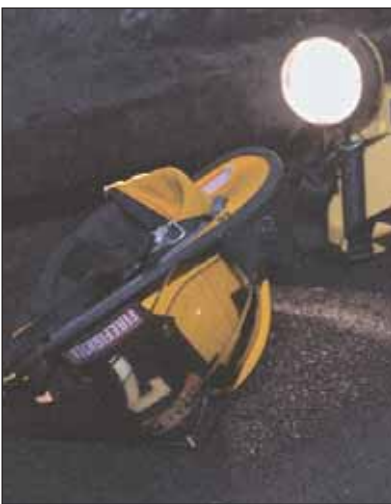
Guardsmen win the U.S. Army's 17th annual Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Awards. Page 5.

WMD fighters



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First Responders



West Virginia tackles homeland defense mission. Page 8.

WMD expert explains facts and fictions

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – Maj. Gen. George Alexander takes weapons of mass destruction very seriously.

He makes no bones about the potential dangers of radiological, nuclear, biological or chemical agents in the hands of terrorists who would do harm to others. These weapons can kill a lot of people. They can make many more extremely ill. They can be released without warning.

More importantly, claims the eminent Army National Guard physician who has served at the White House, they can instill psychological terror and spread panic throughout an entire population, even among people who have not been injured by a blast or exposed to the fearful agents.

That, claims the Army Guard's deputy surgeon general, is the real danger inherent with weapons of mass destruction – or what he also calls "weapons of mass disruption."

But Alexander also insists that it does not have to be that way – if people can be educated about what these weapons can and cannot do.

"The terrorists' intent is to instill widespread fear and terror to advance their own agenda," Alexander explained. "Terrorists want you to become hysterical. They want you to be frightened. They want you to have despair."

Call it the fear of the unknown. The psychological damage can be far more devastating than the actual physical damage, and that's what terrorists really want to accomplish, Alexander explained during a recent interview with "The On Guard," the National Guard Bureau's national newspaper.

"They want to overload the medical system," he added. "Then people lose confidence in the system. They begin to feel helpless. Then they give up."

The fear factor, however, can be controlled if people understand the nature of these weapons and of the motives of the people who would use them.



Alexander

"The key is education, education, education," said the soft-spoken Alexander who becomes downright animated about the facts and the fiction of weapons of mass destruction.

"The public needs to be educated about the facts and the myths of these weapons. Education is the best way to counter terrorism," added the cancer doctor who is also a senior medical scientist and program director at the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health.

Education has been one of Alexander's objectives since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, when hijacked jetliners became the new weapon. He has since served, from December 2001 to March 2003, as the director for Medical and Public Health Security in the White House's Office of Homeland Security.

He is, specifically, a radiation oncologist who has studied at Columbia University, at the Howard University College of Medicine, at the University of Texas's M.D.

Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute and

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Massachusetts National Guard hosts anti-terrorism software training

Capt. Winfield Danielson
Massachusetts National Guard

MILLFORD, Mass. – Members of the Army and Air National Guard from several states and representatives of local civilian emergency response agencies completed three days of initial training on the Automated Exercise and Assessment System (AEAS) on Aug. 26.

AEAS allows emergency responders to simulate reacting to terrorist attacks involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, and is a critical new weapon in the homeland defense arsenal.

"The system allows first responders to conduct a tabletop exercise without employing actual resources," said Col. Bill F. FitzPatrick, compliance manager of the Massachusetts Military Reservation's Environmental and Readiness Center. He added that the software encourages emergency responders to test and refine their WMD response plans, partly because AEAS exercises cost much less than live rehearsals involving actual personnel and equipment.

The software is free, and easy for agencies to install and use. It runs on standard personal computers, and can accommodate up to 20 players linked by local area network to a controller station. Agencies representing up to 40 functional areas can train on the system, including fire, medical, law enforcement and hazardous materials. The system can simulate functional areas that aren't represented by a human player, said instructor Mickey Kirschenbaum of McLean, Va., based Science Applications International Corp.

AEAS scenarios simulate radiological, biological and chemical incidents committed by domestic and foreign groups, including hoaxes. The software can simulate default emergency response agencies, or an agency can load its resources into the software, so it

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Alaska Air Guard fliers log 175,000 accident-free hours

By Maj. Mike Haller

Alaska National Guard

KULIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Alaska. – Anyone who flies in Alaska knows it's not like flying anywhere else in the world, and that includes a group of Air National Guard aviators who just logged 175,000 accident-free flying hours.

So far, according to Brig. Gen. Gene Ramsay, 176th wing commander, "This is the longest stretch of time in Alaska Air Guard's history without an accident.

"This is a major accomplishment for any military unit - and living in Alaska makes it all the more unique – we fly in an extreme environment with unusual weather conditions, com-

plex terrain, remote locations, and sparse populations," he said.

The 176th Wing has two flying squadrons assigned: the 144th Airlift Squadron, with the C-130H Hercules; the 210th Rescue Squadron,

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Air National Guard command chief master sergeant retires

By Staff Sgt. Cheryl Hackley
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – To set a goal is easy. To follow through with it requires dedication. When Valerie Benton stepped into the role of chief master sergeant of the Air National Guard in June 2001, she thought long and hard about what her goals would be, and during the past three years, she made sure she accomplished them before retiring.

"My predecessors had done a great job of introducing people programs in the Air National Guard," said Benton. "In my travels, I saw that many people at the lower levels didn't understand these programs or how to use them, so I wanted ensure the information flowed to the lowest levels."

As the eighth command chief, Benton's legacy will be her service during and after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. "I tease my predecessors that they all had a focus, the Year of the Employer, the Year of Diversity, etc.," she said. "My focus was the global war on terrorism."

Benton said she hopes she has done a good job of recognizing the outstanding job that Airmen have done during the war on terror. "I hope the enlisted corps knows how much we care about them and appreciate the many sacrifices and commitment they have shown to ensure the freedoms we have in this country," she said.

She has always been concerned about the junior enlisted people. "We have to be able to depend on the junior enlisted; they are the future of the Air National Guard," Benton said.

Family Program workshop and Youth Symposium held in New Mexico

By Michelle Bohlen
National Guard Bureau

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – This year's National Guard Bureau Family Program Workshop and Youth Symposium held in Albuquerque, N.M., Aug. 1-5, was a rousing success.

While the overarching purpose of the workshop was to provide training to volunteers, it also served as a leadership forum that allowed participants to share and develop new ideas relevant to the family program.

According to Fran Kraus, NGB volunteer coordinator, the training provided at the workshop was designed to address the needs of the states and territories. This year's event included multiple guest speakers, breakout assemblies on topics that included deployment, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, and starting and running an effective youth program. In addition, each state and territory had an opportunity to share and showcase its unique programs and materials.

The workshop allowed NGB leadership to address the states and territories on important issues affecting Soldiers, Airmen and their families. In an address to the general session, LTG H Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, emphasized how important employer and family support is to achieving the Guard's mission. He also announced the creation of an employer support position in each state and vowed support the two programs.

"What we are doing today is different than

"The responsibility of the ANG command chief is to be concerned about all issues affecting the 94,000 enlisted personnel," said Lt. Gen. Daniel James III, the Air Guard's director. "Valerie served this role well because she cares very much about each and every airman."

She also initiated the Performance Feedback Program for Airmen during her tenure. She feels this was her biggest accomplishment as command chief. "Before this program, an airman could have a 30-year career and never have a performance evaluation on their job," she said. "They had no idea how they were doing."

She credits the members of the Enlisted Field Advisory Team with helping her bring that program on board. "You can't do this job alone," she said. "We did this as a team."

Now, she will join another team with her distinguished predecessors as a retired command chief master sergeant of the Air National Guard.

"Valerie has done a great job. We are so proud of her and welcome her into our fraternity," said retired Command Chief Master Sgt. Richard Green.

Benton's successor is Chief Master Sgt. Richard Smith of the Ohio National Guard. "I proudly pass on to you the world's greatest enlisted force," she told Smith during an awards ceremony held in her honor.

Her parting words to Airmen were simple. Continue to be the best Airmen possible. To achieve this, she urged Airmen to accomplish their professional military education, maintain qualifications, and be prepared for any opportunities.



Benton

"Never lose sight of how important your duties are and be proud to serve as airman of the Air National Guard," she said.

Now that she is finished traveling and has had a fulfilling, 26-year-career in the Guard, she plans to enjoy life. "I am going to just relax and enjoy my family. I am a mother of three and a new grandma," she said proudly.

"But I will miss the people," she added. "You get tired of all the travel, but you never get tired of meeting the many great people you serve with."

"Chief Benton has contributed greatly to our organization," said James. "She will be missed by all."

what we are designed to do," Blum said.

"The Guard will have to shift from what we are designed to do to what we need to do." The directors of the Army and Air National Guard highlighted the importance of family programs and the pressing issues the Guard is currently facing.

"We cannot accomplish our mission without our volunteers," said Army National Guard Director, Lt. Gen. Roger C. Schultz.

Lt. Gen Daniel James III, director of the Air National Guard, spoke about the history of family programs and the importance of volunteerism to the Air National Guard.

"For 70 percent of our workforce, the Air National Guard is a second job, but a first passion," James said, pointing out that good family programs are essential to Guard readiness.

Both generals listened to concerns voiced by attendees, which included the brevity of the demobilization process, spouses not being able to attend mobilization briefings and the effectiveness of TriCare.

Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Thomas F. Hall, specifically addressed mobilization and benefits, the two hottest topics during the workshop. Hall said, in his opinion, when Guard members mobilize their benefits should match those of active-duty service members. He also explained that predictability is the key to making mobilization more manageable for members of the Guard and Reserve. Hall's office is examining ways to make the deployment process shorter, and would like deployments short-

ened from 17 months to 12 months.

Hall said he is focused on trying to make TriCare work for deployed Guardsmen and their families. "If a doctor accepts Medicare, then they should also accept TriCare," he said responding to questions about some medical providers not accepting the military's medical insurance provider.

The National Guard Youth Symposium was held in conjunction with the National Workshop for the third consecutive year. Fifty-nine youth delegates were chosen from the states and territories based on their leadership capabilities and their degree of participation in their state's youth programs.

The delegates worked in teams to identify how they could reach out to other National Guard youth and expand youth services in their areas. Delegates were provided with training aimed at honing their leadership, communication and life skills.

On the last day of the workshop, the delegates addressed the general session and presented their task plans, which included contributing to the design and contents of a quarterly National Guard Youth newsletter to be posted on www.guardfamilyyouth.org.

"The National Guard family has shown over the years that we are ready, reliable, and accessible," Baker said. "Without the support that each of you provides as volunteers, family members and leaders in the National Guard our service members would not be successful."

The 2005 NGB-FP Workshop and Youth Symposium will be held in Boston, Mass.

Colorado CERFP stands ready to defend against terrorism

By Tech. Sgt. Darin Overstreet

Colorado National Guard

DENVER, Colo. – The Colorado National Guard possesses a critical deployment-ready decontamination and first response team, known as the National Guard Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear and high-yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package team. It is commonly referred to as the CERFP.

Twelve of these task forces are being organized around the country. The mission of the teams falls under the Department of Homeland Security, but they are not intended to be war-fighting teams.

The task force consists of an enhanced medical team, decontamination/treatment team and, in the future, a search and extraction team with specialized search and rescue equipment.

The teams were originally scheduled to be operational in October, but the political conventions, upcoming elections, and other high target activities spurred leadership to shorten the suspense to Aug. 1, 2004.

"A few things have happened in the past 10-12 years [since Desert Storm] to help the United States realize that there is a growing threat of weapons of mass destruction attacks," said Lt. Col. Hans Kallam, Plans and Operations, Colorado National Guard Joint Force Headquarters.

The National Guard Civil Support Teams developed from this realization. The CSTs were designed to assist local law enforcement agencies in accessing the risks, hazards and threats associated with a WMD attack.

About five years ago, Colorado was the first of the original CSTs to be certified. It has since become one of the nation's leading performers in CST operations with civil authorities.

"9/11 illustrated that the terrorists were more capable than we thought of pulling off complex operations," stated Kallam. "If these levels of complex planning combine with WMD materials, significant threats will exist."

Military and civilian authorities reviewed the threat and determined if a significant event were to take place, the local law enforcement and civilian response teams would quickly become overwhelmed. "There will be a need greater than the local authorities can provide," Kallam said. "The military can come in and assist."

There are a few military teams trained to respond to such events, but most are located around the national capital area. The time required for these teams to respond to attacks in distant states would be too great to provide the necessary assistance.

Concern spurred the Guard in to action and discussions to resolve this problem began at the National Guard Bureau in Oct., 2003. LTG H Steven Blum, chief, National Guard Bureau, determined the governors needed to have a resource they could call upon in the event of a WMD attack.

The NGCERFP teams are that additional resource. These teams will provide a network of response teams across the country.

Training for Colorado's NGCERFP team ended July 30, ensuring that the team is ready to operate.

"This team fits in very well with the other teams that will respond to a terrorist attack involving WMDs," said Maj. Paul Shingledecker, the teams chief medical officer. "Our job is to go in and help with decontamination and provide immediate medical attention and take the injured to local care facilities."

During the training, Col. Bruce Holloman, commander, Colorado NGCERFP Team said, "we have people from about 16 different Colorado National Guard units representing both the Army and Air National Guard. They have



Photo by Staff Sgt. Cheresa Theiral

A woman gets her face washed to flush out any chemicals that may have gotten into her eyes during simulated chemical attack training for members of Colorado's CERFP Team.

come together as a team that has far exceeded expectations.

"The success of this team is critical. Success means we are another deterrent to those who would harm American citizens," explained Holloman. "Likewise, our ability to save lives and help our fellow citizens will be of great benefit in times of tragedy."

The team members make Holloman proud. "These peo-

ple are outstanding citizens. They've all realized the seriousness of the mission and volunteered to be a part of it."

"Furthermore, they understand that any deployment will be for a very grave circumstance and they are still very willing and able to commit themselves to the cause," Holloman said.

"Not only do I appreciate the efforts of the team, but also we as a community should appreciate their efforts."

Milestone



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Paul Charron

FROM PAGE 1

Alaska

with HH-60G Pavehawk helicopters and HC-130N rescue tankers.

More than 2,200 Airmen and officers are assigned to Alaska Air National Guard units in addition to those of the 176th Wing at Kulis ANG Base.

The Alaska Air National Guard is also home for the 168th Air Refueling Wing at Eielson AFB with KC-135R Stratotankers; the Regional Air Operations Center and 206th Combat Communications Squadron at Elmendorf AFB; the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center and Joint Forces

Headquarters – Air at Camp Denali, and Space Surveillance operations at Clear Air Force Station.

The last major accident for the Alaska Air National Guard occurred Dec. 15, 1965.

"That's nearly 40 years without a crash," Ramsay said.

Members of the Alaska Air National Guard celebrate a milestone in the face of extraordinary deployments and mission requirements. Alaska Air Guard members have deployed to every theater of military operations for more than 30 of the nearly 40 years they've been working toward this latest safety achievement.

Procedures for R&R reimbursement claims detailed

(Editor's note: The following is a detailed list of instructions for those who need to file retroactive R&R reimbursement claims.)

1. General. Payment of onward travel airline costs for R&R Leave Program participants was approved Dec. 19, 2003. Authorization was granted Jun. 21 2004 to implement retroactive reimbursement for onward movement airline travel.

a. Eligible personnel are military members who participated in the USCENTCOM R&R Leave Program during the period Sept. 25 - Dec. 18, 2003 whose airline tickets from the APOD to their final leave destination were paid for by the R&R participants themselves, family members, or other private individuals.

b. To claim retroactive reimbursement, eligible personnel must submit documentation

as indicated below. All R&R Leave participants are reminded to maintain copies of documents associated with R&R Leave for future actions that may require such documentation.

2. Required Documentation.

a. Participants must present the following documents. The claims process will be much smoother if all substantiating documents are submitted.

(1) DD Form 1351-2, Travel Voucher, must be submitted to file a claim for reimbursement. Participants can download the form from the publications and forms website link on AKO or from the Defense Finance and Accounting System (DFAS) Web site (www.dfas.mil/money/travel/travelforms.htm).

(2) Copy of leave documentation containing fund cite (Army: DA Form 31 or R&R leave order; USAF: AF Form 988; USMC: NAVMC3)

(3) Airline ticket receipt (that shows who paid for ticket).

(4) A statement certifying travel. The statement must contain name, SSN, dates of travel, airline used, destination airport, and cost of ticket. Check the example statement and a blank statement form on the Web site..

b. If available, submit a copy of the airline ticket and/or travel itinerary. Inclusion of these documents may speed processing of your claim.

3. Lost Documentation.

a. Personnel who no longer have airline ticket receipts must contact the airline flown for replacement receipts. If the airline is

unable to assist, participants must contact Al-Shamel, the ticket agent within the CENTCOM theater of operations, to obtain copies of receipts.

To contact Al-Shamel, call 011-965-433-8594; send e-mail to: rleave@alshamel.com; or send written requests to the following address: Shuhada Str. Cement House Bldg; Sharq - Kuwait

b. For other missing documentation, contact DFAS at the following address, or at the e-mail address in para 4 below.

4. **Where to submit** your claim: DFAS-IN; Contingency Travel Operations; Department 3900; ATTN: R&R Leave; 8899 East 56th Street; Indianapolis, IN 46249-3900

All personnel should allow at least 4 weeks for their claim to be processed.

Quilts bring warmth to families

By Staff Sgt. Cheryl Hackley

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – Jessica Porter, 20, of Hudson, Fla., was quilting and watching the news on the war with a friend in May 2003. The two, like many others across the country, wanted to do something to support the troops. Together, they decided to make a quilt for each of the families of troops who lost their lives while serving their county. Although the friend moved away before the first quilt was mailed out, their idea stuck with Jessica, and she carried it through.

Jessica, a student at Pasco Hernandez Community College, didn't realize how big Operation Homefront Quilts would become. No one could have predicted how many lives would be lost, and how many quilts would be needed.

Each quilt can take up to 10 hours to make on a machine, longer if all done by hand.

To date, over 750 40-inch- by 60-inch quilts have been made and sent. Over 300 are still needed. Out of the 700, nearly 50 quilts have been made for members of the National Guard. Yet, Jessica is determined to finish what she started.

"How could someone say no to the next family?" asked Joanne Porter, Jessica's mother.

Since May, the operation has grown far beyond the Porter home.

Once word got around about the quilts through interviews and ads in quilting magazines, people from around the world wanted to help.

"Our local quilt group, West Pasco Quilt Guild, has sewn a lot," said Jessica. But many supporters are unknown to the Porter family.

"Many people want to show their support of the troops, but there aren't enough avenues to do so," said Joanne.

Money for postage and mailing supplies, quilt-tops, fabric and more arrive daily at the Porter's residence.

Supplies have even come in from Guam and Korea. Perhaps one of the most generous donations came from a quilting company. The Porters were loaned a \$16,000 quilting machine. The company told Jessica to use the equipment for as long as she needed it.

"Jessica has quilted probably around 150 quilt tops so far on it, and we would have never gotten this far without it," said Joanne.

"Making the quilts and mailing them out has been a full-time job for my mom and me," said Jessica.

"It is time well spent," said Joanne, who had a small sewing business before starting this operation.

Quilting supplies and packages are spread throughout their home, taking up a lot of space.

"It's a small inconvenience compared to the sacrifices troops make," said Joanne. "My husband has been very understanding."

Special thought is put into each quilt, and none of them are the same.

"We don't just pick up fabric and make one," she said.

If they find information on the news or Internet about the deceased Airman, Marine or Soldier, they tailor the quilt and make it more personal.

"If the troop had a baby, then we make it a patriotic baby quilt," said Jessica.

"In remembrance and gratitude" with a name, rank and year is also embroidered on each lap-sized quilt. In addition, a hand-written note from the Porters is included with each quilt showing their appreciation for the sacrifices that the deceased troop has made for freedom.

The Porters work base-by-base and post-to-post to find the names of families who lost a loved one in the war on terror. Usually a Family Support Center will receive the quilts, and pass them on to the families.

"It takes a lot of calling around," said Joanne. But eventually they contact someone about getting a quilt to the family member.

Recently, the Porter's were granted next-of-kin releases



Submitted photo

This is just one of the 750-plus quilts the Porters have made.

through the Army, and are now able to send the quilts directly to the family.

"Jessica is proof one person can make a difference," said Joanne.

Thanks to her skill and determination, a little warmth is brought home to the family members of troops who made the ultimate sacrifice to support their country.

For more info: <http://westpascoquilters.org/ohfq.htm>.

Six Guardsmen win Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Awards

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – Six Army National Guard captains who have demonstrated the qualities of "Duty, Honor, Country" while serving at home and in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan were presented the U.S. Army's 17th annual Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Awards at the Pentagon on May 26.

They were among 25 junior grade officers from the Active, Guard and Reserve components that the Army honored this year for demonstrating the leadership and loyalty that the famous American general believed in, explained Lt. Col. Donna Alberto.

The six Guard officers were recognized for their achievements during a reception led by Brig. Gen. Julia Cleckley at the Army National Guard's Readiness Center in Arlington, Va., on the evening of

May 25. "This award is not just for what you have done but for what you are going to do," Cleckley told them.

Pictured from left are: Capt. Christine Hoffman, commander, 1058th Transportation Company, Massachusetts; Capt. Derek Adams, commander, B Battery, 1st Battalion, 194th Field Artillery, Iowa; Capt. Michael Izzo, commander, B Battery, 1st Battalion, 203rd Air Defense Artillery, Alabama; Capt. Lane Packwood, commander, Headquarters-Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 148th Field Artillery, Idaho; Capt. Craig Strong, deputy state surgeon and commander, 313th Medical Company, Nebraska; and Capt. Scott Cadieux, Company H, 2nd Battalion, 124th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), Vermont.



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

Latin American community honors Guardsmen

By Staff Sgt. Cheryl Hackley
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – Recently the League of United Latin American Citizens held their 75th annual convention in San Antonio, Texas, and recognized two members of the National Guard during an Armed Forces Breakfast.



Herrera

Guard, were each awarded the League of United Latin American Citizens Excellence in Military Service Award.

De La O, a Guardsman since 1977, earned the award after his unit nominated him for military excellence in several overseas deployments since October 2001 including serving at duty stations in Djibouti, El Salvador, Iraq, Peru and Uzbekistan.

At his last duty station in Iraq, he served as a heavy weapons gunner as well as performed convoy protection and airport security. In these roles, De La O experienced first hand the high costs of war. "I remember lots of casualties and a few deaths," he said solemnly.

Herrera also served in Iraq supporting the war on terror. As a military police specialist, she participated in many security details. In her last mission, Herrera was the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon gunner in the lead HUMVEE of a convoy bringing detainees to Abu Ghraib Prison. The convoy was attacked and although Herrera was shot twice in her right arm by small arms fire, she continued returning fire until the vehicles were driven to safety. Herrera nearly lost her arm and has undergone several surgeries, skin grafts and physical therapy and doctors believe she will never have full use of it again. For her injuries, Herrera received a Purple Heart and is now medically retired from the ARNG.

"She is the bravest person I have ever witnessed," remarked her platoon leader following the attack.

Both of these individuals were recognized not only as members of the armed forces, but as Hispanics in the United States. LULAC has been working for 75 years to make the Hispanic population a strong force in America.

During the convention, which was held July 6-11, activities included electing organization leaders and discussing issues and policies. There were many other award breakfast/luncheons to recognize Hispanic law enforcement officers, Hispanic youth and women. College fairs, career fairs and exhibits were also at the convention.

This year marked the first time Hispanics in the military were recognized at the convention in LULAC's 75-year history. There were a total of 11 military excellence awardees, including a Green Beret, Sgt. 1st Class Alfredo Diaz, who was an Arizona Army



Tech. Sgt. Ernest De La O, a heavy weapons gunner in the Texas Air National Guard, proudly displays the American Flag while serving in Iraq. Both he and Sgt. Mary Herrera were awarded the League of United Latin American Citizens Excellence in Military Service Award this year.

National Guardsman before joining Active Duty Army.

"The awards were presented to men and women who have distinguished themselves in the war on terrorism, whose activities best support the ideals of duty, honor, country, or who best epitomize the core values and the citizen-warrior attributes of their military service," said a LULAC official.

Herrera attended the July 8 event with her mother, Maria Herrera, and Arizona Command Sgt. Maj. Karen Craig. She was presented with the award from Hector Flores, LULAC national president and Charles Abell, principal deputy under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

De La O, who was unable to attend the convention, will be presented with his award from his state senior leadership.

Award selecting officials work in the Equal Opportunities and Civil Rights office at National Guard Bureau. They work with a variety of minority programs and were eager to be involved with LULAC. "We are very

proud of this award," said Phyllis Brantley, national program manager. "We have a lot of outstanding individuals deserving of it."

The National Guard recipients will also receive the Excellence in Equal Opportunity Coin from Felton Page, director of NGB office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights. Both of these individuals represent the National Guard in the highest capacity. It's easy to see why these individuals received the award as their leadership couldn't say enough good things about them.

"The LULAC award is a huge honor and Tech. Sgt. De La O deserves it," said Lt. Col. Scott Elliot. "He is one of the best non-commissioned officers to have ever worked for me."

"Sgt. Herrera is a true example of the modern citizen-Soldier," said Craig. "She is motivated, loyal, physically and mentally capable, disciplined, proficient, courageous and always professional."

(Editor's note: Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada, Texas National Guard, contributed to this story.)

FROM PAGE 1

WMD

at the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health. That background has gone hand-in-hand with his career as an Army Guard medical officer with an interest in weapons of mass destruction.

These, he explained, are some of the myths: -- Everyone who is exposed to chemical, biological or radiological agent is going to die. -- Terrorists are equally capable of employing all types of weapons of mass destruction. -- There is no treatment for the agents that terrorists are most likely to use. -- That there is nothing that the authorities can do to protect the American public.

Alexander counters these myths with facts and anecdotes. To wit:

A radiological bomb, a "dirty bomb," may not be as devastating as people fear, even though Alexander explained that terrorists have never exploded such a device. He bases that on the effects of a 1987 radiological incident in Goiania, Brazil, when workers removed radioactive cesium-137 material from a radiotherapy unit in an abandoned building. Five people died and 150 were injured.

More than 200 people were exposed to the radioactive material, Alexander explained, and some 110,000 had to be screened. Of the first 60,000, 5,000 claimed to have symptoms of radiation poisoning. It was determined, however, that none of them had been exposed. "It was mass hysteria," Alexander said.

-- A dirty bomb kills a relatively few people with the initial blast of a conventional explosive and then discharges its radiological matter into the targeted population. A nuclear device kills many people with the initial eruption and then threatens many more with its deadly radioactive fallout.

Terrorists, however, are far more likely to use a dirty bomb because it is easier to build than a sophisticated nuclear device, Alexander explained. The radiological components are easier to obtain.

-- There are medical treatments for many of the biological agents, and many of them do not survive for long in the open air.

A medical drug called Prussian blue was used to treat people with radiation poisoning in Brazil, Alexander related, and potassium

iodine can protect the thyroid from the radioactive iodine discharged by a nuclear device.

"It is not hopeless just because people become casualties of a dirty bomb or a nuclear device," he said. "What they have to do is seek medical attention."

Most of the biological agents - such as small pox, pneumonic plague, Ebola and cholera - would be most effectively dispersed in aerosol form.

However, they require a moist environment to survive, and they die fairly quickly in the open air. Anthrax does form spores, or seeds, which can last for hundreds of years, but those spores would have to be directly placed in an open wound or inhaled in order to do damage. Those factors minimize that risk, Alexander explained.

-- And, yes, there is a lot that authorities can do, and are doing, to protect their people, Alexander said. Government officials can develop risk communications plans and campaigns to inform people about the actual dangers and the myths of these agents.

People who operate chemical plants can inform the public about the natures of the chemicals being manufactured and what can be done in case they are released.

Alexander knows it is hard to convince people faced with the fear of dying that they can be helped. He also knows that an educated population is less likely to become a hysterical mob.

"We have to educate the people about how they might be exposed and that they can get help; that the situation would not be hopeless," Alexander said.

"We are developing more sophisticated methods of medical surveillance so we can determine patterns to make it easier to diagnose the effects and the impact of biological agents," he added.

The most important thing, Alexander would remind the resilient American people, is to remain vigilant and not fall victim to a hopeless attitude.

"We can't succumb to the coercion of terrorism," he said. "We have to go on living, to carry on the best way we can."

Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear and Explosive events |

Agent	What is it?	Symptoms	Treatment
Cyanide	Cyanide is a colorless gas such as hydrogen cyanide (HCN) and cyanogen chloride (CNCl) and is described as smelling like bitter almonds.	Small amounts can cause: nausea, vomiting, rapid breathing, restlessness, dizziness, weakness, headache, rapid heart rate. Larger amounts can cause: convulsions, low blood pressure, loss of consciousness and respiratory failure.	Remove clothing and wash with soap and water. Any clothing that must be pulled over the head should be cut off the body. Cyanide poisoning can be treated with antidotes. Seek medical treatment as soon as possible.
Mustard	Mustard gas, or sulfur mustard, is a blistering agent which causes blistering of skin and mucous membranes and can smell like onions, garlic, or have no odor at all.	Skin: redness, itching or yellowish blisters. Eyes: may become painful, irritated and swollen, runny or bloody nose, sneezing, shortness of breath, cough, diarrhea, fever, nausea, vomiting.	There is no antidote for sulfur mustard. Leave the area where the gas was released. Sulfur mustard is heavier than air and will stay closer to the ground.
Sarin	Nerve Agent: soman, tabun and VX are similar to pesticides called organophosphates and are extremely toxic and can be odorless and tasteless.	Painful and watery eyes, runny nose, pinpoint pupils, drooling and excessive perspiration, cough, diarrhea, increased urination, confusion, drowsiness, weakness, headache, nausea, vomiting, slow or fast heart rate.	There are antidotes available but they must be used within minutes. Leave the area where the nerve agent was released. Fresh air is important in decreasing the possibility of death. These nerve agents are heavier than air.
Anthrax	The three types of Anthrax are skin (cutaneous), lungs (inhalation), and digestive (gastrointestinal).	Inhalation: the first symptoms resemble cold or flu symptoms. Gastrointestinal: nausea, loss of appetite, bloody diarrhea, fever, and stomach pain.	Anthrax can be treated with antibiotics. If the victim knows they have been exposed. Penicillin combined with an anthrax vaccine can be used to prevent infection.
Botulism	Botulism is a muscle-paralyzing disease caused by a bacterium.	Double or blurred vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, dry mouth, and muscle weakness throughout the entire body.	There is an antidote for botulism. Seek medical treatment immediately.
Ricin	Ricin is a poison made from the waste of processed castor beans, which are used to make castor oil.	Chest tightness, cough, nausea, fever, shortness of breath, excessive perspiration, discoloring of skin (blue), vomiting and diarrhea that may be bloody, dehydration, and in some cases seizures, hallucinations, and bloody urine.	There is no antidote for ricin but the victim can be treated to alleviate the symptoms.
Radiological Dispersal Devices (RDD)	An RDD is an explosive or non explosive device, also called a "dirty bomb", which is used to spread radioactive material.	Loss of hair and appetite, increasing pale complexion, sore throat, weakness, diarrhea, bruising, and bleeding gums.	RDDs usually affect small areas, and the best thing to do is leave the contaminated area and seek medical attention immediately.
Nuclear detonations	Nuclear detonations result in injuries from blast, thermal, and radiation injuries. Characteristics of blast effects are hurricane-like winds, static overpressure that crushes hollow objects.	Thermal radiation is intense heat and light, causing permanent or temporary blindness and fires. Ionizing radiation is produced by a nuclear detonation emitting gamma and neutron radiation.	Victims should seek decontamination and shelter for at least 48 hours for the radioactivity to weaken.

(Editor's note: Information compiled from various government Web sites.)

Mountaineer Guardsmen tunnel inside

By Tech. Sgt. Gary Hicks

National Guard Bureau

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia National Guard may be small in numbers, but it packs a powerful punch in defending the homeland against terrorism.

The Mountain State with its 6,000-plus Guard members is also home to the 35th Civil Support Team, one of the country's top anti-terrorist training facilities and a newly formed CERFP, which stands for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear or High Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package. When combined, these highly specialized units provide the state, and surrounding area, with a great deal of protection and responsiveness for countering terrorism.

The rapid-deploying civil support team is one of the first assets to be called upon in the event of a suspected terrorist attack. The 22-member team is capable of a wide range of support to the incident commander that cannot be found elsewhere.

"The primary purpose of the CST is to support the incident commander in a suspected or actual weapon of mass destruction incident by identifying the agent and assessing the situation," said Lt. Col. Michael Kitts, commander of the 35th CST. "We can then advise the incident commander of the proper response measures and facilitate bringing in additional forces for the incident response, be it government or military agencies."

The knowledge and capabilities of a CST is a valuable tool in helping first responders minimize the impact on the civilian populace by assisting with follow-on emergency and military support.

"The total knowledge base and everything that the CST can do, brings assets to West Virginia that we never had before," said Maj. Gen Allen Tackett, West Virginia's adjutant general. "Not only do they have those assets, they are helping train other first responders throughout the state, which in turn prepares West Virginia to be totally ready and prepared if an incident would take place."

The 35th CST takes every opportunity to train with civilian agencies to increase its readiness for future emergencies.

"It's very important for us to work with our counterparts on the first responder and emergency management side," Kitts said. "It's better to hone our skills together and know each others capabilities and limitations while building teamwork. Here in West Virginia, our CST has worked with most of the major state and city agencies."

While the Mountain State might seem like an unlikely place to have a fully certified and functional team of experts in weapons of



Photos by Staff Sgt. Henomin

A 35th CST member evaluates a fallen firefighter during a training exercise inside the Memorial Tunnel.

mass destruction, Tackett knows full well why his state was called upon to provide the needed forces.

"There are different chemicals and products that are made in this [Kanawha] valley that have a detrimental impact on national defense," Tackett said, referring to major chemical producers such as 3M and Dow Chemical.. "West Virginia is also a perfect

"The CERFP is a follow-on team composed of five cells: command and control, security, medical, extraction, and decontamination. We augment the CST's extraction, decon and medical services. Our cells are much larger than theirs, so we can operate for a much longer duration."

— Lt. Col. Larry Wheeler

place to have a CST due to its close proximity to Washington, D.C. With all of the C-130s we have in our state, we can be almost anywhere - real quick."

In addition to their military-specific training, most members of Kitts' team have well over 1,000 hours of specialized training in weapons of mass destruction and the mission of the CST.

"I'm sure I'm like any other TAG out there. I like to brag on my CST because I think we probably have one of the best in the nation," Tackett said. "They are absolutely high-speed when it comes to being able to do their job."

In the case of an actual event, West Virginia's CERFP is ready to respond and be

on site within six hours to assist the CST in its emergency operations.

"The CERFP is a follow-on team composed of five cells: command and control, security, medical, extraction and decontamination," said Lt. Col. Larry Wheeler, one of the four members of the command and control cell for West Virginia's CERFP. "We augment the CST's extraction, decon and medical services. Our cells are much larger than theirs, so we can operate for a much longer duration."

A CERFP typically consists of an enhanced division medical company with a 150-person per hour decontamination and treatment capability, and an enhanced engineer company with specialized search and rescue equipment. These capabilities give incident commanders responding to biological, radiological, nuclear, or high yield explosive incidents the ability to reduce affects of the incident and increase the survival rate of victims.

"These problems we face are so immense and the scope is so large, that no single agency has all the solutions and all of the equipment," said Col. Bill Aldridge, another member of the CERFP's command structure. "The only way the country can increase its ability to respond and be prepared for homeland security is joint training."

Like the 35th CST, the 124-member CERFP takes every opportunity it can to train with other agencies from around the state, as well as, across the nation. One of the most valuable training resources available to these teams is the West Virginia



CST personnel evacuate a fireman after accessing a mock WMD event.

side mountain for homeland defense

Memorial Tunnel project, home to The Center for National Response.

The training site, located near Standard, W.V., is a 2,800-foot long highway tunnel with more than 79,000 square feet of realistic training space. Constructed in 1953, it was part of the West Virginia Turnpike until 1987.

In 1998, Tackett saw great potential in the tunnel as a training center long before the nation was rocked by the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

"Everyone probably remembers the Sarin gas attack in Japan, which occurred in a Japanese subway," Tackett said. "And there aren't too many tunnels or underground structures across this nation that are available to train underground. It's a lot different to be underground when an event takes place than it is when it takes place on the surface. The atmosphere and conditions are much more strenuous in a tunnel environment."

In May 2000 his vision became a reality when the five-phase project began to convert the Memorial Tunnel into The Center for National Response -- an exercise facility for weapons of mass destruction consequence management and counterterrorism.

"One of the first venues we made was a subway system that resembled the subway attack in Japan," Tackett explained. "Then we put together a rubble scene that mirrored the first attack on the World Trade Center. After that we put together a variety of scenarios with the tunnel that has become a test bed for the equipment the CST and first responders across America are utilizing."

Tackett compares the Memorial Tunnel to that of the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, Calif., for brigades.



CST personnel prepare to cleanse a victim at the decontamination point located at the entry to the Memorial Tunnel during the training exercise. The tunnel is a very important and realistic training tool in preparing National Guardsmen and first responders for possible terrorist attacks.

"You fight against an enemy in a scenario-driven exercise that's probably tougher than any enemy that you will ever face on a bat-

tlefield," Tackett said. "We put together exercises that are probably much tougher than first responders are going have to

answer to in civilian life. It builds confidence in their ability to do their jobs."

With the wide variety of requirements response teams must meet, the Center for National Response is the ideal multipurpose facility to meet most of those requirements. Once an organization decides to utilize the facility, a series of planning conferences are scheduled to determine requirements and exercise objectives. The staff then develops, coordinates, and facilitates a unique exercise for the organization or helps the organization conduct its own training.

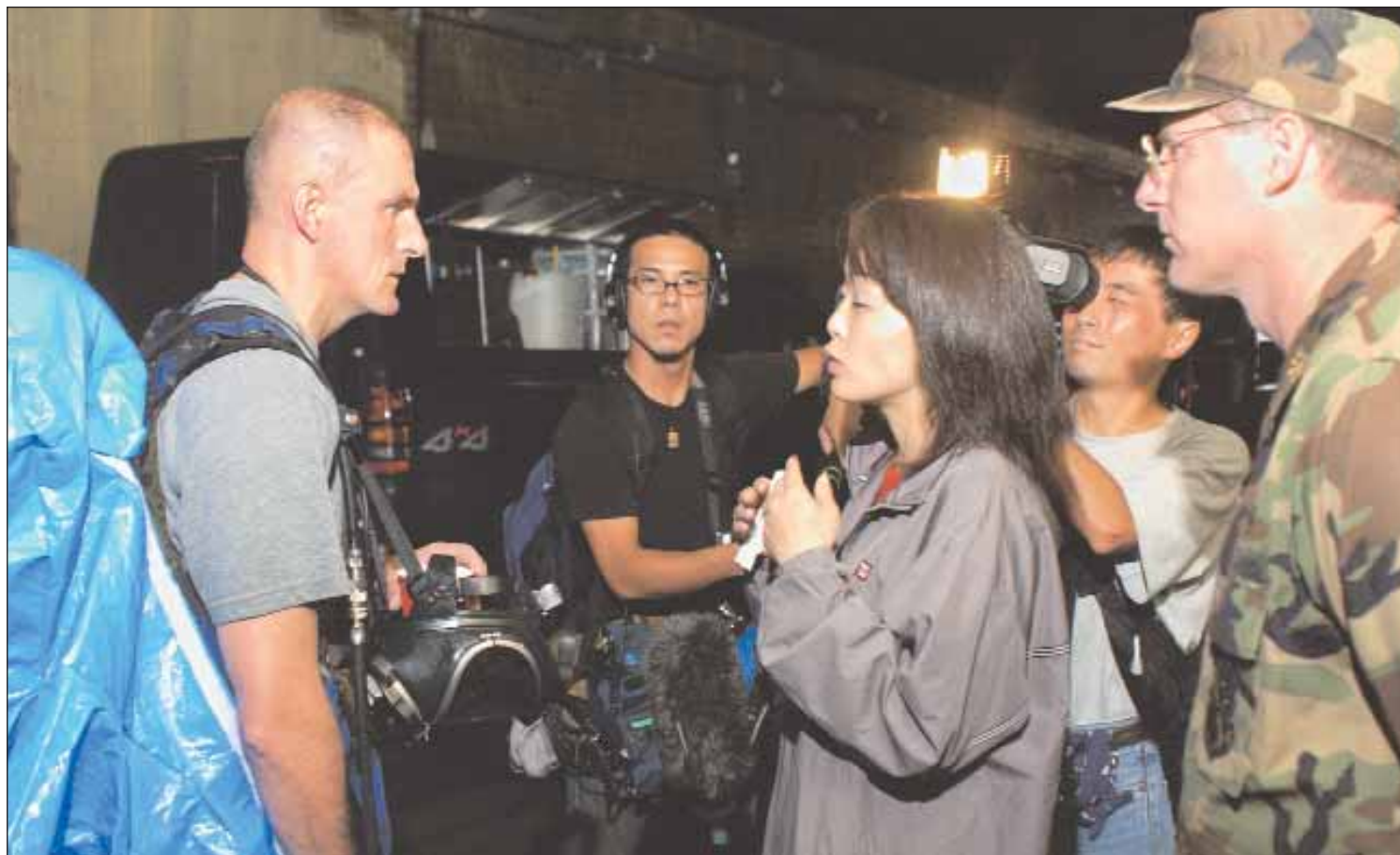
"This is the best kind of training that first responders can have to prepare themselves for a real event," Tackett said.

As home to the national training center for homeland defense, West Virginia will continue to play a vital role in the fight against terrorism well into the future.

"I think West Virginia will play a very important role in homeland defense for years and years to come," Tackett said. "We'll be the people to set the standards and in turn prepare America's first responders, both military and civilian, on how to deal with future threats and attacks by terrorists."

To date, more than 17,000 people have been trained at the center.

For more information about the tunnel and the CNR, visit their Web site at www.centerfornationalresponse.com.



While all CST team members must be experts in WMD threats, they must also be prepared to talk to the media. During a recent training exercise, some members were interviewed by a visiting Japanese film crew.

Guard support programs net \$11,000 in Newman's Own grants

By Staff Sgt. Cheryl Hackley

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – Three National Guard-affiliated programs received Newman's Own grants of up to \$4,000 Aug. 24 at the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes during a ceremony hosted by Charles S. Abell, principle deputy under secretary of defense for Personnel and Readiness.

In all, 64 organizations were vying for the \$50,000 in grants awarded to 16 organizations during the fifth annual Newman's Own Awards.

"Every entrant was a winner," said Dave Smith, vice president of the Military Times Media Group and a guest speaker at the awards ceremony. "But these 16 were the best of the best."

Newman's Own is a line of products including salad dressing and lemonade owned by screen legend and Navy veteran Paul Newman. The company has grossed \$150 million in profit since 1982, all of which has been given to charity.

The Connecticut National Guard's family program Handy Man Hotline Materials and the Missouri National Guard Wonderland Foundation's Camp Wonderland were each awarded \$4,000 grants. The California National Guard's affiliated nonprofit organization Operation Gratitude received a \$3,000 grant.

Top honors went to the Angels of Mercy, a program run by American Legion Auxiliary Unit 270 that supports wounded Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom service members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Newman's Own, Fisher House Foundation and the Military Times Media Group jointly sponsor the program that awards grants to

programs supporting military members and their families.

The Fisher House organization provides homes to family members visiting injured Soldiers at military hospitals, and the Military Times publishes newspapers such as Army Times and Air Force Times. Two representatives from each sponsor judged the entries.

"Newman's Own is proud to be a sponsor and recognize programs that enhance the quality of life for the military community," said Tom Indoe, chief operations officer of Newman's Own.

Entrants were encouraged to apply for the grants with a simple challenge: present an innovative plan to improve the quality of life for your military community and receive funding to carry out the plans, said Fisher House spokesman Jim Weiskopf.

"I am always impressed and amazed by all the innovative and dedicated things you do," said Abell. "When you have such neat ideas, I have to ask, 'Why didn't I think of that?'"

The National Guard programs' "neat ideas" were diverse. Handy Man Hotline Materials was organized in 2003 to provide everyday household diagnostic problems and repairs to homes of Connecticut National Guard family members of deployed Soldiers and Airmen.

The grant money Handy Man received will go toward opening an account at a local home improvement store to purchase supplies and tools needed for household repairs.

Missouri's Camp Wonderland focuses on providing an annual weeklong summer camp for physically and mentally challenged family members of Missouri Guard members, but welcomes all special needs individuals over age 8. The volunteers are Guard mem-



Operation Gratitude photo

Soldiers in Iraq eagerly open packages containing goodies and letters of support sent to them from Operation Gratitude. The organization was one of 16 military support programs to receive a Newman's Own grant to help alleviate the costs of running the all volunteer program.

bers, current and retired, and their families.

Camp Wonderland costs about \$40,000 for 95 special needs campers for one week. The grant money was needed because most of the funding Wonderland was receiving from the state has been cut off.

Operation Gratitude sends care packages and letters of support overseas to service members with a focus on individuals who are not receiving mail. This California Guard affiliated program has sent over 21,000 packages through the all-volunteer organization.

Packages can cost up to \$15 each and the grant money will help cover some of the

shipping costs.

Each entrant had to be a program approved by an installation commander, and the National Guard's commitment was crucial to their success.

"If it weren't for the National Guard's involvement, our organization wouldn't be anywhere near what it is today," said Carolyn Blashek, Operation Gratitude founder.

All of these organizations dedicate countless hours and energy to helping service members and their families. "These programs show a commitment to our service men and women and their families," said Abell. "When we focus on that, we are all in the right place."

National Guard buffers training areas from suburban sprawl

By Rick Breitenfeldt

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – The National Guard is no stranger to being first.

For 367 years, the Guard has been an essential, reliable, ready and accessible force -- and under a new federal program unveiled earlier this year that allows Department of Defense agencies to enter into partnerships for the purchase or interest in property surrounding military training lands, the National Guard will again lead the way.

In order to limit the effects of urban and suburban sprawl, the Army has developed a plan to "buffer" training lands from the effects of this encroachment, and to maintain their ability to use and access the current training ranges within the installation boundary.

Military training lands that were once located in remote locations are quickly being threatened by a number of outside factors which, according to Raymond F. Dubois, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment, can hurt military readiness.

"Encroachment has a direct impact on our

ability to access these ranges and to have realistic training," said Dubois at a recent ceremony honoring the Defense Departments award winning environmental programs.

"While we do try to train as we would fight," said Dubois, "the brutal truth is that we end up fighting as we train."

The Army Compatible Use Buffer program allows for the use of Federal funds to enter into partnership agreements with county, state or municipal governments as well as non-profit organizations for the partner to purchase tracts of land or easements on lands that surround the installations

Many of the 108 Army National Guard training sites would benefit from this program.

The Florida Army National Guard was the first installation to use the program within the Department of Defense, when Florida Gov. Jeb Bush decided to purchase more than 8,500 acres around Camp Blanding to create a buffer around the 73,000 acre installation.

According to Jon Myatt, a spokesperson for the Florida Department of Military Affairs,

"We're working with surrounding counties, cities and townships to prevent encroachment from changes in land use that are incompatible with Camp Ripley's mission."

– Marty Skoglund

preserving the resources and the wild land that surround Camp Blanding is critical to training for the Guard's mission of the security and defense of the Homeland - both at home and abroad.

The area around Camp Blanding is also a thriving habitat for more than 60 rare species, including the Florida scrub jay, Eastern indigo snake, bald eagle and the red cockaded woodpecker.

The Minnesota Army National Guard has also been meeting with planning and zoning officials in the counties surrounding Camp Ripley and recently implemented an ACUB partnership there.

With a new four-lane state highway from the Twin Cities that parallels the Mississippi River to its east, the growth potential adja-

cent to Camp Ripley is a reality, said Marty Skoglund, Camp Ripley's Environmental programs manager.

"We're working with surrounding counties, cities and townships to prevent encroachment from changes in land use that are incompatible with Camp Ripley's mission," said Skoglund.

According to Alisa Dickson at the Army National Guard's environmental programs division, an ACUB program can benefit both the military and the surrounding communities.

The Guard can continue to train to Army standards and surrounding communities can protect environmentally important ecosystems at the same time enhance public access to recreational areas, said Dickson.

Missouri's CERFP ready to answer the call

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – On a rain-chilled Saturday morning in late July, 68 members of the Missouri National Guard demonstrated they are ready to take the next step to help fight the global war against terrorism.

They passed, with flying colors, an Army evaluation that determined their ability to provide emergency medical care and to decontaminate victims of a toxic chemical agent delivered by a weapon of mass destruction – the kind that Homeland Security and Defense officials fear could be used on American soil.

They did that two months earlier than originally scheduled, by Aug. 1 instead of Oct. 1, because officials believe that terrorists are plotting another catastrophic event in this country during the next few months – perhaps to disrupt the November presidential election.

The new team of Army and Air National Guard men and women demonstrated in a small field beside the Cole County Fairgrounds that they are ready to take on the National Guard's new mission of caring for a lot of people in short order.

"Everything here went great. These guys actually surprised me. They surprised everyone on my line," said Maj. Rich Ward, chief of the 5th Army's nine-member team that evaluated the morning exercise. "It won't take me too long to tell you how good you did," Ward told Lt. Col. William Johnson, commander of the Missouri Guard team.

The 52 Army Guard soldiers and 16 Air Guard medical people belong to Missouri's new CERFP. That is short for a mouthful of a title. The C stands for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear or High Yield Explosive and ERFP means Enhanced Response Force Package.

In short, a CERFP is a National Guard team trained to help local, state or federal authorities locate, care for and clean up casualties should terrorists attack a part of the country, most likely a city, with a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or other high-explosive weapon.

The teams will have at least 104 people when fully staffed and will include an engineer element equipped to locate and extract victims from the rubble of buildings and from vehicles. Johnson anticipated that the engineer unit would be added to the Missouri team next year.

Twelve state teams have been formed since last September - one for each of the 10 Federal Emergency Management Agency regions plus two more.

They have been developed, with existing resources, around the Guard's WMD civil support teams in California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington state and West Virginia.

The last two weeks in July and the first week in August is crunch time – when 10 of the teams are being evaluated for three days each by teams from the 1st and 5th

Armies. The teams in Hawaii and Washington will be evaluated later. But even those teams can be pressed into action should they be needed, said National Guard Bureau spokesperson Lt. Col. Kate McHenry, because "there is no federal certification process



A CST member cleans her protective mask.



Photos by Bob Haskell

Members of the Missouri National Guard's new CERFP spray a "victim" of a toxic chemical attack during an Army evaluation of the team's ability to deal with a weapon of mass destruction near Jefferson City on July 24.

here. The adjutants general validate the CERFPs capability within their own states based upon their Army evaluation assessment."

Still, all of the teams have to show the Army they know their stuff, and the Missouri team more than rose to that challenge on July's final Saturday.

"A lot of hoops? We had to jump through one giant hoop to get ready for this evaluation two months early," said Johnson who is getting to be an old hand in homeland defense. He organized Missouri's 22-member civil support team that had nearly two years to be trained and certified, from 1999-2001.

"We found out about the accelerated schedule for the CERFP in early July," Johnson added. "A lot of people called off their vacations and made a lot of sacrifices to make this happen."

The Missouri University Fire and Rescue Training Institute and emergency responders from Cole County and other places also helped to prepare the team at the Ike Skelton Training Site, Missouri's National Guard joint headquarters, Johnson said.

The 16 Air Guard medical people - physicians, dentists, nurses, and technicians - joined the Army Guard decon and security Soldiers to fill out the team the day before the evaluation.

"The Air Force has a long tradition in emergency medical care. We're all traditional Guard people, but we bring a lot of years of experience into a situation like this," said Col. John Owen, the medical team chief who is also a family practice physician. "This speaks highly of these people's commitment, to come out on a summer weekend."

This was the exercise scenario on that summer Saturday. A crop duster plane had sprayed a highly toxic chemical agent over 67,000 people at a county fair and had crashed into the crowd during its second pass. About 45,000 people ran from the area before the local mayor ordered everyone else locked down. Besides being covered with the spray, people were trampled while trying to get away or killed or injured from the plane crash. The incident commander called for the CERFP to help triage, care for and decontaminate the casualties.

In real time, the team arrived at the field at 6:50 a.m. that

Saturday. They set up a 100-yard decontamination line of 13 tents and shelters and put on their yellow and tan protective suits, rubber boots, face masks and respirators with the precision they had learned during a week of training in the heat and humidity of this Missouri summer. They were ready to receive casualties in 90 minutes.

"The more training you receive, the more comfortable you feel in a real situation," pointed out Staff Sgt. Donald Kilmer. "Everything this country is doing to combat terrorism is important. The terrorists are getting smarter, and we have to be able to deal with them."

About 50 role players put the team through its paces as the heavy clouds let lose their downpour. The actors keeled over and had to be carried through the decon line. They nursed broken arms and legs. They screamed in agony. And they shivered in the showers and the rain three or four times to give the CERFP team plenty of works as the evaluators in the florescent orange vests took notes.

"One of our biggest concerns over the last couple of years has been triaging the casualties and getting them decontaminated to distribute them to medical facilities should we have a weapons of mass destruction event. That's the long pole in the tent of effective response here," said Brig. Gen. George Shull, the Missouri adjutant general, who also observed the evaluation.

"It became real apparent to us that the Guard needs to add value to the triage, decontamination and distribution of casualties equation," he added. "It's been worth all of the extra work and effort we've put into it."

All told, Johnson reported, his team processed and decontaminated 171 casualties in 2 hours and 11 minutes. That included scanning everyone for chemical and radiological agents and making sure that one mother and her two daughters went through the line together.

That number is small compared to the casualties that such a team might be expected to deal with in a real crisis. But it was enough to convince the Army evaluators that the Guard people know what they are doing.

"That easily exceeded the standard that we set for them," said Ward. "They showed us that they can do decon very well."

Massachusetts National Guard backs up Democratic Convention

By Spc. David J. Claffey

Massachusetts National Guard

BOSTON – While delegates from across the country checked into posh Boston hotels, dined at fine restaurants and gathered at the FleetCenter for the Democratic National Convention, soldiers from the Massachusetts National Guard took their posts along the lengthy fences, humid subway stations and weathered railroad tracks that encircled the arena.

Working alongside the Boston Police Department, Secret Service and 25 other local and national agencies, the 211th Military Police Battalion, along with the 101st and 181st Engineer battalions and the 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry took part in securing one of the nation's most prominent events, with anything but front-row seats. Also supporting the event were the National Guard's 1st Civil Support Team from Massachusetts, 2nd CST from and New York, and 11th CST from Maine.

Military police from the 211th, the state's most deployed unit, watched the crowd of protesters and pundits from the elevated Green Line subway, which ran across several access ways for the FleetCenter. Teams also patrolled key stations like Haymarket, Government Center and State Street with Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority officers.

"The mission here was two-fold," said Lt Col. Brian W. O'Hare, commander of the 211th. "The military police were working to support the local law enforcement, helping them watch certain areas and creating a secure presence, and the engineers and infantry were prepared to respond if things got out of hand."

Soldiers trained for a week with state police to prepare for the DNC, learning civil disturbance techniques and the different situations they might come across if the peace was broken.

"We started preparing July 12th," said O'Hare. "We brought people in to work directly with state police, then used them to train the rest of our soldiers. It was a lot to take in a short period of time. We were training everyday until as late as 10 p.m. When the convention finally started, the task force was already tired, but they were ready to handle any situation."

Armed with 9 mm pistols and batons dangling from their waists, the MPs paced the length of the perimeter for days prior to the convention, and continued throughout the four-night event. They worked 12 to 14-hour shifts, and while there were no violent exchanges, the crowd and soldiers did interact.

"Some people came up to us and said thank you and some gave us dirty looks," said Spc. Kimberly D. Cronin with the 972nd Military Police Company at the Park Street Subway Station on the Boston Common, a meeting point for many protest groups. "Overall, people seemed positive and I think our presence was good."

Soldiers around the FleetCenter echoed those sentiments, and were glad that there were no major incidents. "Our biggest con-

cern going into the convention was the number of protesters estimated," said O'Hare. "That many people coming together in one place, all with different agendas, can cause problems. Something small can be blown out of proportion. They may just be curious to see what is going on and wind up in what looks like a mob. Fortunately, none of that happened and the incidents were few."

Just down the road at an armory in the greater Boston area, the engineer battalions were waiting in case of a major incident. "Once we get the word, we can be equipped, on the busses and ready to go in 15 minutes," said Maj. Mark A. Merlino, the Air Operations Officer for the engineer task force during the DNC. While the military police trained for patrols and observation, the two engineer battalions focused on riots. "We are a reactionary force. Boston Police has teams ready to respond to riots, but if there are too many to handle we help them out."

Engineers are known for building bridges and handling explosives, so this was new territory for them. "The troops did really well," said Merlino. "It was the first time dealing with these situations for many in the unit. They were given 100 pounds of gear and a week to learn how to use it, and they did."

They started from the ground up, training first on basic moves with the police baton and riot shields, then building to full formations, said Merlino. The state police showed them how to handle protesters handcuffed together and gave a demonstration on the effects of pepper spray. It all finished with over 100 people posing as protesters to test the engineers in a full-scale simulated riot.

The unit continued training during the convention while other members of the engineer force were standing by in their command center, collecting information on DNC events and waiting to see if the unit would be needed. There were many command posts spread throughout the city keeping all of the agencies connected.

"Communication was very important to the success of this mission," said David Estrada, a spokesman for the Boston Police Department, which was in close communication with the Guard. "We have been preparing with other agencies since we received confirmation that the DNC was coming here over a year ago. We deal with special events on a regular basis, but not on this scale, so our systems were tested."

The military system was also tested, with all of the information passing through a Joint Operations Center for Brig. Gen. Gary A. Pappas, the joint task force commander.

"The concept of this joint headquarters and national special security event is new," said Pappas. He was appointed by the President to head both active and reserve forces in the region during the DNC, a job only given once before, during the G8 Summit on Sea Island, Ga., in June.

"We have been planning for months and the cooperation between services has been a concern. We have people from the National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Northern Command and NORAD working together here, but after three days, I didn't see the uniforms

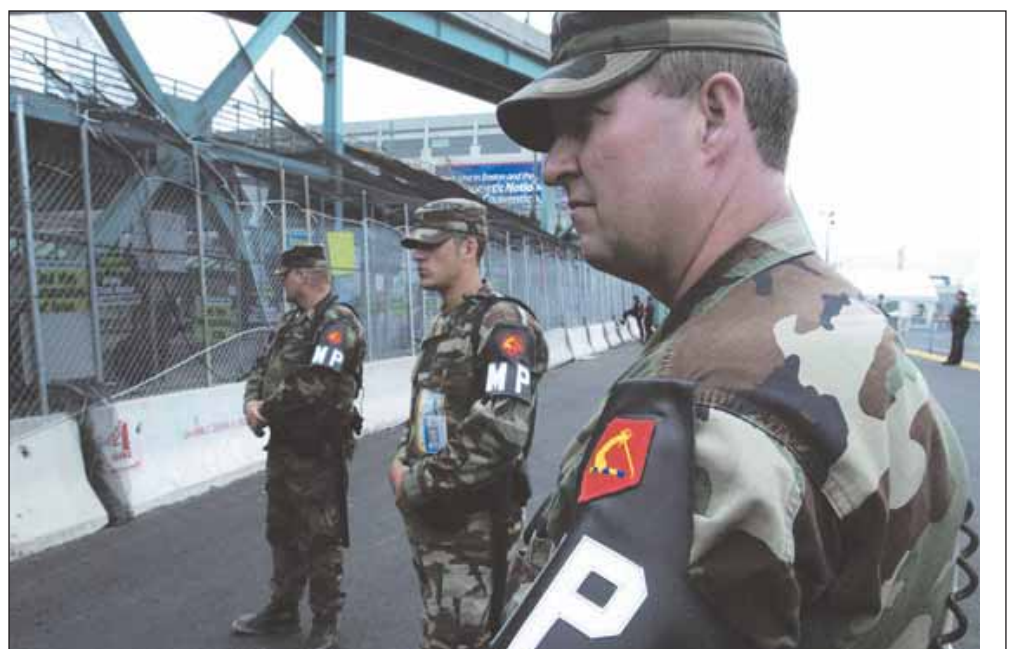


Photo by Spc. David J. Claffey

Staff Sgt. Robert J. Francione, Spc. Gary L. Morley and Spc. Keith A. Kullmann of the Massachusetts National Guard's 211th Military Police Battalion observe protesters in the "Free Speech Zone" during the Democratic National Convention in Boston. MPs patrolled the perimeter with Boston police officers on the ground and along the old Green Line track.

anymore. We were dealing with professionals who knew their job. We produced a team and that's what made this successful," Pappas said.

Having a joint commander for homeland security missions is a relatively new concept and many eyes were on the Massachusetts National Guard and Pappas.

"There were some unique challenges in an area like Boston," said Pappas. "It is an old city with cow paths, a city that has undergone a major construction, the remnants of which are still there. You can look at maps and photos, but you don't get a feel for what is in that area." As a Boston native, his knowledge of the area was key to his selection and provided him with a better sense of how and where to deploy troops.

Pappas had an assortment of tools to choose from, if needed. In addition to the military police surrounding the FleetCenter and the engineers on call, he had a rapid reaction force comprised of soldiers from the 182nd Infantry. In an emergency, the unit was prepared to mobilize anywhere in the state within four hours to provide any support needed.

Also on the ground in and around Boston were the Civil Support Teams. Composed of specialists in chemical, biological and radioactive substances, the teams patrolled around the FleetCenter and other key areas with detection devices, looking for hazardous materials before they became dangerous.

"We are working with a number of different folks from the Boston Fire Department to the EPA," said Maj. Walter H. Connery, Medical Operations Officer with the 1st CST. "If any suspicious packages are left within the FleetCenter perimeter we are the ones to check on it. We take samples and secure the area until our mobile labs analyze the material." Teams like the 1st CST were very busy throughout the convention as protest groups baited them with packages and powder. "They try to test us and our

reaction time. Fortunately, nothing dangerous was found."

The Massachusetts Volunteer Militia and the National Lancers also provided valuable security assistance during the DNC.

"With the military police in Boston and a large number of troops on call, we were asked to assist with base security," said retired Col. Leonid Kondratiuk, of the National Lancers, a volunteer ceremonial cavalry unit that sometimes doubles as a mounted search party when people get lost in state forests. "We scout out the perimeter, and if we see something out of place we let force protection know. A mounted soldier can cover the distance of a foot soldier in less time."

While the Lancers patrolled military facilities, members of the MVM helped to secure the Joint Operations Center, checking ID cards and restricting access. "We do this because we enjoy it, and like serving in some capacity," said Kondratiuk of his fellow volunteers.

For many, the success of the convention was how everything came together - and that nothing went wrong. Now the systems and techniques used in Massachusetts will be shared with the New York National Guard in preparation for the Republican National Convention.

"When you see that all these agencies could work together so seamlessly, it's hard to believe," said Pappas, "but everything has been well coordinated. The tremendous experience and leadership our people possess is absolutely superb and has helped me a lot."

Pappas added, "If there is still a discussion about putting all military capabilities under one command, then that concept has been validated over the past four days. It works. It is a model for how the National Guard can expand beyond the standard blizzards, hurricanes and floods and become a viable member of the homeland security team."

Guard assists civil authorities with political convention

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

NEW YORK - Fort Hamilton is a small, quiet Army post on the Atlantic shore of Brooklyn that seems to be a long way from the skyscrapers and the nonstop noise of Manhattan. It was at that fort, however, that New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. George De Simone reaffirmed his stand against terrorism during the Republican National Convention.

De Simone is a retired New York Fire Department lieutenant, and helping civil authorities keep the 5,000 delegates and a few hundred thousand demonstrators free from acts of terrorism during the four-day convention was very important to that Army Guard officer.

Between 75 and 100 of his friends, firefighters he knew by their first names, died at the World Trade Center on the dreadful Tuesday of Sept. 11, 2001, De Simone explained.

"That was the worst day of my life," said De Simone who told of how debris from the first tower to be hit was falling around Engine Company 224 in Brooklyn Heights as he opened the firehouse's door to respond to the call that came in six minutes later.

"I saw the second plane hit with my own eyes," he added. "That's the day I got involved with the fight against terrorism."

De Simone retired from the fire department, after more than 25 years, in March 2003, but he is continuing the fight during his 34th year in the Guard.

Every member of the military's Joint Task Force-Republican National Convention, especially the National Guard troops from New York, had essentially the same reason for wanting to help preserve the peace in this city nearly three years after 9-11- when President George W. Bush accepted his party's nomination for a second term. They did not want their city to get hit again.

There were about 2,000 of them on duty during convention week, from Aug. 29 until Sept. 3, guarding bridges, tunnels, train stations and power plants as part of the biggest planned security force that New York has ever mustered.

How big was it? Here's one indication. A record 10,000

New York police officers were reported to be on duty in the Big Apple on Aug. 29 when demonstrators chanted and marched along Seventh Avenue the day before the convention started.

Guard members, meanwhile, demonstrated during the pleasant week that they are ready, willing and able to deter, defend against and defeat terrorist activities; that they are trained and equipped to protect their communities.

All of the military personnel, nearly 1,700 on Title 32 or state active duty status and more than 300 others on Title 10 federal status, served on the same joint task force, rather than on two separate forces, during the National Special Security Event. Army Guard Col. F. David Sheppard, the New York Guard's deputy adjutant general, was in charge.

That arrangement, endorsed by President Bush and New York Gov. George Pataki, reflects the new way that the military is doing homeland security. It has already been employed this summer during the Group of Eight economic summit in Georgia and the Democratic National Convention in Boston.

"Having one military commander makes it a lot easier for us to deal with the federal, state and local authorities and for them to deal with us," explained Sheppard at the 124-year-old Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue, the task force's headquarters that was strung with miles of blue wire required to run modern computer and communications equipment.

"What makes this different from Georgia and Boston is that we have formed this task force from Guard troops who have never worked together before because so many of our people are already deployed," Sheppard explained.

One outfit, the 101st Signal Battalion from Poughkeepsie, officially came into existence during the month of September.

The vast majority of National Guard troops and other military personnel took up positions away from the convention-goers and protestors, officials explained, freeing up more police officers to keep the crowds under control.

Guard troops were spread from the eastern end of Long Island to Poughkeepsie, about 60 miles north of the city.

"It's important for us to be seen by the public, to let them know we're helping to preserve the safety of this area," said Army Guard Spc. Johnny Blanco-Rubi, a member of the 101st Signal Battalion who was helping to guard one of the Long Island Railroad's maintenance yards in Brooklyn.

A handful, members of the New York Guard's 2nd Civil Support Team, pulled convention duty at Madison Square Garden and Penn Station, paired up with members of the New York Police Department's Emergency Services Unit to detect and assess harmful agents from any weapons of mass destruction.

On the other hand, you didn't have to travel all that far to spot Guard Soldiers in battle dress uniforms and body armor on duty with police officers at such landmarks as the Triborough Bridge, the Lincoln Tunnel, the Indian Point Power Plant and other critical parts of the infrastructure. "No blue, no green" was the basic idea.

The message was clear. New York was as secure as possible.

Most of the federal troops, including members of all of the active services, brought in dogs trained to sniff out explosives or were explosive experts themselves.

Most of the Guard troops were reinforcements for Task Force Empire Shield, a force of a few hundred troops that has been on duty at such installations as Grand Central Station and Penn Station since the terrorists attacked on 9-11.

That was the base that the joint task force for the Republican convention was built on, explained Army Guard Lt. Col. Michael Leonardo, the smaller task force's fulltime commander.

Guard Soldiers such as Sgt. Joyce Racho made friends wherever they served. She is a New York police officer who took vacation time so she could serve with her Guard unit, said 101st Signal Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Ron Patterson. Racho's new job as the nuclear, biological and chemical NCO was important for that outfit.

"Your Guard Soldiers have been great," Edward Gilhooley, an assistant deputy chief for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's 700-member police force, told Brig. Gen. Michael Swezey, who commands the New York Guard's 53rd Troop Command.

"This is by far the largest operation we've ever conducted with the National Guard," added Gilhooley who commands the MTA's eastern region police force.

Troops, for example, guarded railroad stations and repair yards in Brooklyn and Queens that are critical for the trains to transport an average of 290,000 passengers every workday, Gilhooley said.

"These Soldiers who are on duty at our railroad stations and who are patrolling the perimeters of our maintenance yards make it possible for our officers to do their police work," he said. "We don't have the resources to do everything that the Guard is assisting us with."

Long Island Railroad people did have the means to show their appreciation. Guard Soldiers got water, ice, chairs, shelters from the sun, and other creature comforts. Some, it was said, were invited to a retirement ceremony for one of the railroad's engineers.

Guard members also helped each other.

"People down here need help," said Cpl. Mitchell Wearne, an insurance company supervisor from Buffalo who reported to Fort Hamilton as a radio-telephone operator. "I have always believed that if we need help up in Buffalo, people from here would come to help us. That's what the Guard is all about."



Photo by Spc. Dennis Gravelle

New York Army National Guard Soldiers and New York City police officers worked the Manhattan streets together during the Republican National Convention. "No blue, no green" was the idea.

Pennsylvania Guardsman saves two children involved in car wreck

By Senior Airman Jay Ostrich

Pennsylvania National Guard

SLATINGTON, Penn. – A Soldier in the Pennsylvania National Guard was driving home early in the morning of July 28 when he happened upon a car accident.

Spc. Damion Smith's Tuesday summer night had been like many other typical nights for 20-year-old. He took in a movie with his girlfriend, ate some good greasy food at the local diner and played a late-night video game grudge match with a good friend. But on his way home to get some rest, Smith saw something out of the ordinary – something that would change his and the lives of two boys forever.

Looking out his window, Smith, a system support specialist with Company A, 213th

Area Support Group, Allentown, Penn., noticed a car had collided with a large tree and had caught on fire. Making a U-turn and calling for help, Smith rushed to scene where he found an unconscious driver and heard moaning and screams for help emanating from the backseat.

As the fire grew out of control, Smith rifled through the front door, bypassing the driver, who appeared unconscious, and instinctively pulled two children from the mangled wreckage. After getting them beyond the blaze and the dripping oil and gas pouring from car, Smith whisked the children away to safety.

"All I remember was that in one second it seemed like 8,000 thoughts had raced through my head," said Smith, who partially credits his Army training for helping him quickly assess situations. "In that time, all I

knew was that someone needed help who couldn't help themselves and I had the ability to get the job done."

After saving the 9- and 10-year-old brothers from certain death, Smith rushed back to try and save what turned out to be the father of the two young boys. The vehicle, now mangled and engulfed in flames, was simply unreachable and later exploded, killing the father who had fallen asleep at the wheel.

"I pulled the kids out first, because I knew they were still alive," said Smith who had recently returned from a 10-month deployment to Afghanistan. "I am sorry they lost their father, but there was nothing I could do."

For his efforts, Smith has received many congratulatory phone calls from friends and family along with an award from a local

Lions Club calling him a hero. He has been recommended by leadership to receive the Soldier's Medal and the Pennsylvania Cross for Valor, the state's highest National Guard award.

"Spc. Smith personifies what the Army core values and the Pennsylvania Guard are all about," said 213th ASG commander Col. Phillip DeHennis.

"This is a fine example of how proper training led to a lifesaving rescue."

"Don't get me wrong, the recognition is nice, but I don't really think I did anything that anyone else wouldn't have done," said Smith.

"A lot of people said I was crazy and I could have lost my life, but if I had it to do all over again, I wouldn't hesitate to do so."

FROM PAGE 1

Software

will mimic the capabilities of that organization.

"You can fight the battle as you are equipped, or as you would like to be equipped," said Maj. James "Phil" Johnson from the National Guard Bureau's Directorate of Training and Exercises. He

added that part of the power of the software is that it can help identify resource shortages.

Emergency management agencies from across the country are using the software, and Camp Edwards was one of three sites selected for the first regional "train the trainer" sessions. West Virginia hosted a session in July and Washington is scheduled to hold one in September.

The Guard has resources available to assist

civilian emergency response agencies.

"The goal is to familiarize each state's National Guard with the software, so they can coordinate with their civilian emergency management community and support training," said Johnson. "The end result will be a state that is better prepared for terrorist attack."

Thirty-two people from 12 states' National Guard and eight Massachusetts civilian

agencies participated in the training at Camp Edwards. "I think this is an awesome system," said Maj. James A. Murphy, assistant deputy superintendent of the Plymouth County Sheriff's Department.

"It's something the entire emergency response community can use to coordinate and train together for the good of the civilian community and the preparedness of the emergency response agencies."

FROM PAGE 14

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ACAP clears path for transition

By ACAP Staff

ARLINGTON, Va. – At first glance, Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. A. Frank Lever III would seem a most unlikely candidate for the Army Career and Alumni Program. After all, he has worked in state government and founded, owned and operated two private companies. He, of all people, would most probably know the ins and outs of transitioning to civilian life, especially after having come on active duty full time only three years ago.

Yet, Lever might be one of ACAP's biggest cheerleaders. He is quick to praise the program's virtues for both himself and his family. Having already gone through the program's pre-retirement portion, he attended the senior-executive presentation in June. Lever has found ACAP to be a real eye-opener, especially as he prepares to send out his first resume in more than two decades.

Since the late 1960s, Lever has followed two greatly different career tracks in the Guard and as a civilian. Prior to joining the full-time force, Lever's state government duties culminated with his work as deputy commissioner of the South Carolina Department of Youth Services. He also led two private companies.

For the military, he has become the Army National Guard director's personal advisor on all enlisted matters, with special emphasis on quality of life and training. He also acts as a representative and advocate for the 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia to the Army leadership and Congress.

Now, for the first time since he joined the Guard in 1969, Lever finds himself about to set out truly on his own. Even with ACAP's help, he said, this is an experience of a different color.

"The important thing is that I've been so

'green' for the last 20-some odd years," Lever said. "Now I'm going to get my resume out to the civilian world. It's been since I was 21 that I last applied for a job in state government; that was in 1970. It feels kind of out of the ordinary to pick up and learn how to do things, and we can all use some guidance."

This is where for Lever – and many thousands of Soldiers like him each year from the total Army force – the Army Career and Alumni Program steps in to lend a hand. ACAP is the Army's transition program, responsible for providing pre-separation benefits counseling and job assistance skills training annually to more than 80,000 separating or retiring Soldiers.

ACAP officials say the program is no less important for the thousands of Citizen Soldiers in the National Guard called to temporary active duty and now on the verge of returning to their families, friends and employers. In some cases, the time on deployment gave guardsmen time to reconsider their career path, and here, too, ACAP can step up to help.

In a recent case, Sgt. Patrick Wade was a full-time student in aviation science before he was mobilized to serve in Iraq. After his tour, he wanted to change his major to business management and ultimately earn a master's degree in business administration. He asked an ACAP counselor at the ACAP Demobilization Resource Center to help him select a college and locate funds to achieve his goal. The ACAP counselor also referred Wade to the Fort Campbell, Ky., ACAP Center, the Illinois National Guard education services officer and the College Board web site for individual research.

ACAP emphasizes helping Soldiers transform their military training, skills and experiences into a competitive resume, offering individualized counseling for all Soldiers leaving active duty. Since its inception,

ACAP concentrated on guiding combat arms, combat support and combat service support Soldiers through the process of converting their military expertise into civilian job opportunities. Above all, the ACAP officials emphasized, the program is a service for the Army's total force that provides skills training on job searches, but it does not guarantee a job.

"Our goal is to ensure that every Soldier, family member and Defense Department civilian leaving the Army who comes to ACAP for transition services is provided both professional and caring individual assistance. This will help them during their stressful return to the civilian employment community," said ACAP Director Jim Hoffman.

He said Army leaders believe that separating, retiring and redeploying Soldiers – along with their family members and civilians who decide to leave the Army and return to their civilian communities – deserve a professional and standardized program of services to make their transition a complete success.

Lever, the Army Guard command sergeant major, has seen many positives in ACAP, and he is far from the end of the program. For an unlimited time after he retires from the service, he knows he can still call on ACAP for transitioning and job-placement support. Soldiers separating from the military can call on ACAP support for as much as 180 days. However, today Lever's focus is on learning as much as he can, as soon as he can, so he will be ready to test the civilian waters.

"I've learned a lot about the medical part and getting my records in shape, as well as some of the benefits," Lever said. "I've learned how to get things right before getting out of here."

While Lever said the most important part of ACAP seminars was learning about his vet-



Lever

eran's benefits, a close second was having his wife also attend some sessions. "My wife enjoyed them," Lever said. "It's good for the spouse to hear all those things."

Apparently there are benefits for both Soldier and spouse because, inspired by what they learned at ACAP, the Levers plan to meet with their financial counselor to plot a course for peace of mind in their retirement years. "Having my wife at the briefings to hear about all the benefits you get was very positive," Lever said.

The ACAP counselors, he added, have given the couple confidence as they get ready for their next anxious steps away from the Army. Lever plans to sit back and relax for a few months after he takes off his beret and boots for the last time. Yet, he knows when the time comes to once more test the job market, his resume will be at the ready, thanks to a few well-invested months with ACAP.

Guard pilots train in New York for national security event



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

A flight of New York Army National Guard Blackhawk helicopters approach the Downtown Manhattan Heliport on the East River after flying over the Manhattan and Brooklyn bridges during an Aug. 29 training exercise in preparation for the Republican National Convention.

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

NEW YORK – Seven Army National Guard helicopter crews executed a picture-perfect training mission on a sunny afternoon perfect for pictures in lower Manhattan the Sunday before the Republican National Convention was gavelled to order.

The venerable Brooklyn Bridge was the backdrop for the Aug. 29 Joint Task Force-Republican National Convention exercise. It tested the aviators' abilities to land their Blackhawk and Chinook helicopters on an East River heliport near Wall Street at a precise time and then lift off again rapidly.

Several blocks to the north of the so-called "Wall Street Heliport" is the site of the World Trade Center, that melancholy piece of New York City real estate where the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, prompted so many homeland security precautions for the visiting Republicans three years later.

The Army Guard helicopter drill for the National Special Security Event had serious implications, explained Maj. Lee Ohrnstein.

The aviators practiced the procedures for inserting additional troops into the city should they be needed to support civil authorities during the four-day convention, said the New York Army Guard's aviation coordinating officer for the task force.

The exercise demonstrated the Guard's resolve to remain critical to America's homeland defense just as it has since the founding of this country.

It supported officials' contentions that "the National Guard has developed enhanced capabilities and diversified readiness that will save American lives."

"It went about as well as we hoped it would," said Ohrnstein who was pleased with how the helicopter crews performed their ballet. "This mission tested the crews' aviation planning process, their in-flight linkup procedures, and their time-on-target executions of plus or minus 30 seconds."

The helicopters came from various locations and linked in midair meeting their time hacks. They landed and took off as scheduled.