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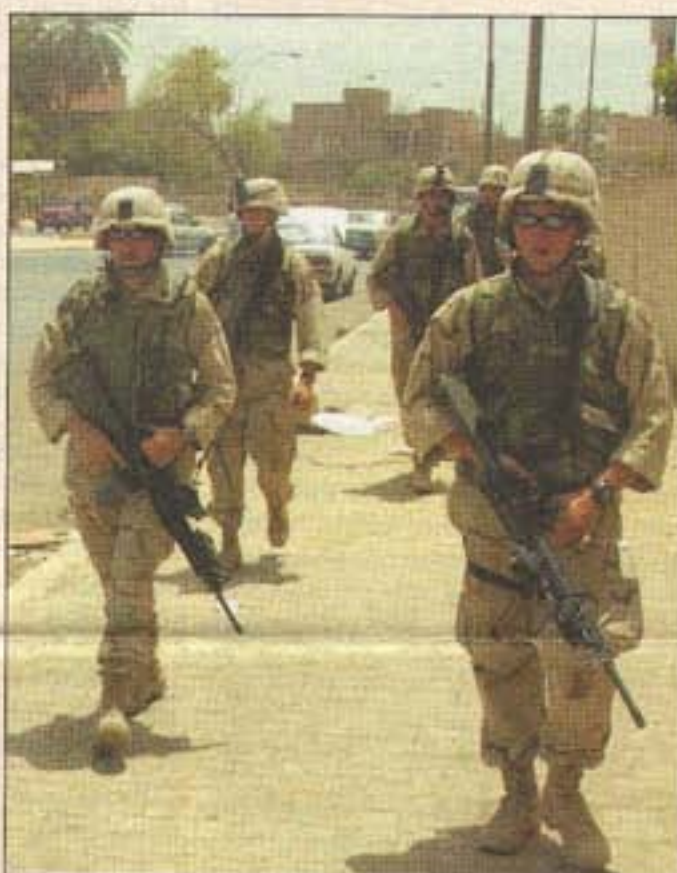
Homeland Defense:

The road to peace begins at home



Photos by Cpt. Charles Mussi, National Guard Bureau

(Above) Florida Army National Guard Capt. Rex Painter (right) drives a Humvee through the desert during the early stage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Florida Army Guard soldiers with Company A, 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry patrol a Baghdad neighborhood in Iraq.



Citizen-soldiers deploy worldwide to preserve life, liberty and freedom for all

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

A Florida Army National Guard infantry commander has a hard time believing everything that he and the citizen-soldiers in his battalion are seeing and hearing and doing in Baghdad these days.

"It is absolutely amazing to think that a Florida Guard battalion is here in the first place, let alone doing what we are doing. If you ever thought you had it bad, you have no idea what bad really is," states Lt. Col. Thad Hill, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry, in a detailed and moving letter from Iraq to his friends back home. "The men ... will never forget what we have

done here and what we have seen."

What have they done? They have taken charge of Zone 17, where there are many medical facilities and schools, in the heart of Iraq's capital city, replacing a battalion in the 101st Airborne Division.

They have detained medical directors who are trying to sell drugs on the black market. They have encountered an Iraqi teacher who asked the Americans what she could teach her students and when she could give them tests. They have visited the birthplace of Abraham. They have ridden past the burned remains of destroyed Iraqi tanks. They have guarded one of overthrown President Saddam Hussein's palaces.

These National Guard soldiers have done virtually everything that soldiers do in a

dangerous and deadly combat zone while they have been engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Most importantly, they have deployed - because that is what National Guard troops do. They have been doing that for a long time - since 1636 when the National Guard was born in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The Guard's contributions have not gone unnoticed.

"When we were attacked on Sept. 11, more than 100,000 reservists and National Guard members sprang into action - Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told about 1,000 members of the Reserve

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Changing times STARCS out, joint commands in as Guard restructures

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

COLUMBUS, Ohio - National Guard leaders from the 54 states and U.S. territories supported the chief of the National Guard Bureau's historic initiative for transforming their organization into a force of modern Minutemen that is more responsive for the American people while meeting in Columbus, Ohio, on May 18.

The National Guard's adjutants general reached consensus with the ideas put forward by Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum, the Guard Bureau's new chief, to consolidate separate state headquarters for members of the Army and Air Guard into joint, or combined, headquarters.

Idaho Maj. Gen. John Kane said the National Guard



Blum

generals agreed the time is ripe for change and that they support the requirements for the 21st century that Blum presented during the spring conference of the Adjutants General Association of the United States. Kane is the association's president.

Blum has advocated transforming the command structures for the 460,000 members of the Army and Air Guard since becoming the Guard Bureau's 25th chief on April 11.

He has emphasized that idea to members of Congress, to the national news media, and to many members of the National Guard. He has also insisted that the National Guard will retain its war-fighting capabilities.

"Homeland defense is the National Guard's most important priority. Make no mistake

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About The On Guard

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A letter from Iraq: Army Guard colonel writes home

(Editor's note: Lt. Col. Thad Hill is the commander of the Florida Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry that is on duty in Baghdad, taking part in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He recently wrote this letter to people back home about his battalion's experiences.)

Hello Everyone,
Since I have had little access to either phone or e-mail, I have decided to write this one letter to catch everyone up on what has transpired since I left Kuwait back on March 28th.

If you did not know - I am in Baghdad. In fact, I am in the heart of Baghdad, almost in its center on the banks of the Tigris River.

The battalion received a change of mission order to reconsolidate and move to Baghdad to be assigned to V Corps. The line companies A, B and C were in various locations in either Kuwait or Iraq working with the Patriot Missile battalions they had started the war with. I had a hell of a time trying to communicate with them to coordinate a movement and link-up that covered almost 450 miles. Between e-mails, satellite phones, and CH-47 helicopters, we finally worked out the details. The trip up from Kuwait took two days and allowed the soldiers to see some of the most barren landscapes one could imagine. We saw villages that were so poor, the people actually lived in houses made of mud and straw (mud huts). Camels and sheep were seen all along the route as well as burned hulks of many Iraqi military vehicles and tanks. We stopped at the ancient city of Ur, the birthplace of Abraham and the site of a ziggurat (a temple) dating back over 6,000 years old. We passed by the town of Karbala, one of the most religious cities in the world after Mecca and Medina.

As we approached Baghdad we saw more destruction caused by the units in front of us that had to fight their way in. My first night in Baghdad was spent at one of Saddam's captured palaces! Charlie Company was the first company to arrive in the city and was immediately assigned to secure the palace. This location is the current headquarters of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Aid, basically the new seat of the Iraq Government. As Alpha, Bravo and Headquarters and Headquarters Company arrived we were attached to the 3rd Infantry Division, 1st Brigade Combat Team. Our immediate mission was to conduct a relief of one of the battalions of the 101st Airborne Division. This was done in three days, and we took control of our zone in the city on May 6.

Baghdad has over 5.6 million people and is divided into 56 zones. I am responsible for Zone 17. We are charged with support and stability operations as well as multiple civil affairs-type missions. The zone is characterized as "academia" and "medical," due to the large number of schools, universities and medical facilities within it. The Saddam

Medical Center is the largest hospital complex in the country. Some of the most famous and well-known doctors come to this hospital to perform surgeries and operations. There are over 60 schools and two universities as well as the various local shops, markets, stores, neighborhoods, and public utilities you would expect to find in any large city.

It is absolutely amazing to think that a Florida Guard battalion is here in the first place, let alone responsible for and doing what we are. Schools have just opened after months of being closed, and I have had to sit down with headmasters, teachers, superintendents, and others - who knows what they were - to reestablish order. I have had to work on pay issues, security issues, schools with unexploded missiles and weapons stored in them, people who were not so good and reliable - but who are still trying to influence things - and looters. Today I was asked by a teacher what she could teach and when she was allowed to test the students. I was amazed at what the old regime had done and what they controlled. By the way, I told the teacher that she could test whenever she wished and that I did not care what she taught as long as the kids were able to learn. The Iraqi people will be responsible to decide what their students will be taught. They are so happy to be able to do this. They just need some time to acquire the proper textbooks and supplies. The same story can be told at the hospitals, where we are detaining medical directors who are trying to sell

drugs on the black market and are withholding needed drugs for special friends and VIPs. We have seen children die every day at the Children's Hospital we are securing because these people are so corrupt. My battalion doctors and a squad of infantry will pay a visit to this hospital director tomorrow, and he will either cooperate or I will have him detained. The cool thing about being the boss of this zone is that I can do this - legally.

We patrol the streets and neighborhoods day and night and conduct random checks at various places. We have secured numerous weapons and ammunition [caches] and have taken drunks, criminals, and looters off the streets. This has been a very rewarding mission for everyone. I hear daily from the soldiers how this has made the deployment and war a viable endeavor and worthwhile. The lack of freedoms and rights these people suffered and now the thanks we get from the majority we see every day is rewarding.

We all want to come home as soon as possible, but at least we are busy every day, doing good things that hopefully will allow the people of Baghdad to enjoy what most of us in America take for granted - Freedom.

If you ever thought you had it bad, you have no idea what bad really is. The men of the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry will never forget what we have done here and what we have seen.

I hope to write again or better yet talk and see you all very soon.

Thad

GUARDTOONS



MAN, THESE DEPLOYMENTS SEEM TO BE GETTING CLOSER AND CLOSER TOGETHER.

Schwartz
VISC



In the News

Iraqi liberation requires record number of C-130s

By Capt. David P. Lester

485th Air Expeditionary Wing/Public Affairs Officer

UNDISCLOSED LOCATION – Operation Iraqi Freedom has seen the utilization of Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve assets across the globe.

Seven C-130 units have joined together at the 485th Air Expeditionary Wing to form the largest collection of C-130 aircraft in the world. The 485th AEW is currently deployed in a forward location in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

The ANG units are the 130th Airlift Wing from West Virginia, the 118th Airlift Wing from Tennessee, the 139th Airlift Wing from Missouri, the 123rd Airlift Wing from Kentucky, the 137th Airlift Wing from Oklahoma, and the 166th Airlift Wing from Delaware. The lone AFR unit in the group is the 914th Air Reserve Wing from Niagara Falls, NY.

"This is the largest grouping of C-130 assets in the world," said Col. Randall Jones, 485th AEW/operations group commander. "This shows the vital role that Reserve forces play in the employment of the U.S. military machine."

However, the work wasn't easy.

"The great job we did at deploying and arriving at our location as quickly as we did created some obstacles we had to overcome," said Jones. "Because we arrived before a majority of our offloading equipment, we had to prioritize the unloading of aircraft to accomplish the mission. We also used every available body to get the living and operating tents set up."

"It was great to see how all of the people across the base worked together to accomplish whatever mission they were given," said Jones. "Working long hours was the norm and volunteerism by everyone was the



USAF photo by SrA Manuel Martinez

C-130H Hercules aircraft of the 485th Air Expeditionary Wing shown here shortly after arrival at this remote location in Southwest Asia.

key to getting our operations up and running."

While a majority of the C-130s arrived quickly, additional aircrew, maintenance, and support personnel arrived sporadically over a three-week period. During this time the personnel at the base spent their time building tents for new arrivals, constructing offices, and launching aircraft.

"The unit members did a fantastic job of prioritizing the day-to-day tasks to set up shop and still focus on the mission," said Col. Jimmie L. Simmons, 485th AEW vice wing commander. "In this environment it would have been easy to focus on just getting the tents for living quarters set up but that did

not happen."

Making the transition into the theater more complicated, the C-130s were partnered with F-15C fighter aircraft from Langley AFB, Va., and Eglin AFB, Fla. This presented a unique opportunity to create a Wing with two aircraft types that used different maintenance systems and had different support requirements.

The wing leadership realized that the timeline to complete the beddown and transition to combat operations would require innovative thinking and creative internal processes. Therefore they made the decision to manage the flight operations for the two assigned airframes using dedicated deputy group commanders. These commanders focused on the F-15 and C-130 specific areas with overall direct leadership coming from the Wing.

The C-130 leadership faced the significant task of consolidating seven flying wings into four operational airlift and maintenance squadrons.

"This was one of our early success stories since they were able to form a cohesive team in a short four days," said Simmons. "They managed to consolidate the seven wings successfully which is a real credit to their can-do attitude."

Once the unit was up and flying they began to rack up impressive numbers.

The 485th AEW has over 45 C-130H Hercules assigned to it. The aircraft and personnel began arriving on March 9 and flew the first mission on March 13.

By the end of March the C-130s had flown 710 sorties and logged more than 1920 flying hours. By April 18 they had easily doubled that number with a total of 2115 sorties and 4857 flying hours logged.

They also hauled over 5900 tons of cargo

and 4800 passengers during this timeframe.

"The proof is in the pudding," said Jones. "The data shows that we were ready to succeed and that we got the job done. It wasn't easy but the folks persevered and rose to the challenge."

Support functions from the Guard and Reserve such as intel, command post, tactics, base operations, current operations and weather also joined together to form the Operations Support Squadron.

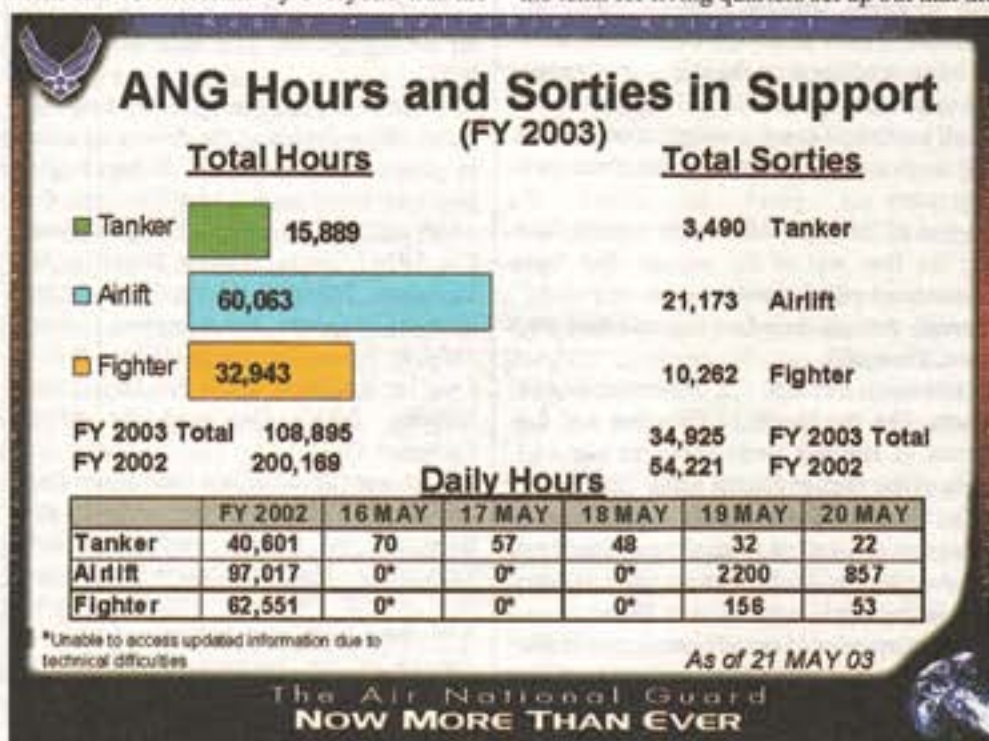
"This is the first time that the Reserves have fully staffed their own OSS," said Lt. Col. Shawn M. Anderson, 485th OSS/Director of Operations. "There have been operational support flights before but never a squadron of this size."

Of course with the high operations tempo and short times between launches the maintainers were extremely busy.

"Our maintenance folks faced challenges every step of the way," said Col. Howard P. Hunt III, 485 AEW maintenance group commander. "From geographic separation between airplanes (miles in some cases) to severe sandstorms, they faced many new issues they had not had to deal with before."

"I attribute the fantastic average mission capable rate of 93 percent to the experience of our people," said Hunt. "They worked long hours, under severe conditions, and did an extremely professional job in getting our aircraft in the air. It is an honor to be with them."

"There is no way I could say enough about the professionals who keep our aircraft working," said Simmons. "Their attention to detail is equal in importance to the pilot's ability to land a heavy aircraft using night vision goggles. They are winners!"



Puerto Rico Guardsmen deliver the goods

By Spc. Bill Putnam

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Puerto Rican National Guardsmen are standing watch over American equipment being shipped to Iraq.

It's normally a job for the Marines, but 1,200 soldiers from the 92nd Infantry Brigade, dubbed "Guard Mariners," have mobilized for the mission. The first team recently completed its initial six-week voyage to Kuwait and back and several other teams are now underway.

Before going to sea, all soldiers had to qualify on the crew-served weapons that they would carry on the ship, the M-2 .50-calibers and the M-240B machine guns.

The soldiers' job while underway is to defend the ship from potential terrorist attacks. If a potential terrorist gets close, the soldiers on board have what Col. Rodney A. Mallette of the Military Sealift Command called "release authority" to take care of that threat.

An average mission might take three or four weeks, and how long the guardsmen stay on-board is dictated by the length of the voyage, Mallette said.

"They're on board until the mission's completed," Mallette said.

He explained that with the current operations tempo, and the threat of terrorism against shipping — as highlighted last November when an explosive-laden boat exploded next to a French oil tanker off the coast of Yemen — this mission is something that needs to be done. There needs to be a force designated to handle security of surge sealift, Mallette said.

"Let's put it this way — this is the new normalcy," Mallette said. He serves as the operations officer for the Military Sealift Command and coordinates all sealift carrying U.S. military cargo on both government-owned and contracted ships throughout the

world.

The Military Sealift Command first realized the terrorism threat to American shipping after Sept. 11, 2001, said Mallette.

Then the threat became more acute with the build-up in Kuwait for Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Marine units normally tasked with shipping security became overwhelmed, said Mallette.

During the build-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Military Sealift Command floated 110 ships and shipped 20 million square feet of cargo to Kuwait, said Mallette.

"That number doesn't include tankers or other ships directly supporting the fleet," Mallette said.

That large number and the limited number of Marines assigned to security duty forced the MSC to come up with new ideas to guard the ships, Mallette said.

The idea to put National Guard soldiers on the ships came up during that time, and so far it's worked wonderfully, Mallette said.

"We haven't had any personnel problems," he said.

The captain of the Faust later echoed Mallette's comment during a visit by Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Reginald Brown.

Brown visited two ships May 8 — one in Charleston, S.C., and another in Norfolk, Va. The first ship was the M.V. Faust, a government-contracted ship loading equipment bound for Kuwait. The second was the USNS Seay, a government-owned ship docked in Norfolk, Va.

"They're a good crew and we've had no problems," John Hefner, the Faust's captain, told Brown about the guardsmen. Hefner is also a Naval Reservist.

The 92nd Infantry boarded its first ship March 21 after a two-week training period at

"It's like an adventure, something new and exciting. This is something you can look forward to telling your grandchildren about."

— Staff Sgt. Anthony Latalladi

Fort A.P. Hill, Va., and a move to its deployment headquarters at Fort Bragg, N.C.

During his visit to both ships, Brown asked the soldiers if anyone had a problem with the mission or doing it again in the future.

"Not at all, sir," the soldiers said.

"As you all know, we can't go to war now without calling the National Guard," Brown said to the soldiers.

There might be some talk in the civilian media in the future about how the Army abused the National Guard and Reserves during the build up to the war, Brown said.

"That might be the impression, but it wasn't the case," he said.

Brig. Gen. Roberto Marrero-Corletto, the 92nd Infantry brigade commander, told Brown that his teams were initially supposed to be led by lieutenants, but the mission turned into a sergeant's mission.

Two of those sergeants are Sgt. 1st Class Reinaldo Ortiz, the leader of the brigade's Team 109, and his assistant, Staff Sgt. Anthony Latalladi. Ortiz normally works for the Puerto Rico Power Authority. Latalladi is a high school teacher. They have been in the National Guard 24 and 20 years, respectively, and said they're looking forward to traveling to other places on board the ships.

"It's like an adventure, something new and exciting," Latalladi said. "This is something you can look forward to telling your grandchildren about."

Their team is taking over for Staff Sgt. Pedro Diaz's team and is heading to Kuwait. While not on duty, their soldiers will be attending classes on weapons maintenance, first aid and nuclear, chemical and biological protection.

But weapons maintenance will be their biggest project. The salty air of the ocean can rust weapons in a hurry, said Ortiz. That means plenty of bore-brushing the barrels, and spraying lots of weapons lubricant, which they have plenty of, Ortiz said.

Living conditions on the ship weren't spartan and that surprised Diaz. The Faust has a small basketball court, a weight room, a pool and even a sauna. Soldiers have their own rooms too.

Some of his guys did become seasick during the first part of the voyage. But their Dramamine pills helped, he said.

Overall, though, their first trip on board was good, Diaz said.

Crossing through the numerous choke points, like the Straits of Gibraltar and the Straits of Hormuz, were the most stressful parts of the voyage for the team, Diaz said.

The Straits of Hormuz are a narrow choke-point that ships must navigate crossing from the Arabian Sea to the Persian Gulf. On one side is Iran, and on the other is Oman.

"There are a lot of speed boats in the Straits of Hormuz that could hit a major target like our ship," he said.

There is one way of looking at the job the National Guard soldiers are doing, Brown said before returning to the Pentagon. The mission demonstrates the versatility of the Guard, he explained.

"In a way, it's like we're ensuring our stuff gets there," Brown said, "because if the ships are damaged by terrorists, it can definitely hamper our mission."

Island powerhouse

By Staff Sgt. Gary Hicks

National Guard Bureau

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — It may measure only 35 by 100 miles, but Puerto Rico is packing a tremendous punch in the war against global terrorism.

The small Caribbean island and its much heralded 10,000-member National Guard has always answered the call to duty, most recently for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"The troops are more than willing to do whatever it takes," said Lt. Col. Victor R. Torres, mobilization and readiness officer for the Puerto Rico National Guard headquartered in San Juan.

Doing what it takes is exactly what these bilingual Guardsmen do day in and day out. That has led to 41 percent of the total force being called to federal service.

Units aren't drawn out of a hat for activation. They are chosen based on strength and readiness, something Puerto Rico takes very seriously. In fact, the U.S. territory leads the nation in strength by unit and is among the top 10 in percentage of troops being qualified in their military occupational specialties.

"We have 21 units activated. That's 4,195 troops out of our 8,000-member Army Guard," Torres said. "These units were activated because they were ready and all of their paperwork and records were in order. That's something you have to work on constantly, not just one weekend a month."

In addition to the 92nd Infantry Brigade, Puerto Rico deployed the following units in support of operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom: the 544th Military Police Co., 892nd Engineer Co., 192nd Combat Support Battalion, 1st Battalion, 162nd Field Artillery, 292nd Combat Support Headquarters, 770th Military Police Co., 480th Military Police Co., 1st Battalion, 296th Infantry, 755th Military Police Co., and the 840th Ordnance Co.

"I am very proud of our Guard members and the good things that they do for Puerto Rico and our nation," said Brig. Gen. Francisco A. Márquez, Puerto Rico's adjutant general. "We are very fortunate to have these great men and women and the support of our government and their employers in these trying times."



Photo by Spc. Bill Putnam

Staff Sgt. Pedro Diaz, a team leader for the Puerto Rican Army National Guard soldiers guarding shipping to the Persian Gulf, talks to Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Reginald Brown, about the weapons his team manned on the M.V. Faust during their voyage from Kuwait to Charleston, S.C.

D.C. Guard receives a welcome home

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

Good old Hangar 8, and the families and friends who had waited patiently inside, was a sight for sore eyes to 179 members of the District of Columbia Air National Guard who returned to Andrews Air Force Base, Md., from the war in Iraq late on May 1.

Several hundred people — spouses, children, moms, dads, brothers, sisters and good friends — welcomed home their heroes about two hours after President George Bush told the country that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."

"You have shown the world the skill and might of the American armed forces," said the president, a former Texas Air National Guard pilot, aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. "America is grateful for a job well done."

The DC Guard members from the 113th Wing's F-16 fighter squadron were grateful to be back but were glad they had served during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I've been in for 12 years, and this was my first time in a real combat situation," said one staff sergeant. "It made all of our training worthwhile."

Those who touched down at Andrews that Thursday night were the last and largest group from the DC wing to return to their loved ones. The week saw three homecomings following the unit's Feb. 21 departure from that same Air Guard hangar.

Thirteen of the squadron's pilots roared home in jet fighters on Monday, April 28. Then 28 members of the maintenance team came back on April 30. Those who welcomed them waved small American flags, held up placards, including one that read "Welcome Home, Uncle Karl," and presented bouquets of flowers to the Guard members wearing desert brown uniforms.

The 250 DC Guard members supported one of the war's most sensitive missions with members of two other Air Guard wings from a base whose location cannot be disclosed, it was explained. Their job was to prevent Iraq from launching Scud missiles at Israel and against the U.S.-led coalition forces.

"It was very important for us to prevent anything that would draw Israel into the war," one of the fighter pilots said.

The DC Guard members shared that mission with members of the Air Guard's 187th Fighter Wing from Montgomery, Ala., and the 140th Wing from Aurora, Col.

The fact that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's ill-fated regime did not launch any Scuds or torch the oil fields or employ chemical weapons was one of the big surprises of the war, DC Guard members explained. So was the fact that they all got to come home a lot sooner than they had originally expected.

Most of the 1,200 members of the three



Photos by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

(Above) A happy staff sergeant with the District of Columbia Air National Guard's 113th Wing holds his two sons after returning to Andrews Air Force Base, Md., following his tour of duty during Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Right) The family of a District of Columbia Air National Guardsman anxiously awaits his return to Andrews Air Force Base, Md., following his tour of duty with members of the 113th Wing during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Air Guard units that helped to watch over Israel have either come home or are returning, it was explained.

"We thought we would be there until late next summer or into the fall," said a pilot. "The war winding up so early was a pretty big bonus for all of us."

"There was a great deal of concern about what [Hussein] might do," added the woman who explained she worked in the mission-planning cell during the war's most intense combat. "There was a great deal of relief that he didn't. We can't be anything but thankful."

"The great thing about getting done with the war so quickly was getting home before the baby was born," said one staff sergeant whose wife is expecting their third child, a daughter, in early September.

His glowing wife and two young sons did not leave the side of the tired but happy airman who explained "there was a lot of hooting and hollering when we heard we were coming home because we were set up to be there through August if we needed to be."

"It was good to be part of a such a great team of maintenance professionals," he added.

"I predicted when they left that they'd be home before Memorial Day just because of



the nature of the air war," explained Brig. Gen. David Wherley Jr., the wing's former commander who is now serving as the acting commanding general for the DC National Guard.

"But we still have people over there, and I'm concerned about them," Wherley added. About 150 members of the DC Army Guard's 547th Transportation Company are serving in Kuwait, and members of the 113th Wing's Security Forces Squadron remain on duty in Southwest Asia, said Capt. Sheldon Smith, a DC Guard spokesman.

Waiting for her husband of 15 years to step off the bus when it pulled up to Hangar 8 "makes this the happiest day of all," said one wife who had asked her three children to hold the flowers and signs they had brought with them. Her son had drawn a "Welcome Home, Dad" cardboard flag on March 24, she said.

"I'm not holding anything but daddy," she laughed. "It's so nice to come back to this hangar for a happy occasion," she added, recalling that trying Friday in February when the same Guard members said their final good-byes before going off to war. "My last memory of him is watching him walk away." Now she can remember him walking back into "good old Hangar 8."

Deployment Excellence Competition

Billy E. Birdwell

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — Army National Guard units can compete for an Army deployment award.

Army National Guard units which deploy for any contingency or support deploying units can compete for the Army's Deployment Excellence Award, according to Army National Guard officials.

The program, now in its third year, recognizes units of various sizes for outstanding mission accomplishments, which meet or exceed established deployment standards, according to its stated mission.

Army Guard units have nothing to lose and lots of recognition to gain by entering the competition, according to Henry Johnson of Fort Eustis, the program manager for the Deployment Excellence Award.

This Army-level award is open to most units or installations that deployed or supported a deployment during the competition year which runs April 2002 through March 2003.

The competition covers four categories: large and small deploying units, supporting unit and installation. The winners receive special plaques presented by the Army chief of staff plus two members of the winning units receive funded trips to the Pentagon award ceremony.

"Our biggest concern is that there are units out there doing a good job [deploying or supporting deployments] that aren't being recognized" for their efforts, Johnson said. Units need not wait for another level of command to nominate them. The competition is through self-nomination, he explained.

"We recommend units go on-line and download the checklists. As a unit deploys they can go down the checklist to prepare for the award as they deploy," he said.

Units and installations competing for the DEA are evaluated on their ability to plan and execute a deployment or deployment support mission. Units and installations are only permitted to compete for the award based on a single deployment or deployment support event the unit or installation participated in during the award competition year. This event has to be identified by the unit or installation as the basis for the award in the Unit Deployment Profile nomination packet submitted by each competing unit.

Details on the competition, eligibility, self-nomination procedures and checklists are available at the Deployment Excellence Award website,

<http://www.deploy.eustis.army.mil/dea> or by contacting Mr. Henry Johnson, program manager (Commercial) 757-878-1833 (DSN) 826-1833 or Ms. Val Hladky, board secretariat (Commercial) 757-878-1983 (DSN) 826-1983 (FAX) 757-878-1834.

Troop morale and welfare top priority for new Chief

ARLINGTON, Va. — Take care of yourselves and your people. That is among the many messages that Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum has emphasized to military and civilian supervisors since becoming the 25th chief of the National Guard Bureau in April.

"What we are is not about machines, it's about people. They are our most precious resource," Blum told several hundred members of the Guard Bureau's staff in Arlington, Va., on May 9.

That applies to staff members and their families because, Blum pointed out, 70 percent of the today's National Guard members are married.

"Now, when you're talking about a Guard member, you're talking about that member's family," said Blum who has been married for 35 years and who has two grown children and three grandchildren. "Programs like Family Support are readiness issues. They're just as important as having Humvees. They're just as important as having the [most modern] piece of equipment."

He assured supervisors that they have "maximum flexibility to accommodate their people" — to give them regular days off to recharge their batteries and to give them time to deal with family emergencies.

"There will be times when you're not going to be able to take days off because of the nature of the business that we

have," Blum said. "If we've got something to do, we're going to do it. But we don't have something to do that requires you to cheat time from your families all of the time."

Furthermore, the new chief has linked career advancement to how well his people take care of themselves and others.

"My intent is to treat everyone as I want to be treated, with dignity and respect. Dignity and respect is what I'm asking for everyone," Blum said.

"I will not promote you ahead of your peers because you work more days than everybody else," he added. "I'm not going to promote you ahead of your peers because you work 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

"I will promote you because you demonstrate that you have leadership and adaptability, that you're willing to take risks, that you're willing to build the team, and that you make people feel good about working around you."

"If you burn your people out, you're not making points with me," Blum cautioned. "If you grind your people up, you're not making points with me. If you're an abusive leader, I have no use for you because that violates the value I place on dignity and respect and the value I place on human resources. We can't be doing that to each other."

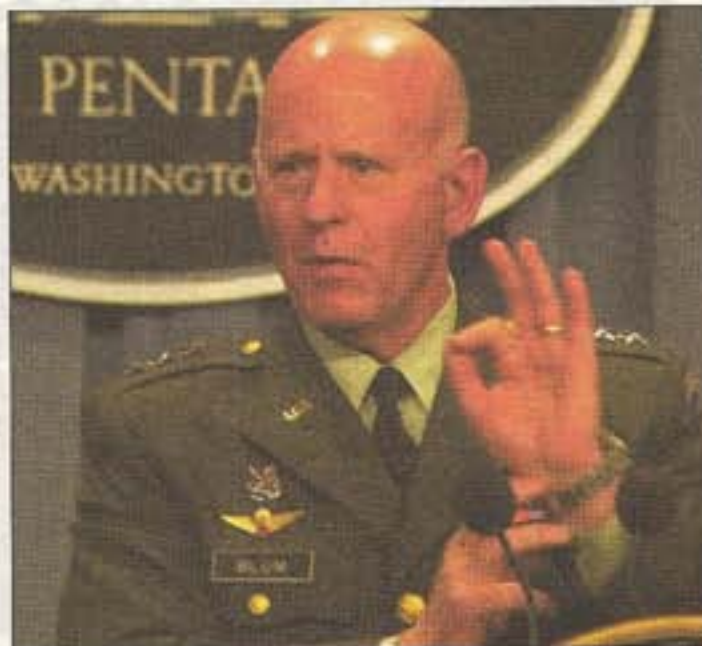


Photo by Helene C. Stikkel, Department of Defense
Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, explains his plans for transforming the National Guard into a more responsive force to Pentagon reporters on May 16.

FROM PAGE 1

Change

about that. We have been performing that mission since 1636, and the American people expect no less of the National Guard during these trying times," said the no-nonsense Blum about the war against global terrorism.

One hundred, 48 thousand citizen-soldiers and airmen were serving in the United States and in 44 other countries, including Iraq and Afghanistan, on May's third Sunday when he met with the adjutants general, Blum pointed out.

"We will continue to honor that commitment by transforming into a more efficient and accessible force," he said. "We are not going to let turf and parochialism get in the way of doing what is right for America."

"We fight jointly, and we need to train and operate on a daily basis in a joint environment so we can make the transition [from citizen to soldier] very quickly. After all, our symbol is the Minuteman," Blum told Pentagon reporters on May 16.

"We will be better understood by our active duty counterparts. We will then be seen for what we are — reliable, ready, and accessible," he predicted.

Blum has ordered the National Guard Bureau, which currently consists of a joint staff and separate directorates for the Army and Air Guard, to become a joint headquarters by July 1 of this year. He has asked the states to establish joint headquarters, and do away with state area commands for Army Guard forces, by Oct. 1.

Lieutenant Gen. Roger Schultz, director of the Army Guard, and Lt. Gen. Daniel James III, director of the Air Guard, will serve as deputy chiefs of the Guard Bureau, Blum explained. The next vice chief of the Guard Bureau will become the chief of staff for the joint bureau, he added.

Blum is also urging the states to include

members of other military components, including the Coast Guard, in their joint headquarters. He said he would do that at the Guard Bureau that is based in Arlington, Va.

"We will not fund state area commands by Oct. 1. We will fund joint headquarters," Blum said in central Ohio. "The joint world is no longer a theory. It's a reality."

Indeed, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld addressed both issues on the same Armed Forces Day weekend that Blum took his vision for the National Guard's transformation to Ohio.

"Joint and combined war-fighting is our path to the future," said Rumsfeld during the May 16 opening ceremony for the Joint Services Open House at Andrews Air Force Base, Md. He was referring to the unprecedented manner in which the different services have worked closely together to conduct Operation Iraqi Freedom and the war against terrorists in Afghanistan.

"We are seeing signs of transformation all around us," the defense secretary added. "We have to keep that up. The challenge is to maintain true jointness in war-fighting."

"The adjutants general accepted very favorably the things that Lt. Gen. Blum laid out for them," said Kane, the adjutant general for Idaho. "They are looking for a few more details, but, overall, his ideas were very well accepted."

Kane said they could meet the Oct. 1 deadline for reorganizing the state commands into joint headquarters.

"It will push us, but that's fine," Kane said. "Sometimes it's better to be pushed than to be pulled."

Major Gen. Robert G.F. Lee, who became Hawaii's adjutant general on Jan. 1, said he has already begun forming a joint National Guard headquarters in that state.

"I didn't know how far I could go with it. But Lt. Gen. Blum has made it clear I can make our headquarters as joint as I want to,"

he explained.

Lee, who commanded U.S. Army Reserve forces in the Pacific Command before becoming Hawaii's National Guard leader, predicted he could easily entice other reserve components to assign representatives to his state's headquarters.

Officials claim this transformation is as significant for the country's largest military reserve force as two are other chapters of National Guard history. One was the Militia Act of 1903, also called the Dick Act, that established federal guidelines for organizing, training and equipping the Guard in line with standards established for the regular Army. The second was the creation of the Air National Guard in 1947 that led to separate Army and Air Guard directorates.

The historic agreement among the National Guard's leaders occurred in a state steeped in history. Seven U.S. presidents have been born in Ohio. The Wright brothers lived in Ohio and became the first people to fly a powered aircraft 100 years ago this December. Ohio natives John Glenn Jr. and Neil Armstrong became, respectively, the first American to orbit the earth and the first person to set foot on the moon.

The adjutants general, 34 of whom belong to the Army Guard, hope that forming joint headquarters that are more in line with the active forces' will streamline the process for mobilizing Army Guard soldiers for federal duty.

They believe that citizen-soldiers who have already been processed and prepared at their home stations should not have to go through the same process at active Army mobilization stations before they are deployed.

"We don't need to be double checked and triple checked every time our troops get activated," Lee said.

The Air Guard routinely deploys troops from their home stations, it was pointed out.

The adjutants general also paid heed to

Blum's proposals for improving the Guard's capabilities for defending the homeland.

Homeland defense, he explained, ranges from full-scale combat operations in places like Iraq and Afghanistan to flying combat air patrols over U.S. cities, providing security along international borders and at ports of entry, and safeguarding air bases in this country.

It reflects the National Guard's dual role as state forces commanded by the nation's governors and as a federal force when ordered to active duty by the president.

Blum's proposals focus on enhancing capabilities, adding to mission essential task lists for combat arms units, and task organizing. They include:

Organizing chemical, biological and incident response task forces to include assets from the Guard's 32 full-time civil support teams, enhanced medical companies that can decontaminate and treat 150 people per hour, engineer companies with special search and rescue equipment, and combat units trained to support law enforcement agencies.

Expanding the Guard's involvement in ground-based missile defense over and above the unit that is currently being formed to staff a facility that is expected to be operational in Alaska by Oct. 1, 2004.

Creating quick and rapid Guard reaction forces that are immediately available to state and federal governments and that are trained for both combat and security duties.

These new forces can be formed with personnel and resources that are already available to the Guard, Blum said. They will not require a lot of new, expensive, sophisticated equipment.

"This will require a new way of thinking," the Guard Bureau chief added. "Most real transformation happens right between your ears. It's not about hardware, and it's not about information technology. It's about how you think. And we need to change the way we think."

Casualty assistance: Bearing the bad news

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — Senior Master Sgt. Larry Harris remembers his grief and how helpless he felt on March 3, 2001, and for many days afterwards, when he heard the numbing news that 18 members of the Virginia Air National Guard had been killed in a plane crash in Georgia.

He felt the grief of losing 18 friends, civil engineers with the 203rd Red Horse Flight, who were being flown back to Virginia Beach on an airplane belonging to the Florida Army National Guard.

He felt helpless because he did not know how to help the victims' families, beyond offering his own condolences, as they began arriving at Camp Pendleton, Va., where Harris was the noncommissioned officer in charge of the flight's personnel section.

"I knew all 18 of [the victims] very well," Harris said. "But I didn't know the first thing about casualty assistance. I really didn't know what to do."

Thankfully, other casualty assistance representatives were immediately available to help those grief-stricken families through their ordeal. Now, Harris could also do his part.

He and 29 other Air Guard personnel from Virginia to Alaska have completed a three-day workshop at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., dealing with Air Force casualty services. That involves the procedures to be followed should families have to be told that a loved one is injured or missing or dead.

The Air National Guard is making a concerted effort to train people to do just that and to help the survivors obtain the assistance and the benefits to which they are entitled.

It is a sad fact that people in uniform do not always come home safe and sound and that their families have to be

"This is valuable information about how to notify the next of kin and who the benefits go to. It's important to have a comprehensive casualty reporting system in place so that everybody knows what to do if casualties have to be reported."

— Senior Master Sgt. Larry Harris

cared for, pointed out Col. Tod Bunting, the Air National Guard's director of Diversity, Personnel and Training.

"I hope this workshop will be a waste of your time and that you'll never need to use this information," Bunting said. "But the world being what it is, you just never know."

Indeed, two members of the Air Guard were killed in Kuwait and in Afghanistan in late March, and their families had to be notified and helped, class members were reminded.

Three classes, 90 people in all, have taken the training, and the intent is to have casualty assistance representatives trained for all 90 Air Guard mission support flights by Sept. 30, the end of this fiscal year, said Capt. John Morrow, chief of the Air Guard's Customer Operations. That, he explained, includes primary representatives as well as personnel supervisors and alternates.

The next class will be held at San Antonio, Texas, in July. Another has been scheduled for Andrews in August, Morrow said.

"We are on schedule to train about 150 personnel, including directors of personnel, personnel superintendents, and primary and alternate casualty assistance representatives by the end of our last scheduled class in August," Morrow explained.

Casualty assistance, class members have been told, is

one of the military's most sensitive assignments. It involves helping survivors come to grips with perhaps the most heart-wrenching situation of their lives and to deal with military procedures that most probably don't understand.

The Air Force's Casualty Charter states it best: "Provide dignified, compassionate, and humane notification and assistance to family members and other designated persons as promptly as possible after a member's casualty status is determined."

"This is a total force effort to train members of the Air National Guard, the Air Force Reserve and the active Air Force on how to report casualties and how to meet the needs of the family members," Morrow said.

There's a lot more to that business than going to a family's home with the bad news and a check.

A ream of paper slides was the lesson plan for the three-day course. Scott Hand, chief of Casualty Operations at the Air Force Personnel Center, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, was the lead instructor. Hand explained he has been in the business for about 30 years, during his 24 years in the Air Force and now as a civilian.

Class members also served as instructors to explain requirements that are unique to the Air Force's active and reserve components, Morrow said.

The final exam took the form of the game show "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" It was an upbeat way for the class to conclude the comprehensive course that everyone understood covered a serious subject.

"When reporting an aircraft accident, report only the status of whom?"

was one of the questions. "Everybody on board, military and civilian," was the answer.

"Currently, what percent of gratuity pay is taxable?" was another question. "Fifty percent" was that answer.

"I'm not looking for you to be experts," Hand told the class that included a cross section of personnel specialists — including airmen first class, chief master sergeants and a second lieutenant — for whom casualty support would be an additional duty. "This just gives you the basics — and the numbers to call if you need help."

"This is my third National Guard class, and I've grown more and more impressed with the Guard's people," Hand said at the Air National Guard's Readiness Center.

"This gives me a lot more confidence about going back to my unit," said Tech. Sgt. Jen Singh, from the Alaska Air Guard's 168th Mission Support Flight at Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks.

"Since we serve on an active duty base, the Air Force would support us," she explained. "But the Guard is a family, and we want to take care of our own."

"This is valuable information about how to notify the next of kin and who the benefits go to," said Harris, now the full-time personnel superintendent for the Virginia Air Guard's 192nd Mission Support Flight at Sandston, Va. "It's important to have a comprehensive casualty reporting system in place so that everybody knows what to do if casualties have to be reported."



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell, National Guard Bureau

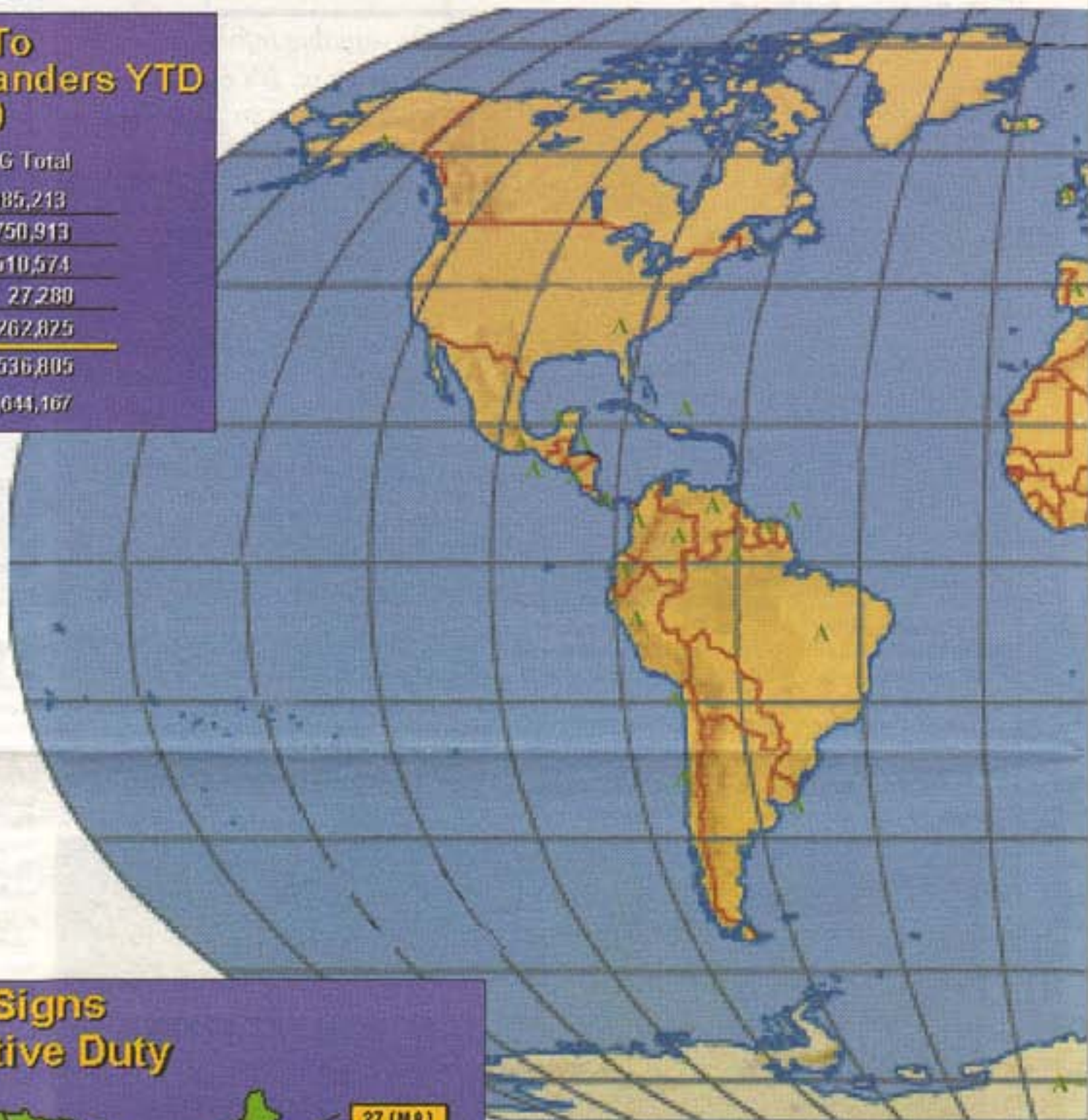
Ohio Air National Guard Master Sgt. Jeffrey Holaday won a Texas T-shirt because he answered 16 questions during the informal final test for 30 Air Guard members who attended a three-day casualty services workshop at Andrews Air Force Base, Md. Instructor Scott Hand, right, from Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, was the quiz master.

Defending the homeland and uph



Support To Combatant Commanders YTD (Mandays)

	ARRNG Total
CENTCOM	2,985,213
EUROCOM	750,913
NORTHCOM*	8,510,574
PACOM	27,280
SOUTHCOM	262,825
FY03 YTD Total	12,536,805
FY02 YTD	3,044,167



Vital Signs State Active Duty



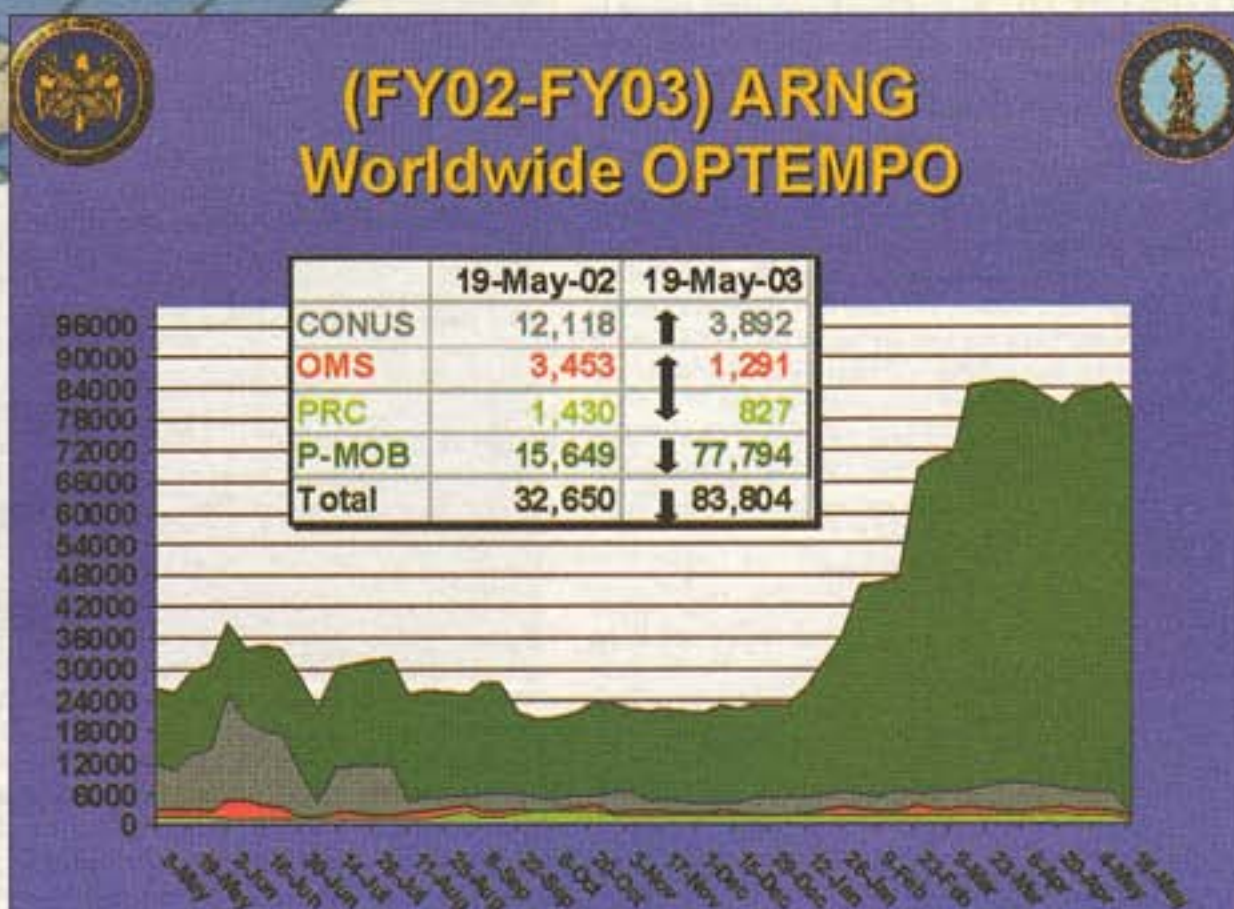
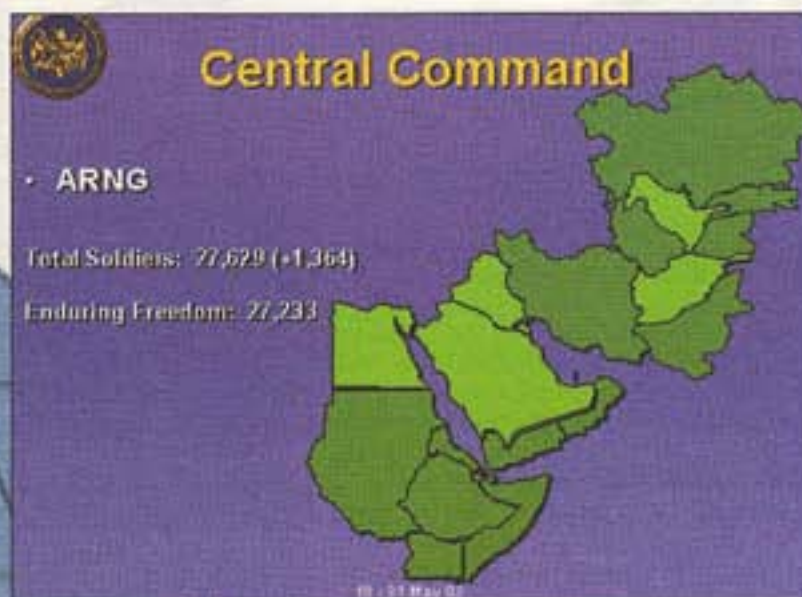
ARRNG & ANIG Personnel on State Active Duty as of 20 MAY 03: 349 (+ 23)

	FY03 (YTD)	FY02 (YTD)	FY02 (EOY TOTAL)
States Conducting Opns	42	40	62
Total Operations	153	146	263
Total Man-days	287,889	458,420	645,419

18 - 31 May 03



holding freedom around the globe



Nebraska Guardsmen clearing the road to peace

By Lt. Col. Craig Johnson
and Cpt. Aaron Jordan
68th Engineer Battalion

TALLIL AIRBASE, Iraq – The 109th Engineer Battalion's subordinate unit, the 68th Engineer Company of Ft. Hood, Texas continues to lead the way in clearing critical areas for occupation for forces deploying to Tallil Airbase at Logistical Support Area (LSA) Adder.

The Mine Clearing Armored Protected (MCAP) dozer is the workhorse used by engineers to conduct this vital mission. This dozer is uniquely equipped with special blades that roll the earth into rows thus exposing mines and other unexploded ordnance (UXO). The MCAP dozer is hardened with extra layers of steel and bulletproof glass that protects the operator from harm if a mine explodes during the process. Even experienced dozer operators must learn new techniques and procedures to operate the



Photo courtesy of the 109th Engineer Battalion

(Above) Members of the 109th Engineer Battalion pose for a group photo in Kuwait. (Left) A Mine Clearing Armored Protective (MCAP) dozer clears area for 12th Aviation Brigade.

equipment as it severely limits their ability to see the work.

This is the battalion's first experience at working with this type of dozer. Two of the three MCAP dozers are used for proofing large tracks of land to be used as living or

work areas. The third is configured to breach lanes through minefields for units in offense operations.

The MCAP dozer's armored protection lends itself to other high risk missions. The MCAP is currently being used to demolish

buildings and clear rubble from a future logistical support area near Tallil Airbase, Iraq. The re-enforced dozer with an armor protective cab provides the operator a safe environment from falling debris from a clashing structure.

Iraq war ends, South Dakota Guard's role increases

By Public Affairs Staff,
South Dakota National Guard

RAPID CITY, ND – As Coalition Forces claim victory in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, troops are now faced with maintaining order and rebuilding the war-torn country. Engineers, truck drivers, medical personnel are in high demand.

That stabilization process will undoubtedly put greater demands on the five South Dakota Army National Guard units now deployed to Kuwait and Iraq.

Five weeks after the conflict began, more than a third of the 1,500 Army Guard soldiers activated for Operation Enduring Freedom/Noble Eagle are now serving in the Gulf region. If plans continue, that number will increase in May when two more Guard units move out to support the effort.

"You might think the war is over, but there is a lot of work left to do," said Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, adjutant general. "Our people have the skills and equipment to help in the rebuilding phase of this operation."

Missions in Iraq

Sturgis' 109th Engineer Battalion was the first unit to deploy to Kuwait and was the only South Dakota unit in the region when the ground war began March 20. The 39-member headquarters unit arrived in Kuwait in mid-February and crossed the Kuwait border into Iraq on the fourth day of the war.

With its two attached engineer companies, the 109th advanced to a logistical support area near the Tallil Air Base where it provided essential engineering support to the 86th Combat Support Hospital (CSH) during the first critical days

of the war.

"We worked closely with the 86th CSH personnel to ensure that its hospital bed-down area was constructed quickly," said Lt. Col. Craig Johnson, 109th commander. "The hospital provided medical services for soldiers and civilians injured during the conflict. It had to be expanded three times over the next several weeks."

In the early stages of the war, the soldiers of the 109th were called upon to help as litter carriers during a mass casualty event at the hospital. Upon receiving the call for assistance, the soldiers grabbed their battle gear and rushed to the hospital.

"The hospital didn't have sufficient personnel to handle the large amount of casualties that were arriving by ground and air," said Johnson. "So, the unit was broken into four-man teams to assist moving patients to the hospital. That day brought the first effects of war to the eyes of our soldiers."

On the first weekend of April, three more S.D. units deployed to Kuwait to include the 727th Transportation Company, 200th Engineer Company and Company B, 109th Medical Battalion.

Soldiers of the 200th Engineer Company from Pierre, Chamberlain, Mobridge and Lemmon are currently off-loading equipment from ships at a Kuwaiti port.

"Our first mission when we got here was to unload ships at port," said 1st Lt. Dana Limbo, platoon leader. "We were unloading ships in 10 to 20 hours compared to two or three days."

Since their bridge transport vehicles are capable of hauling shipping containers, truck drivers began delivering containers to units in the field. The 200th is expected to move out of

that area within several days to support a mission in Northern Iraq.

The 727th of Elk Point, Brookings and Watertown, got all its equipment rounded up by Easter Sunday and prepared to move into Iraq with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. The unit is hauling water, supplies and food items.

South Dakota's medical unit, Company B, 109th Med. Bn., Vermillion, is waiting to find out if it will be assigned to a humanitarian medical mission. If not, the unit could be home sooner than expected.

The 740th of Milbank and Brookings, arrived in Kuwait after the 727th and began to off-load its equipment and haul supplies from Kuwait into Iraq.

Back in the States

The 235th Military Police Company, from Custer and Rapid City, has joined the military police team at Fort Carson. After completing the 94-hour Enhanced Military Police Certification program and ride-along program, the 35th hit the road to perform law enforcement duties on the installation.

One hundred twenty members of the 665th Maintenance Company of Mitchell and Rapid City are providing security at Ellsworth Air Force Base and Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls.

Rapid City's 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment remains at Fort Riley, Kan., awaiting future orders. Its possible the 129th will return home in late May.

Both the 1742nd Transportation Company of Flandreau and Sioux Falls and the 842nd Engineer Company of Spearfish, Belle Fourche, and Sturgis continue to train at Fort Carson.



News Makers

Fallen Guardsmen laid to rest

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Idaho Air National Guard Maj. Gregg Stone, who died from wounds during Operation Iraqi Freedom, was laid to rest with full honors among many of America's military heroes during a burial service at Arlington National Cemetery on April 17.

"He will rest here with those of like mind and determination, the determination to see this nation remain a beacon of light to a world searching for true liberty," Air Force Chaplain (Capt.)

Mark Thomas told several hundred members of Stone's personal and military families during the Easter Week graveside eulogy.

Stone died at a U.S. Army field hospital in Kuwait on March 25 from injuries he suffered two days earlier when a U.S. Army soldier allegedly tossed a grenade into the tent in which Stone was sleeping.

Stone was the second U.S. service member killed in that attack, and he is one of 126 who have died during the war. Stone was the first Air Force casualty. Army Sgt. Hasan Akbar has been charged in the grenade attack.

The 40-year-old Stone had been a traditional Guard member with the 124th Air Support Operations Squadron, part of the Idaho Air Guard's 124th Wing in Boise, since October 2000. He had previously been an electronic warfare officer on B-52 and B-1 bombers during his 17 years in the Air Force.

He was serving as an air liaison officer with the Army's 101st Airborne Division at Camp Pennsylvania when he died six days into the war against the Iraqi regime of President Saddam Hussein.

The Air Guard officer was said to be the fifth U.S. service member killed during the war for Iraqi freedom to be buried at Arlington, this country's most famous military cemetery.

Stone's family accepted the Bronze Star Medal that was posthumously awarded to the man for preparing a 24-man tactical air control party "for combat operations in a chemical environment."

Brigadier General Gary Saylor, commander of the 124th Wing in Idaho, presented the medal and accompanying certificate to Stone's two young sons.

"During the opening days of Operation Iraqi Freedom, he and his unit successfully endured multiple missile attacks as they prepared to engage the enemy," the citation stated.

"Your father believed in his life's calling ... He joined the Air National Guard so that each of you might have the opportunity to experience the joys of growing up in a free and democratic society," Chaplain Thomas told Stone's sons. Lieutenant Gen. Joseph Wehrle Jr., Air Force assistant vice chief of staff, presented American flags to Stone's fiancée and to his parents.

Army National Guard Maj. Gen. H. Steven Blum, the new chief of the National Guard Bureau, led a large delegation of National Guard and other military mourners during the service at Section 60 where the hardwood trees displayed the emerging green leaves of a new spring.

Army Capt. Andras Marton, a 101st Airborne soldier who was badly injured during the same grenade attack that took Stone's life, gamely stood up from his wheelchair on his heavily bandaged left leg to salute his departed comrade before the service started.

He was wheeled close to the casket for a final somber tribute after members of the U.S. Air Force Honor Guard fired a 21-gun salute and played "Taps" to signal that it was over.

Four A-10 jet fighters from the Maryland Air Guard's 175th Wing performed a missing-man fly-over before the service. A horse-drawn caisson, led by a rider-less horse, then carried Stone's flag-draped casket to the burial site.

A funeral service was held for Stone in Boise on April 5 and a memorial service was held at Gowen Field on April 6.

* Indiana Army National Guard Spc. William Jeffries, 39, died on March 31 in Rota, Spain, where he was taken after becoming ill in Kuwait.

A military official said he suffered a blood clot in his lung and acute pancreatitis, Indiana newspapers reported.

Jeffries, who lived in Evansville, Ind., was a member of the 152nd Infantry Regiment. His unit was part of two Indiana Army Guard infantry battalions that were deployed to Kuwait.

He graduated from Reitz High School in Evansville in 1982 and served 10 years in the Air Force before joining the National Guard. Survivors include his wife and his mother.

* The Florida National Guard's first casualty in Operation Iraqi Freedom was laid to rest in a ceremony in Gainesville recently.

Cpl. John Travis Rivero, 23, was killed

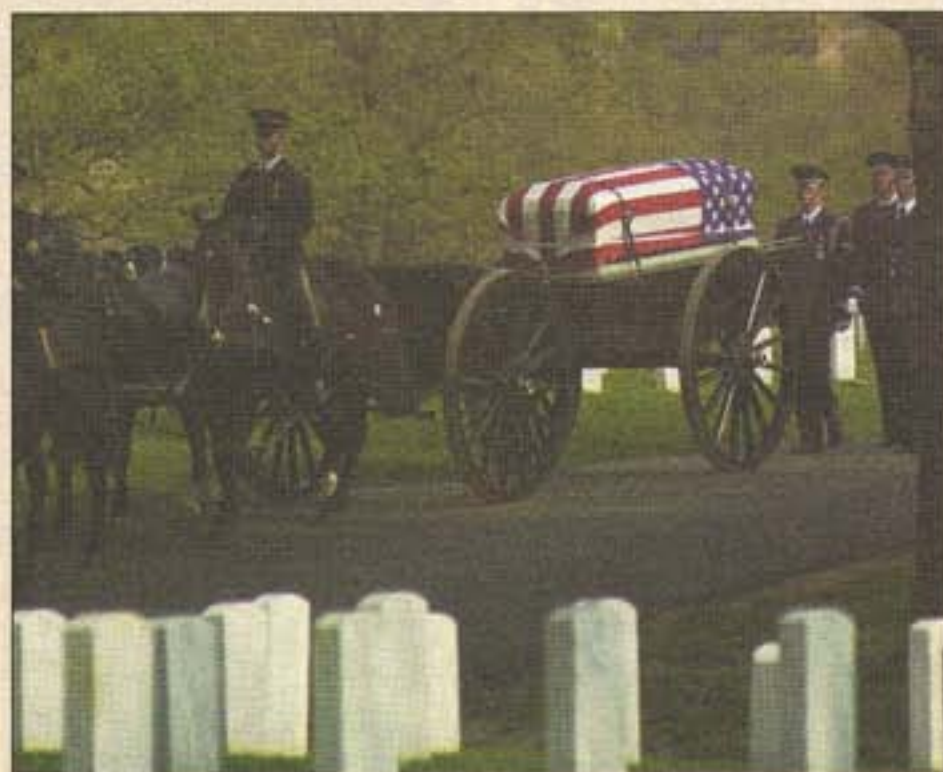


Photo by 2nd Lt. Kimberly Smith, Air National Guard

(Above) The coffin containing the body of Idaho Air National Guard Maj. Gregg Stone is carried toward his grave before a burial service at Arlington National Cemetery on April 17.

(Below) Honor Guard soldiers fold the flag draped across the casket of Cpl. John Travis Rivero.

when the Humvee he was riding in overturned while on patrol in western Iraq on April 17.

During the funeral Rivero was posthumously awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and Florida Cross. Brig. Gen. David Godwin, commander of the 53rd Infantry Brigade, presented the awards to Rivero's family.

Rivero was described by friends as a

"model soldier" who was proud of his service to help free the Iraqi people. His friends also remembered him as someone who would go out of his way to help a friend in need.

Rivero is the first casualty, in a combat zone, for the Florida National Guard since 1991 when Sgt. Tracey Brogdon of the 325th Maintenance Company was killed in a vehicle accident in Saudi Arabia.



Air Defense Artillery protects the capital

By Sgt. 1st Class Eric Wedeking
National Guard Bureau

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Both the Army and Air National Guard creatively continue to lead the way in Homeland Defense as the 111th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, an Army Guard unit from New Mexico provides command and control while Air National Guard air traffic controllers and an active-duty short-range air defense battalion mount a strong air defense around the nation's capital.

Initially, active-duty U.S. Army air defense artillery units from Fort Bliss and Fort Hood, Texas, deployed Avenger, Stinger and other command and control assets around Washington, D.C. in February, but as the months have rolled on, more and more National Guard units are being called in to support the mission.

"It started out as an all-active duty mission. Now, we've come to provide command and control over active-duty assets. It eventually has the potential to be an all-Guard mission," said New Mexico Army National Guard Maj.

Larry Wilbanks, an operations officer for the 111th Air Defense Artillery Brigade normally headquartered in Albuquerque. "It's really going well. We've got a mix of active duty and both Air and Army National Guard. It's true jointness."

After four months of operations, Wilbanks predicted the air defense provided not only by the Avenger and hand-held Stingers, federal aircraft and District of Columbia Air National Guard combat air patrols would continue into the foreseeable future.

"More than likely, this mission is not going to be going away any time soon. This is an integrated air defense mission within the National Capital Region involving joint coordination with all of the (Homeland Security) federal agencies," he added. "Our mission is on the cutting edge, we're leading the way and we'll eventually be writing the tactics, techniques and procedures and future air defense doctrine."

The Avenger missile systems are presently being manned by troops with the 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery

Regiment from Fort Hood. Initially, the U.S. Army troops from the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade from Fort Bliss, Texas, provided command and control, but they have since re-deployed. The site of the desert camouflaged Avengers caused a stir in the Washington, D.C., area when an Avenger fire unit was spotted by curious commuters in February sitting near the Anacostia River directly within eyeshot of the Washington Monument.

Photos of the fire unit appeared in newspapers around the country and the world while traffic backups were reported following the sightings. But now, local residents would be hard-pressed to see the Avengers.

Wilbanks would not elaborate on specific troop numbers, specific capabilities, or Avenger, Stinger or radar site locations because of obvious security concerns.

Besides the U.S. Army air defense missile operators and New Mexico Army National Guard air defense headquarters decision-makers, Mississippi Air National Guard citizen-aiirmen with the Gulfport-based 255th Air Control Squadron are also providing high-tech radar, computer and satellite communications support to the joint operation.

A Persian Gulf War veteran previously serving in a missile battery for the U.S. Army in 1991, Tech. Sgt. Curtis Bounds of Biloxi, Miss., who now serves as a satellite communications technician with the 255th took time off from his busy real estate investment business to venture to the Washington, D.C., area to help protect the nation's capital.

Also, Bounds said his unit's deployment is proving less taxing than compared to the more demanding environment of Southwest Asian deserts more than a decade ago. Now, troops live and work in the cosmopolitan District of Columbia area.

"There is no comparison to this and 10 years ago living out in the middle of the desert in a foxhole with the sand blowing all over. In the desert it was very miserable versus now. We're just living good," he said. "Back then (during the first Persian Gulf War) I was single, and young and dumb. Now I'm older, I've got a wife and kids so now I know better."

The ground-breaking mission the National Guard is providing as part of the nation's overall homeland security mission was recognized as being so critical Lt. Gen. Roger Schultz, director of the Army National Guard, and Command Sgt. Maj. A. Frank Lever III, command sergeant major for the Army National Guard, both in nearby Arlington, Va., recently paid the capital air defenders a visit.

Watching air traffic controllers contacting various federal agencies for confirmation on the identification of several unidentified small aircraft flying in the region, the Army National Guard leaders said they were impressed with the joint-military nature, complexity and precision of the air-defense operations.

"This is a serious piece of work," Schultz said after meeting with troops. "You and I are carrying on a tradition in a special way what the National Guard represents" the tradition of the "Minuteman."

Wilbanks said the New Mexico Army

National Guard troops literally continue to uphold the Minuteman spirit because they were alerted, mobilized and deployed on 24-hours notice.

"With the urgency of this mission, we basically mobilized in one day. Our unit was mobilized and out the door very quickly," Wilbanks said. "And all the military installations in and around D.C. have been supporting us. They've bent over backwards."

Lever said the air defense operation, originally dubbed "Operation Clear Skies" following a series of successful exercises simulating various air attack scenarios, is important for the Washington, D.C., area because it symbolizes the importance of the Guard's historic homeland defense mission.

For the National Guard, Lever said lightning-quick response times are now the norm.

"We may be going right from home station to deployment," Lever said. "What's that say to all of these sergeants I see here? We have to be ready all the time. We're putting a big responsibility on our noncommissioned officers."

Since being in operation in mid-February, Wilbanks reported few incursions into restricted airspace around the National Capital Region, saying only that they detect and properly react to both large and small aircraft flying in restricted airspace without previously gaining permission.

"It's mostly been people who aren't paying attention to flight instructions and flying into area municipal and regional airports," Wilbanks said. "But we're very confident in our reaction times and procedures."

Tens of thousands of federal employees and U.S. military troops would tip their hats in appreciation for the "low-profile" warriors protecting the skies over Washington, D.C.

One such soldier, Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Cyrus, an administrative specialist serving at the Army National Guard Readiness Center in Arlington, Va., knows the valuable protection air defense artillery men and women provide to the nation since he previously served as a Stinger crewman during a stint in the U.S. Army.

"On average, the air defense artillery soldier is the best-informed and fully dimensional soldier on the conventional battlefield," Cyrus said. "I've heard from many military families around the capital region who said they are extremely grateful these unsung National Guard citizen-soldiers and airmen are protecting the entire region."



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Wedeking, National Guard Bureau

(Above) Mississippi Air National Guard Staff Sgt. David Washington of the 255th Air Control Squadron checks gauges on one of several 60 kilowatt generators while his and other units defend the skies over Washington, D.C. (Right) Command Sgt. Maj. A. Frank Lever III (far right) speaks to New Mexico Army National Guard citizen-soldiers helping provide air defense artillery support around the Washington, D.C., area while Lt. Gen. Roger Schultz, director of the Army National Guard, listens to Lever's comments



West Virginia Air National Guard crew drops off cargo in Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Victoria Meyer

485th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

UNDISCLOSED LOCATION – Aware of the threats on the ground around Baghdad, a crew of six C-130 West Virginia Air National Guard air crew members, who are deployed to a desert air base in Southwest Asia, loaded up their gear April 18 and headed for Iraq.

The mission was similar to the ones in the past but this felt a little different to the crew. It was their first trip into Baghdad, and it was a daytime mission.

"There is a higher level of threat because it is a daytime mission," Maj. Sea Chavers, the aircraft commander, said. "They can see us from the ground," Chavers explained.

"But we have been waiting to get into Baghdad. For us it is like getting into the game," he expressed about his crew.

"It was different going into Baghdad because there was so much going on on the ground," said Maj. Bart Cavendish, navigator, who will miss the birth of his second child while he is deployed.

This particular crew has been delivering cargo to mainly remote locations where there aren't a lot of towns and buildings to scan. The entire crew constantly scans the area to look for threats, and around Baghdad there were several towns to be aware of.

The crew members said it was great to do what they were actually trained for, combat missions. Even though before they were deployed they expected to be doing primarily scheduled theater airlift.

In Desert Storm, the West Virginia C-130s flew mainly combat support missions and rarely flew into the combat area.

So far in Operation Iraqi Freedom, almost all C-130 sorties have been combat sorties, Col. Randy K. Jones said. Jones is the 485th Operations Group commander here.

"We train for combat missions about 90 percent of the time," Chavers said.

The six crew members not only fly together, they sleep in the same tent, eat at the same dining facility, and spend most of their off time together.

"As soon as Sept. 11 happened, I knew it was inevitable that we were going to participate in a significant way."

– Maj. Bart Cavendish

"This is better than a debrief because if you do something wrong, you hear about it for days," co-pilot 1st Lt. Brian Preece said. Crews are not changed in a wartime environment to help establish and maintain consistency among aircrews.

"Crews are selected based on experience level and how they well they gel together," Tech. Sgt. Shane Crum, flight engineer, said.

Each member of the crew doesn't have time to worry about what someone else is doing and if they are doing it right. "You need to be able to depend on them, especially during combat operations," Chavers said.

This deployment didn't come as much of a surprise for this C-130 crew.

"As soon as Sept. 11 happened, I knew it was inevitable that we were going to participate in a significant way," Cavendish said.

It wasn't a matter of if they got called; it was a matter of when. The West Virginia crew was activated March 3 and deployed March 6.

Some of the crew said that because there was a tangible reason for the war, it was easier to put their lives at home on hold.

It is easier to accept the sacrifices we all are making because there is a direct correlation between Sept. 11 and this war," Chavers said. "The war is a result of us getting attacked."

Not only did the crew drop off valuable cargo to the troops at the Baghdad Airport, but as one young soldier raised a handful of letters to give to the loadmaster, there was unspoken trust that he would send them off for him.

FROM PAGE 1

Deployed

Officers Association in January as the U.S. armed forces were gearing up for Operation Iraqi Freedom. "They helped defend our homeland, they helped drive the Taliban from power, they shut down the terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, and liberated the Afghan people."

"At this moment, Guard and Reserve [members] are patrolling streets, seas, and skies across the globe, disrupting terrorist networks and helping to prevent them from killing more innocent men, women and children," Rumsfeld added. "These contributions have been vital to our success thus far in the global war on terrorism."

"The National Guard is a balanced force. [It] has been a very substantial portion of our nation's strategic reserve," Paul McHale, assistant secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense, recently told the House Subcommittee on National Security.

"We anticipate that in the years ahead, that overseas war fighting mission will be retained, but that it may be enhanced by additional homeland defense missions."

Anyone who thinks otherwise or who wonders why need only listen to Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, the new, no-nonsense chief of the National Guard Bureau, who explains what the Guard is all about in a way that everyone can understand.

"The National Guard's number one priority is the security and defense of our homeland. We have a non-negotiable contract with the American people to win our nation's wars," Blum has told everyone who has gotten to know him or heard him speak since the United States Senate confirmed him as the Guard Bureau's 25th chief on April 11. That, he added, means protecting and comforting Americans close to their homes and taking the fight to enemies far away.

"What's going on in Iraq and Afghanistan these days is an away game," Blum maintains. And the National Guard, he insists, has

been and will continue to be a driving force in the effort to prevent anyone from ever again bringing "an unscheduled home game" to the American people as terrorists in hijacked jetliners did on Sept. 11, 2001.

"We can no longer count on the protection of the oceans. We no longer have the luxury of time to train our soldiers and airmen to fight a war. We have to be ready right now," he states.

He also makes it perfectly clear that he knows it is not a game - like the Yankees playing the Red Sox or the Super Bowl.

"This is very serious work we are about. Very serious work, at a very, very unique and wonderful time in the history of our country," Blum told several hundred members of the Guard Bureau's military and civilian staff in Arlington, Va., on May 9. "You talk about relevance? You're living it. You want to go into combat? You're there. You've got a chance to defend your country - right now."

"What you're doing is probably more meaningful and important now than at any time since before we were a nation," he stressed. "That's the last time that the National Guard was as important as it is today - before we were a nation, when we didn't have an army, when the [militia] from several states had to march to Boston to form the Continental Army for George Washington. That was the first mobilization."

There have been a lot more since then, and the numbers clearly support the idea that the 462,000 members of the Army and Air National Guard are ready to be mobilized and to serve within this country as well as anywhere in the world.

All told, more than 131,000 traditional members of the Army and Air Guard have been mobilized to support that war at home and abroad in the last 20 months, Blum told members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense on May 7. That, he added, is in addition to the Guard's full-time force of 35,000 people whose work-

loads have increased significantly.

Men and women from every American ethnic group and nearly every faith, bankers and teachers and bookkeepers and carpenters leave their homes to become fighter pilots and cooks and infantry soldiers and personnel specialists and combat and civil engineers.

Full-timers answer the call as members of 32 civil support teams certified to check for chemical, biological and radiological agents, the kind that could be delivered by a weapon of mass destruction.

That's the cross-section of Americans who have proven countless times that they can stand with their active duty and other reserve component brothers and sisters to defend this land. Here's what they've been doing during the war against terrorism.

"Operation Noble Eagle has mobilized in excess of 16,000 [Army Guard] soldiers from 36 states and territories to provide force protection at various Department of Defense facilities and at our nation's borders," Blum told the Senate subcommittee.

"Operation Enduring Freedom has mobilized about 16,100 soldiers from 29 states and territories to support the global war on terrorism in Southwest Asia through the U.S. Central Command area of operations," he added.

The Air Guard has also earned its keep, Blum told the senators.

"As fiscal year 2002 came to a close, we had flown 25 percent of the fighter sorties [for Enduring Freedom], 31 percent of the tanker sorties and 27 percent of the airlift sorties," he said.

"Air National Guard citizen-airmen are the backbone of Operation Noble Eagle [in this country]," Blum added. "By the end of 2002, we had flown 74 percent of the fighter sorties, 62 percent of the tanker sorties, and 36 percent of the airlift sorties. We maintained almost 100 percent of the alert sites."

The Air Guard is over achieving in a couple of ways.

Forty-four percent of its security force personnel, for example, are serving on active duty. So are nearly 30 percent of the people in intelligence, services, weather and tactical airlift control elements.

Its F-15 and F-16 fighter wings have been tasked with 64 percent of Noble Eagle missions even though the Guard has 31 percent of the fleet, according to a report from the Air Guard's Readiness Center at Andrews Air Force Base, Md. The same is true for the Guard's KC-135 tanker and C-130 airlift fleets. The tankers, that constitute 43 percent of that fleet, are tasked with 72 percent of the missions. The C-130s are hauling 67 percent of the load with 52 percent of the fleet.

The Army Guard, meanwhile, has sent soldiers to 71 foreign countries since last Oct. 1. It had also mobilized nearly 68,000 soldiers by early May. That included more than 46,000 mobilized for the U.S. Central Command which is responsible for the actions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Guard has paid the price for going into harm's way. Two Army Guard soldiers and an Air Guardsman have been killed in Afghanistan during the past 13 months. Maj. Gregg Stone from Idaho Air Guard was killed in Kuwait during the first week of Iraqi Freedom. He was the first Air Force casualty for that war.

Others have been wounded and injured while serving their country.

Four soldiers with the Pennsylvania Army Guard's 131st Transportation Company serving in Iraq were hospitalized after a piece of unexploded ordnance blew up in a plastic foot locker that was located in the unit's sleeping tent. None of the injuries were described as life threatening.

Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. A. Frank Lever III sadly shook his head about that incident and said, "Well, they're not in Pennsylvania."

The same can be said about a lot of members of the National Guard from every single state and territory. They are deployed.

Florida medics care for troops in Kuwait

By Staff Sgt. Stephen Hudson

Florida National Guard Public Affairs

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — Members of the Florida Army National Guard's Company A, 161st Medical Battalion from Camp Blanding near Starke, Fla., are serving in Kuwait in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

During a conference call with statewide media recently, several unit members were given an opportunity to speak to the media via satellite phone to tell what life was like while deployed.

"Everyone is performing exceptionally well," Maj. Arnold Leeks, commander of Company A, said. "Everyone is working hard and we are in 24 hour operations."

Many of the soldiers put school and civilian careers on hold for what could be more than a year away from family and friends. More than 90 percent of the unit's members work full time in Florida communities and bring their civilian medical experience to their military careers.

One such soldier is Spc. Andrea Goguen.

Goguen, a 21-year-old nursing student at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, said that she was getting great medical experience from the work she is doing at Camp Virginia, Kuwait.

"I miss my family but I am glad to be here," Goguen said. "It's important that we are all here."

The medical staff has been seeing more than 100 patients every day and most of the injuries included broken bones, sprained ankles and respiratory problems.

The soldiers said they are treating mostly American military personnel but were helping with coalition forces and some Iraqi prisoners too.

The Guard soldiers have worked well together and with active duty units added Leeks.

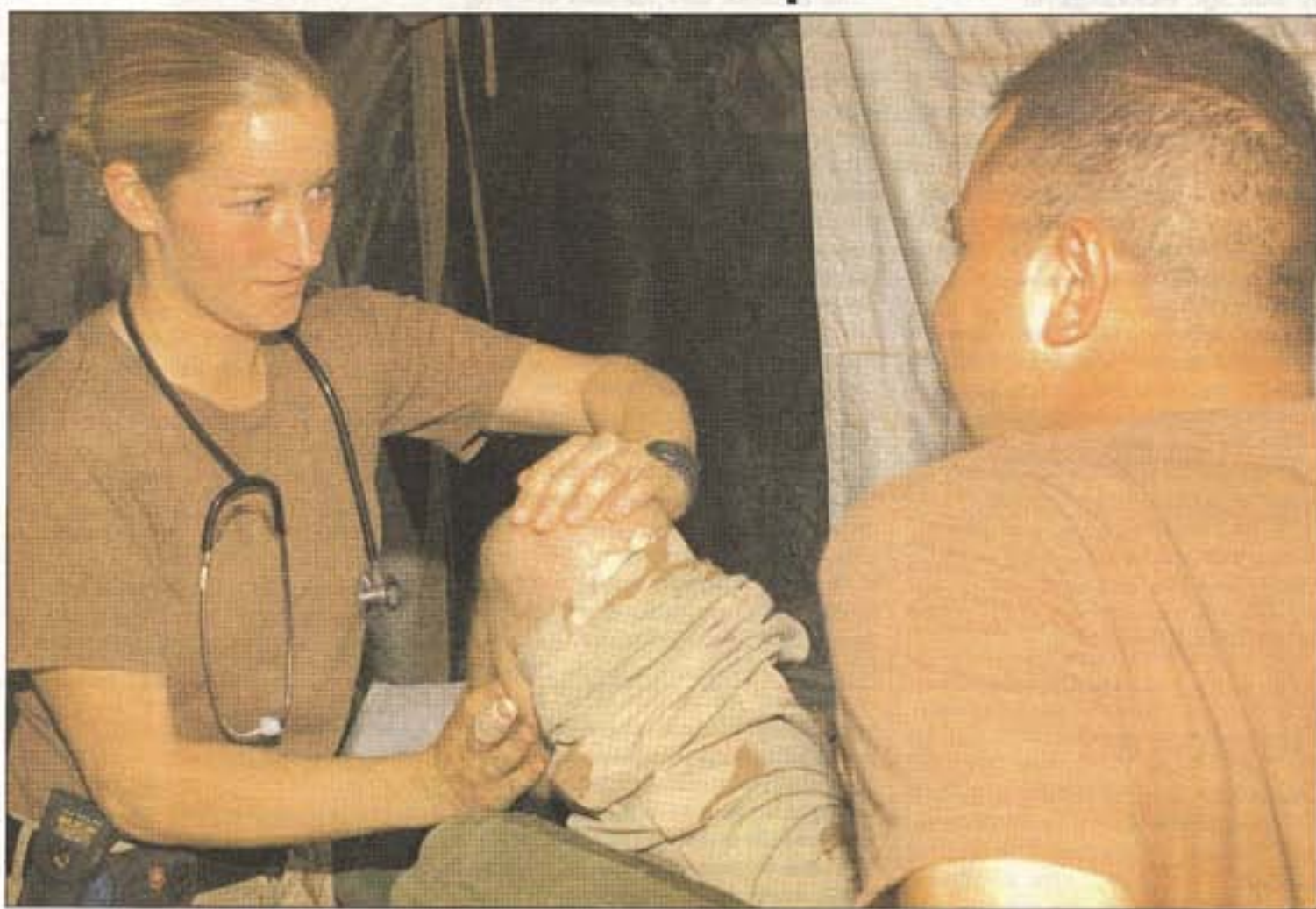


Photo by Capt. Charles Mussi, National Guard Bureau

Dedicated 'Gator Fan', Spc. Andrea Goguen, from Gainesville, Fla., talks with a soldier with an injured knee during sick call at Base Camp Virginia, Kuwait. A Florida National Guard soldier serving with Company A, 161st Area Support Medical Battalion, she is one of thousands of Army National Guard soldiers currently deployed to base camps in Kuwait and Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"There are some challenges that we have here that we don't have back home," said Lt. Col. Ronald Renuart, an internist with Baptist Healthcare System in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. "We are 40 or 50 miles from the nearest specialist so I have to try and handle everything myself. We are also limited in resources such as medicines."

Renuart added that one of the most gratifying experiences he has had since arriving in Kuwait was working with so many different soldiers that are younger than him and watching them mature.

The 161st is an area support unit of doctors, nurses and medical technicians with the capability to provide immediate emergency

care in a field environment or a military base.

If an injury is more critical than can be handled at the troop medical clinic then they can be evacuated to larger hospital.

Since early January the Florida National Guard has mobilized more than 5,200 people in support of operations around the world.

ARNG SAFETY PROGRAM AIR & GROUND

Class	ARNG Air		ARNG Ground	
	FY02	FY03	FY02	FY03
A	4	0	21	9
B	0	1	4	1
C	11	6	59	36↑
D	-	-	41	18
Forfeiture	1	0	20	11
Costs	85.3M	481	6.7M	2.4M↑

48-34 May 03

National Guard Mandays add up

FY03 Year-to-Date Combatant Commander Manday Total							
	STATES	COUNTRIES	ODT/EXER	TTAD	PRC	PARTIAL MOB	Totals
USJEC	54	2	278	442	50,362	8,416,155	8,467,238
CENTCOM	49	10	2,811	3,523	94,138	2,894,741	2,985,213
EUCOM	51	27	93,398	7,232	323,566	326,717	750,913
NORTHCOM	2	2	4,743	32,517	0	6,076	43,336
PACOM	41	15	23,755	1,313	0	2,212	27,280
SOUTHCOM	32	20	66,895	2,889	0	203,041	262,825
SOCOM			-	365			
FY03 YTD	54	76	181,891	43,281	468,066	11,838,942	12,536,805
FY02 YTD			393,890	86,040	704,897	2,459,340	3,644,167
						Work years (286)	34,347
						Work years (280)	49,218
YEAR TO DATE 90,621 SOLDIERS FROM 54 STATES, TERRITORIES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HAVE DEPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF COMBATANT COMMANDERS							
NEW =	461						
	90160						



History

Always ready, always there

The National Guard in 366 years of Homeland Defense

By Ms. Renee Hylton

National Guard Bureau Historian

ARLINGTON, Va. — September 11, 2001. Like Pearl Harbor nearly 60 years before, Americans old enough to comprehend a radio or television broadcast will probably never forget the moment when they saw the first horrific images of the terrorist attacks on New York City and the Pentagon.

But as people all over the world gathered around satellite images of death and destruction, a small group of citizens in and around New York and Washington had no time for television. Even before the twin towers fell, and with phone communications down, Guardmembers from New York City units were rushing to their armories (which themselves became crisis centers in for relatives desperately searching for the missing). They knew that when disaster struck, they would be needed.

As these Army Guard members began to reach their armories, Air Guard fighter jets from D.C., Massachusetts, and North Dakota were in the air over New York City and Washington, ready to intercept other hijacked planes. By the end of the day, these men and women would be joined by thousands of Guard members from Connecticut, D.C., and New Jersey called up to deal with this unprecedented crisis. The National Guard was the U.S. military's "first responder" in the most damaging foreign attack against U.S. soil in history, and its role on 9/11 epitomizes the role the Guard has played in homeland defense since colonial days.

It was Native Americans defending their homeland who were the military threat when the English and Spanish colonies were founded, and with few European soldiers present, it was citizen/soldiers of the militia who defended isolated European settlements from attack. By the time the British Army arrived in New England to enforce unpopular tax laws, the colonial militias had evolved into a homegrown but sophisticated military system. In the late 17th century the New Englanders had pulled special "marching forces" from the militia for long-term operations against the French and their Indian allies. In the 1770s, "Minutemen" were recruited from the militia to be "first responders." At Concord Bridge in April 1775, the Minutemen were joined by thousands of militia from the surrounding townships, who mustered in the middle of the night to march to Concord as soon as news arrived of the

British raid. Like the Guardmembers of 9/11, they didn't wait for orders.

Local and regional defense was a large part of the militia's role in the Revolutionary War, especially in frontier regions. In North Carolina, militia officer William Lenoir was called out repeatedly to defend against Indians, put down local Tories, and reinforce the Continental Army. "I slept with my wife on one side and my rifle on the other," was Lenoir's description of his war years.

The "second war of American independence," as the War of 1812 is sometimes called, was characterized by large militia call-ups to protect coasts and waterways from invasion by Britain's Royal Navy, but victory ended the threat of foreign invasion. The nation's attention turned westward, as Americans brought the militia tradition to new territories and states. As long as Native American tribes contested the new settlements, community defense remained a key militia role, just as it was during the Civil War years.

Following the Civil War, focus shifted back to the longer-settled parts of the nation, as state militias in the industrializing Northeast and Midwest were reorganized to face a different kind of foreign threat: "radical" labor organizers who led large and sometimes violent protests against developing American industry. The huge waves of post-Civil War immigrants, increasingly non-Northern European in origin, frightened many "old Americans." With few city or state police forces, the militia, now increasingly called the National Guard, was the only organized force available to a governor or mayor trying to maintain order. Some historians note that the monumental and imposing stone armories built for the National Guard in years between 1875-1915 look like castles for a reason: they were built to withstand the assault of poor and exploited urban laborers.

But putting down strikes was not popular duty with Guardsmen, who had long wanted an increased role as a reserve for the Army. In 1903 and 1916, legislation mandating exactly that was passed, just in time for the Guard's largest-ever homeland defense mission.

In March of 1916 the Mexican bandit/revolutionary Pancho Villa raided the town of Columbus, N.M., killing 17 Americans and wounding scores. The governors of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico quickly called up their National Guards, and President Woodrow Wilson followed by calling up almost the entire National Guard, 158,664



(Above) New York Air Guardsmen dash for their F-94B aircraft in 1954. The Air Guard's Runway Alert Program represents the real beginnings of the post-Vietnam Total Force Policy. (Below) National Guard Field Artillery in the Southwest, 1916. Following 9/11, Guardmembers would again help police the nation's borders.



men, and deploying them along the border. Some Guard units were still there when the U.S. entered World War I in April, 1917.

With the entire National Guard called into Federal service, the states organized volunteer units, usually called "state guards," to take over the Guard's regional security missions. These organizations were revived during World War II, and in both wars were overseen by the Militia Bureau (now the National Guard Bureau). Today, 21 states have volunteer units which are affiliated with the State Guard Association of the United States, and these organizations are receiving more attention since the Guard's post-9/11 Federal call-ups have increased so dramatically.

After World War II, a new Reserve Component, the Air National Guard, took the lead in the Guard's homeland security role. In 1953, the Runway Alert mission gave the Air Guard part of the nation's air defense mission, and by 1991 all the Air Force fighter-interceptor squadrons were from the Air

Guard. It was no accident that three of the first squadrons scrambled over New York and Washington on 9/11 were from the National Guard.

The events of September 2001 brought tens of thousands of Army and Air Guard personnel into active service to deal with the threat of terrorism. Using civilian passenger airlines as weapons represented a new threat, but the Guard's great strength has always been its ability to adapt quickly, as the successful airport security mission proved. Guardmembers in their own states and communities moved quickly to provide armed security for the nation's air travelers, some on duty within hours of President Bush's phone call to their governors.

An advertising campaign in the 1980s described the National Guard as "always ready, always there." The Guard's role in defending the homeland since September 2001, while at the same time deploying overseas to fight terrorists on their home ground, proves that "always ready, always there" is truer than ever.

Operation Enduring Love:

Guard couple renew their vows after 17 years

By Master Sgt. Deb Smith

410th Air Expeditionary Wing

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM — Beneath a dust colored tent somewhere in the middle of Southwest Asia, two hearts became one-again. And it all began on a windy afternoon, just after the war in Iraq, when Colorado Guard members Tech. Sgt. Palmer Turner and Senior Airman Deborah Turner donned their best desert camouflage and renewed the vows they made some 17 years ago.

While it may not be unusual to hear of military couples rushing to the altar shortly before leaving on deployment, the Turners admit that it is a bit different for a couple to wait until after they've deployed to tie the knot, even if it is for the second time.

But Tech. Sgt. Turner, says it was far more than just a little post deployment prank that drew them down the aisle once again. It was the culmination of a special closeness the two have shared since they met, and the unusual opportunity to be deployed together in the same combat zone.

"With four children, we've not really had a lot of time together for years-you know, just the two of us," said Turner. "So it's actually kind of funny, now that we're thousands of miles away from the house and the kids, that we have to sleep in separate quarters more than a quarter of a mile apart."

But in spite of the mere meters between them, the avionics back shop technician and supply specialist have found ways to stay close including dining and doing laundry together when possible.

"I've also been keeping a journal over the past 2 months we've been here and just reflecting on how much we've been through has really helped me realize how much I miss her, and want to be with her," said Turner.

But he quickly added that the idea of renewing their vows came shortly after their arrival in country-on the same day, but on separate aircraft.

"This really was all her idea," he said. "After we were called to active duty, we both anticipated celebrating our anniversary in theater, but as the war began to wind down, and personnel began to redeploy, we had an opportunity to think about what we've been through and agreed this would be a very special place to say 'I do' again."

So they did.

In a small, intimate ceremony, on the 26th of April, in the New Tent City Chapel, Ch. Major Mark Barnes, 410th AEW Wing Chaplain, pronounced the Turners man and wife all over again.

The bride said, for her, the toughest part of the whole event was the stress of having her entire chain of command present. However, the groom said the part that made it tough for him was the fact he had just been relieved of his trash detail.

"We've really endured a lot," said Senior Airman Turner, who was recruited into the Colorado Air National Guard by her hus-

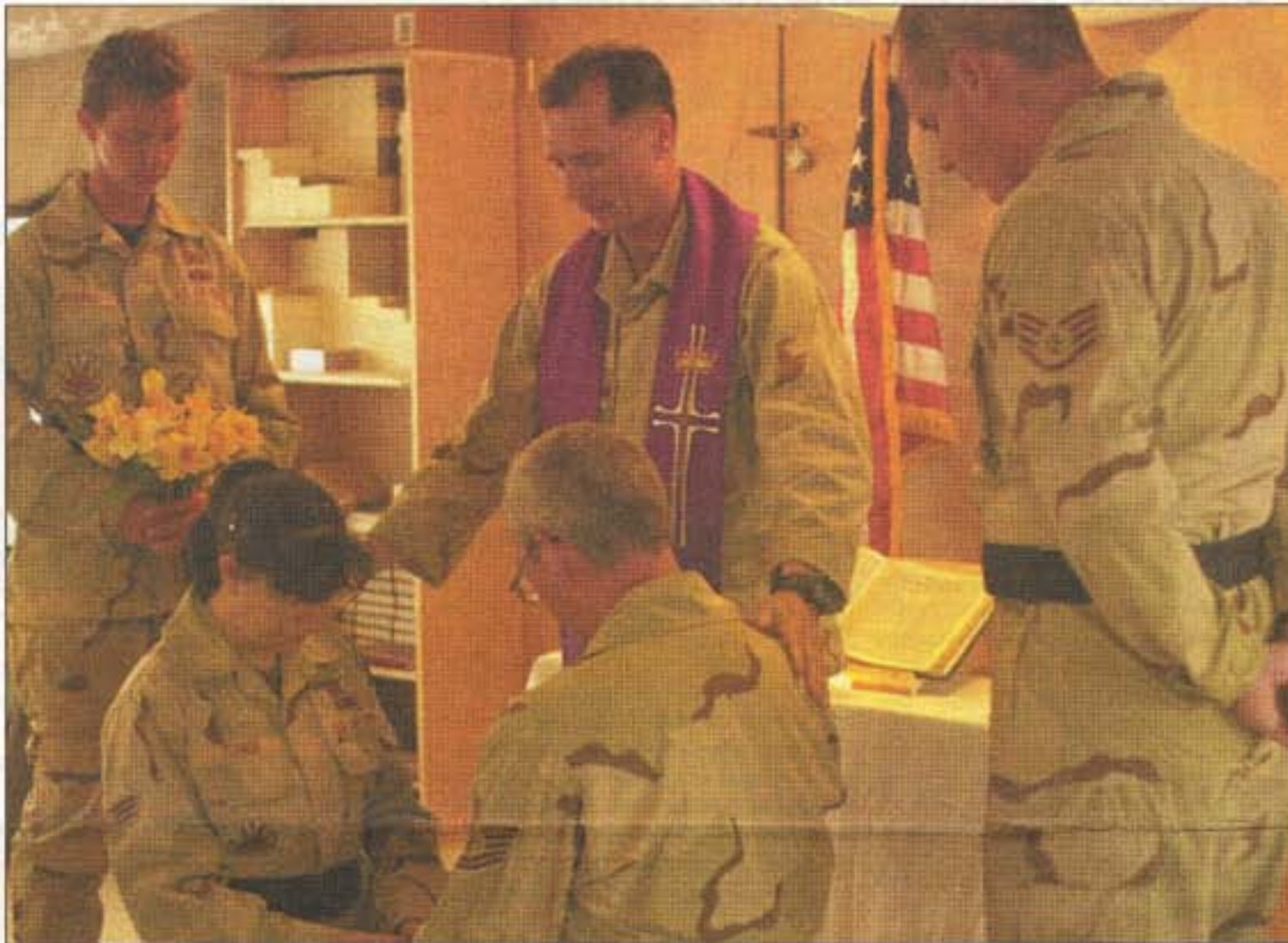


Photo by Master Sgt. Deb Smith



band. "What more could a couple possibly go through than to be thrown into a war zone together?"

"You know 17 years ago, we stood before the pastor of the Aurora First Presbyterian Church as equals," reflected tech. Sgt. Turner. "And we've pretty much remained equals throughout most of our married life.

But his time it's different. We're older, we've been through a lot more. But looking at my shoulder this time, I'm thinking I finally outrank her.

The Turners reside in the Denver area and are members of the 140th Wing, Colorado Air National Guard Buckley Air Force Base Colorado.

(Above) Their unexpected "quiet time" together reminded Tech. Sgt. Palmer Turner and Senior Airman Deborah Turner of the reasons they married in the first place and the couple seized the opportunity to renew their vows while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. Here they are joined by honor attendants Senior Master Sgt. Annadele Kenderes (left) and Staff Sgt. Sean Seeley (right). Ch. Major Mark Barnes, 410th AEW Wing Chaplain officiates. (left) After 17 years of marriage and 4 children, Colorado Guard members Senior Airman Deborah Turner and Tech. Sergeant Palmer Turner now assigned to the 410th Air Expeditionary Wing, found themselves finally "alone" while deployed at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.

