

THE ON GUARD

Volume XXXII, 10 NEWSPAPER of the ARMY and AIR NATIONAL GUARD October 2003
Visit us on the web at: <http://www.ngb.army.mil/onguard>

Earning a promotion ...

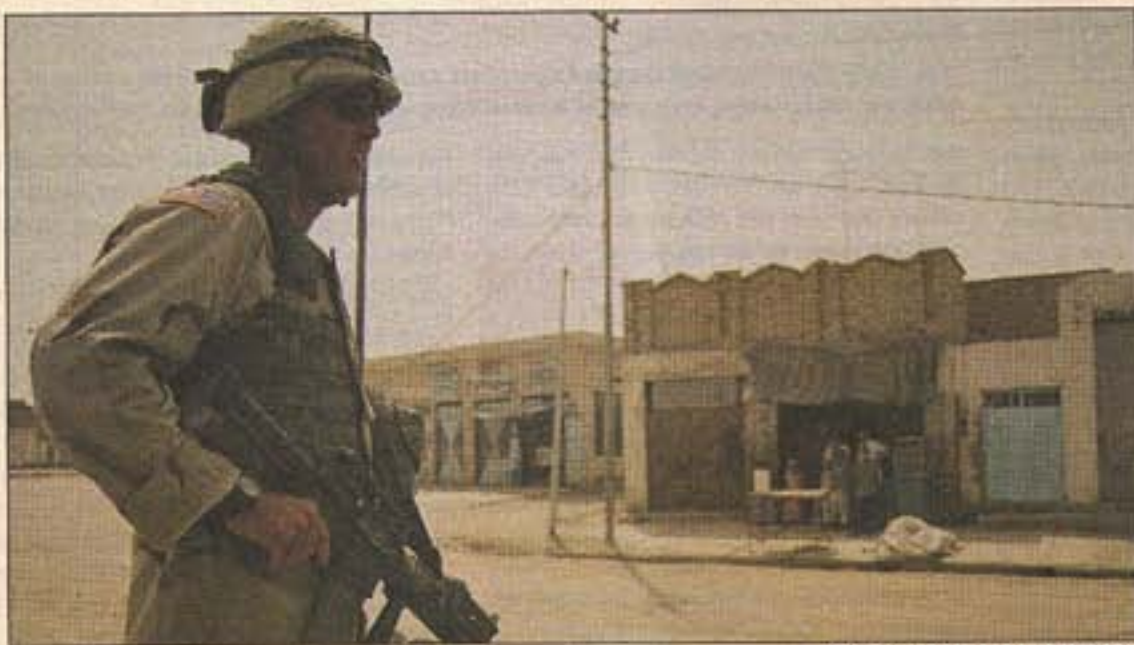


Photo by Staff Sgt. John Barton

An Indiana National Guard soldier of the 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry patrols a street in southern Iraq. Some deployed Guardsmen may be eligible for promotion. See details below.

Deployments will not interfere with deserved promotions, chief says

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait — National Guard members who are defending their nation from terror bear many burdens, but being passed over for promotion will not be one of them.

While visiting National Guard troops on duty in Iraq and Afghanistan in early September, LTG H Steven Blum told America's citizen-soldiers that their military careers should not be hindered due to mobilization.

"We are committed to not penalizing people for being patriots

and for answering their country's call," said Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau. "Promoting people and then giving them time to attend their schools or complete their education after their deployments is the right thing to do. Any policy that disadvantages you while you are deployed will be changed or rescinded."

Soldiers and airmen who have accumulated enough time in grade but who have not been able to attend required schools because they are serving on active duty may be eligible for

promotion under Blum's plan. If selected, the individuals would be promoted and allotted a period of time to complete their required education after being demobilized.

Blum, who has commanded a multinational peacekeeping force in Bosnia, wanted to send a message that he will find and visit Guard troops wherever they are serving. He also wanted to engage in open dialogue with the people who have been deployed this year because of the war in

See CHIEF On Page 2

Battling Isabel

National Guard Bureau's new division for Homeland Defense weathers the test

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — Call it a scrimmage.

That is a football practice under game conditions with which Army National Guard Col. Peter Aylward compared the test that Hurricane Isabel gave the National Guard Bureau's new Division for Homeland Defense, and the way it has begun to oversee the states' responses to emergencies in mid-September.

It was the baptism under fire — or wind and rain — for the Guard Bureau in its new capacity as a joint headquarters that has been forged by LTG Steven Blum, since he became the Guard Bureau's chief in April.

Teams at the Army and Air Guard readiness centers, located near Washington, oversaw the response to national emergencies before Blum reorganized the Guard Bureau into a provisional joint headquarters similar to the United States' other major military combatant commands.

"This was the opportunity to scrimmage. A scrimmage helps to validate the playbook and makes sure we have the right players on the field and that we're calling the right plays," said Aylward, the chief of the Guard Bureau's Homeland Defense Division.

That did not diminish the impor-



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear

Virginia Guardsman Spec. Brent Hart of Company C, 276th Engineer Battalion clears debris from Route 618 in Surry County, Va., after being called to state active duty.

tance of the Guard Bureau's primary mission — to support the more than 2,500 Guard troops called to state active duty in five states and the District of Columbia, where Isabel hit the hardest, Aylward pointed out.

"In some cases, our soldiers out there risked their own lives to help save their neighbors or their neighbors' property, including animals," he said. "I am always impressed by

See STORM On Page 3

REMEMBERING 9-11

Reflection

Guardsman serving in Kuwait recalls ground zero

2



TRAINING

Canada

Maine Guardsmen train with Canada

8



DUTY

Iraq

Sacrifices made, numerous missions accomplished

15



About The On Guard

The On Guard is published monthly using federal funds under provisions of AR 360-81 by the Command Information Branch of the National Guard Bureau's Public Affairs Office for all members of the Army and Air National Guard. The 55,000 copies are distributed to all National Guard units and selected organizations throughout the Total Force. The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Army, the Air Force or the National Guard Bureau.

Submissions

E-mail your stories to us by the 1st of each month. We prefer that photos be high-quality digital (200 dpi or more) and e-mailed to:

Editor.OnGuard@ngb.army.mil

Address

NGB-PAI-CI
Suite 11200
1411 Jefferson Davis Highway
Arlington VA 22202-3259

Phone/Fax

(703) 607-2649
DSN 327-2649
FAX: (703) 607-3686

Web Site

www.ngb.army.mil/onguard

Staff

CHIEF,

National Guard Bureau
LTG H Steven Blum

CHIEF,

NGB, Public Affairs
Mr. Daniel Donohue

CHIEF,

NGB-Public Affairs
Command Information
Mrs. Dalena Kanouse

EDITOR

Tech. Sgt. Gary Hicks

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT

Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

Guardsman recalls 9-11 while serving in Kuwait

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait – A New York Army National Guard soldier, who is also a New York City firefighter, helped American soldiers engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom observe the second anniversary of the terrorist attacks against America during a memorial service here on Sept. 11.

Capt. Josef Pruden gave a moving account of how his faith in God sustained him through that terrible day, forever branded as 9-11 in 2001 during a Service of Remembrance and Healing at this camp located south of Kuwait City.

Speakers forged a direct link between the terrorist attacks and the global war against terrorism still going on two years later.

The memorial service marked a rededication of the soldiers' resolve to carry on that war in Iraq so that Americans can live without fear of other such attacks and so that the Iraqi people can enjoy the fruits of freedom.

"I felt God had been preparing me for something," said Pruden, who was on duty at his firehouse in South Jamaica, Queens, when terrorists killed thousands of people by flying three hijacked jetliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and a fourth plane crashed into a field in western Pennsylvania.

"By midnight that night, I had left my firehouse to join my [National Guard] unit, while establishing perimeter security around Ground Zero," said Pruden, who commanded the headquarters battery for the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery at that time.

That day and the grim weeks that followed intensified his relationship with God and with other people, said Pruden. "Now I take every moment with my family and my friends very seriously."

Pruden is now among 29,000 members of



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

New York Army National Guard Capt. Josef Pruden vividly recalled the events of Sept. 11, 2001, during a service in Kuwait commemorating the second anniversary.

the National Guard on duty in Iraq and Kuwait. They are serving with other U.S. service members and with troops from other coalition countries determined to stamp out terrorism.

Other Guard soldiers in Kuwait said they are taking their part in that war just as seriously, even if it means they may have to remain in the country for 12 months, which is longer than they had originally expected.

"If we've got to stay here, it's our responsibility, because we signed that contract," said Alabama Army Guard Spec. Stephen Davis after singing "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" solo, backed up by a Gospel choir, during the service.

"I believe it's important to give people over here the freedom that we have in the states and to help straighten out a country that was in a bad situation," added Davis, a member of the 226th Area Support Group from Mobile, Ala.

The Army recently announced that tours of duty for National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers serving in the Persian Gulf will be extended to one full year "on the ground."

"We are where we are today because of what took place two years ago," said Brig.

"I felt God had been preparing me for something. By midnight that night, I had left my firehouse to join my [National Guard] unit, while establishing perimeter security around Ground Zero."

– Capt. Josef Pruden

Gen. Michael Diamond, commanding general of the 377th Theater Support Command (Forward) and one of the principal speakers during the service.

"Freedom-loving people do not wish to live in a society filled with terror and destruction," Diamond added. "We are and we must take the fight to the enemy. If not, we will find them invading our country, our families and our loved ones back home."

Coalition forces have already lost 259 people during operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and in the Philippines, Diamond pointed out.

"Remember and rededicate yourself to our service, our duty here, so that evil will not triumph, so that a few desperate men will not subvert the peace for millions of citizens who live on this planet," Chaplain (Col.) Matthew Horne encouraged the gathering.

"We fight not just for America and for Americans," added Horne, the 377th's command chaplain. "We fight for these rights for all people, including the people of Iraq."

"Each and every one of you is making a difference by your presence in this theater," said Diamond in praise of his listeners. "We are where we are because we do not want to encounter another incident like 9-11."

FROM PAGE 1

Chief

Iraq so he can improve the conditions for those who will take part in future rotations.

Blum addressed several common concerns shared by troops at every stop during his eight-day visit. These included: the predictability and length of their deployments; how effectively the Guard units are being utilized; and their prospects for obtaining leave and passes while on active duty.

"Some men and women in this first rotation will have to remain overseas for a full year," Blum said in Kuwait and Iraq at the same time the Army announced that tours of duty for National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers serving in the Persian Gulf would be extended to one full year "on the ground."

Guard officials are striving to schedule future year-long rotations far enough in advance so that troops would know when their tours of duty would begin and how long they would be deployed overseas. The troops would be eligible for 30 days of leave as well as for periods of rest and recuperation during that year, and they would be given two or

three weeks for demobilization at their home stations, Blum said.

Efforts are also being made to shorten what can be a lengthy mobilization process, especially for Army Guard soldiers, so that troops can spend as much time as possible at their duty stations.

"Future Guard members and reservists may thank you for bearing the pain that they're not going to have to bare," Blum said.

He indicated that every effort would be made to send home Guard units that are not needed as early as possible "so we can get you ready for the next time, if necessary."

"The American people are proud of you, and I am proud of you. There has never been a more important time to be in the National Guard, because we are defending our homeland," Blum told numerous small and large groups of Guard people he met in Qatar and Kuwait as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan during his fast-paced, eight-day trip.

Some 29,000 National Guard troops - including members of infantry and signal battalions, transportation and military police

companies and engineers - are serving in Iraq and Kuwait, said Col. Glenn Walker, chief of the Army National Guard affairs office in Kuwait.

Except for a few meetings with officials, such as Gen. John Abizaid, the U.S. Central Command's combatant commander, Blum devoted his time to talking and listening to citizen-soldiers and airmen participating in operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

It was his most extensive overseas trip in the nearly five months he has been the Guard Bureau's 34th chief.

Blum shook hands with every Guard man and woman he saw. He presented Bronze Stars to six soldiers in the Indiana Army Guard's 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry for their combat service in Iraq. He promoted one junior officer to captain, and he gave his personal coin to troops, who have made significant contributions to the war effort.

"I think his visit helps highlight the fact that we're here and that he wants to help us," said Oregon Army Guard Spc. Amy Swanson at a former Iraqi air base.

Isabel throws a curve, Guardsmen step to the plate

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — More than 2,500 Army and Air National Guard troops in five states and the District of Columbia turned out with chainsaws, trucks and water trailers to help people along the East Coast deal with the devastation of Hurricane Isabel during September's third weekend.

They evacuated people from flooded island homes to shelters on higher ground. They helped local police departments prevent

looting. They provided clean water and ice to communities with contaminated water systems. And they helped state transportation workers clean up the storm's considerable debris.

They devoted this summer's final weekend to the work that National Guard troops traditionally do when Mother Nature hammers America.

"I am always impressed by their dedication, commitment and willingness to respond in a moments notice — at times putting their own wellbeing at risk," said Army Guard Col. Peter Aylward, who directed the National Guard Bureau's Crisis Action Team in Arlington, Va.

"We will do whatever it takes to help save lives, prevent suffering and mitigate property damage," Aylward added.

Guard soldiers drove Humvees into 30-inch deep flood waters to rescue people stranded on islands along Maryland's Eastern Shore of the battered Chesapeake Bay.

Nine of them spent the weekend in Rock Hall, providing local police with enough of a presence to prevent looting, said Maj. Todd Stewart, who commanded a 200-soldier task force that was responsible for 250 miles along that shore.

"They only have a couple of police officers, and they had problems with looters the night before. We gave them a deterrent to prevent further problems," Stewart explained.

Most of the Guard's weekend labors were focused in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia where millions of people were coping without electricity and drinking water. The storm was blamed for about 30 deaths, including 17 in Virginia.

More than 1,300 Guard troops were on duty in North Carolina, and over 600 were serving in

Virginia. Nearly 700 were on duty in Maryland during the weekend's peak of activity, and 170 were serving in the nation's capital.

Guard troops evacuated more than 1,000 people from Maryland coastal communities with five-ton trucks and Humvees and also provided security details for Hooper and Taylor islands, said Maj. Charles Kohler, the state's Guard spokesman.

North Carolina Guard members airlifted water, ice and military meals to the Outer Banks, transported

2,500 gallons of fuel to the Outer Banks by ferry boat, deployed 40 generator teams to provide auxiliary power to people without electricity, and dispatched security teams to North Hampton and Hyde counties, Guard officials reported.

In Virginia, about 120 members of the 276th Engineer Battalion helped Department of Transportation crews clear some 400 miles of primary and secondary roads in Surry and Isle of Wight counties, between Virginia Beach and Richmond.

Other Virginia Guard soldiers, from the 2nd Battalion, 111th Field Artillery, were ordered to state active duty to help provide traffic control in Hampton and to distribute water to Hampton and Virginia Beach.

About 300 citizen-soldiers began operating eight regional water and ice distribution sites on Sept. 21, said Lt. Col. Chester Carter III, Virginia's National Guard spokesman.

More than 1,400 National Guard troops in seven states were waiting when the Category 2 storm hit the North Carolina coast with 100 mph winds and torrential rains at mid-day on Sept. 18 and then cut a swath toward the north as it diminished to a tropical storm.

The combination of high winds and flood waters from the storm that was initially said to cover an area the size of Montana led to federal disaster declarations for North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia and Delaware. West Virginia, New Jersey and Pennsylvania government leaders declared state emergencies.

Guard troops were ready to help state officials assess the damage and help citizens in those states as well. Fifteen two-man crews in West Virginia, for example, were prepared to rescue and evacuate citizens from areas of that water-

Clearing a path to recovery ...



Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Army National Guard

Virginia Army National Guard Spc. Bradley Dial clears fallen trees from Route 618 in Surry County, Va. Dial is a member of Company C, 276th Engineer Battalion, and was called to state active duty to help Virginia recover from the ravages of Hurricane Isabel.

FROM PAGE 1

Storm

their dedication, commitment and willingness to respond at a moments notice. For them, this was the Super Bowl, or at least the playoffs."

Aylward knows a thing or two about preparing for big football games, because he was a linebacker for his high school team in Melrose, Mass. He also helped to coordinate the National Guard's supporting role during the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Ga.

Seven years later, Aylward was on top of his game as the coach of a 22-member Homeland Defense Crisis Action Team of Army and Air Guard officers that was organized to help Guard forces deal with Isabel's September onslaught of high winds, heavy rains and flooding.

"It's like General Blum calls it — neighbors helping neighbors," said Aylward, who has a New Englander's way of cutting to the quick.

The Guard Bureau's Homeland Defense Division helps its neighbors by making sure they have what they need in personnel, equipment and supplies, such as bottled water to deal with an emergency such as a massive, Category 2 hurricane.

"That's the wonderful thing about a hurricane. You have time to plan. It's not like an earthquake that makes you jump through all kinds of hoops right

away," said Aylward about how Isabel gave the National Guard Bureau time to get ready to test its new system.

People along the Eastern Seaboard knew that Isabel, which reached Category 5 extremes while still at sea, was coming nearly a week before it hit land. The fact that it had weakened considerably before hitting North Carolina on Sept. 18 was a blessing indeed, Aylward said.

Therefore, as far as he was concerned, it was scrimmage — a way to train for the bigger games, the really catastrophic events such as 9/11, which the Guard Bureau's joint headquarters is designed to deal with.

"This was an opportunity for the joint team to gain confidence," Aylward said. "It was a way to test our crisis communications system and to help us sort out what are the critical issues for the states that we are here to support."

"Crisis communications is the key," he added. "And the whole system has to be exercised."

Although this coach was not reluctant to hold people's feet to the fire, Aylward said he was impressed with how the team pulled together.

"Most of these people have served on crisis action teams before, and we have a lot of talent in the states," Aylward said. "That core of experience helps everyone get their heads in the game and learn from the experts."

logged mountainous state where flooding from Isabel's heavy rains was a major concern.

Air National Guard commanders ordered 59 planes — including jet fighters and huge transport planes — flown from their home bases in six states along the storm's projected path, between Virginia and New York, to safe havens in other parts of the country.

The Virginia Army Guard also sent half a dozen helicopters to Frankfort, Ky.

This war against the weather is an old National Guard mission under new management.

It marked the first time that the Guard Bureau, which this year has been reorganized into a provisional joint command, oversaw the states' efforts to deal with the threat to persons and property in this country.

"We're here to provide the policies, the coordination, and the money for the people out there,

who are doing the work," Christopher Gardner, the Guard Bureau's acting vice chief, told the members of the newly formed Crisis Action Team at the National Guard's headquarters.

Guard officials were quick to point out that plenty of troops were available for state active duty even though tens of thousands of citizen-soldiers and airmen have been deployed because of the global war against terrorism.

Father and son help liberate the Iraqi people

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

CAMP ARIFJAN, KUWAIT – William and Timothy Miller bonded in many ways as a father and only son. They played paintball in the woods. They played basketball. William helped coach his son's middle school and high school wrestling teams.

Now the Millers of the Indiana Army National Guard have bonded in quite a different way. They have gone to war together, and they have both earned the coveted Combat Infantryman Badge for taking part in ground action against an enemy force.

William, 39, is a sergeant, and Timothy, 20, is a specialist in Company A of the 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry that got into the thick of Operation Iraqi Freedom when the Indiana Army National Guard soldiers began crossing from Kuwait into Iraq in late March – during the first days of intense ground combat against the forces of Saddam Hussein.

Here's the kicker. The father wound up in the Iraq combat zone near the city of Al Nasiriyah, because his son talked him into joining the National Guard after William had already spent 14 years in the active Army.

Tim enlisted in March 2000 while he was still in high school. His father joined in January 2002. Tim trained as a grenadier. His dad was originally charged with preparing the Guard unit's new recruits for basic training before deploying to the Persian Gulf one year later.

"I'm going to have to stop listening to him,"

"I felt the same apprehensions that any father would feel about having his son go into this situation."

– Sgt. William Miller

cracked Sgt. Miller in early September, when they were out of harm's way back in Kuwait, at comfortable Camp Arifjan south of Kuwait City, and counting the days until they could return to their family in Mentone, Ind.

"One of the big reasons I'm glad I came over here was to make my family feel better, knowing I was with him," said Sgt. Miller, who was a military policeman and dog handler before getting out of the Army in 1997.

He had settled into civilian life as a steel worker in northern Indiana with his wife and daughter as well as with Tim, the oldest child, before again putting on the uniform as a traditional Guard soldier. Then he and his son went to war.

"I felt the same apprehensions that any father would feel about having his son go into this situation," the elder Miller explained. "He's made me very proud – as a father and as a friend."

"I was more confident than I would have been had he not been with me, because he'd done a deployment or two already," said the son.

They did not serve side-by-side as the coalition forces made the big push into Iraq. Sgt. Miller got there first on March 26 as part of the Guard battalion's element assigned to secure a refueling station.

Spec. Miller followed two days later, when his light infantry platoon drove its Humvees to the same region.

Sleeping in sand-gritty foxholes for the first three weeks of the war and going without showers for as long as 45 days were among the same experiences they endured during their three months of pulling rear area security in Iraq.

That does not, however, give them an exclusive right to war stories in what is undeniably a patriotic family.

William has eight brothers and sisters, he explained, and five of them have also served. One brother and a sister were Marines. Another brother and sister were in the Navy. Another brother is still in the Navy.

William's father-in-law, Tim's grandfather, retired from Army Intelligence as a warrant officer. And his wife, Tim's mom, also spent three years in the Navy.

His wife has been the rock, who has comforted her 13-year-old daughter as well as Tim's fiancée, while not giving in to the counsel of her fears, William said.

He was busy in his own right, Sgt. Miller explained, "looking out for other young whippersnappers, who believe they are bulletproof and think they'll live forever."

But he never forgot that his son was also in



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

Indiana Army National Guard Sgt. William Miller and his son Spec. Timothy Miller went to war in Iraq together with the 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry earlier this year.

harm's way in the same place.

"I did what I had to do, but it always played in the back of my mind," said Sgt. William Miller, who could finally relax after his son was safe and sound with him back in Kuwait and they could both think about going home to Indiana.

One man, two distinct badges

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

CAMP ARIFJAN, KUWAIT – Capt. Wesley Russell is a Christian soldier, who wears two distinct badges on his uniform that signify he has already spent his time in hell.

He is one of the few U.S. Army soldiers to have earned both the Combat Infantryman Badge and the Combat Medical Badge. Both testify to the fact that he has participated in ground combat against an enemy force.

Russell, 37, lives in Muncie, Ind. He is the full-time personnel officer for the Indiana Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry. He got those badges of courage, because he has taken part in both of the United States' wars in the Persian Gulf against troops loyal to Saddam Hussein.

He earned the medical badge in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm, when he was an active Army medic with in the 1st Cavalry Division that helped drive the Iraqi Army out of Kuwait.

He earned the infantryman badge, better known as the CIB, 12 years later during Operation Iraqi Freedom, because he spent last March and April as part of the Army Guard battalion that pushed into Iraq with the other coalition forces.

Getting both badges is an uncommon accomplishment for a couple of reasons. A soldier can earn only one badge during a particular conflict, according to Army regula-



Russell

tions. You have to be an infantry soldier to win the CIB, and you must be a medic serving with infantry soldiers in combat to earn the medical badge.

Earning both badges brought him considerably closer to God, Russell explained.

"I became a Christian in a foxhole as mortar rounds were coming in on the first day of the ground war during Operation Desert Storm. That was Feb. 24, 1991. It was my 25th birthday," he recounted.

"Having that faith made things a lot easier the second time around," he said about going to war again last spring. "And I was close to others who also found the faith."

Serving for his soldiers ...

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

CAMP ARIFJAN, KUWAIT – Staff Sgt. Harold Paskins is about to conclude his military career much like he began it 43 years ago – in the shadow of a war.

Vietnam was the war he went to after he was drafted into the Army in 1964. Operation Iraqi Freedom is the war he will leave when he retires from the Indiana Army National Guard next March – after a total of 27 years in uniform.

He spent two years in the Army. He joined the Guard 18 years later, and he has served for a quarter century as a traditional soldier.

"There's no better way to end it, going out the same way I came in," reflected the soft-spoken Paskins of Fort Wayne, Ind., who has two distinctions among the 650 citizen-soldiers in the 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry who have spent this year serving in Kuwait and enduring combat in Iraq.

He is 60 years old, which makes him the battalion's oldest soldier. He is also believed to be that outfit's only Vietnam veteran. A few of the battalion's other old hands were in uniform during that era, it was pointed out, but Harold Paskins is the only one who went to 'Nam.

Paskins embodies the expression: "The

more things change, the more they stay the same."

He was an infantryman, a scout, during the few months he served in Vietnam, from the end of 1964 until March 1965, said Paskins, who declined

to say any more about the subject.

He was a manager for a modern new dining facility that he helped open last May at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, the gateway to the conflict for tens of thousands of soldiers and Marines.

He could have sat this one out, Paskins acknowledged, because most men do not go off to war when they are pushing 60. He could probably have stayed behind to mind his small lawn care business in Fort Wayne and occasionally haul a load in a trailer truck.

But Paskins takes this soldiering business pretty seriously.

"I had 18 young soldiers, and I felt I could help them by coming over here," he explained.



Paskins

Minnesota's youth camp is unique and growing

By Master Sgt. Judy Ojard

Camp Ripley Public Affairs

CAMP RIPLEY, Minn. — Of all the programs that benefit Minnesota Guard families, Youth Camp may be the best. It also may be unique.

"Some other states have youth camps, but, we think, none are like ours," said Master Sgt. Rich Kemp, the state's Youth Camp coordinator. "Some are more like boot camps. Ours is like a regular summer camp, with some extras."

Held each August since 1990 at Camp Ripley, near Little Falls, Minn., Youth Camp is for the children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews of active or retired Army or Air Guard members.

"We have all the same activities as other camps, canoeing, swimming, archery and so on," Kemp said. "What's different is the military emphasis. Campers are divided up into four teams named for Minnesota Guard equipment, the Bradleys, Blackhawks, Hercules and Falcons. We have a flag ceremony each morning and evening, we teach the kids to march, and they stay in the same barracks Guard members stay in. It helps them relate to their family members in the Guard."

The program was the brainchild of Minnesota Adjutant General Eugene Andreotti and Sgt. Maj. Tony Nathe, then head of the state's recruiting and retention team, Kemp said. Andreotti, who retired this year, gave Guard families a high priority. Nathe saw family support as a retention tool.

"That first year, we had only one week of



Photo by Staff Sgt. Dan Ewer

Youth campers swarm the cockpit of a Hercules C-130 provided by 133rd Flight Wing based at Ft. Snelling, Minn., under the watchful eye of the crew. The camp's affiliation with the military makes unique activities, like tours of military aircraft, possible.

Youth Camp," said Kemp, who has worked with the program since its inception. "Not a lot of people knew about it, so not as many kids signed up. We also had a lot less volunteers, so everyone had to do more. But we're growing, and we get better every year."

Minnesota now offers two one-week Youth

Camp sessions every summer, with up to 136 campers, aged 10 to 12 years old, in each. A Teen Camp, for 13 to 15 year olds, was added in 2001, Kemp said. It is designed for 54 campers and runs consecutively with the first week of Youth Camp.

Because the program benefits Guard families, it can use Camp Ripley's facilities free of charge, according to retired Sgt. Maj. Claude Sand, this year's second-week Youth Camp director.

"We use Ripley's buildings, buses, facilities, like the confidence course, and equipment, like canoes, roller blades and bicycles," Sand said. "Rations, supplies and printing are about all we pay for. All of our staff are volunteers, so we can charge each camper just \$100 a week, and even give a few scholarships."

Each camper must be accompanied by an adult volunteer, either the Guard member or someone else in the family, Sand said, but an exception is made for the kids of deployed Guard members.

"Having each camper bring a volunteer guarantees we'll have plenty of staff," he said. "Our ratio is very high, about one staff member for every three campers." He added that volunteers are assigned to different squads than their children, to prevent favoritism, and give kids a chance to do things on their own.

The camp's affiliation with the military allows activities that civilian programs can't match, Kemp said.

"Besides the buildings, we use (Camp Ripley's) confidence course, rifle range and land navigation courses," he said. "Teen Camp uses the rappelling tower. The Friday of each session is 'military day', when counselors who are in the military wear their uniforms, and we have a C-130 and Blackhawk

(helicopter) fly in for the kids to tour. The crews are there to answer questions. We also have an F-16 fly over (by 148th Fighter Wing based in Duluth, Minn.), and give rides in Humvees and Bradleys."

"It's a great program, run by the Guard for Guard kids," said Chief Warrant Officer Three Steve Grimaldi, an assistant team leader for the first week of Youth Camp this year. "It has a variety of goals, not just fun." Grimaldi, a full time helicopter pilot for 1256th Medical Company in St. Paul, returned the second week to let campers tour his UH-1 medical evacuation helicopter.

"We're fully accredited by the American Camping Association," said Lori Ewoldt, a former Guard spouse and registered nurse, who volunteered this year for the medical staff. "They look at the qualifications of our medical staff, our food, supplies, and maintenance—every aspect of the program."

Teamwork is an important aspect of the Youth Camp experience, Sand said.

"We use colored T-shirts, caps, ID tags, and individualized chants and cheers to create the feeling of group identity in each of the squads, and in Youth Camp as a whole. Teams have projects that they work on together, like banners and marching drills for the graduation ceremony," he said.

In addition, the staff looks for areas where each camper can shine, Ewoldt said.

"We try to have a wide variety of activities in the course of the week, so there'll be something to appeal to everyone. It's important that all the campers find something they enjoy or can do well," she said.

"I wouldn't be here if I didn't believe strongly in the program," she added, echoing the sentiment of every Youth Camp staff member.

My first fish



Photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Ewer

Minnesota's first lady, Mary Pawlenty, compares fish stories with a young angler at the Family Fishing Day held at Camp Ripley for families of deployed service members. "I was looking for ways to help families of deployed soldiers," said

Pawlenty, who worked with the Camp Ripley staff, Minn. Department of Natural Resources' Fisheries Division and MinnAqua Program to organize the event. "I love fishing, and I love military families. It was natural to put the two together."

Indiana Guardsmen prove themselves in Iraq

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

CAMP ARIFJAN, KUWAIT – "The Thugs," as they call themselves with a certain sense of pride, have learned about going to war in ways that no street gang could ever imagine.

They are 24 Army National Guard infantry soldiers from Indiana, and they joined the brotherhood of combat infantry veterans during a long, anxious night in late March while guarding a captured ammunition supply point in southern Iraq.

They also helped to write a new chapter in the history of the modern Army National Guard by moving into enemy territory and holding their ground after the first week of Operation Iraqi Freedom which began on March 19.

The Thugs are the mortar platoon for the 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry, which demonstrated during this second war against the forces of Saddam Hussein that the Army Guard can handle itself in a combat situation; that it is primed for the fight.

"We have validated ourselves to the active Army. Seven years of hard work and training has paid off," said Lt. Col. Ivan Denton, the 1st Battalion commander, about what his 650 light infantry soldiers and other Army Guard infantry units have accomplished during the second Gulf War.

The battalion is part of Indiana's 76th Infantry Brigade, which became one of the Army Guard's 15 separate and enhanced brigades in the mid-1990s.

"We believed that the enhanced, separate brigades' stock would rise during this war, and we took that very seriously," Denton said.

Army Guard infantry soldiers did not get into Operation Desert Storm a dozen years ago, when a coalition force drove the Iraqi army out of Kuwait. This time, seven different Army Guard infantry battalions served in

Iraq between late March and early September, because the Army needed all of the help it could get, said Col. Glenn Walker, chief of the Army National Guard Affairs Office in Kuwait.

"If you were ground combat and they needed you, you got used," Walker explained.

All told, 29,000 Army Guard troops, belonging to 708 units, were operating in the Iraq-Kuwait theater by September, he said.

Many of the Guard's support units, including transportation and medical companies, were pressed into service during the first Gulf War and have been called up again.

This time, however, the infantry can take a bow.

And the 1st of the 293rd from Fort Wayne, Ind., has led the way because it has been there the longest of any Army infantry outfit, Walker said. As many as 640 of those soldiers spent

more than four months in Iraq.

A total of 476 of these soldiers received the Army's Combat Infantryman Badge and another 31 got the Combat Medic Badge for participating in ground combat against an enemy force.

Furthermore, Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, on Sept. 7 pinned Bronze Stars on Denton, Maj. Ronald Westfall, Maj. Eric Bray, Capt. Eric Derue, Capt. Wesley Russell and Command Sgt. Maj. John Runge.

Ironically, no one thought that outfit would actually go into Iraq.

It was mobilized last October to provide rear area security for Patriot missiles and for shipping and airport facilities in Kuwait, where U.S.-led coalition ground forces were massing to invade the country to the north.

The mobilization order arrived three days after Denton had officially taken command of the battalion on Oct. 19.

"I thought 'Lord have mercy. Welcome to command,'" recalled the new boss, a former Army Ranger, who had seen combat in Panama in late 1989, when U.S. forces over-

threw the government of Manuel Noriega.

The battalion went into overdrive. The first half flew into Kuwait on Jan. 3, heavily armed, because "we didn't know what we were stepping into," Denton said. All of his soldiers were there by Jan. 20. Two days later, the battalion's Humvees arrived by ship.

They were among the first military units to come from the United States. "We were very proud to be the first infantry battalion out the door," Denton said.

They began guarding docks at the Shuaiba Port on the Persian Gulf and pulling security at Kuwait International Airport against possible terrorist attacks and sabotage as equipment and troops began pouring into the country.

They also patrolled the perimeter at Camp Arifjan, south of Kuwait City, to protect soldiers and Marines who were organizing for the invasion.

Remaining in Kuwait, however, seemed to be the Hoosier soldiers' fate, and Denton told them it was highly unlikely they would go into Iraq.

Two days later, on March 26, he recalled, they began escorting elements of the 3rd Infantry Division into that country. It all happened that fast.

"We had a lot to do in a short amount of time," said 1st Lt. Andrew Weaver, who was told to get his 20-man scout platoon across the border and close to the Tallil Air Base near the Iraqi city of Al Nasiriyah in 24 hours.

His team passed destroyed Iraqi artillery pieces and smoldering Iraqi tanks as they entered that country across a network of defensive ditches.

"I had to pinch myself, because in some ways it felt like I was in training back at Fort Polk, La.," recalled Weaver, who had transferred into the unit when he was told it would be sent to the Middle East. "But we were headed toward some of the heaviest fighting of the war. I knew this was the real thing."

So did "The Thugs" - nicknamed for the sound that a mortar round makes when shot from an 81mm tube.

It all hit home when those mortar men were ordered to secure a sprawling ammo supply point next to the Tallil Air Base, so terrorists could not use the bullets, rocket-propelled grenades and anti-aircraft missiles against the Americans. The rest of the battalion took up positions around the air base.

The two dozen "Thugs," armed with automatic weapons mounted on Humvees, on March 27 replaced a mechanized active Army unit that had been guarding the site with armored Bradley Fighting Vehicles. They had engaged enemy fighters, and they had reason to believe the Indiana soldiers would also be hit.

"None of us slept that night. We stayed at 100 percent alert," said Sgt. 1st Class Scott MacGregor, the mortar-platoon sergeant who positioned half of his men at the main entrance and the other half at an observation post a couple of miles away.

"It was kind of an eerie feeling," MacGregor explained. "We could hear the fighting in the city six or seven miles away.



An Indiana Army National Guard soldier with the 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry watches over the Iraqi countryside at sunset.

There was fighting all around us. We were out there by ourselves."

But MacGregor had trained his people well since becoming the mortar platoon sergeant in July 2001. He's a patrolman for the Muncie Police Department in Indiana. He had served in Somalia in 1993, when he was in the 10th Mountain Division. And he knew it was only a matter of time before a National Guard unit, perhaps his, would wind up in a place like this.

"That man had us doing mortar drills day-in and day-out for months," said Spc. Sean Middaugh. "He never let up, and it definitely paid off that night."

The enemy did not come that night. Still, MacGregor said "The Thugs" lived up to his expectations. They stayed on their toes. They looked out for one another. And, after being relieved the following day, they set up a fire-base, so they could support the rest of battalion if they were needed.

The success of those first couple of days set the tone for the next four months. The Indiana soldiers continued to operate around Tallil and in the Al Nasiriyah area as the war progressed toward and then into Baghdad.

Their job was to keep that airbase secure so that A-10s fighters could fly their sorties; so that an 82nd Airborne brigade combat team could land its men and equipment in Saddam Hussein's backyard; and so that Army Rangers could train there and then fly off to rescue Pfc. Jessica Lynch.

Sadly, the battalion did lose one soldier during its deployment. Spec. Brian Clemens was killed in Kuwait on Feb. 6 when a Humvee in which he was patrolling the Camp Arifjan perimeter rolled over. He was 19.

The Indiana battalion returned to Kuwait in late July and began waiting for the orders that would send the men home and end their year-long mobilization.

This is how their commander defined what they accomplished:

In Kuwait, they secured the seaport, so that 120 ships could unload the beans and bullets for war in a secure environment. They guarded the airport where 180,000 troops landed safely.



Photos by Spc. Matthew McClelland, Indiana Army National Guard

Indiana Army National Guard Spc. Isaac Keller is at full alert while patrolling a road near the southern Iraqi community of Suq ash Shuyukh. Members of the 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry pulled security there earlier this year.

Military invited to NFL kickoff in D.C.

By Spec. Lorie Jewell
Operation Tribute to Freedom

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Just a few weeks ago, Spec. Keith Simms was dodging snipers and terrorist bombers in and around Baghdad. Spec. Lyndon Holmes was moving equipment and supplies into the Iraqi capital, while Spec. Steven Blanchette was making security sweeps of homes in the city of Fallujah.

On Sept. 4, the three National Guardsmen were standing a few hundred feet from a massive stage fronting the U.S. Capitol, taking in an energetic performance by hip-hop soul artist Mary J. Blige. They were among thousands of uniformed military members at NFL Kickoff Live, a free concert jump starting the new football season. The NFL reserved special front-stage viewing areas for the armed forces as a way of saying thank-you for their service.

The event drew more than 100,000 music and football fans to the National Mall. Some 25,500 service members and their families — including roughly 2,200 Guardsmen and their guests — registered online to attend through Operation Tribute to Freedom, a Department of Defense initiative that supports and encourages recognition of America's servicemen and women.

"This is the most fun I've had in seven months," said Simms, of Baltimore. "It feels good. Really good."

Simms, Holmes and Blanchette enjoyed the concert from the VIP bleachers, where they sat with dozens of other Walter Reed Army Medical Center patients who were mobile enough to travel. Some came in wheelchairs with wives and friends. The

reserved section included access to a tent filled with food and beverages. Celebrities — like NFL Hall of Fame running back Marcus Allen — spent time in the bleachers visiting soldiers and signing autographs.

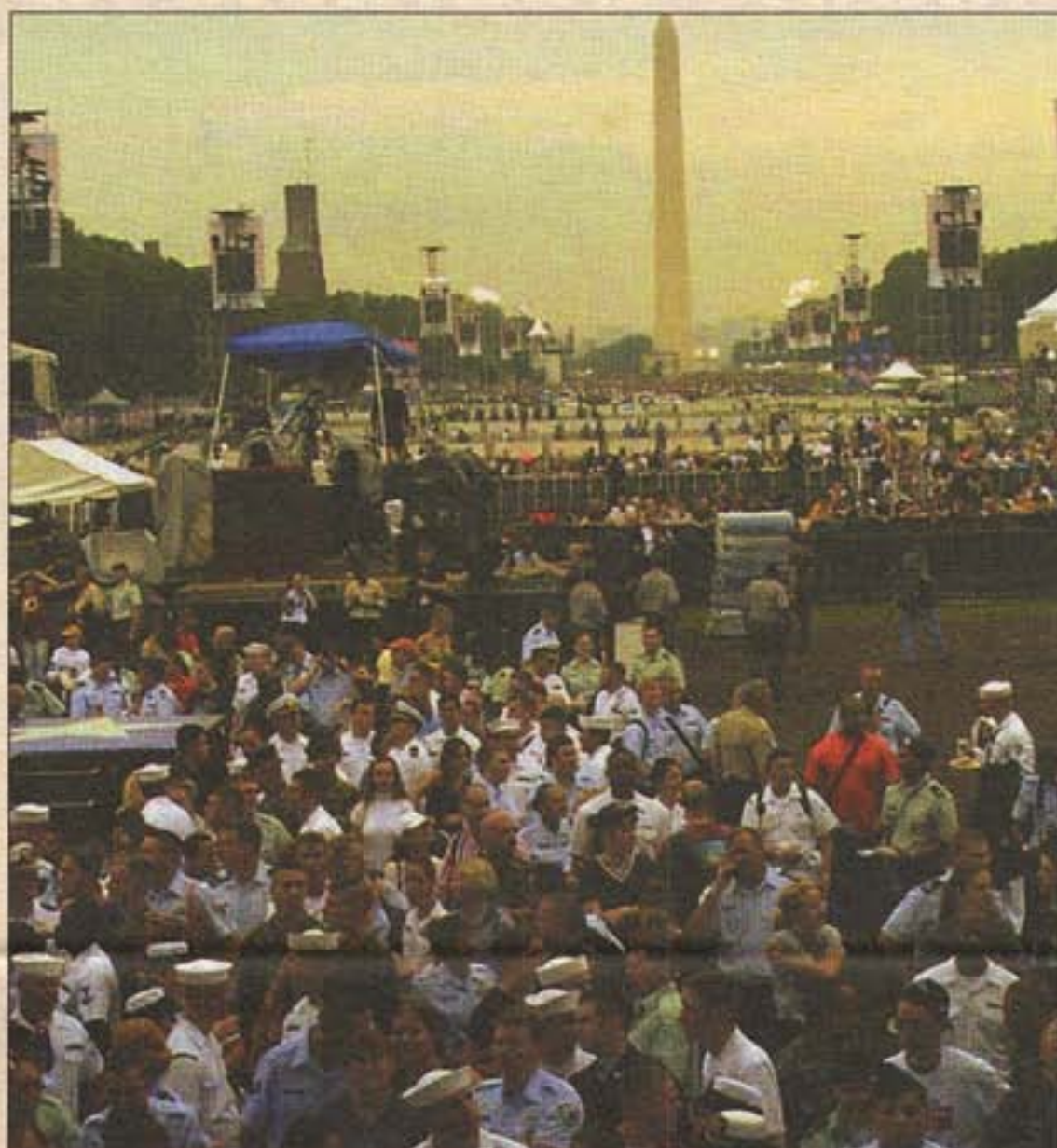
A heart condition forced Simms out of Iraq five months after his arrival with the 1229th Transportation Company of the Maryland National Guard. The stark contrast between sweltering days in the desert of Iraq and intermittent afternoon rains on the Mall was a bit overwhelming, he said. He's still not quite used to the security of being home. On his 45th birthday in June, a young Iraqi boy threw a brick through the windshield of the 5-ton truck Simms was driving through a small town. He narrowly escaped injury.

"It's a big adjustment, being back," said Simms. "But I'm hanging in there."

So, too, are Holmes and Blanchette, who are recovering from injuries and ailments at the Army hospital. Holmes, a member of the 547th Transportation Company, Washington, D.C. National Guard, broke his left hand in June. He fell while getting off a truck he was riding in as his unit worked to secure an area near Baghdad.

Blanchette, of North Kingstown, R.I., is a member of the 115th Military Police Company, Rhode Island National Guard. A serious kidney disorder sent him to the Army hospital a little over a week before the event.

Feeling appreciated for their service helps with the healing process, said the guardsmen and others who have seen their share of horrors in Iraq and elsewhere while fighting the global war on terrorism.



Photos by Spc. Andrew Hillegass

Members of the armed forces gather in front of the stage before the start of the NFL Kickoff Live concert at the National Mall. The service members and their families were honored guests of the NFL as part of Operation Tribute to Freedom.

Blige and several other performers sharing the playbill — Aerosmith, Good Charlotte, Britney Spears, and Aretha Franklin — expressed their gratitude to the armed forces both on stage and at a press conference the day before.

"The military has a lot to do with us being here," Blige said at the Sept. 3 media gathering. "They deserve a lot of support."

Most of the celebrities noted personal connections to the military. Blige's father served in Vietnam. Franklin spoke proudly of two brothers in the Navy, one of whom retired after 20 years as a navigator. Paul Thomas, bass player for Good Charlotte, has a cousin in the Army who flies Blackhawk helicopters.

Their ties to troops continued at the concert, where five service members — each representing a different branch of the military — introduced the band or performer from their same hometown or

state. Army Sgt. 1st Class Katherine Perez of the Florida National Guard had the pleasure of giving an enthusiastic stage call to fellow New Yorker Mary J. Blige. It was an experience like none other, Perez said.

There was the Washington monument in front of her and the U.S. Capitol building to her rear. Recently retired Washington Redskins defensive back Darrell Green was at her side, calling her a hero.

Stage lights of all colors flooded the massive crowd as it sent thunderous applause and cheers into the night air. Network television cameras put the scene in homes all across America.

"It was pure ecstasy," laughed Perez, still giddy a few days later. Most of the service members in the crowd have been deployed at some point in the two years fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan or other global hot spots. Some, like

Perez, are currently deployed for service in Operation Enduring Freedom. Perez is with the 107th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment from St. Augustine, which was called to active duty in early February and is now working on the task force for Operation Tribute to Freedom.

Uniforms of every style and color blanketed the audience. From the stage, Aerosmith front man Steven Tyler thanked the military several times, repeatedly telling them the performance was "all about you."

Unlike his days in Iraq, there was no stress or fear for Simms, the Army specialist from Walter Reed, as he soaked up the concert energy. But he couldn't help thinking about his buddies still overseas.

"I wish a lot of the guys over there could get a taste of this," said Simms, watching Blige sway and swoon on a Jumbotron.



A member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart presents awards to four Purple Heart recipients from different branches of the military.

Maine Guardsmen continue a 33-y

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

Camp Gagetown, N.B. — Maine Army National Guard soldiers have learned a lot about working closely with their allied cousins, because they have been training on eastern Canadian soil most summers for the past 33 years.

Camp Gagetown, a sprawling training ground in the western part of New Brunswick, has been the home away from home for the 1st Battalion, 152nd Field Artillery for a couple of weeks of annual training since those Maine citizen-soldiers began towing their 155mm howitzers across the border in 1971.

"Going to Gagetown," therefore, has been business as usual for this Maine heavy artillery outfit for longer than many of its members have worn military uniforms or been alive.

The Lawfield Observation Post and the Hibernia Road on the post beside the Saint John River are as familiar to Maine citizen-soldiers, who train in Canada, as the Jackson Barracks beside the Mississippi River in New Orleans is to those in the Louisiana National Guard.

Some, including Sgt. 1st Class Zane Grant, who is 55, have been to Gagetown 35 or 40 times for weekend drills as well as for annual training.

"There is more urgency to train the way we would fight, knowing what has happened and what could happen," said Grant about the demands that the war against terrorism has made on the National Guard.

Now, Grant and other members of the Maine outfit are training with Canadian reserve artillery soldiers who also appreciate the chance to get better acquainted with their American counterparts.

Training at Gagetown makes sense for a couple of reasons, said Lt. Col. Verne McMoorn, who has commanded the Maine artillery battalion for two years.

The battalion needs a lot of room to maneuver and fire its howitzers with any degree of combat realism. Gagetown has plenty of room for that because the diamond-shaped base features nearly 425 square miles of wide-open and heavily wooded terrain for the Canadian army's Combat Training Center. That's nearly half the size of the U.S. Army's National Training Center in California.

"You won't find anything on the East Coast any better than this," McMoorn said. "The sheer size gives us the chance for realistic training with our support elements and our three firing batteries. Over here we can do tactical logistics."

The battalion is based in the northern Maine city of Caribou. Its elements are scattered across northern and eastern Maine from Fort Kent to Calais to Waterville, and they can all convoy to Gagetown in a day.



(Left) Maine Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Philip Tompkins checks the sight alignment for one of the howitzers belonging to the 1st Battalion, 152nd Field Artillery during an annual training fire mission at the Canadian Force's Camp Gagetown in New Brunswick. (Below) Maine Army National Guard Spc. Joseph Bourgoine fires one of the 155mm howitzers.



Photos by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell, National Guard

Otherwise, it takes three days to get to Fort Drum in upper New York state, the closest place in the continental United States where this battalion can train with its heavy artillery. It takes three days to get back home. Those six days, Maine Guard officials said, cut deeply into the battalion's limited training time.

Earl Adams, who was 36 and a Maine Army Guard major at the time, pulled the strings that made it possible for the battalion to begin making the considerably shorter trips to the Canadian camp in 1971, during his second year as the battalion's commander.

It took less than a year to get the necessary

permission from Washington, D.C., and Ottawa and to coordinate with the brass at Gagetown to make it happen, recalled Adams who retired as Maine's adjutant general in 2000.

"We never really thought of this as an experiment. The die was cast pretty much from the start," Adams recalled. "But it has proven to be a lot more successful than we thought possible at that time."

Now the Maine battalion trains at Gagetown, on average, two out of every three years. It still has to make the long haul to Fort Drum every few years because that is where the Maine soldiers would report if the entire

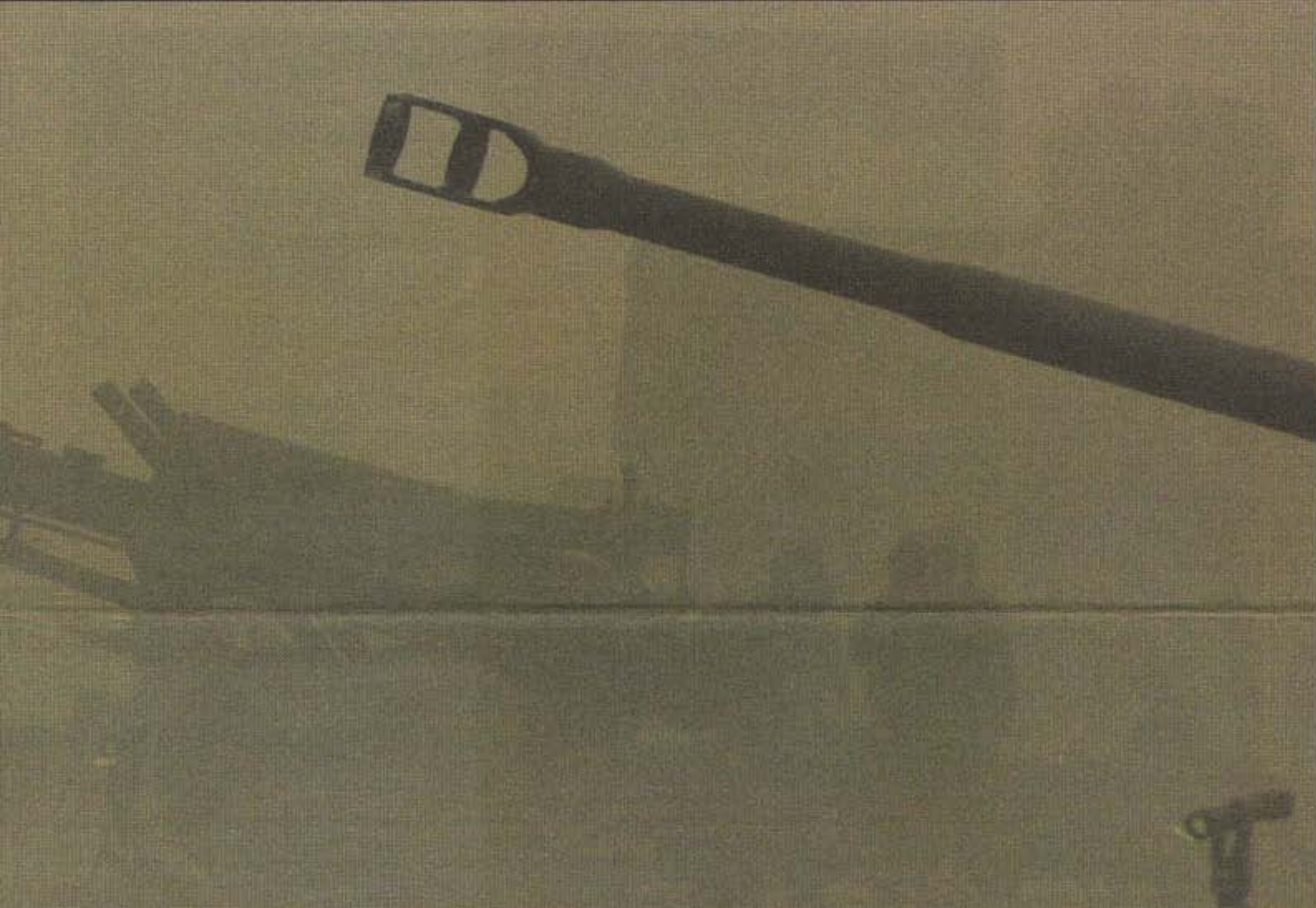
battalion were mobilized for war.

The other advantage, everyone agrees, is that the Canadians are incredibly accommodating and easy to work with.

"We are quite happy to have the National Guard train here. The Canadian and American forces have many traditions and tactics in common, but we can always learn from one another," said Canadian Army Capt. Doug Allison, spokesman for Col. Barry MacLeod, the Camp Gagetown commander. "We certainly look forward to the continuation of this relationship."

The Maine battalion trains more frequently at Gagetown than any other foreign unit.

ear tradition with Canadian troops



Allison acknowledged.

Maine Army Guard engineers have also built bridges and firing positions and repaired roads on the post in years past to help maintain good relations with the Canadians.

"Our relations with the Canadians have always been top shelf," said Maj. Gen. Joseph Tinkham, Maine's adjutant general, who has seen the relationship mature since August 1972.

He was a young artillery officer, who had joined the Army Reserve after serving in Vietnam and was assigned to be the safety officer for 1st of the 152nd's Bravo Battery during his first association with the Army Guard.

"That's where I learned to love the National Guard," Tinkham recalled. "After they scraped off their civilian rust, those Guard soldiers were as proficient with their howitzers as any soldiers I had served with in Vietnam. I found out immediately that

they knew their jobs very well and took them very seriously."

The Americans are learning the same thing about members of the Canadian militia thanks to a relationship that McMoarn has nurtured during the past eight years with members of the 3rd Field Artillery Regiment that is located in Saint John and Woodstock, New Brunswick.

Maine Guard soldiers helped the Canadian reservists position their 105mm howitzers during the regiment's weeklong field exercise last summer. The Canadians reciprocated during the first two weeks of this August by furnishing four forward observers to support the Maine battalion.

"We do exactly the same things. We just use different terms for them," said Maj. David Boudreau, second in command of the reserve regiment and a civilian engineer, who designs telephone switching systems.



Canadian Reserve Forces Sergeants Ronald Wilson, left, and Norm Mason watch shells explode on the Lawfield Impact Area.

For example, American army artilleryists call the center of their target area the "azimuth of fire," while Canadians call it the "center of arc," explained Boudreau, adding that Gagetown is the perfect place to learn those lessons of the language.

"We wouldn't know that if we hadn't worked together," said Boudreau. "In the

theater is no place to find that out. This is the place to find that out."

There is one term, however, that all military people understand. That is "training." And that is what Maine Army National Guard soldiers have been able to do a lot of for a long time at Camp Gagetown thanks to the cooperation of the Canadians.

Operation Lone Star:

Branches join forces to help a community

By Spc. Derek Del Rosario

100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

WESLACO, Texas — "An Army of One."
"Accelerate Your Life."
"Cross into the Blue."

No matter what slogan they identify with, the military personnel involved in Operation Lone Star 2003 are helping Rio Grande Valley residents live healthier. For two weeks this summer, three elementary schools in South Texas were converted into makeshift clinics where Naval Reserve and Army and Air National Guard personnel worked together to provide dental and medical assistance to the under-privileged residents of the community.

The annual humanitarian exercise has been a joint effort ever since its debut in 1999. Army National Guard Lt. Col. Zerline J. McNeal-Ingram of the Austin-based Texas Medical Command Group is the executive officer of the clinic at Chapa Elementary in La Joya, Texas. She has been involved in every Operation Lone Star since its inception and has seen the growing relationship among the services.

"I was involved in this operation even before it was officially called Operation Lone Star," said McNeal-Ingram. "During the first exercise, the clinics were set up in tents, and all the military services made significant contributions."

McNeal-Ingram related the joint efforts of Operation Lone Star to her experience during Operation Desert Storm, where she worked with services from different countries as well as with different U.S. services.

"Desert Storm involved joint forces as well as forces from countries like France and Italy," she said. "Every service has a different way of looking at things, but what matters is we all served the same purpose, much like that of Operation Lone Star."

Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Gilbert Cisneros Jr., of the 149th Medical Squadron in San Antonio also credited his previous



Photos by Sgt. Kevin Bromley, 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Gilbert Cisneros Jr., of the 149th Medical Squadron in San Antonio, checks the blood-sugar levels of Rio Grande Valley residents during Operation Lone Star 2003. Cisneros said joint exercises, such as Operation Lone Star, make it easy to work with other services because everyone wants to help those in need.

experience of working with different services as facilitating his relationship with other service members as part of Operation Lone Star.

"I am quite comfortable working in a joint-forces situation," Cisneros said. "I worked in a joint-service situation at a Combat Casualty Care Course at Camp Bullis. I think that as any soldier, seaman, marine or airman gain more experience working with one another, they become more comfortable in that environment."

While many of the physicians and dentists participating in the humanitarian mission have prior experience working in a joint-service setting, many military personnel are new to Operation Lone Star and to working with other services. Navy Reserve Cmdr. James Eric Hibbs of the 4th Dental Company at Fort Worth noticed obstacles can come with being new to a joint-forces mission.

"I have been a part of Operation Lone Star before, but it's still a re-learning experience," the dentist said. "I still have to brush up on the rank structure when I work in a joint environment. For those who are new to working with other services, it can be a big challenge to handle a different rank system."

Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Phillip G. Casillas of the 149th Medical Squadron in San Antonio also agrees that learning and recognizing different military titles in the

services can be daunting.

"It takes time to get used to new rank structures," said the airman. "For me, the insignia on Navy uniforms are very hard to learn. I think when people run into a situation like that, it's all about informing ourselves by asking questions."

According to Hibbs, being informed about another service member's branch is not a problem.

"I think everyone loves to be a teacher," Hibbs said. "People like to talk about their military service to members of other services. They are proud of the service they are in and want to share that with others."

McNeal-Ingram said that being educated on different services is a good way to facilitate communication among the services. She gave an example in regards to her own service.

"A lot of people do not understand what the Army National Guard does," said McNeal-Ingram. "When they realize we are part of 'an Army of One,' they get a better concept of our mission and how it is similar to their own. It is all a matter of education."

Being informed about different services' rank structure is not the only thing that can help a joint mission. Understanding other branch-specific differences helps avoid confusion during joint exercises. According to Hibbs, not knowing about a different service-

es, organizational structure also can be an obstacle.

"Sometimes, the administrative side is different among the various services," he said. "Being aware of the different processes and procedures of another service and things like understanding their chain of command can help promote a team effort."

Despite the differences among the services, McNeal-Ingram believes that since Operation Lone Star is a humanitarian mission, it helps keep all of the services as one team.

"In my opinion, medical groups tend to blend easier than other fields do," said McNeal-Ingram. "It is easier for personnel in the medical field to work together because we share a common goal: to promote health care and leave a situation better than it was before, no matter what uniform is worn."

Navy Reserve Dental Technician Annmarie Wilson of the 24th Dental Company in Marietta, Ga., also believes that the common field the services share is a great assistance to the team effort of the military personnel during Operation Lone Star.

"Even though this is mainly an Army exercise, all the services share the same goal," said Wilson. "All of the military personnel here want to lend a helping hand and to pro-

See OLS on Page 11



"Helping people in need is the mission, and we are all working together toward that goal," said DT2 Annmarie Wilson of the 24th Dental Co., Marietta, Ga., in describing the teamwork of the joint forces involved in Operation Lone Star 2003.

Medical reserve forces train for real threat

By Sgt. Kevin M. Bromley
100th Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment

EDINBURG, Texas — It's 3 a.m., the moonlit central Texas landscape rushes below the UH-60 Black Hawk. The occupants are bathed in the red-glow of the helicopter's interior lighting, their features illuminated intermittently by the aircraft's flashing strobe lights as they wing southward towards Mexico.

Col. Charles Killingsworth, Texas Medical Command Group commander, is being briefed in-flight through the helicopter's intercom.

However, the headsets do little to drown out the screaming whine of the twin turbine engines. There is an outbreak of a virulent infectious disease in the shantytowns of the Colonias along the border of Mexico. The culprit, identified by the Texas Army National Guard's Civil Support Team 6, is weapons-grade Anthrax.

An as-yet undetermined terrorist group has released the disease among the impoverished people of Texas' southern-most settlements. This site was chosen because of its close location to the U.S. border and the lack of medical facilities.

The civilian health care community is overwhelmed and does not have the resources to handle a mass-casualty event such as this.

Although the events depicted in the opening paragraphs of this article are fictitious, it could become a gruesome reality.

In this type of scenario, medical personnel of the Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army and Navy Reserves may be called upon to act as the first line of defense in attacks involving weapons of mass destruction or bio-terrorism.

In order to prepare for these missions, the Texas Army National Guard uses Innovative Readiness Training (IRT).

This training doctrine, allows commanders to meet their mobilization readiness requirements, while providing a benefit to the partnership community. One such IRT is Operation Lone Star (OLS),



Photos by Sgt. Kevin M. Bromley, 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Members of the U.S. Naval Reserve, and the Texas Army and Air National Guard, load supplies and equipment used during Operation Lone Star 2003. Operation Lone Star is a joint-service humanitarian exercise that provides medical and dental services to impoverished rural communities along the southern Texas border. The exercise is a Department of Defense-sponsored Innovative Readiness Training exercise that provides a needed community service while satisfying military mobilization training requirements.

which provides medical and dental services to impoverished communities along the U.S.-Mexican border. OLS Operations Officer Maj. Jeff Verschoor aptly described OLS as "a humanitarian mission, but at the same time a training mission."

OLS provides service members with experience in processing mass casualties with undocumented medical histories in a live exercise.

"If there were a smallpox or anthrax outbreak, or other weapon of mass destruction, we'll see the same kind of mass-casualty processing that we see during OLS," Verschoor said.

"We would also see [a percentage of] these types of injuries when deployed in a mass-casualty operation." OLS doctors and dentists see an average of 1,000 patients per day.

The most difficult adjustment service members make during OLS is operating as a joint-service team. This type of operation is often difficult because of different policies procedures and logistical systems among the attending services.

"The [medical and dental] training is not that different

across the services, but we have to learn to communicate," explained Naval Reserve Capt. John Batlle of the 4th Medical Battalion. "Joint exercises are the way of the future — combine our assets and work together."

As with any military operation, communication is vital to successful completion of the mission, and differences in rank structure and jargon can be a hindrance in a joint operation.

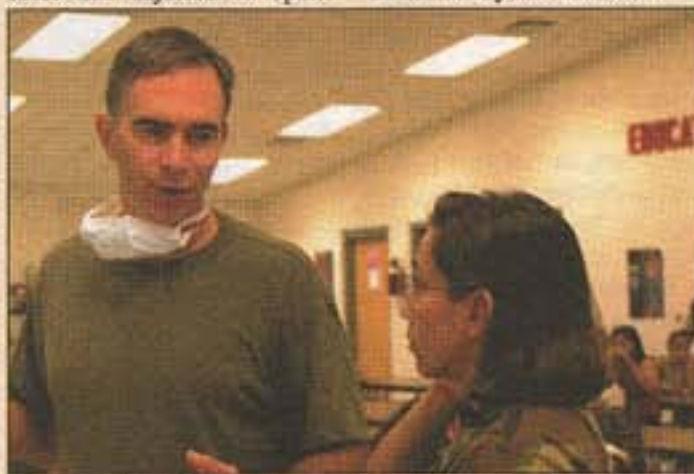
However, Batlle indicated, "During this operation, Army, Navy and Air Force personnel quickly assumed leadership roles and adjusted to opera-

tions in a joint environment."

Although mission readiness is the focal point of innovative readiness training, the most positive benefit of this operation is its effect on service member morale and esprit de corps.

Instead of spending two weeks participating in simulations on a mock battlefield, they are actually providing desperately needed services to people.

"I have attended all five years of Operation Lone Star, and I look forward to this operation every year," said Lt. Col. Zerline McNeal-Ingram, now in her 26th year of service.



Navy Reserve Capt. John Batlle and Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Julie Ortega discuss in-processing and medical screening procedures at Chapa Elementary in La Joya.

FROM PAGE 10

OLS

vide those in need with medical and dental care they lack access to."

Operation Lone Star 2003 marks the first time the Army National Guard has led the mission. In previous years, the training exercise was led by the Marine Corps Reserve. According to McNeal-Ingram, however, the particular service that directs Operation Lone Star does not play a factor in the humanitarian mission's effectiveness.

"It does not matter whether the Army, Navy or Air Force leads this mission," the executive officer said. "As long as we all maintain our military bearing and respect each other, we can work together as a collective unit."

Whether soldier, seaman, airman or Marine, people from the services agree that the training receive is helpful to their own service's preparation for a possible real-world mission.

"Being part of the Air Force, I am more accustomed to giving shots to adults," said Cisneros. "This exercise gives me a chance to immunize children. It's a new experience, and it gives me gainful experience to what reality is like. These low-income areas, this is reality."

Hibbs acknowledged how the two-week operation helps the Navy's involvement with the Marines.

"The Navy needs training to go into the field with the Marines in different conditions," Hibbs said. "Exercises like these gives us a chance to test, evaluate and replace the equipment we might plan to use in the field."

McNeal-Ingram feels that Operation Lone Star provides strong medical training that Army National Guard members can use in the future.

"The experience gained at this operation can be used in a disaster-type situation," said McNeal-Ingram. "It gives our soldiers a realistic view of an environment where we might be called to help."

Despite their different affiliations, Cisneros, Hibbs and McNeal-Ingram have high expectations and hopes for the future of Operation Lone Star.

"I wish there could be more humanitarian efforts here at home as well as abroad," said Cisneros. Operation Lone Star has promoted good will between people and the military, and he hopes that it can continue to do that.

Hibbs agrees that Operation Lone Star provides a great opportunity for different services to develop a relationship with each other.

"I don't believe one service is better than any other," the Navy dentist said. "This mission provides great training for all the members of the different services. This mission should continue because not only does it provide a humanitarian aid, it also helps every soldier, airman or seaman with training that can be used during war time."

McNeal-Ingram wishes that not only different services but also different fields of training could be involved in Operation Lone Star missions.

"One year we had military police here helping with safety issues and taking care of crowd control," the Army Guard officer said. "Maybe in the future we could have engineers from the different services help the community."

Guard pilots write the book on flying unarmed aircraft into combat

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

ALI AL SALEM AIR BASE, Kuwait — A small group of Army National Guard aviators are writing "the book" that others like them will probably read and may one day fly by.

It's the book about piloting unarmed and unarmored twin-engine airplanes, which were designed to fly people and cargo through peaceful skies, into places where people can shoot at them.

It's the book about what to do when you take a Sherpa to war.

Army Guard aviators are writing it, because the Army Guard is the only military organization that flies the Sherpa, otherwise known as the C-23.

"We're writing the doctrine about how to fly what is essentially a commercial airplane in a combat theater, because nobody has done this before," explained Mississippi Army Guard Capt. Mark Johnson, who commands a company of C-23 Sherpas in Kuwait.

Johnson is a member of Company I, 185th Aviation, which is based in Gulfport, Miss. It also has Sherpas in California, Connecticut and Missouri. Those were the people making the flights to Iraq, and writing "the book" in September.

Let's make a couple of things perfectly clear.

First, the Army Guard flies fixed-wing airplanes just like the Air National Guard. The planes are part of the Operational Support Airlift Agency. It's just that the Army Guard has a lot fewer of them, and its planes were not designed to fly in hostile territory.

Second, the Army Guard has been flying some of its fixed-wing planes — its C-23 Sherpas and its smaller C-12 Hurons — from Kuwait into Iraq, as well as to more friendly places in the Middle East, during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The fleet generally includes eight Sherpas and three Hurons that are based at the Kuwait Air Force's base north of Kuwait City. Two more Hurons are based in Afghanistan, but that's another story.

The twin-tailed, rectangular C-23s look like throwbacks to biplanes that were flown during the 1930s even though the Sherpas are about 15 years old. They can carry up to 18 passengers or a couple of tons of cargo as high as 14,000 feet at a top speed of 210 mph.

The C-12s can carry seven passengers up to 31,000 feet at 300 mph.



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

A California Army National Guard flight engineer signals the pilot to start the engines of a C-23 Sherpa for a morning flight from Kuwait into Iraq. The Army Guard's Sherpas are proving to be a reliable workhorse for transporting personnel and cargo in the Persian Gulf during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The C-12s have pressurized cabins. The C-23s don't.

That makes the C-23 a fairly fat target to someone with a surface-to-air missile even though it is much smaller than the Air Force's workhorse C-130.

Johnson said the Sherpa crews are counting on installing defensive chafe and flare devices similar to those used on C-130s and designed to decoy a missile away from the target. But they will not make those planes fly any faster.

Still, Johnson explained, the coalition force frequently needs such things as rotor blades, transmissions, and bottled water, as well as people, flown to Iraq, so one or more of the Sherpas fly there most days.

The C-12s have made some flights to Iraq, but they generally carry their human cargo of generals and other important officials to other places, said Alaska Army Guard Maj. Bill Smith, who directs that operation in Kuwait.

The C-12s have been doing that long enough so that the Army "knows how to use us," Smith said. "We're part of the fight."

The Sherpa community is finding its niche during this war.

Although a few Sherpas flew for a short while during the first Gulf War, Johnson said, they have been pressed into duty for this one to take some of the load off the Army's cargo-carrying helicopters, the CH-47 Chinooks.

The sand that they kick up when they land and take off raises havoc with the Chinooks' large twin rotors and multiple moving parts, he pointed out, and it costs a lot less to fly a C-23 than it does to fly a CH-47.

"We can go from airport to airport for a lot less money," Johnson said, "and the Chinooks can go from an airport to remote areas where we can't go because there are no runways."

The Sherpas got into the war in August, when they hauled a total of 122 personnel and about eight tons of cargo during 208 hours of flying.

Johnson believes they'll be used even more as coalition forces continue to occupy Iraq.

The fact that they are flying to air fields in Iraq is the reason for writing "the book" about the lessons they are learning during their on-the-job combat training.

Many of the ideas have already

been put on paper, said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Paul Dwyer, who is also a pilot from the California Highway Patrol. The Sherpa people are, however, reluctant to reveal many of the techniques that they've borrowed from the C-130 and special operations crews and figured out on their own.

Let's just say they fly as high as they can for as long as they can, then they take a sort of circuitous route to the ground as quickly as they can. And they make their approach as quietly as they can. Then they get up and out as quickly as possible.

Nothing, however, can eliminate all of the risks, pointed out Missouri Army Guard Staff Sgt. Larry Welty, a Sherpa flight engineer, who used to earn his keep in the Army as a Black Hawk helicopter crew chief in the elite 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment.

"I've had some interesting rides in those Black Hawks in Haiti and Somalia," said Welty, who had made nearly 10 flights into Iraq through the first week in September.

"The first one always stands out because you don't know what to

expect," Welty said. "You just have to put your faith in each other to do the job."

"After the first couple of flights, the pilots made some good decisions about the best way to handle the missions," he said. "Now I'm a little more relaxed about flying into Iraq, but you never totally put it out of your mind that you could get shot."

Dwyer said it is always a good idea to expect the unexpected.

He could not contact the tower one time as he was approaching an airfield in central Iraq. It seems the place had just been attacked with mortars, and the air traffic controllers had vacated the tower.

"We landed anyway, taxied and shut it down," Dwyer said. "Everything turned out fine."

The Sherpa crews, as well as their passengers, hope the tactics they are testing under combat conditions will continue to keep them safe.

"Necessity is a great motivator," Dwyer pointed out. "We have the necessity to get in and out of there quickly."

That's what "the book" is all about.

Parker Award November deadline fast approaching

By William Hays
U.S. Army Aviation Center

FORT RUCKER, Ala. — Nomination packets are due at the U.S. Army Aviation Center Nov. 1 for the annual Parker awards for excellence among Army Aviation battalions and squadrons.

The competition is open to aviation and aviation maintenance battalions and squadrons of the active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard.

A Department of the Army evaluation board will meet in November to select a winner in each category of combat, combat service, combat service support and Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA) battalion-size units and one overall winner from among those four.

Each unit will be evaluated in terms of excellence in accomplishing its mission-essential task list, in the areas of leadership, training, maintenance, and safety.

Details on nomination procedures, including endorsements through the chain of command, are in a document at the Aviation Branch Personnel Proponency website, <http://www-rucker.army.mil/ap/default.htm>, then click on "Awards" on the left side of the screen.

Active Army, ARNG, and USAR Table of Organization and Equipment and Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE and MTOE) units will compete equally. USAR and ARNG may submit one nomination per category for TOE and MTOE units. Active Army MACOMs will submit one nomination per category.

The Department of the Army awards are named in honor of Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Ellis D. "Don" Parker, former Director of the Army Staff. As a Major General, Parker was Commanding General of the U.S. Army Aviation Center and Chief of Army Aviation from January 1985 to September 1989. The award program was named for him in recognition of his achievements while leading Army Aviation during its early development as a Branch of the U.S. Army.

For more information contact Capt. Belden Birdsell at COM (334) 255-2370, DSN 558-2370 or email beldenj@rucker.army.mil.



A flight home ...



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Rick Ware, West Virginia Air National Guard
West Virginia Army National Guard aviators from the 146th Medical Company help Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch settle into her wheelchair after flying the young woman and members of her family from Washington, D.C., to Elizabeth, W.Va., for a heroine's welcome on July 22.

West Virginia Army National Guard aviators proudly return Lynch to the mountain state

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

ELIZABETH, W.Va. — Army National Guard aviators and Air National Guard security forces personnel helped Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch, the heroine of Operation Iraqi Freedom, return to her West Virginia home and a rousing homecoming on July 22.

Four members of the West Virginia Army Guard's 146th Medical Company formed the crew for the Blackhawk medevac helicopter that flew Lynch and members of her family from Washington, D.C., here to Elizabeth, W.Va., where she made her first public appearance since being captured in Iraq on March 23.

About 20 security force members of the West Virginia Air Guard's 130th Airlift Wing out of Charleston helped the West Virginia State Police and the Wirt County Sheriff's Department provide security for the homecoming in the western part of the state that captured the nation's attention that summer afternoon.

"The helicopter landed on the field where she played softball when she was going to Wirt County High School. That was very nice," said Maj. Mike Cadle, spokesman for the West Virginia National Guard.

"It's great that she's home with her family. Her homecoming came off without a hitch. It was fabulous," added Cadle, who said about 3,000 spectators and 350 media members saw Lynch make a brief speech and then travel by motorcade to her family's home in nearby Palestine.

The crew members for the nearly three-hour flight from the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where Lynch has been recuperating since returning to this country on April 11, were Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert McClure, the pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 4 James McPeak, the copilot, Sgt. 1st Class Larry Cosner, the crew chief, and Staff Sgt. Paula Tucker, the flight medic.

"She's a West Virginia soldier, and we wanted to bring her home," Cadle told The Parkersburg News and The Parkersburg Sentinel. "If we hadn't placed the request, she would have been brought home by some other method. We were very pleased the hospital honored our request."

The other passengers were Lynch's mother and father, her boyfriend, and West Virginia Army Guard 1st Sgt. Dan Little, the cousin of Jessica's father, and a full-time Army Guard helicopter technical inspector.

Little has been by the family's side throughout the four-month ordeal of Lynch's capture after her company's convoy was ambushed, her dramatic rescue from an Iraqi hospital on April 1, and her stays at military hospitals in Germany and then Washington.

Pin Program: Cards now available in 100 languages

By Staff Sgt. C. Todd Lopez

Air Force Print News

WASHINGTON — Airmen whose parents speak languages other than English can now order Air Force Parent Pins with accompanying cards translated into one of 100 languages.

The new Your Guardians of Freedom initiative is an extension of the Parent-Pin program called "E Pluribus Unum." The Latin term comes from the great seal of the United States and means, "out of many, one," said the program's director, Brig. Gen. Edward Tonini.

"We try to take a lot of what we do in this program from history," Tonini said. "E pluribus unum comes from our founding fathers. It evokes both the strength that America derives from the diversity of its citizens and the strength that our Air Force derives from the diversity of its airmen."

In the first four months of the Parent-Pin program, more than 200,000 parents or parental figures received the lapel pins and personalized cards from Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper and Secretary of the Air Force Dr. James G. Roche.

Tonini said the idea for E Pluribus Unum came shortly after the program kicked off in early May. "It started very early on in the program with an e-mail from a lieutenant colonel in Arizona," Tonini said. "He thought the program was magnificent but said his father spoke only Spanish, and it would be so much more meaningful to his father to receive the card in Spanish. Over the next few weeks, we got a hundred of those kinds of letters."

Even before launching E Pluribus Unum, members of the Your Guardians of Freedom office received more than 1,000 requests for cards in 40 different languages, according to Tonini. About 70 percent of those requests were for Spanish.

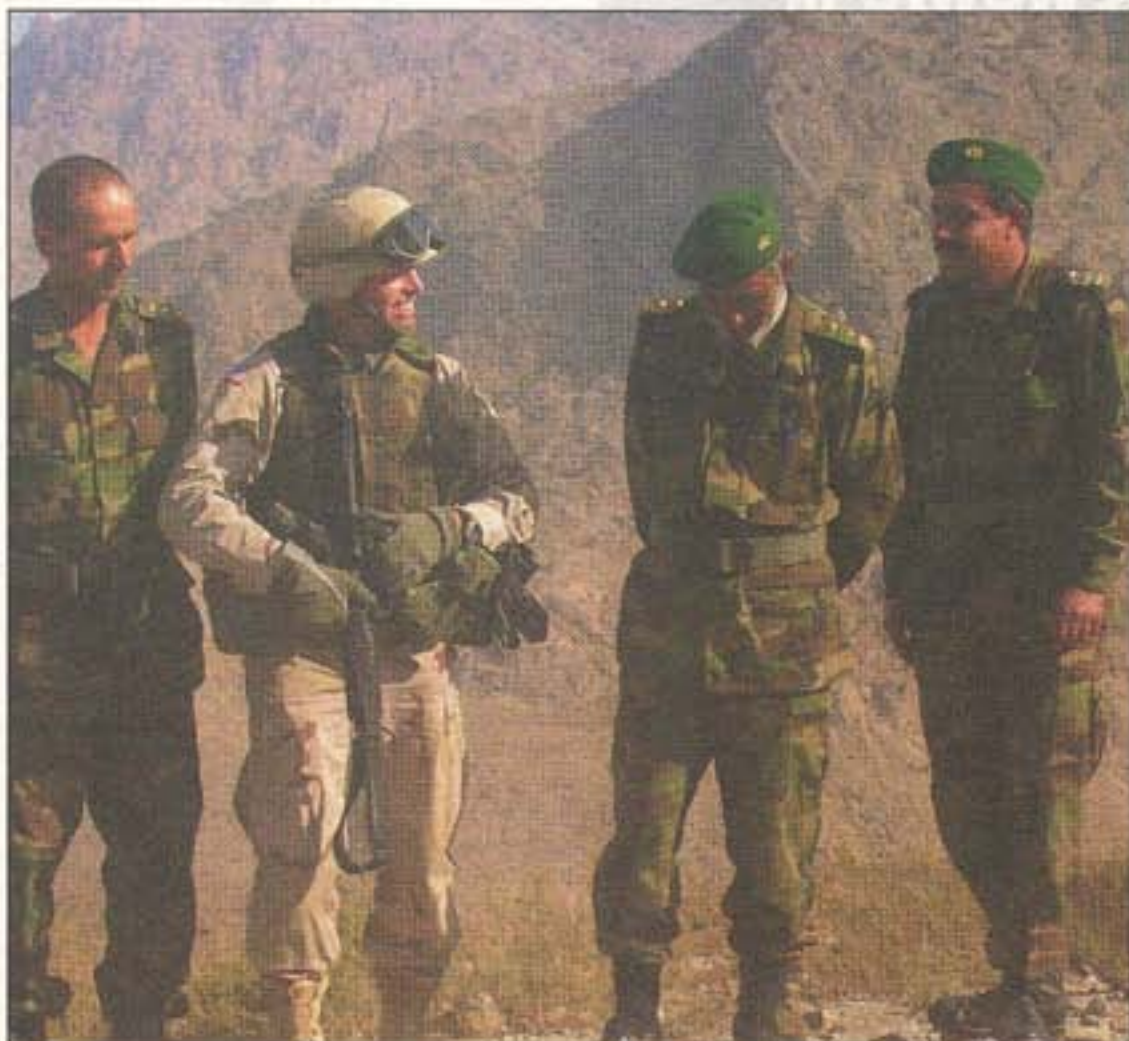
Officials teamed with people from the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif., and other commercial agencies to translate the original card into 100 different languages, Tonini said.

The purpose for offering the letter in so many languages is community outreach, according to Tonini.

"The Air Force Parent-Pin program is designed to acknowledge the parents and parental figures whose support continues to be critical to America's airmen," Tonini said. "When your parents wear these pins, their friends will ask about it. Your parents will tell them about you and your service, and how proud they are of you. This is a real 'support multiplier,' and that support is just as important if your parents or parental figures don't speak English."

"There is a lot to be gained for the Air Force in terms of communicating with the huge number of people in the United States whose primary language is other than English," Tonini said. "If we can make an impression in a non-English speaking family by translating the letter, then we believe that is a positive thing. This is a true diversity outreach program."

Montana Guardsman offers knowledge, receives wisdom



Submitted photo

Central Corps Commander of the Afghanistan National Army, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Moeen (second from right) with Col. Joel Cusker (second from left) during a situational back-brief to the corps commander in the process of wrapping up "Operation Gardez Guardian."

On Guard Staff Report

AFGHANISTAN – Montana Army National Guardsman, Col. Joel D. Cusker, deployed to Afghanistan to offer counsel to one of the country's most senior military leaders, but in the process became the pupil.

"I am responsible to mentor, coach, and support the central corps commander of the Afghanistan National Army – Maj. Gen. Mohammad Moeen, who has 28 years of service in the military. Twenty-two of those are in combat," Cusker said. "I am well aware of the fact that I am learning a great deal from this outstanding leader and skilful warrior, and that he might not gain anything from me, yet my duty is to try and mentor, coach and support."

After nearly completing a 280 kilometer tactical military maneuver that included the successful acquisition of four truckloads of Russian ammunition critical to feed the weapon systems of the Afghanistan National Army, Cusker provided a situational back-brief to the corps commander.

"I shared with him one of the leadership tenets of General Colin Powell – 'Perpetual optimism is a combat force multiplier,'" said the cavalry officer assigned to the 10th Mountain Division. "After listening to my back brief and latest comment, the Corps' G2, Col. Dur Mohammad, averts his eyes away from the corps

Commander – not certain what his commander's reaction will be to the comment from a bold American soldier."

Moeen smiles shyly, while watching his boot trace a pattern in the dust – thinking for a moment.

"Then the corps commander reverted to the teacher," Cusker recalls. "He shared with me the quiet confidence that years of front-line experience has provided him – The mission is not over yet; we have not returned safely back to the Base at Central Corps and we cannot allow the luxury of imagining that we are victorious when the outcome is still uncertain."

A warm smile graces the combat veterans face as he looks at Cusker – not unlike a teacher who recognizes a pupil who has much to learn.

"With that gesture, he assured me that he understands my point, and that there is some level of wisdom to both of our comments," Cusker explains. "He took my gloved hand into both of his, pulled me close, pressed his cheek to mine, took a step back, placed his right hand over his heart, bowed his head slightly, and moved off with his entourage scurrying after him."

"As you can imagine, these 60 days have been an incredible professional experience," Cusker said.

(Editor's note: This report is based on an e-mail from Col. Cusker.)

Georgia Guard participates in large scale homeland defense exercise

By Kenneth R. Baldowski, Lt. Col.
State Public Affairs Officer

ATLANTA, Ga. – A concealed explosive device hidden in an inconspicuous ocean-going container on the Port of Savannah was the scenario which called into action the Georgia National Guard and more than a dozen federal, state and local first responders in one of the largest combined homeland defense exercises conducted in the State of Georgia.

While the most visible portion of the drill took place at the Port of Savannah's Ocean Terminal, National Guard soldiers from around the state also responded to similar threat simulations at Georgia's nuclear plants Hatch and Vogtle and other locations around the state.

The one-day training exercise was designed to refine, rehearse and validate homeland security plans for providing military support for civil authorities.

Guard officials also took advantage of the exercise to test the organization's ability to respond quickly to emergency situations taking place in various parts of the state. In Savannah, the simulated bomb threat called into action members of the Georgia National Guard's 4th Civil Support Team who were charged with locating and determining the nature of the device. In coordination with U.S. Customs and Chatham County Explosive Ordinance Disposal, the device

was located and destroyed without major incident.

"This was an example of the excellent cooperation between federal, state and local agencies, all who have a role in our homeland defense," said Maj. Gen. David Poythress, Georgia's Adjutant General. "Such exercises help us to identify areas of responsibility and coordinate an effective response when called upon to do so."

Across the state, the Guard worked with other agencies ranging from the Department of Public Safety to emergency management officials. In Savannah a key participant was the U.S. Coast Guard.

It's a good opportunity to put names and faces together," said Coast Guard Cmdr. Tim Close, captain of the Savannah port. "In a real incident, these are the same guys we'd be working with."

More than 600 Georgia Army and Air National Guardsmen participated in the one-day homeland defense exercise.

Observing the exercise were legislative representatives from Georgia's congressional offices as well as key state Homeland Defense leaders.

Submitted photo

Georgia's 4th Civil Support Team was one of the first units to be alerted during Georgia's largest statewide homeland defense exercise.



Lexington's 211th MPs' tour of duty extended

Story by Spc. LeeAnn Lloyd

Fort Bliss Monitor

When soldiers from the 211th Military Police Battalion of the Massachusetts Army National Guard were called to active-duty status in support of the war on terrorism, they had no idea their 6-month mission would keep them on active-duty for nearly two years.

The National Guard group was called to active-duty in support of Operation Noble Eagle in October of 2001, and was tasked with various homeland security missions. Shortly after their release from active-duty late May 2002, the battalion was alerted of the possibility of overseas deployment for a different mission - Operation Enduring Freedom.

The group was then divided - two companies were sent on missions in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan, while the others packed their bags in preparation of fighting America's battles in Iraq or Kuwait. Instead, they ended up in the sub-zero temperatures of Fort Drum, N.Y.

The battalion performed various command and control tasks while backfilling Fort Drum. Still, this was not enough to appease the battalion's needs to be a part of the war efforts. After nine months of assisting at Drum and playing the Army's popular game of hurry up and wait, they were put on standby in preparation for missions overseas. The soldiers had just packed their bags for another weekend venture home when the phone call came that changed everything.

"We hadn't even been home 48 hours when my phone rang. It was first sergeant telling me that I had to go back - we were heading out. I thought he was playing a joke on me," Cpl. Kim Wright, 26, of Holyoke, Mass., said. Wright is assigned to 211th's headquarters detachment.

Wright had originally been sent out with a line company to assist in Afghanistan. She boarded the plane, but her trip was short-lived when she broke her foot in Germany en route to Afghanistan, and was sent back to Fort Drum, where she linked up with the 211th. She, like most members of the 211th, never expected to be on active-duty so long.

"When I left home, my son, Nathan, was four and a half years old and when I get home he'll be six. We all signed up knowing there was a possibility of something like this happening, but we never thought we'd be gone for nearly two years," Wright said.

The next landing strip for the soldiers provided a big change. They were no longer in the winter-like weather of New York; they were in the harsh heat of Kuwait. Even in early spring months like March, the heat can be detrimental. The group spent two months assisting at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, until they were sent to their current location of LSA Anaconda, Iraq. Both companies that went to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan did their six-month rotation, were sent home and replaced by the battalion's third company, and a handful joined their fellow soldiers in Iraq.

"I couldn't believe the extremes in temper-

"Being out here is bittersweet. You make sacrifices. It's about devotion to duty; devotion to service. But it comes at an expense to personal lives. Your loved ones, your education, everything all stands to the wayside."

- Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Morin

atures. We went from Fort Drum where the temperature was thirty degrees below zero, to here, where it's one hundred and thirty degrees above zero. We went from white-outs in the snow to whiteouts in the sand," Spc. Sonya Aldrich, 25, of Boston, Mass., said.

A difference in the heat index is not the only challenge the soldiers have faced. They've also had to pool their resources and knowledge to make their little home in the giant sandbox called Iraq. The soldiers have learned to make do with makeshift commodities most people tend to take for granted. They've successfully built and designed their own showers and toilets - two very important assets in a place where hygiene becomes a never-ending mission.

"Never in a million years did I think I'd be out here doing some of the things that I am," Wright said. One advantage is most of the soldiers are skilled in a different specialty in the civilian portion of their lives, making adjustments to living conditions a little easier, the soldiers said.

One thing that helps the soldiers build morale is receiving mail from home. Seems like a simple gesture, but it is not so easily achieved here. One letter could take months to reach its departure point in the States to its

final destination in Southwest Asia. When soldiers don't get word from home, they rely on each other for support.

While on active-duty status in Iraq, serving as military policemen, cooks, mechanics and communications specialists, these soldiers remember everyday that back home they are also sales representatives, teachers, carpenters and policemen - supporters and assets of Massachusetts's communities. They never forget that they are husbands and wives, grandparents, mothers and fathers. It's the understanding that they are fighting for a better future that keeps them going.

"Being out here is bittersweet. You make sacrifices. It's about devotion to duty; devotion to service. But it comes at an expense to personal lives. Your loved ones, your education, everything all stands to the wayside," Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Morin, 31, immigration officer in Massachusetts, said.

While this deployment may be a first for some of the younger troops and a little harder to deal with, there are those seasoned soldiers out there to provide their expertise. Sixty-year-old Fred Coe of East Bridgewater, Mass., is the oldest soldier in the theater, and lives each day as if he's in his 30's. A Vietnam Era veteran, the Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical noncommissioned officer-in-charge sees the sacrifices being made not only on behalf of the soldiers, but on behalf of their families and supporters, too.

"Sacrifices have to be made, whether it's by those here on the front lines, or by those supporting those here on the front lines. People don't realize our families and friends are sacrificing, too. They say it's not the reporter that gives you freedom of press; it's the soldier. We're the ones who have to insure that," Coe said.

Still, soldiers can't help but worry about what's going on at the home front, and how deploying may have changed their lives forever. Wright wonders how her five-year-old son, Nathan, will cope with both of his parents deployed to support the war efforts for extended periods. And now she has to go back to get her associate's degree in dental hygiene, a feat she was only one semester from achieving. Aldrich resigned from her job in a print shop for the deployment. She hopes to go back to school full-time to become a physical therapist. Coe plans to retire with his wife of 16 years.

When it all is said and done, the battalion would have spent nearly two years on active-duty status.



Photo by Capt. James Blake, 211th Military Police Battalion

1st Sgt. Stephen Balboni, of West Springfield, Mass. and Spec. She'laugh Dunbar, of Tewksbury, Mass. give candy to children near a school in Iraq. Grateful children are give Spec. Dunbar a watermelon. The soldiers are part of the Mass. National Guard's 211th Military Police Battalion. The 211th adopted the school and are coordinating with Army Engineers to remove aircraft engines that were left there by the Iraqi Air Force. The unit is also collecting school supplies for the students.

Maine National Guard air ambulances save lives

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

ALI AL SALEM AIR BASE, Kuwait - Ron Ireland needed about as much time as it takes a Black Hawk helicopter's main rotor to complete two, may be three, rotations at full speed to ponder this question.

How is the second Gulf War different from the first?

Ireland is a chief warrant officer 4 and a pilot for the Maine Army National Guard's 112th Medical Company out of Bangor, and he has rather unexpectedly returned to the Persian Gulf to fly air ambulances during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The first time, a dozen years ago, he was flying for the active Army's 36th Medical Detachment out of Fort Polk, La. He returned to his native Maine after leaving the Army and joined the Army Guard outfit in 1993, so he could keep on serving and flying.

"The first time I came here, we waited around for a long time for the war to start. It ended pretty quickly, and we left a couple of months after it was over," recalled Ireland of that 100-hour ground war against the Iraqi army in February 1991.

"The last time we didn't come to stay. This time we have. The liberation is the big difference."

So it is. The 112th's soldiers may be there for a full year, until next March, because the Army has directed that National Guard and Reserve units' tours of duty be extended to 12 months "on the ground."

This time the well-traveled 112th is right in the thick of things. It is said to be the only Army Guard air ambulance company operating in Iraq and Kuwait.

Those 130 citizen-soldiers - pilots, crew chiefs, medics and mechanics - are an example of how much more heavily engaged National Guard units are the second time around.

The company supported Operation Desert Storm by going to Germany to replace an active Army medical unit that was sent to the Gulf.

Now it is the 112th's helicopter crews, who are flying in the combat zone. Since early May, they have seen tracer rounds cut through the night while flying over Iraq. They have transported injured and burned Iraqi prisoners of war as well as wounded and injured American and coalition soldiers. They have even landed on and lifted off from a Navy hospital ship.

The Maine company, commanded by Maj. Mark Sullivan, is based here north of Kuwait City, but its area of responsibility includes all of Kuwait and as far north into Iraq as Baghdad.

That, Sullivan said, is equivalent to the stretch between Bangor, Maine and New York City.

Things are not, however, quite so civilized in the Persian Gulf.

Flying over vast stretches of desert can be challenging because the blowing obscures



Photos by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell



Maine Army National Guard Sgt. Brooke Taylor, a medic in the 112th Medical Company, watches a Black Hawk air ambulance run up before taking off in Kuwait.

the horizon, especially at night when the crews must rely on night vision goggles.

"There is no terrain definition at night. You can fly right into the ground if you're

Maine Army National Guard Sgt. Steve Striga tunes an engine on one of the air ambulance helicopters that the 112th Medical Company is flying in Iraq and Kuwait during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

not paying attention," Ireland said.

And the tracers at night remind everyone that they are in hostile territory.

"I don't know that anyone's actually been shot at, but we have seen tracers in the vicinity," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Todd Lidback. "At least we haven't had any holes in the helicopters. That's a good thing."

As of Sept. 5, the flight crews had transported 827 patients and logged about 2,200 hours since they began flying on May 2, the day after hostilities in Iraq were officially declared over.

"We're a lot busier than I thought we'd be," said Sullivan, who has detached parts of his company to three different locations in Iraq. "We flew 660 hours during 15 days in May. And we've made about 25 landings on the Navy hospital ship that was located at least 60 miles out in the Persian Gulf."

After initially supporting the Marines, the medical company now supports troops from other countries that are part of the coalition force that is helping the United States try to bring stability to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

The 32-member maintenance section

keeps busy working on as many as four helicopters at a time because the sand wreaks havoc with electrical and avionics systems.

"We've replaced eight engines," said Staff Sgt. Don Shorey, the 112th's senior quality controller. "We haven't missed a mission yet because of a downed aircraft, but this sand is tough on this equipment. This is not exactly Maine."

Shorey is an old hand at this deployment business ... as is Sullivan.

They are among 16 members of the company have taken part in its three major deployments - to Germany in 1990-91, to Bosnia in 1999-2000 and now to the Persian Gulf.

It is one more sign of how the Army Guard's mission has changed.

"I joined this company in September 1993, because I figured it would be a weekend a month and two weeks of training a year," Ron Ireland recalled. "And I said, 'Yeah, I can do that.'"

Ten years later, he is back in the Persian Gulf, back in a shooting war, as a National Guard soldier.