

IN THE NEWS

guardHELP:

New York program is making a difference

6



YEAR OF THE ENLISTED

The 'BACKBONE':

The Air Guard is saluting those in stripes for 1999

8-9



FEATURE

HAULING HOPE:

Maryland fliers deliver relief to Honduras

16



THE ON GUARD

Volume XXVIII, No. 4

Newspaper of the Army and Air National Guard

January 1999

Guard aids attack on Iraq

Gas to the Gulf: Maine refueling wing bridges gap for Desert Fox operation

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Jim Perrott of Pittsburgh, Pa., has begun to think of Bangor, Maine, as his home away from home. If he makes many more trips to the Pine Tree State, he'll be able to get in on the lottery for an in-state moose hunting license.

The staff sergeant and boom operator on a Pennsylvania Air National Guard KC-135 Stratotanker flew to the Bangor Air National Guard Base Dec. 17 to do his part for Operation Desert Fox.

The citizen-airman left his dump truck and backhoe, the tools of his one-man construction firm, parked in Pittsburgh and flew to Maine for the third time in a year and a half to participate in this country's military actions against the Iraqi forces of Saddam Hussein.

"Hey, Bangor is a nice place to come to. We like the people, and we like the lobster," said Perrott after pumping 85,000 pounds of jet fuel into an Air Force E-3 aircraft that was bound for the Persian Gulf on the Saturday before Christmas. It was an extraordinary day in American history.

President William Clinton, the commander in chief, was impeached by the House of Representatives. Congressman

Robert Livingston, who had been designated as the next Speaker of the House, announced he would not take that job in January.

Hours later, the president halted a 70-hour air attack against Iraqi military targets, explaining that four nights of bombings had sufficiently afflicted Hussein's ability to produce chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction.

The political intrigue in the nation's capital seemed far removed from Bangor where the Maine Air Guard's 101st Air Refueling Wing, the renowned "Maineiacs," went about their business of running an air refueling bridge for this nation's military aircraft ordered to Southwest Asia.

Nearly two dozen tankers from five different Air Guard and Air Reserve units, plus several active duty outfits from as far west as Washington state and California, had flown to Bangor to join the Northeast Tanker Task Force after the air strikes against Iraq were ordered on Dec. 16.

Maineiac maintenance people hosed snow and ice from the winter's first significant storm off the big Boeing KC-135 tankers so they could fly if they were needed. Four of them flew missions that Saturday.

"The people here are fantastic," praised Air Reserve MSgt. Jerry Miles from Selfridge, Mich. "We came in here yesterday expecting to push snow off our plane by hand. They told us they'd handle it. We're not used to that support."

"It's another day and another mission," maintained Maine CMSgt. Sonny



Photos by MSgt. Bob Haskell

BRIDGE to BAGHDAD
A Maine Air Guard KC-135 (above) gases an aircraft headed for the Persian Gulf. A member of the Bangor-based 101st Air Refueling Wing (right) de-ices an aircraft.



See IRAQ, Page 11



COMMENTARY

• Goatee Gotta Go • Christmas Deployed • Miffed over Marathon

ABOUT the PAPER

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 50,000 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.

The On Guard is the registered trademark of this publication.

Submission Requirements:

Send on disc (with clean copy) or e-mail your stories to us by the 20th of each month. We prefer that photos (B&W or color print) be mailed.

Mailing Address:

NGB-PAI-C
Park Center IV, Suite 450
4501 Ford Ave.
Alexandria VA 22302-1454

Phone/FAX Numbers:

(703) 681-0716
DSN 761-0716
FAX: (703) 681-0732/0731

E-Mail:

malthanerj@ngb.ang.af.mil

STAFF

CHIEF,
National Guard Bureau
Lt. Gen. Russell C. Davis

CHIEF,
NGB, Public Affairs
Daniel Donohue

CHIEF,
NGB-PA
Command Information
Maj. Andrew Smith Sr.

EDITOR
MSgt. John Malthaner

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT
MSgt. Bob Haskell



GUARD MAIL

Hairy Issue

As a fellow marathoner I have the utmost respect for the accomplishments of the National Guard runners who competed at the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington D.C. (November issue).

Cognizant of the fact that our runners were there in a military status, on orders, why didn't Indiana Army Guard Spc. Curt Carey -- the Guard's second fastest runner that day -- comply with military standards?

Next time Curt, shave the goatee, or stay home.

MSgt. Vincent J. Delaney
Indiana National Guard

Holiday musings
from Bosnia

It's 7 a.m. on Christmas day in the Coalition Press Information Center in Bosnia, and not a creature is stirring, except me.

I just sent the duty officer home, and I fired everyone last night (well, I told them there was no reason why they had to come to work today). 1st Sgt. Holmes will be in soon, so we'll run the shop today. We have a Christmas party set up for this afternoon, so the crew should start straggling in around noon to check e-mail, call home, whatever.

Today will be a nice change of pace from the cat-herding, media-escorting

hell of 10,000 VIP visits we've been through for the last two months.

We're away from our families for the holidays, and it's really tough on some of the crew, myself included. It helps that we had a very close group before we deployed, and we've become even closer. Deployments tend to bring out the best in people, and from what I've seen, these young men and women are at their best when things are at their worst.

Case in point. We escorted CBS *This Morning* on a 12-hour mission to Srebrenica last week. Srebrenica was a United Nations safe haven overrun by the Serbs in the darkest days of the war, and over 1,200 Moslems were buried in a mass grave after the Serbs finished their work. The reporters were all red-eyed and exhausted. The crew came back numb from the stresses of the trip, because Serb is in RS territory and they aren't very friendly to Americans.

We're used to it because we've all been there at least once. They parked the Humvees, checked in the weapons and ammo, and I did the mission debrief. Sgt. Elker looked at the planning calendar and noted that we were over the hump -- less than 100 days until redeployment.

I wish I could describe the expressions on peoples' faces; exhaustion, joy, hope, and satisfaction for a job well done. It's that kind of spirit that has brought us this far and will bring us back to our families and friends this spring. I can't find the words to express my pride in this group. They've become my family in place of those back home.

We're over the hump. We can smell

the barn at the end of a long ride, and it's a good feeling.

Maj. Mathew Hennick
Oregon National Guard from Bosnia

Total Running Farce

I just read the article about the Marine Corps Marathon (November issue).

Let me get this right -- SSgt. Curt Rogers from the Kansas Army National Guard finished fifth overall, three places ahead of Marine Capt. Alex Hetherington, yet Hetherington was declared the first U.S. military finisher?

Evidently, the Kansas Air Guard is not part of the U.S. military.

SMSgt. Paul Servatius
Idaho National Guard

LETTERS POLICY:

The On Guard welcomes letters from readers. All letters must include the writer's name, address and daytime phone. Names may be withheld upon request. All letters are subject to editing for style, content and space requirements.

You may FAX your 'Letters to the Editor' to DSN 761-0732 or (703) 681-0732.

Letters can be mailed to: NGB-PAI-C, Park Center IV, Suite 450, 4501 Ford Ave., Alexandria VA 22302-1454.

Our e-mail address is:
malthanerj@ngb.ang.af.mil

GUARD TOONS

By Lyle Farquhar

Comments or ideas: lfarquhar@mostj.ang.af.mil





IN THE NEWS

• Millennium Moves • Helping Honduras • Recruiting Rise

Guard embraces Y2K compliance

■ Bug Alert: Bureau leaders plan to exercise pound of prevention

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

A ounce of prevention, it has been said, is worth a pound of cure. If that is the case, the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., is preparing a pound of prevention this year for potential situations involving the Y2K "millennium bug."

"The National Guard is taking actions to meet the Department of Defense directive to be Y2K compliant," said Lt. Gen. Russell Davis, Chief of the Guard Bureau.

"Y2K compliance enables the Guard to perform its war-fight mission as well as be able to respond to the calls of our governors," Davis added.

Some experts are concerned that the millennium bug will shut down older computer systems and equipment keyed by microchips because they register only the last two digits of a year and will read 2000 as if it is 1900, before electronic computers and chips were created.

Others, such as Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre, are confident that Year 2000 problems will be more of a nuisance than a crisis for the American people.

National Guard members are doing everything possible to make sure its trucks and tanks and airplanes and its communications and data processing and payroll systems keep right on working after the clock strikes 2000 next New Year's Eve.

The bureau will conduct a nationwide communica-

tions exercise during the summer to make sure all systems stay on line. That is significant, it was explained, because the Guard has not previously run such an exercise with all 54 states, territories and the District of Columbia at the same time.

The bureau has also asked the state Guard agencies to make sure their systems are in order so they can keep on performing their federal Army and Air Force missions and respond to state emergencies.

"Y2K compliance is as essential to a blizzard, earthquake, flood or other disaster response as it is to meeting the governors' potential calls for Y2K related incidents, should they occur," Davis stressed.

Several states have indicated they will alert elements of the Guard in case they are needed, officials acknowledged. An alert or call to state active duty is a state prerogative, and calls prior to an actual event are not uncommon, they pointed out.

Hamre expressed confidence that America's military men and women will continue to be paid and that Guard members will not have to respond to Y2K situations.

All Department of Defense pay systems are already Y2K-compliant, and the department will continue to test the systems in March and April to ensure they will work, Hamre told the American Forces Information Service on Jan. 14.

Although the Federal Emergency Management Agency will probably lead the efforts to deal with immediate problems created by the millennium bug, Hamre said Defense will set up its own command center and participate in Y2K operations in December.

There is no plan, however, to mobilize the Guard or active duty service members for Y2K operations, he told the information service.

NATIONAL BRIEFS

Governor Ventura Wants You

Having a former Navy SEAL as Minnesota's governor seems to have had a powerful effect on military recruiting.

On Dec. 10, the Minnesota National Guard mailed 62,000 brochures featuring a snapshot of Gov. Jesse Ventura to high school juniors. Recruiters have gotten more than twice as many replies as usual.

"He is someone people can recognize and become interested in, and if he can help us recruit people into the National Guard, that's great," said Maj. Kevin Gutknecht, a Minnesota National Guard spokesman.

During the week of Dec. 14, the number of inquiries jumped to 85, 47 of which were from people who had received one of the Ventura fliers.

Ventura, 47, joined the Navy in 1969 and became a member of a SEAL underwater demolition team, serving in the Vietnam War.

So far, the National Guard is the only organization allowed to use the former pro wrestler in advertising.

Commissary visits doubled for Guard, retirees not 60

The Department of Defense released a policy Dec. 16 spelling out how members of the National Guard, Reserve, Retired Reserve and their families can immediately take advantage of the new law granting them 24 commissary visits annually.

In October, Congress passed the 1999 Defense Authorization Act that increases the number of commissary visits for reservists from 12 to 24 annually if they accumulate 50 or more retirement points for military service in a calendar year.

The expanded commissary benefit also is available to Reserve retirees (and their dependents) eligible for retired pay at age 60, but who are not yet 60.

For this year, the military services will issue two 12-visit DD Forms 2529 to authorized Reserve and Retired Reserve members. For the year 2000, the Reserve commissary privilege card will be revised to contain 24 blocks for recording the dates of visits in lieu of the current 12 blocks.

"Service in the National Guard and Reserve is now more challenging than ever," said Charles Cragin, acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. "Doubling the commissary access helps to level the playing field."

Hurricanes expand Guard's 'horizons' in Honduras

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

The devastation from two hurricanes last fall has the potential to significantly expand the National Guard's horizons in Central America this year.

A force of 2,500 Guard troops originally pledged for New Horizons '99 nation-building projects in Honduras is being increased to four times that number for rebuilding and humanitarian aid missions in Honduras and the Dominican Republic, Army Guard officials in Arlington, Va., announced in early January.

Some 10,000 Guard soldiers from across this country will help their Latin American neighbors recover from the widespread damage of Hurricanes Georges and Mitch.

Furthermore, the timetable for doing this work has been expanded



Photo by Capt. John Goheen

from the first half of 1999 through the end of August to give Guard engineer units time to rebuild roads and then construct schools and clinics.

"We are using our war-planning skills to deploy these large groups of Guard soldiers to those countries where they will employ their war-

NEW HORIZON—Tennessee Army Guard SFC Randall McCadams gave a young boy a Spanish bible while training in Honduras last year.

fighting skills to help a lot of our less fortunate neighbors," said Maj. Glenn Hagler, the Army Guard's Central American project officer. "It has turned into a massive undertaking."

Five additional Central American joint task forces employing troops from most of the United States' military reserve components are being organized thanks to an additional \$56 million in funding approved on Jan. 6, Hagler explained.

The National Guard will direct three of those task forces in addition to the task force originally sched-

■ See HORIZONS, Page 4

IN THE NEWS

HORIZONS

From Page 3

uled to deploy to Honduras in late January and another force being sent to the Dominican Republic beginning in March.

National Guard engineers first undertook nation-building projects in Honduras in the 1980s. Now the nation has become the focus of a military humanitarian mission after floods and mudslides from Hurricane Mitch killed thousands and wiped out entire towns and banana plantations late last October.

More than 7,000 Guard troops will be rotated into that country for two-week tours this year, Hagler said.

Engineer battalions from South Carolina and Mississippi will direct Task Force Sula that will concentrate on constructing four schools and three clinics and digging wells in the northern part of the country from late January through May.

Louisiana, Missouri and Nebraska will send the largest groups of Guard soldiers into the north-central region with the new task forces. Between 450 and 550 troops will be on duty most of the time.

They will focus on rebuilding roads and bridges with bulldozers and trucks during the first, dry half of the year and then build schools and clinics when summer brings the rainy season.

Furthermore, 20-member National Guard medical teams from five states and from the Air Force have already stepped up to conduct a half-dozen medical readiness exercises in remote areas of Honduras, Hagler explained.

Doctors, dentists and nurses will administer basic medical procedures -- from inoculations to pulling teeth -- to improve the Hondurans' quality of life.

Army Guard teams from Illinois, Iowa, Puerto Rico and Minnesota and an Air Guard team from Minnesota have agreed to conduct the medical missions, Hagler added.

Alabama will lead a 3,500-member task force that will be rotated to the Dominican Republic that Hurricane Georges hammered last September, killing at least 200 people and leaving thousands of others homeless and without food and water for days.

New York takes byte out of drugs

■ Right Place, Time:
SrA. Timothy Losito discovers surplus computers

By MSgt. Jeannine Mannarino
New York National Guard

Thanks to SrA. Timothy Losito thousands of kids across New York will have the opportunity to do their homework on computers after school.

Losito, a member of the New York National Guard's counterdrug team, was helping a local law enforcement agency set up a new office with computer equipment when he stumbled upon a surplus of automated data equipment.

After asking around, Losito discovered that the equipment was going to be discarded. On behalf of the Empire State's counterdrug program, he asked officials at the state agency if he could take the excess equipment, have it restored, and use it to support the state's various youth programs.

The surplus computers were picked up and serviced by the technical support staff at New York's counterdrug headquarters, based at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia.

Once the equipment was operating, members of the counterdrug program distributed the computers to a variety of groups, starting with their own drug demand reduction programs. New York's Corps of Cadets program was the first to



Photo by MSgt. Jeannine Mannarino

receive the computers.

The Corps of Cadets program, currently with nearly 600 young adults in its ranks, began in 1991 with corps in Jamaica and Buffalo. That base has expanded to groups in Buffalo, Rochester, Schenectady, Saratoga Springs, Utica, Syracuse, two in Brooklyn, Harlem, Newburgh, Peekskill, Albany and Gloversville. A new program is being opened in Islip on Long Island.

Once the counterdrug program completes distribution of the computers to all its youth programs, other state-sponsored youth programs will begin receiving them.

Before leaving counterdrug headquarters, each computer had a special anti-drug message installed as a screen saver. It depicts Uncle Sam carrying a placard that reads: "I want to be drug free."

Although the task of restoring used equipment is time consuming, many with the state's counterdrug program believe their efforts will pay off.

"Our goal at counterdrug headquarters

PROGRAMMED FOR YOUTH--
New York Air Guard SrA. Robert Welrich refurbishes a computer at the state's Scotia-based Counterdrug Headquarters. The computers will be used to support various state youth programs.

is to provide the opportunity for all youth in New York to remain crime and drug-free," stated Col. Dennis Kavanagh, counterdrug director. "Our drug demand reduction programs are designed to involve them in safe, structured activities.

"By taking on these computers," he added, "we will be one step closer to fulfilling our goals."

It's a step, Kavanagh acknowledged, that was made easier by Timothy Losito.

"I applaud Airman Losito's initiative," he said. "And each participating state agency for their support in helping the counterdrug program put the byte on drugs."

Pine Tree
TRIBUTE

GSM John Leonard, Capt. Amy Calder and Lt. Col. Bruce Barry, all members of the Maine Army Guard assigned to the National Guard Bureau, helped decorate nearly 4,000 graves with Christmas wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery. It was the sixth year the Maine State Society arranged to honor veterans buried there.



Photo by SFC Lorna Gaggis



PEOPLE

• Guardmembers Fighting Against Drugs

Lt. Col. Dennis Banowetz is passionate about keeping youths off drugs

Caring for California's KIDS

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Dennis Banowetz has a colorful past and a wide variety of interests.

He has been a Marine and a deputy sheriff in Los Angeles County; an Army National Guard military police officer and an infantry battalion commander. The Roseville, Calif., native is a gold-medaled rapid-fire pistol marksman from the 1987 U.S. World Cup team. He and his wife Sonja are certified wine judges.

He was one of the first men elected to the advisory panel to the Young Women's Christian Association's board of directors. He is studying leadership development for women while pursuing a doctoral degree at the Fielding Institute in Santa Barbara.

Dennis Banowetz also cares about California's kids. For the past eight years the lieutenant colonel in the California Army National Guard has channeled a lion's share of his considerable energy into steering young people away from abusive drugs.



"People who are under 18 make up 20 percent of our population and 100 percent of our future"

LT. COL. DENNIS BANOWETZ
Drug Demand Reduction pioneer

Even as he prepares for new challenges after he retires from 30 years of military service next May, Banowetz has fashioned a formidable legacy as the pioneer and administrator for California's Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) Program.

DDR is a National Guard program that sponsors such drug awareness programs as the Red Ribbon Celebration that has grown into a national event every October. DDR embraces the idea of dealing with the problem at its source by persuading young people to stay away from drugs in the first place.

He is alarmed by U.S. Department of Justice statistics that indicate teen drug use has increased 78 percent since 1992; that one of 10 American teen-agers use drugs every month; that cocaine use rose 166 percent from 1994 to '95.

"The people who are under 18 make up 20 percent of our population and 100 percent of our future," the 49-year-old Banowetz frequently reminds his staff of nine Army and Air Guard members based at Mather Airport outside Sacramento.

That two members of that team work full-time in Los

Angeles and San Diego indicates just how involved the highly regarded California program has become since Banowetz took it on in 1990 -- when he worked alone and when no one in the nation knew what DDR stood for.

"DDR is where it is today in California because Dennis Banowetz thought big enough to take it there. He is an incredible visionary," said Tracy Righello, a staff sergeant who worked with Banowetz for several years before launching her own consulting business.

The key to success, Banowetz explained, has involved building a corps of volunteers among Guardmembers and civilians to spread the DDR message throughout the state.

"We avoided developing our own programs," he said. "We are here to support the communities. We supported 527 missions last year, including 3,700 volunteers, and we impacted 1.8 million Californians, most of them young people."

According to SFC Antonio Bruno, Banowetz's team has evolved from the poor stepchild within the California Guard's counterdrug program to an equal partner with the interdiction team that helps law enforcement people find and cut down marijuana plants and that strives to choke off the supply of drugs at the borders.

"I joined this team last October because now I have a little girl and because I'm concerned about the environment she will grow up in. It makes you look at things differently," explained Bruno. He oversees DDR operations in the southern part of the state after transferring to Banowetz's staff from the interdiction team.

When he retires to take on his next career, Lt. Col. Dennis Banowetz will be remembered as the father of the California counterdrug program that helped a lot of people, especially the young, take a long, hard look at the dangers of drug abuse.

'DARE'ing to make a difference

By SrA Mark A. Leno Jr.
New Hampshire National Guard

MSgt. Mike Sullivan is taking his message about the horrors of drug use to fifth and sixth grade classrooms in New Hampshire.

As a member of the Granite State Air Guard 157th Air Refueling Wing's security forces squadron, Sullivan spends 17 weeks a year reaching youths at the Newington Elementary School through the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program.

The hour-long DARE classes, taught once a week to 18

Newington students, are aimed at getting kids to stay drug and violence free.

Sullivan added that he is often asked by students about his Pease Air National Guard-based unit.

"I showed the students that the Air Guard is their neighbors," Sullivan said. "I not only taught the DARE curriculum, but I was able to provide more insight about what the New Hampshire Air National Guard does."

Sullivan, a former full-time police officer with the Newington Police Department, joined the Guard full-time about



Photo by SrA Mark Leno

two years ago. As part of his duties with the police department, Sullivan taught the nationally-accepted DARE program. Despite changing uniforms, he was allowed to continue teaching the program through the school year.

"This will be my last year for teaching DARE," he said. The Newington Police Department will continue to teach the program with a new DARE officer.

The 157th security force's deputy chief said his experience with the Guard was an advantage. It seems the children asked often about his unit's mission, and in particular, the KC-135 refuelers that flew over their school.

Sullivan, teachers, parents and students recently celebrated the end of a DARE program at the elementary school.

Dressed in Air Force blue,

DRUG FREE MESSAGE

New Hampshire's Air Guard MSgt. Mike Sullivan, a member of the 157th Air Refueling Wing's security forces squadron, chats with DARE students at Newington Elementary.

Sullivan presented each of his 18 DARE students with certificates, DARE shirts and a stuffed toy lion called Darren the Lion, the mascot of the program.

"I have worn my BDUs in teaching some of the classes," Sullivan said. "But on graduation day, I wear my blues."

Whether in a Newington Police Department uniform, his BDUs or formal Air Force dress blues, Sullivan has taught many New Hampshire youth the importance of remaining drug-free, and belonging to the Air National Guard.



New York's guardHELP program has communities linking with armories, bases

Redefining DEFENSE

A neglected cemetery in Queens. An abandoned barge along the shores of Lake Ontario. A Manhattan historic park that overlooks the Hudson River and is a short walk from Grant's tomb.

All have benefitted from the New York National Guard's guardHELP program, the most far-reaching community support effort in the state's history.

Maj. Gen. Jack Fenimore, the Empire State's adjutant general, called the prototype initiative "the most important program in our history."

"guardHELP is vital to the future of the National Guard because it highlights the community mission, which we alone in the military community can support," Fenimore explained. "Long before the next state emergency or the next federal mobilization, our units will be delivering real service to our state residents through jointly-conceived and developed projects, both large and small."

The program was launched last May when each New York Army Guard armory and Air Guard base hosted get-to-know-you meetings with civic leaders to determine their needs. In short, wherever a community need could be linked to a unit capability, a joint project could result.

Schenectady — home to the 109th Air-lift Wing's Stratton Air National Guard Base, the Headquarters for 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry and the state's counterdrug program — served as the test bed for the



Photos by Sgt. Eugene Pomeroy

initiative last summer. Army and Air Guardsmen and women supported a youth job program and cleaned up a park that had been a hotbed for crime and drug abuse.

Since then, the New York Guardmembers have discovered many ways to help make their communities better.

• **More than 75 members of the New York City-based Headquarters, 206th Support Battalion, the 145th and 102nd Maintenance and the 1569th Transportation Companies** joined Parks Department and local labor union volunteers to restore a neglected historic park.

The Riverside Park, located along the Hudson River on Manhattan's west side, had become clogged with litter and debris and a haven for drug traffickers, criminals and the homeless.

The once scenic setting that boasts proximity to the George Washington Bridge and the Ulysses S. Grant Tomb had become an eyesore and unsafe for recreational use. Repeated efforts by a group of concerned citizens to restore the park's original beauty were limited.

Enter Lt. Col. Frank Ombres, 206th commander, who was aware of the problems in his once favorite childhood playground. As the secretary-treasurer of the Building, Concrete, Excavating & Common Laborers Local 731 in civilian life, Ombres saw a potential guardHELP project.

Over one weekend in November, a team of Guard, union members and city volunteers removed garbage, cut away damaged metal benches, and reset 600-pound concrete capstones along a stone retain-



guardHELPers — A 206th soldier (opposite) guides a forklift to a piece of granite. 206th troops (left) position a concrete portion of a retaining wall. Soldiers (above) use a welder to cut away a damaged bench.

ing wall using Guard wreckers with cranes.

The troops also operated a 10-ton forklift, 2 1/2-ton trucks and 5 and 10-ton wreckers as masons and concrete workers repaired the crumbling granite wall. The troops concentrated on tasks requiring use of their military skills, while the civilians accomplished most of the clean up.

The unusual effort drew considerable public attention from residents and news organizations. *The Daily News*, a New York City newspaper with a readership exceeding one million, covered the story and named Frank Ombres "Hero of the Month," awarding him a \$500 check. Ombres, the first Guardsman to receive such notice, donated the money to the Riverside Park Fund.

The project is expected to take two years to complete.

• **Chainsaws and weed-whackers** broke the silence of neglected Prospect Cemetery in Queens in late October when 107th Support Group citizen-soldiers teamed with many others to remove years of accumulated debris and decay at one of New York's oldest burial grounds.

The cemetery is the resting place of historic New Yorkers — Robert Van Wyck, the first mayor of the city's incorporated five boroughs more than 100 years ago — and American Revolution and War of 1812 veterans.

107th Guardmembers, New York Guard volunteers and at-risk youths enrolled in the Guard-sponsored Challenge program joined employees with the city's parks and sanitation departments, to remove weeds, branches, old tires, clothes, furniture and dead animals. Evidence of vandalism and drug use also were discovered, along with knocked-down and broken gravestones that offered a faded snapshot of an earlier period of New York history.

The guardHELP project was launched when the 107th's Capt. Wayne Brooks, a

INSIDE guardHELP



BARGE BUSTERS — New York engineers construct a path to an abandoned barge.

police office assigned to a precinct near the cemetery who frequently serves as a liaison between the Guard and other city agencies, made others aware of Prospect's problems.

• **Engineers from the 204th and 152nd Engineer Battalions** made quick work of a barge that was abandoned along the shores of Lake Ontario in September.

With municipal employees and local volunteers, they removed the deteriorated remains of a 100-foot restaurant barge from Chaumont Bay and carted it away.

Times have changed for the area's Army Guardmembers, who were once only noticed by residents when they drove military convoys to nearby Fort Drum for annual training. Now, on the heels of their noble efforts during last year's major ice storm, their rainbown patches are warmly greeted.

Dubbed Operation Shipwreck, members of the Binghamton-based 204th and the Buffalo-based 152nd were eager to eliminate a long-running problem for one of the communities they serve.

Rotting timbers from the barge's underside, it was abandoned more than four years ago, had created a navigational safety hazard and an environmental threat. Chaumont Bay is a designated New York State coastal fish and wildlife habitat that serves as a migration and winter refuge for birds.

Using military bulldozers and loaned excavators, the Guard engineers constructed a quarry rock causeway from the shore to the barge.

The engineers then drove to the barge with trucks and a crane and demolished it. The debris was taken to the Three Mile Bay Fire Department to be burned.

The guardHELP initiative garnered national recognition for the 204th through the Department of Defense's Environmental Awards Program. It also drew praise from several residents fed up with the floating, unsafe eyesore.

"They were all very excited that we were taking it out," reported the 204th's SFC Richard Brown.

Editor's Note: This story was compiled from several New York National Guard reports on guardHELP: 1st Lt. Everett Roberts reporting from Riverside Park; Sgt. Eugene Pomeroy reporting from Prospect Cemetery; and Capt. Richard Goldenberg from Lake Ontario. New York Lt. Col. Paul Fanning also contributed to this story.

Giving a Pine Bush project aids endangered butterfly

Sgt. Steven Petibone
New York National Guard

New York Army Guard aviators took flight recently to ensure that an endangered butterfly can continue to do the same.

Air and ground crews from the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation joined forces with the state's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission to airlift deteriorating hulks of 15 vehicles from remote sites within the environmentally-unique and endangered preserve in mid-November.

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve, a scenic, 2,400-acre wilderness, is home to several species of wildlife, including the endangered Karner Blue butterfly.

The effort was another in a series of Empire State National Guard projects aimed at linking Guard assets to the needs of the community they serve through their innovative guardHELP program.

"Projects like this not only help keep our soldiers proficient in their combat training skills, but benefits communities at no additional cost to the taxpayer," said Lt. Col. Dave Sheppard, the New York Army Guard's state aviation officer.

Dubbed "Operation Karner Blue," flight and ground crews from the 3-142nd Aviation, based at Aviation Support Facility #3 in Latham, used UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to pluck the rusting vehicles from resting places under the forest canopy and at the bottom of a steep ravine. Some of the rotting hulks, preserve officials noted, had been there for more than 40 years — well before the preserve was established.

Latham aviators modeled their Karner Blue effort after a similar airlift project at Long Island's Central Pine Barrens for the past two years. That continuing effort is being performed by the 142nd's Company B. More than 55 vehicles have been removed so far.

The preserve is surrounded by residential areas and one of the largest shopping malls in the state. It also is in close proximity to the New York State Thruway and the Adirondack Northway. Even though the airlifts were conducted within preserve boundaries, the aerial activity

was visible to residents, motorists and shoppers.

"We're looking forward to working with the National Guard to provide stewardship to the preserve," said John P. Cahill, DEC commissioner. "This project is an example of various local and state government agencies working together with private partnerships, to not only protect, but enhance the beauty of the Pine Bush area."

The problem with discarded cars, noted preserve steward Joel Hecht, was the result of past practices.

"People dumped their unwanted cars in Pine Bush without realizing the area's importance," he reported.

Since the preserve's creation in the 1970s, more than 90 percent of accumulated debris and waste has been removed.

The abandoned cars, Hecht said, were in areas the preserve commission couldn't get to without cutting access roads, thus damaging the habitat.

"With the Guard's assistance," he added, "we will be able to get these cars out of an otherwise inaccessible area with minimal harm to the environment."

The irony of the military's involvement with such a project, was not lost on Brig. Gen. Bill Martin, New York's deputy adjutant general.

"Who would have ever thought that the Army was an environmental group," he quipped to a gathering of local officials, visiting school children and capital district news organizations. "In many respects," he added with tongue-firmly-in-cheek, "we're redefining the word *Green Peace*."

Martin indicated that the Empire State National Guard is making many strides to become more community and environmentally-conscious through the creation of new partner-

ships between federal, state, local agencies and private groups.

The general went on to thank the DEC for calling the Guard's attention to the environmental dilemma.

"In many respects, this is the epitome of good government," Martin observed. "We're leveraging training, resources and the taxpayers' dollars for a wider variety of uses."



Photos by Sgt. Steven Petibone

GUARD LIFT — A soldier (above) with New York's 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation ties down an abandoned car so that one of his unit's Black Hawks (top) can whisk it away.

YEAR OF THE ENLISTED

Frances Arnold was the first woman to make 'Chief' in the Air National Guard

Too busy to NOTICE

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Like a lot of pioneers, Frances Arnold was too busy to pay much attention to the idea that she was a pioneer.

"All I was concerned about was getting my work done and doing my duty," she recalled during a December interview from her home in Old Hickory, Tenn. — near The Hermitage that was the home of a political pioneer named Andrew Jackson who was elected this country's seventh president in 1828.

Frances Myra Holt Arnold made her mark in a man's world 150 years later when she became the first woman to be promoted to chief master sergeant in the Air National Guard. That also made her the first woman in the entire National Guard to achieve the top enlisted grade of E-9.

She reached that milestone in June 1978 as a traditional member of the Texas Air National Guard's headquarters staff in Austin where she was earning her full-time living as a personnel management specialist with the Texas Department of Health at the same time.

The seeds were planted when she was growing up in Indiana. She joined a Civil Air Patrol squadron in Terre Haute, and she marched in a YWCA drill team led by a Women's Army Corps recruiter.

"She influenced me a lot," Arnold explained. "I was always told I couldn't do something or other because I was a girl. I didn't think there should be any difference. I believed I could do just about anything as well as anybody, and I proved it."

She is 70 now, and her accolades include a plaque bearing her photograph and legacy that has been placed in the NCO Academy's new Guardian Flight Room at Tyndall AFB, Fla. She has also been inducted into the Texas National Guard's Hall of Honor at Camp Mabry.

But the prestige of becoming the Air Guard's first female first sergeant and then the first woman chief and the Texas Air Guard's first senior enlisted advisor tested her perseverance, she explained.

The military was definitely a man's world when she served in the active Air Force from 1952-58, Arnold said. The situation hadn't changed a great deal during the three years she spent in the Air Force Reserve and when she joined the Texas Air Guard's 149th Combat Support Squadron in early 1969.

Getting ahead, she recalled, included taking jobs that men didn't want, working holidays and weekends, and making coffee and cleaning up after meetings because it was considered "women's work."

"Women had to work doubly hard," she recalled. "I did it for a long time, until I made master sergeant. Then I could tell someone else to do it."

One officer refused to call her "chief" after she had earned that designation. She was forever a sergeant in his eyes. One colonel insisted she would be his secretary until she insisted that chief master sergeants are not secretaries.

Other men stood steadfast behind her. Brig. Gen. B.J. Flores, Texas' former Assistant Adjutant General for Air, offered encouragement. The state's former Air Guard personnel manager, Lt. Col. Albert Lloyd, advised her on education requirements. "I had some very good supporters," Arnold explained.

The rewards of her 27 years in uniform made the double standards easier to cope with, she acknowledged.

Her Air Force education — electronic data processing, disaster preparedness, and supervisory responsibilities and methodologies — served her well in her civilian career, Arnold said.

Frances Arnold believes that by the time she retired from the Texas Air Guard in 1988, she had staked out her reputation as a trail blazer for women in the National Guard by "being aggressive enough to fulfill my own goals and by standing up for my rights, with lots of hard work."

1999 is the year the Air National Guard embraces its' enlisted men, women

Saluting STRIPES

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

"Civilized nations do not leave borders completely open to those who might wish to inflict harm on the citizenry."

Gen. Charles Horner

It starts with the generals. Every one in uniform understands that.

In February 1993, for example, Air Force Gen. Charles Horner voiced his concern that America could become dangerously vulnerable to attack from outside, post-Cold War forces if it continued to cut the number of locked and loaded war planes patrolling its airspace.

Six years later, Air National Guard MSgt. Brian Fox is a flight line chief out of Duluth, Minn., who helps keep four F-16 jet fighters from the 148th Fighter Wing primed to respond to many emergencies in the skies around Tyndall AFB hard by the Gulf of Mexico in western Florida.

He is part of the 11,000-member First Air Force team that includes seven Air Guard fighter wings designated to protect the air sovereignty of the United States. The First Air Force, also based at Tyndall, became an exclusively Air Guard operation in October 1997.

Fox, 32, is one of the enlisted people who routinely translate the policies influenced by people like Gen. Horner into day-by-day procedures that, in this case, help insure the domestic tranquillity for the 265 million residents of the 48 continental states.

1999 is Brian Fox's year. It is the year for every man and woman in the Air National Guard who wear stripes on their dress blues and on their forest green and desert brown camouflage uniforms. It is the Year of the Enlisted.



Photo by MSgt. Bob Haskell

A few statistics, courtesy of the Air Guard's Personnel Information and Analysis Office, help to define that force.

- It totaled 94,862 at the end of September, about 10,000 fewer than the peak year of 1992.

- Enlisted people comprise nearly 88 percent of the Air National Guard.

- 65,308 are traditional, part-time Guardmembers. 29,076 are full-time federal technicians or members of the Active Guard and Reserve.

- They average 12.7 years of satisfactory service.

- 15,220 are women. 8,504 are African American. 5,316 are Hispanic.

- They perform 170 different jobs defined by Air Force Specialty Codes.

- The average age is 35.7, and 62.4 percent are married.

- 6,503 have bachelor's degrees; 875 have master's; 61 have doctoral or equivalent advanced degrees.

- Staff sergeants are the biggest single group. 28,945 are making E-5 pay.

Statistics tell only part of the story. They do not fully reflect the commitment that the enlisted people bring to their jobs.

Some examples:

"This is a real-world mission," said Fox of the Minnesota F-16 detachment's assignment in Florida. "I never saw the end game when I was on active duty. It was always training. When we scramble here, it may be because of a drug runner, a boat that has capsized, a small airplane that has gotten lost, a B-52 with mechanical problems, or the Cubans."

"Members of the enlisted force feel like they're more of a part of the mission. We can actually fly on the planes. And if we don't rig the pallets right for air drops, we could lose people and some very big assets," said MSgt. Maria Cotto Price in Puerto Rico where an F-16 fighter wing is being converted to a cargo-carrying C-130 airlift wing.

"We deliver the final product. It takes a lot of dedication to do this job. Even the part-timers working in this field come in two or three times a week on their own time," said CMSgt. Sonny Reynolds who has been pumping gas into military aircraft at 27,000 feet from the boom pods of "Maineiac" KC-135 Stratotankers for 23 years.

This universal feeling that they are performing crucial jobs helps explain why the Air Guard, and Air Force Reserve, are accepted as equals by the active Air Force. Everyone is expected to master the same procedures and maintain the same standards.

"I think the relationship of the Air Force and its reserves is very, very good ...," said Gen. Dennis Reimer, the Army chief of staff.

"What the Air Force focuses on is taking individuals and training them to be proficient members of a crew on a piece of machinery, and they are superb at it," acknowledged another senior Army general.

That this is the Year of the Enlisted does not mean that those sporting the stripes are resting on their oars. Too many Air Guard people are doing too many things around the world — maintaining warplanes at Incirlik, Turkey, and flying supplies to civilian research teams based in the Arctic and in Antarctica — to waste much time swapping high-fives. Central

ENLISTED 'ENGINE'UITY — Minnesota MSgt. Brian Fox (left) inspects one of his unit's F-16s after a flight in Florida.

American victims of Hurricane Mitch still need their help as well.

It is, however, a chance to reflect on what the enlisted force has meant to the Air Guard's first 52 years and to reinforce its roles for the future.

CMSgt. Gary Broadbent became the senior enlisted advisor to Maj. Gen. Paul Weaver Jr., director of the Air National Guard, in Washington, D.C., last July. He has stated two major objectives for 1999: Recording the enlisted heritage and promoting enlisted pride.

"Recording our enlisted heritage will ensure that our unique historical legacy will be remembered by the enlisted force of the future," Broadbent explained. "Promoting enlisted pride is sorely needed if we are to maintain our high standards of excellence."

He's getting lots of support from the boss.

"We're committed to increasing the grade level, career progression and related leadership opportunities for all of our people," said Weaver. "Our focus is to develop options to increase the percentages for our enlisted force. Under no circumstances would we tolerate any further reduction in grade structure."

Changes are already in the works. The title Senior Enlisted Advisor has been changed to Command Chief Master Sergeant to better reflect the responsibilities similar to those held by command-level sergeants major in the Army and Marines and masters chief in the Navy.

Each state, Broadbent promised, will receive an additional billet for part-time senior and chief master sergeants this year.

"It's time to get our senior enlisted leaders back in the saddle, and this program will help make that happen," he explained.

Also, the 1st Air Force is training enlisted weapons directors to replace commissioned officers. By 2004, 27 enlisted people around the country will be trained to direct fighter pilots to their targets thanks to the plan embraced by 1st Air Force commander, Maj. Gen. Larry Arnold.

That fits in nicely with Broadbent's Year of the Enlisted emphasis on preparing today's young enlisted people for tomorrow's challenges.

"Our job is to train the next generation," he said. "We need to understand the day will come when we must stand back and enjoy the fruits of our efforts."

That fits in nicely with Broadbent's Year of the Enlisted emphasis on preparing today's young enlisted people for tomorrow's challenges.

"Our job is to train the next generation," he said. "We need to understand the day will come when we must stand back and enjoy the fruits of our efforts."

That fits in nicely with Broadbent's Year of the Enlisted emphasis on preparing today's young enlisted people for tomorrow's challenges.

"Our job is to train the next generation," he said. "We need to understand the day will come when we must stand back and enjoy the fruits of our efforts."

That fits in nicely with Broadbent's Year of the Enlisted emphasis on preparing today's young enlisted people for tomorrow's challenges.

"Our job is to train the next generation," he said. "We need to understand the day will come when we must stand back and enjoy the fruits of our efforts."

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Sgt. Melissa Colwell is an intense woman who has been searching for hyphen-sized aircraft signals on circular radar screens during eight and a half years in the Air National Guard.

Her job at the Southeast Air Defense Sector is to spot the tiny blips as quickly as possible so other Air Guard people at Tyndall AFB on the Florida panhandle's Gulf coast can identify them as friendly aircraft or potential threats to the United States.

Colwell and her colleagues pay even closer attention, if that is possible, to their green screens when they pull the duty in the sector's operations center on Saturday mornings.

That is when the Cuban exile group Brothers to the Rescue routinely fly two small airplanes out of a southern Florida airport and spend a few hours searching the Florida Straits for Cubans trying to reach the U.S. on rafts, boats and anything else that can float.

A Cuban Air Force MiG fighter forced an international incident nearly three years ago, on a February Saturday, by shooting down two of those search planes that the Cuban government claimed had flown into its airspace. Four men went down with the planes.

Although that incident occurred over international waters and although it did not involve the National Guard, it has served to keep members of the 1st Air Force's southeast sector that much more alert.

"We want to make sure that we do not let a high-speed plane come out of Cuba and get to Miami before we see it," said the resolute Colwell who has been working full-time for the sector since 1996.

Enlisted Air Guard people like Colwell monitor all of the aircraft approaching the east and west coasts and the southern border of this country as members of the 1st Air Force team that is responsible for protecting the air sovereignty of the United States.

"Guarding America's Skies" is its motto and mission.

The 1st Air Force, also based at Tyndall, depends on armed jet fighters from seven Air Guard wings to protect those borders and the American people from an attack by enemy aircraft. It became an Air Guard

operation in October 1997. It is part of the North American Aerospace Defense Command's protective umbrella that also covers Canada and Iceland.

Aircraft that might be carrying terrorists' weapons of mass destruction or smuggling drugs keep the radar watchers glued to their screens around the clock.

"There is nothing more important during peacetime than the air sovereignty of the United States," said SMSgt. Brett Johnson, a flight superintendent for the southeast sector that is the busiest of the three air defense sectors in which the 48 continental states are divided.

It covers 200,000 square miles of airspace and over 2,000 miles of coastline from North Carolina to the eastern edge of Mexico. Those Air Guard people identify 2,000 aircraft a day, Johnson said. Watch officers scramble jet fighters between 200 and 400 times a year to check out unidentified aircraft.

Although commissioned officers direct the sector's operations, it is the enlisted people who must spot, track and identify the "unknown riders."

Furthermore, more than two dozen people who wear stripes will become enlisted weapons directors, and fill slots currently held by officers, early into the new millennium. That job involves directing the scrambled fighters to unidentified aircraft.

"Enlisted people used to do this job extremely well. We are confident they will do it just as well again," said Maj. Gen. Larry Arnold, 1st Air Force commander.

"This mission has increased my level of maturity and responsibility 10-fold," said SSgt. Jan McNally Jr. who brought those skills to the Air Guard after instructing enlisted weapons directors in the active Air Force.

Johnson frequently reminds the 21 enlisted members on his watch about the true nature of their mission. It is more than merely looking for blips on radar screens.

"We are looking at millions of people who we're protecting on a daily basis," he insisted. "We are their first line of defense."

That is a far bigger job than tracking the two airplanes flown by the Brothers to the Rescue most Saturdays. The mission makes those members of the Air Guard their brothers' and sisters' keepers.



Photo by MSgt. Bob Haskell
BROTHERS' KEEPERS — SSgt. Melissa Colwell (foreground) monitors 'Brothers to the Rescue' aircraft on her radar screen.



CHUTE CHECK—Ohio's SFC Stephen Drapp (above) inspects the parachute of a retired Canadian Reserve Forces soldier.

Buckeye Special Forces troops are deploying for missions all over the world

Not just RAMBOs

By Spc. Steve Toth
Ohio National Guard

To characterize a special forces soldier as a Rambo or John Wayne, observes Capt. Ted Owens, is inaccurate.

The executive officer with the Ohio Army Guard's Company B, 2nd Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group says his Buckeye bunch is much more than just steely-eyed killers.

"We are highly-trained, seriously dedicated soldiers," Owens stated. "We have real-world missions all the time, all over the world."

Some of those missions have taken the unit's nearly 80 troops to Kenya, Somalia, Japan, Korea and Haiti.

Carefully selected and trained, special forces (SF) soldiers are America's main weapon for waging unconventional warfare in an age when conventional conflicts are increasingly rare, Owens noted. On a daily basis, special forces units are deployed worldwide to protect and train U.S. allies on how to defend themselves against tyranny and oppression.

Downsizing and the need for more special operations missions in an ever-changing world has meant an increased reliance on National Guard SF units.

Headquartered in Chagrin Falls, Company B also has a detachment in Middletown. The unit has served as an opposing force, conducted communications and medical classes, trained SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) units and



Photos by Spc. Steve Toth

conducted airborne operations with Air Reserve and Guard units.

Last August, the Chagrin Falls force conducted joint training with the Air Reserve's 910th Airlift Wing, based in Youngstown. The exercise, known as Super TAC 98-1, involved Air Reserve

aircraft from six states, three National Guard SF units and 11 members of the British and Canadian armed forces.

Eight C-130 aircraft dropped 77 paratroopers from 1,250 feet onto a drop zone at the Ravenna Training and Logistics Site.



SPECIAL SOLDIER—After completing a jump (left), Ohio special forces SFC Preston Suminquit (above) packed up his parachute.

In addition to airborne jumps, it is not uncommon to find SF soldiers using their drill time to train in small unit tactics, weapons, first aid and land navigation. They also may embark upon a five-mile march with a 50-pound ruck.

The training, administered by a team led by MSgt. Paul Bobak, the unit's training NCO, is unapologetically arduous.

So is becoming special forces-qualified. Candidates undergo rigorous training, which begins with the 24-day Special Forces Assessment School (SFAS). Prospective green berets are tested in everything from land navigation to physical stamina and survival.

After completing SFAS, soldiers must endure a six-month qualification course, known as the "Q." This is where they are taught unconventional tactics, light infantry doctrine and low-intensity conflict resolution. Potential green berets will test these skills in desert, jungle, mountain and arctic environments.

SF soldiers are trained in one of four skills: weapons, combat engineering, communications or medical. Each SF soldier also must complete a six-month foreign language course or exhibit an equivalent proficiency and attend airborne school.

Once qualified, special forces soldiers are assigned to a 12-man Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha or "A-team."

"It takes a lot of dedication and commitment on their part," Bobak said. "They have to be willing to be separated from their families for long periods of time."

"We're looking for guys with a lot of heart," he added. "And with mental and physical stamina."



Photos by Sgt. Thomas Porter

Rumbling at Gopher State artillerymen put howitzers to test RIPLEY

By Sgt. Thomas Porter
Minnesota National Guard

The rumble of self-propelled howitzers was heard once again at Camp Ripley as soldiers from the Minnesota Army Guard's 1st Battalion, 125th Field Artillery went to work.

It marked the third annual training that those artillerymen had the unique combination of power and mobility, that only the self-propelled howitzer offers, at their disposal.

The weapon represents an improvement over the towed howitzer, reported Capt. Brad Ommodt, B Battery commander. He commanded three "tubes" -- a name given to the howitzer by unit members -- at Ripley.

The howitzer, which can accurately hurl a 155-mm round packed with high explosive up to 11,000 meters, is the workhorse of America's artillery arsenal.

The self-propelled howitzer's little brother, the towed howitzer, relies on a conventional truck to get around. The self-propelled model, Ommodt explained, sits atop a tracked vehicle and has the mobility of a tank.

Mounted on the tank chassis, it literally shakes the earth as it rolls by. Even seasoned citizen-soldiers at Camp Ripley stopped to watch and listen as the Jackson-based battery's 155mm guns deployed to the field.

"One of the advantages is that you can keep up with the mechanized infantry," Ommodt added.

The battalion's primary mission, he said, is to soften up the enemy's position before the mechanized infantryman get there.

That is why, he added, the self-propelled howitzer's ability to provide support when and where it is needed allows his battery to be an infantry troop's best friend.



RUMBLINGS -- As the battalion moves out (top photo), Capt. Brad Ommodt (left) briefs troops and Sgt. Brigham Hampel (above) applies camouflage.



Photo by MSgt. Bob Haskell

IRAQ

From Page 1

Reynolds, a part-time golf pro, who has made his primary living by laying on his stomach in the tail of tankers. He has refueled nearly every kind of jet-propelled plane in the U.S. arsenal while logging over 6,000 flying hours since 1975.

Pumping 70,000 pounds of jet fuel into an E-8 J-STAR, while flying a 240-mile track from northern Vermont to northern Maine, occupied that four-man Maine tanker crew commanded by Maj. Greg Romain for two hours on

FOCUSED on FUEL -- Maine's CMSgt. Sonny Reynolds, a boom operator, does his part to refuel a jet supporting 'Desert Fox.'

that Saturday.

As far as they were concerned, President Clinton was the boss, and the boss had decided that the air strikes were necessary to make the world a safer place.

The fact that hundreds of cruise missiles and bombs were actually being dropped on Iraqi targets rapidly increased the Bangor-based task force's operational tempo, acknowledged Col. William Smith, who became the Maineacs' new commander on Dec. 5.

"We always take this job seriously," insisted Smith. "We know the tanker task force air bridge is critical to the successful deployment of air assets during contingency operations."

The fact that President Clinton called off the air strikes that Saturday evening, Dec. 19, meant the mission in Bangor was winding down by Monday and that people like Jim Perrott could ex-

pect to be at his Pittsburgh home for Christmas.

Other National Guardmembers were also primed for Desert Fox duties as Christmas drew near. They were among 383 members of the nation's seven reserve components called up by presidential order.

Eighty Florida Army Guard soldiers in the 32nd Army Missile Air Defense Command were called to active duty on Dec. 18 but were demobilized by Dec. 22, reported a National Guard Bureau spokesperson.

An Air Guard tanker from Wisconsin's 128th Air Refueling Wing in Milwaukee took off for Southwest Asia on Dec. 18.

More than 170 Army Guard aviators, plus seven Army Reservists and two Air Guard weather specialists, were already in Kuwait supporting the deny-flight missions over southern Iraq with Apache attack helicopters and Black Hawks.

NEWS

MAKERS

Compiled by MSgt. John Malthaner
National Guard Bureau

The War Veterans Commission of Oklahoma recently selected Air Guard Lt. Col. Rita Aragon as its 1998 Oklahoma Woman Veteran of the Year.

Aragon was recognized for spearheading the state's involvement in the dedication of the new Women's Memorial near Arlington Cemetery in Washington D.C. More than 100 Oklahoma National Guardswomen attended.

City of Edmond Mayor Bob Rudkin proclaimed last Nov. 6th as "Lt. Col. Rita Aragon Day," noting her involvement in several community projects, along with her work mentoring young women in the education and military career fields.

Aragon is currently the Sooner State Air Guard's executive support staff officer in Oklahoma City.

She has been a member of the National Guard for 20 years and is a retired Oklahoma City school principal.



Lt. Col. Rita Aragon was honored by an Oklahoma veterans organization.

The West Virginia Air Guard's 167th Airlift Wing proved its combat readiness when it earned an "Outstanding" rating during its recent Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI).

Fewer than 10 percent of units rated by major command-level inspectors receive the highest score.

It was the first time the 167th got an outstanding on an ORI.

An official report stated: "(The 167th AW) will respond quickly and decisively anywhere in the world tasked with airlift, aeromedical, logistical and combat support capabilities."

The New York Air Guard's 107th Air Refueling Wing, based at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, continued its tradition of supporting the Niagara Community Mission by sponsoring a food and clothing drive.

Airmen and women delivered two truckloads of items, including nearly \$3,250 in groceries, \$260 in personal care items and a \$500 gift certificate to Wagner's Farm. They also brought donated clothing, a pallet of flour and 10 cases of cereal.

"The gratitude and appreciation of the people we're helping makes it all worthwhile," said the 107th's TSgt. Eugene Spino. "We wish we could do more."

Alabama Air Guard SMSgt. Richard Adkins won a gold medal in the 300-meter prone event at the International Law Enforcement Games in the United Arab Emirates.

During the 10-day event, Adkins -- a member of the 187th Fighter Wing based in Montgomery -- out shot 40 other participants from Holland, Hungary, Zimbabwe and several Arab countries.

The International Law Enforcement Organization holds the event every two years. More than 1,800 shooters participated.

Adkins is a full-time member of the Camellia State Guard's counterdrug program, working as a case support specialist with the Mobile-based Drug Enforcement Administration.

On drill weekends, the 18-year Guard veteran serves as the 187th's weapons safety NCO.



New York TSgt. Eugene Spino helps deliver holiday spirit.



Alabama SMSgt. Richard Adkins with rifle and medals he won in the United Arab Emirates.

Lt. Col. Phillip Weigant was honored by the Department of Commerce posthumously.



Laura Weigant, widow of Oklahoma Air Guard Lt. Col. Phillip Weigant, received the Gold Medal Award for science to recognize her late husband's exceptional contribution to science and engineering from the United States Department of Commerce (DOC).

The award is the highest honor of its kind granted by the DOC.

Her husband, who commanded the 125th Weather Flight in Tulsa, is most remembered for his work with the weather dissemination system EMWIN. The system is designed to perform severe weather watches.

Through his vision and initiative, Weigant convinced Oklahoma's affiliate of the Public Broadcasting System to down link the EMWIN signal and make it available throughout the state. Further, with the assistance of State Senator Cal Hobson, he convinced the State Board of Higher Regents to develop a plan by using the Regent's fiber optic system to transmit the EMWIN signal statewide.

Nine other Guard states, and the Air Force's Special Operations Command, benefited from his expertise.

Engineers from the Indiana Army Guard's 1313th Engineer Battalion joined several state agencies to build a veterans cemetery near the Madison State Hospital.

The Hoosier engineers installed two 66-foot culverts for drainage and 34,000 feet of drain tile. The Guardmembers also widened the road to the entrance and cut a half-mile, 22-foot-wide road that will enable people to drive through the cemetery.

Lastly, they constructed a 20-foot-wide, 9-foot-tall dam for erosion control and landscaped an 8-foot-high, 60-foot-wide burn.

Two Kentucky Army Guard aviators apprehended a pair of purse snatchers in the parking lot of an Alabama Wal-Mart recently.

CWO2s Allan Beghtol and Lance Nation, attending an advanced aviation course at Fort Rucker, Ala., were shopping for last minute provisions when they noticed two suspicious young men.

The suspects suddenly grabbed a woman's purse and darted away.

"We saw that they were getting away, so we got back in our car and went after them. Once we got close to them, we jumped out," Nation recalled.

As the suspects crossed railroad tracks adjacent to Wal-Mart, they noticed Beghtol and Nation chasing them. Nation tackled the first suspect, while Beghtol held the other down until police arrived.

"It is great that they (Beghtol and Nation) went after the two assailants. The chances of the Enterprise Police Department recovering the purse would have been slim to none," said Lt. Mike Lolley, an Enterprise police officer.

"We weren't out to get medals or anything," Beghtol said. "We just saw two kids up to no good and chased them down."

Despite a change in aircraft, Puerto Rico's Air Guard was ready when disaster called

Bonded by ADVERSITY

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Few people in Puerto Rico have anything good to say about Hurricane Georges that ripped across their island, and swallowed up a reported 26,000 houses, on Sept. 21. But members of the Air National Guard found traces of a silver lining around those dark, destructive clouds.

The hurricane gave members of the 156th Airlift Wing a new sense of purpose at the very time they are converting from a jet fighter unit to a cargo-carrying force with a fledgling fleet of C-130 Hercules airplanes.

They had the equipment and the assets to fly food and supplies to their storm-stricken people -- something they could not do during their 51-year history with single-seat fighters designed to shoot down enemy aircraft.

"The hurricane was very unfortunate, but it moved us immediately into full-force cargo movers," maintained Brig. Gen. Daniel Lopez-Romo, Puerto Rico's assistant adjutant general for air. "It created tremendous bonding."

What had formerly been a fighter wing with 15 single-seat F-16s is being converted into an airlift wing with eight C-130s that require crews of five.

The Puerto Rican fleet numbered just two of the four-engine cargo planes when the storm roared in from the west and cut a destructive swath across the southern half of the 85-mile long U.S. commonwealth. It is one of the Caribbean's sitting ducks for the hurricanes that form every June through November.

People without provisions, power and places to live needed help in a hurry 100 years after the Spanish-American War that made the island a U.S. territory.

The governor called out the Guard, and men and women in the 156th formerly concerned with weapons and communications systems for F-16s at the Muniz Air National Guard Base beside San Juan began embracing their new mission by helping to airlift thousands of tons of water, food and generators to remote parts of the island.

"Members of the enlisted force feel

like they're more of a part of this mission," remarked MSgt. Maria Cotto Price, superintendent of the Air Guard's newest aerial port. She is said to be the first Air Guard woman to be given that job.

Air crews rushed supplies from many places in the United States to their island cousins -- a thousand miles southeast of Florida. In all, some 4,000 Puerto Rico Air and Army Guard members and State Guard

troops distributed 15 million pounds of ice and 5.5 million gallons of water.

Army Guard troops evacuated residents from flooded communities, cleared debris and repaired roads, bolstered security for 19 correctional facilities and eight police districts, installed 60 electrical poles, and spent 164 hours patrolling power lines in helicopters.

Two members of the Air Guard's 141st Air Control Squadron on the island's eastern end nearly lost their lives while driving across a shallow river after servicing a generator used to pump one town's well water. A wall of water cascaded out of the mountains and struck their vehicle broadside, carrying it 250 down stream, explained TSgt. Hector Valentin.

He and SSgt. Angel Ortiz scrambled onto the roof as the surging waters engulfed their vehicle. The wet, cold men pulled themselves to the safety of the shore on a line thrown by civil defense workers.

Since September, those and other heroic deeds have given way to the details of converting Puerto Rico's fighter wing to a combat-ready airlift outfit. The process is expected to take three years.

Lopez-Romo, a lawyer and former U.S. attorney in Puerto Rico, cited two reasons for the change.



Photos by MSgt. Bob Haskell

CONVERTED-- MSgt. Maria Cotto Price (above) directs the packing of relief supplies. MSgt. Roberto (left) and TSgt. Nancy Escabi say they went from F-16 crew chiefs to C-130 flight engineers with relative ease.

The United States needs fewer fighters because the threat from Warsaw Pact forces is history and because the United States' modern, highly technical jets have a high survivability rate.

Also, demands for cargo-hauling assets are increasing in the Caribbean because American forces are pulling out of Panama and the U.S. Army South is moving to Puerto Rico.

The C-130s are best suited for flying in and out of the small airports in that part of the world which frequently faces the threat of hurricanes and other natural disasters, Lopez-Romo added.

"We are learning the business slowly, but we'll get there," promised Col. Nelson Tejada, the wing commander, who piloted the venerable C-130s for 800 hours in over four years after joining the active Air Force as a newly-commissioned lieutenant in 1968.

Twenty-six years after joining the island's Air Guard jet fighter fraternity, Tejada has taken over the wing during what he admits is a challenging time.

The new mission means downsizing from 1,100 positions to 950, he explained. The full-time force is being trimmed from 280 people to 230. Entire sections, such as munitions and armaments and electronic defense measures have gone away.

Younger pilots who had commuted to Puerto Rico from the states have gone looking for part-time flying jobs with other fighter wings. Other members of the wing have taken a \$25,000 early-retirement option. The wing will lose about 50 people because of the conversion, Tejada estimated.

Meanwhile, people must be hired or retrained as pilots, navigators and enlisted flight engineers and load masters in time to satisfy the Air Force's increasing demands on the reserve components.

The wing will not get all eight of its cargo craft until late 1999 at the earliest, Tejada explained, but it is already scheduled for a deployment to the Arabian nation of Oman in 2000.

"We know we will be busy," said Tejada. "We will be flying to places we've never been before."

Airmen such as the husband and wife team of MSgt. Roberto and TSgt. Nixey Escabi have accepted the challenge.

They enjoyed the elite status as crew chiefs responsible for maintaining their own F-16s before those jets flew away forever. Now they are among the first four Puerto Rican flight engineers trained to monitor the engines and the hydraulic, fuel, electrical and other systems that make the C-130s go.

Five months of intense training in Little Rock, Ark., have earned them the right to sit immediately behind the pilot and copilot on the flight deck and help solve problems that could mean life or death for the plane and its crew.

"You feel like Capt. Kirk sitting on the starship Enterprise," cracked Nixey.

"If a light goes on, the pilot immediately turns to us," said Roberto who had to shut down an engine during his final check ride on Oct. 21 in Arkansas. Countless hours of training prepared him for the new job.

As much as they loved being responsible for F-16s, they never got to ride.

"Our biggest satisfaction was having our plane come back Code 1, with no problems," Nixey related.

"Now we get to go on the missions," she added. "We will be helping more people. We will be more involved -- not only in war time but in peacetime."



STATES

• Royal Visit • Top Trainers • Maine History

NORTH CAROLINA

Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, visited air and ground crews of the Tarheel State Army Guard's 1st Battalion, 130th Aviation in Kuwait.

The battalion and its AH-64 Apache attack helicopters deployed to the region in September as part of Operation Southern Watch.

The Prince, a British Navy fighter pilot, was briefed by CWO4 Robert Edwards, an instructor pilot. Edwards explained the difference between the Apache the Guard flies and the "Longbow" model Britain is scheduled to receive in the near future.

The Morrisville-based 1-130th is slated to return home in February.

MICHIGAN

The Air Force christened its first U.S.-based, rangeless, air combat training system at the Phelps-Collins Air National Guard Base's Combat Readiness Training Center in Alpena.

Known as the Alpena-Kadena Instrumented Training System, or AKITS, the state-of-the-art, first-of-its-kind, air combat training system for F-15 and F-16 fighter jets, allows pilots to perform and evaluate simulated missions through a computerized airborne

instrumentation pod.

"AKITS is an outstanding debriefing tool," said Wolverine Air Guard F-16 pilot Capt. Kurt Schroeder. "Instead of spending hours trying to recreate what we did up there, we just turn on the computer and let it run."

At a recent ceremony, Senator Carl Levin, a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, praised the system.

"The defense of our nation's security is our number one priority," he said. "It's absolutely vital to provide our pilots with the best technology and tools available to secure freedom around the world."

NEW MEXICO

Retired Col. Steve Smith experienced déjà vu recently when he strapped himself into the cockpit of a 42-year-old F-100F, the same type he had flown 24 years earlier in Vietnam.

Smith was joined by four F-16 pilots with the Albuquerque-based 150th Fighter Wing, his former unit.

Col. William White, Col. Richard Radtke, Col. William Robinson and Capt. Greg Redd flew in various formations with Smith and his Super Sabre, an aircraft he and unit members piloted in 1968 in response to the Pueblo Incident.

The privately-owned F-100F was used with the F-16s for a photo shoot.

ILLINOIS

In DEEP WATER

Illinois Army Guard SSgt. Doug Danielson makes a physically-demanding swim in full-combat gear at the Jungle Operations Training Center in Panama. Danielson, a platoon sergeant with the Chicago-based Company B, 178th Infantry, joined nearly 500 other Prairie State Guard members who left the center as "jungle experts."



Photo courtesy of the Illinois National Guard

MAINE

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

The symbol of the Pine Tree State National Guard's finest hour, the standard for one of the Civil War's most enduring heroes, Joshua Chamberlain, found a new home when the National Guard celebrated its 362nd birthday in December.

The restored American flag that experts believe the 20th Maine Infantry Regiment carried into the Battle of Gettysburg and marked the left end of the Union line during the pivotal second day of fighting has been displayed in quiet dignity at the Maine State Museum in Augusta.

The tattered colors, with 11 visible stars, have been preserved in a 7-foot square aluminum frame and positioned at the head of an exhibit. It is dedicated to the 20th's heroic action against overwhelm-

ing Confederate forces on July 2, 1863.

Chamberlain commanded the regiment and received the Medal of Honor for ordering a bayonet charge after his men ran low on ammunition. That attack surprised the Southern troops and prevented them from taking the end of the Yankee line and, perhaps, defeating the Union army.

Color Sgt. Andrew Tozier also won the medal for defending the flag while standing his ground in the center of the regimental line that had been shot away during the ferocious fighting.

The flag "was the last thing some Mainers saw before dying," remarked Douglas Hawes, the museum's historical collections curator, when the framed flag was unveiled in Maine 135 years after the Civil War's most famous battle. The flag, missing its lower right corner, was turned over to the museum in a wooden box in 1969.



Photo by MSgt. Bob Haskell

UNVEILED—An 11-star American flag, carried by the 20th Maine Infantry Regiment at Gettysburg, now rests in Augusta.



HISTORY

• Remembering the Mormon Battalion

To finance its move west, the Mormons joined the fight against México

Muster made in HEAVEN

Mexican soldiers who attacked U.S. troops staged along the Rio Grande River were probably not surprised when President James K. Polk declared war on Mexico in May of 1846. However, they could not have foreseen the effect the war would have on a group of western pioneers called the Mormons.

Two months prior to that attack, more than 3,000 Mormons escaped religious persecution when they left Nauvoo, Ill., and headed west. Led by Brigham Young, the group's first prophet, they crossed the frozen Mississippi River and moved steadily through Iowa. Enduring harsh winter conditions and a lack of food, this "Camp of Israel," as it was called, took 131 days to cross Iowa and reach the Missouri River.

While Young contemplated how he and his people would move further west, President Polk had other concerns. He had been elected on an expansionist platform that called for the annexation of Texas and the addition of Oregon. Even California seemed within the country's grasp. When negotiations over that territory and the Rio Grande boundary failed, Polk took military action. Having instigated the Mexican Army's Rio Grande attack, he sent a vigorous war message to Congress. War was declared May 13, 1846.

Part of Polk's war strategy called for Col. Stephen Kearney to lead the army into the southwest, occupy Santa Fe, and then march to California and secure it for the United States.

Concerned about rumors regarding Britain's interest in California, and unsure of what influence the Mormons would have on the war, Polk favored enlisting a Mormon battalion into Kearney's force.

Their involvement was not accidental. Before the president ever instructed Secretary of War, William Marcy, to officially muster the battalion, Polk had received a letter from Elder Jesse Little, president of the church's Eastern States mission. Brigham Young had authorized Little to obtain whatever assistance he could get from the federal government to assist the Saints in their emigration west. Most of the group's resources were consumed in their move from Illinois to Iowa.

With access to John Kane, a prominent federal judge and political associate of the president, Little had originally lobbied to finance their move by winning federal contracts to build forts along the Oregon Trail.

Forming a battalion to support the war effort provided a much better opportunity. It would provide the Mormons with a ready supply of cash. It also gave the group, which had been excluded by American society for their

religious beliefs, an opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism.

While the battalion's formation was in everyone's best interest, some Latter-Day Saints resisted. When Capt. James Allen arrived from Fort Leavenworth to enlist the Mormons -- located in camps about 120 miles north-east of the Kansas Army post -- he was greeted with suspicion.

The Mormons could hardly be blamed for their skepticism, given the persecution they had suffered in Illinois and Missouri by residents and insensitive political leaders. Many were also unaware of the behind-the-scenes deal brokered between the federal government and Elder Little.

Elder Wilford Woodruff, one of the Twelve Apostles, wrote of Allen:

"I had some reasons to believe them to be spies and that the President (Young) had no hand in it. We, however, treated them with civility and directed them on to Council Bluffs to lay the case before the President."

After just one meeting with his fellow apostles, Young was able to promise Capt. Allen the Mormon's full support. Recognizing the value of the U.S. government's official recognition, Young declared, "Let the Mormons be the first men to set their feet on the soil of California."

By July 16th, more than 500 men had volunteered to



GUARD HISTORY

By SM5gt. Steve Stearns
Air Guard Historian



Photo courtesy of the Museum of Church History and Art

MORMON MITE -- In an effort to get money to finance their move west, the Mormons volunteered to help the U.S. fight Mexico.

serve. They would form an important adjunct to the 2,000 soldiers Kearney commanded. The volunteers were accompanied by 84 women and children. Twenty women were made laundresses at the rate of \$7 a month. At Fort Leavenworth, the volunteers received infantry equipment and a uniform allowance of \$42.

For the Mormons, the practical effect was enormous. Instead of buying uniforms, most of the men gave their allowance back to their Mormon leaders and wore rough frontier clothing instead. In fact, before leaving Iowa, the volunteers pledged their allowance and pay to care for their families, to assist the poor still in Nauvoo to leave, and to assist the church's move west.

When Elders Parley Pratt, John Taylor, Orson Hyde and Jesse Little met with the Mormon soldiers at Fort

Leavenworth prior to their departure, they collected \$5,192. The money bought blankets, provisions, and outfitted several wagons.

On Aug. 13, 1846, the second stage of their journey began when Companies A, B and E began their march to Santa Fe. (Kearney had left earlier in June to conquer New Mexico; the battalion was to follow and assist in the operation if necessary). Companies C and D followed on Aug. 15. Ironically, Capt. Allen never lived to accompany the battalion. He died of a fever in August at Leavenworth. Eventually, 1st Lt. Andrew Jackson Smith, a West Point graduate, was assigned to lead the battalion.

Under Smith, the Mormons marched an average of 15 miles a day for 61 days. By the time the battalion had reached

Santa Fe in October, they had suffered through summer heat, a lack of water and a malevolent doctor who believed every disorder could be cured with calomel and arsenic.

Lt. Col. P. St. George Cooke assumed permanent command of the battalion at Santa Fe. He sent most of the remaining women and children, plus 150 of the sickest men, to Fort Pueblo, Colo. The rest of the battalion left Santa Fe Oct. 19th to traverse 1,100 miles where no wagon train had ever been.

The odds of a successful journey were against the battalion. They had to travel through enemy territory with inexperienced guides and were short on rations. They also had to deal with several Indian tribes.

After warding off repeated attacks by wild bulls near the San Pedro River in December, the battalion took Tucson, Ariz., without a shot when Commandante Don Antonio Comaduran overestimated the size of their force.

On Dec. 18, they continued their trek to California, where they were greeted by desert terrain, a traumatic crossing at the Yuma River (several mules drowned) and a severe lack of water.

Ordered to San Diego by Kearney, the Mormons arrived there Jan. 29, 1847. They remained there for six months, working on community development projects during their spare time. Eighty-one soldiers reenlisted when the battalions' one-year enlistment ended in July. Some of those discharged ended up participating in the discovery of gold in the San Joaquin Valley.

While the battalion was making one of the longest marches in U.S. Army history, the money they earned had allowed many of their families to move to the Salt Lake Valley. The Mexican War also offered a chance for the U.S. government and the Mormons to strike a mutually-beneficial bargain -- the Mormons remained loyal and provided troops to President Polk, while the government helped finance their families' move west.

It was a muster made in heaven.

Editor's Note: The Utah National Guard was officially organized on March 26, 1894 in Salt Lake City. It was an outgrowth of earlier territorial militias, including the Mormon Battalion. Today, members assigned to the Utah Army Guard State Area Command wear a unit patch that pays homage to the early Mormon militia.



TRAINING



Maryland's 175th Wing hauls tons of relief for hurricane-ravaged Honduras

Delivering Hope for the Holidays

By Lt. Col. Jean Marie Beall
Maryland National Guard

Sometimes it's personal. That was the case for Capt. Joel Burgess, a Maryland Air Guard C-130 pilot, as his unit headed for hurricane-ravaged Honduras loaded with relief supplies.

"My oldest niece's husband is from Honduras near Tegucigalpa," explained Burgess, a member of the 175th Wing. "We had heard the area was getting hit, but we had no contact. It was two weeks before we heard anything."

The result, he added somberly, was total devastation.

"Their standard of living got wiped out," Burgess said.

It is just one reason the Free State Air Guard crew flew two relief missions just before Christmas to a Central American country still struggling to its feet after Hurricane Mitch's knockout blow.

Part of what has been called Task Force Hope, the 175th fliers joined U.S. Air Force cargo haulers in shuttling supplies and disaster relief personnel to affected areas.

During the first mission to Honduras'



Photos by Lt. Col. Jean Marie Beall

Soto Cano Air Base, Guardmembers delivered 22,500 pounds (three pallet loads) of a solution used to rehydrate infants.

The following day, according to 175th loadmaster SSgt. Paul Mezzanotte, the unit hauled five more pallet loads — four contained (27,000 pounds) corn soy meal, the other, four water purifiers. The country's water system was devastated by Mitch and many of its hospitals are in desperate need of the purifiers.

The mission's commander, Lt. Col. Dave Rein, said the unit had offered to fly relief missions when the hurricane first hit, but their services weren't needed at the time.

"This type of mission has a special meaning for us because we're using our skills to contribute to a massive effort to

assist other people who have been devastated by nature's fury," Rein observed. "People helping other people in need is what it's all about. We're trained for war, but we're using those skills in peace."

While the crew was busy flying, crew chiefs like TSgt. Leonard Goad and SSgt. Steven Iman kept the aircraft humming, no easy feat when the 30-something-year-old C-130Es are older than some of the people who fix them.

By early December, some 5,074 tons of supplies and equipment had been delivered by crews from 12 countries, reported MSgt. Steven Davis, a member of the Travis AFB, Calif.-based 615th Air Mobility Group charged with tracking missions flown into and out of Honduras.

"This has definitely been an interna-



HELPING HONDURAS -- A Maryland C-130 (left) unloads relief supplies in Honduras, while TSgt. Leonard Goad (opposite) and SSgt. Paul Mezzanotte (above) take care of business.

tional operation," Davis added.

A visit to the countryside near the town of Conyagua showed just how destructive water can be. When the rivers surrounding the town flooded, it tore a major bridge apart, said SSgt. Jeff Troth, a member of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division.

"The Hondurans built a make-shift ferry using 55-gallon drums because 2,000 families were left stranded," he said. "It was incredible."

For members of the Maryland Air National Guard, flying relief efforts for Hurricane-ravaged areas is nothing new. The unit previously responded to Hurricanes Gilbert, Hugo and Andrew.

SMSgt. Dave Murphy, a 28-year veteran and flight engineer with the Baltimore-based unit, recalled the wake of Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

"It was the worst I had seen," he said. "Everything south of Miami was gone."

Like Murphy, Maj. Michael Vichich, a navigator and 15-year veteran of the Howard County Police Department, has seen Mother Nature's wrath.

"From the air it was hard to see the devastation the storm brought," he said. "You could see where the rivers had widened and made their paths through the mountainous terrain."

"These people endure the hardships that life brings them with a smile on their face and a positive attitude," he continued. "They have endured more in a short period of time than most Americans go through in a lifetime."

While the Marylanders were glad to be returning home, the four-day mission gave TSgt. Erick Stone, a loadmaster, pause to reflect.

"The mission of the Air National Guard," he observed, "is to help the citizens of many nations promote the well-being and overall conditions of living."