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THE ON GUARD

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October 1999

East Coast can't avoid Floyd

Hurricane Helpers: Nearly 11,000 Army and Air Guard troops respond

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

A North Carolina Army Guardsman, assisted by a civilian nurse, used his raincoat to drag a mother in labor under fallen power lines so police could rush her to a hospital as Hurricane Floyd lashed into the state before dawn on Sept. 16.

That effort by Sgt. Scott Bloemers, reported in the Wilmington, N.C., *Morning Star*, underscored the rescue efforts put forth by thousands of National Guard troops along the East Coast during the height of the massive hurricane and in its waterlogged wake the following day.

Floyd was downgraded to a tropical storm after causing millions of dollars in damage and at least 17 deaths.

Heavy flooding in North Carolina and in New Jersey required Guardmembers to use big trucks and helicopters to help rescue hundreds of people trapped on rooftops and in other buildings.

By Sept. 17, more than 2,100 Army and Air Guard troops were on state active duty in North Carolina, where the storm hit the hardest. Another 561 were on duty in New Jersey, and 925 had been called up in New York, said Guard officials.

Those numbers brought the week's total to over 10,800 National Guard troops called out in eight eastern states to help civil authorities deal with one of the largest storms to threaten this country. South Carolina's force reached 3,719 as the Texas-size storm bypassed Florida and zeroed in on that state.

"The spirit of cooperation between all of the various agencies has been tremendous," said North Carolina Army Guard Maj. Barney Barnhill. "Everybody is do-

ing what they can to help out."

That included a massive search and rescue mission by about 30 Defense Department helicopters along the North Carolina coast, said Maj. Robert Jones, that state's National Guard spokesman.

Helicopters from the Coast Guard, the Navy, the active Army at Fort Bragg and from four states carried stranded people to safety and looked for others who needed their help. Tennessee, Georgia and Florida each sent two Army Guard Black Hawks to reinforce North Carolina's utility helicopter crews.

"Everything that's not an Apache [attack helicopter] is out there flying," Jones explained.

Tarheel State Air Guardmembers, meanwhile, flew in 33,000 cases of Meals Ready to Eat in three C-130 cargo planes for flood victims, and other citizen-airmen erected a tent town for 80 people near the Wilmington airport, Jones added.

Forty-nine of the state's armories were opened so Guardmembers could help the people afflicted in flooded regions.

New Jersey Guard troops reported to the northern part of that state after eight inches of rain overflowed river basins, noted SSgt. Ray Martyniuk. He added that citizen-soldiers had rescued hundreds of residents, including 100 senior citizens from a East Brunswick nursing home.

North Carolina's Sgt. Scott Bloemers had his unusual encounter Sept. 16 while he and two other sergeants drove the woman who was in labor toward the Columbus County Hospital in Whiteville.

Cheryl Peele, a registered nurse, accompanied the mother. They arrived at an overpass at 6:45 a.m., but fallen power lines blocked the way. Whiteville police were waiting on the other side.

Bloemers and Peele laid the woman on his raincoat and dragged her under the wires. Police drove her to the hospital.

The expectant mother reportedly said she was not sure what she would name her baby. But she allowed, that if it were a boy, she would not name it Floyd.



Photo by SSgt. Bob Jordan

DOG DAY AFTERNOON -- North Carolina Army Guard PFC Ricardo Whitaker lifts a dog into a military truck near Tick Bite, N.C., after he rescued it from flood waters caused by Hurricane Floyd. More than 2,100 Tarheel State Guardsmen and women were put on state active duty to help their neighbors recover from the hurricane and its aftermath.



COMMENTARY

• Gun Gaffe • Twister Assisters • Word Worry

ABOUT the PAPER

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NEW Address:

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

Phone/FAX Numbers:

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

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. Lee Pecknett

EDITOR
MSgt. John Malthaner

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT
MSgt. Bob Haskell



GUARD MAIL

Off target

While reading the July issue, I noticed that the photo on page 10 (Nebraska marksmen gun down international title) described Nebraska SMSgt. Larry Schmid as firing a HK handgun. The accompanying photo clearly shows him firing an UZI 9mm submachinegun.

Too often the civilian press misidentifies firearms, which increases the confusion within the general public about them. It's for this reason, I feel it is important that when official military publications are talking about firearms, they accurately describe them.

TSgt. Alan Smith
Maine National Guard

In a Twist

I'm writing regarding the information being put out by numerous National Guard magazines about the tornado that struck Kansas and Oklahoma May 3rd. Much of the coverage was incorrect and incomplete.

Soldiers with the Kansas Army Guard's Detachment 1, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry based in Wichita,



Photo by Lt. Col. Rod Loos

SMSgt. Larry Schmid fires an UZI 9 mm submachinegun.

were the first Guardmembers to be activated. They were the first in and last out of their armory. I know, because me, my wife and MSgt. McGee were the only ones there when the tornado struck Haysville and Wichita.

I have read many articles crediting other companies and units with the above distinction.

It's also disappointing to read nothing about the exploits of our unit, especially when we were the first Guard unit to help evacuate people from areas devastated by the tornadoes. We helped transport many elderly and handicapped people out of those hard-to-reach areas using our Humvees and 2-1/2-ton trucks.

Most of the other units only patrolled the areas to provide security and prevent looting.

Sgt. Robert G. Slater
Kansas National Guard

Rain/Reign/Rein of Criticism

Enjoyed reading your paper (July) online, but couldn't resist sending this comment regarding the National Brief titled, "Shinseki take Army's reins."

Seems to me it should be "Shinseki takes Army's reins." Reins, a noun, is what you take hold of to drive a team of horses or people.

Reign, a verb, is what a "person in authority does to exercise sovereign power."

Just a thought for the day. And thanks for the nice article about our command.

Kathy Gibbs

7th Army Training Command, Germany

LETTERS POLICY:

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Mail letters to: NGB-PAI-C, Suite 11200, 1411 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington VA 22202-3680

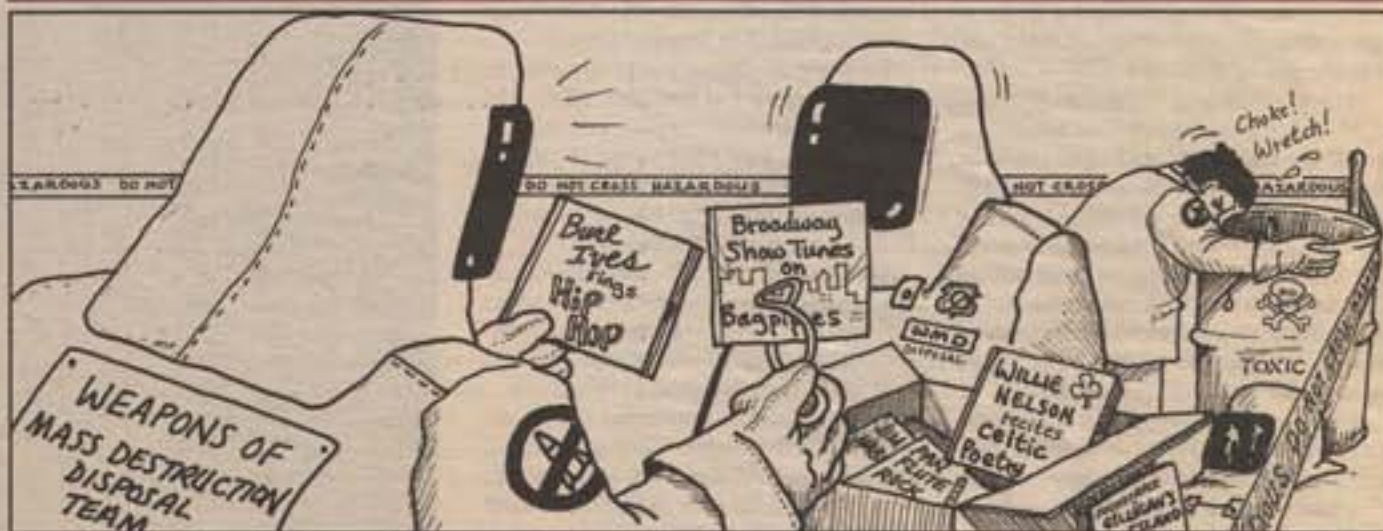
FAX your letters to DSN 327-3686 or (703) 607-3686

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

GUARD TOONS

By Lyle Farquhar

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



"Looks like we got here just in time."



IN THE NEWS

• McGhee Milestone • Link Retires • Fenimore Appointed

Academy graduates 10,000th officer

■ **Right Place, Time:** *'I represented everybody who has ever walked across that stage'*

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

August 20th was a defining day for Jon Michael Taylor as he became a new officer, a second lieutenant in the Alabama Air National Guard. The 13-year enlisted veteran of the 117th Air Refueling Wing in Birmingham was in the right place at the right time to become the 10,000th officer candidate to graduate from the Air Guard's Academy of Military Science at the McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base in eastern Tennessee.

"I was kind of surprised. You never think it's going to be you," said Taylor after his gold bars were pinned on by Air Force Gen. Lloyd "Frog" Newton, the guest speaker, and Air Guard Lt. Gen. Russell Davis, Chief of the National Guard Bureau. Gen. Newton commands the Air Education and Training Command.

Taylor, 32, also earned the Air Force Association's Academic Achievement Award by attaining the class's highest academic average. He was one of 10 distinguished graduates among 97 new Air Guard and Air Reserve officers. He also finished the demanding six-week program as one of its five squadron commanders.

He thrived in a competitive arena endured by 18 women and 79 men. The candidates' average age was 29.1 years.

"This wasn't about Jon Taylor. I felt that I represented everybody who has ever walked across that stage," said the former Air Guard master sergeant who was design-

nated as the academy's 10,000th graduate because of his alphabetical listing in E Squadron.

He was the 95th person, the third from the last, to receive his diploma during the Aug. 20 ceremony. It was punctuated by an undercurrent of curiosity about who would be honored as the 10,000th candidate to complete the academy that has trained 164 classes of Air Guard officers since April 1971. It began training Air Force Reserve officers in 1994.

"This has been a goal and a dream for my entire life," said Taylor of his reasons for seeking a commission. "I wanted to do it because of the love I have for this country and the Air National Guard. This is my way of giving back as much as I can."

He will become the full-time executive officer for the Alabama wing's support group. He has previously served as the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 117th's command section and as a member of its personnel flight.



2nd Lt. Jon Taylor

Taylor holds a history degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and associates degrees in personnel and information management from Jefferson State Community College and the Community College of the Air Force.

"It is a credit to the organization that it has trained 10,000 people to help lead the Air National Guard," said Taylor whose career includes a 1990 deployment for Operation Desert Shield.

He and his wife Althea live with their two daughters and son in Tarrant City, Ala., north of Birmingham, where he serves on the zoning board and umpires youth league baseball games.

The Academy of Military Science is one of four officer-training programs in the Air Force.

The Air National Guard academy's 10,002 graduates include Brig. Gen. Fred Sloan, commander of the Wisconsin Air Guard's 115th Fighter Wing. Sloan graduated with the second class at McGhee Tyson in July 1971. He was its first graduate to become a general officer.

Assistant Guard Bureau Chief retires

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

A 60-years-old, Thomas Link was ready to wing it.

"I really don't have a plan. I've been following a plan for 40 years," explained the quietly influential gentleman from Tacoma, Wash., who retired as Assistant Chief of the National Guard Bureau near Washington, D.C., on Sept. 2.

He ended four decades of federal service four months before he will celebrate his 61st birthday on Jan. 1,

the Y2K day that will usher in the new millennium. He ended 27 years of Guard service during which he became an institution as its highest-ranking civilian and a champion for its 1,000 civilian workers.

"People who serve in civilian clothes make the same contributions and the same sacrifices and feel the same sense of patriotism as those who wear the uniforms," said Lt. Gen. Russell Davis, the third Chief of the National Guard Bureau whom Link served as assistant chief.

That group included Lt. Gen. John

Conaway, who appointed him to the job in July 1992 after Link had served as director of the Guard Bureau's Joint Staff. It also included Lt. Gen. Edward Baca, the Guard Bureau's chief for 46 months before Davis assumed the job last August.

In short, Thomas Leighton Link became the quintessential organization man who adapted to the personalities and policies of a host of generals while giving them a solid base of corporate knowledge.

■ See VITAL LINK, Page 4

NATIONAL BRIEFS

Gen. Fenimore appointed to Reserve Forces Policy Board

New York Adjutant General Maj. Gen. John H. Fenimore V was recently named by Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen as the Air National Guard member of the Reserve Forces Policy Board, effective Sept. 1.

The 24-member board was created by Congress in 1952.

Acting through the assistant secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, the board serves as the principal policy advisor to the Secretary of Defense on military reserve force matters. Members include the assistant secretary responsible for reserve affairs from each of the military departments, and active duty and reserve forces general and flag officers representing all services, including the Coast Guard.

As New York's adjutant general, Fenimore is responsible for command and control of all militia forces in the state.

His military experience includes service as the New York Air Guard's assistant adjutant general for Air. Prior to that post, he served as the commander of the Empire State's 106th Aerospace Recovery and Rescue Group based at Westhampton Beach.

Shinseki stresses 'The Army'

The Army's new chief of staff said he wants the Army's heavy forces to be more mobile and its lighter forces to be more lethal. Those were some of the topics he covered in a meeting with defense reporters recently.

Gen. Eric Shinseki, the 34th chief of staff, also detailed his disdain for such labels as the "Total Army" or "One Army."

"[We are] no longer the 'Total Army,' no longer 'One Army.' We are *The Army*, and we will march into the 21st century as *The Army*," he said. "We acknowledge our [reserve] components and their unique strengths. But we are *The Army*, and we will work to structure ourselves accordingly."

He added that the active Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve benefit by recognizing the strengths of "what each brings to the fight."

Shinseki, who served two years as the top Army general in Europe and commander of the NATO peacekeeping forces in Bosnia, understands the impact that long-term peacekeeping operations have on the Army. He told the reporters that the Army "may not be enough" for the missions of the future.

VITAL LINK

FROM PAGE 3

"They are all talented, dedicated people who brought unique things to the job," said Link. "This is the best organization in the world because of the people who bring their talents and expertise from the field."

Link has certainly added to that mix while helping the National Guard weather this decade's challenges of reducing the force by nearly 20 percent at the same time it is taking on many more missions around the world for the Army and Air Force.

"I used him as a sounding board for a lot of my ideas," recalled Baca who moved from New Mexico to Washington in late 1994 to lead the nation's half-million Guardmembers.

Link started as an enlisted man, spending six years as a medic in the Washington state Army Guard's 41st Aviation Brigade. He was discharged as a staff sergeant in 1967.

He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Puget Sound in 1968 after seven years of working and studying during nights at a Veterans Administration hospital in Tacoma.

He worked for the Interior Department for four years, including a hitch in the desert at Blythe, Calif., and he attended graduate school at George Washington University in 1970.

He moved east for good in 1971 and became assistant director of civilian personnel for the Air National Guard a year later. He took on the director's duties in 1983, and he attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 1984. He was the first Guard Bureau civilian to take that two-month course for senior Defense Department managers.

He has since made Guard Week, a tour to various Guard installations, one of the annual features for civilians enrolled in the Defense Department's 13-year-old Executive Leadership Development Program.

"It's been important to maintain the corporate knowledge while keeping a vision for the future. We can't get bogged down in the past," observed Link two days before he began winging his way into his new future.

Guard families the focus in Maine

Maine Concerns: Spouses of Bosnia-bound troops given attention

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

At first blush, Dallas, Texas, and Brewer, Maine, seem to have few ties that bind. National Guard families, however, became a common denominator for those distant cities.

Dallas was the setting for this year's five-day Family Program Workshop led by Dorothy Ogilvy-Lee, chief of the National Guard Bureau's Family Program Office. More than 400 state volunteers talked about the ways and means of helping families who Guardmembers leave behind while they serve far from their homes.

Brewer was the place where Kristin Devoe and a handful of others took the talk a few steps further during August's first weekend. They addressed the concerns and the needs of the families of 77 Maine Army National Guard soldiers who will spend this winter in Bosnia during a nine-month deployment.

"We want these Guard people to know they can feel comfortable, that someone will be here to help their families," said Devoe during the first Maine Family Program meeting that she helped orchestrate.

The members of the Bangor-based 112th Medical Company left Maine for Fort Benning, Ga., in late August. In early September they went to Bosnia to fly "Joint Forge" peacekeeping medevac missions in Black Hawks for an active Army hospital out of Fort Hood, Texas.

Devoe worked with MSgt. Margaret Williams, Maine's former full-time Army Guard Family Program coordinator, and Kay Brown, wife of Maj. David Brown, the Maine detachment's commander.

They helped the aviators' families get set for their lengthy separations far more thoroughly than 129 of the company's citizen-soldiers were prepared in December 1990 when they left home for eight months of active duty in Germany during Operation Desert Storm.

Who will help get in the winter's wood? What if a check bounces? Who do you call if the car or furnace or washing machine



Photo by MSgt. Bob Haskell
ALL in the FAMILY — Kay Brown, wife of Maj. David Brown, addresses 112th Medical Company troops and their families.

breaks down? What do you tell your 6-year-old why dad or mom won't be home for Christmas? And what can you expect when the soldiers return next spring?

Those were among the issues that 150 Maine people, including 70 family members, explored in Brewer. Family Program people now have plenty of answers thanks to nearly a decade of experience.

"This is a lot better. The family programs were not really geared up to help us before we left for Germany," said detachment 1st Sgt. Donald Shorey.

Devoe, 46, has helped the Maine program come into its own. She and her husband Tom have raised two children on a potato farm in Limestone and she is a customer service representative for a bank in nearby Presque Isle.

She began working with Aroostook County Army Guard families in 1980 because her husband belonged to a field artillery battalion, she explained. She got involved with Bangor-area families last January when her husband became the 112th's mess steward.

"I go where my husband goes," said Devoe who in February helped others prepare the families of 15 Army Guard air traffic controllers from Bangor being deployed to Kuwait.

By August she had stepped up to spearhead the family program for the 77 aviators leaving for Bosnia.

A dozen volunteers, for example, are committed to calling the families at least once a month to see if they need help, the crowd was assured. And the wives and husbands remaining at home were urged to ask for help if they need it.

"Don't try to be tough and not ask for assistance," Williams told them. "This is not going to be easy, but you can get through it."

The volunteers have apparently helped parents staying at home adjust to the idea of being both mom and dad.

Sgt. Laurie Robichaud, for example, is leaving behind her husband Mike and 5-year-old stepson as well as her own two teenage children. Mike will meet with his son's teacher and make doctors and dentists appointments in his wife's absence while he continues to work at a Brewer paper mill.

Another project is also sure to keep him busy while his wife is in Bosnia. He's going to remodel their home.



Photo: courtesy of the Oklahoma National Guard

TAKING AIM

A soldier with the Oklahoma Army Guard's 45th Infantry Brigade eyes the enemy while training at Fort Riley, Kan., recently. More than 700 active Army and Army Guard troops from Oklahoma, Nebraska, Illinois and Texas converged on Riley for the Delta Saber exercise.



PEOPLE

• Winging Relief • Levant Legend

Delivering
the GOODSBy MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

The clouds and the mist that caressed Nicaragua's volcanoes and mountains recently reminded California Army National Guard pilot Ken Blakenship of helicopter flights he made over Vietnam's Central Highlands in 1970-71.

Flying military passengers around Central America for part of this summer in a twin-engine airplane as part of the New Horizons' new air wing is far more peaceful duty for the senior warrant officer.

It has, however, been an adventure for the Army Guard aviators from 11 states and territories who have spent three to four weeks doing their bit for people who are counting on the United States to help them recover from last fall's devastating hurricanes.

The fixed-wing aircraft are a



Photo by MSgt. Bob Haskell

new element in this year's New Horizons operations that have traditionally relied on helicopters for air support.

The pilots have carried people in and out of a half-dozen countries and made four-hour flights from New Orleans and back in gleaming white twin-engine airplanes. They have hauled tons of medical supplies and other cargo aboard gray, twin-tailed C-23 beasts of burden to troops working out of base camps in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Their flights across dense rain forests and over jagged mountain ranges have reminded them of seat-of-the-pants flying stories told by old-time pilots.

"It's like flying used to be in the United States in the 1950s

and early '60s. It's more challenging because radar and other air traffic control services are not as widespread as we're used to back home," said Blakenship.

"I've had to revert to techniques, like calling in position reports, that I haven't used since flight school. And that was 30 years ago," he laughed.

Still, the Army Guard airplanes and crews assigned to the Operational Support Airlift Command based at Fort Belvoir, Va., have delivered the goods across Central America since they joined the Honduras-based Forward Command Element in mid-March.

By late July, the tallies for 183 missions included 1,747 passengers and 73 tons of cargo during 621 flying hours. The workhorse

PROUD PILOTS — CWO4 Robert Vance (left) and CWO5 Ken Blakenship take a moment to smile after flying a mission to Nicaragua in a C-12.

"Sherpas" from five different states had accounted for 1,300 passengers and 62 tons of that cargo.

Aviators and maintenance people from the Virgin Islands to California answered the call to keep at least three planes flying across the theater through mid-September and take some of the long-distance load off the helicopters that are also part of the operation.

"These planes have become the real shining light of this mission," said Ohio Army Guard Brig. Gen. James Caldwell, who is commanding the Forward Command Element for the U.S. Southern Command. "Those C-23 Sherpas are just fantastic. They're the only planes we have that can get cargo into [mountainous] Guatemala."

"Logistics is never the glamorous part of these operations, but don't let anybody kid you. These are logistical exercises thinly disguised as engineer training exercises and medical exercises," added Caldwell about the

importance of getting people, supplies and spare parts to the base camps when they are needed.

It's also a bonus for pilots who spend three or four weeks based at Soto Cano Air Base in central Honduras.

CWO4 Robert Vance, a California Guard instructor pilot, anticipated logging 60 hours of flight time during his 24-day tour. Most Guard pilots get in 10 to 20 hours a month, he said.

With Blakenship, Vance is flying a seven-passenger C-12, with the Native American nickname "Huron," on a carefully controlled schedule that requires diplomatic clearances three to seven days in advance before they can enter the different countries.

"If you don't get that clearance, you're out of luck," Vance explained.

That means a lot of people on the ground in Central America would also be out of luck. Therefore, the Army National Guard aviators are doing all they can to make sure that no one gets let down.

Pine Tree Pioneer

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Farming has given way to many other ways of life for many people who have long called Levant, Maine, home. But they have certainly not forsaken the dawn-till-dusk spirit on which they were weaned in the rural, central Maine community.

Linda Wiggin learned of hard work — haying, tending chickens and picking pails of wild strawberries — while growing up on a 100-acre farm across the Horseback Road from a white Baptist church in South Levant. She was one of four daughters and a son raised by Glen and Beatrice Withee.

Her family's farm-work ethic has served her well since becoming one of the first five women to join the Maine Air National Guard unit in Bangor. That was in 1974, when the wife and the mother of two flew to Texas for six weeks of basic training. She was 34.

"What the hell are you doing here?" is the question she soon had to answer and endure.

Twenty-five years later, Linda Wiggin has shown 'em she had a pretty good idea of what she was doing there.



The farm girl from Levant has helped the Air National Guard come of age and become a pioneer for other women equally determined to make their mark in what was once a man's military world.

She retired on Aug. 16, her 60th birthday, during the Air Guard's Year of the Enlisted Force as a chief master sergeant — as an E-9, the pinnacle enlisted rank for her profession.

She left as the senior enlisted member of the 101st Air Refueling Wing's 150-member civil engineering squadron and as the facilities manager for the Bangor Air National Guard Base. She took with her the distinction

LEADING LADY — CMSgt. Linda Wiggin has helped pave the way for Maine women.

of becoming the first woman in the Maine Air or Army National Guard to be promoted to E-8, senior master sergeant, and then to chief master sergeant in January 1993.

She made many friends and impressed many people along the way.

"Linda managed to blend into this men's world without sacrificing her femininity or her gentility," said SMSgt. Michael Gleason, the Maine Air Guard's recruiting and retention superintendent. "She has an even demeanor. She was always in control."

"Thanks for breaking the ice," is the inscription on a plaque that Gleason gave her when Wiggin was promoted to chief.

Not every man gave her such unqualified support, but they always knew where she stood, said MSgt. Jan Thompson, who joined the unit soon after Wiggin.

"She succeeded by being honest and direct. When you asked her a question, you always got a direct answer," said Thompson. "She was not wishy-washy. She was a good inspiration for all of us."

Dedication, loyalty and persistence are the qualities

See PINE TREE PIONEER, Page 13



YOUTH MOVEMENT—Mississippi Air Guard SrA. Mandy McGee illuminates others to her state's challenges during the Enlisted Association of the United States conference in Des Moines, Iowa.

Youth is

Nearly 1,400 soldiers, airmen turn out in Des Moines for Enlisted Association conference

SERVED

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Thirty years ago, 22-year-old Mandy Van Pelt would have been called many things — not all of them complimentary — by the older generation.

Activist. Radical. Troublemaker. Those were words used to describe outspoken young people like the New York Army National Guard aviation specialist during the turbulent 1960s.

Older members of the Army and Air National Guard's enlisted corps had another word — Patriots — for Spc. Van Pelt and a group of young, impatient citizen-soldiers and airmen during a late-August conference in Des Moines, Iowa.

The 55 vocal and astute junior enlisted men and women — privates, specialists, senior airmen and sergeants — threw their own coming out party in the conservative heartland during the 28th annual conference for the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States.

Some 1,400 mostly senior

noncommissioned officers and their spouses from the association's seven regions attended the conference. They discussed resolutions for congressional consideration dealing with pay and commissary privileges, retirement benefits, and reinforcing the Guard's full-time force.

They listened to national-level speakers such as Lt. Gen. Russell Davis, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, discuss the state of the U.S. military and the demands being placed on today's Guardmembers, families and civilian employers.

The junior enlisted people, including 21 from Oklahoma, made it clear they want a piece of the action. They came to Des Moines not to burn the flag but to wave it.

"We want to be considered as equals in this enlisted association. We deserve to be heard," insisted Van Pelt, the daughter of New York Army Guard CSM Robert Van Pelt and a late-May communications and theater graduate from the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania. She chaired the junior enlisted committee that met for the first time.



Photos by MSgt. Bob Haskell

They demonstrated a mature knowledge of the issues that the older members considered on the Hawkeye State home turf of Maj. Gen. Roger Schultz, director of the Army National Guard.

Florida Air Guard SrA. Gabriel Avile, for example, brought nine years of experience, including seven years in the Army Guard, to the junior enlisted table. Van Pelt was attending her sixth national conference.

"We should have the same medical and dental benefits as active duty people," offered Wyoming Air Guard SrA. Rhett Shumway. "If physical fitness is a readiness issue, so is health care."

The youth movement, that has gained momentum during the past three years, drew far more favor than fire from association

SOONER SOURCE—Oklahoma National Guard women SSgt. Stacy Doughty and Sgt. Lavonda Barnhart lead a contingent of Sooner Staters during opening ceremony festivities at the Enlisted Association conference.

members whose average age was said to be 43.

"Without you, this association is doomed to failure," CSM John Leonard Jr. Command Sergeant Major for the Army National Guard, told the group.

"The junior enlisted people are the future of the National Guard and this association," explained Mike Cline about this year's decision to give them their own forum.

Cline, 54, is executive director of the 75,000-member organization based in Alexandria, Va. His job is to lobby people on Capitol Hill about issues critical to the National Guard's 419,000 enlisted people.

"These young people have a stronger voice with people in Congress than they realize," Cline added.

They must also be cultivated and mentored as the Guard's future leaders, charged Brig. Gen. Craig McKinley, the Air Guard's deputy director.

"It's getting harder to find senior people who are staying beyond 20 years to become commanders and chief masters sergeant," observed McKinley during the Air Guard's Year of the Enlisted Force.

"We need young people to aspire to the senior grades. That's where mentoring comes in," McKinley added. "I sense that

INSIDE THE CONFERENCE

THE Advocate

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Do you have the clothes to do this job?" It was the most unusual question Mike Cline had ever been asked during a job interview. He laughed and assured the people doing the hiring that he had recently purchased some new suits.

The former truck driver and body shop owner and recent Malone (Ohio) College graduate was soon chosen to work the halls of Congress on behalf of the Army and Air National Guard's enlisted men and women.

That was in 1989. Ten years later, imposing, straight-talking Michael Patrick Cline from Cleveland, Ohio, has indeed made his presence felt in Washington, D.C., as executive director for the 75,000-member Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States.

The association's mission is as direct as its executive director: "to promote and maintain adequate national security and to promote and advance the status, welfare, and professionalism of the National Guard of the United States."

At 54, Cline is a retired Ohio Army Guard military police and operations master sergeant. The 26-year military veteran has the bearing of a former linebacker. He minces no words about what he wants for the National Guard's 419,000 full-time and part-time enlisted troops and their families.

"We want to be treated with the same damned respect as people on active duty," he told 55 junior enlisted people on Aug. 23 in Des Moines, Iowa, during the association's 28th annual conference.

Issues such as dental insurance, extensions for Veterans Administration home loans, increases in Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits, and retirement policies for Active Guard and Reserve enlisted people that are equitable with those for officers routinely fill the association's plate.

"It gives you a good feeling to know you have made an impact on millions of people because of something you have worked on," Cline said.

He also made it clear that he and his staff of six cannot do it all. Every member, old and young, has to be involved, he insisted.

"I do not understand people who will not fight for what they're entitled to," Cline said. "Congress gives us nothing. We have to go after it."

"You have more influence on your members of Congress than you realize," he encouraged the young Guardmembers. "If you don't do something, if you lose a benefit, you have only to look in a mirror."

Still, knowing who to see and what to say on Capitol Hill requires experience and persistence.

That is what Cline has mastered for the Guard's enlisted people who, by law, cannot lobby members of Congress or state legislators to introduce or support legislation that will benefit people in uniform.

Although he works for retired SFC Delano Kerby, the elected president, and a 21-member executive council, Cline has brought the enlisted association a long way during his decade as executive director.

Its office was hidden on the third floor of the District of Columbia Armory when he took the job. Its equipment included two telephones, one typewriter, a computer with no software, a photocopier that turned white paper to black, and a broken chair. Cline's only assistant was his new wife Diane. The membership hovered around 33,000.

The association has since bought an 1850s-era, two-story building in the Old Towne section of Alexandria, Va. It has acquired state-of-the-art office equipment. Its staff has grown to seven. Its membership has more than doubled.

And Mike Cline has become a familiar force to such congressional luminaries as Senators Ted Stevens from Alaska, John Warner from Virginia and Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania as well as retired Mississippi Congressman G.V.

"Sonny" Montgomery.

"Congressman Montgomery helped open a lot of doors for me because he was so well respected and because he believed in the National Guard," Cline explained. "But it took me a couple of years to make my own way on the Hill."

He made his way by learning to work with congressional staff members, said Air Guard MSgt. Blaine Ross, who worked closely with Cline during four years as the association's president and two years as vice president.

"He doesn't beat around the bush with them. He tells them like it is," explained Ross. "He has great credibility because he was an enlisted soldier himself. I have never seen anyone who cares about enlisted soldiers and airmen the way Mike Cline does."

His wife, who works for the Army's Institute of Heraldry, is a source of inspiration. Diane is a District of Columbia Air Guard technical sergeant — the historian for the 113th Wing.

One thing, however, was apparent as Mike Cline worked with 1,400 association members in Iowa. The new clothes he bought in 1989 may have helped make the man, but the man has certainly made the job.



GENERAL CONCERN -- Brig. Gen. Craig McKinley, the Air Guard's deputy director, addresses attendees at the conference.



Photos by MSgt. Bob Haskell

FAMILY AFFAIR -- SPC. Mandy Van Pelt, and her dad, CSM Robert Van Pelt, made their commitment to the enlisted force clear in Iowa.

spirit is coming back. We need more of that."

Oklahoma is a good example of how the youthful spirit has blossomed within the enlisted association.

That state's association paid the way to Des Moines for the 21 junior enlisted members, explained Army Guard Sgt. Lavonda Barnhart. Eight attended the 1997 national conference in Little Rock, Ark., and 16 went to Savannah, Ga., last year, she said.

They still have their work cut out before they are considered equal partners.

"You're just getting started," retired Iowa MSgt. Terry Dell, the association's vice president, encouraged them.

"Now we want junior enlisted people on all seven area councils."

Still, Mandy Van Pelt from Rocky Point, N.Y., a flight operations specialist in the Long

Island-based 42nd Aviation Brigade, believes they have put the best foot forward.

"If you're fired up about this association, the other members will listen to you," the determined young woman admonished her peers. "They need to hear from junior enlisted people."

Being heard has never been one of her problems, she explained.

"I was taught to speak up about things that are important to me. My dad has been in the Guard for 27 years. It's part of my life," she added of her commitment.

Her father, vice president of the New York enlisted association, is in her corner.

"She's a typical case of a kid who has had a mentor — me. Her mother

and I are extroverts. She's a product of that," explained Robert Van Pelt, command sergeant major for the 42nd Infantry Division. "She's my daughter. I'm proud as hell."

"Without you, this association is doomed to failure"

CSM JOHN LEONARD
Army Guard
Command Sergeant Major

INSIDE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Major MOM

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Maj. Patricia Ann Pettis obviously appreciates big families. She and her husband Daryl have three daughters and two sons, ages 6-14, who they have settled into the family's Acworth, Ga., home a few miles north of Atlanta.

She acquired another, considerably larger, family June 15. The 40-year-old woman became the medical team leader for Georgia National Guard's new 20-member military support detachment formed to deal with weapons of mass destruction.

They call her "Major P," and she mothers her extended family with all of the care that she gives her five children. That is important because members of her Guard family might someday have to put on air tanks and cumbersome chemical suits and walk into an area contaminated with nuclear, biological or chemical agents — where no mother would want her children to go.

She was all business for five July and August weeks at Fort Leonard Wood in central Missouri where the Guard's 10 military support detachments trained for all kinds of terrorist situations that medical people love to hate.

"I love the military, and I love this kind of work," said Pettis as she checked the blood pressure and other vital signs of Georgia's half-dozen citizen-soldiers who would soon enter a building where simulated chemicals had been discovered in a second-story bathtub.

"The worst thing that can happen is one of my team members going down," she observed while calmly asking the survey team members how they were feeling, if they had slept soundly, and if all was well back home.

The training itself can be hazardous because the temperature inside a confined chemical suit can reach 120 degrees on a hot day. The citizen-soldiers can stay in them for only so long.

It could be much more complicated should they respond to a real crisis. Pettis would have to monitor her Guard people working in a hot zone and advise the local

incident commander about the effects that any dangerous materials they discover could pose for unsuspecting people.

Taking care of her military family is her way of "doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people," she explained.

The woman from Detroit is a pediatrics nurse with a master's degree from Boston College. She was an Air Force nurse for nine years before joining the Georgia detachment in June.

"I am so flattered to be on this elite team," beamed Pettis during August's second Saturday.

It's an important mission, she said, "because terrorism isn't going away, and we need to be ready for it. I want to provide the best defense I can for this homeland."

She knows how to put people at ease. Two small stuffed animals attached to her stethoscope are intended to calm her patients and gain their trust, Pettis said. She gives team members candy to sustain their energy, and she listens to them carefully enough to know if they are having a good or a bad day. She has clearly earned their confidence.

"She knows more about us than we know about ourselves," said Army Guard Sgt. Holly Muse, a survey team leader.

Meanwhile, Pettis remained attuned to her own children who she had last seen since July 9.

"My two oldest are holding down the



Photo by MSgt. Bob Haskell

MEDICAL MARVEL — Georgia Air Guard Maj. Patricia Pettis checks the temperature of Sgt. Daniel Cook, a survey team member.

fort. They understand what I'm doing because they know what happened at Columbine High School," said Pettis of last April's massacre in Colorado. "I just don't talk about how dangerous this job might be."

Her husband is also in her corner. "Daryl works close enough to our home so he can check on them a couple of times a day," added Pettis. "He's been my solid support system."

That enabled Maj. Patricia Ann Pettis to support her new Georgia National Guard family through five weeks of quality training at Fort Leonard Wood before returning to Acworth in mid-August to spend quality time with her own family.



Nearly 200 rapid responders gear up for weapons of destruction

Poised for DISASTER

By MSgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

Blue and yellow chemical suits that became saunas in the Missouri sun were the wardrobes that some 200 National Guard men and women frequently changed into for 37 sweltering days at Fort Leonard Wood during their first dress rehearsal as players in this country's campaign against terrorism.

They were not practicing for a theatrical production during those five July and August weeks, and they would rather not have to display their talents on the stage of life and death.

The members of 10 congressionally-funded military support detachments from across the country gathered at the new home of the Army's Chemical School to bond into teams intended to help civilian authorities deal with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction.

Come January the 22-member teams of modern Minutemen expect to be on call to go into bombed buildings or other dangerous settings and collect and

identify unknown, potentially hazardous materials that could kill civilian firefighters, police, emergency medical responders and innocent people.

They also anticipate being certified to request additional help and to be included in security details for such public events as gubernatorial inaugurations and the Super Bowl.

"I've seen a lot of sick people out there. Someone's got to be ready to do something about it," rationalized Georgia Army Guard Cpl. Daniel Polanski, 23, a former 82nd Airborne soldier who joined the Georgia detachment after seven months with the De Kalb County Police Department.

"Terrorism's on the rise," he added. "It's so easy to get this stuff on the



Photos by MSgt. Bob Hankel



RAPID RESPONDERS — A Military Support Detachment team from Washington (far left) carry a simulated victim out of the hot zone. Colorado detachment survey team members (left) check a dining facility for possible contamination. Members of Colorado's team (below) carefully handle hazardous waste during a training exercise at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.



Internet and to buy it."

Polanski and the others have trained to do a dangerous job while testing the Defense Department's new program for helping defend the homeland against terrorist attacks similar to the bombings in Oklahoma City and the World Trade Center in New York.

"This is a new business for us. We have to make sure we have identified the right number of personnel and that we have given them the right equipment," said Fifth U.S. Army Col. David Annen, commandant for the training program that began July 12.

"I'm really encouraged by how far they have progressed during the short time they've been here," he added.

They have also set the stage for an additional 17 Guard detachments that Congress is considering, said Maj. Gen. Fred Rees, vice chief of the National Guard Bureau.

"We've got to see what Congress tells us to do. Then we'll go from that guidance," explained Rees during an Aug. 12 visit. "These original 10 teams will give us a baseline capability. The sense that we had to move expeditiously to get these teams out there as an initial safety net will have been done by January. That should give us some breathing room to get the other 17 teams in place."

Since January, the full-time Guard members have attended national-level classes in handling hazardous materi-

als, the dynamics of international terrorism and performing medical procedures in contaminated areas. The citizen-soldiers, who were already proficient in Special Forces operations, military intelligence and civilian and military medical techniques, applied those classroom lessons to realistic training scenarios during those hot summer days in central Missouri.

Collecting samples of chemicals following an explosion at a college dining hall; evaluating suspicious substances discovered in a barn and in a bathtub inside a private residence; checking the fluid leaking from the trunk of a suspected terrorist's car that has crashed during a high-speed chase. Those were among the non-stop drills for detachment members who constantly monitored each other's oxygen and equipment in simulated hot zones.

"I've learned there's a lot of stuff out there we don't want to be exposed to," said Spc. Edward Parker Jr., administrative assistant for the California team. "I've gone through all of the training because if a member of our team goes down, I go in."

Chemical agent monitors, combustible gas indicators and photo ionization detectors were among the dozen pieces of state-of-the-art equipment on which the detachment members trained for their new mission.

Active Army observer-controllers and Prime Vendor civilian equipment

experts from Virginia watched their every move that included responding to false alarms.

"Having the assets that can identify a hoax is also important. Hoaxes can be a big part of our world," said Maj. Chris Petty, the Colorado detachment's executive officer.

"The National Guard has never performed a function like this. That's what interested me," explained Georgia Army Guard Sgt. Daniel Cook, a high school history teacher for three years who took a reduction in rank to don a blue suit as part of a three-member, initial-entry team.

They must also know how to cope with panicked civilians who are not accustomed to military order, pointed out Colorado SSgt. Craig Vago.

"Soldiers train for events of war and confusion, whereas your average person does not," he observed. "That means we have to work harder to help bring order out of chaos."

The Guard's other new military support detachments are based in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Texas, Missouri and Washington state.

Their training at Fort Leonard Wood coincided with the August release of a year-long Defense Department study expected to improve the way that reserve components will be used into the next millennium.

"This is an inclusive look at how

we're going to utilize and rely on the Guard and Reserve in the future," said Charles Cragin, acting assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, about the study "Reserve Component Employment 2005."

"I think members of the Guard and Reserve are going to get a lot of professional and personal satisfaction as we clearly delineate some of the existing missions, as well as new missions," Cragin told the *American Forces Press Service*.

Public acceptance will be the key to the new Guard detachments' long-term success, predicted Annen. That means always being prepared.

"They have to market themselves and their capabilities within their areas so the local incident commanders who would take charge of an emergency situation know these teams are out there," he said.

And the detachments must keep on training and building databases so they know the cities and the buildings they might have to enter during the confusion of a crisis, Annen added.

"They've got to make sure they're ready 24 hours a day, seven days a week," he charged. "They've got to be ready to answer the fire call in the middle of the night."

That made this summer's dress rehearsal at Fort Leonard Wood as important for the entire cast as it was for the individual players.

CZECHING IN — Czech Lt. Col. Richard Rataj (below) conducts the Texas band in Prague. TSgt. Michael Severino hits a high note.



I Texas's 531st Air Force Band makes rhythmic point in Czech Republic struments of PEACE

By Sgt. Len Butler
Texas National Guard

Hips weren't the only things shaking when the Texas Air Guard's 531st Air Force Band took their act to the Czech Republic recently. One local was shaking his head in disbelief.

"Growing up, I was always told that Americans were the imperialist enemy," explained a young man named Jan in broken English. "But not anymore. Now we are friends."

Such was the latest triumph registered by the Lone Star State's *instruments of peace* after performing a series of concerts for the people of one of NATO's newest partner nations.

Armed only with an interpreter and their music, the 36-member band played in front of crowds that would have been unimaginable during the dark days of the Cold War.

The whirlwind eight-city tour took the band through historical towns and hamlets in the republic. The ancient Gothic and Baroque architecture contrasted the plain tenements built during the communist era, serving as a reminder that this small but beautiful country was once tucked deep behind the Iron Curtain.

Band Commander 2nd Lt. Jeffrey C. Mathews said the tour actually began some 5,000 miles away in the band's home at Fort

Worth, Texas.

"Many hours of rehearsing and a lot of planning were the keys to pulling off a tour of this magnitude," he said.

By the time the band arrived at their first stop, Kromeriz, a large crowd had already gathered in the town square. The local newspaper had printed a story the day before, alerting the townspeople of the band's impending concert.

Thick gray clouds hung overhead as the band and Czech soldiers unloaded the sound equipment and set up the stage. The threat of rain didn't scare off the curious citizens of this ancient city. A vast majority of them had never seen an American before, much less an American in a military uniform.

Band members shook off their jet lag and jumped right into the set. The crowd grew larger and became more enthusiastic with each tune. To be sure, the language barrier made communication seem impossible. But the music seemed to transcend words and touch the audience.

This tour included no roadies or support crew to handle the gear. Each time the band arrived at a concert site, they had to set up the instruments and sound equipment themselves, then tear down the equipment again to



load up for the next stop.

"Playing is the easy part, and obviously, the most rewarding," said SrA. Jack Bradley, a clarinetist. "The real work is before and after the show. Playing in front of an audience and getting a good reaction from them makes up for the sweat of having to move this heavy gear around."

The Czech hosts did play a significant role, however. Mathews said that all of the performance sites were arranged and set up in advance, as were the band's accommodations.

"You name it and they took care of it," Mathews said. "Their planning was phenomenal and the hospitality was beyond anything we expected."

The band played music for virtually every taste. When they weren't performing their standard orchestra repertoire, they played jazz and rock and roll.

In the town of Tabor, the band set up for the sounds of the big band. Local citizens passing by

CROWD PLEASER — Texas Air Guard SSgt. Erika Stevens (above) belts out a tune in Stribo. Stevens (right) and SSgt. Dave Barnes greet a young groupie.

Photos by Sgt. Len Butler



quickly noticed the men and women wearing unusual blue uniforms. Curiosity seemed to hold the people in place. When the grooving sounds began to bob from the sound system, any apprehension dissolved, and the locals danced and swayed to the beat of Gershwin and Miller.

"This is what it's all about," said jazz band leader SrA. Michael Browning, who played trombone. "We get a good vibe from the audience and give it right back to them."

Czech band director Lt. Col. Richard Rataj said the contrasts between American and Czech music was interesting.

"The American style of conducting the orchestra is much different than ours, and so is their style of playing," he said. "The people in our communities are not used to the Americans' way of making music."

Czech military bands don't play music from as many genres as American military bands do, but they are quite accomplished. General Major Petr Voznica, Czech ground forces commander, said the five Czech military bands routinely tour throughout Europe, often play-

ing before large audiences.

The high point of the tour was the concert held at the Prague Castle. The fabulous landmark also gave the band an opportunity to perform in front of the countless tourists that visit from all over the world.

"The setting here at the castle is so exciting, and as a conductor for a talented group of musicians, it also makes for a lot of fun," Mathews said. "There were several tourists from the United States who came up to us and expressed their gratitude at hearing an American band here."

Rataj even had a chance to get in on the action. At the close of the band's set, he conducted a Czech march tune to which the 531st never missed a beat.

Voznica said he would like to see further exchanges between Czech and American bands.

"My hope is that we can coordinate our operations between the military bands, as well as our bilateral contacts in other areas," he said.

MSgt. Bruce Hamberlin, a clarinetist, said the tour was an eye-opening event for him.

"The rich history of this country, the unique architecture of the buildings are so fascinating," he said. "This is something I will remember for some time."



Photo by MSgt. Floyd Jones

'I would fight along side
this brigade any day'

Deadly in the Desert

By Capt. Danny N. Blanton
Mississippi National Guard

As the dust settled across the battle fields of the Mojave Desert, all that remained of the Mississippi National Guard's "Magnolia Rotation" were the echoes of their historic deeds.

For three weeks, more than 5,000 citizen-soldiers from 23 states took on the National Training Center, or NTC, at Fort Irwin, Calif., as the largest reserve-component task force to train there since the Persian Gulf War.

Located in the middle of the Mojave Desert, the NTC is considered one of the toughest military training environments in the world. Troops are exposed to brutal desert temperatures, which exceed 100 degrees in the daytime and dip into the 30s at night.

Soldiers also face an opponent more skilled and more familiar with the terrain. Using weapons and equipment modified to resemble those used by former War-

saw Pact countries, the active-duty soldiers who serve as at NTC's renowned opposing force, or OPFOR, rarely suffer defeat at the hands of visiting units.

"Both the observer controllers and the OPFOR are truly committed to training the force; and they train the force with one main purpose — protecting our nation and our families," said Capt. Doug Ferguson, commander of Company D, 2nd Battalion, 198th Armor, based in Sardis, Miss. "We are here to learn from the OPFOR and do our best to defeat them."

While the rotation tested the 155th Brigade Combat Team, it also allowed them to leave their mark.

"Gunnery has always been a strength of ours," said Brig. Gen. Ed Roberts, 155th commander. "We feel confident we can hit our targets."

This proficiency enabled the 155th to become the first task force-sized, reserve-component element to be invited to the combined-arms live fire exercise.

"These guys love to shoot. It was a tremendous morale boost for them to have the opportunity to participate in a live-fire exercise of this magnitude," Roberts said.

Being invited to live-fire was not the 155th's only contribution to the NTC history. While participating in the direct-fire, live-fire exercise, Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 114th Field Artillery, based in Ackerman, Miss., became the only battery, reserve or active, to hit all of its targets.

During the direct-fire qualification exercise, batteries bring all six of their artil-



Photo by 2nd Lt. Kavanaugh Breazeale

lery weapons systems on line and fire their 155mm cannons directly at stationary targets.

"We want to see action, we want to see something blow up," said PFC Michael Evans, a member of Bravo Battery. "We love live-fire."

Many of the soldiers were excited about the exercise and the unit's proficiency.

"Bravo Battery sets the pace and the standards. We are bad to the bone," said SSgt. Paul Davis. "We feel like we can compete with the regular Army."

The 1st Platoon, 114th Military Police Company, based in Clinton, Miss., also raised the bar for future reserve-component NTC rotations.

According to Capt. Scott Lippiatt, the platoon's observer-controller, the unit became was the first Guard platoon to complete the Military Police live-fire exercise since the exercise began in January 1997. During the live-fire exercise, the platoon conducted a dismounted deliberate attack against a suspected enemy's mortar section.

NTC observers also were impressed. "It has been a delight to work with this

DESERT WARRIORS — Mississippi Army Guard 1st Lt. Scott Caldwell (left) and Spc. Larry Wilson, both members of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 198th Armor, watch for the enemy at the National Training Center. An M-2 Bradley Fight Vehicle crew (left) from Mississippi's Company C, 1-155th Infantry roll into battle.

great brigade. They are very coachable and eager to fight," reported Col. Benjamin Freakley, NTC Observation Group commander. "I look forward to serving beside them in the future."

As with all deployments, safety played an important role. Freakley congratulated the 155th for recording no serious injuries during their rotation.

"It is not often that a brigade can come out here and train in these conditions without any accidents," he said. "It took a lot of hard work to accomplish such an outstanding milestone."

Maj. Gen. James Garner, Mississippi National Guard adjutant general, attributed the success to the Magnolia Rotation to discipline.

"This is a tribute to their training to get here and their desire to perform well," he said. "We're certainly a much better brigade today and we will continue to improve."

While Freakley said it will be important for the Guard's latest desert warriors to "dissect" its triumphs and defeats, it was clear that the 155th's soldiers left a favorable impression.

"I would fight along side this brigade any day," said Brig. Gen. William Webster, Jr., NTC commander.

NEWS

MAKERS

Compiled by MSgt. John Malthaner
National Guard Bureau

The 50th Anniversary of the devastating Mann Gulch fire that killed 13 smokejumpers in 1949 was commemorated in a ceremony hosted by Montana Gov. Mark Racicot Aug. 6.

Robert (Dick) Greene, Walter Morris and Joseph Murchison — members of the Montana National Guard's 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion — were in attendance. "The Triple Nickels" was the first and only all-black parachute unit in U.S. military history.

"The 555th was an experimental unit because the Army was skeptical about forming a unit of black paratroopers. They didn't think black soldiers had the stamina, the nerve or the guts to become paratroopers," recalled Morris, the first African-American paratrooper and unit first sergeant. "The history of black soldiers in 1943 was that we were very good truck drivers, cooks and waiters. We could load ships and load ammunition, but to jump out of a plane, and then become combat infantrymen, was unheard of."

Many enlisted blacks from other units voluntarily took rank reductions to join the Triple Nickels, hoping the unit would be given the opportunity to fight against Adolf Hitler and Germany.

Then fate stepped in. "Operation Firefly," a secret mission that involved locating and destroying incendiary balloon bombs launched by the Japanese (many of which were found in Montana), occupied the unit. Thus, they became the Army's first and only organized "smokejumpers."

Nebraska Army Guard PFC John Ulrich's quick thinking and skill aided in the rescue of a Nebraska couple involved in a car accident.

Ulrich, a cook with Troop C, 1st Squadron, 167th Cavalry, was riding home from drill with his 16-year-old sister, Seana, when they saw a Ford Ranger pickup truck that was approaching them lose control, completely rollover, and come to a stop in a ditch on its wheels.

Ulrich jumped into action. He told his sister to call 911 on her cell phone while he sprinted to the vehicle to render aid. The two occupants, neither of whom were wearing a seatbelt, were tossed about the pickup cabin.

"When they rolled, the guy who was driving ended up pushing (the woman) down between the seat and the dashboard. She was stuck," he said.

Ulrich rushed around to the other side of the truck to free the driver, Gary Bridges. Bridges was wheezing and totally disoriented.

"He kept asking, where were they? What happened? Did they roll?" Ulrich recalled.

After helping Bridges out of the truck, Ulrich went around the truck and pried the door open so that the passenger, Bridges' wife Roberta, could be helped out. She had glass in her mouth.

"I told her not to swallow anything," Ulrich said. "She was coughing glass out of her nose two days later."

The Bridges were taken to a hospital and released a short time later with minor injuries.

"Gary and I are very thankful for John Ulrich and all the help he gave us," said Roberta Bridges, who once worked with Ulrich for a year at a grocery store. "Thank God for him."



Historic paratrooper retired 1st Sgt. Walter Morris fields an interview.



Nebraska's PFC John Ulrich rescued a couple after a car accident.



Louisiana Gov. Mike Foster joined Youth Challenge program teens at their new facility in Carville.

On a sweltering August day, hundreds of people gathered to commemorate the transfer of the Gillis W. Long Hansen's Disease Center in Carville, La. — the newest home of the Louisiana National Guard's Youth Challenge program (YCP) — from federal to state control.

Although the official transfer didn't take place until recently, the Carville facility welcomed its first YCP cadets April 12. The program is patterned after the Challenge located at Camp Beauregard in Pineville, La.

The Camp Beauregard-based program has graduated more than 1,785 at-risk teens, many of whom have gone on to college, joined the military, or are now employed.

The Pelican State's Challenge program is ranked first in education among all the National Guard states that offer the five-month, quasi-military alternative to high school dropouts.

The reality of the Carville facility as a home for a second YCP began years ago when U.S. District Judge Frank Polozola and U.S. Congressman Richard Baker approached Louisiana Gov. Mike Foster about using the under-utilized 330-acre federal facility as a state educational campus.

In addition to the YCP, a federal Job Corps Program will open at the facility. The state Army Guard's 415th Military Intelligence Battalion also has been relocated there.

"What better use of state money is there than saving young people," remarked the Governor.

Joe Padilla, the National Guard Bureau's Youth Programs chief, logged nearly 1,400 miles on a Blackhawk helicopter visiting Montana's seven Tribal Nations. The whirlwind tour was in support of the Montana National Guard's aggressive initiative to include at-risk Native American teens in its Youth Challenge program.

Padilla spent three days in July enjoying Montana's rich Indian culture and heritage. The tribes visited included the Flathead, Salish, Kootenai, Blackfeet, Chippewa, Cree, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Sioux, Crow and Northern Cheyenne. The trip was highlighted by Padilla's participation in the Blackfeet's "March for Sobriety."

Montana Adjutant General Maj. Gen. John Prendergast joined the outreach effort after he and Dan Donohue, NGB Public Affairs chief, inked a pact authorizing the Montana National Guard's Challenge program. The Big Sky Guard became the 27th state to offer the five-month, in-residence program to high school dropouts.

The program will be located on the University of Montana - Western in Dillon. It is the first Challenge program to be placed on a college campus. The first class began Sept. 1.

During a recent annual training, Virginia Army National Guard Spc. Trinity Huber exchanged vows with Jamie Hall. The ceremony, presided over by Chaplain (Capt.) Gary Olson — the 2nd Battalion, 111th Field Artillery's chaplain — was conducted on the Fort Pickett parade field.

The groom, resplendent in his battle dress uniform, was joined by fellow Battery C cannoneers, as well as two M198 Howitzers.

South Carolina's new training center may be the best site in the reserve components

Palmetto Paradise

By SFC Gene Thomas
South Carolina National Guard

The Palmetto State can now boast the newest and, arguably, the best training center in the reserve components. South Carolina Guard officials dedicated their new facility on Fort Jackson July 31 in honor of Lt. Gen. Robert L. McCrady, a former state adjutant general.

The Robert L. McCrady Army National Guard Training Center covers 15,000 acres on the southeast corner of the Army installation. The facility contains the new \$15.3 million Lt. Gen. James C. Dozier Regional School.

The Dozier school, also dedicated July 31, is home to multi-state officer candidate and NCO officer development schools.

Dozier, a Medal of Honor recipient, is another late former South Carolina adjutant general. He established the Palmetto Military Academy, the third oldest Guard officer candidate school in the nation in 1950.

The McCrady training center also has a new leadership reaction course. And construction is nearly complete on a 30,000-square-foot battle simulation center, an organizational maintenance shop and a moving-target tank gunnery range.



Photos by SFC Gene Thomas



CAROLINA CAMPUS — Officer candidates (top photo) breach an obstacle at the McCrady training center. North Carolina Army Guard Sgt. John Collins (left) prepares to remove rocket pods from the Multi-Launch Rocket System. Florida Spc. Jamie Simpkins (above) and South Carolina Spc. Christin Ryan (kneeling) take on land navigation during Primary Leadership Development Course training.

PINE TREE PIONEER

FROM PAGE 5

that carried Wiggin so far, Thompson explained.

"I had to shut out snide remarks, but I believed in working there," Wiggin said. "My superiors always supported me. That made it a lot easier. The other stuff was never anything that I couldn't live with."

It started for the most basic of reasons. She wanted to know what went on during the weekend drills.

She went to work at Dow Air Force Base in Bangor as a telephone operator in 1965. She was hired as a civilian clerk-typist at the Air Guard's civil engineering squadron in 1968, the year that Dow closed and the Air Force pulled out of Maine's Queen City.

The squadron got busy managing, remodeling or dismantling the facilities the Air Force left behind. It bothered her, she explained, to not know what was going on

during the weekend drills. She signed up in January '74 to find out and to become a federal technician.

"I knew I wanted to do better than what I was doing," explained the woman who had also concluded that "what the military does is very important" — even if her mother and close friends thought she had completely lost her mind.

Much has happened since then.

She has deployed with other civil engineers to Panama in early 1990, during the final days of Operation Just Cause that brought down Manuel Noriega. She has served in Aviano, Italy, and on bases across the United States.

The 101st has had its jet fighters replaced by air refueling tankers, and the Guard has matured from a part-time force to an equal partner in the Air Force's worldwide operations. The "Maineiacs" are renowned as one of the Air Force's finest units and stand up the Northeast Tanker Task Force whenever overseas operations require additional airplanes in a hurry.

That has meant millions of dollars in new construction

at the Bangor base — a new ramp for the tankers; a high-tech, fully enclosed fuel cell dock; new operations and communications centers; and a new home for the civil engineer squadron.

Linda Wiggin and others in the civil engineer office have played major roles in giving Bangor one of the country's most modern Air Guard installations.

She put it all behind her in mid-August and began settling into retirement with her retired husband Galen at their pleasant home in Levant. It's about four miles down the road from the farm of her youth and the Baptist church where she still sings in the choir.

There's a garden to be gotten in and grandchildren to dote on. They will watch for the geese that return to their peaceful pond every fall.

It will be good, she acknowledged, to take life a little easier knowing that, in the words of her friend Jan Thompson, she made a difference.

"She conducted herself as a chief should," said Thompson. "She made it easier for women to be accepted."



STATES

• Sooner Soaring • Gulf Gophers • Mayor on the Move

OKLAHOMA

Defense Secretary William Cohen thinks Oklahoma is OK. Conversely, Saddam Hussein probably does not.

That's the impression 150 members of the state's 138th Fighter Wing brought back when they returned from Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, where they spent July enforcing the no-fly zone over northern Iraq.

The mission included bombing raids on Iraq. Using precision-guided munitions, F-16 pilots struck several Iraqi defense sites.

The Tulsa-based outfit is one of only four in the Air Guard equipped with the capability to drop laser-guided ordnance.

Unit pilots reported coming under fire several times; however no aircraft were hit.

Cohen visited Incirlik recently to thank those involved with Operation Northern Watch.

"Thanks to the Turkish government and military and our British friends, we are able to contain Saddam Hussein," Cohen said. "As a result, the region stays more stable. And when the region is stable, then you can have at least an opportunity for freedom."

The 138th was one of three Air Guard units taking 30-day turns enforcing the zone. Iowa's 132nd Fighter Wing succeeded Oklahoma, who were replaced by Ohio's 180th Fighter Wing.

ALASKA

Sherpa SHOW

Alaska Army Guard CWO2 Neil Gotschall, a fixed wing pilot, explains the features of the C-23 Sherpa to visitors of the San Pedro Sula, Honduras airshow. Gotschall is a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation at Fort Richardson. Nearly 5,000 Hondurans turned out for the air display that celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Col. Armondo Espinal airbase.



Photo by SFC Brenda Benner

MINNESOTA

Twenty-one members of the Gopher State Army Guard's Company G, 147th Air Traffic Services, are operating some of the Army's latest equipment to help enforce the no-fly zone over southern Iraq.

The air traffic controllers are using the tactical terminal control system to direct aircraft over Ali Al-Salam Air Field, Kuwait.

Mounted in Humvees, the new system has a reach of one kilometer and emits scrambled messages undetectable to the enemy, said SFC Steve Nelson, unit administrator. The system has been in the Army inventory for a year.

The 21 citizen-soldiers have plenty of Guard company in the region. They are assigned to Task Force 151, which also includes Army Guard aviation troops from Mississippi and South Carolina.

In addition, Arkansas has light infantry companies in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and nine New Mexico Army Guardmembers are currently assigned to an active duty Patriot antimissile defense battery in the region.

The Guardsmen and women are helping to enforce the no-fly zone established during the 1991 Persian Gulf War to prevent Iraqi military aircraft from attacking the Shiite Muslim minority population in southern Iraq. A similar zone was set up to protect minority Kurds from persecution in northern Iraq.

DISTRICT of COLUMBIA

By LaTonya Dozier

District of Columbia National Guard

Imagine taking off in a two-seater jet that immediately climbs 15,000 feet in 45 seconds. That's what District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams did after accepting an offer from D.C. Commanding General Maj. Gen. Warren L. Freeman "to come fly with us."

Flying in an F-16 from Andrews AFB, Md., the mayor flew with the D.C. Air Guard 113th Wing on July 28, his birthday.

Before his flight, the mayor received a flight surgeon briefing and two hours of egress training.

"He was reluctantly excited," said SrA. Sheron Mosley, who performed the egress training. "You could tell that he wanted to go up, but the more I talked about what to expect, he looked like he was starting to think 'Do I really want to go up?'"

Freeman and Col. David Wherley, 113th Wing commander, said the flight was a good idea.

"The mayor represents our number one advocate to help us recruit future airmen for the Guard," said Wherley. Added Freeman: "It's important that he understand what we do and how we do it."

Once airborne, pilot Maj. Bill Shelton flew the mayor 15,000 feet straight up, before leveling off.

"I could really feel the impact of the speed at which we climbed on my face and my entire body. It was a helluva climb," said the mayor.

Shelton flew the mayor over the Patuxent River, the White House and off of the Chesapeake Bay. After demonstrating several different F-16 maneuvers, he allowed the mayor to take the stick.

"The mayor flew a couple of loops," reported Shelton. "He never started to feel sick."

"It was amazing," Williams said. "It really makes me have a lot of respect for what they do."



Photo courtesy of the D.C. National Guard

MAYOR on the MOVE -- D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams gives a thumbs up before flying in a 113th Wing F-16 Falcon.



HISTORY

• The Air National Guard's Aviation Pioneers

FIRST in FLIGHT

The shadows lengthened as the late afternoon sun dropped toward the western horizon over the shell-scarred landscape. A flight of Royal Air Force (RAF) SE-5s patrolling at 16,000 feet turned toward their home base at Bruay, France several miles to the south. Reed G. Landis, the only American in the formation, "hunched forward in the tiny cockpit and searched the scattered puffs of clouds ahead ... suddenly Landis saw the flight leader rock his wings vigorously and roll into a steep dive to the left. Approximately 1,000 feet below, a half-dozen Pfalz scouts were cruising east."

Landis' combat report described what happened next. He "followed flight down on F.A. scouts, majority of which spun. Continued to dive after F.A. and engaged one as it came out of a spin. Fired short burst from both guns into F.A., which did several turns of a spin and then fell into a dive."

Landis, an Illinois Guardsman who had volunteered for aviation service in 1917, followed the Pfalz down and watched it crash into a village. The engagement on May 19, 1918 was Landis' first official kill although he had managed to dive two enemy aircraft out of control during earlier fights. Landis went on to become one of America's leading wartime aces. While a U.S. officer, all 10 of his official kills were scored while flying with the RAF.

The Guard was a hotbed of early interest in aviation. There were many efforts to form Guard aero units in various states by civilian flyers, businessmen and National Guardsmen. They were as interested in promoting the general development of American aviation as they were in establishing Guard aviation. The California Guard established an aeronautical detachment in its 7th Coast Artillery Company in February 1911. Eugene Ely, the earliest man to launch an aircraft from the deck of a warship, was the detachment's first private. Before being killed during an air show in Macon, Ga. in October 1911, he became the first pilot to be commissioned in that state. In May 1912, Ohio's Lt. Col. Charles Winder attended the Army's Aviation School at Augusta, Ga., becoming the first Guard officer to earn a Reserve Military Aviator rating.

Several states had established small aviation branches within their National Guard organizations by 1916. Aside from New York, none were able to provide those fledgling air organizations with anything approaching adequate financial support.

The Army began sending Guardsmen to flight school in late 1915. In August 1916, Congress appropriated \$13.88 million for military aviation. The legislation also mandated that flight training would be provided to one Guardsman from each state. That initiative had been promoted by Reuben Fleet, a prosperous businessman, member of the Washington state legislature, and a Guardsman. In the spring of 1917, Fleet was one of eleven Guardsmen selected for such training. He transferred into the Army and won his wings after the U.S. declared

war. He helped manage the production and procurement of Army aircraft from his Washington, D.C. office. Fleet was selected to organize the nation's first airmail service in May 1918. He left the Army in 1922 and established the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation in Buffalo, N.Y., the following year.

Raynal Cawthorne Bolling also played a key role in the formative years of National Guard aviation. The socially-prominent New York Guardsman was the chief attorney for the United States Steel Corporation. In the summer of 1915, he began taking flying lessons and attended a military training camp for businessmen at Plattsburg, N.Y. After returning from Plattsburg, Bolling and several other prominent New Yorkers began to organize a National Guard aero company with the support of Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan, the state's Adjutant General. Aided by an initial \$12,500 gift from the Aero Club of New York City and other contributions, the fledgling Guard aviators rented two aircraft and financed the training of student pilots at private flying schools. On Nov. 1, 1915, Capt. Bolling organized and was appointed commander of the first real Guard aviation unit, the 1st Aero Company, New York National Guard.

Bolling's air unit was called into federal service on July 13, 1916 during the crisis with Mexico precipitated by Pancho Villa's raid on Columbus, N.M. In September, they were augmented by the 2nd Aero Company of the New York National Guard from Buffalo, plus ten officers from other states. The 2nd Aero Company had been organized in 1916. Following Villa's raid, President Woodrow Wilson mobilized the National Guard. The 1st Aero Company never saw the Mexican border. Instead, it trained at Mineola, N.Y. The company was mustered out of federal service on Nov. 2, 1916 and disbanded on May 12, 1917. Bolling was disillusioned by the experience at Mineola. He doubted that aviation could ever be a success in the Guard because it was costly and highly technical. Largely based on his advice, the War Department disbanded

Guard aviation units and their members were encouraged to volunteer for active duty as individuals.

The Army had to rely heavily on Guardsmen and volunteers from civilian life with no military experience when President Wilson and the Congress approved the creation of a gigantic wartime aviation program in the summer of 1917. That spring, Guardsmen provided a significant pool for the Army to draw aviators from. Approximately 100 of them had either qualified as pilots or were in training to become military aviators. Although comprehensive figures were not available on how Guardsmen actually served in the U.S. aviation program during World War I, a small number of them made significant contributions to it.

After joining the Signal Corps Reserve, Col. Bolling led an important U.S. mission to Europe in the summer of 1917. Its recommendations played a critical role in shaping America's huge wartime aircraft production pro-



GUARD HISTORY

By Dr. Charles J. Gross
Air Guard Historian

gram. While assigned to the A.E.F., he established schools and training centers in Europe for American fliers. Other members of New York's 1st Aero Company served with distinction in France. Lt. Col. Philip A. Carroll, an attorney, left the Guard to help form the 1st Aero Reserve Squadron and had shipped overseas as the unit's commander. Once in France, Carroll had been assigned to the Aviation Instruction Center at Issoudin, France. He eventually became the Assistant Chief of the Training Section of the AEF's Air Service.

Capt. James E. Miller, a banker in civilian life, was sent overseas in July 1917. He headed the training facility at Issoudin and then was assigned as commander of the 95th Aero Squadron.

1st Lt. Blair Thaw served in the Air Service's 1st Aero Squadron. He was killed in an aircraft accident while commanding the 135th Aero Squadron.

In addition to Landis, the Guard contributed three other aces to the allied air effort. Tennessee Air Guard Capt. Reed Chambers became an original member of the famed 94th Pursuit Squadron in France. A friend and trusted confidant of Rickenbacker, he was credited with six aerial victories. Kansas Capt. Field Kindley scored 11 victories, while Minnesota Guard Lt. Martinus Stenseth was credited with 647 victories.

The individual ace became the glamorous symbol of WWI aviation in the minds of the press and a public hungry for individual heroes. But, in reality, the most important aviation work in the war was done by the observation squadrons that kept track of enemy movements and helped control artillery fire. The short career of a Kansas Guardsman, 2nd Lt. Erwin R. Bleckley, illustrated that role.

In early October 1918, members of the 50th Aero Squadron, which he was assigned to in France, attempted to locate and resupply an American infantry battalion that had been cut off by the Germans in the Argonne Forest. Bleckley and his pilot, 1st Lt. Harold Goettler braved poor weather and intense ground fire to resupply the doughboys. Unable to see any signs of life, they were forced to guess where to drop their packages.

Bleckley and Goettler decided to fly one more relief mission that day before the doughboys ran out of ammunition and food. They flew at treetop level, almost dropping to the ground on their first pass, and then pivoted for another run over the area. But, the airmen's luck ran out. Both Bleckley and Goettler were hit by enemy fire. Goettler managed to lift his DH-4 out of the ravine and over a ridge, where it crashed in front of the French lines. He was dead when the French found him. Bleckley was dying, but preserved his notes which helped pinpoint the German positions around the contested ravine. Both Bleckley and Goettler received the Medal of Honor posthumously for their heroism. Bleckley was the first National Guard aviator to earn the nation's highest military decoration.

Early Guard aviators made significant individual contributions to the early development of American military aviation through WWI. Their service was the opening chapter in the long and difficult struggle of National Guard aviation to win the right to serve as organized units of the American military establishment.



Maj. Reed Landis



TRAINING

Texas helicopter crews help law enforcers find marijuana

TROUBLE down BELOW

By Sgt. Len Butler
Texas National Guard

Two Texas Army Guard helicopters slowly descended through the morning mist to a landing zone where a small army of lawmen waited to do battle in the war against drugs.

"Big Bird," a UH-60 Black Hawk and "Little Bird," an OH-58 Kiowa reconnaissance helicopter, touched down in Cherokee County, Texas, as part of Operation Green Thunder, the Lone Star State Army Guard's aerial reconnaissance mission dedicated to assisting local authorities in marijuana eradication efforts.

The Drug Enforcement Agency and the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) served as the lead agencies for the annual operation.

After meeting with law enforcers, the Little Bird crew was dispatched to "recon" Pierce's Chapel, an area suspected of drug activity.

"All right, you go over there and see what you can see," said the Big Bird pilot. "We're going to head to the northwest part of the county to see if we can spot anything like we saw last year."

What the Green Thunder team spotted last year was a marijuana field containing 5,000 plants, valued at more than \$8 million. The field was found growing in a logging area that had been clear-cut, one of the reasons why the region is favorable for growing the illicit crop.

Sheriff James Campbell said that he estimates nearly 40 percent of his county is logging country. Timber and paper companies clear-cut an area, then gather the scrap timber into rows to be burned. The ashes make the soil very fertile.

Once the battle strategy and flight plans were set, a DPS narcotics agent climbed aboard the Kiowa to work as the spotter, while sheriff's deputies and DPS agents loaded into the Black Hawk. A ground support crew headed to a centrally-located part of the reconnaissance area. The helicopters ascended over the treetops.

Reconning for marijuana in a dense, green forest may seem like an impossible task, especially at a minimum-flying altitude of 500 feet. But DPS Sgt. Marvin McLeroy, a narcotics division investigator, said it's not just marijuana that exposes the location of a field.

"The tools that we use to grow a garden at home are needed out in the woods for a marijuana garden as well," he said.

McLeroy said marijuana requires an enormous amount of water. So it is almost always located near one of the numerous ponds, streams, rivers and swamps scattered throughout the East Texas Piney Woods. McLeroy said buckets and barrels found in remote area offer clues.

A more sophisticated way of transporting water is through PVC pipe. The pipe is inserted into a lake and siphoned to marijuana plants.

"If we happen to find a field during our recon mission, more than likely the grower won't be around," McLeroy said. "Even if we do catch somebody in the immediate vicinity, he can just say that he was hiking or scouting a hunting area."

The radio emitted a familiar voice as Little Bird called in.

"Big Bird, this is Little Bird. I think we've got something ... Looks like some kind of marker, like a white flag."

"We're on our way," replied Big Bird.

After the Black Hawk broke hard right, gaining altitude, the co-pilot weighed in with his views on the battle against drugs.

"I've always felt that drugs have scorned our society," he said. "As Guardmembers get called up for situations on a national level. We should always be ready and able to assist in the interests of our state as well."



Photos by Sgt. Len Butler

AIDED BY AIR — A Texas Army Guard OH-58 Kiowa helicopter (above) hovers over a clear-cut section of forest, popular areas for marijuana growers. A Cherokee County narcotics investigator (top photo) hauls off some marijuana.

Big Bird slowly skimmed above the tree line, returning to the field where last year's big bust occurred.

"It sure was an awful lot of dope then," said the pilot. "You could just about smell the stuff when we hovered above it."

This year however, it was only a barren swath of field that was just showing signs of regrowth. Growers are rarely caught, with even fewer going to jail.

Assisting the citizens of Texas is something these pilots have become very familiar with in recent years. The pilots and aircrew of both helicopters have helped fight wildfires and have flown flood relief missions when they were not assisting the Green Thunder operation.

Days can be long and tedious on this sort of mission. In order to effectively recon the area, the flight speed is reduced

to a virtual crawl. A pilot or a spotter could see something, then hover over it for minutes, trying to determine whether it was marijuana or just another shrub that happens to look like it. Sometimes days will go by before the crew makes a find.

East Texas was once a thriving marijuana-growing region. Since the eradication program was initiated however, marijuana fields have been reduced in both numbers and size. With increased aerial reconnaissance and improvements in counterdrug tactics, the large-scale fields of the 1980's and early 90's have been virtually wiped out.

"It's just not worth it anymore for the growers," McLeroy said. "It takes an awful lot of work to get their gardens growing. But we go in and destroy the stuff before they can harvest it."

As the Black Hawk approached the Pierce's Chapel area, a makeshift tent, made of clear plastic sheeting and PVC pipe, appeared through the trees. Long abandoned, the weight of the leaves falling from surrounding trees had collapsed the roof of the structure.

"A guy was growing a large marijuana field close to where that tent is," Sheriff Detective Johnathan Rhodes said. "He just lived in that tent and tended his crop. We busted him over three years ago."

Over a ridge and into the distance, the Kiowa was circling a freshly cleared patch of the forest. Beneath the Kiowa was a white piece of cloth tied to a stick, stuck in a mixed mound of dirt.

The rugged terrain and remote location of the flag prevented the ground crew from accessing the area. Consequently, the sheriff's deputies aboard the Black Hawk were ordered to investigate.

There, growing out of a burned scrap mound stood 364 plants, all around two feet tall. Rhodes figured the find would be worth more than \$600,000 on the street. The plants were taken back to the sheriff's office to be incinerated.

"In the old days, we had so many marijuana fields that many times we had to burn it right on the spot," Rhodes said. "If we can, we will take it to the station."

Climbing back aboard the Black Hawk, Rhodes said Operation Green Thunder is critical to the success of eliminating marijuana in the county. Looking out over the ridges and forest, he expressed his gratitude for Texas Army Guard.

"We just couldn't do it without them," he said shaking his head. "They're doing us a huge favor. But more important, they're doing a huge favor for the children of this state."