

# GX<sup>®</sup>

THE GUARD EXPERIENCE

MARCH/APRIL 2011  
VOL 8 :: ISSUE 2

>> ON THE ROAD

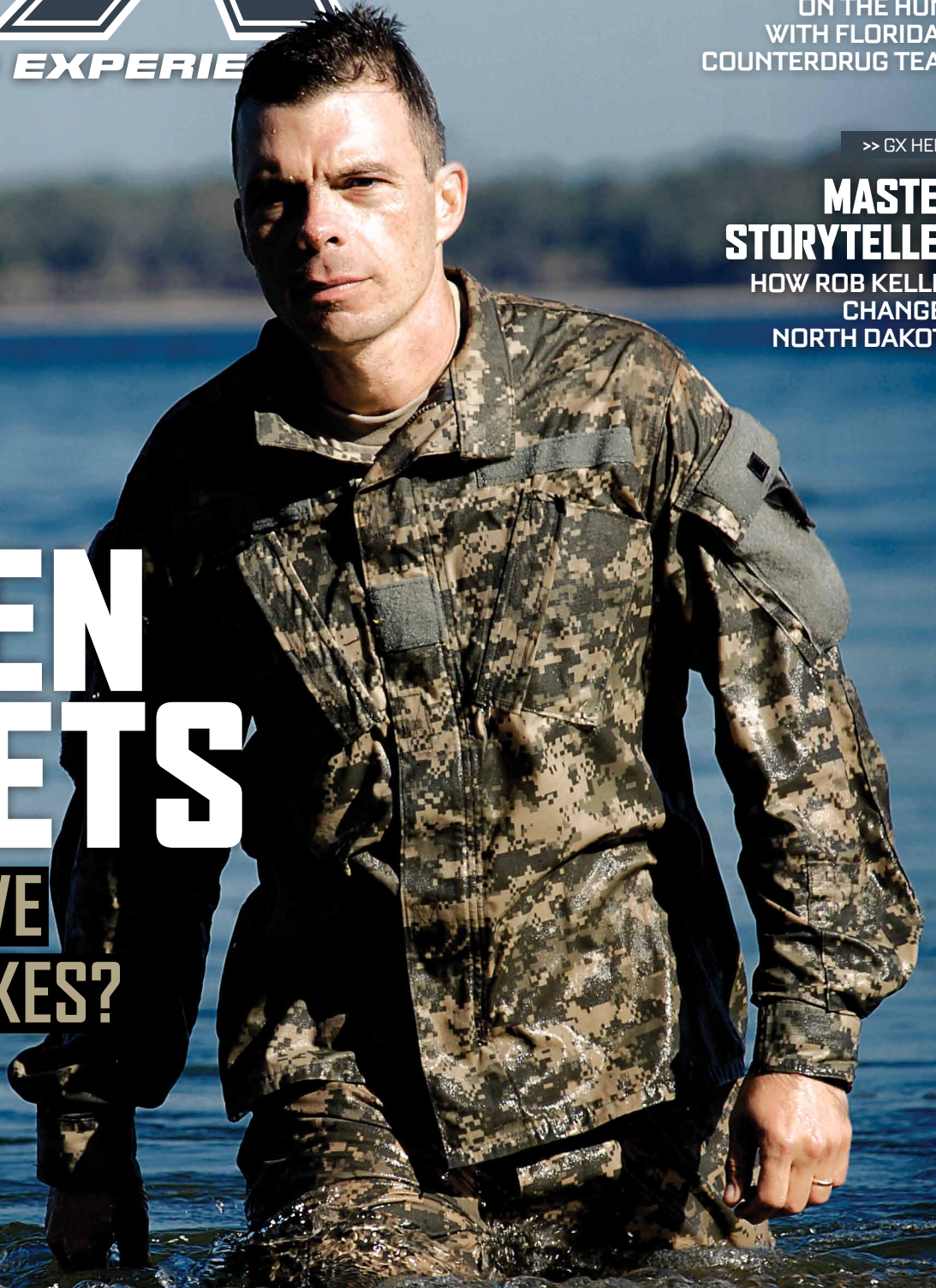
**SLASH AND BURN**  
ON THE HUNT  
WITH FLORIDA'S  
COUNTERDRUG TEAM

>> GX HERO

**MASTER  
STORYTELLER**  
HOW ROB KELLER  
CHANGED  
NORTH DAKOTA

# THE GREEN BERETS

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WHAT IT TAKES?



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## Soldiers,

On behalf of the citizens of Iowa, I extend my deepest gratitude for your steadfast determination to protect and serve our great nation. You are playing a vital role in our national defense here at home as well as our efforts in support of overseas missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, Guantanamo Bay and the Sinai. Your efforts are making a difference and paving the way for our children's future.

Today, the Iowa National Guard is "Mission Focused and Warrior Ready." We are completing our final preparations to send the 2/34th Brigade Combat Team to

Afghanistan to execute a full-spectrum mission set. They will be linking up with our 734th Agribusiness Development Team, which has been deployed since August. These two organizations will make up the largest single deployment of Soldiers and Airmen since WWII, with over half of them deploying on their second and third deployment.

Through your hard work and devotion to excellence, the National Guard has prevailed as a Reserve Component that can serve in an operational capacity—available, experienced, trained and equipped for predictable routine deployments in the United States and overseas. We have become an operational reserve that is an integral partner with the Army and Air Force.

In addition to the operations overseas, many of you have been activated by your governors to provide short-notice responses to unexpected contingencies within your states and territories. You have supported civil authorities contending with man-made disasters, particularly catastrophes. You demonstrated to our citizens that the National Guard is ready and accessible when called.

Together the National Guard has proven that we can do the domestic support and overseas contingency missions in a cost-effective manner—making the National Guard the best value for America's defense. The National Guard is Always Ready, Always There. Thank you for your sacrifice and selfless service.

Sincerely,

Brigadier General Timothy E. Orr  
Adjutant General, Iowa



# EXPERTS

# NEEDED

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HIGHER GRADE  
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**MISSION:** To celebrate and support the Soldiers and families of the National Guard. To provide today's Army National Guard members with information for becoming a better Soldier and better citizen. To encourage and assist Guard Soldiers in maximizing the benefits of their military career as well as their personal and family goals.

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## The American Dream

Sometimes I forget how lucky I am. As an American, I have a lot of liberties that many people around the world can't begin to dream about. I can pretty much do whatever I want so long as I'm not breaking the law. And as far as I can tell, nobody is ever going to take these freedoms away from me.

I was reminded the other day of how precious these privileges are in an amazing phone conversation with Colonel Ben Correll of the 2/34th "Red Bulls" Infantry Division. Currently deployed to Afghanistan, Correll and his Soldiers are seeing firsthand how deprived the Afghan people are—and it's been that way for centuries. We spoke about his unit's mission, and how they are both actively seeking out the enemy and attempting to win the hearts and minds of the civilian population.

Never before have the Afghan people had a chance to live a life they choose. Since 9/11, hundreds of thousands of Guard Soldiers have deployed to ensure that the future will be different, and in 2004, for the first time in history, the Afghan people held a presidential election.

President John F. Kennedy said, "The best road to progress is freedom's road." The National Guard Soldier has literally been paving the roads to freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq for the better part of a decade. And you'll continue to do so until the job is complete.

So as you deploy in 2011 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation New Dawn and other Guard missions, know that you're making freedom a reality for millions of Iraqis, Afghans and others around the world.

Stay safe, and thank you for your service!

Christian Anderson, Editor  
Christian.Anderson@GXonline.com



**ON THE COVER**  
Soldiers in the Florida National Guard were given the chance to see if they have what it takes to become Special Forces. For more on this story, turn to page 32.

COVER PHOTO BY  
Master Sgt. Thomas Kielbasa



COURTESY OF MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD

TUNICA, MS – Two weeks before being deployed to Iraq, Mississippi Army National Guard Master Sergeant David Spencer from Byhalia, MS, won the Citizen-Soldier III motorcycle that was raffled off at Horseshoe Casino Tunica as one of many events to raise funds for The Better Life Foundation. Mississippi-born, Grammy-nominated multi-platinum rockers 3 Doors Down raised over \$280,000 at their annual fundraiser to benefit The Better Life Foundation, which was held at Horseshoe Casino Tunica Nov. 12–13, 2010.



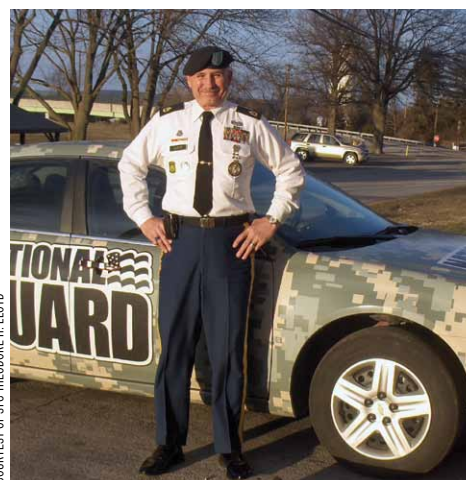
DC CHAD CARLSON

Pearl Harbor, HI – First Lieutenant Duston Mullen of Sturgis, SD, was promoted to the rank of captain on Dec. 2 aboard the USS *Missouri*, which is stationed at Pearl Harbor, HI. Mullen works as the senior platoon trainer for the officer candidate school at the Regional Training Institute at Fort Meade. Each year, officer candidates from the South Dakota Army National Guard have a consolidated drill with other states, where they visit Pearl Harbor as part of their military training.

Have you done something you're especially proud of? Maybe you've run a marathon. Completed an Ironman. Climbed a mountain. Anything you've accomplished that took a lot of energy and commitment counts. Email us a photo and a few sentences about your journey, and you might see yourself on this page in a future issue of GX.



Send your photos and letters to [Editor@GXonline.com](mailto:Editor@GXonline.com).



COURTESY OF SFC THEODORE H. LLOYD

I just finished reading volume 7, issue 4 of GX. Reading the stories about Soldiers who have re-enlisted touched me in a way that made me want to share my story.

Currently, I'm a proud recruiter for Pennsylvania, located in Carlisle, PA. I've been a recruiter for more than 14 years and I really enjoy my job because I have the opportunity to give our young Americans a direction for their future, whether their goal is college, trade school or going into the workforce. The Army National Guard has something to offer everyone. I enjoy going into the high schools and talking to the students about their options with the Army National Guard, and conducting the "YOU CAN" school program.

I'm 58 years old. A waiver has been submitted for me to go to age 62 in the Guard. If the waiver is approved, I'll have another four years to continue my service to my Soldiers, to the community, and to my assigned high schools. If my waiver is not approved, I'll apply for the junior ROTC program, which I wanted to do when I retire from Guard.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story.  
**SFC Theodore H. Lloyd, Pennsylvania National Guard**



SFC Blaine Mahi provides a security escort for the minister of defense of South Korea with GEN David Petraeus.

## The 1136th Transportation Company Maine Army National Guard

ON MARCH 14, 2010, 177 Soldiers from the 1136th Transportation Company, Maine National Guard, deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Performing primarily force protection operations during their deployment, the men and women of the 1136th have worked closely with their Afghan counterparts as well as the civilian populace. The 1136th deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, so they are seasoned in overseas operations.

WHILE PROVIDING FORCE PROTECTION in Kabul, Afghanistan, select members of my platoon traveled to a nearby Afghan National Army (ANA) base to assist with their training. An Afghan brigadier general requested this specialized training for his Soldiers at entry control points and turned to our 1136th Force

Protection Company from the Maine National Guard for assistance. As a senior MP (military police) in the company, I, along with Sergeant First Class Jason Willard, led training on search techniques for individuals and vehicles.

We taught the ANA officers how to search a person in a low-level threat environment

as well as how to react when the threat level increases. We demonstrated restraint and control techniques. Each ANA officer was given the opportunity to practice these techniques after the discussion and demonstration. They quickly learned the importance of a thorough search and a

COURTESY OF MAINE NATIONAL GUARD

systematic approach for a person and a vehicle. Two other Soldiers in the platoon assisted with the class, and [volunteers agreed] to be searched by the ANA.

Over the course of a few days, the ANA were able to demonstrate their new skills competently. Their officers are now charged with training the Soldiers under them and supervising their performance during regular operations.

I think this simple experience went a long way to enhance the relationship we have with our ANA neighbors. By working together, we are building stronger bonds and more secure bases in Kabul.

>> **Staff Sergeant Michael Sprague**  
Movement Control  
1136th TC (SECFOR)  
Kabul, Afghanistan

FALL IS HERE IN KABUL, AFGHANISTAN, and it's nice to imagine the cold, crisp air, the beautiful fall foliage and the preparation for hunting season back in our home state of Maine. Over here, there are few signs of the season changing except for the cool temperatures in the early morning and late evening.

Our maintenance team is working as hard as ever. The ongoing joke is that we finally get one vehicle up and running, just in time for two more to come in. There is no time for days off when the mobile teams need a vehicle they can depend on to get back safely every night. This idea is at the heart of every person on our team, and it keeps us mission-focused.

Our small team provides maintenance support for multiple units on base and several other compounds. When we first arrived, no one was even aware of the Motor Pool and now new groups stop by to ask for help every day. Every person on our team has shown dedication, commitment and selfless service to our unit, and we are proud our good reputation has surpassed the small compound we live on.

>> **Sergeant Michelle Michaud**  
Pine Tree Motor Pool  
1136th TC (SECFOR)  
Kabul, Afghanistan

DESPIITE THE BUSY SCHEDULE, our close-knit squad has been steadily improving our living quarters. Before winter set in, we decided that adding a traditional New England porch to our existing Afghan building would make it just right. Sergeant Josh Rollins headed up the project, with help from the rest of us.

COURTESY OF MAINE NATIONAL GUARD

The addition turned out very well—it helps to have two volunteers from Maine's 133rd Engineer Battalion and civilian construction workers in the squad. During a low-tempo period, projects to make our lives a little more comfortable are the order of the day.

The temperatures are coming down at night, making physical fitness and sleep more comfortable. We are past the halfway point and say things like, "almost done," "won't be long now" or "in the home stretch," to keep our motivation up. Most of us have settled into new routines and time is passing quickly. The support from home continues. Moose meat jerky sent from Maine was an excellent reminder of home, and it brought thoughts of camp and hunting season.

We will continue to complete our missions to the best of our ability, help the Afghans when we can and deal with each challenge as it comes along. As Red Green says, "Keep your stick on the ice."

>> **Sergeant Michael Sherman**  
Mobile Security Escort Team  
1136th TC (SECFOR)  
Kabul, Afghanistan

Editor's note:  
These letters were written for GX early in the fall of 2010.



Soldiers from the 1136th routinely perform security at checkpoints in their area of operation.



Working with civilians has become routine for the 1136th and their ANA counterparts.



» **KHWAZI,  
AFGHANISTAN**

SPC Erik Martin, a member of the 26th Infantry Brigade, Virginia National Guard, and attached to the Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul, uses a footbridge to cross a river during a mission to Khwazi village, Afghanistan, on Dec. 14, 2010.

Photo by SSG Brian Ferguson



Richmond, VA, to Kabul, Afghanistan: 7,031 miles



>> **CAMP ATTERBURY, IN**

An Indiana National Guard Soldier from the 219th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade prepares to engage targets with the Mk 19 grenade launcher as the sun rises at Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center, IN.

Photo by SGT Will Hill





» **DURANI,  
AFGHANISTAN**

SGT Stephanie Tremmel, 86th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Vermont National Guard, plays with a young Afghan girl while visiting the Durani village south of Kabul, Afghanistan.

Photo by Kristina Gupton



Hartford, VT, to Kabul, Afghanistan: 6,530 miles



## >> DANDARH, AFGHANISTAN

SFC Chris Buchness (right) and SPC John Marks, both with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Red Horse, part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, Task Force Red Bulls, provide security overwatch for fellow Soldiers conducting a sweep of the village of Dandarh.

Photo by SPC Kristina Gupton

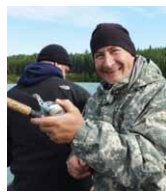


Des Moines, IA, to Kabul, Afghanistan, 7,079 miles



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Doctors coordinate lifesaving surgery.

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**"WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT OUR COMFORT AND SAFETY ARE BORNE ON THE BRAVE AND BROAD SHOULDERS OF THOSE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM."**

>> SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT M. GATES



# Operation Orient Shield II

## Missouri trains with Japanese

By SFC Mike Chrisman / KAMI-FURANO, JAPAN



SSG Douglas Sloan and a Soldier with the 26th Infantry Regiment, Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force, study a map for a route reconnaissance mission.

**"MOVE, MOVE, MOVE!** Enemy fire at nine o'clock—engage and fire! Cover me while I move! I've been hit; I need a medic!"

These are just a few of the commands barked by leaders of the Missouri Army National Guard amidst helicopters touching down in the landing zone, small-arms fire, mortars and grenade explosions as 1st Battalion, 138th Infantry Regiment, based out of Kansas City, MO, teamed with the 26th Infantry Regiment, Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force. The training exercise in northern Japan in early November was part of Orient Shield II.

"This type of training experience only comes once in a blue moon," said Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Fujimoto of St. Louis, MO, commander of the 138th. "The Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force is one of the most professional, modern and disciplined military organizations I have ever seen. Just to train with such a professional army is an experience in itself."

### TOGETHER WE STAND

Fujimoto said Orient Shield is a great opportunity for a Reserve component to work with one of the United States' biggest allies.

"Together we can accomplish more than either one of us could apart," Fujimoto said.

The focus of the exercise was developing tactical, bilateral operations and war-fighting skills between the U.S. and Japanese militaries.

"Our main goal is to enhance the interoperability between the U.S. and Japan," said Colonel Takeshi Hirano of Hiroshima, the regimental commander for the 26th. "During this training we are learning the differences and similarities between the U.S. and Japan."

U.S. ARMY SFC MIKE CHRISMAN, 138TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT



A Soldier watches as his fellow Soldiers fly to another location during training for Orient Shield II.

TOP: SGT. SHUNJI SHIMIZU, 2ND SIGNAL BATTALION, JAPANESE GROUND SELF-DEFENSE FORCE; RIGHT: SGT. 1ST CLASS HIROKATA TANAKA, 26TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, JAPANESE GROUND SELF-DEFENSE FORCE

This training came less than two months after tensions flared between Japan and other Eastern nations over islands in the region. The dispute is of interest to the U.S. because of a half-century-old agreement between America and Japan. In 1960, the two countries signed the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, a binding agreement for both countries to support each other from enemy attack.

"Exercises like this encourage enduring professional mutual engagements and good will between the U.S. and Japan as we strengthen our relationship," said Major General Michael Harrison, commander, United States Army Japan. "All participating U.S. Army units benefit in maintaining a bilateral partnership. Operations like Orient Shield serve as an opportunity to integrate and train all branches of the U.S. military, while building rapport between the U.S. and our allies."

Approximately 400 Soldiers from National Guard units in New Hampshire, Illinois, Washington, Nevada, California and Missouri participated in a two-week training exercise called Orient Shield II.

### WIN-WIN

"This is a very important exercise," said First Lieutenant Taihei Hongo of Tacoma,

WA, a linguist from the Washington Army National Guard's 341st Military Intelligence team. Hongo was born in the United States but has family in the U.S. and Japan. He has spent most of his life split between the two countries.

"Japan is one of our closest allies and someone we wouldn't want to lose," he said. "This has been a great experience. They are learning a lot from us, and we are learning from them."

One week of training allowed the two countries an opportunity to collaborate and exchange military strategies, before the operation culminated in a field training exercise combining all of the shared techniques into a battle scenario. It quickly became clear that the two sides use similar military tactics.

"Interacting with our Japanese counterparts showed that their tactics and procedures are almost identical to ours," said First Sergeant Shannon Wilde of St. Elizabeth, MO, first sergeant for Headquarters Company, 138th Infantry Battalion. "There are slight differences between us. There are some things they haven't thought of and others that we haven't thought of. It's good to exchange ideas." **GX**



Mortar fire training was one of many exercises the nations collaborated on during the operation.

# In Command

## Governor names adjutant general

Courtesy of Ohio National Guard Public Affairs / COLUMBUS, OH

**ON DEC. 14, GOV.-ELECT JOHN KASICH** named Colonel Deborah A. Ashenhurst Ohio's new adjutant general, effective Jan. 10, 2011.

"I stand ready to serve you and the citizens of Ohio with military forces trained and prepared to support our fellow Ohioans in any matter of safety and security," said Ashenhurst.

As adjutant general, Ashenhurst is responsible for the operation of the adjutant general's department and the military preparedness of the Ohio Army National Guard, Ohio Air National Guard, Ohio Military Reserve and Ohio Naval

Militia, totaling more than 18,000 personnel.

"Being given the privilege to command at the highest level is an honor bestowed upon very few. I understand the great responsibility I am undertaking, and I look forward to serving the more than 18,000 Airmen and Soldiers of our great organization," said Ashenhurst.

Ashenhurst previously served as commander, 73rd Troop Command, a brigade-sized unit recently designated as one of the first two Homeland Response Force units in the nation.

Ashenhurst is the first female general officer for the Ohio National Guard, and Ohio's first female adjutant general. She is the 81st Ohio adjutant general, and upon taking office is one of only two women serving as adjutants general in the 54 States and Territories.

"I stand as an example to the women in the Guard and other male-dominated fields to show that they too can be a leader of both men and women; what I truly hope to show is that leadership is not gender-specific," said Ashenhurst. **GX**



COL Ashenhurst effectively took command of the Ohio National Guard on Jan. 10, 2011.

COURTESY OF OHIO NATIONAL GUARD

# In the Nick of Time

## South Dakota physicians help give Afghan girl new opportunity at life

By CPT Anthony Deiss / CAMP PHOENIX, AFGHANISTAN

**FOR 13-YEAR-OLD AFGHAN SAFOORA**, the gift of a new chance at life came just in time for the Islamic celebration of Eid al-Adha. Suffering from a tumor in the middle of her brain, Safoora received the surgery she needed to save her life.

While the holiday of Eid al-Adha is similar to Christmas for Americans, Safoora's gift did not come from a jolly man in a red suit. It was delivered by two men in green camouflage.

### SECOND CHANCE

Colonel Ashok Kumar, a physician, and Captain Regan Norgaard, a physician assistant, both deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan, with the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, South Dakota Army National Guard, coordinated the surgery.

"I am very thankful for Colonel Kumar and Captain Norgaard and their efforts to help my daughter," said Ishmael Mohammad, Safoora's father. "I am hopeful she will live a long and happy life."

Mohammad, an Afghan worker at Camp Phoenix, brought Safoora to the 196th's Brigade surgeon's office in October after she began experiencing dizziness, headaches and difficulty concentrating in school.

"We knew she'd had a tumor removed in June 2008 in Pakistan," said Kumar, of Rapid City, SD.

Through a non-Department of Defense volunteer program called Operation Outreach Afghanistan (OOA), Safoora was able to receive assistance for her first surgery.

### OPERATION SAVE A LIFE

"After Safoora's first surgery, she recovered well. In June 2010, she started to have headaches and dizziness," said Kumar, a 20-year employee of the Veterans Affairs hospital in Sturgis, SD. "A scan of her brain done in June at a NATO military hospital in Kabul showed a mass in the same area of her previous surgery."

"The doctors at the Coalition hospital said her life was in danger and without surgery soon, she would most likely die," added Norgaard, of Brookings, SD. "Unfortunately, the surgery she needed could not be performed anywhere in Afghanistan due to lack of medical resources. We needed to look at other options."

With limited time, options and money



COL Ashok Kumar examines 13-year-old Afghan girl Safoora, after a recent operation she received to remove a tumor from the middle of her brain. **RIGHT:** CPT Regan Norgaard poses with Safoora before she departs to India to remove a tumor from the middle of her brain.



to pay for a second surgery, Mohammad was only hoping Kumar and Norgaard could make Safoora's last days as comfortable as possible. However, the two men were not going to settle for only treating her pain. They acted quickly to try and save her life. Kumar, who was born and raised in India, contacted a cousin in India, who arranged for medical care at a university hospital there. Norgaard made travel arrangements for the girl and her father.

The second brain surgery was conducted on Oct. 29. A few weeks later, Safoora and her father returned to Afghanistan, where she seems to be recovering very well.

### ALL'S WELL

"I'm so thrilled Safoora didn't have any complications, infection or significant brain damage, and she is functioning like a normal child," said Kumar, after a recent examination. "She's completely without any neurological deficien-

cies and her memory is pretty good. We are hopeful she will not have any recurrence of the tumor."

"It feels really great to help children like Safoora," said Norgaard, an employee at the Sanford Health clinic in Brookings. "Being a part of the Operation Outreach program is so rewarding—it's something I will cherish about my deployment experience here."

Kumar said that many of the Afghans he sees around the camp and at the bazaars stop to thank him for his work. "They are talking in the community, and it's raising our image," he said. **GX**

# The Gift of Life

## Soldier celebrates birth of child

Story and photo by SFC Don Veitch / LOWELL, MA



SPC Vannek Pech and his wife, Leakhena, celebrated the birth of their daughter Evelyn on Dec. 6, 2010.

**SEVENTY DEPLOYING SOLDIERS** headed for the waiting command group and the aircraft that would fly them to their mobilization site at Fort Bliss, TX, on Dec. 6.

Every Soldier has much to think about when starting a new deployment. The Soldiers of Battery E (Target Acquisition Battery), 101st Field Artillery Regiment, Massachusetts National Guard, were no exception.

One Soldier in particular—Specialist Vannek Pech—had a little more on his mind, though. He was focused on his wife and the rapidly approaching birth of their second child.

Moments before Pech, a radar operator with Battery E, heard his name bellowed down the aisles of the plane, he had been one of the Soldiers receiving well-wishes from the command group as he boarded the aircraft. But instead of leaving with his unit, Pech was pulled from the plane by the very group that had just wished him a safe deployment.

The command group had just heard about Pech's situation and immediately decided to remove him from the flight.

"It speaks volumes about the quality of Soldiers we have in the Massachusetts Army National Guard and their dedication to placing the mission and their unit first that Specialist Pech was sitting on the plane waiting to deploy, knowing his wife was in labor," said Brigadier General Thomas Sellars, commander, Massachusetts Army National Guard.

"He displayed a high level of commitment to his mission and fellow Soldiers. Not one of those Soldiers on that plane would want him to miss this moment." **GX**

# Fish and Wildlife

## Kentuckians venture to Alaskan wilderness

By David Altom, Kentucky National Guard / SEWARD, AK

**SIX KENTUCKY CITIZEN-SOLDIERS**, all Wounded Warriors, offloaded their gear from their Air National Guard C-17 in the wilderness of Alaska. The mission: Operation Wounded Warrior Alaska. Their assignment: adventure, fun and camaraderie. A joint effort between the Kentucky National Guard and dozens of generous individuals, the project gave these Veterans a chance to rejuvenate.

The attendees included Master Sergeant Brett Hightower, Staff Sergeant Ricky Brooks, Staff Sergeant Ken Wining, Sergeant

Casey Cooper, Specialist Henry James and Specialist Jeremy Austin. Staff Sergeant Bart Greenwood, an Iraq Veteran, served as their escort.

The trip began with a visit to Anchorage, followed by a drive to the Kenai Peninsula for several days of fishing.

### GREAT PLANES

Alaskan hospitality was evident everywhere. Seventy-four-year-old Ron Fike welcomed the Kentuckians to his home, an aircraft hangar adjacent to a gravel airstrip. Fike, the archetypical Alaskan, smiled modestly as he

showed off his experimental plane and workshop.

"I'm a disabled Veteran, too, from Korea," he explained. "So I can identify with them."

Airplanes are common in Alaska. Johnny Evans, an Alaskan state park ranger, flies as part of his ranger duties. Unlike Fike, who lives in an apartment in his hangar, Evans built a hangar on the front of his house.

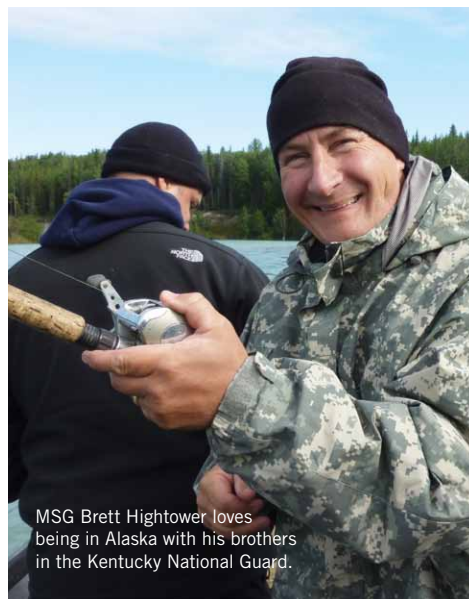
"Alaskans love the Veterans," Evans said. "When I told everyone they were coming to visit, there was an outpouring of food and money."

"For me, this trip meant the

opportunity to spend time with Kentucky National Guard Soldiers," said Hightower. "It's the first time since my injury that I've been with a group of Guard guys who have been deployed, who have a whole lot in common and who have been injured. These are guys who have served our state and our nation honorably."

Cooper was injured during the March 20, 2005, fire at Salman Pak, Iraq. Rather than talk about the war, he focused on his family, friends and duties as a full-time Guard Soldier.

"I felt honored and privileged,"



MSG Brett Hightower loves being in Alaska with his brothers in the Kentucky National Guard.

the military police noncommissioned officer said of being invited on the trip.

### CHANGE OF PACE

James, who was in the gunner position when an IED hit his vehicle in 2005, described the difficulties he faced following major surgeries.

"At home, I'm not able to do a whole lot," revealed James. "It has been great to get outdoors to see the moose and the countryside."

Hightower saw a lot of value in the discussion and wanted to maintain the momentum for the wounded troops.

"As a group, we believe we have good ideas that can help other wounded Soldiers," he said. "Every individual Soldier is different in their experience. Collectively, there's a lot of information, a lot of pointers, that we can provide to assist others in their process."

Private donations for the trip came in from sources as diverse as members of Kentucky Gov. Beshear's office staff, the Kentucky State Police Professional Association, and dozens of friends, family and members of the Kentucky Guard who are touched by the Soldiers' stories.

One of the biggest contributors was Terry Johnson, owner of the Salmon Catcher Lodge, where the troops stayed for most of their visit.

"I was touched by the sense of duty our troops showed following 9/11," Johnson shared. "About 80 percent of the pilots I work with are in the military, so I have great respect for what they do."

"I consider anybody who's been to Iraq or Afghanistan, who's been wounded or hurt, to be national treasures. Because they know what dedication is. They know what service is." **GX**



### Combat Comic

A Soldier currently serving with the Alabama Army National Guard's 111th Ordnance Group in Iraq stands out from his fellow Soldiers in two ways: He's a comedian, and he stutters. His moniker is "The Stuttering Comic." Audiences from cities including Seattle, WA, Jacksonville, FL, Las Vegas, NV, and Branson, MO, have seen 38-year-old comic Captain Jody Fuller perform. Fuller graduated from officer candidate school in 2002, served as an Army officer 2002-2006 and joined the Guard in 2007.

- CLINT WOOD / PHOTO BY CPT JODY FULLER



### Signed in Sinai

Two Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers re-enlisted for three more years while their unit was deployed to Sinai, Egypt, recently. Approximately 440 Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, in Milan, Galesburg and Macomb were mobilized in May for a one-year deployment. The unit is expected to return around Memorial Day. The Soldiers are part of the Multinational Force and Observers. The international peacekeeping force oversees the terms of the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

- STORY & PHOTO BY ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD



### Learn From the Best

Guard Soldiers who need advice on competing in Soldier of the Year or NCO of the Year events will find it with Staff Sergeant Adam Little. Little, 2010 Army National Guard NCO of the Year, is now the Officer Candidate School course manager for the Augusta, MI, 2nd Battalion, 177th Regiment Regional Training Institute. Little's duties include teaching course materials, running the day-to-day operations of the OCS training company and serving as the enlisted advisor to the commander.

- COURTESY OF MICHIGAN NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS / PHOTO BY JIM DOWNEN JR.



### High School Friends Now Battle Buddies

Specialists Bryan Couillard and Joel Howard, both from Lowell, MA, and members of C Company, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts National Guard, met in 10th grade at Dracut High School. They learned, played sports and hung out together. Now, they work side by side as infantrymen in Afghanistan, escorting subject-matter experts to schools, clinics and meetings with village elders throughout the province. "It was definitely easier going through Basic Training with one of your best friends by your side," Howard said.

- SSG BARRY LOO / PHOTO BY MASSACHUSETTS NATIONAL GUARD



### South Dakota Covers the Bases

The 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, South Dakota Army National Guard, constantly strives to better camp living conditions for the U.S. and Coalition Forces stationed throughout the Kabul Base Cluster (KBC). The Directorate of Public Works (DPW), a section within the 196th, uses Afghan labor to help build base infrastructure. "Our mission is to ensure troops within the KBC have ... the best quality of life so they can focus on their primary mission," said Major Trent Bruce, DPW officer in charge, 196th.

- STORY & PHOTO BY SGT REBECCA LINDER



The Kenai Peninsula Experimental Aircraft Association treated Kentucky's Wounded Warriors to a unique tour over Alaskan glaciers.

DAVID ALTOM, KENTUCKY NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

DAVID ALTOM, KENTUCKY NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



MG Brian Tarbet, adjutant general, Utah National Guard, presents SSG Matthew Cieslak, center, and SGT Joseph Lee the Utah Cross.

# Heavy Mettle

## Two NCOs awarded Utah Cross for actions in Cambodia

By CPT Choll Ence / DRAPER, UT

▶ **TWO UTAH ARMY NATIONAL** Guard Soldiers from the 197th Special Troops Company (Airborne) were awarded the Utah Cross during a ceremony held at Camp Williams, Dec. 4.

Staff Sergeant Matthew Cieslak of Mountain Green and Sergeant Joseph Lee of South Jordan were cited for their exemplary actions in rendering aid to an injured moped driver during a training exercise in Kampong Speu, Cambodia.

"The Utah Cross is the second-highest award presented by the Utah National Guard," said

Lieutenant Colonel Brent Baxter, executive officer, 97th Troop Command, Utah National Guard. "The Utah Cross is presented to any member of the Utah National Guard who distinguishes himself or herself through a voluntary course of action. Such actions include [facing] existing danger or extraordinary responsibilities with praiseworthy fortitude and exemplary courage that are clearly above and beyond the call of duty."

Colonel Milada Copeland, commander of the 97th, said this award "goes to show that these

two Soldiers—when they were in a foreign country, didn't speak the language, and could have driven off—actually took the time to assist the individual. They went to great lengths to make sure the person got proper medical care and [that] his life was saved."

### PRESENT DANGER

In the early morning of June 17, Lee witnessed a moped, carrying baskets full of eggs, collide with a pedestrian on the busy highway outside of the Training School for Multi-National Peacekeeping Forces.

Recognizing the severity of the accident, Lee quickly summoned Cieslak, the company medic, to assist him in treating the injured driver. While waiting for Cieslak to arrive, Lee began to perform first aid on both the moped driver and the pedestrian.

"I just started cutting up clothing to put bandages on [the driver] to stop the blood, waiting for

the medic to arrive. I then ran to the other guy and cut the remainder of the shirt and put it on him," said Lee.

Cieslak explained that the injuries to the driver were severe and consisted of numerous facial fractures, which could have resulted in his airway being completely blocked by swelling.

Upon stabilizing the driver, Cieslak and Lee arranged with their interpreter to transport the driver to the nearest medical clinic. Once at the clinic, the medical staff began trying to treat the injured driver incorrectly for his type of injury. Cieslak immediately recognized the potential danger of their treatment and told the medical staff.

Determined to save the driver's life, Cieslak and Lee opted to take the driver to the public hospital located 45 minutes away in Phnom Penh, which had the capability to take X-rays and CT scans.

Once at the hospital, Cieslak attempted to relay the driver's vital

## "THEY WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO MAKE SURE THE PERSON GOT PROPER MEDICAL CARE AND [THAT] HIS LIFE WAS SAVED."

▶ COL Milada Copeland, commander, 97th Troop Command, of the two Utah Soldiers awarded the Utah Cross

signs and condition to one of the doctors.

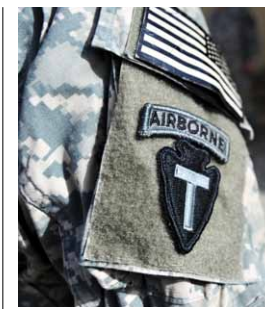
After the driver had recovered from the accident, he and his parents met with Cieslak and Lee to thank them for saving his life.

Prior to leaving Cambodia, the Soldiers of the 97th collected donations to cover the driver's hospital bills. A dentist in the area agreed to fix the driver's teeth pro bono.

"They are exceptional Soldiers," said Copeland. "There are a lot of exceptional Soldiers in the Utah Guard. This is a prestige award that we don't give out a lot." **GX**



SSG Matthew Cieslak, a medic with the 197th Special Troops Company (Airborne), Utah Army National Guard, treats an injured moped driver in Kampong Speu, Cambodia, June 17, 2010.



### Texas All Sewn Up

▶ As Veterans and Americans around the world honored the memory of lives lost during the attack on Pearl Harbor 69 years ago, over 60 Soldiers from Task Force Ghazni, Ghazni Texas Agribusiness Development Team-IV, commemorated the day by receiving their combat patches during their combat patch ceremony at Forward Operating Base Ghazni Dec. 7. The Soldiers were awarded the patch after serving overseas in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom for over 60 days. This patch validates their status as combat Veterans.

—2LT LAURA G. CHILDS / PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN COURTNEY WITT



### Iowa Medics Treat Girl

▶ The two Iowa National Guard combat medics with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment, treated the burn wounds of Kamela, a 3-year-old Afghan girl from the village of Alishang. The medics, beginning the third month of a yearlong deployment to Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam, treated her for second-degree burns over the lower half of her body. The aid station operates 24 hours a day, with eight medics, a laboratory technician, a doctor and a physician assistant.

—STORY & PHOTO BY SSG RYAN C. MATSON



### Fighting Fire With Simulators

▶ The firefighting Soldiers of North Carolina's 677th and 430th Engineering Detachments, 449th Theater Aviation Brigade, recently brushed up on their skills to respond to a downed aircraft with a training event at the North Carolina Air National Guard's training facility at the Charlotte/Douglas International Airport. The firefighters practiced in situations they might see associated with a fiery aircraft wreckage. Soldiers rehearsed extinguishing flames caused by spilled fuel and other exterior fire situations, and performed other key maneuvers.

—SGT KELLY LECOMPTÉ / PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD



### Idaho in Charge

▶ With the Transfer of Authority ceremonies in Baghdad on Dec. 3, the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team, Idaho Army National Guard, officially began its mission. The 116th will be working much like a city or state government office, maintaining infrastructure and providing support services to thousands of U.S. military and civilians residing at Victory Base Complex, Iraq. "We are very proud to be here, and to be selected for this challenging and important mission," said Lieutenant Colonel Todd Edgar of the 116th.

—SSG APRIL DAVIS / PHOTO BY SGT TRESSA ALLEMANG



### Missouri Soldier Among the Few

▶ Staff Sergeant Jonathan Hanna is one of the select few to don the iconic drill sergeant's campaign hat. The recognizable brown felt hat, steeped in tradition, is arguably one of the most iconic images in the military. Hanna is the third Soldier to be sent by the Missouri Recruiting and Retention Battalion to drill sergeant school. He finished third out of the 56 graduates in his class, placing him on the Commandant's List. "Once you put the hat on," Hanna said, "you're looked at differently."

—STORY & PHOTO BY JENNIFER ARCHDEKIN

# Onward, Upward

## Guard space operations take off

By MAJ Joseph Paladino / COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

THE U.S. MILITARY has increased its utilization of outer space, and the Army responded to this in 1997 by creating the career field known as Space Operations Officer. Soldiers in this job help ground commanders exploit the space component of communications, precision engagement, geospatial intelligence, environmental effects on satellite communications, and overhead persistent infrared imaging capabilities.

The National Guard has benefited from the addition of this career field. Today there are approximately 135 Space Operations Officers and enlisted Space Enablers in 25 states. About 85 percent of these space professionals are located in the 117th Space Battalion, Colorado Army National Guard.

Space support teams are adaptable teams of six Soldiers—two officers and four enlisted Soldiers—each with unique space-related skills and knowledge.

The team leader is an FA-40 space operations officer who provides commanders with the staff expertise necessary to fully exploit space capa-

bilities and enhance a command's ability to task, collect, process and act on space-based products, information and warnings.

Space support teams have been using space-based capabilities in Iraq since 2003 and are currently synchronizing these capabilities in Afghanistan. In addition, these teams provide domestic disaster and national special security events (NSSE) support.

During a domestic or NSSE response, space personnel use their unique experiences to assist nonmilitary agencies in the response and recovery effort. This relationship becomes synergistic and provides more rapid and precise space effects.

The space support team maintains a stand-alone Satellite Communications (SATCOM) terminal that offers global broadband communications capabilities, and can produce space-related products. Examples include Global Positioning System navigation accuracy predictions, satellite location predictions, and space-related geospatial imagery products.



As the Guard continues to evolve, Soldiers must be trained to understand the benefits derived from space assets and how to use them effectively. Whether delivering decisive combat power on the battlefield or mapping critical infrastructure in support of a domestic emergency response, Guard space forces offer capabilities that can improve the effectiveness of Army National Guard operations. **GX**

For more information on the Army National Guard's space operations, go to [www.NATIONALGUARD.com](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com).

# Burch on Balance

## Ninth CSM shares views on achieving Guard success

By Clint Wood / ARLINGTON, VA

THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD'S Richard J. Burch was appointed to the position of command sergeant major in March 2010 and is the ninth person to hold the title. In a recent interview with GX magazine, he discussed some of his military philosophies and plans.

"All Soldiers and leaders should strive for balance," he said. "Whether it be for domestic emergencies, to support civil authorities or for a wartime mission, there are going to be a lot of mission requirements. The key to our success is balance, so that we can provide for our families, as well as for our states and nation."

### ALL-INCLUSIVE

"Balance is all about mission, whether it's a foreign or domestic mission, a Soldier going off to a professional military education, or some other type of training event," he noted. "The mission ... needs to be accomplished, but we [also] need to ensure that the ... Soldiers and their families [are] taken care of."

"'Welfare' is making sure Soldiers are trained and ready," continued Burch. "[It's about] making sure the quality of life for our Soldiers is commensurate with their quality of service, because the Army National Guard is a service of choice."

Burch's duties include advising the Director of the Army National Guard on Guard policies and actions that affect enlisted Soldiers. He also coordinates with the Sergeant Major of the Army and Command Sergeants Major of the Army National Guard in each state.

**GX:** What are your goals for FY 2011?

**RB:** We're starting to roll out a new promotion system [for staff sergeants and above], and we're looking at all states adopting this system by 2012. One of my goals for 2011 is to ensure the system provides a more equitable way to identify up-and-coming leaders ... and to ensure there's enough flexibility for the 54 States, Territories and the District of Columbia, to be able to manage their force.

**GX:** What is the new promotion system?

**RB:** It's going to put a lot more emphasis on the Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Reports

(NCO-ERs). So the leadership is going to be responsible for telling the story of the noncommissioned officer (NCO) through the NCO-ER, and the NCO is going to have the responsibility of ensuring that their story is being told.

That's what counseling is all about. Leaders talking to Soldiers and Soldiers talking to leaders, and evaluations being rendered that ... depict the Soldier accurately so the board can make valid assessments.

**GX:** Why should Soldiers feel confident in deploying with a Guard unit?

**RB:** There are a lot of mechanisms and processes that the Army National Guard and the Army have put in place so that Soldiers are ready for whatever is asked of them.

Readiness involves a lot of things. It's not just

the individual Soldier. We also want to make sure two other ingredients of readiness are on the radar: the families [and the employers]. We have to make sure all three ... are taken care of, to avoid problems on the back end.

**GX:** What advice do you have for deploying Soldiers regarding fitness?

**RB:** If you enjoy running, there are other folks who enjoy running too. If you enjoy lifting weights, there are plenty of other Soldiers [who do as well]. We can help you find those folks. We can help you build a team.

It's like anything in life. You're going to have to commit yourself to it and set up a routine that works for you. Soldiers have to take it upon themselves, because it's not a matter of whether they have the time—it's whether they take the time. **GX**

# Crossover Hero

## Olympic gold medalist enlists in New York

By MSG Corine Lombardo, New York National Guard Public Affairs / LATHAM, NY

OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST Justin Olsen, a member of the U.S. Olympic bobsled team since 2007, enlisted in the New York Army National Guard on Jan. 7, 2011.

"I already represent my country," said Private First Class Olsen. "Now I have an opportunity to serve ... at the same time."

Olsen will train as a human resource specialist for the Joint Force Headquarters after this season's World Cup ends.

Once he completes his individual entry training,

Olsen plans to apply for the Army World Class Athlete program. This program provides outstanding Soldier-Athletes with support to compete in national and international competitions while maintaining a professional military career and promoting the U.S. Army to the world.

"I hope to be selected, and as a Soldier-Athlete, I hope that I can give back as much to the program as they are giving me," Olsen said. "My plans are to continue to earn

medals and make a name for my sport and the program."

Olsen began thinking about the National Guard when his bobsled teammate Mike Kohn, who was then a sergeant in the Virginia Army National Guard, told him about the Guard and the Army World Class Athlete program.

"He just sat me down and said, 'Think about what you want to do with the sport and what you want to do with your career,'" Olsen said. "I've thought about it for a long time, and now is the right time for me." **GX**

SFC STEVEN PETIBONE



LTC Steve Rowe enlists Olympic gold medal winner Justin Olsen into the New York Army National Guard on Friday, Jan. 7, 2011.



CSM Richard J. Burch presents the 2010 Army National Guard Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Award to SSG Adam Little.



# New Wheels for Chowkay

## Iowa delivers tractor to Afghanistan demonstration farm

By CPT Peter Shinn, 734th ADT / KUNAR PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

**BY AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL** standards, the two-wheeled, Chinese-made tractor delivered by the Iowa National Guard's 734th Agribusiness Development Team (ADT) to the Chowkay Demonstration Farm in Kunar province, Afghanistan, on Dec. 5 was not much to look at.

But for the farmers, it was technology not seen since the late 1970s. Mashuqallah, agriculture extension manager for Chowkay District, expressed delight at the reintroduction of mechanized agriculture.

"It's a new technology for our farmers," Mashuqallah said. "Although I'm familiar with it, having it here will allow other farmers to learn how to use it."

### DIRT DEMO

Production agriculture specialists with the ADT first tilled the ground in the demonstration farm's greenhouse to prepare the seedbed for vegetable planting. Then they looked on as Mashuqallah used the tractor to till large strips of earth outside the greenhouse. Next, the ADT trained Mashuqallah's son and several local farmers.

The ADT's project manager for the Chowkay District, First Lieutenant Scott Shirk of Emmetsburg, IA, arranged to purchase the tractor. He explained the tractor would also enable training on the benefits of mechanical planting.

"We bought a seed drill attachment for the tractor, and what we're

going to do is establish test plots of mechanically planted wheat and test plots of hand-sown wheat," Shirk said. "Most farmers around here hand-sow their wheat, but

we'll be able to show them how mechanically planted wheat has a more uniform planting depth and seed distribution, and that alone should boost yields a good bit." **GX**



SSG Bennett Groth provides assistance with tilling the ground outside the greenhouse at the Chowkay Demonstration Farm in Afghanistan's Kunar province.

# Honor Roll in Iraq

## First convoy mission a success for Oregon

By SGT Pat Caldwell / JOINT BASE BALAD, IRAQ

A line of MRAP vehicles operated by Soldiers with Company F stands ready to begin a convoy at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.



**FIGHTER 41'S FIRST CONVOY** mission began in the early morning at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, Dec. 12.

The Guard members with Company F, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), Oregon Army National Guard, made last-minute adjustments to their equipment.

Team commander Staff Sergeant Tony Cox of Redmond, OR, hopped into the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle he commands, Fighter 41.

The convoy drove to an area where Cox made final preparations with the convoy coordinator. Then they moved to another location, where each gunner test-fired his weapon. Then they headed out.

This mission served two purposes: to get a convoy to a nearby forward operating base, and to offer the Soldiers a taste of the job

they would perform for the next nine months.

### CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

The convoy proceeded slowly through a series of small villages. It reached its destination at midday.

Cox said cooperating with the people of Iraq is still important, even as the American military starts a drawdown process.

It was dark when the convoy returned to the base. It had suffered no attacks. Still, it was a huge learning experience.

"It was interesting to see how people lived in this area, and it makes you appreciate what we have stateside," said Specialist James Rouleau.

As a Veteran, Cox said he recognizes how quickly a routine mission can go wrong. "We need to keep talking to these people as we go out [and] leave Iraq," he observed. **GX**

TOP: U.S. AIR FORCE CAPT. PETER SHINN; BOTTOM: SGT PAT CALDWELL



# Helping Hoist

Courtesy of New York National Guard / ADIRONDACK, NY

**TWO NEW YORK** Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters helped out the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Nov. 29 by airlifting parts of a helipad to the top of Wakely Mountain.

The two helicopters carried 2,000-pound prefabricated helipad components to the top of the mountain by sling-loading them under the aircraft. The mission provided the aviators a chance to train on sling-loading in mountainous terrain, explained New York Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer Charles Roda.

"All of the reconstruction material was airlifted in by state aviation, but the platform beams were too heavy," said DEC conservation operations supervisor Ron Andersson. "Asking the National Guard for assistance was our only choice."

The helipad will provide access to a fire tower and radio repeater placed on top of the mountain and allow ease of access to the 3,750-foot mountain, which offers expansive views of the Adirondack Park. **GX**

COURTESY OF NEW YORK NATIONAL GUARD



## Pennsylvania Partners

Pennsylvania's Normandy Tactical Command (TAC) Post welcomed in the new year at FOB Lightning in Afghanistan. The team's primary mission is to advise the Afghan National Army's 203rd Thunder Corps. Colonel James F. Chisholm IV, senior advisor, seeks to continue the success his predecessors attained with the ANA, Afghan Uniformed Police and Afghan Border Police. "Afghan forces have the same issues integrating with each other that American forces do," he said. "We have to break down organizational stereotypes."

— CPT KENNETH A. STEWART / PHOTO BY SSG JASON COLBERT



## Rescuing the Rescuers

In January, Georgia National Guard Soldiers transported snowbound staff members of Atlanta's Grady Memorial Hospital to their workplace safely, despite the treacherous and icy roads caused by a powerful storm. The Soldiers were members of the 560th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and the 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. "We just want them to get to their destinations safely, so that they can go about the business of saving lives," said Specialist Joshua Blevins, a mechanic with the 178th Military Police Company.

— STORY & PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD



## Oklahoma Follow-Through

Soldiers of the 2/45th Agribusiness Development Team (ADT) conducted a multiple-stop mission in Afghanistan in late 2010. The first stop was the women's development center. Chief Warrant Officer Four Jill Graham, the ADT's administrative officer, met the center's director and discussed plans for a greenhouse. The second stop was Paktya University, where the team assessed recent progress. The last stop was a local farm, where Sergeant First Class Billy Payne gauged improvements made since the last visit a few weeks before.

— STORY & PHOTO BY SGT JOHN P. SKLANEY III, 2/45TH AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TEAM



## Danish March

More than 50 U.S. service members stationed in Kosovo gathered in November at Camp Grand Danois, the Danish camp inside Camp Novo Selo, Mitrovica/Mitrovice, Kosovo, for the Danish Dancon March. The Dancon March is a tradition for Danish Soldiers wherever they are stationed, and has been held every year since 1972 and consists of approximately 16 miles of difficult trail.

— STORY & PHOTO BY PFC SARAH A. CUMMINGS, 130TH PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT



## Big Thanks on Thanksgiving

About 75 Soldiers of the Delaware Army National Guard's 238th Aviation Regiment were welcomed home and reunited with their families Thanksgiving morning, 2010, after a combat tour in Afghanistan. They arrived at the New Castle County Air Base in Delaware. The Soldiers had served about 10 months overseas. Skill sets include mechanics, flight crewmembers, and Black Hawk pilots and maintenance crew. For more than half, it's a second deployment. Approximately 80 percent of all Delaware Guard members have deployed since 9/11.

— COURTESY OF DELAWARE NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS, NEW CASTLE, DE / PHOTO BY SSG DANIEL GROBELRY



# THE GREEN BERETS

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES? :: BY SSG MITCHELL

COURTESY OF MASTER SGT THOMAS MELBASA

**D**ays after the attacks on September 11, 2001, the U.S. Special Forces were striking back. The premier fighting force of the United States Army spearheaded the Global War on Terror as part of a secret mission in Afghanistan. The Taliban was being hunted before they even knew it. The Special Forces were first seen briefly on the evening news, weeks before the official invasion of Afghanistan actually occurred.

Images flashed across the evening news of Afghan Northern Alliance members on horseback, crossing the Hindu Kush Mountains wrapped in blankets, adorned with nothing more than Kalashnikov rifles and their traditional Pashtu pakol hats on their heads. As the camera lens scrolled over the caravan winding their way through mountain paths to battle the Taliban and Al-Qaida, something just didn't seem right. Intermingled among the 5-foot, 120-pound Afghans were bearded giants.

Unlike the Afghans around them, these men carried U.S.-made M4 carbines across their chests, equipped with modern-day optics and lasers. Underneath their blankets were tan-colored plate carriers holding extra magazines, radios, grenades and medical kits. It wasn't until a few weeks later during the invasion that the U.S. public learned these men had been taking the fight to Al-Qaida.

Many of you may have heard about Special Forces before, but from my experience, not many people know who we are or what we're about. Some of the common questions I often come across when somebody finds out what I do in the Guard are, "Are you guys like Navy SEALs?" or "You don't look much like Rambo." And of course, there's my ultimate favorite, "My uncle was in Special Forces, his name's Jason, do you know him?"

## “BEING OVERSEAS IS PART OF THE JOB AND AN IMPORTANT ONE AT THAT.”

>> "SFC," 19th Special Forces Group

Of course, my answers are usually along the lines of "No, not even close, but I do know how to swim" or "I know, I can't shoot a machine gun one-handed either." And the answer to my favorite question about Jason the uncle: "Of course I do, he wears a uniform with boots and everything, right?"

But in all seriousness, the National Guard Special Forces have seen their fair share of

action since 2001 between both conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Both the 19th and 20th Special Forces Groups, the two groups that comprise National Guard Special Forces, are spread throughout the United States and join their Active Duty counterparts within the Special Operations community. With operations continuing around the world, wherever you find an Active Duty Special Forces team, you'll find members of the National Guard Special Forces as well. The operational tempo can be just as high in the Guard as it is on the Active Duty side.

"Everyone knows about Special Forces getting work done in Iraq and Afghanistan, but we actually work all around the world," "SFC," a member of the 19th Special Forces Group, said during an interview. "I have personally been to South America, Europe and even parts of the Middle East."

"Being overseas is part of the job and an important one at that," he added. "Working with partner nations gives us satisfaction we haven't felt anywhere else!"

All Special Forces Soldiers go through a process called Special Forces Assessment and Selection, a grueling course located at Camp Mackall in the Sandhills region outside of Fort Bragg, NC. SFAS, as it is more commonly known, is used to assess a Special Forces candidate's physical fitness, leadership, motivation and mental stamina. Over a 21-day period, Special Forces candidates conduct forced marches through the rolling terrain of North Carolina, carrying duffel bags filled with sand, land navigating their way over terrain, and generally find themselves under a rucksack for the better part of their stay at Camp Mackall.

With a Special Forces mission always looming on the horizon, time of day is of no matter to the instructors at SFAS.

I remember my time at SFAS a few years back. I was having a conversation with one of my hut mates about where we were going to eat first if we survived our endeavor at Camp Mackall. Right as our argument was heating up about where to get the best steak, a fellow candidate burst into our hut and announced an Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) had just been posted on the communal



A Soldier pushes his comfort level to the extreme during a three-day screening at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, FL, hosted by 3rd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group.

board, which is used to notify SF candidates of upcoming events and was to be checked every 15 minutes. I started changing out of my uniform and into my APFT gear and glanced at my watch. "2 a.m.?" I thought to myself, "Why would they have us take an APFT at 2 a.m.?"

The answer: Why not have an APFT at 2 a.m.? Special Forces Soldiers are expected to conduct missions both night and day. It isn't uncommon for one operating downrange to train with his partner nation during the day, eat dinner and conduct a mission that night. SFAS is where this fact is driven into every "wannabe" who decides to attend.

"SFAS is a gut check; there's no other way of looking at it," a Special Forces Veteran told me. "There's no motivation coming from the SFAS cadre; you either do it or you quit, it's very simple. SFAS is a rite of passage that everyone goes through. We're known for being self-motivated and self-starters, and this is where those traits are tested."

Even after enduring the blood, sweat and tears of SFAS, the training for a future Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) member is truly just beginning. Following SFAS, and hopefully after its successful completion and selection, the Special Forces candidate continues onto the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC), more commonly

## A LOOK AT FORT BRAGG

Courtesy of U.S. Army

The post came into existence in 1918, when 127,000 acres of desolate sand hills and pine trees were designated as a U.S. Army installation named in honor of Confederate General Braxton Bragg, a former artillery officer and North Carolinian.

With the threat of WWII, a reception station was built here and Fort Bragg exploded to a population of 67,000 Soldiers within a year.

In 1942, the first airborne units trained here in preparation for combat. All five WWII airborne divisions, the 82nd, 101st, 11th, 13th and 17th, trained in the Fort Bragg-Camp Mackall area.

The 82d Airborne Division was assigned here in 1946, upon its return from Europe. In 1951, XVIII Airborne Corps was reactivated here and Fort Bragg became widely known as the "home of the airborne."

More than 200,000 young men underwent Basic Combat Training here during 1966-70. On July 1, 1973, Fort Bragg came under the U.S. Army Forces Command headquartered at Fort McPherson, GA.



**19TH SPECIAL FORCES GROUP**  
UTAH  
WASHINGTON  
WEST VIRGINIA  
OHIO  
RHODE ISLAND  
COLORADO  
CALIFORNIA  
TEXAS



**20TH SPECIAL FORCES GROUP**  
ALABAMA  
MISSISSIPPI  
FLORIDA  
NORTH CAROLINA  
ILLINOIS  
KENTUCKY  
MARYLAND  
PENNSYLVANIA  
MASSACHUSETTS



## BEHIND ENEMY LINES

In Kuwait, December 2002, Major Andrew Franz was put in command of a Special Forces (SF) liaison element of Washington Army National Guard Soldiers. The assignment was to enter Iraq with the Army's 3rd Infantry Division (ID), then move ahead and link up with American SF teams already deep inside Iraq. Their mission was to ensure that the advancing Army troops didn't end up in firefights with the U.S. SF teams already there.

The first operation was to retrieve an SF team that had been conducting reconnaissance at a bridge about 100 miles inside Iraq. But before the liaison element could reach the reconnaissance team, they were compromised. After a long gun battle, they finally eluded their Iraqi pursuers. Now, instead of meeting at the bridge, the liaison team had to find the recon team on the plain.

Things weren't going smoothly for the 3rd ID, either. They started receiving reports of unexpected enemy armor. Their fear was that Iraqi elements had slipped undetected into southern Iraq.

As he prepared to retrieve the reconnaissance team, Franz asked the 3rd ID for support. Normally, maneuver units would comply. But, explained Franz, "We weren't moving in their desired direction." The request was denied.

Franz waited until nightfall and his team set out across the sand in its Humvees. "Operating out ahead of everyone else was pretty scary," Franz said. "But the linkup went smoothly."

MISSION SPOTLIGHT

Every second counts for Green Berets in combat, and keeping the Soldier supplied with ammunition is always a priority.



Green Berets have to be proficient with all kinds of weapons, including the M3 Multi-Rule Anti-Armor Anti-Personnel Weapon System (MAAWS).



## THE HISTORY & MISSION OF SPECIAL FORCES

Courtesy of [www.NATIONALGUARD.com](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com)

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy referred to the Green Beret, worn by U.S. Army Special Forces, as "a symbol of excellence, a badge of courage, a mark of distinction in the fight for freedom." His description was dead-on. The Special Forces are made up of the best-trained and most mentally tough Soldiers the National Guard and Army have to offer.

Originating during WWII under the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), Special Forces have evolved into America's leading experts in unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance and direct action missions.

Known as "The Quiet Professionals," the Green Berets are always either conducting a mission or training for one. Throughout the world, Special Forces work in peacetime and wartime operations.

Special Forces use five types of missions to accomplish their objectives:

**COUNTERTERRORISM:** Special Forces counterterrorism missions are conducted in order to stop, resist and resolve terrorist incidents abroad. They are also used to train other nations' military forces in the basics of fighting terrorism.

**DIRECT ACTION:** Direct Action missions are short-duration strikes used to seize, capture, recover or destroy enemy weapons and information or recover personnel or material.

**FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE:** This mission is conducted to assist, advise and train the military and national defense forces of foreign governments so that they can protect their citizens from aggressors and maintain their sovereignty.

**SPECIAL RECONNAISSANCE:** These intelligence-gathering activities monitor the enemy's movement and operations. Special Recon is used for reporting on both pre-strike and post-strike activities.

**UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE:** UW, or guerilla warfare, is used to train, equip, advise and assist forces in enemy-held or enemy-controlled territory to repel a hostile nation's retaliation.

known as the Q Course, also located at Fort Bragg. This is where the Special Forces Soldier receives his foundation training, the real bread and butter of the job.

When I reported for the Q Course, I was told something I found to be very true. The sun was just breaking the horizon and we were broken down into platoons, waiting for the sunglass-wearing cadre member to address the class. Finally, he stood on a podium and in a booming voice said:

"Gentlemen, welcome to Fort Bragg. Congratulations on successfully completing SFAS, but your training starts today. You have proven your willingness to endure a bit of pain, but even with that not all of you will successfully negotiate this course. From this point on, the rucksacks will get heavier, your patrolling legs longer, you'll be sleep-deprived and hungry, but most importantly you'll learn to use your most lethal weapon in the entire Special Forces arsenal, your brain."

A few weeks later, I found myself on a patrol in the woods of Camp Mackall with a rucksack digging into my neck and shoulders that I could have sworn weighed more than I did. Now I was the patrol leader and was responsible for my team successfully completing our patrol to the checkpoint where our team leadership was switched out.

Unlike SFAS, I now had to deal with all the discomforts of a rucksack, as well as keeping the patrol on its correct course to our objective, all while moving at a snail's pace. Right as the numbness of my ruck straps was setting in, the all-too-familiar whistling sound of a simulated artillery round came flying over our team. "INCOMING!" was screamed by everybody on the team as we dove for the

ground. The first explosion was immediately followed by a second one as our team struggled off the ground. Our movements were slow as a result of the weight of our rucks and sleep deprivation, but we began making our way out of the area where we were under attack.

After what seemed like an hour of running through the woods, our cadre stopped us. "Alright boys, stop. Drop your rucks, rehydrate. That's never going to work," he explained. "You guys are going to kill yourselves thinking like individuals; you're a team, it's time to start acting like it."

Those few words of wisdom could have come from Buddha himself. It was true, though. To be successful at the Q Course and SF in general, you have to get the mentality of being an individual out of your mind and act as a team.

The Q Course is considered the Basic Training of the Special Forces. Emphasis is placed on Small Unit Tactics and specific MOS job specialties. The Q Course teaches all future SF Soldiers their basic duties and responsibilities once they make it to an ODA. They are also expected to conduct and complete a language skill that has been assigned to them. The Q Course peaks with a final rite of passage known throughout the Special Forces community as Robin Sage.

A four-week culmination exercise, this is where Special Forces students are given their final examination and are evaluated on their ability to cross-train members of their team as well as conduct unconventional warfare operations in a mock country known as Pineland.

"After graduating the Q Course, the newly tabbed member of the regiment is assigned

### AVAILABLE TRAINING SCHOOLS

- ① AIRBORNE SCHOOL
- ② U.S. ARMY MILITARY FREEFALL SCHOOL
- ③ AIR ASSAULT SCHOOL
- ④ SPECIAL FORCES COMBAT DIVER QUALIFICATION COURSE
- ⑤ RANGER SCHOOL

Talk to your recruiter for more information about the schools you can go to as a Green Beret.

ELITE STATUS



COURTESY OF SFC RUSSELL LEE KLIVA



The Special Forces always have the best air support, including the AC-130 Spectre gunships.

## MAKING IT RAIN

It was a dark night at Hurlburt Airfield in Florida.

In the distance, we heard the buzzing of the engines of the AC-130 Spectre. The radio came to life: "Guardian 16, this is Spooky 23. Sorry for the delay, boys, we're about five miles out. Stand by for contact."

Once the aircraft was overhead, I sat on top of my tower with my laser on my target, about 800 meters in front of me.

Don't mess this up, I thought to myself. Then, into my radio: "Spooky 23, this is Guardian 16, you're cleared hot."

I saw the tail's strobe flashing. A small fireball erupted from the side of the plane. Then a huge fireball of the 105 mm howitzer round erupted in the distance, followed by the boom of the explosion.

A direct hit! I breathed a sigh of relief.

Just another day in the life of a Special Forces Soldier in the Army National Guard. My teammates and I were in training to become subject matter experts in bringing steel rain from 20,000 feet, courtesy of an AC-130 Spectre gunship.



SFC Mark Wanner worked closely with Afghan nationals during his deployment.

a team, or ODA," a Special Forces Operation Sergeant explains. "When he comes to us, there's certain things that he is expected to be able to do, and from that point on we focus on training him up to be an integral part of our ODA."

Depending on the team, this special emphasis may be focused on advanced Close Quarter Battle training, combat diving, military free-fall or sniper operations.

With the Special Forces companies of the National Guard having the same M-Day schedule as the rest of the Guard, many of the day-to-day responsibilities on Active Duty fall onto the shoulders of the Special Forces Guard Soldiers. Physical fitness is one of those responsibilities. Following a recent visit to the 19th Special Forces Group in Utah, I walked into the building that houses the ODAs to teams swinging kettlebells and running themselves through vigorous circuits.

"This is just a way for us to spend some time together and build some team rapport," one of the team members told me. "Every one of our guys has a pretty intense workout program at home; you can't get into this kind of shape by working out three days a month."

"Our weekends are rather intense when it comes to training," a 19th Group Operations Sergeant explains. "We only have a certain amount of time every month to get our tasks accomplished. Think of it as cramming 9 pounds of sand into a 5-pound bag."

COURTESY OF U.S. AIR FORCE

Even though the sun was just breaking the horizon and I was sitting there talking to the MSG, just 45 minutes down the road a 19th Group ODA was boarding a C-130 on an airstrip in preparation for conducting a free-fall operation, while another team was loading weapon systems onto the back of a truck and getting their gear ready to head out to their ranges scattered around the mountainous landscape.

"We want to train like we fight," the MSG explains. "Ultimately that is what our training encompasses, going to combat."

Besides their regular Guard service, many members of National Guard Special Forces find themselves attending the same advanced training schools as their Active Duty counterparts. Many of these schools can last up to six months, and very rarely are they located in an area that will bring the Special Forces Soldier home at night.

Aside from a regular deployment schedule and training schedule, Special Forces Soldiers also conduct missions called JCETs, or Joint Combined Exchange Training. These missions send members of National Guard Special Forces to host nations around the world anywhere from two weeks to six months. There, Special Forces Soldiers train the host nation military forces in everything from patrolling and small unit tactics to airborne operations and sniper training. It is not uncommon for SF Guard Soldiers to deploy

COURTESY OF SSG MITCHELL, SFC MARK WANNER

one year and follow up the next year with a 45-day trip to either Africa or South America to conduct a JCET.

The desire to go above and beyond the call of duty within Special Forces goes back years before the Global War on Terror. You can reach all the way back to the days of Vietnam and find lists of men who received Bronze Stars and Silver Stars and have even been Medal of Honor recipients who wore the Green Beret and the Special Forces tab on their left shoulder. These men give true definition to the term "The Quiet Professionals."

We understand that it is our job to go into harm's way and stand in front of our enemies. We do everything possible so Americans can maintain their way of life.

I am proud of being a Special Forces Soldier in the National Guard. I am proud of what the tab on my shoulder and the Green Beret I wear represent. It is because of the actions of amazing Soldiers who write the pages of history because of their selfless service and commitment to their teams and the teammates they work with. I'll finish this article with a word of warning. If you decide to attempt to join our ranks, know that you are entering a world of commitment and dedication to the men around you. Once you become a member of our community, you will be tested time and time again.

So with that, do you think you have what it takes to don the Green Beret? **GX**



About the author: Staff Sergeant Mitchell has been associated with the 19th SFG(A) since 2004. Since then, he has conducted numerous schools and courses within the Special Forces community. Mitchell's most recent deployment was working in Regional Command East with a Special Forces Detachment in 2009. EDITOR'S NOTE: Staff Sergeant Mitchell's name has been changed to protect his identity for operational security.

For more on Special Forces, go to [www.NATIONALGUARD.com/GoExtreme](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/GoExtreme).

SOLDIER PROFILE

## SFC MARK WANNER: JUST DOING HIS JOB

Sergeant First Class Mark Wanner and I met in Florida, during the training mentioned in this article. He was on a Special Forces team in the Ohio National Guard. We became friends.

We deployed together to Afghanistan, but went our separate ways. I ran into him once, and over lunch, we briefly discussed a firefight his team had been in. The only detail discussed was that one of his teammates had been wounded.

Recently, I was online and saw the head-

line "Ohio National Guard Soldier Earns Silver Star." I clicked the link. To my surprise, there was Mark with a Silver Star pinned to his lapel.

I learned that the firefight was no small event. When Mark's team member was wounded, Mark rushed through a hail of enemy fire to carry him to safety. Even while still in contact with the enemy, Mark stayed with him until he was airlifted to safety.

Mark doesn't see himself as a hero, even though everybody else does. "I was just doing my job" has been his response.

Mark is a perfect example of why I'm proud to be a member of the Special Forces.



# The “Red Bulls” Ride

By Clint Wood and Christian Anderson

## From Iraq to Afghanistan, 2/34th Commander Tells All



**THE 34TH INFANTRY “RED BULL” DIVISION** has always taken the lead in war fighting. Comprised of Army National Guard Soldiers from Iowa and Minnesota, this unit’s rich history in the U.S. military dates back to WWI.

But it wasn’t until WWII, on the battlefields in Sicily and Italy, that the “Red Bulls” earned their prestigious nickname. Amassing 517 days of continuous time on the frontline—more than any other Army division in the European theater—the Soldiers of the 34th fought so efficiently and ferociously that the German troops they defeated called them the “Red Devils” and “Red Bulls.” The latter name stuck, and 60 years later, the division’s emblem, a red steer over a black water jug, is one of the most famous patches in Guard history.

In 2006, the “Red Bulls” returned to combat operations, deploying to central and southern Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This marked the largest single unit deployment for the division since WWII. With its return in July 2007, the brigade became one of the longest-serving Army National Guard units in Iraq—16 months.

In September 2010, they were at it again, deploying to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The “Red Bulls” epitomize the spirit of the National Guard Soldier: “Always Ready, Always There.” *GX* spoke to their commander, Colonel Ben Corell, for a close-up look at the unit and their mission in Afghanistan.

**Q&A**

**GX:** How is your mission in Afghanistan different from the one in Iraq?

**BC:** This is a different fight and is even more complex than it was in Iraq. We are much closer to the population [here] than we were [in Iraq], from my experience there.

I think about when I was a battalion commander and took the battalion into Iraq with the 1/34th. A lot of those brand-new lieutenant platoon leaders are now company commanders within the 2nd of the 34th formation.

We are so much more experienced today than we were previously. We have Soldiers here who have multiple deployments under their belts. I would say somewhere in the [range of] 60 percent of this organization have deployed previously.

**GX:** What are your day-to-day roles in Afghanistan?

**BC:** We’re working with the Afghan National Security Forces, whether that’s the National Police, the provincial local police or the Afghan National Army [ANA]. We have elements that are working with the Afghan National Border Police, as well.

We’re planning missions together. We’re going out and conducting operations together. It isn’t just a token ANA element here or a token police officer there, it’s a collective planning and collective operations of platoon-sized

elements—company-sized elements who are going out into the battle space collectively with “Red Bulls” and Coalition partners.

**GX:** Does working with the ANA present a unique set of challenges? Or is it something your Soldiers take in stride?

**BC:** My Afghan counterpart is a brigade commander here in the Afghan National Army that I partner with. Some of my staff lives with [his staff]. They train with them. He and I meet on a regular basis and we plan combined operations. I see it as a critical piece that will move us down the road to the day that they will fully take the lead and we can begin to pull back. That’s really what the focus is now—building that capacity. Not only within the Army, but it has to happen within the police as well. We also have the mission to do that.

Being primarily an infantry division ... it’s hard for these Soldiers to posture themselves and remember, “I am an infantryman, but I also have to work with the civilians.”

We’ve trained hard. We’ve been successful. My Soldiers have made me very proud of how they’re conducting this mission. Because, as I alluded to, it is difficult. It’s complex. I look around, I go out and do my battlefield circulation and I’ve got 19-year-old men and women who are out doing a tough job. Anywhere from 19 to some pushing into their 50s. It’s a tough job.

**COL Ben Corell**



Colonel Ben Corell was commissioned as a second lieutenant infantryman at the Iowa Military Academy Officer Candidate School program in 1988 in Camp Dodge, IA. Prior to commissioning, he served three years in the Iowa Army National Guard as an enlisted infantryman. He received his bachelor’s degree in management from Upper Iowa University in Fayette, IA. His military education includes Army Basic Combat Training, Advanced Individual Training (infantry), Infantry Officers Basic Course, Infantry Officers Advanced Course, Command and General Staff College, Infantry Pro-command Course, and U.S. Army War College. As a commander, Corell has deployed to Southwest Asia (Task Force Alpha), Multinational Force Observer mission (Task Force 1/133rd) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Task Force Iron).

**PAST ASSIGNMENTS:**

- Rifle Platoon Leader for B Co., 1/133rd Infantry Battalion
- Executive Officer for B Co., 1/133rd Infantry Battalion
- Scout Platoon Leader for HHC, 1/133rd Infantry Battalion
- Commander of B Co., 1/133rd Infantry Battalion
- Operations Officer for 1/133rd Infantry Battalion
- Executive Officer for 1/133rd Infantry Battalion
- Commander of 1/133rd Infantry Battalion
- Strategic Planner for Joint Forces Headquarters for Iowa
- Deputy Commanding Officer for 2/34th Brigade Combat Team
- Commander of the 2/34th BCT as of June 2010

(LEFT) PHOTOS COURTESY OF 234TH INFANTRY DIVISION; (RIGHT) COURTESY OF IOWA NATIONAL GUARD



# FORGING THE UNIT'S HISTORY

## WWI

The 34th Infantry Division was created in late summer 1917, from National Guard troops of Minnesota, Iowa, the Dakotas and Nebraska. It arrived in France in October of 1918 but was too late to see action in WWI, as the war ended the following month.

## WWII

The 34th Infantry Division was activated during WWII on February 10, 1941. The division made a good showing at the Louisiana Maneuvers. As part of the first U.S. division to be shipped overseas, Private Henke of Hutchinson, MN, was credited as being the first American Soldier to step off the boat in support of the war.

The division participated in six major Army campaigns in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Portions of the 34th Division are credited with over 600 days of frontline combat. The division suffered 21,362 casualties, 3,737 of whom perished. Members of the division were awarded 11 Medals of Honor and 98 Distinguished Service Crosses.

## POST-9/11

Since 9/11, the "Red Bulls" have been involved in several missions for the Global War on Terror:

- > Operation Joint Forge – Bosnia
- > Operation Joint Guardian – Kosovo
- > Operation Vigilant Hammer – Europe
- > Mediterranean Theater of Operations – Egypt
- > Joint Task Force Bravo – Honduras
- > Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan
- > Operation Iraqi Freedom – Iraq
- > Operation Noble Eagle – Multiple homeland defense missions

Approximately 11,000 Soldiers from the 34th Infantry Division have been deployed in support of these missions since 9/11.

To be successful, being as decentralized and dispersed as we are, you've got to have that core discipline. And I see it within these "Red Bull" Soldiers. You've got to trust the leaders. You've got to rely on the training that we did. And then you push them out. They're out in harm's way every day, and they're doing a job that makes me proud.

The values that these Soldiers hold are in alignment with the Army Values. They are the values that their parents [taught them]. And that is how they are conducting this mission every day. That's why they are successful doing it.

**GX:** The Soldiers of the "Red Bulls" have consistently followed through on the job for the past decade. How does this spirit contribute to success?

**BC:** I see sacrifice, dedication, from [Guard Soldiers], Marines, Active Duty Army, Air Force—our Coalition partners. I see that same willingness to put it on the line every day from [all of] them. I can guarantee that all those partners ... are going to do everything they can to be successful. And the way we'll do that is by reducing the capability of the insurgency, and focusing on building our Afghan National Army, police and border police.

At some point, the Afghan National Army and the Afghan government are going to have to pick up the ball and continue to move it. We can support them, but they're going to have to take the lead. I'm talking about the transition of Afghan responsibility, for their security. For their own government. For their own economic development. We talk about it being condition-based, but I believe that has got to [begin] soon. Because there are challenges from a political standpoint.

But from my perspective, we are focused on the right things. I believe that with the team I brought here, we will do everything humanly possible to set [up] the conditions for [the Afghans] to be successful.

**GX:** Are your Soldiers making a lot of contact with enemy forces?

**BC:** We are making contact [with them] every day. Our Soldiers have been in harm's way the whole time we've been here. But we've been able to put out overwhelming combat power through direct fire, indirect fire and all means available to us ... [so] we've been successful at reducing the capability of the enemy. That means either through [destroying], capturing or disrupting the enemy, he is not able to make his networks work. To this point, we have been successful keeping our Soldiers safe as they make that contact and react to that contact.

However, the enemy chooses when and where he is going to attack. Fighting the insurgents is

tough business, and we are fully engaged with our intelligence capabilities within the brigade. We tap into all means of intelligence above the brigade level that we can. We use that to shape where we want to focus within the footprint of the "Red Bulls." The enemy has the advantage in everything that he does. He knows the population, he speaks the language and he looks like the local population. This is an enemy who has been in combat for more than 30 years. They're well-supplied, motivated and tough. They use this terrain, which is unforgiving, to their advantage. And very rarely, unless you have them cornered, will they stand and fight. They will plan the mission and they will execute it. They are competent at that.

**GX:** Is that ever frustrating to the Soldiers—that the enemy won't stand and fight?

**BC:** It's difficult when you get fired at and you don't see exactly where it's coming from. But it does sharpen your skills, so that next time, when the enemy does strike, you're prepared to go out and kill or capture him. And when you're able to do that, you ride that wave of success for some time.

In some cases, the Soldiers in the toughest living conditions, who are in contact [with the enemy] daily, have honed those skills. They're very, very efficient at the job they've been asked to do.

**GX:** Does it make you feel honored to think that one day, 100 years from now, you're going to be grouped together with the heroes of the "Red Bulls" from WWI and WWII?

**BC:** Absolutely. My father was in the Marines, and that gave me access to the local American Legion and VFW as a small boy. I can remember those WWII Vets wearing "Red Bulls" on their shoulders. I looked at them with awe and honor. Most of them—you didn't even know they were in the military until it was Veterans Day or Memorial Day, when they put on their uniform for the local parade.

I was there with the 1st of the 34th in Iraq when the Sunni uprising occurred in 2006. I remember sitting in a dining facility in a place called Hit, Iraq, as CNN reported that Al Anbar was lost. I was sitting in Al Anbar and remember thinking, "You know what—this isn't lost. This is hard work, but we can still be successful."

I feel honored that I had a front-row seat and watched that transition take place in Iraq in 2006. I believe I'm in the same place in history right here in Afghanistan today, because we are in a historical moment. I'm awfully proud today to be part of this. The Soldiers that work for me here make me pretty proud every day. And I know history is in the making here with what we are doing. **GX**

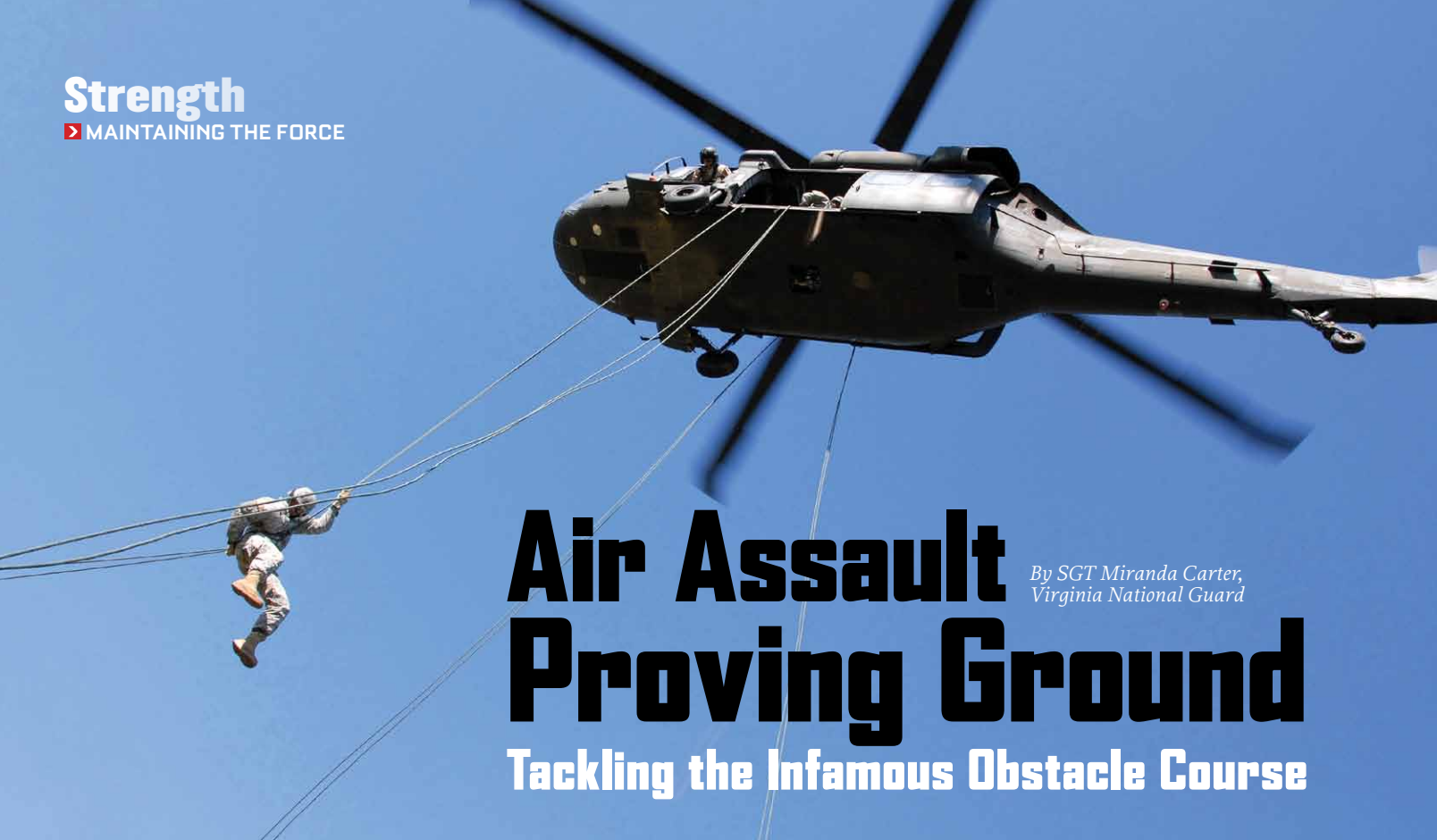


## THE "RED BULLS" TODAY

In 1991, the 34th Infantry Division "Red Bulls" was reorganized and redesigned as an active National Guard division, replacing the 47th Infantry Division.

Since then, the headquarters and the brigade structure have been transformed. The 1st Brigade transformed into the 1/34th Brigade Combat Team just prior to mobilizing for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The division and its subordinate units remain actively involved in their states' missions to provide a ready response to natural disasters and civil disturbance. They're also involved in joint exercises; division and brigade war fighter exercises; overseas deployments to Europe, Central America and Southwest Asia; combat maneuver training center rotations; and officer and NCO exchanges with the United Kingdom, Norway and Germany.



# Air Assault Proving Ground

## Tackling the Infamous Obstacle Course

By SGT Miranda Carter,  
 Virginia National Guard

IN A PREVIOUS ISSUE OF GX MAGAZINE, we discussed the success of the National Guard Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Simultaneous Membership Program Air Assault campaign initiated by the National Guard Bureau. As with any military operation, an after-action review is in order.

The "3 Ups" that were covered are 1) the record number of cadets who earned their Air Assault wings, 2) the low injury and medical drop rates and 3) the amount of information that was taught by Warrior Training Center instructors and learned by Air Assault School (AAS) graduates to take back to their ROTC programs and educate other cadets. In this issue's article we will look at the "3 Downs," or areas that should be improved before this year's AAS courses kick off:

1. An extremely high drop rate of female cadets during the obstacle course and the 2-mile run on Day Zero.
2. Lack of physical preparation of cadets before reporting to Air Assault School.
3. Insufficient knowledge to successfully pass the written and practical segments of Phases I and II.

Whether it is an overestimation of the fitness level these females had or an underestimation of how physically demanding AAS is, one fact can be determined from the statistics: Many female cadets do not properly train for successful completion of AAS.

Let me explain. A female cadet who runs 2

miles in 18 minutes during an Army physical fitness test (APFT) will earn 71 points (in the 17-to-21-year-old age group), which is passing by Army standards. However, if that female cadet ran that same 2-mile time at AAS, she would be considered a Day Zero failure and would be immediately dropped from the course. The difference is this: The physical training that

★ 2011 Air Assault Dates ★

<p><b>6-17 June</b> Camp Rilea, Oregon; 117 slots</p>
<p><b>20 June-1 July</b> Camp Rilea, Oregon; 116 slots</p>

female cadets are exposed to before reporting to AAS may not be specific enough to guarantee successful completion of the course.

The standards at AAS are not going to weaken, so female cadets must become faster and stronger than they have ever been. For example, a female cadet with a qualifying APFT run time of 16:58 (86 APFT points) reported to AAS but didn't have the endurance after completing the 2-mile run to successfully negotiate the O course.

### TRAIN AS WE FIGHT

The old saying "train as we fight" must be adopted while preparing for a physically

demanding school such as AAS. Female students must build enough upper-body strength and stamina to complete the 2-mile run in less than 18 minutes, which is the standard for both males and females, and negotiate the nine obstacles required on Day Zero.

The focus put on training for the APFT is not enough to adequately prepare for AAS, nor is it specific enough to target the muscles needed to graduate from this course. An example of this is that push-up and sit-up improvement workouts are great for boosting your APFT score, but nowhere in FM 21-20 (Army's physical fitness training manual) will you find hand, wrist and forearm strength exercises that are vital to rope climbing and completing the obstacle course. Doing APFT training alone will not train a female's body to complete the mandatory run of 18:00 and then successfully negotiate all nine obstacles of the demanding O course.

Females must change the way they train for AAS and incorporate different exercises such as pull-ups and sprints to strengthen the muscle groups needed to climb a rope and make it through the first mandatory obstacle, The Tough One. They must learn to stress their bodies and simulate the fatigue they will experience at AAS. This type of training is required so your body can continue to operate in a constant state of muscle failure. The way to achieve this level of fitness is by pushing yourself to the threshold during training sessions and then continuing to train.

COURTESY OF U.S. ARMY

### STUDENT BECOMES THE TEACHER

I was an Army Reservist originally. I got out for several years, and when I looked for a change in careers I needed more schooling, so I re-enlisted into the Guard in August of 2008 for all the great educational benefits it offers.

Not having to worry about how I was going to afford such a big change in my life, I was able to concentrate on my education and all the excellent opportunities college provides. This is when I met Master Sergeant Chris Painter, who was the lead instructor for ROTC at my university. I had little idea what the Reserve Officers' Training Corps was all about until I had the opportunity to spend a day with a few cadets.

From there I was hooked, and it turned out to be the best decision I have ever made. ROTC has opened a wealth of knowledge and doors for me, including the opportunity to be a company commander in my current unit, the 1/104th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, Pennsylvania National Guard. It also allowed me

to land the greatest job I have ever had: instructor for the West Virginia University ROTC Mountaineer Battalion. I have had more than five specialty schoolings in the last year alone. Most of my schooling has been leadership classes that have also played a vital role in my professional growth.

However, the biggest thrill is being able to teach in such a great organization as Cadet Command. I get to play a role in the future of several soon-to-be commissioned officers. It is a great honor and privilege to watch these young men and women go on to do great things for their country, and knowing that I had some part in their success is a great award. I would recommend that anyone, if given the opportunity, look into the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. The opportunities are endless, and the training you receive can be applied to any career path you decide.

➤ **First Lieutenant Grant Boudreau**  
 Pennsylvania National Guard  
 Assistant Professor of Military Science,  
 West Virginia University

You must be able to perform at a high level on demand, much like a professional athlete.

### CROSS-TRAINING IS KEY

If you have aspirations of attending AAS next summer, I highly recommend that you review GX 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6. You can find them online at [www.NATIONALGUARD.com/life/gx-the-guard-experience-under-Past-Issues](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/life/gx-the-guard-experience-under-Past-Issues). They will give you ideas of how to supplement (not substitute) your training. For example: You can implement plyometrics into your workouts after your scheduled training sessions. You can also add cross-training activities to your regimen that will benefit your AAS fitness.

Swimming, ruck marching, rock climbing (indoor and outdoor) and rope climbing will build your upper-body strength and stamina. Again, once you have reached that muscle fatigue threshold in your upper body, immediately start your cardio work with running, sprints and stairs to simulate conditions you will experience at AAS.

Many females make it successfully through Air Assault School by properly training for the rigorous events throughout the duration of the course. In discussions with some of these females about the pre-training, they all mentioned that if they had not built their upper-body strength and incorporated pull-ups and endurance exercises into their workouts, they might not have been able to negotiate the obstacles on Day Zero.

Several men who have not adequately trained have also been Day Zero drops because they did not have the necessary strength and stamina. Females are not the only ones who must properly prepare, but unfortunately they have the lowest statistics of graduates from the course, and special attention needs to be given to their training. Because of their anatomical structure, females generally have a more difficult time making it through the course. With suitable training and Air Assault-specific workouts, it is possible to reach the goal of more females earning those prestigious Air Assault wings.

### HIT THE BOOKS!

I call this doing your homework. You can do advance reading before reporting to AAS by studying the Phase I and II material. Subjects such as aircraft identification, aircraft safety, aeromedical evacuation procedures and pathfinder operations can be found in the AAS handbook that can be downloaded at <https://www.benning.army.mil/wtc/wtc/b/aaslt/index.htm>. There is no better feeling than confidence in knowing that you are physically and mentally prepared for success and earning your Air Assault wings. **GX**

For more on ROTC, go to  
[www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fastropes](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fastropes).

## 2009 Air Assault Female Student Status

23	Female students report to AAS
-10	Obstacle Course drops Day Zero
-3	2-Mile Run drops Day Zero
-1	12-Mile Road March drop
-1	Medical drop
<b>8</b>	<b>Female students graduate = 34.7% pass rate</b>

### LEARNING TO BE A LEADER

When I decided to join the National Guard, it was originally for tuition assistance. Little did I know that a decision I made at 18 years old, straight out of high school, would forever change my life.

When I arrived at Basic Combat Training (BCT), my whole outlook on being a National Guard Soldier changed. I learned how to work as a member of a team, how to be a good battle buddy to those around me, and most of all how to live the Warrior Ethos. Because of college, I was a split option Soldier and didn't have to complete my initial training, BCT and AIT all at once.

After I completed my sophomore year at Middle Tennessee State University, I left immediately for AIT at Fort Rucker, AL, in order to hold the 15P MOS, aviation operations specialist. Upon arriving I realized how important my job was going to be and how much I truly love being involved with aviation. I knew then exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to become an Army National Guard officer.

Shortly after returning from AIT, I contracted with Middle Tennessee State University's Army ROTC program. In ROTC I learned not only how to become a leader, but also how to interact with others in order to reach a common goal: to complete the mission. I learned that teamwork as an officer is the ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. I just graduated and received my commissions in December and will be reporting for duty at Fort Rucker within the year.

➤ **Second Lieutenant Amanda C. Morgan**  
 Tennessee National Guard  
 2010 Graduate of MTSU





• SSG Michael Wong joined the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office in 2002 as a 9-1-1 call dispatcher.  
• **Opposite Page:** SSG Wong was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom twice.

# A Life of Service

## Medic and Florida Patrolman Puts Others First

By Camille Breland

**ON ANY GIVEN DAY,** Staff Sergeant Michael Wong might be responding to a residential burglary, treating civilians for heatstroke or teaching new National Guard Soldiers how to pack a medical aid bag. Sometimes, he can be found in his son's first-grade class, assisting the teacher and keeping the students focused on learning.

He's one of those Soldiers. He shows up early, stays late and is always willing to help wherever it's needed.

Wong, a member of the Florida Army National Guard's 256th Area Support Medical Company (ASMC), puts his life second, and the lives of his immediate family, his Guard family and his community first. He does this in two ways: First, he's a combat medic in the Guard who has deployed twice and responded to numerous stateside missions. Second, he serves his hometown of Jacksonville, FL, as a police officer with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

### CHOICE DECISION

Like many young people, Wong was unsure of what to do after graduating from high school. "I had tried working, and I had a job here and a job there, but I had no real focus or purpose," Wong said in an interview with GX.

Joining the military was a turning point in his life. "[It was] one of the best decisions I have ever made."

Wong joined the regular Army, serving as a signals intelligence analyst. Four years later, he switched to the Guard. His original military occupational specialty in the Guard was a single channel radio operator, but he quickly switched to combat medic.

SCOTT SMITH

"When I saw what the medics did, I knew that's what I had to do, and that I wouldn't be happy doing anything else," he shared.

The story of how he became a police officer has a similar theme. Wong first joined the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office in 2002 as a 9-1-1 call dispatcher. For two years, he answered emergency calls from people in Jacksonville, relaying information to police and emergency responders, and reassuring callers that help was on the way.

"Sitting in the communications center, you feel helpless," he said of his 9-1-1 duties. "You wish you were out there helping instead of just being on the phone. I couldn't just sit there. I had to be out in the community assisting them."

After returning from a deployment to Kuwait in 2004, Wong applied to become a police officer. The process included extensive background checks, and physical and psychological evaluations. When it was time for his four-month officer training, his National Guard experience gave him an advantage over the other trainees: He was physically fit, trained on multiple weapons and handguns, and already familiar with an officer rank structure and chain of command. He graduated from the academy in 2004.

### GLOBAL EDUCATION

Wong's first deployment with the National Guard was in 2003. His unit, then known as A Company, 161st Area Support Medical Battalion, went to Kuwait to provide medical care to U.S. troops, Coalition Forces and Kuwaiti nationals.

A sergeant at the time, Wong was the team leader of two Soldiers, treating injuries and medical conditions at the Level I treatment facilities on Camp New Jersey, a U.S. military base 30 miles northwest of Kuwait City. His unit served there for a few months before moving to Camp Victory in northern Kuwait to conduct the same mission.

At the Level I treatment facilities, Wong and his Soldiers provided immediate care to Soldiers and civilians around the camp. With the temperature sometimes rising to 130 F, they frequently treated heatstroke and other heat-related ailments. For 10 months, they lived and worked in "tent cities"—everything from their living quarters to the medical aid station was constructed from a tent.

"Living in a tent was like camping, kind of, but there was sand everywhere," he remembers.

Kuwait was where he learned what it was like to selflessly serve by putting the needs of others—many of whom he didn't know and would never see again—ahead of his own.

"To be out there helping people made me feel good," he said.

Although his first deployment was a great experience, Wong says he hasn't missed living in a tent. "I can honestly say that I haven't gone camping since then," he quipped.

COURTESY OF SSG MICHAEL WONG



**"THE GUARD'S MISSION IS NEVER TOO BIG AND NEVER TOO SMALL."**

>> SSG Michael Wong,  
Florida Army National Guard

### DESERT OASIS

By 2008, Wong's unit had reorganized into the 256th ASMC and deployed again, this time to Iraq. As a staff sergeant, Wong was the noncommissioned officer in charge. The mission was providing medical assistance to U.S. troops at Camp Slayer, just outside of the Baghdad International Airport.

Before they arrived at Camp Slayer, Wong admits he and his comrades originally didn't have a great outlook on being stationed there. "We thought it was going to be the worst," he recalls. "But when we rolled up, there were lakes, palm trees and beautiful buildings—it was amazing."

During the 10-month deployment, Wong and his team responded to medical emergencies on and around the camp, in addition to their normal duties of treating

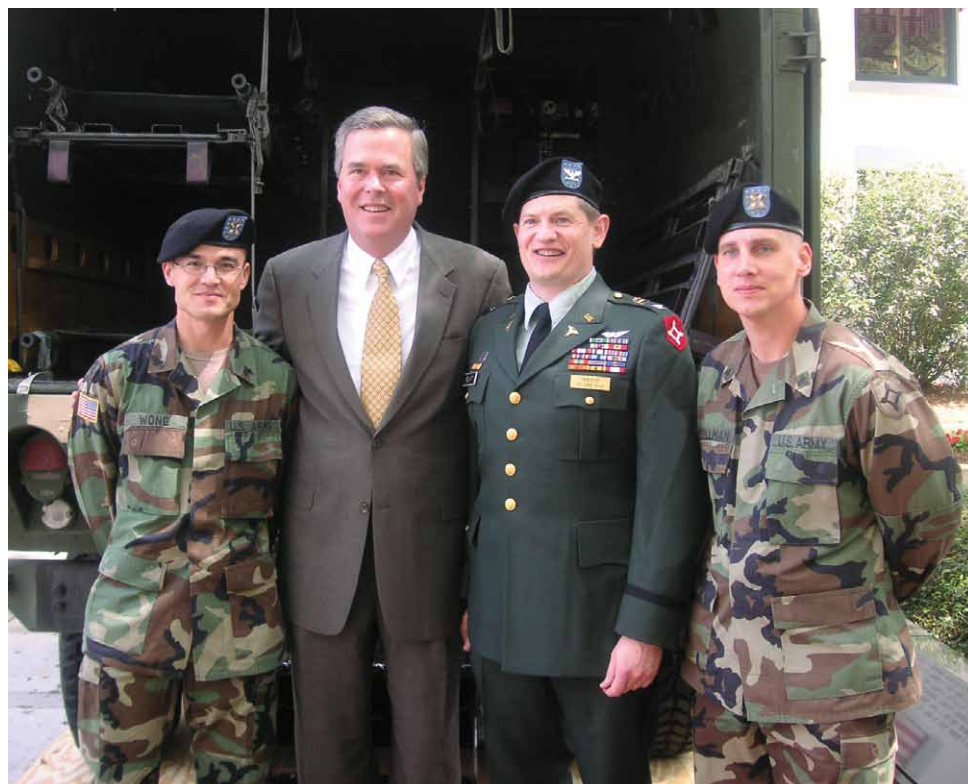
patients with less severe ailments. Each day, Wong's unit held a "sick call"—a specified time during which Soldiers needing medical attention could be treated. Once again, most treatments were for heat exhaustion.

Deployment gave Wong a broader view of the world and a greater appreciation for his life, friends and family. He returned to the U.S. each time with a new outlook on life, a humble spirit and a selfless attitude. Wong shares this appreciation with his wife of 12 years, Sarah, and their four children, ages 2–17.

### ON THE HOME FRONT

Back home in Florida, Wong's Guard service hasn't skipped a beat. He's often called up for stateside missions, such as Hurricane Wilma in 2005. For that event, Wong and his unit provided support at a food and water station. In 2010, Wong and his team served at Florida's adjutant general change of command ceremony, where they treated heat-related conditions.

Guard Soldiers are continually training to be ready for a call to service. These training events, large or small, are real missions for medical companies,



► **Top:** SSG Wong exemplifies the Warrior Ethos and was recognized by former Gov. Jeb Bush. ► **Bottom:** SSG Wong deployed for a second time in 2008, where he served as a medic at Camp Slayer. ► **Opposite Page:** SSG Wong hopes to serve as long as he can and eventually retire from the Guard and the Sheriff's Office.



in that if a Soldier is injured during training, the combat medics rush in with support.

Jacksonville, which rests on Florida's north-eastern shoreline, covers 841 square miles and has a population of more than 850,000.

Working a nearly 12-hour midnight shift for the sheriff's office, Wong never knows what his job will bring. One night in December 2007 turned out to be much more than a typical patrol. A parking garage that was under construction collapsed, with 24 workers inside. The sheriff's office was directly across the street, so Wong heard the rumble of the crumbling concrete. He immediately rounded up fellow officers and rushed to the scene. They successfully evacuated all but one of the construction workers. Many believe none of the victims would have survived if it weren't for Wong and his officers.

"There's no doubt in my mind that he was instrumental in saving lives that day," said Richard Buoye, a lieutenant and shift commander with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

For Wong's bravery and sacrifice that night, the sheriff's office gave him the Medal of Merit, an award given to officers for acts of heroism not involving criminal action.

Even during the most routine tasks, Wong works without complaint or hesitation. One of a police officer's less glamorous duties—and possibly the one most loathed by citizens—is running radar for speeding. But, as Buoye said, "You'd be amazed at what you get into by just making traffic stops." Wong gladly takes the less desirable assignments. He just wants to do his job and do it well.

#### TO CATCH A THIEF

Buoye recalled one night when he was reading out assignments at the beginning of the shift. Earlier, other officers had seen a file about a man suspected of stealing electricity from his landlord, but no one had taken the case. When Wong heard the assignment, he grabbed a few other officers and went to investigate. They found the suspect, ran a scan, and realized that the man was also wanted for home invasion robbery, sexual battery, armed robbery and auto theft—"a litany of first-degree, life felonies," according to Buoye. "Mike put that guy in jail. The other guys had ignored [the assignment], but Mike is a guy who says, 'Let's go do this.'"

Whether he knows it or not, Wong is a

Do you know a Soldier who serves as a firefighter, law enforcement officer or medical professional? If so, email us at [editor@GXonline.com](mailto:editor@GXonline.com) today.

COURTESY OF SSG MICHAEL WONG



**"HE'S ONE OF THOSE GUYS THAT THE YOUNGER GUYS TRY TO EMULATE."**

►► Richard Buoye, lieutenant, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office

mentor to his younger co-workers and battle buddies. At Guard drills, he always takes time to help younger Soldiers improve. On patrol, he usually takes a younger officer to ride along.

"Sergeant Wong is one of those folks that you never have to worry about," said Captain William Elliott, commander of the 256th ASMC. "You know he's looked over his training schedule and knows all the equipment he needs. He often leads the classes and training that we have to conduct at each drill. He's willing to pass his knowledge on to his subordinates, whether they're in his platoon or not."

Wong's mentorship resonates throughout his work, too. "You need patrolmen who like to get their hands dirty with the young guys," Buoye said. "Mike likes to get out there and try to find bad guys. He takes the young guys, and they go out and wolf-pack it."

"He's one of those guys that the younger guys try to emulate."

#### GRATEFUL BAD GUYS

Oddly enough, even some of the people Wong has arrested later thanked him for doing his job professionally and courteously.

"There have been times when I've put somebody in jail, and then I see them later and their whole mind-set has changed," Wong shared.

One of Wong's goals is to change the public perception of law enforce-

ment, beginning with his community. Every day, he makes the effort to have a positive interaction with Jacksonville residents, to build trust between them and the sheriff's office.

"I have faith in the people of my community, and I hope that they have faith in me as well," he said.

Wong hopes to stay in the National Guard until he reaches 30 years—but not just for the retirement. "I love doing it," he said. "I love being able to have a mission not only for the local community, but for the state, nation and globe."

When the time comes, Wong will be ready to answer the call of duty. "The Guard's mission is never too big and never too small," he said. That's because he's one of those great Soldiers—courageous, mission-ready and selfless. **GX**

# FAMILY FUN You Can Afford

## Don't Go for Broke on Your Summer Vacation

By Stephanie Kahan, USAA

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE, but summer is just around the corner. Even in today's difficult economic environment, we need time for family, relaxation and recharging our batteries—a vacation. However, that same economic environment puts a premium on getting the most bang for your vacation buck.



### PLANNING

Any successful vacation begins with a detailed plan, and now is the time to develop yours. It should start with a budget. The first question to ask yourself is: "How much can I afford to spend?" The answer will dictate whether you take a road trip to nearby attractions, or head for a Disney dream vacation.

Either way, you should take advantage of the benefits of being part of the military:

**Theme park discounts.** Disney consistently offers great deals on park passes for military members. For many years, Anheuser-Busch's "Here's to the Heroes" has offered free admission to Busch Gardens and SeaWorld for Active Duty, drilling Reservist and National Guard members. Check the offices or websites of Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) and Information, Tickets and Tours (ITT) for discounts on attractions in your area.

**Armed Forces Vacation Club.** This organization allows you to rent space-available timeshare resorts at significant discounts. Check out their search engine at [afvclub.com](http://afvclub.com).

**Armed Forces Recreation Center Resorts.** These full-service resorts provide the opportunity for a very reasonably priced stay in some sweet locations, from Virginia Beach to Bavaria. Shades of Green at Walt Disney World is probably the most widely known of these.

**United Service Organizations (USO).** Whether you're looking for free snacks and Internet access in the airport, or travel assistance in a foreign country, the USO can help.

### PREPARATION

Getting ready for a vacation can take serious time and effort, especially when it comes to financial preparation. Here are some ways to save money and make your dream a reality:

**Loose change.** Turn your daily pocket change into vacation spending money. Use a big jar or 5-gallon water jug and encourage the rest of your family to make daily deposits as well. You'll be surprised at how fast it adds up. We may not be talking plane tickets here, but it can certainly cover a few meals on the town.

**Coupons.** Everyone has used coupons at some point, but get serious in the coming months. Clip and use coupons, and when you finish shopping, add the savings to your vacation fund.

**Dining in.** You're probably most familiar with this term as a formal military event. But if you focus on eating at home, your vacation may benefit. Skipping a \$30 dinner each week for 12 weeks and putting that money in a "vacation envelope" adds up to \$360 of fun in the sun.

**Vacation account.** Segregate your vacation money. Whether it's the aforementioned jug, envelope or a separate savings account to which you add \$25 or \$50 from each paycheck, fence that money off.

### EXECUTION

OK, you finally made it. Your plans are coming to fruition. The detailed planning, cost-cutting, coupon-clipping and systematic savings have you en route to your vacation destination. Unfortunately, this is where the wheels have a tendency to fall off, financially speaking.

**Eating out.** Just like at home, keeping your body fueled has a tendency to be a real money drain. Avoid the tendency to let it all hang out on vacation. Pack snacks in lieu of expensive treats at theme parks, and use the refrigerator in your hotel/condo to prepare inexpensive meals. When you do treat yourself to a meal out, drink water and skip dessert. And while you're at it, don't forget to ask for a military discount. Many restaurants offer them, but you usually have to ask.

**Souvenirs.** Talk about a black hole. From \$25 T-shirts to soon-to-be-forgotten knickknacks, take a pass on expensive trinkets. Instead, bring a digital camera, and encourage the kids to keep a journal during the trip. Photos and a diary will provide wonderful, lasting memories.

**Excursions.** Be tactical. You're probably in a new place that's full of wonder in and of itself. A picnic or a day spent exploring the local attractions may be just as enjoyable, and a lot less expensive, than signing up for an excursion at \$50 a head.

Now is the time to start planning and preparing for your dream vacation. And if you do it right, you can enjoy the relaxation and family fun without the post-trip stress that comes from vacationing beyond your means. **CX**



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# School's NOT Out for Summer

## CliffsNotes® on the Benefits of Summer School

By Johanna Altland, Grantham University

NOW THAT YOU'RE MIDWAY through the spring semester of college, you're probably thinking about the warm days and vacation possibilities for summer.

Why not consider summer school? Summer classes are growing in popularity. Last year, many colleges and universities reported record enrollment in their summer courses.

If you're taking classes at a traditional semester-based college, your school most likely offers a summer program in which you can complete courses at an accelerated pace. If you're enrolled in an online college, consider continuing through the summer months. If your institution doesn't offer a summer program, find out if summer course credits at a community college or online university can be transferred to your regular school.

### FOUR BENEFITS OF SUMMER SCHOOL

**>> Accelerated Degree Attainment.** Because summer courses are typically shorter than regular classes, you could take one or two classes over summer break and still have time to enjoy the warm weather. And, you will be that much closer to graduation—anywhere from three to nine credits closer, depending on the number of classes you take.

Additionally, you will be that much closer to reaping the benefits of a college degree—higher pay and lower risk of unemployment. It has been reported that the United States has the biggest societal income disparity gap of any industrialized

**The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that COLLEGE GRADUATES EARN anywhere from \$22,000 TO \$38,000 more per year than high school graduates.**

country in the world. Educational attainment has been cited as one of the key factors in the difference between America's richest and the poorest.

Even in today's tough economy, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that college graduates earn anywhere from \$22,000 to \$38,000 more per year than high school graduates.

**>> Tackle a Challenging Course.** If you struggle with a specific subject, like math or English, one of the best things that you can do is take those courses over the summer. Without the distraction of a

huge course load, you can devote more time to the material.

I'm horrible at math, so during my undergraduate program, I completed my algebra and statistics classes over the summer. Statistics—a word that quickly sends me into a panic—was a challenging, accelerated six-week course, but I was able to devote all of my study time to the material. My hard work paid off—I passed the class. Looking back, I know that if I'd taken the class as part of a full course load, there's no way I would have passed.

**>> Smaller Classes.** Typically, summer classes have fewer students, which allows for better student-instructor interaction. This is especially beneficial if the subject matter is challenging. Your instructor can devote more time to specific lessons and work with you one-on-one.

Summer is also a great time to enroll in courses that are popular and therefore hard to get into during the regular year.

**>> Save Money on Tuition.** Some colleges and universities offer reduced tuition and fees for their summer programs, which enables you to maximize your tuition money. For those who rely on military tuition assistance, those dollars will go even further.

### A WORD OF CAUTION ABOUT BURNOUT

While summer school can be advantageous, you want to avoid burning out.

According to *Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary*, "burnout" is "exhaustion of physical or emotional strength usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration." If this happens, you may start caring less about your grades or even become disenchanted with school.

To prevent burnout, take a couple of weeks off during the summer to re-energize. Watch your favorite shows, have dinner with loved ones, or just hang out and relax. When you return to school, you'll find it easier to stay on task.

Taking classes during the summer is a great way to get closer to graduation, tackle challenging courses and maximize your tuition dollars. Plus, there's an added benefit—being able to find a prime parking spot on your college campus. **CX**



### RECOGNIZING THE SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT

Those of us who take on new commitments and go the extra mile to get the job done are the most susceptible to burnout. Juggling work, family and school is challenging on most days, but when you're heading toward burnout, it can be overwhelming. The best way to avoid burnout is to recognize the symptoms and take action:

#### Lack of energy

Do you find yourself increasingly exhausted each morning? Does the thought of getting out of bed make you sick to your stomach? Burnout can cause severe exhaustion, even if you're getting a healthy amount of sleep each night.

#### Inability to focus

Are you having a difficult time meeting deadlines? Do you find yourself struggling with your coursework because you just aren't interested anymore? It's difficult to concentrate on your work if you're no longer motivated.

#### Worn out physically and emotionally

Are you losing your temper? Are you tossing and turning every night because you can't sleep? Burnout can cause depression, migraine headaches, an upset stomach and anxiety. It can also lower your body's immunity, so you're more likely to get sick.

#### Decreased attendance

Are you calling in sick to work or skipping class because you just can't deal with it anymore? Lack of caring and commitment is common when you're at the end of your rope. This can result in missed classes and workdays.

# Best Foot Forward

## Healthy Feet Are Essential to Total Fitness

By Ann Stark, Health Correspondent, and Charles Hammond, D.P.M.

**WHAT SURVIVES HUNDREDS OF TONS** of force during a lifetime and contains roughly one-fourth of the total bones in the human body?

Answer: one of the ultimate feats of natural engineering—your own two feet.

You may have heard the adage that “the Army marches on its stomach,” but the reality is that it has, and probably always will, march on its feet.

### STANDING INVITATION

Healthy feet are critical to mission accomplishment and total fitness. Ask any Soldier experiencing “march fractures” (micro-fractures similar to shin splints) if this isn’t the case. Also not a surprise is the fact that a voluntary survey of Air Force participants deployed and

supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom indicated that personnel with blisters were found to be at a higher risk for subsequent injury.

Even though one pair must last a lifetime, most people think about their feet only when they hurt and demand attention. However, according to the National Institutes on Aging, feet are often an indicator of overall health and well-being. Joint stiffness could mean arthritis. Tingling or numbness could be a sign of diabetes. Swelling might indicate kidney disease, heart disease or high blood pressure.

Podiatrist and retired member of the Army Medical Corps Dr. Charles Hammond adds, “Hot weather is especially hard on feet, so it makes good sense take some extra precautions to keep them healthy. Because the feet are located so far

from the heart—which affects circulation—foot injuries may become infected more quickly and heal more slowly than those on other parts of the body.”

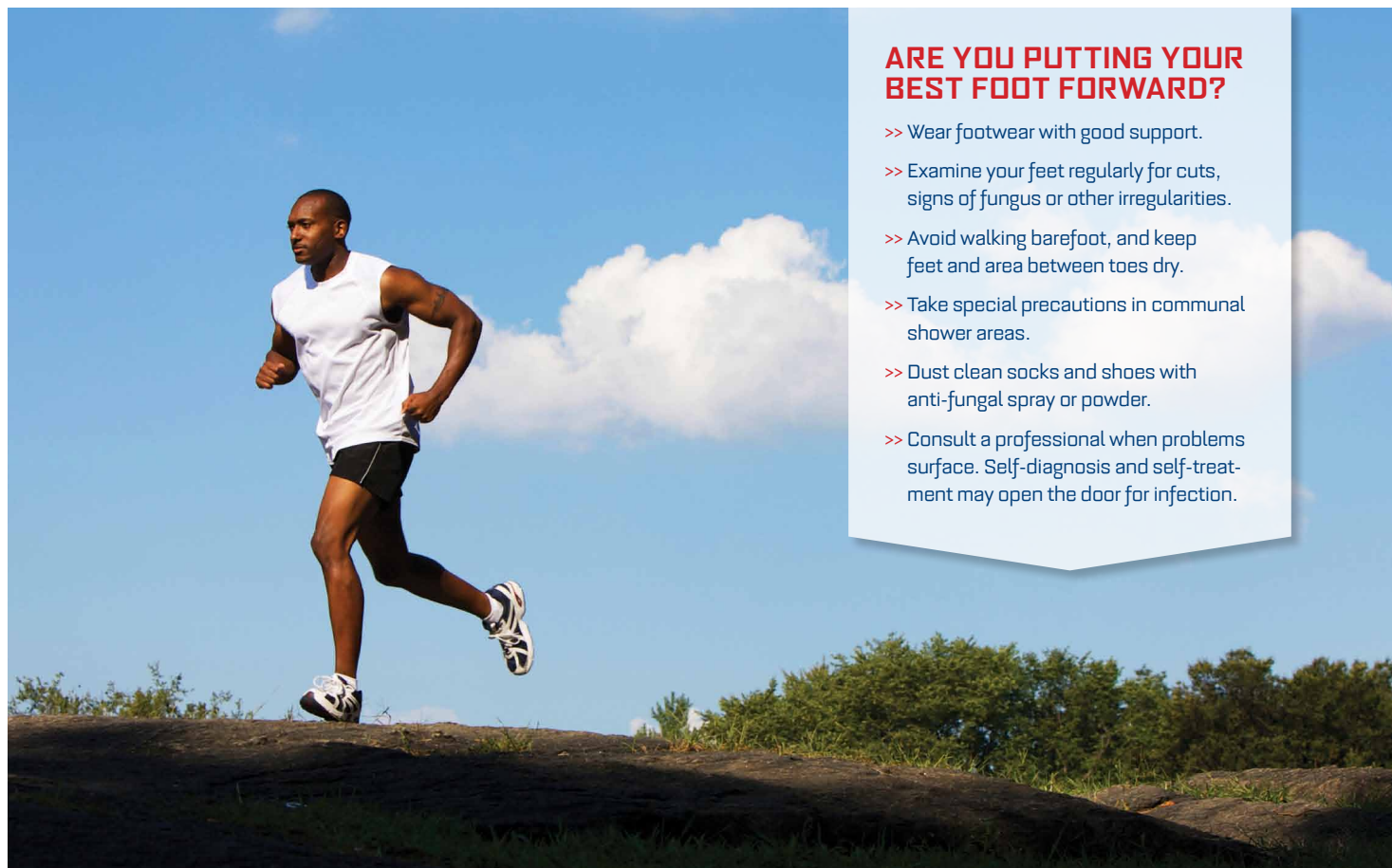
### LACE UP

Pool decks and public locker rooms provide an ideal breeding ground not only for athlete’s foot, but also for viral organisms that cause plantar warts. It’s a good idea to avoid walking barefoot in these high-traffic areas.

The best foot care advice for all seasons is to dry the feet and toes carefully after bathing, and to seek medical help at once if you notice infection.

Athletes should be aware that old tennis or other athletic shoes in the back of the closet could contain a ticking time bomb. The athlete’s foot organism (*tinea pedis*) thrives in a dark, warm, moist environment and, once it takes hold, it is exceptionally difficult to eliminate.

“The fungus lives in the dead top layer of skin—the epidermis—and has a life cycle of shedding spores. So every time you put on those old sneakers and your feet perspire, you could be re-infecting yourself,” says Hammond. **GX**



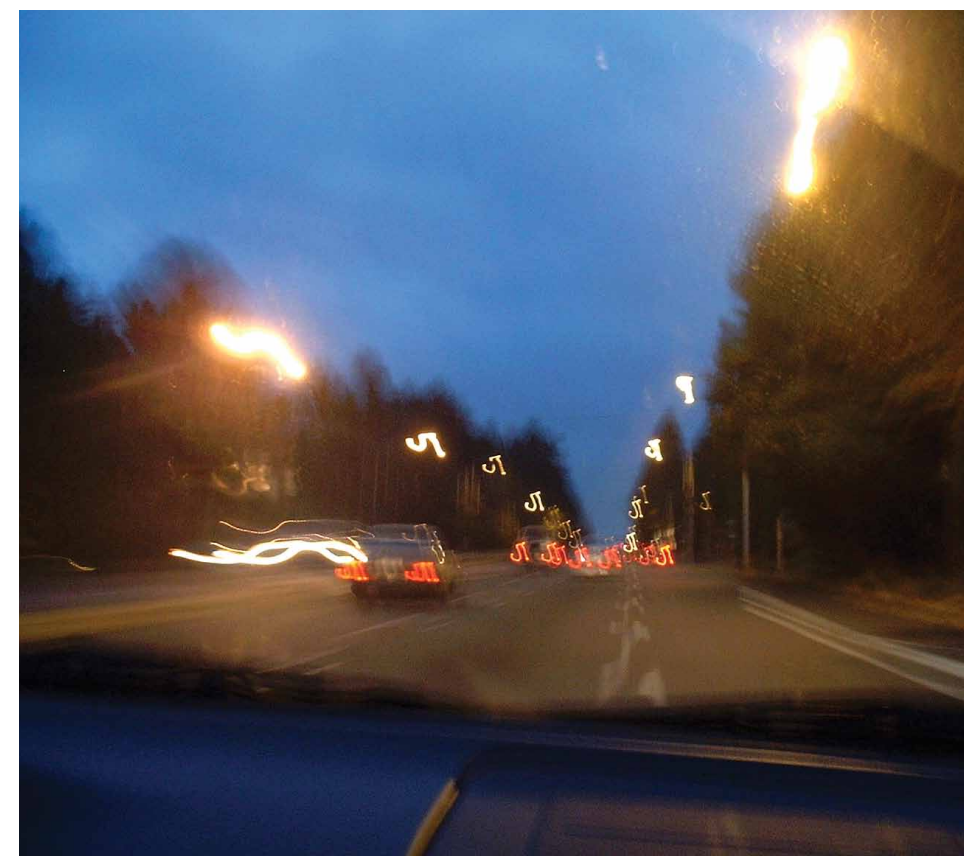
### ARE YOU PUTTING YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD?

- >> Wear footwear with good support.
- >> Examine your feet regularly for cuts, signs of fungus or other irregularities.
- >> Avoid walking barefoot, and keep feet and area between toes dry.
- >> Take special precautions in communal shower areas.
- >> Dust clean socks and shoes with anti-fungal spray or powder.
- >> Consult a professional when problems surface. Self-diagnosis and self-treatment may open the door for infection.

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# Cocktail for Disaster

## The Staggering Costs of Driving Under the Influence By MAJ Marc D. Defreyne



**THAT TIME OF YEAR** is almost here again—warm weather, cookouts and general summer partying.

As adults, we know we shouldn’t drink and drive. Nevertheless, year after year, intoxicated drivers remain a threat to the safety and well-being of our citizens.

Most cases of DUI (driving under the influence) take place within 15 miles of the driver’s home, despite the obvious alternatives to getting behind the wheel. On average, every year there are over 12,000 deaths resulting from drunk driving and 30,000 DUI arrests. In most states, you are considered to be driving under the influence if you have a blood alcohol content of over .08 percent.

There’s a good chance the average person would be considered to be driving under the influence if they’ve had three to four beers in one hour just prior to getting behind the wheel. Unfortunately, this probably happens quite often.

The alternatives to drinking and driving include having a designated driver, taking a taxi and staying at a hotel. Then, of course, there’s just not drinking. But taxis are expensive, hotels are overpriced and you can handle the wheel after “a few beers,” right? Know this: You do not need to be “drunk” to get a DUI. The prosecutor needs to prove only that you were “affected by alcohol.”

If you think a mistake during your “civilian time” won’t impact your Guard career, think again. At a minimum, you can expect a General Officer Letter of Reprimand, possible adverse comments on your OER/NCOER, possibly a bar to re-enlistment, and a flag on your record. In addition, under AR 600-85 (2 FEB 2009), your commander must consider you for administrative separation and evaluate your continued eligibility for access to classified information. Have fun this summer, but think twice before you drink and drive. **GX**

### THE COST OF A DUI:

- **Fines and court fees:** \$866 minimum up to \$8,125
- **Attorney fees:** Minimum of \$1,500
- **Ignition interlock:** \$730 to \$2,800
- **Mandatory alcohol treatment/counseling:** \$1,200 to \$8,000
- **Towing of your vehicle:** \$150
- **Electronic home monitoring:** \$150 to \$2,225
- **License reissue fee:** \$150
- **Insurance:** Rates will easily rise 30% to 75%
- **Jail time:** Minimum of 24 hours—up to 365 days
- **Suspension of driver’s license:** Minimum 90 days (add costs of taxi to get around town)

### OTHER POTENTIAL DUI EXPENSES:

- Damage to your vehicle
- Lawsuits for property damage
- Lawsuits for physical harm (and possibly death) to other parties
- Possible criminal charges for involuntary manslaughter or other more serious charges that lead to prison

### THE ALTERNATIVES:

- **Designated driver:** \$0— or the cost of a few soft drinks
- **Taxi:** Average cost is \$2.50 per mile; at 15 miles, approximately \$38
- **Hotel:** About \$45–\$200 a night



Justin Diestler (second from left) is pictured with his family and Guard Soldiers. The family proudly displays the awards they received from ESGR.

# Patriotic Pedal Power

## Bike Shop Supports Troops

By Stephanie Inman

“SUPPORT THE TROOPS” is a phrase that has risen from the wake of 9/11 and lodged itself in the hearts of many Americans. These words echo through the streets, proudly displayed on bumper stickers and signs.

For one company, though, “Support the Troops” is more than just a phrase: It’s a philosophy. Since it opened 60 years ago, Kearney Cycling and Fitness in Kearney, NE, has established a tradition of honoring the men and women in uniform. Over the years, the company has employed countless National Guard Soldiers and Reservists at its store. If these Soldiers do have to deploy, the shop guarantees them a job upon their return.

“It gives them a sense of normality when they come back. They have a solid base here,” said Justin Diestler, the owner of Kearney Cycling and Fitness.

One of the company’s current employees, Specialist Chelsea Steinhauser, is preparing for a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan. She serves in the Nebraska Army National Guard with the 402nd MP Battalion.

As she prepares to serve overseas, Steinhauser is often called away for training. Her absence is a

challenge for the shop because it has only four employees.

But Diestler understands that Steinhauser’s duties as a Soldier may conflict with those of an employee, and he works around it.

### A HUMBLE AWARD WINNER

Nominated by Steinhauser, Kearney Cycling and Fitness was awarded the Patriot Award and the Statement of Support by Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). ESGR recognizes companies that excel at supporting their employees before, during and after the deployment process.

Diestler was honored to receive these awards, but he believes that a company’s sacrifice is nothing compared with what a Soldier must sacrifice.

Coming from a military family, Diestler has seen personally what a Soldier has to go through to protect this country. That knowledge has instilled a deep-rooted sense of pride.

Diestler’s family “is the type that when we see the flag coming down the street, hats are off and you put your hand across your chest. My 8-year-old daughter gets so mad when she

sees people who don’t put their hand across the heart,” he said. “It comes back to the simple fact that I have grown up in a family with a military background.”

Both of Diestler’s grandfathers served in the Army during WWII. One was a cook stationed at Pearl Harbor during the bombings. The other ended up as a prisoner of war and was rescued by General George Patton at the Battle of the Bulge.

Also, Diestler’s father was an army medic during the Vietnam War. His service had a significant impact on Diestler’s attitude toward the troops.

Diestler saw how the lack of public support for the Vietnam War affected the troops. So as many troops head to Afghanistan and Iraq, Diestler backs them 100 percent.

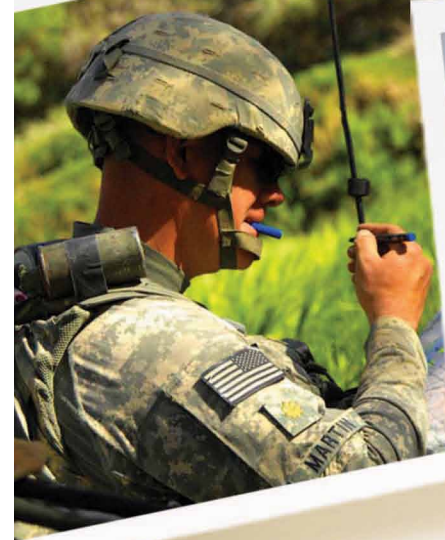
These Soldiers “need us to stand behind them, because we all saw what happened in Vietnam when people didn’t stand behind them,” he said. “We walked out of there with our tail between our legs.”

“Support the Troops” is a message that Diestler wants to pass on to his children and grandchildren. He imparts this advice to them so that they can carry on the Kearney Cycling and Fitness tradition.

“It’s their job to support the men and women. Whether that’s saying the Pledge of Allegiance extra loud, putting your hand across your heart when you see the flag, or enlisting when you turn 18. It’s a duty and a gift.” **CX**

BRAD WORTON

# WE ALL SERVE



Jim Ainsworth of Nevada ESGR and Mike Williams, Operations Vice President of Nevada based REMSA, with employees and U.S. Army National Guardsmen Specialist Tyler Teese, Sergeant Steve Park, Sergeant Kevin Basta, Sergeant Nich Hammond, and Specialist Mike Roen.

**ARMY NATIONAL GUARD ★ ARMY RESERVE ★ NAVY RESERVE ★ MARINE RESERVE  
COAST GUARD RESERVE ★ AIR NATIONAL GUARD ★ AIR FORCE RESERVE**

We all serve. Whether serving our communities or our country, members of the National Guard and Reserve depend on their military units, families, and employers for support. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is a Department of Defense agency that seeks to promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law and resolving conflict through mediation.



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# Behavioral Health for the Future

## New MSW Program Open to Guard Soldiers

By COL Darlene McCurdy

**PROTECTING THE NATIONAL SECURITY** of America is no longer exclusively a responsibility for Active Duty personnel. Waterhouse and O'Bryant (2008) found that 11 percent of the U.S. Armed Forces to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom were members of the Army National Guard or U.S. Army Reserves.

In view of the joint operation environment that exists during military deployments, the Army Medical Department (AMEDD) offers a variety of training opportunities for members of the Guard and Reserves to participate in graduate education alongside others in the AMEDD family. Among these educational opportunities is the Army Master of Social Work (MSW) Program, which admitted its first class in June 2008.

### TIME TO GROW

Much like the Active Duty behavioral health inventory, the behavioral health inventory in the National Guard is critically short, currently operating with only 33 percent of its required

### The Work of a Social Worker

In this exciting critical role, Guard social workers perform a variety of tasks at the most advanced clinical level. Army National Guard Military Credentialing Solutions and the Army National Guard Chief Surgeon Office provide oversight for their credentialing.

Among Guard social work duties are assisting service members and their families in building resilience against a range of stressors; serving as an expert resource to professionals outside their work environment; and providing in-service training for military/civilian leadership. Additionally, they are responsible for connecting service members and their families with available resources, and monitoring therapeutic processes and outcomes.

Guard social workers are key members of a larger multidisciplinary team, whose knowledge and expertise are integral to the overall National Guard mission and medical readiness.

work force. In order to rectify this critical shortage, which comes at the worst time, the Guard will offer an opportunity for a minimum of five commissioned medical service corps officers to pursue their graduate degree through the Army MSW Program so that they may become social work officers in the Guard.

The MSW Program is 14 months in length for Guard Soldiers who have undergraduate degrees from accredited colleges or universities. The MSW Program is nine months for Guard Soldiers who have completed a Bachelor of Social Work degree within five years of their program start date.

The inaugural class for the Army MSW Program was admitted June 2008, and at the time, the program was available only to Active Duty Medical Service Corps officers. The first class graduated 15 students in August of 2009, and these officers are now in phase two of the program, a 24-month post-master's internship at one of nine internship sites at a variety of military medical facilities. The objective of the internship phase is to enable new MSW graduates to complete state requirements to acquire their independent practitioner license. National Guard members who attend the MSW Program complete the internship phase at a Veterans Affairs hospital located in their home state.

### SUBSTANTIAL CREDENTIALS

Although the Army MSW Program has been accepting students only since 2008, the program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education as an off-campus program for Fayetteville State University. The program is also accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. This enables graduates of the MSW Program to be eligible to take their license exam upon graduation.

In just a few short years, the MSW Program has received a great deal of interest and has nearly tripled in size. This is due in large part to the desperate need for more behavioral science officers. Zoroya (2007) reports that the number of Army behavioral health providers has not kept pace with the number of U.S. troops deployed to

fight the war in Iraq. Not only is the number of social workers insufficient to meet the needs of the current force, the Department of the Army has approved measures that will result in a significant increase in the current number of authorized social work positions that are in the Table of Organization and Equipment. As a result of these increases, the Army MSW Program has gone from admitting 15 students to 40 students during the 2011–2012 academic years.

The Army MSW Program is unlike any graduate social work program, in that it equips its graduates to practice as social workers in a military community. Every course within this program is presented from a military perspective. It is essential that military social workers are able to provide competent and ethical social work support in a variety of settings. The RAND Center for Military Health Policy Research estimated that the military healthcare system would receive up to 300,000 new cases involving service members with mental health problems related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Tanielian & Jaycox 2008).

### SPIRIT OF SERVICE

Therefore, if you have a passion for working with military families and would like to become a uniformed social worker in the Army National Guard, the Army MSW Program may be designed for you. This program will not only give you the opportunity to receive your graduate social work degree in 14 months, but will also equip and prepare you to take the Licensed Master of Social Work Exam prior to beginning your 24-month post-master's internship.

Army National Guard social work is an excellent opportunity to have a direct impact on both military and civilian communities. They work with Soldiers and their families via education, prevention, intervention and ongoing career life-cycle support.

Army National Guard social workers are the frontline behavioral health support embedded in the formations, and work closely with military leadership and medical personnel. They are embedded in the units, providing direct support and continuity of care in a more fluid and dynamic environment. The NASW code of ethics parallels the Army Values, which facilitates a seamless transition from civilian to military provider. **GX**

For more information, contact Colonel Darlene McCurdy, the AMEDD Senior Advisor for the Army National Guard, at [darlene.mccurdy@amedd.army.mil](mailto:darlene.mccurdy@amedd.army.mil) or go to [www.NATIONALGUARD.com/socialwork](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/socialwork).

# Returning on a Jet Plane

## R&R Program Celebrates Millionth Soldier Served

Story and photo by LTC Deanna Bague

**GENERAL GEORGE W. CASEY JR.**, chief of staff of the Army, joined several hundred supporters at the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport to welcome home the Rest and Recuperation (R&R) flight of the one millionth service member, Jan. 11.

"It's wonderful to be here and to participate in this ceremony today—but most importantly, to say thank you to all of you who make this possible," said Casey. "I know those Veterans from Vietnam that were recognized just a bit ago—when they came into the United States through the airports—they didn't have the kind of welcome that you are giving our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines today. It has become such a big part of our ability to sustain this all-volunteer force, which is now in its 10th year of war."

Fanfare led by Tuskegee Airmen and Vietnam Veterans was a major part of the Army's one millionth R&R celebration, said Sergeant First Class Liuva Ruiz, who helps process thousands of service members at the airport's DFW Personnel Assistance Point. Dallas is by far one of the most supportive cities for service members, she added.

"For the welcoming, [people] are always willing to go ahead and clap," said Ruiz. "I've seen them purchase lunches for Soldiers in the airport—just complete strangers [who want] to show their support for those service members."

### KIND WORDS COUNT

Casey, whose son recently earned R&R leave, said he understands the uplift service members experience when a person acknowledges their service through various acts of kindness, including verbal appreciation.

"What a difference it makes to have a Soldier get off the plane and to have people there to say, 'Welcome home,'" said Casey.

He said to have people approach service members walking through airports to say, "Thank you for what you do," or to have people who pick up the tab for a breakfast or a lunch, or to have people give up a seat on an airplane, is notably important.

"The message that communicates to our Soldiers and to their families is that their sacrifices are both recognized and appreciated by the people of America," said Casey.

Soldiers who either arrive to take leave, or depart upon completion of R&R, said a simple thank-you means a lot.

Casey said all of the volunteers and individuals who take time to recognize Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines, day after day, make a significant impact on America's defense.

"We could not do what we have done as an Army and what we have done as [the] Armed Forces to protect this country over the last 10 years if it were not for that," said Casey. **GX**



Linda Tinnerman, a USO volunteer, greets Soldiers arriving at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport.

### SUMMING UP R&R:

Soldiers who are serving in areas designated as hostile fire and imminent danger areas may be eligible for one Rest and Recuperation (R&R) trip per 12-month period. R&R is a chargeable leave program that authorizes use of ordinary leave and may not be combined with other absences. Soldiers must meet certain requirements to be eligible for an R&R trip.

### ARE YOU QUALIFIED FOR R&R?:

Only members of the National Guard serving on Active Duty or initial Active Duty for training or Active Duty training for a period of 30 or more consecutive days for which they are entitled to pay or members of the National Guard serving on full-time duty are eligible to participate in the various leave programs.

In addition, only National Guard Soldiers who are deployed to a 12-month tour of duty in the Central Command area of one of the 17 designated countries by the Department of Defense are eligible for Rest and Recuperation (R&R) leave. Soldiers serving in an area specifically designated as imminent danger and hazardous duty pay are also eligible for R&R leave.

# Faith Under Fire

## Chaplains Provide Moral Support to Stressed Guard Soldiers and Families

By Christian Anderson

**NEVER BEFORE HAS THE UNITED STATES** been engaged in an official war for 10 straight years. The stress has been felt all the way from the White House to the private first class who lives down the street. Therefore, the need for military chaplains is greater than ever.

Army National Guard and Air National Guard chaplains provide moral, emotional and spiritual support to Soldiers and Airmen across the ranks.

“As the overseas operations put more demand on the National Guard and its members, the strain began to become more noticeable,” said Major Paul Douglas, Section Chief, Chaplain Accessions, National Guard Bureau. “The National Guard is at an extremely high operational tempo, and our chaplains are feeling [it] right along with the other Soldiers and Airmen deploying.”

That anxiety has manifested itself in the highest rates in history of suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, and divorce among military personnel. Depression is common. Couple all

of this with the reluctance of many service members to pursue treatment for personal, emotional or mental health problems, and you have a recipe for disaster.

### THE ABCS OF CPE

Hosted by Veterans Affairs (VA), the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program trains chaplains to handle these more complex issues. Open to Air National Guard and Army National Guard chaplains and chaplain candidates, CPE differs from traditional seminary training in that, while the seminary is based upon principles of theology, CPE aims to help the chaplain identify and respond to spiritual, emotional and moral distress.

CPE puts the chaplain directly in contact with troubled Soldiers and Airmen, and with real-world situations. Through intensive interaction with them, along with feedback from peers and teachers, chaplains develop a greater awareness of themselves and those to whom

they minister. Case studies, reports, seminars and face-to-face contact with individuals in hospitals and hospices help the chaplain learn to respond in valuable ways. From theological reflection on specific human situations, they gain a new understanding of ministry.

As a former Navy chaplain, Keith Ethridge, Director of the VA National Chaplain Center, knows the types of spiritual wounds that Guard members bear. He explained that although seminary training is extensive, CPE goes even deeper.

“Chaplains know the unit members and families of the Guard,” Ethridge said. “Chaplains look at spiritual well-being and specifically try to help the unit members stay mission-capable. After the high volume of deployments over the last several years, we want to do everything that we can to help them.”

Douglas agreed. “The CPE program is a way to educate Guard chaplains so they can deal with the real issues at hand,” he explained. “The training won’t give them the ability to swoop in and convince the Soldier or Airman to change their attitude—[it’s] much more than that. CPE is about giving chaplains the knowledge to recognize and respond to moral distress and spiritual injuries.”

### ALL ACCESS

To ensure that interested chaplains can participate, CPE offers both a residency (one year/four units) program and shorter, single-unit programs. Application is open to all National Guard chaplains.

“It’s important to the VA that National Guard [members] receive the same benefits as the Active Duty components,” said Ethridge. “We want to give ... chaplains the opportunity to be equipped to face the challenges of deployment and the tools to function effectively in stressful circumstances.”

Relocating to pursue CPE is not always an option for chaplains. Offering the program at various locations across the nation is key to the success of the NGB’s goal, which is to provide access to training to as many chaplains as possible. The extended programs and distance-learning options make CPE more accessible to those who don’t live in major cities.

Making CPE convenient for chaplains is a top priority for the VA Chaplaincy. Since many chaplains want to get back to their families and civilian jobs after training or a deployment, it was crucial for the VA to allow them to pursue the course through alternative options.

Each unit of CPE requires 400 hours of training. There is no tuition charged by VA for taking CPE; however, the Association of CPE regions charge a student registration fee for each



unit, which is paid for by either the Guard or the Guard member.

### BOOTS AT GROUND ZERO

Chaplain (Colonel) Eric Olsen of the New York National Guard can attest to the importance of CPE. After receiving his degree in theology from the Lutheran Theological Seminary, he pursued CPE at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan. With over 20 years as a chaplain, he has utilized his CPE education both at home and abroad.

“My unit responded to Ground Zero on 9/11, which was tough, because we had to respond without any preparation,” Olsen explained. “We were there at 11 a.m. that morning and rolled right into helping with the recovery operations.”

“We were working perimeter security and escort for people in and around the site, as well as working in the morgue, assisting the aid workers and recovery personnel,” he continued. “The typical day was 12 hours, and we were doing everything we could to engage the faith communities in helping people who had lost loved ones.”

Olsen remained near Ground Zero for the better part of the year, and utilized both his traditional training and his CPE skills.

Shortly after being released from Ground Zero duty and returning to his family and full-time job, Olsen was mobilized to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom as a battalion chaplain with light infantry. There, the CPE training was invaluable, because the unit found itself in the middle of heavy insurgent activity. He found that one of the most prevalent concerns among Soldiers was the possibility of their own death.

“For many Soldiers, this was the first time they had encountered an enemy who wanted them dead,” Olsen said. “That is a very harsh reality.”

### IMMEDIATE DANGER

Another harsh reality Soldiers experience is a near-miss, such as a flying bullet or exploding IED. According to Olsen, this is when Soldiers really start contemplating life.

“There are a million questions Soldiers ask themselves after stressful and dangerous experiences,” Olsen said. “As a chaplain, we have to help walk them through those questions about faith and find their own answers.”

Although Olsen helped hundreds of Soldiers during his deployment, one stood out—a lieutenant who doubted whether he was going to make it out of Iraq alive.

“He came to me after he had been hit by an IED three times in a 24-hour period,” he said. “He had received wounds in all three attacks. The following morning we sat for a couple of hours because he was reluctant to go back out on patrol. He wasn’t being a coward—he had just faced so many near-death experiences in a short period of time, it made him pause and contemplate things. Eventually, he went back to his job.”

Since his return from Iraq, Olsen has encouraged chaplains under his command to pursue CPE, not just for themselves, but also for the sake of their Guard members.

“It forces you to deal with the unit dynamic, where you aren’t just preaching, but engaging on a very human level,” Olsen explained. “And that’s important. I have seen great growth in chaplains that take CPE courses. We need to recognize CPE’s value.”

“I thank the chaplains at NGB for giving us the thumbs-up to see what we can do with this training,” Olsen concluded. **GX**

To learn more about becoming a chaplain in the National Guard, go to [www.NATIONALGUARD.com/highercalling](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/highercalling).





Cadets from the Maryland Freestate ChalleNGe Academy participate in one of the interactive components of the National Guard's mobile Energy Lab during the unveiling in Washington, DC, Sept. 30, 2010.

## Education on the Go Guard Launches Mobile Education Lab

Story and photo by SFC Jon Soucy, National Guard Bureau

**THE MISSION OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S** "Educate to Innovate" initiative is to improve the participation and performance of students in science, technology, engineering and math programs. To support this goal, the National Guard debuted The Energy Lab, a mobile classroom featuring interactive learning tools focusing on the science and technology behind alternative energy sources.

Unveiled at Washington, DC's Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in 2010, The Energy Lab is part of the Guard's Mobile Learning Center program, which is visiting schools in 10 states from October 2010 through spring of 2011.

The mobile lab will also provide exposure to science and math for schools and communities that may not have access to those resources.

"Visiting high schools and armories in underserved communities, the Mobile Learning Center will focus on technology, and help students explore energy efficiency and alternative energy sources," said Chief Master Sergeant Denise Jelinski-Hall, senior enlisted advisor to the chief of the National Guard Bureau.

Engaging students in science and technology is key to building interest in studying those fields.

"Somebody has to get people fascinated or interested in technology and science, and [The] Energy Lab, it seems to me, will tap into that interest and fascination," said Rep. Eleanor Holmes-Norton at the unveiling ceremony.

The lab does this through interactive video-game-type technology, in which students use their knowledge of science and engineering to navigate through the scenarios.

**“THE MOBILE LEARNING CENTER WILL HELP PREPARE OUR CHILDREN FOR A FUTURE FILLED WITH THE HOPE OF PROSPERITY, HAPPINESS AND SECURITY.”**

>> CMS Denise Jelinski-Hall

The program utilizes common student interests, such as computers and interactive games, to provide a new way to observe how science and engineering can be applied, said Jelinski-Hall. Geared toward high school juniors and seniors, the lab helps introduce science and technology to youth who are often considered too far along to become interested in the sciences.

### BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

"It's geared toward students in the 11th and 12th grades—and that's real late," said Holmes-Norton. "What this mobile Energy Lab does is to say 'Wait a minute, there's a way to tap into the fascination of young people today at fairly advanced ages so that they become truly interested in technology.'"

Building on that interest in science and technology, and providing the vehicle to expose students to those concepts, fits in with the Guard's community-based structure.

"It's also totally fitting and appropriate that the National Guard spearhead this initiative," said Jelinski-Hall. "We are the face of your communities in all 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia."

However, in the end, it comes back to building communities and providing value for a better future for those in the community.

"Education is the key," said Jelinski-Hall. "The Mobile Learning Center will help prepare our children for a future filled with the hope of prosperity, happiness and security. They deserve nothing less." **GX**

# Strengthening the Community

## Institute Fosters Support of Military

By Elaine Wilson, American Forces Press Service

**AN INDIANA-BASED** organization is working to build community support of service members and their families throughout the state in the hope of serving as a model for the rest of the nation.

Shelley MacDermid-Wadsworth, director of the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) and a family studies professor at Purdue University, led the institute's efforts on behalf of military families—Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve and Veteran—during the third annual Trauma Spectrum Conference on Dec. 7–8 in Bethesda, MD.

The MFRI is a research and outreach organization based at Purdue in West Lafayette, IN. It is supported by Lilly Endowment Inc., the Defense Department and other organizations.

The state is home to 23,674 active and Reserve component members, mostly Army National Guard, with 1,800 deployed and 3,600 cued up to deploy in January 2012, MacDermid-Wadsworth said.

The institute has been working to boost awareness of and support for these military members and their families with some success, she said.

MacDermid-Wadsworth stressed the need to funnel information about the military to communities. It's important, for example, to inform teachers when they have a military child in their classroom.

"In your classroom, when you're talking about how you feel about the war, you might want to keep in mind that there might be a kid in your classroom whose parent is there," she said. "It's just helping people be aware that they are in contact with military families. They just may not know it."

In an effort to foster this information flow, the institute partnered with the Center for Deployment Psychology to provide training sessions for large groups of providers such as healthcare providers, marriage and family therapists, and mental health providers, she explained.

The institute also has asked to present a military track at conferences and seminars, and has reached out to early childhood professionals, social workers, school counselors and teachers. Additionally, the institute has shipped 1,300 training kits to primary care physicians within the state, MacDermid-Wadsworth said.

She acknowledged some roadblocks to community-based support efforts, including the variability of communities, even across one state.

Communities need infrastructure—such as jobs, healthcare, Veterans and family programs, and awareness within schools and nonprofit groups—in order to offer military families the support they need, MacDermid-Wadsworth said. "All communities are different, and all are confronting issues in different ways," she said. "Our goal is to help them succeed."

It will take an ongoing effort to bring communities on board for the long term, she added.

"If you're really going to make change," she said, "you have to get the community mobilized, wanting to do this work, have to feel they own it ... and there has to be a way to sustain it."

"The thing we struggle with the most is: How do you shift from awareness to mobilization? That's where we're at now." **GX**



## A Great Value for U.S. Carpenter Says the Guard Is Cost-Effective

Story and photo by SGT Darron Salzer, National Guard Bureau

**MAJOR GENERAL RAYMOND CARPENTER**, acting director of the Army National Guard, feels the Army Guard is a cost-effective value for the United States, "but the national leadership has got to figure out how much belongs in the Army Guard and how much in the active component."

Speaking with a panel of industry leaders at the Reserve Officer Association in Washington on Dec. 8, Carpenter agreed that personnel are the key to the value of both the Army and Air components.

"If we didn't have the people—and the right people—that we do today in the Army National Guard, then the rest of what we do today would not matter," Carpenter said.

Carpenter feels that business and civilian partnerships have also helped the Army Guard achieve the successes that it has today.

"In the last five years, our equipment-on-hand percentages have risen from about 34 percent to about 89 percent," Carpenter said. "That is a tremendous [achievement] not only for us, but also for our business partners."

"However, as we continue to meet mission requirements at home and abroad, we need to ensure that we are putting our resources in the right places and to be provided services at the right cost and value that makes sense for us."

"If we can achieve this, then we can continue to be a cost-effective National Guard." **GX**



➤ Since 1982, the Rhode Island National Guard has hosted Leapfest, the world's largest and longest-running international parachute competition.



# FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE

The Rhode Island  
National Guard

*By Jason Hall*

In the early days of the new English colonies in America, the settlers found themselves in recurring conflicts with Native American tribes. Many colonies began forming militia units following the fighting between the Massachusetts Militia and Native Americans during the Pequot War of 1637.

**TRAINBAND**

On May 13, 1638, the town of Portsmouth organized the first militia unit in Rhode Island. Called a “trainband,” this militia force was comprised of “freemen as a militia subject to call and expected to perform certain military duties in the protection of the people.” With the exception of “herdsmen and fishermen,” all males age 16 to 50 were required to join the militia and participate in eight musters per year. By 1641, there were two full regiments of militia in the colony of Rhode Island.

The Rhode Island Militia was involved in its first combat in 1675 during the first major war in American history. Known as King Philip’s War, the colonial militias of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island fought several Native American tribes under the command of “King Philip,” the leader of the Wampanoag tribe. The pivotal battle of the war happened in Rhode Island’s “Great Swamp” on December 19, 1675. Attacking in deep snow, a militia force of 1,100 from Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut overran the Native Americans, inflicting heavy casualties. The victory at Great Swamp led to the eventual capture and execution of King Philip.

The colonial militia spent the rest of the 17th century and much of the 18th century protecting the colony from Native American raids. However, by the middle of the 1700s, dissent and dissatisfaction with their mother country, Great Britain, led many colonists to begin discussing the possibility of independence. Far before the “shot heard ‘round the world” at Lexington, MA, on April 19, 1775, the militiamen of Rhode Island were harassing British forces. On July 19, 1769, the militia sunk the British schooner HMS *Liberty* in Newport, RI. During the evening of June 10, 1772, the militia captured and burned the British schooner HMS *Gaspée* in Narragansett Bay.

**RISE AND FIGHT AGAIN**

Three days after the Battle of Lexington, the Rhode Island General Assembly organized the “Army of Observation,” consisting of 1,500 men. In command of the army was Brigadier General Nathaniel Greene.

The path that gained Greene a reputation for leadership second only to George Washington’s was long and arduous. Born into a Rhode Island family of ironworkers, young Nathaniel learned leadership and managerial skills while in charge of the family foundry.

Though raised as a pacifist Quaker, Greene was intently interested in military matters, which led his congregation to expel him for attending a militia parade in September 1773. In October 1774 he helped to create a new militia unit called the Kentish Guards. Due to a limp in one leg, the members of the unit did not feel that Greene was a suitable commander. Undaunted, Greene enlisted as a private in his own unit and, despite the lowly rank, played a critical role in revising Rhode Island’s militia laws. When war finally broke out between the colonies and England, the Rhode Island General Assembly viewed the limping Private Nathaniel Greene as the individual with the most military knowledge and experience, and thus elevated him to the rank of brigadier general.

General Greene took his Rhode Island infantry and artillery regiments to Boston to aid in General Washington’s siege of the British forces surrounded in that city. Placing their guns on Dorchester Heights, with a clear view of the British positions, the Rhode Island artillerymen became the first continental artillery to threaten the enemy trapped in Boston.

Greene’s continued exploits would eventually inspire the Continental Congress to appoint him Major General of the Continental Army, and make him the senior American commander in the South. During his campaigns against Lord Cornwallis, which

produced defeats and victories for the Americans, Greene uttered to his men, “We fight, get beat, rise and fight again.”

The actions of Greene would force Cornwallis to move his army to Yorktown, VA, where it was ultimately defeated, bringing about the victorious end of the American Revolution. In the end, over 20 regiments from Rhode Island served in the Army to bring freedom and give birth to a new nation.

**CONFLICT TO BE CONTINUED**

The newly formed United States did not enjoy immediate peace with its former ruler. In the early 1800s, due to the great need for sailors as a result of the ongoing Napoleonic Wars, England began impressing (kidnapping) American sailors. Those states that relied heavily upon maritime commerce, such as Rhode Island, feared that a conflict with England would wreak havoc upon their livelihoods.

Since the end of the American Revolution, the Rhode Island Militia had undergone a major reorganization. Five county brigades had been created: the Newport County Brigade, the Bristol County Brigade, the Providence County Brigade, the Washington County Brigade and the Kent County Brigade. It would be these militiamen who were called upon to protect the state when the War of 1812 began.

The fear of a British invasion of Rhode Island would pervade during the entire war. When a British fleet appeared off Narragansett Bay on July 16, 1814, it appeared that the fears had been realized. However, perhaps due to the presence of the large Rhode Island militia brigades, the British never invaded. With the end of this second war against England, the men of the Rhode Island Militia reverted to their monthly drills and duty to protect the citizenry of the state during domestic upheaval.



The 2nd Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry saw heavy action during the Civil War.

COURTESY OF RHODE ISLAND NATIONAL GUARD



CPT Christopher J. Ahlemeyer of the Rhode Island National Guard low crawls during the Best Ranger competition held at Fort Benning, GA, May 7–10, 2010.

## WE ARE ENTERING OUR EIGHTH YEAR OF SUPPORTING OUR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BY DEPLOYING RHODE ISLANDERS INTO HARM'S WAY."

>> LTC Denis Riel, of ongoing Rhode Island National Guard deployments

### DIVIDED, THEY FOUGHT

As the country grew and expanded, so did the divide between the states in the North and those in the South. The chasm created the sense of two different countries, and that perception erupted into war in April 1861.

During the Civil War, over 23,700 Soldiers from Rhode Island fought to preserve the Union. Eight infantry regiments, three cavalry regiments, 10 artillery batteries and three heavy artillery regiments were sent southward, with 1,685 Rhode Islanders never returning.

One Rhode Island Soldier who did return was Elisha Hunt Rhodes. Joining the 2nd Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry as a private, Rhodes ended the war as colonel and commanding officer of the regiment. The epic trials faced by Rhodes are highlighted in Ken Burns' PBS miniseries "The Civil War," which featured quotes from Rhodes' wartime diary. In the series, Rhodes describes the hell and carnage during the Battle of Gettysburg:

"A shell burst over our heads, immediately followed by showers of iron... Most of the shells that came over the hill struck in the road on which our Brigade was moving. Solid shot [split boulders] as if exploded by gunpowder. The flying iron and pieces of stone struck some men down in every direction... About 30 men of our Brigade were killed or wounded."

Rhodes went on to describe how he and his fellow Soldiers became desensitized to the death that surrounded them:

"Sunday a soldier of Company A died and was buried. Everything went on as if nothing had happened, for death is so common that little sentiment is wasted. It is not like a death at home."

Colonel Elisha Hunt Rhodes, and the rest of the Rhode Island Militia, helped to preserve the Union and keep the United States intact.

### FEDERAL CASES

The rest of the 19th century was relatively peaceful until 1898, when the United States

went to war with Spain. In reaction to the outbreak of the war, Battery A, 1st Rhode Island Volunteer Artillery, entered federal service, though did not see combat action.

In 1908 the unit was redesignated as Battery A, Rhode Island Field Artillery. Eight years later it would once again enter federal service. This time, Battery A and the entire Rhode Island National Guard were federally mobilized to respond to the threat posed by Pancho Villa's band of marauders raiding along the U.S.-Mexico border. The mobilization provided valuable training and reorganization of the Rhode Island National Guard.

The Rhode Island National Guard again answered the president's call in 1917 with the United States' entry into WWI. The state designation of the units was changed to the new Army numerical system, with Battery A, Rhode Island Field Artillery, becoming 1st Battalion, 103rd Field Artillery, Rhode Island National Guard.

As a unit of the 26th "Yankee" Division, the men of Rhode Island were among the first Guard members to arrive in France. During the Allied counteroffense along the Marne River, the men of the 26th provided overwhelming artillery fire and their infantry helped push the enemy back, eventually leading to the capitulation of the German forces.

War reignited in Europe in 1939, though the U.S. initially tried to remain neutral. In 1940, in preparation for possibly joining the fight, President Franklin D. Roosevelt mobilized the nation's entire National Guard for a year of training and reorganization. This action proved to be extremely beneficial when the country was dragged into WWII following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

The majority of the units of the Rhode Island Guard were transferred to the 43rd "Winged Victory" Division. Initially deployed to Auckland, New Zealand, in October 1942, the 43rd Division joined the forces of General Douglas MacArthur fighting in the Southwest Pacific. The men of Rhode Island saw extensive combat service in the Northern Solomons, in New Guinea and during the Luzon Campaign to liberate the Philippines. Having helped secure victory, the Guard left federal service in October 1945 and returned to Rhode Island.

### POST-WWII

After the end of WWII, the ensuing "Cold War" would produce several federal call-ups for the Rhode Island Army National Guard. Units from the state served in Germany with the

43rd Division during the Korean War. At the same time, Rhode Island's 705th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion was deployed to Okinawa.

During the Vietnam War, contrary to popular belief, several National Guard units were sent to that conflict. One such unit was the 107th Signal Company, Rhode Island Army National Guard. The 107th was activated on May 13, 1968, and served in Vietnam assigned to the Regular Army's 972nd Signal Battalion.

Unfortunately, the public perception of the National Guard during and after Vietnam was extremely negative, with many citizens not fully understanding the critical role of the Guard. That perception began to change with the deployment of Guard men and women for the Persian Gulf War, 1990–91. Three military police units of the Rhode Island National Guard were mobilized for duty during the war.

Arriving in Saudi Arabia in January 1991, the 118th Military Police (MP) Battalion conducted operations concerning enemy prisoners of war. A month later, the 119th MP Company and the 115th MP Company also arrived in Saudi Arabia. The 119th was put in charge of three prisoner-of-war camps, while the 115th provided base security, escorted VIPs and conducted other missions as assigned. By

July of 1991, all Rhode Island units in Saudi Arabia had returned home. However, it would not be long before the men and women of Rhode Island would return to the Persian Gulf.

### DEFENDING AGAINST TERROR

The U.S. suffered its worst terrorist attack in history on September 11, 2001. In response, Guard Soldiers and Airmen were mobilized to provide domestic security as part of Operation Noble Eagle.

The ever-expanding War on Terror would require the Rhode Island Army National Guard to go overseas once again, in its largest deployment since WWII. Over 3,200 Soldiers and Airmen of the Rhode Island National Guard have served in Afghanistan and Iraq for a total of 5,400 individual deployments.

During its service in Iraq, Rhode Island lost four members of its National Guard, with an additional 57 wounded. Lieutenant Colonel Denis Riel, public affairs officer for Rhode Island, stated, "What we will remember will not be the number who served who came home, but the number who served who did not come home."

In terms of deployment of Rhode Island Soldiers, according to Riel, "It has overwhelm-

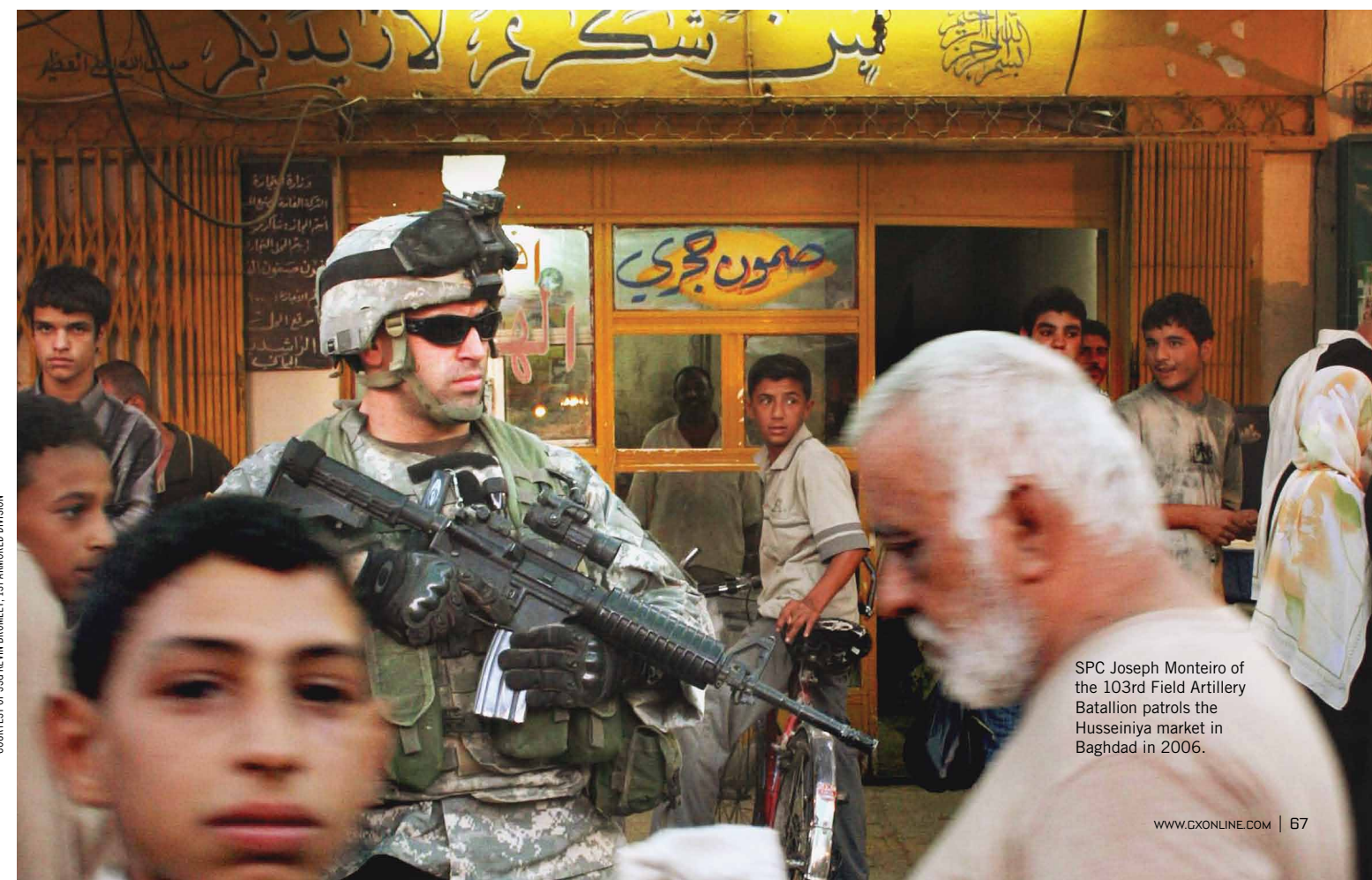
ingly been in Iraq. But moving forward, it will be Afghanistan."

Currently no members of the Rhode Island National Guard remain in Iraq as the focus turns to completing the mission in Afghanistan. Over the coming months, approximately 800 Soldiers of the Rhode Island Guard will be deployed, including the venerable 103rd Field Artillery Battalion. With its WWI, WWII and other battle streamers flying proudly from the staff of their colors, the 103rd will be sent to Kuwait to provide critical security.

In early 2011, two combat infantry units, along with two combat support units, deployed to Afghanistan. Though separated once again from family and friends, the men and women of the Rhode Island National Guard continue to do their jobs as Citizen-Soldiers.

"It's business as usual for us," Riel said. "We are entering our eighth year of supporting our Department of Defense by deploying Rhode Islanders into harm's way."

Though they're from the smallest state in the country in size, the men and women of the Rhode Island Army National Guard have made an impact that has been, and continues to be, felt around the world. **GX**



SPC Joseph Monteiro of the 103rd Field Artillery Battalion patrols the Husseinia market in Baghdad in 2006.

# Storming the Beaches

## The 115th's Assault During the D-Day Invasion *By Luke Guthrie, NGAUS*

OVER THE PAST 66 YEARS, a great deal has been written on the triumphs and tragedies of the D-Day invasion. A significant amount of attention has focused on the initial assault waves and the airborne jump into "Fortress Europe." These initial spearheads gained the foothold that enabled Allied forces to retake the European continent from Nazi tyranny.

As with every conflict in which the United States has fought, the National Guard was a key component in that eventual victory. Once the initial assault wave, led by the 16th and 116th Infantry Regiments (from the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions, respectively, the latter regiment made up of Virginia National Guard members), had established the beachhead, reinforcements were brought ashore to consolidate those gains and push inland.

Maryland's 115th Infantry Regiment landed on Fox Green sector of Omaha Beach at 1024 hours on June 6, 1944, four hours after the initial assault wave and a mile east of the beleaguered 116th Infantry. The 1st and 2nd battalions of the 115th were to hit the beach abreast, while the 3rd Battalion would serve as the regimental reserve, landing behind them once the 1st and 2nd battalions had moved off the beach.

The 3rd Battalion's landing was less intense than that of the initial landings, but it was far from uncontested. While most enemy gun positions directly affecting the beachhead had been eliminated, Omaha Beach was still well within range of mortar and artillery fire. Lieutenant Richard J. Ford, a 3rd Battalion platoon leader, relates:

*"It was difficult to see the beach through all the smoke and haze. We didn't land at our selected area but about 1500 yards to the ... left. We were to land on Dog Red at the Le Moulin draw. Instead we landed in the 1st Division sector on one of the Green beach sites. This resulted in my platoon being mixed in with the 18th Regiment of the 1st Division. At this spot the fire was not too intense, but there was enough artillery and mortar fire to make you move."*

The two lead battalions pushed inland just west of the draw between Colleville-sur-Mer and Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, following foot trails and scaling the cliffs just off the beach. The 2nd Battalion, on the right, took casualties almost immediately, as its sector was heavily mined. The 1st Battalion moved faster and took the high ground, encoun-

**160,000**  
**ALLIED TROOPS**  
LANDED ALONG A  
**50-MILE STRETCH**  
OF NAZI-OCCUPIED  
COASTLINE ON THE BEACHES  
OF NORMANDY, FRANCE.

MORE THAN  
**5,000 SHIPS &**  
**13,000 AIRCRAFT**  
SUPPORTED THE  
D-DAY INVASION.

MORE THAN  
**9,000**  
**ALLIED SOLDIERS**  
WERE KILLED OR WOUNDED,  
YET MORE THAN  
**100,000**  
**SOLDIERS**  
BEGAN THE MARCH  
ACROSS EUROPE  
TO DEFEAT THE NAZIS.

— COURTESY OF THE U.S. ARMY

tering moderate resistance from small units of the German 726th Infantry Regiment. The 3rd Battalion fared somewhat better, its lead elements moving up behind the lead battalions with a mine-detector-equipped engineer, marking mines as they went.

The 115th's D-Day objective was the town of Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, just over a kilometer from the beach. What would normally be a 10-minute walk took nearly five brutal hours with riflemen moving forward cautiously, keenly alert for snipers, machine guns and mines. By late afternoon, the 2nd Battalion had reached the outskirts of the town, but its rifle companies were met with heavy fire when the 2nd Battalion tried to enter. Covering their withdrawal, the 1st and 3rd battalions dug in while the 2nd Battalion pulled back and consolidated its position for the night. According to the regiment's daily journal, the 1st Battalion continued to take heavy mortar and sniper fire throughout the night, killing its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Richard C. Blatt.

While the 1st Battalion continued to bear the brunt of the German fire, the 3rd Battalion's commander, Major Victor P. Gillespie (a 19-year Maryland Guard Soldier), received the order to move his battalion into position to attack Saint-Laurent. Advancing under cover of darkness, the battalion's three rifle companies took positions to the northeast of the town and prepared to assault at first light. M Company, the battalion's heavy weapons company, dug in to support the assault with machine guns and mortars.

The 3rd Battalion experienced its first taste of urban warfare during the battle for Saint-Laurent. Moving carefully from building to building, 3rd Battalion GIs encountered stubborn German resistance. Often fighting against enemy troops in the next room or across a courtyard, the determined Soldiers of the 115th finally cleared the town by midmorning.

As the confusion of D-Day subsided, command structures were forced to adapt "on the go" to better direct the battle. Since the 115th was operating in the 1st Division sector, the regiment was detached from the 29th Division. In the early afternoon of June 7, the 115th's executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Louis Smith, ordered the 3rd Battalion to send a junior officer to link up with the 3rd Battalion of



### GUARD UNITS INVOLVED IN THE D-DAY INVASION

- > 28th Infantry Division
- > 29th Infantry Division
- > 30th Infantry Division
- > 35th Infantry Division

the 26th Infantry Regiment between Saint-Laurent and Formigny to further consolidate situational awareness along the front.

With Saint-Laurent captured, there was no time to rest. The 115th continued its southwesterly advance toward Longueville, encountering small German units en route, and significant resistance near the towns of Louvieres and Montigny. By the morning of June 8, after two days of constant combat, the regiment captured Longueville and began to establish defensive positions. It would be on the move again by nightfall.

The 115th's D-Day objectives had been met slightly behind schedule but were met nonetheless. In the opening two days, the regiment captured roughly 195 enemy prisoners while killing 69. By the close of June 7, the 3rd Battalion suffered a number wounded

and three Soldiers killed: Marylanders Staff Sergeant Ernest L. Esham and Private First Class Norman W. Morris, and Pennsylvanian Sergeant Pierre L. Robinson.

An M1 helmet worn by a 3rd Battalion Soldier on D-Day and throughout Normandy now resides in the National Guard Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Although donated anonymously, we do know that it belonged to a Maryland Guard Soldier from the 115th who served in M Company. The fixed bale helmet (and its rare Hood Rubber Company liner) still bears the distinctive "Blue and Gray" insignia of the 29th Division. As a key component of the museum's WWII gallery, it stands to honor the sacrifices made by the men of the 115th Infantry and the 29th Division who led the way into occupied Europe. **GX**

The National Guard Educational Foundation (NGEF), located in Washington, DC, was established in 1975 with the mission to educate the public and foster awareness about the contributions of the National Guard of the United States. In short, we tell the Guard's story.

As the educational element of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), the foundation achieves its mission through a portfolio that includes the National Guard Memorial Museum and the National Guard Memorial Library in Washington, DC; the Guard Muster, a permanent register of Guard men and women, preserving individual legacies of service; and educational programs, forums and seminars for students and the general public.

#### Please visit us at:

#### National Guard Memorial Museum

One Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

#### Hours:

Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

The National Guard Memorial Museum is free and open to the public.

To learn more about the museum, go to [www.ngef.org](http://www.ngef.org).

**SWASH**

**AND**

**BURN**

**ON THE HUNT WITH FLORIDA'S  
COUNTERDRUG TEAM**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY FRED MCGHEE

**W**hat the heck have I got myself into? Those were the words reverberating in my mind as I was hunched over in exhaustion in the dense Florida Panhandle forest. I'm more accustomed to sitting at my desk staring intently at my computer screen, filtering through countless emails while sipping a cup of coffee. But here I was, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, covered with ticks and chiggers, bleeding from numerous cuts and abrasions, sweating profusely, leaping over a barbed-wire fence to keep pace with sheriff's deputies and two bluetick coonhounds in pursuit of a fugitive suspected of growing 40 marijuana plants.

One wrong turn and we would be lost—or, worse, we could come face to face with a desperate fugitive willing to do anything to avoid capture. My only reassurance in the middle of all this madness was the OH-58 Kiowa helicopter hovering above, barely visible through the forest canopy. The helicopter belongs to the Florida Army National Guard Counterdrug Program.

In case you haven't figured it out by now, this was a real-life manhunt.

To say that I was out of my element would be an understatement. I'm a mild-mannered magazine editor, not a bounty hunter, so police chases are new to me. But to place this story in proper context, I have to start at the beginning.

**DAY ONE** UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION

After landing in Panama City, I made my way to Marianna, FL, a small, rural town in the middle of the Panhandle, to accompany Guard Soldiers and law enforcement agents on marijuana eradication missions and also to cover the Aerial Observation School, more commonly known as “spotter school.” The training, provided by the Florida National Guard Counterdrug Program, Putnam and Holmes counties, is a teaching tool instructing state law enforcement agents how to spot marijuana plants from a helicopter.

It sounds simple enough, but, as I would learn over the next three days, it's not. The conditions in the Panhandle are perfect for growing marijuana, and the indigenous vegetation is ideal for concealing it. Add to that the extreme methods marijuana growers employ to grow their plants—including elaborate watering systems, exotic seed blends and an endless array of chemicals used to expedite plant growth—and you begin to understand why illegal marijuana farms are a multimillion-dollar business. Law enforcement officials had seized more than \$4 million worth of marijuana statewide at this point in 2010, with two months still left in the growing season, which typically runs from May to September.

After arriving in Marianna, I met up with two Guard Soldiers tasked with eradicating marijuana grows across Florida as part of the Aerial Reconnaissance Team (ART)—Chief Warrant Officer Fours Sean Hogan and Kent Kiser—of the Florida National Guard Counterdrug Program. They would be my points of contact for the next three days. I had no idea when I met these guys just how much they would teach me about illegal marijuana grows and how to spot them. More important, they explained how these illegal underground businesses corrupt families and stain whole communities. The Florida Counterdrug Program has around 200 Soldiers, three aviators, four crew chiefs and one noncommissioned officer.

Hogan and Kiser, both OH-58 Kiowa helicopter aviators, previously deployed to Afghanistan, where they provided air support for ground troops. Now they are in a different role, helping conduct spotter school training.

They take students from various state law enforcement agencies out for three days of flying. The students are taken to known growth sites to see how marijuana looks from the air. The officers fly over the site at about 500 feet so the students can get a good



➤ **Above:** CW4s Kent Kiser (left) and Sean Hogan (right) are pilots for the Florida Counterdrug Program and have both deployed to Afghanistan.  
➤ **Right:** Guard air crews are trained to spot marijuana from 500 feet in the air, which helps the sheriff's deputies on the ground pinpoint their search efforts.

look at dope patches. “We call it calibrating your eyeballs,” Hogan said. Once they feel the students have a good read on what to look for, they take them to another known site and have them try to spot dope. “We’ve yet to have anyone who can’t spot marijuana plants after going through training,” Hogan said.

The agents take what they’ve learned back to their respective agencies and apply their new dope-spotting skills to their counties’ drug enforcement efforts. This works for counties with air assets. But as I learned, most counties in Florida lack air assets. For those counties, the Guard’s Counterdrug Program provides air assets free of charge. Law enforcement officials can file a request with Counterdrug state headquarters to arrange for air assets.

A sign of Counterdrug’s effectiveness is in the repeat business the program receives from local, county and federal law enforcement agencies. The benefit of using the Guard’s air assets is that it’s a force multiplier: covering large areas in a fraction of the time it would take law enforcement agents.

“Deputies could spend all day every day tracking down grows, but that’s not their only job. We give them speed, efficiency and quick coverage of their county,” Kiser said.

Captain Ron Rice of the Taylor County Sheriff’s Department, who’s also an instructor for the spotter school, said that his county used to seize more than 10,000 plants a year but that the number is now under 1,000, thanks



in large part to the Guard’s assistance. Taylor County, which has a history as a popular spot for illegal grows, is nearly 1,300 square miles and relies heavily on the Guard’s air assets to patrol for marijuana patches.

“We would lose the battle against drugs without help from the Guard’s Counterdrug program,” Rice said.

After spending more than five years each



Light, nimble and durable, the OH-58 Kiowa is the weapon of choice for the Florida Counterdrug Program aviators.

as members of Florida’s Counterdrug Program, Hogan and Kiser said they have seen about everything there is to see when it comes to seizing dope. Both Soldiers are natural storytellers. Over dinner and a few beers, they recalled some of the more dangerous and humorous anecdotes from past missions. I took it as their way of telling me to expect the unexpected.

**DAY TWO** SPOTTER TRAINING

We met up early the next morning at a small airfield in Marianna. There I got to meet Chief Warrant Officer Five Gerry Dedge, a veteran of several deployments to both Iraq and Afghanistan. They were using two copters for the training that day: Dedge was piloting a LUH-72 Lakota, while Hogan and Kiser piloted the OH-58 Kiowa. After a quick mission brief, we were on our way to some known marijuana patch sites to spot dope.

I don’t know how they do it. Looking at the landscape, all you see is green. For a layman like myself it’s difficult to spot dope, so I followed Dedge’s instruction and looked for trails, buckets and freshly tilled ground, all signs that a grow may be near. Another sign to look for is water or some sort of irrigation. Sounds simple, but you’d be amazed at the ingenuity of illegal growers. We’re not talking about water hoses from the local hardware store. To irrigate their

dope patches, growers expertly use expensive metal plumbing materials and water pumps. The more experienced growers don’t leave behind remnants easily identifiable from the sky. They start their plants off indoors, letting them grow about a foot tall before planting them outside, usually on public land. Some growers have gone to strictly indoor growing, using greenhouses year-round.

“There’s a patch,” Dedge said through the radio. “Yeah, we see it,” Kiser responded from the OH-58 Kiowa.

Both helicopters took turns hovering over the patch, showing spotter school students how to discern marijuana leaves from the surrounding vegetation. Marijuana leaves are dark green on top and shiny, almost metallic, underneath. It takes a while to calibrate your eyes, but I caught on fairly quickly. After a few hours of airtime with the spotter school students, we made our way to an airfield in Floral, AL, a sleepy little town on the Alabama-Florida state line, to refuel the aircraft and grab some lunch. There I talked with Dedge and Hogan about the Counterdrug Program’s success.

Dedge said the marijuana eradication program has been very successful, and with the success comes unexpected problems. The eradication program provides easily quantifiable results: number of seizures, arrests and monetary value of seized plants. The issue

is they have fewer seizures compared with past years’ numbers, so the perception is that the eradication program is no longer needed. Hogan equates that rationale to eliminating the police department from a town with a low crime rate. It doesn’t make sense.

“The number of outdoor marijuana grows has decreased because we’re making it harder on growers,” Hogan said. “We’ve driven the price of marijuana up because of the lengths growers must go through to produce it.”

Dedge said it doesn’t help that the general public has no idea the Guard provides these types of services and how effective they are at reducing the amount of drugs that reaches their communities.

We wrapped up lunch, but before we departed for another training mission, Dedge introduced me to two members of the Ground Reconnaissance Team (GRT). The GRT consists of highly trained Guard Soldiers who enter communities across Florida undercover, gathering valuable intelligence on illegal grows and growers, then relaying that information to local law enforcement. They specialize in rural and urban reconnaissance and observation.

The GRT employs digital video and photography, remote cameras, and night-time surveillance equipment to record illegal narcotics activity. The GRT, like the ART, is provided at no cost to local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. The GRT members



► **This page:** What appeared to be an abandoned trailer was actually the home base for an illegal grower.  
► **Opposite page:** The Taylor County Sheriff's Department and the Florida Counterdrug Program in pursuit of the suspect.

could not reveal their names because of the risk of reprisals against them or their families.

One member said they had been working in Holmes County for the past couple of weeks. They had intelligence on a growth site, and that's where the ART was headed. So, I was back in the LUH-72 Lakota headed to another site. We found about seven or eight small plants, nothing major. I couldn't believe how many hours we spent in the air that day, maybe six or so; Counterdrug aviators log 350–500 hours of flight time a year. It was getting late, so we headed back to Marianna.

At dinner that night, Hogan and Kiser were eager to see what I had learned that day and whether I had any questions. I did. I wanted to know if domestic missions like these provided good training for Soldiers headed overseas on deployment. "Oh yeah, definitely," Hogan said. "When you're overseas, you're focused on what your task is for that mission. It's not any different here.

"The end result and product are different, but there's no difference in how we go about our business."

Hogan went on to explain why he chose to work in the Counterdrug Program. He said it may sound corny and clichéd, but he knows the work they do is making a difference because he can see it. "Some people say it's only a little pot, so what's the big deal? Well, marijuana is a gateway drug, it leads to something else—methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin. It's a domino effect," Hogan said.

The numbers support his claim. The Florida Counterdrug Program seized more than \$700 million worth of illegal drugs in 2010. "We're not going to stop them all, but we know we are making an impact," Hogan said.

### DAY THREE MANHUNT

By the third day, I felt I had a good idea of Counterdrug's role: providing intelligence and reconnaissance to local, county and federal law enforcement. If all goes as hoped, the assistance they provide law enforcement officials leads to arrests as well as plant removal.

Spotter training had finished the day before, so we were going to cover a couple of sites we had received intelligence about from the GRT. So, I was expecting an easy, uneventful day. And that's just how the day started: routine flights, a few plants here and there, so far nothing extraordinary.

After lunch we decided to switch things up. I would ride along with sheriff's deputies from Holmes County as part of the ground team.

We rolled around the county for a few hours, hitting a few spots following information from Hogan and Kiser in the OH-58 Kiowa. The copter was getting low on fuel, so we were going to wrap things up for the day.

At least that's what we thought. On their way back to base, Hogan and Kiser happened across an illegal grow patch. But this one was different in that the plants were full-grown and planted in the suspected grower's front yard, in front of his run-down, doorless trailer. To top it all off, the shirtless suspected grower was sitting in a worn-out lawn chair, sipping on a Bud Ice tallboy.

"This guy had several large plants in his front yard, some the size of Christmas trees," Hogan said. "We took a cursory look. We didn't want to tip him off before we could get ground units onsite."

I just happened to be riding with said ground units. And with one flip of a siren switch, we were now racing to the site. Following the coordinates provided by Hogan and Kiser, we, along with several other deputies, arrived onsite to find the suspected grower had fled the scene using the dense Panhandle forest as cover from the helicopter above.

Back at the trailer, I stood in sheer amazement: first, at the dimensions of the plants and the Pringles can-size buds they'd produced, and second, at the filthy conditions in which the suspect lived. The trailer floors were rotting and covered with trash and debris, with stained walls and a stench so powerful it made your eyes water. I kept thinking to myself that this is no way for a human being to live.

Making the scene even stranger, if possible, was the bluegrass music blaring from a '70s-era phonograph. I made my way down the hall of the trailer, taking it all in, until I came across the bathroom, where the fugitive had been in the process of drying and processing harvested marijuana buds, getting them ready for the street. It seems Hogan and Kiser had found this guy just in time. All in all, the suspect had 35–40 marijuana plants.

I got busy, taking pictures of the plants, the trailer and the whole area. Then a deputy's pickup pulled into the scene carrying bloodhounds, a clear sign that this was now a manhunt.

The canine unit and several other deputies started to enter the woods, trailing the suspect. With my journalistic juices flowing, I decided to quietly, inconspicuously follow them. It seemed like a good idea at the time. Once they got the scent, the dogs picked up the pace, roaring and weaving back and forth, taking us deeper into the woods. One of the deputies

turned to me with a smile and said, "All right, it's really going to pick up from here. You can roll if you want or you can go back. What do you want to do?"

I pondered his question, and then it dawned on me that we were fairly deep in the woods and there was no way I would be able to find my way out. So I said, "Let's go."

For the next hour I tried keeping pace with deputies, leaping over barbed-wire fences, getting smacked in the face by branches and eaten alive by ticks and mosquitoes. I remember looking up through a clearing in the forest canopy, seeing Hogan and Kiser in the helicopter, and seriously wondering if they could airlift me out. Adding more tension to the situation were the denseness of the forest and the fact that I had lost visual contact with the deputies. I was trailing them by sound only. One wrong turn and I could encounter a fugitive who might be armed. I was exhausted and dehydrated, and my arms were bleeding from the thorny bushes. I was quickly running out of steam.

Luckily, I linked back up with one of the deputies. We were separated from the rest of the pack, so we ventured off, eventually finding an old dirt road. The deputy radioed for help, and we were picked up and taken back to the grow site, where more than 20

law enforcement agents were now on hand.

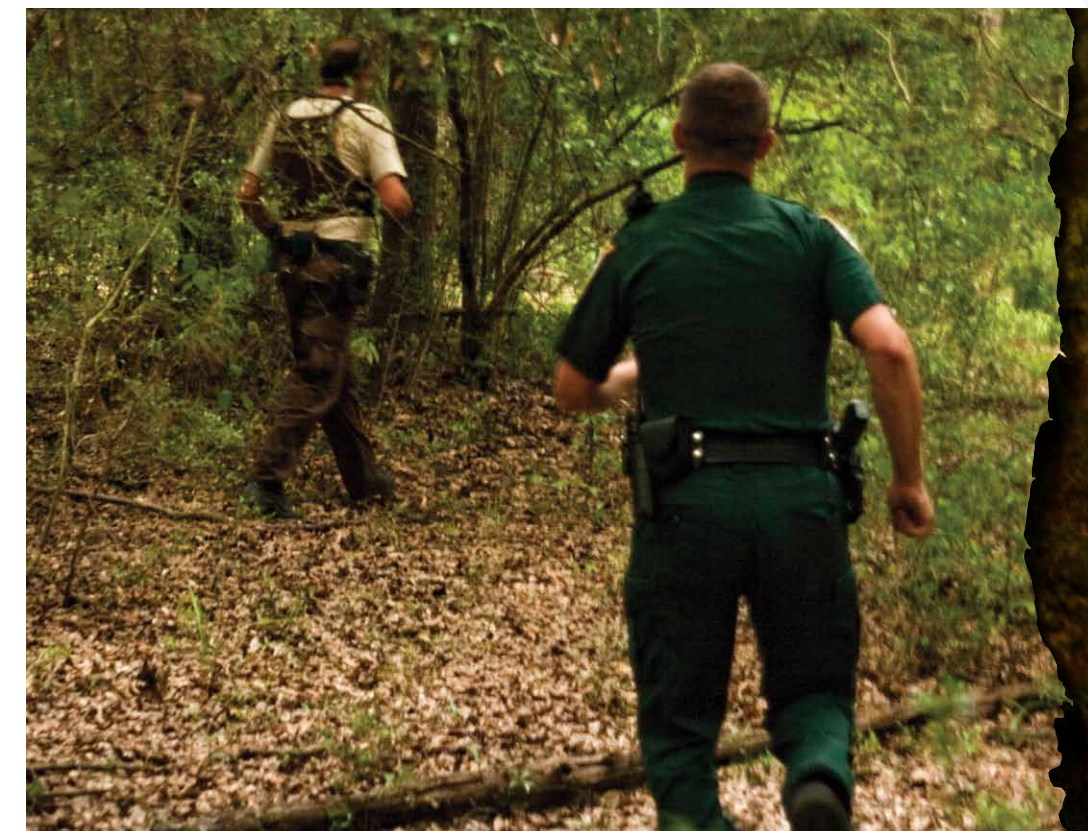
Just as we arrived, a call came through the deputy's radio saying that officers had just caught the fugitive. He was apprehended at the very location where we had just been picked up. The suspect was arrested and later confessed to growing marijuana with intent to distribute.

None of this would have been possible without the help from Florida Counterdrug.

"That's what we're here to do, to assist local law enforcement," Kiser said. It's "great to see our information lead to an arrest because we know that guy isn't going to be selling those drugs in communities."

That night we gathered for dinner one last time, only the roles had changed. Instead of Hogan and Kiser telling stories while I listened, I was recalling the day's events and what it was like to be on a manhunt, even though I didn't actually participate in the bust.

I didn't think anything could surpass my time with Florida's Counterdrug Program, but I was wrong. My next trip, to the Appalachians of Eastern Kentucky, would find me hanging out of a helicopter untethered, sliding down a mountain in a Humvee, and suspended from the bottom of a Black Hawk at more than 2,000 feet in the air. **GX**



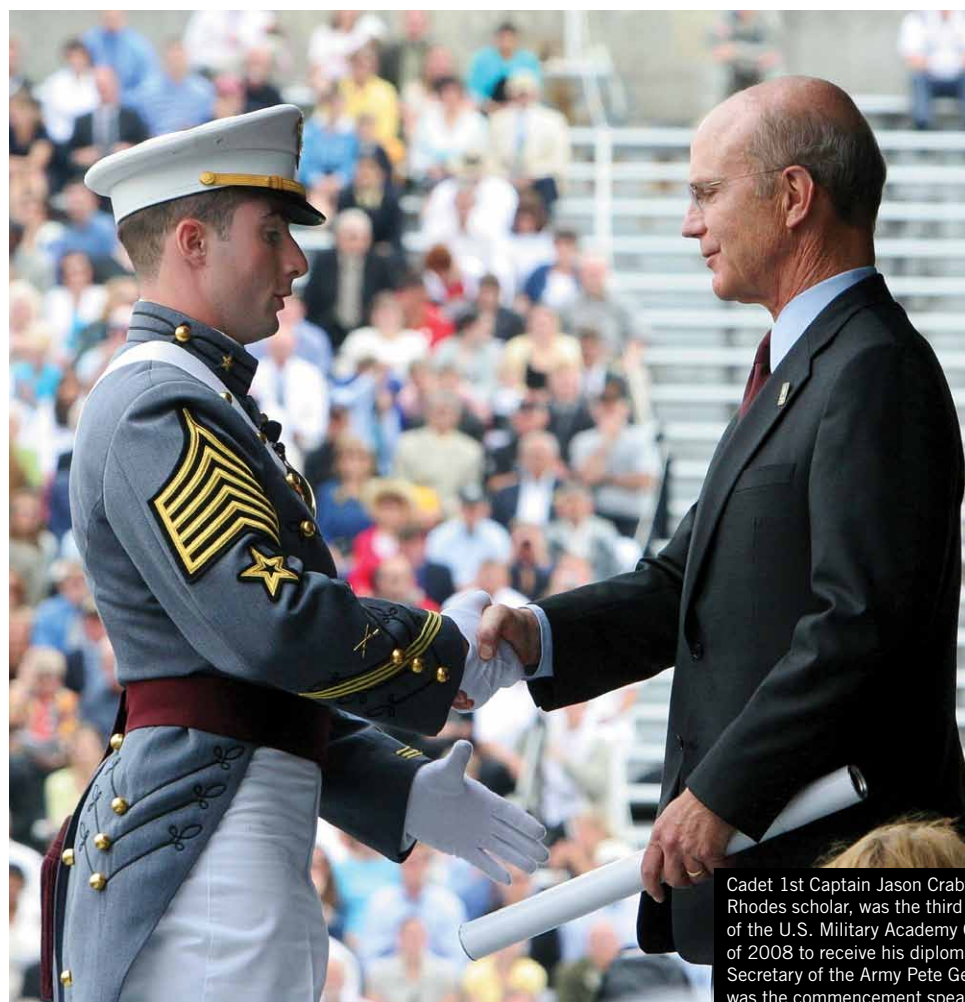
# Get to the Point

## Academy Turns Out World's Greatest Fighters

By Christian Anderson

**IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN** are forged into leaders. Only the elite are chosen, and there's no guarantee of success. The process doesn't take place overnight. It takes four years. But, after those four years, those left standing will go on to lead some of our country's finest fighting units.

Graduating from the United States Military Academy—better known as West Point—requires a strong commitment to service and the ability to endure sacrifice. The school has been transforming young people into leaders for over 200 years.



Cadet 1st Captain Jason Crabtree, a Rhodes scholar, was the third member of the U.S. Military Academy Class of 2008 to receive his diploma from Secretary of the Army Pete Geren, who was the commencement speaker.

Located 50 miles north of New York City, West Point maintains a student body of roughly 4,400 each year. Its first class graduated in 1802. Affectionately known as the “Long Gray Line,” the list of alumni is long and star-studded. It's at West Point that Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, George S. Patton, Omar Bradley, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight Eisenhower and Norman Schwarzkopf acquired some of the skills that helped them make history.

### ELITE ACCEPTANCE

Typically, each class starts with about 1,300 students and graduates around 1,000.

To say that getting accepted is difficult is an understatement. Applicants have to display an impressive background filled with extracurricular activities and stellar SAT test scores. They must also have a congressional recommendation, a requirement since the early 20th century. Applicants who manage to procure a nomination must undergo a fitness assessment and a full medical exam.

Only about 85 slots per year are reserved for National Guard and Army Reserve members, so the competition for the Guard Soldier is especially tough.

West Point was an all-male institution until 1976, when 119 females were accepted. The class of 1980 was historic, as 62 of those original 119 were commissioned into the U.S. Army as second lieutenants.

### FIRST THINGS FIRST

Each summer, new cadets are ushered into West Point via “Beast Barracks,” an eight-week adventure that gives the cadets insight into their next four years. Modeled after Basic Combat Training, it's not for the fainthearted. The days are long and stress levels are high. After cadets get haircuts, uniforms and fitness assessments, there's marching, marching and more marching. Throw in physical training several times a day, and the cadets are worn out.



### DELIBERATE INEQUALITY

Like any other four-year institution, West Point has an organized class structure. But instead of using the standard terms of freshman, sophomore, junior and senior, the cadets are labeled fourth class, third class, second class and first class, respectively.

The fourth class, being the newest, is under great scrutiny from the upperclassmen. Once they move into third class, they're cut a little more slack—and given more responsibility.

By the time a cadet makes it to first class, their only supervisor is the faculty. The first class juggles a lot of responsibilities. Like an officer in the Guard, a first-class cadet is assigned a group of younger cadets to lead and advise. This system teaches the cadets the skills of leadership.

### CURRICULUM

West Point offers 26 core courses and more than 45 majors. It's consistently ranked as one of the finest liberal arts colleges and overall universities by many reports, including *Forbes* magazine, and there's no denying that cadets have to study to make the grade.

The majority of professors are officers, with civilians making up the remainder. The combination of diverse faculty and a broad curriculum prepares the cadet to meet the intellectual requirements of a modern leader.

Although most graduates continue with their military schooling after graduation, a few cadets become Rhodes scholars and travel to Oxford,

England, where they're immersed in a culture of world-class academics. Once they receive their degree from Oxford, Rhodes scholars typically resume their military training. West Point has been sending graduates to Oxford for over 50 years.

### GRADUATION AND COMMISSIONING

All cadets receive a full scholarship and an annual salary to help pay for supplies such as uniforms, textbooks and laptops. The government pays for rent, as well as medical and dental care.

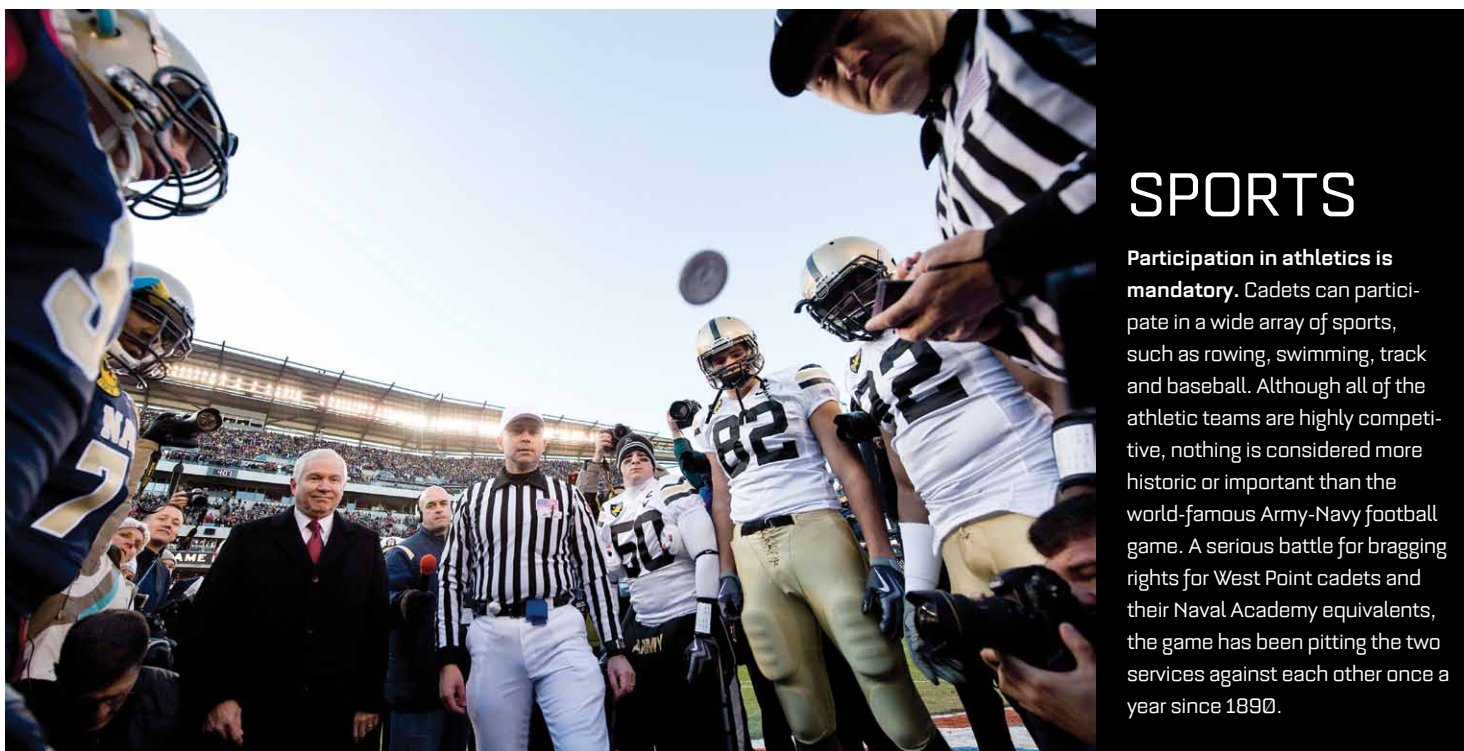
Upon graduation, cadets are awarded a Bachelor of Science degree and a commission as a second lieutenant. The commission obligates them to five years on Active Duty service in the U.S. Army, Army National Guard or Army Reserve, along with three years in an inactive reserve status.

### MOS SELECTION

Although West Point graduates are primed for great jobs in the military, there's no guarantee that they'll get their first choice of Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). Much like their peers in ROTC and Officer Candidate School, West Point cadets are evaluated by and rated on their academic and physical performances, and are assigned an MOS based on their grades and the jobs they picked in school.

Following graduation and a brief leave, the newly commissioned second lieutenant will report first to branch training, then to their Active Duty station. **GX**





## SPORTS

Participation in athletics is mandatory. Cadets can participate in a wide array of sports, such as rowing, swimming, track and baseball. Although all of the athletic teams are highly competitive, nothing is considered more historic or important than the world-famous Army-Navy football game. A serious battle for bragging rights for West Point cadets and their Naval Academy equivalents, the game has been pitting the two services against each other once a year since 1890.

### Fast Facts

- >> **Motto:**  
"Duty, Honor, Country"
- >> **Founded:**  
March 16, 1802
- >> **Faculty and Staff:**  
600
- >> **Student Body:**  
4,500 approx.
- >> **Land Size:**  
15,974 acres
- >> **West Point's Mission**  
"To educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the United States Army."

**Cadet Honor Code:**  
A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.

## HONORABLE ADMISSION

### LOUISIANA PRIVATE ACCEPTED TO MILITARY ACADEMY

Less than one year after enlisting in the Louisiana National Guard, Private Kele Bole is about to make a leap most Soldiers only dream of. This summer, she will join the ranks of cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Bole attended Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson in Columbia, SC, after joining the Guard in March 2010. Before enlisting, she had no plans of pursuing an education from West Point.

"I was planning to go to [Louisiana State University] and major in kinesiology," said the now 18-year-old Bole, a senior at West Monroe High School. This summer Bole was scheduled to attend Advanced Individual Training to become a combat medic and then join the 39th Military Police Company in Delhi.

Bole's plans quickly changed after one phone call. She now anticipates reporting to the New York campus as a cadet in July.

Staff Sergeant Obie Sims, who had recruited Bole, approached her about applying to the prestigious academy. They worked together to complete the application and interview process.

"There are numerous opportunities in the Guard," said Sims, "but a lot of people, even current National Guard Soldiers, don't know about them."

Bole said she started the application process in

September and finally got the call January 5.

"I had to write three essays, go through medical and physical fitness tests, and get a congressional nomination. I also interviewed with Senator David Vitter [who is on the academy's board] and with another West Point graduate," said Bole. "It was a long, stressful process."

Congressman Rodney Alexander signed Bole's nomination for the academy, and his office made the call informing her of her acceptance.

Each year, West Point accepts about 1,200 incoming freshmen from approximately 15,000 applicants. Of those, only 85 seats are reserved for National Guard and Reserve Soldiers.

Even with a 4.0 grade point average and on track to be class valedictorian, Bole wanted to be sure she could pursue a higher education without worrying about the cost. So she joined the National Guard.

Bole needed her guardians' signatures to enlist in the Guard because she was only 17 at the time.

"My grandparents were livid when I first talked about joining the military," Bole laughed. "They thought I would get scholarships without the military and were worried about what my joining up would mean. But they signed the papers, and are very supportive and very proud of what I am doing."

— By SGT Robin Carpenter, Louisiana National Guard

COURTESY OF U.S. ARMY



## FAMOUS WEST POINT ALUMNI

Jefferson Davis  
Class of 1828

Robert E. Lee  
Class of 1829

George G. Meade  
Class of 1835

William Tecumseh Sherman  
Class of 1840

President  
Ulysses S. Grant  
Class of 1843

Thomas J.  
"Stonewall" Jackson  
Class of 1846

George B. McClellan  
Class of 1846

George E. Pickett  
Class of 1846

Ambrose P. Hill  
Class of 1847

James E. B. Stuart  
Class of 1854

Colonel George A. Custer  
Class of 1861

Henry D. Flipper  
Class of 1877

George Washington Goethals  
Class of 1880

General John J. Pershing  
Class of 1886

General Douglas MacArthur  
Class of 1903

General George S. Patton, Jr.  
Class of 1909

General Omar N. Bradley  
Class of 1915

President  
Dwight D. Eisenhower  
Class of 1915

Frank D. Merrill  
Class of 1929

William D. Darby  
Class of 1933

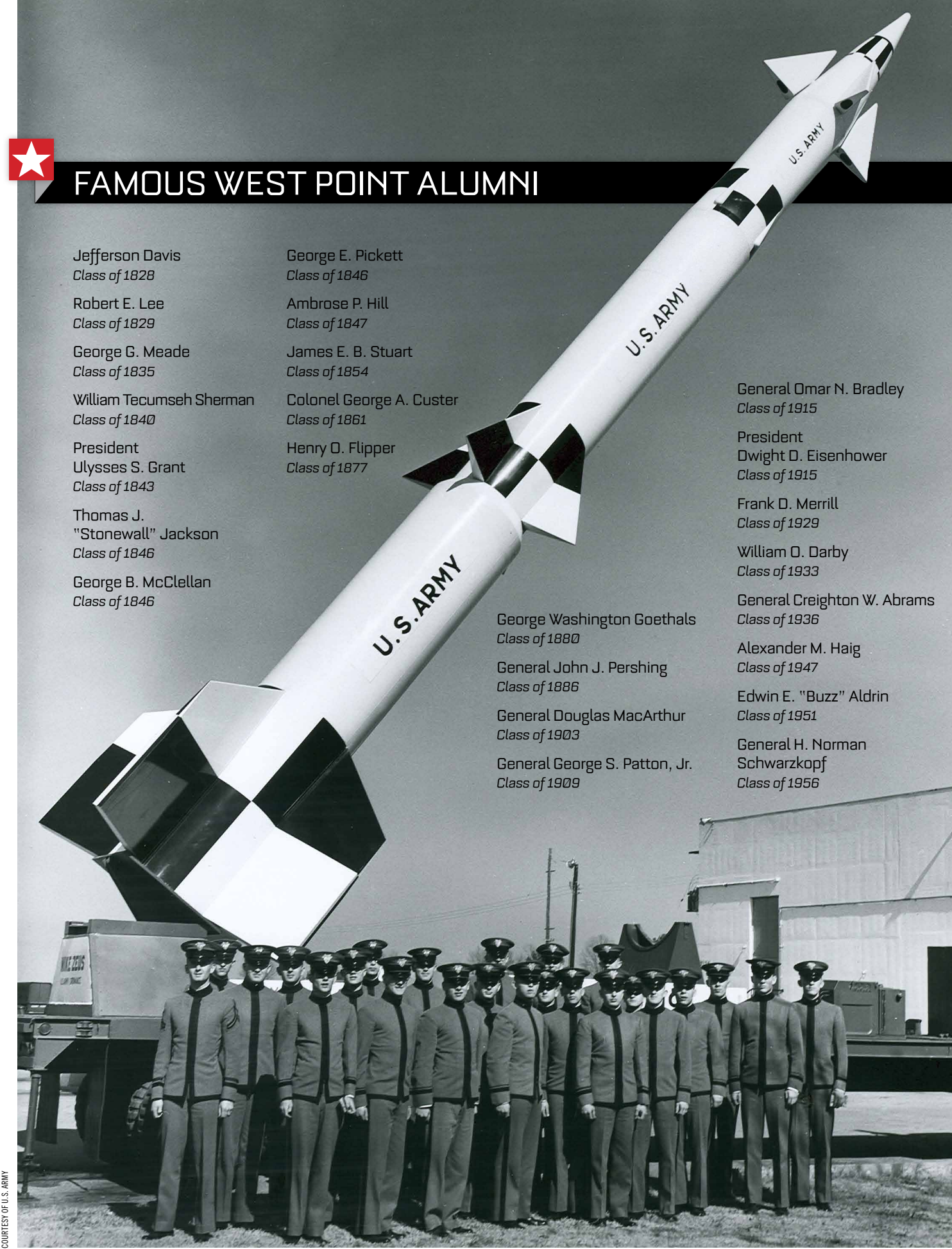
General Creighton W. Abrams  
Class of 1936

Alexander M. Haig  
Class of 1947

Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin  
Class of 1951

General H. Norman  
Schwarzkopf  
Class of 1956

COURTESY OF U.S. ARMY



# Deepwater Disaster

By Christian Anderson

The Guard  
Responds  
to Nation's  
Worst Oil Spill

The morning of April 20, 2010, proved to be one of the most eventful days in our nation's history. Around 9:45 a.m., an explosion rocked the Deepwater Horizon oil rig, located more than 40 miles off the coast of Louisiana.

The explosion, which killed 11 crewmembers, was caused by a sudden kick of gas through the 5,000-foot riser pipe connecting the well to the oil rig that went undetected for several crucial moments.

The Guard went into high gear.

British Petroleum, owner of the rig, and the U.S. Coast Guard rushed to rescue the 94 survivors of the explosion. On their heels was the National Guard, activating hundreds of Soldiers in engineer, transportation and medevac roles. These units immediately sprang into action, spearheading the response to protect the coastlines of the Gulf Coast states.

Our nation braced for the worst, and 36 hours later, the threat of the explosion became a reality as the remains of Deepwater Horizon sank to the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico.

By May 3, over 1,800 National Guard Soldiers had been placed on Title 32 status to assist in Louisiana. Troops helped clean up and contain the crude oil that leaked into the Gulf. The mission was dubbed "Operation Deepwater Horizon," and the world watched as a multinational force worked in overdrive to stave off total disaster.

Operations stretched well into the summer, until the oil leak was capped on July 15, 2010. Although this was a temporary solution, the damage had been done, and the cleanup became a huge priority for the Gulf states and the federal government.

#### FIERCE AND FEARLESS

On September 19, 2010, the well was officially and permanently sealed off. Within a few days, the media shifted its attention elsewhere, but the Guard remained on duty, doing everything in their power to protect the coast.

Many islands and inlets, specifically in Alabama and Louisiana, felt the brunt of oil seeping into their ecosystems. On Dauphin Island, a barrier island south of Mobile, AL, Guard members erected more than five miles of HESCO barriers. Soldiers built another seven miles of barriers in other coastal areas. The new mission: maintaining the barriers. Soldiers in Louisiana worked hard and fast to construct a Tiger Dam, which was used to prevent the oil from spilling onto beaches and into waterways.

According to NASA, Deepwater Horizon was leaking close to 70,000 barrels of oil per day, with a total estimate of 2.94 million gallons having spilled into the Gulf Coast.

Although the Guard officially stood down with disaster response shortly after September 19, Soldiers were still working directly and indirectly to protect the Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi coastlines.

COURTESY OF LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD



## HESCO BARRIERS

You will find HESCO barriers wherever National Guard Soldiers are stationed. Often used for protection against small-arms fire, Soldiers have learned to rely on them for safety. HESCO barriers were used heavily during the response to Hurricane Katrina and were pulled out of retirement for Operation Deepwater Horizon. Comprised of a collapsible wire mesh container and heavy-duty fabric liner, HESCO barriers were used to prevent erosion and keep oil from leaking into other bodies of water.



COURTESY OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

COURTESY OF LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD

▶ TO WATCH VIDEO OF OPERATION DEEPWATER HORIZON, GO TO [WWW.NATIONALGUARD.COM/OILSPILLRESPONSE](http://WWW.NATIONALGUARD.COM/OILSPILLRESPONSE).



COURTESY OF LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD

## TIGER DAMS

Shortly after the sinking of Deepwater Horizon, it was apparent that drastic measures were needed to keep the beaches in the Gulf Coast safe from the leaking oil—specifically, Louisiana’s coast. The National Guard chose Tiger Dams to protect the coast. The Tiger Dams were constructed in a variety of shapes to accommodate wetlands, beaches and barrier islands while protecting the local wildlife or fragile ecosystems. The concept behind the Tiger Dam was to use them as barriers between the ocean and the beaches to keep oil off the land. Soldiers filled the dams with water from the Gulf of Mexico. The water was used to fight the oil. They used a safety screen to keep fish and crustaceans from being sucked into the pump. The top tube on the pyramid is a special containment unit that is initially pumped with water, but may be emptied in less than five minutes to be pumped full of oil and debris that may wash up against the dam itself. Tiger Dams are 50-foot-by-19-inch cylindrical tubes that can be stacked in a pyramid shape up to 32 feet high and interconnected to form shoreline barriers of unlimited length.

### Fast Facts

#### ALABAMA NATIONAL GUARD

- ▶ 10 miles of HESCO barriers were built to protect the coast, specifically Dauphin Island
- ▶ Over 350 Soldiers responded

#### FLORIDA NATIONAL GUARD

- ▶ 80 Soldiers directly assisted efforts in the Gulf
- ▶ Aviators were involved in searching for and spotting oil pockets in the Gulf of Mexico

#### LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD

- ▶ Soldiers constructed 25 miles of HESCO barriers and Tiger Dams
- ▶ Over 1,000 Soldiers were activated to Title 32 status in response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill

#### MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD

- ▶ 250 Soldiers responded to Deepwater Horizon
- ▶ 912 hours flown by Mississippi aircraft

▶ **British Petroleum** announced in July 2010 that it would pay out \$20 billion in funds over the next decade to help restore both the ecosystem and the economy of the Gulf Coast states. As of December 2010, British Petroleum has made \$2.6 billion in payments.



## Born Leader

Dale Jr. enjoys some clean air off the front of the pack at the Ford 400 at the Homestead-Miami Speedway in Miami, FL.

### SPORTS

Guard anglers get high-tech; Tech time with Dale Jr.

88

### SPECIAL

CPT Aaron Isaacson reaches the summit of Mt. Lobuche in Nepal

92

### GEAR

Silent Spy: RQ-7 Shadow UAV keeps the enemy under surveillance

100

# Born to Run, Ride and Swim

## Ironman Hopeful Trains Throughout Deployment

By SGT Jerry Boffen, 130th Public Affairs Detachment

**DEPLOYMENT PRESENTS MANY CHALLENGES** for Soldiers. They must leave their friends, families and homes behind to fulfill their role in the mission. Many of the luxuries, freedoms and activities they enjoy at home must be set aside.

But one Soldier has found a way to keep one of his favorite activities going overseas. Specialist Carlos Ruiz, 41, of the Puerto Rico National Guard, continues to train for and compete in mountain-bike races and triathlons in Kosovo, where he's serving with the NATO-led peacekeeping mission. A triathlon is a race that combines swimming, running and cycling into one event. The distance and terrain on these events vary.

### BORN TO RUN

When at home in Puerto Rico, Ruiz, an infantryman with A Company, 1st Battalion, 296th Infantry Brigade, Multinational Battle Group East, competes in between eight and 10 triathlons each year. Recently, he has been training for and competing in half-Ironman competitions. These consist of a 1.2-mile swim in open water, a 56-mile bicycle course and a 13.1-mile run. Ruiz said he hopes to compete in a full Ironman within the next three or four years.

In addition to the triathlons, Ruiz also competes approximately eight times per year in bicycle races as a member of the Puerto Rico National Guard cycling team. The National Guard provides him assistance with training and maintenance on his bicycle.

To stay competitive, Ruiz must train constantly. In Puerto Rico, he trains every day of the week. He tries to be equally vigilant overseas, but "It's a little difficult," he says, "because I don't have the resources I have at home."

"I'm mostly focusing on running and cycling now," he continued. "[When we first got here] I focused on building a strong running base. Now I'm building up my cycling."

"There's no pool, so I can't really swim while I'm here," he continued. "But I do weightlifting, which builds the same muscles that are used while swimming."

### CROSS-TRAINING

In addition to improved fitness, Ruiz said he feels that his training and competing complement his military service.



SPC Carlos Ruiz pushes himself during a mountain bike race in Barranquitas, Puerto Rico.

"I have to be able to deal with the pressure from other competitors," he said. "I have to be focused and disciplined. I have to stay highly motivated. These are all things that are important as a Soldier, too."

Ruiz has several different motivators. One is his competitive nature.

"When I compete, I try to do my best," he said. "I enjoy doing this, but ... I want to win. And if I don't win, I need to know that I did the best I could."

He illuminated his point with a story of his first-ever triathlon.

"The swim was in a pool, and we had to do a set number of laps. I was fourth coming out of the water. Next came the cycling and I got into second place rather quickly. I was just pushing, trying to catch first place."

"Then, when it came time to transition into the run, I heard the guy in first [place] say, 'That's it. I can't do anymore.' I kept going. I ran at a good pace and won the race, but I got disqualified because somebody said I didn't do enough laps during the swim. I knew I did them all, though, because I wasn't a very good swimmer at the time, and I was counting every lap, pushing myself to finish."

"I didn't get first, second or even third place because they disqualified me, but I went home that day, knowing in my heart that I won that race."

### NOTHING BUT A NUMBER

Another motivator for Ruiz is his age.

"I'm in my forties now, but I can still go out there and outrun guys that are half my age," he said. "That feels good."

Finally, Ruiz feels it sets a good example for his children. His 10-year-old son, Jeancarlo, has begun training, too. Ruiz said it's a good way for the two to bond.

"We'll go running or cycling together and he's actually pretty good," Ruiz said. "He keeps up with me pretty well."

When asked why he thinks his son began training, Ruiz said, "I think he does it because he wants to be like his dad. That makes me proud."

Ruiz, who hopes to resume competing soon after he returns from deployment, lives in Gurabo, Puerto Rico, with his wife, Janesse Rodriguez, and their two children, Jeancarlo and Karla. In his civilian career, he's a business manager in security and safety at the Puerto Rico Art Museum. **GX**

COURTESY OF SPC CARLOS RUIZ

# Eyeing the Gold

## Player Leads Team to Victory

By SSG Jeff Lowry, Indiana National Guard

**AN INDIANA NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER** reached new heights in his soccer career when he won gold as an All Army team member in a military tournament.

"Really, I was honored to be a part of the team, said Captain Timothy J. Halls, who played striker and midfielder for the team. "It was a great win for the Army, and I hope to be in a place next year where I can come back to defend the gold."

If he's selected in 2011 and the Army wins gold again, that will be three years in a row. The Army team also earned silver in 2008.

### SOCCER WARS

The Armed Forces Soccer Championship consisted of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine teams. The weeklong, round-robin tournament pitted the services against one another so they could be seeded for the finals.

"It's pretty intense, with games every day," said Halls. "Actually, our week started out a little rough. Day one, we beat the Navy. Day two, we lost to the Marines, and day three, we lost to the Air Force. All were close games."

With two losses, the Army team had an uphill battle to fight.

"We were seeded fourth and had to play the Air Force again that Saturday morning," said Halls, 28, of Chesterton, IN. "We beat them Saturday and then had to play Navy on Sunday for the gold."

The final game was a low-scoring affair.

"It was a battle the entire time; the finals were decided by an overtime and then went to a shoot-out," said Halls.

Navy scored first in overtime, the Army matched that, and then Army took the shoot-out for the win.

### DOUBLE GOLD AND COUNTING

"It's cool the Army was able to bring home the gold—and the second year in a row," said 1st Lieutenant Daniel Newell, a defender for the Army team.

Newell, of Scottsdale, AZ, is an Active Duty Soldier and a platoon leader with Company A, 508th Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, stationed at Fort Bragg, NC. Newell praised his teammate.

"T.J. is a great guy," said Newell. "Our primary connection was that both of us were officers."

Though the team included Soldiers of different ranks, it didn't hinder them from bonding as a single unit.

"There were definitely cliques, but considering it was privates to captains from all backgrounds, it really was not bad at all," said Halls, who has worked at the National Guard Bureau (NGB) for two years and credits his supervisors with the opportunity to play.

"I just happened to be ... with bosses who supported this chance I was given," he said.

Halls works in domestic operations at NGB. The last unit he served with in Indiana was Company B, 1st Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment, 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, based in Martinsville, IN.

### LIFELONG KICKERS

Halls has played in youth recreation leagues, on his high school team, and on intramural teams at Indiana University.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF U.S. ARMY



Left: CPT Timothy Halls plays striker and midfielder for the All Army Soccer Team. Below: Active Duty, Guard and Reserve Soldiers united together to form the team.



Newell also had a wealth of soccer experience. He's played since he was 4, and was the captain of his team at the U.S. Military Academy. Both players said they enjoyed representing the Army.

"It was a great experience. It was rewarding, and it's an honor to represent the unit," said Newell, who added that the Army's uniforms were also outfitted with Soldiers' unit patch.

Now that this tournament is finished, the military will select all-stars from the different branches to represent the U.S. military in an international competition in South America, and if the U.S. qualifies there, the team could play in the World Games the following year.

Although Halls didn't make the U.S. military all-star team, he hopes others become interested in military sports.

"I hope that more Soldiers and families take an interest in ... All Army Sports—there are many out there," said Halls. **GX**



Pro anglers use countless variations of rods, reels and lures to achieve success.

# Tools of the Trade

## Justin Lucas Describes FLW Fishing Gear

By Stephanie Inman

AS ANY GREAT ATHLETE OR PRO KNOWS, the right equipment is everything. It can be the difference between a first-place or second-place finish. For a pro bass angler, it can mean a string of fresh catches or an empty line.

So to understand how the National Guard-sponsored FLW (Forrest L. Wood) fishing team is so successful, we must first examine their gear. Justin Lucas, an angler with the FLW team since 2007, believes that possessing the appropriate gear and knowing when to use it is the key to winning.

The rod is one of the most crucial components of an angler's gear. "In golf, there are all sorts of different clubs. You can't use your driver to putt with," Lucas said. "It's the same thing with fishing. There are different rods for various situations."

Rods can vary in length and power. The power is determined by the stiffness throughout the rod, and it can range from 1 to 5. Certain variables determine when a fisherman uses a heavier or lighter rod. For instance, when Lucas is in the Florida Everglades, he needs a rod with a higher power to navigate a fish through the marshy terrain.

"I use a heavier-power rod down [in Florida].

If I had a light rod and I hooked a big fish in the grass, I would either break my rod or I wouldn't even get a hook into the fish. If I have a stout rod and I set a hook into that fish, I can drive the hook into that fish's mouth and wrestle it out of that grass," he said.

But a heavy rod isn't acceptable in every circumstance. "If you are fishing 40 feet deep on a real clear lake, you have to finesse the fish," Lucas said. "Then you would need to use a really light rod."

Lucas recalls his first rod: a Bass Pro Shops combo that cost him around \$60 or \$70. Today, his collection of rods has expanded to about 25. Each one serves a unique function.

"It's like a golfer's golf bag: There's not one club in there that's the same as the other. They all have their purpose."

Rods are just the tip of the iceberg when discussing the tools of the elite FLW/National Guard fishing team. The anglers use various reels and lures as well, depending on the rod and the time of the year.

Lucas uses a spinning reel with a lighter rod, and a baitcaster reel with medium to heavy rods.

"It's harder to use a baitcaster reel. You get a lot

of backlash with them, where your line balls up and gets in knots," he said. "But the baitcasting reel is better for your medium to heavy rods. You have more control with a baitcaster than a spinning reel. You can cast with more accuracy. Personally, I like using the baitcaster the best."

Lures come in hundreds of shapes, sizes and colors. The season often determines when an angler will use a certain lure. Lucas prefers a plastic worm or jig during the colder months because bass are at the bottom of the lake. Then in late spring to early fall, he employs a topwater lure because the bass hover at the water's surface.

### BOAT EVOKES PATRIOTISM, PRIDE

Even with a plethora of rods, reels and lures, Lucas' success hinges on the capabilities of the National Guard-sponsored Z521 Ranger fishing boat. The boat is about 21 feet long and can reach 74 mph. Speed is essential to anglers so they can arrive at "sweet spots" on the lake before others.

However, it's not the speed that makes Lucas proud to be riding in the National Guard boat. It's the American Flag painted along the side.

"It's an honor driving a truck and boat across country that has the American Flag all over it. It's cool to get the thumbs-up from everybody and see the patriotism among most Americans. If I had another boat, I wouldn't get the thumbs." **GX**

For more behind-the-scenes info, check out [www.NATIONALGUARD.com/FLWFishing](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/FLWFishing).

COURTESY OF SRS

# Tech Time

## The Nuts and Bolts of the Guard Car



The blue-and-white No. 88 National Guard/AMP Energy Chevrolet Impala driven by Dale Earnhardt Jr. in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series may look like a normal Impala, but that is where the similarities hit the brakes.

The tires are different, the engine is a rocket and the fuel can be used only in 2007 and newer street cars.

By Clint Wood

For more on Dale Jr., go to [www.NATIONALGUARD.com/TechTime](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/TechTime).

### NEED FOR SPEED

The GM Chevrolet R07 engine in the No. 88 National Guard/AMP Energy Chevrolet Impala produces 850 horsepower with a maximum of 9,500 RPM. These 358-cubic-inch engines are manufactured, assembled and tested at Hendrick Motorsports. It takes about 40 hours to assemble an engine.

These engines last only one race weekend. Teams come prepared for each race—there is a spare engine in the backup race car and a spare engine assembly in the race hauler.

### FILL IT UP

The No. 88 National Guard/AMP Energy Chevrolet Impala is fueled by Sunoco E15 gasoline for the first time this season. E15 is a 15 percent ethanol blend using American-made ethanol from corn. This new fuel is pumped directly from tankers at each track instead of from onsite underground storage tanks. The Impala holds 18 gallons of fuel.

Consumers can purchase this same fuel from gas stations, but it's recommended for cars and trucks built since 2007. The current allowable limit of ethanol is 10 percent.

### TREAD CHECK

A Goodyear Eagle Racing Tire is like a tire-within-a-tire, because it has a safety spare in it that enables the Impala to return to the pits in case of a flat tire. The average life of a racing tire is 150 miles, compared to about 50,000 miles for a normal tire. Racing tires are inflated with nitrogen, compared to air from your friendly gas station for street tires. A racing tire's tread thickness is 1/8 inch—about the thickness of an iPod nano—compared to a street tire that has a 3/8-inch-thick tread—the thickness of a pack of bubble gum.

On the average race weekend, Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s team will use between nine and 14 sets of tires, depending on the length and type of the track. Goodyear uses about 18 different types of tires to cover the needs of teams during a racing season. All the racing tires are recaptured and recycled.

# TRI HARDER

## THE BASICS OF MULTISPORT TRAINING

by **SGT ROBY DI GIOVINE**  
20th Special Forces Group

1997-1999 Cycling Elite (Italy)  
2000-2004 Professional Cycling (Europe and USA)  
2005-Today Triathlete, Ironman, Triathlon Coach (USA)

**IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO LOSE WEIGHT**, increase stamina and maximize your weekly cardio sessions, triathlon could be the sport for you.

Actually, triathlon is good for everybody. Every weekend, all around the country, thousands of people challenge themselves with this endeavor. In fact, since its inception in the late 1970s, it has become one of America's most popular sports.

What's special about triathlon? The challenge, the friendly crowds, the sense of accomplishment, the technical aspects, the environment—lakes, oceans, forests, country roads, mountains—and tons of nice Lycra. OK, spandex might not be that cool for some people, but, I promise, wearing it is not mandatory.

Most of all, triathlon makes you feel good.

### THE BASICS

Triathlon is a multidiscipline race of swimming, cycling and running. Normally, the first leg (discipline) is the swim. Next comes the bike and then the run.

There are four distance options to choose from:

<b>Sprint</b>	250-800-meter swim; 8-14-mile bike ride; 5K run. Some sprints use a pool for the swim.
<b>International/Olympic</b>	1,500-meter swim; 40K ride; 10K run.
<b>Half-Ironman</b>	1.2-mile swim; 56-mile ride; 13.1-mile run.
<b>Ironman</b>	2.4-mile swim; 112-mile ride; 26.2-mile run.

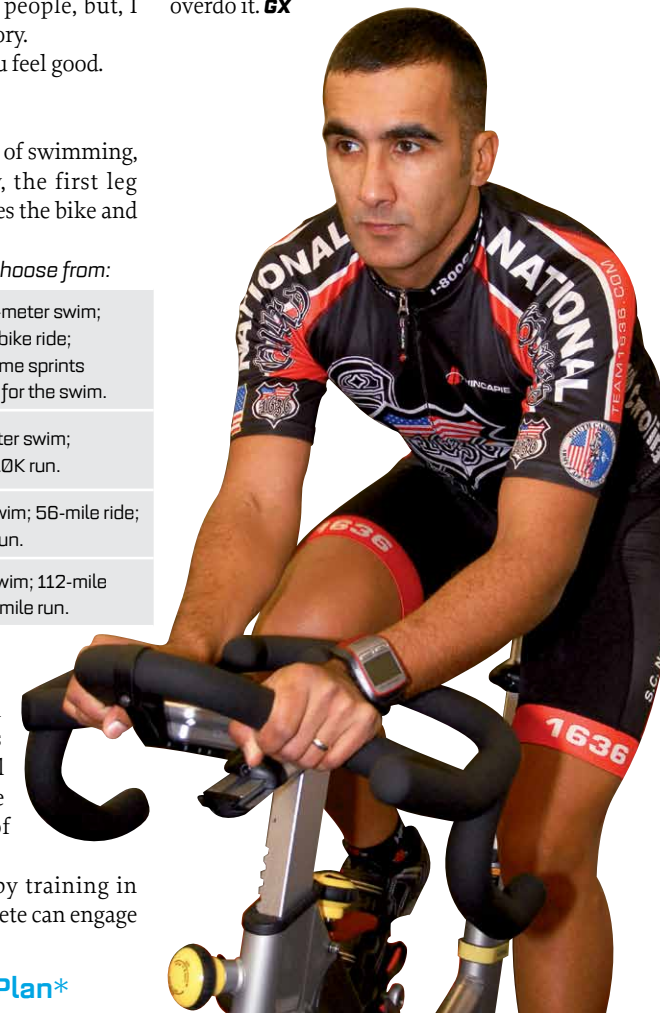
### TRAINING FOR TRIATHLON

Training for triathlon at any level requires you to apply the rules of cross-training. So, there will never be a back-to-back run, ride or swim—it's always a matter of alternating the three sports.

What really matters is that by training in three different disciplines, the athlete can engage

all of the main muscle groups and consistently keep the cardiovascular system active. In other words, they work every day on different muscles and use one sport as the active recovery for the other two sports. Even without racing, this would increase your fitness level. You don't have to be a champion to benefit from triathlon training.

Lastly, stay hydrated, and stretch properly every day to prevent injury. The key for athletic longevity is nutrition, recovery and stretching. An injured athlete can't train. A tired athlete can't perform. This applies to professional and amateur athletes alike. Train smart, and don't overdo it. **GX**



## Triathlon Myths

Triathlon is for "real" athletes

**TRUTH** Triathlon is for everybody. In local competitions, it's not uncommon to see overweight men and women racing, and having fun doing it. One of the founders of Nike said, "If you have a body, you are an athlete." Therefore, we are all very much real.

Triathlon is expensive

**TRUTH** To train and compete in triathlons, all you need is a pair of running shoes, shorts, T-shirt, swimming goggles and a bicycle. Any kind of bicycle is fine. You may already have a mountain bike sitting somewhere in your garage—that would do.

Triathlon requires too much training; "I don't have time"

**TRUTH** Let me be straightforward: Do your kids need healthy parents? Can they leave you alone 35-50 minutes a day, three or four times a week? If so, you have enough time. You need to make training a priority.

People will laugh at me

**TRUTH** Triathlons are very friendly. Entire families often gather around to support their athlete. Most triathlons are like big parties where people with similar interests and goals race to conquer their personal limitations. Go to a local race and watch—that's the best way to understand the good-natured spirit.

I'm too old

**TRUTH** Triathlons require maturity. The average age in Ironman events is 37. The most competitive age groups are the 30-34, 35-39 and 40-44. The Ironman World Champion is 37 years old, and the past four champions were between ages 34 and 37. Local triathlon events have an even higher average age.

I don't have a place to train

**TRUTH** You can train anywhere by taking Spinning classes at any gym, running up and down stairs, and doing laps at the local YMCA or a community pool.

### Roby's Sample Training Plan\*

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Bike ride 45-60 minutes, moderate pace	Swim 20-30 minutes or stretch for 20 minutes	Jog 20-25 minutes	Rest	Bike ride 30-45 minutes, with six one-minute surges at max speed (recovery three minutes)	Run 10 minutes easy, then execute 4 x 400 meters at max speed (recovery walking for five minutes). Cool-down 5-10 minutes	Rest

\* This is a basic template for longer training sessions and more advanced levels. Prepping for Ironman requires a much higher level of training.

COURTESY OF RAFFAELE FERRONI

COURTESY OF RAFFAELE FERRONI

❄️ CONQUERING ❄️  
IMPOSSIBLE



**CPT Aaron Isaacson  
scales a Himalayan giant**

Story by Stephanie Inman  
Photos by Didrik Johnck





Captain Aaron Isaacson had a choice. Turn back and increase his odds of surviving or press onward. His determination willed him forward. But the seven long hours spent trying to conquer the 20,075-foot summit of Mt. Lobuche in Nepal had taken a toll on his body. The lack of oxygen was making it difficult for him to breathe.

"I was so exhausted. My legs were shaking and my muscles had almost given up," he said. "We trained for a year to get here. It's all coming down to this moment, and I don't know if I am going to make it."

Isaacson, a combat engineer in the Kansas National Guard, was accustomed to pushing his body and mind beyond their limit. His three deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan were a testament to that claim.

But as he clung to the side of the icy mountain with his crampons, Isaacson found himself in unfamiliar territory. No amount of training or experience could have prepared him for this moment. He wasn't battling against terrorists anymore. He was battling against himself.

and I just lost it. I was crying at that point because I realized that I was going to make it. That was the hope I needed," said Isaacson.

#### DEFYING ALL ODDS

Isaacson knew firsthand the determination it takes to triumph over challenges. On his first deployment in 2004 to Iraq, Isaacson received permanent hearing loss and was awarded the Purple Heart.

In 2006 he served in Iraq again. Then in 2008, Isaacson volunteered for a third deployment to Afghanistan. During that tour, he suffered a leg injury that left him inactive for several months.

"I went through a lot of depressing times lying in the hospital in Afghanistan," Isaacson said. "All my buddies were gone, and I felt I should still be in the fight with them. My guys were pushing back out for another big combat operation that I wanted to be a part of. I really needed to be there for them. It was painful because I didn't have communications with them. I was more worried about them than myself."

Isaacson was sent back to the United States for an operation. He had to undergo a year of physical therapy.

**"I REALIZED THAT IT WAS THE SUMMIT, AND I JUST LOST IT. I WAS CRYING AT THAT POINT BECAUSE I REALIZED THAT I WAS GOING TO MAKE IT."**

>> CPT Aaron Isaacson

Isaacson had endured 10 arduous days through the Himalayan Mountains as part of an expedition called "Soldiers to the Summit." This expedition's mission was to place 11 wounded U.S. Soldiers on the summit of Lobuche.

But here on the last leg of the climb, summit day, it appeared that Isaacson might not reach his goal.

The razor-sharp wind sliced right through him. At 20,000 feet in the air, Isaacson weighed his options. He realized he had come too far to give up now. Either he would summit or die trying.

Isaacson lifted his ice ax into the air, hammered it down into the cliff, and moved forward an inch. The only thing he concentrated on was placing one foot in front of the other as he continued up the mountain. Moments passed which felt like hours. Finally, through the fog, Isaacson could vaguely see his fellow climber celebrating off in the distance.

"I had given everything to make it, then I saw Brad cheering. I realized that it was the summit,

Rehab proved to be challenging both mentally and physically, especially for a guy who has skied the Alps and run with the bulls in Spain.

But Isaacson didn't let himself get discouraged. He stayed focused on his one goal—returning overseas to fight with his comrades in uniform.

"I love serving overseas. My concern was that I wouldn't be able to do that anymore. So I needed to push it. I kept reminding them every week [of physical therapy] that I wanted to go back and serve."

During that year, Isaacson became restless. He longed for a good challenge. He needed something to get his adrenaline flowing. So he contacted World T.E.A.M. Sports, a nonprofit organization that brings together athletes, with or without disabilities, to participate in athletic events. They were organizing the "Soldiers to the Summit" expedition to Mt. Lobuche. Isaacson had found his ticket.

As a young boy, Isaacson had fantasized about climbing a mountain. He was drawn to how



At 18,000 feet, the "Soldiers to the Summit" team sets up base camp.

**EXPERIENCE "SOLDIERS TO THE SUMMIT"**

A film is set to be released documenting the incredible "Soldiers to the Summit" expedition. Michael Brown, the videographer, participated in every aspect of the Mt. Lobuche climb. He captures and portrays the personal journey of each Soldier and their motivation to summit.



the goal was so cut and dry—make it to the top. Yet Isaacson never imagined that his boyhood dreams would come true, because the trip would be expensive.

"I grew up in a small farm town in Kansas," said Isaacson. "So the world was a big place. I would watch documentaries on Everest climbers and think, 'Man I would really love to do that.' But it's so expensive. I never imagined I would be able to fund such a climb."

But thanks to sponsors like the National Guard and the Boys Scouts of America, Isaacson's dream could become a reality.

On Oct. 2, Isaacson and 10 other Wounded Warriors were led by 10 expert climbers up Mt. Lobuche. The Soldiers who participated in this expedition had been wounded in battle, and their injuries ranged from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to blindness.

The expedition was dangerous, but they were in good hands. The 10 climbers leading them were among the elite. They had all been part of the most successful expedition up Mt. Everest, which placed 19 climbers on the summit in 2001. Among the climbers was Erik Weihenmayer, the only blind man to climb the highest mountain on all seven continents. The pairing of Soldiers and climbers was perfect because both had overcome great obstacles to get where they are today.

After a year of performing practice climbs in Colorado, Isaacson and the rest of the team left the United States in October for their month-long expedition. They flew in first to Bangkok, Thailand, then left there and flew to Katmandu, Nepal. In Katmandu, Isaacson was first introduced to Nepalese culture.

Upon stepping off the plane in Katmandu, Isaacson was met with a bustle of activity. People were passing by from all directions, shouting and yelling.

Isaacson, who has visited over 25 countries, was accustomed to dealing with foreign cultures. But certain aspects about Katmandu transported him back to his deployments. His Soldier instincts began to take over as he moved about the city.

"Katmandu resembled a mix between Baghdad and Kabul. It even smelled the same. It caused [the Soldiers] to throw back to when they were deployed," Isaacson recalled. "So without knowing it, we went back into protection mode. Our eyes were darting around. We were all quiet, just watching everything. Then we realized that they're a very spiritual people. I hadn't anticipated that. They are very much into serving."

Isaacson was able to witness the true depth of that spirituality when he attended the Puja. This ceremony is a ritual required for anyone

preparing to climb Mt. Lobuche. The Sherpas, or Nepalese mountain guides, won't take teams up the mountain unless they have participated in the Puja.

"All the monks allow us into their main room, and they chant for 30 minutes to an hour," said Isaacson. "I had never seen anything like it before. It was a really beautiful ceremony. It's asking the mountain to allow us to climb it safely."

Isaacson had always been a very spiritual and Christian man. But sitting and listening to the chant made him ponder his own beliefs. He was awed and inspired by the monks' sheer devotion to prayer and meditation. He left the temple with a renewed sense of faith.

**EAGER AND READY**

Isaacson hardly spent any time in Katmandu until he and the rest of the team headed to Luklas, Nepal, the last destination. Luklas' airport is ranked one of the most dangerous airports in the world. One end of the runway is a cliff and the other end is a vertical mountain wall.

When the plane touched down and came to a stop, everyone on board cheered.

Now that the team had arrived safely, they were ready to begin the first leg of their journey. The team loaded all their gear onto 10 yaks and headed down a 5-foot-wide dirt trail that would take them to Mt. Lobuche. It took them roughly 10 days to reach base camp, which was located at 16,500 feet, Isaacson said. During that time, the team spent the night in teahouses, or tiny motels, located in the various villages they passed.

The team slowly opened up to each other at these teahouses. When they first embarked on the trip, the Soldiers and climbers were strangers from all across the country. But in the evenings, there wasn't anything to do except talk. Televisions and video games had been left back home in the States. So to pass the time, they shared stories. They bonded over their struggles. But also how they overcame them.

"I tried to get the [Soldiers] to talk about their stories from Iraq or Afghanistan," said Isaacson. "Some of us were in similar areas at the same time, so it was neat to get their perspective on things."

Isaacson became close to two men in particular, Chad Butrick and Matt Nyman. Both of these Soldiers served several tours overseas, and they shared with Isaacson the stories of their injuries. Isaacson was impressed by the positive attitude of each Soldier, despite their life-altering injuries.

The Soldiers' stories weren't the only ones that resonated in Isaacson's mind. The climbers had a few shocking tales as well. One climber, Charley Mace, narrowly escaped a devastating avalanche on a climb.



**WORLD T.E.A.M. SPORTS** is a nonprofit organization that embraces the philosophy that injuries don't have to be limiting. This organization organizes athletic events for both disabled and non-disabled people. One of their upcoming events is the 2011 Adventure TEAM Challenge, which consists of a three-day race where able-bodied athletes are paired with those who are disabled. They race through the breathtaking backdrop of Colorado and mountain bike, white-water raft, rappel and climb to the finish line.

Isaacson began to realize that although the mountain climbers don't wear a uniform, they aren't much different from Soldiers. Both are forced to adapt to foreign cultures and surroundings. They both push their bodies to the brink. They also have stared death in the face.

That common ground unified the team as they progressed farther up the mountain. At one point during the climb, Isaacson caught a glimpse of this camaraderie. He had been struggling physically, and he thought that he might be holding up the rest of the team. So Isaacson turned to the person climbing behind him, Chad Butrick, and asked if Butrick wanted to pass him.

"I asked Chad, 'Do you want to go around me?' He just gave a big smile and said, 'I am up here to summit with you.' That was all I needed. It was such good motivation."

**PUSH TO THE TOP**

After 10 days of hiking, the team finally made it to base camp. But they didn't rest long. After about a day at base camp, they began their journey to high camp, 18,000 feet in the air, Isaacson said.

Everyone knew they were getting closer to the summit. The oxygen was becoming increasingly sparse. Every step was more challenging than the last because their bodies were fighting

to take in more oxygen.

But the rewards were worth the struggle. The higher they rose, the more spectacular the views became. In every direction, snow-capped mountains sprinkled the skyline.

High camp was their last stop before they made their ascent to the summit. Isaacson had done everything he could up to that point to prepare his body for the grueling journey. He was diligent about drinking plenty of water and eating right.

When the team reached high camp, they all discussed how they would finish the last leg of the expedition. The team would split off into two groups and climb about 10 to 12 hours to reach the summit. One group would leave at midnight, and Isaacson's group would leave at 1 a.m.

The night before Isaacson embarked with his group, he stepped out of his tent before the sun was up. He paused to reflect on how far he had come on this journey.

"The moon was out and the stars were extremely bright. We were so high that all the snow peaks around were just glowing. It was one of the most incredible things I have ever seen. I had just a peace of mind," he recalled. "I didn't have bills and car payments to worry about. It was all pretty simple."

CPT Aaron Isaacson trained for a year and completed four different climbs in Colorado to prepare for Mt. Lobuche.

On the eve of summit day at 1 a.m., Isaacson gathered up all the gear he needed. He had his helmet, boots, harness, ice ax and crampons, which are spikes that attach onto the boots. He also had goggles, because without them the sun can reflect against the snow and cause temporary or permanent blindness.

All of his preparation was for this moment. He was ready.

“You start off into the darkness. It took about four or five hours to reach snow where you have to put on your crampons. Then you get hooked into the ropes,” said Isaacson. “The ropes were fixed onto the mountain by the Sherpas. You just start climbing on the snow while you are hooked into an ascender. It bites the rope so you slide it up and if you fall, it holds you onto the rope. It got pretty steep and turned into ice at a certain point.”

Every muscle in Isaacson's body was working on propelling him forward. The repetitious act of delicately climbing across ice began to drain Isaacson's energy. He questioned whether or not he was going to accomplish his goal.

“We were going for hours with just a headlamp on in the dark, climbing up rock and in the snow. It's just never-ending,” said Isaacson. “There was a certain point where I didn't know if I was going to make it. That's when I turned to Chad Buttrick and he smiled at me and said, ‘No, we are going to make it.’”

Isaacson used that encouragement to fuel him. After about 10 hours of sheer perseverance, Isaacson made it. He had reached the summit, 20,075 feet above the ground.

“I was ecstatic. The year's worth of work actually [paid off]. You stand up there for your summit photos and hold various flags of sponsors and the American Flag. I had a hard time standing, because my legs were shot. But I was just completely happy to be up there. Most everyone was speechless. We just sat and took it all in. It was an amazing view. You could see Mt. Everest right next to us. We were only there for about 30 minutes, then we came back down.”

Even though Isaacson had reached the top, some of the toughest challenges lay ahead.

“Eighty percent of injuries come from the descent of the mountain, not the climb and the summit. I could see how people get hurt on the way down since they are so exhausted. All those concerns started to come into my mind,” said Isaacson.

Each climber was assigned a Sherpa to assist them down the mountain. Isaacson was assigned to a Sherpa named Chuwang Nima. Nima was 43 years old and had summited Mt. Everest 19 times, which is where he got his nickname, “19.” Next summer, Nima plans on breaking the world



## ISAACSON'S CLIMBING GEAR

Food
Water
Medical Gear
Helmet
Harness
Ropes
Ascender
Ice Ax
Tent
Walking Poles
Crampons
Expedition Gloves
Expedition Boots
Socks
Multiple Layers of Clothing

record and climbing Mt. Everest 21 times. With Nima's help, Isaacson was able to make it safely down to high camp on Mt. Lobuche.

### NEVER GOOD NEWS

At high camp, Isaacson was slowly unwinding from the whirlwind he had just experienced. Slowly, he was shrugging off his gear and relaxing his exhausted muscles.

Then in an instant, everything changed. Isaacson overheard on the radio that Nyman was suffering from cerebral edema, otherwise known as brain swelling. This could cause serious and traumatic brain injury.

“I put my gear back on and started to climb back up the mountain to help out,” said Isaacson. “I met them coming down. All the fun went away. Everything got extremely serious. We ended up putting Matt into a compression chamber, so that we could lower the altitude in his body and keep him from having worse problems. I was just really worried. It's like back on a deployment when one of the Soldiers is hurt. You want to make it OK.”

A horse was hired to take Nyman back down to the nearest hospital, but the horse wouldn't arrive until morning. So Nyman spent the entire night in the compression chamber.

In the morning, Buttrick and Isaacson helped load Nyman into the horse's saddle. Then Buttrick and Isaacson followed on foot as they raced Nyman to the nearest hospital.

Nyman survived and, luckily, didn't suffer any permanent injury. But he rode the horse the rest of the way down the mountain just as a precaution.

Isaacson was relieved to see that his companion was back on his feet again. But not long after this incident, Isaacson found himself in his own life-threatening situation.

### BEWARE OF YAK

During the trip back down Mt. Lobuche, the team had to cross over valleys and rivers through the use of bridges. Now, these bridges were a slightly upgraded form of rope bridges, Isaacson described. They were 3 feet across, with only handrails for protection.

Yaks were used on the expedition to carry the gear, and the team was advised to never be on the bridge at the same time as a yak. These animals were unpredictable and could throw their 1,600 pounds around and cause massive damage.

Isaacson and Sherman Bull, one of the climbers, were halfway across a bridge when a yak entered from the opposite direction.

“It lowered its horns and drove straight into Sherman. I thought that since I had lived in Kansas most of my life and had been around cows, I could handle this,” Isaacson said. “So I jumped up behind Sherman, grabbed on to the yak's horns and socked it in the face,” said Isaacson. “That didn't do any good. He ended up pushing harder into Sherman. I caught my heel on a sharp portion of the bridge and fell onto my back. Sherman fell on top of me, and the bull kept driving us right off the bridge.”

Isaacson compared it to being run over by a car that had no brakes. The yak continued to trample over Isaacson and Bull, and to push them closer to the edge. Down below was a 150-foot drop to the valley floor. They were both helpless under the massive size of the yak.

Before Isaacson and Bull went over the side, a climber named Kevin Cherilla jumped up at the last moment and seized Isaacson's backpack.

Cherilla gripped the pack for dear life as a way to secure the two men on the bridge. Then Cherilla kicked the yak in the face, and it scurried away.

Isaacson said he owes his life to Cherilla. Because of Cherilla's courageous action, Isaacson only suffered injury to his leg. The alternative, however, could have been much worse.

Isaacson knew he had to thank the man who saved his life.

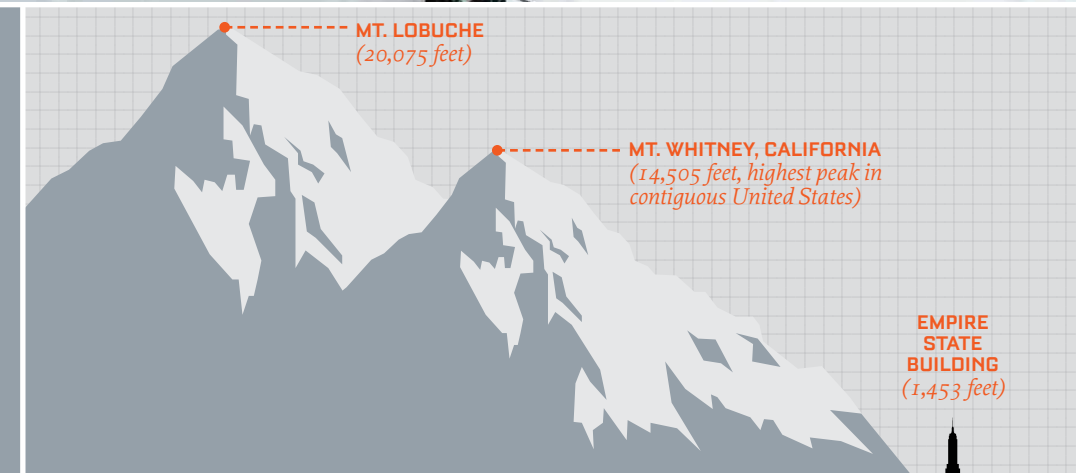
“Before I had left on the climb, the Kansas Adjutant General, Tod Bunting, gave me his personal coin in the event that somebody stood out,” said Isaacson. “So that night we had a big ceremony and I presented the general's coin to him.”



After nine long hours of climbing, Matt Nyman (left) and CPT Aaron Isaacson (center) take a moment to rest and take photos on the summit with another climber.

“I became overwhelmingly inspired by many of the wounded Veterans on this climb. Watching them tackle this expedition with such vigor and drive has caused me to look at life in a different way.”

>> CPT Aaron Isaacson



### FLIGHT HOME

The expedition was successfully completed on October 21, 2010. The Soldiers and climbers flew back to their homes, hugged their families and slowly returned to their “normal” lives.

But this adventure would forever change them. Their previous perception of normal would be altered. Isaacson said that after the “Soldiers to the Summit” expedition, his life was never the same.

“I became overwhelmingly inspired by many of the wounded Veterans on this climb. Watching them tackle this expedition with such vigor and drive has caused me to look at life in a different way,” he said. “Some of them were

blind and others only had one leg. That is what changed my life. They haven't given up. They press on with such tenacity that I have changed the way I view the rest of my life. Never give up.”

Isaacson, a wounded Veteran himself, has become an inspiration to others. Frequently, he speaks to groups such as the Boy Scouts of America and promotes the message of resiliency and perseverance. He wants people to know that you can't give up, despite certain hardships.

This message has become a motto throughout Isaacson's life. Even when facing the medical review board and struggling to push through his injuries, Isaacson never gave up hope of

deploying again.

Now Isaacson is preparing for his fourth deployment to the Middle East in February with the 69th Troop Command. He attributes the fallen Soldiers as his motivation for never giving up.

“Above all, I owe it to the Soldiers that never made it home to press on with life and live it to the fullest. I look forward to what is next.” **GX**

*The Expedition Photographer on “Soldiers to the Summit” was Didrik Johnck. His work can be viewed at [www.johnckmedia.com](http://www.johnckmedia.com). GX would like to thank Didrik for the use of his photos in this article.*

# SPY IN THE SKY

## The RQ-7 Shadow UAV

By CPL Ryan Steelman and CPL William Delaplain,  
 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team,  
 Oklahoma National Guard

**WHETHER LOOKING FOR THE ENEMY** planting IEDs or conducting surveillance, the RQ-7B Shadow 200 (Shadow)—an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS)—is the “spy in the sky” for ground maneuver units.

The UAS is comprised of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, the Ground Control Station (GCS), the transmitters and receivers, a hydraulic launcher and an automated landing system. The GCS has two stations—one for the aircraft operator and one for the camera operator.

The Shadow’s launch and recovery operations can be conducted by a single operator with two ground crewmembers, while for mission operations, two operators are required. Multiple aircraft and personnel allow for 24-hour operations, keeping the Shadow ready at all times.

### INSTANT INTEL

The system also has multiple remote video terminals that can be forward-deployed with units in the field. The remote terminals provide ground units with on-the-spot intelligence as they conduct combat operations.

The current configuration includes a 15-foot wingspan that can hold 44 liters of fuel and a carbureted Wankel rotary pusher engine. As the system continues to improve and expand, units with the Shadow can seek out and disrupt the enemy before they can impact the mission.

### Fast Facts

> <b>WINGSPAN:</b> 4.27 m	> <b>ENDURANCE:</b> 5 to 7 hours	> <b>MAXIMUM DASH SPEED:</b> 219 km/h (118 kt)
> <b>LENGTH:</b> 3.4 m	> <b>MISSION RADIUS:</b> 200 km	> <b>CRUISE SPEED:</b> 167 km/h (90 kt)
> <b>HEIGHT:</b> 0.86 m	> <b>CLIMB RATE:</b> 300 m to 450 m a minute	> <b>LOITER SPEED:</b> 111 km/h (60 kt)
> <b>SPEED:</b> 194.5 km/h (105 kt)	> <b>TAKE-OFF DISTANCE (LAUNCHER):</b> 10 m	
> <b>FLIGHT CEILING:</b> 4,572 m (15,000 ft)		

# MASTER STORYTELLER

## How Rob Keller Changed North Dakota

By SSG Billie Jo Lorius, North Dakota National Guard



Rob Keller has experienced a lifetime of service, enlisting into the Air Force in 1973.

**Master Sergeant (Ret.) Rob Keller** has dedicated his entire life to the Guard. He served his state and nation for 27 years and then decided it was time to relax into retirement. But just four months after he turned in his ACUs, he found himself right back where he says he belongs—serving in the North Dakota National Guard.

Keller worked first in recruiting, then in public affairs, both jobs full time, with a goal of leaving each position better than he'd found it. He now works as the director of the Service Member and Family Support office.

Keller first became interested in the military because as a child, he had always aspired to be a pilot. He joined the Air Force and was stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota as an aircraft maintenance engineer from 1973 to 1977. He earned his private pilot's license while working as a television reporter during a break in his military career, and enlisted in the Army National Guard in 1979.

**MAJOR CHANGE**

Keller retired as a master sergeant and public

affairs director of the North Dakota National Guard, serving in this capacity when 9/11 happened and during the tumultuous years that followed. He remembers how public affairs changed and how he grew as a Soldier and a person during this time.

"September 11 changed all of our lives," he said. "Our families, our way of doing business, how we travel. It changed the entire scope of public affairs. Each state's National Guard was responding to queries from international organizations, and the high tempo of operations continues to this day."

Keller began his full-time career in the Guard in recruiting after spending seven years in television broadcasting as a reporter and anchor at a Rapid City, SD, station. He

moved to North Dakota with his family and got a job as a recruiter. He earned the coveted "Master Badge," a permanent award for recruiting production.

After serving more than 12 years under recruiting, and then as full-time unit administrator for the 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, he made the switch to the public affairs office, which was in line with his experience at the news station and his degree in communications. Major Pat Richards was the public affairs officer at that time and hired Keller. Though Keller didn't know it, Richards was grooming him to take over his post when he retired.

"Rob was one of those people that just seemed to have 'it.' I had unwavering faith in his ability to excel in whatever he was called upon to do," Richards said. "His high degree of professionalism, civilian education and ethics made him a natural, and the right person for the top job in public affairs."

**DANGEROUS WATERS**

In 1997, Keller served as the assistant public

affairs representative during the flood of the century that paralyzed towns along the North Dakota–Minnesota border. Throughout this time, Keller worked closely with Richards, North Dakota National Guard public affairs officer, in writing press releases and escorting local and national media in and out of flood-ravaged areas.

"Striving to say the right thing, the right way and at the right moment in time—that's Rob Keller," said Richards.

Keller said he appreciated the role his job played in supporting the troops and showing appreciation for the sacrifices servicemen and women make for the nation. He was serving as the public affairs officer when North Dakota lost 12 Guard members during the Global War on Terror.

The North Dakota National Guard "broke the code" on embedding media with units that deployed. Keller also conceived the idea of sending a four-person public affairs team into a war theater for a short-term mission with the goal of telling the story of North Dakota units that were in Iraq.

SGT BRETT MILLER

"To my knowledge, this was the first time a public affairs team traveled to a wartime theater. We traveled in and out with boots on the ground to really be able to tell these service members' story. The information we gathered was invaluable both to the Guard and our North Dakota community," Keller said.

Going to Iraq was also Keller's biggest fear, but it didn't stop him from wanting to get there to accomplish the mission and tell the story. "It was the unknown, going into a combat zone and trying to figure out what's going to happen next. I remember mortars going off our first night there, but the mission was accomplished," he said.

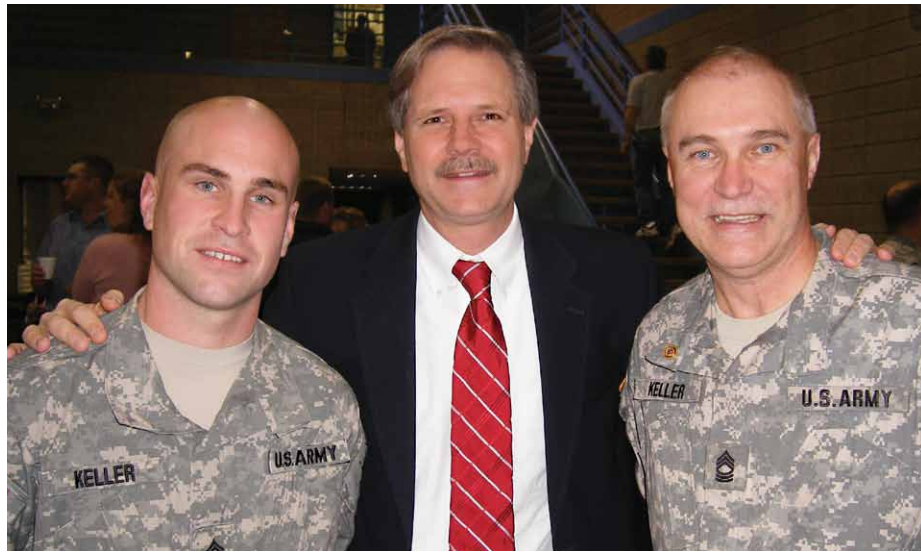
He conducted two public affairs missions to Iraq that also served to historically archive North Dakota's participation in the war. During his tenure, he paved the way with new ideas for growing public affairs and serving the Guard. He saw the public affairs office change, when much of the Guard had to adapt as the Global War on Terror transformed the way business was conducted throughout the military.

**DOUBLE DUTY**

"Rob really developed a knack for formulating communication strategies for multiple complex issues. When you're supporting two key state agencies, both crucial to public safety and service, there is no room for error," Richards said, referring to Keller's positions as public affairs officer for both the North Dakota National Guard and the North Dakota Division of Emergency Services. "Simultaneous events such as the Guard's role in responding to the Global War on Terror, and natural disasters in North Dakota, were indicative of the daily environment that Rob worked in."

Keller became known by journalists throughout the state as a public affairs person who really understood what it took to tell a story about the Guard.

In his position, he worked not only with media, but with elected officials as well. "Any of us who have worked with Rob over the course of his career can attest to his dedication, communication skills and hard work," said Sen. John Hoeven, former governor of North Dakota.



CLOCKWISE: Rob's son Andrew also serves in the Guard. Keller coordinated all of the media requests for the North Dakota Guard while he was deployed to Iraq. Rob realized how much he missed the Guard when he rode his motorcycle on a 6,000-mile trip to Alaska and back.



Rob Keller spent time in Ghana with the Guard as part of the State Partnership Program.

"Always be accurate, honest and open. Tell your story. Be confident. Talk about what you know and maintain your professionalism."

MSG (Ret.) Rob Keller,  
North Dakota National Guard

to everything a person does is what allows him to understand his current role in Service Member and Family Support.

"Military families are our community and what allows us to be successful as service members. We place high value on our families and empower them with resources so they can become resilient in adapting to situations and overcoming adversity," Keller said.

As an organization, the North Dakota National Guard has focused on providing services to both the Guard members and their families. Keller said it is a combat multiplier because when troops are focusing on their mission and know that things are taken care of back home, they are more effective.

Nationally, others have noticed that Keller is making a difference leading the family programs.

#### EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP

"The North Dakota program has grown and flourished under his [guidance]," said Paula Sumrall, National Guard's Volunteer and Child/Youth Program branch chief. "His self-confidence and professionalism shine through. Changes needed to be made, and he made them so that the program could grow and thrive.

"I value his opinion on matters coming from the state perspective," she continued. "He's straightforward and honest with his input, and caring and considerate in his presentation."

Keller said that the key to his success, aside from the support of his family, would be the mantra: "Always be accurate, honest and open. Tell your story. Be confident. Talk about what you know and maintain your professionalism."

As for Keller's future, he prefers to stay focused on the North Dakota National Guard and its success. "I want to leave this organization better than I found it. When I leave, someone is going to come along and do it better than me. And that's the way it is supposed to be." **GX**

The public affairs shop transformed in not only communication strategies, but personnel. Keller was a one-man show when he started off his role as lead in public affairs. One person developed into two, then three and finally four as he was readying for retirement.

#### JUST CAN'T QUIT

"In public affairs, we made a difference. The hardest thing for any PAO—the day you leave the job, you are cut off cold turkey from the direct access to information. It's hard when you are used to being in the know. I smashed my BlackBerry, and then four months later I had another one," he laughed.

Though the act was symbolic and performed on an inoperable device, it was the final task before he passed off the public affairs lead job to Captain Dan Murphy, North Dakota National Guard public information officer.

"Rob served as a teacher to so many public affairs Soldiers and Airmen in the North Dakota Guard. He defined the operation as it is today, and I will forever be grateful for his guidance and mentorship. He exemplified what it meant to always be available, accessible and offer the best service possible," said Murphy.

When Keller left his position, he had no intention of coming back such a short time later. He hopped on his motorcycle to take



off on an adventure he had been dreaming about—a 6,000-mile solo road trip from North Dakota to Alaska.

"Riding is my sanity. I really love the long-distance adventure trips. We are in the military because we like adventure. It fulfills that desire to push beyond my personal limits," he said.

He kept track of his journey with a blog at [mytb.org/robkeller](http://mytb.org/robkeller) that 11,000 people still track. He was on this trip from North Dakota to Alaska when he heard about a job as state family program director, and he thought it sounded like a position where he could make a big difference.

When he left North Dakota, he thought, "I've served my country and felt good about my accomplishments. While on my motorcycle

trip, I thought, 'Man, I really miss that.' We are always known for doing new things in North Dakota. What job could replace what I just left?"

He had always believed families and volunteers were integral to the success of the Guard, and now here was his chance to give back to his peers in an organization he had been so proud to serve in. He started in his current position as director of Service Member and Family Support for the North Dakota National Guard in October 2008.

#### BEST OF THE BEST

Colonel David Thiele and Connie Sprynczynatyk were on the selection team that hired Keller to lead the family programs office and have been thrilled with their choice

COURTESY OF ROB KELLER

and the accomplishments he has achieved in his two years leading the program.

"Out of a group of strong candidates, Rob stood out," Thiele said. "He understands the level of commitment and dedication required to truly take care of service members and their families. These programs have touched over 14,000 service members and families across the state since January of 2009, helping with issues that range from housing for a homeless Veteran to assisting in VA benefit applications. We believed that Rob was the right person to take our support programs to the next level, and he has exceeded our highest expectations," Thiele said.

Under his leadership, the organization has grown from 15 employees to almost 40.

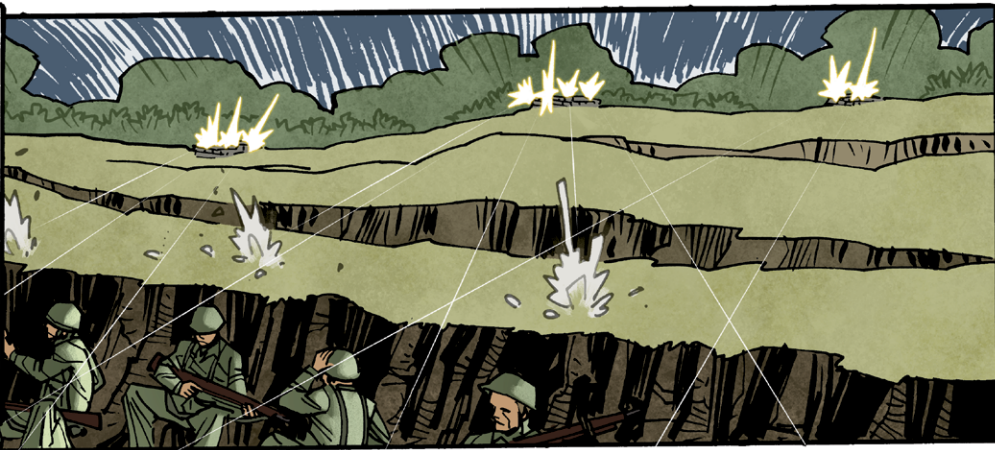
"Our programs and services kept growing and growing, and we got into that battle rhythm. It was a great move. The dedicated employees at the Service Member and Family Support are an integral part of the success we have realized. I could not have done it without them," Keller said.

Keller also focuses his time and energy on working with children and is an active member of the Evangel Temple's Drama and Youth Department, where he and his wife, JoLynn, serve as sponsors for the 150-plus youth group. He serves as chair for the Youth Council, a seven-member group that oversees the youth program. As chair, he established a fine arts program for junior high and high school students.

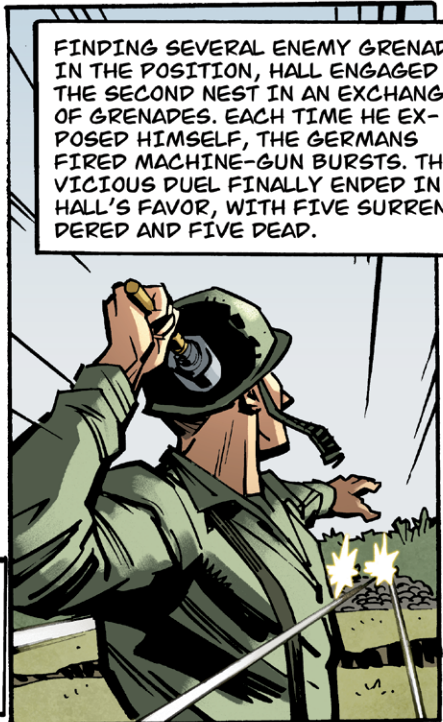
COURTESY OF ROB KELLER

# HEROIC ASSAULT

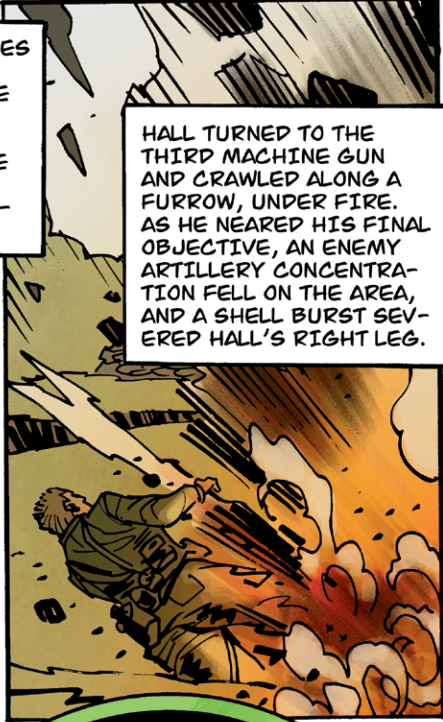
ANZIO, ITALY, MAY 23, 1944—STAFF SERGEANT GEORGE J. HALL AND HIS MEN FROM THE 135TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 34TH INFANTRY DIVISION, WERE PINNED DOWN BY THREE ENEMY MACHINE-GUN NESTS. HALL'S COMPANY WAS ORDERED TO ASSAULT THE ENEMY OVER OPEN TERRAIN AND UNDER DIRECT ENEMY OBSERVATION, SO HE VOLUNTEERED TO ELIMINATE THE ENEMY IN THE PATH OF HIS UNIT'S ADVANCE.



CRAWLING ALONG A TRENCH FURROW THROUGH FURIOUS MACHINE-GUN FIRE, HE POUNDED THE FIRST POSITION WITH FOUR HAND GRENADES, KILLING TWO GERMANS AND TAKING FOUR OTHERS AS PRISONERS.



FINDING SEVERAL ENEMY GRENADES IN THE POSITION, HALL ENGAGED THE SECOND NEST IN AN EXCHANGE OF GRENADES. EACH TIME HE EXPOSED HIMSELF, THE GERMANS FIRED MACHINE-GUN BURSTS. THE VICIOUS DUEL FINALLY ENDED IN HALL'S FAVOR, WITH FIVE SURRENDERED AND FIVE DEAD.



HALL TURNED TO THE THIRD MACHINE GUN AND CRAWLED ALONG A FURROW, UNDER FIRE. AS HE NEARED HIS FINAL OBJECTIVE, AN ENEMY ARTILLERY CONCENTRATION FELL ON THE AREA, AND A SHELL BURST SEVERED HALL'S RIGHT LEG.



WITH TWO MACHINE-GUN NESTS ELIMINATED, HIS COMPANY WAS ABLE TO FLANK THE THIRD AND CONTINUE ITS ADVANCE WITHOUT INCURRING EXCESSIVE CASUALTIES. HALL'S FEARLESSNESS, DETERMINATION AND PRODIGIOUS COMBAT SKILL EXEMPLIFY THE HEROIC TRADITION OF THE AMERICAN INFANTRYMAN, AND HE WAS AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR ON APRIL 6, 1945.



**END**



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