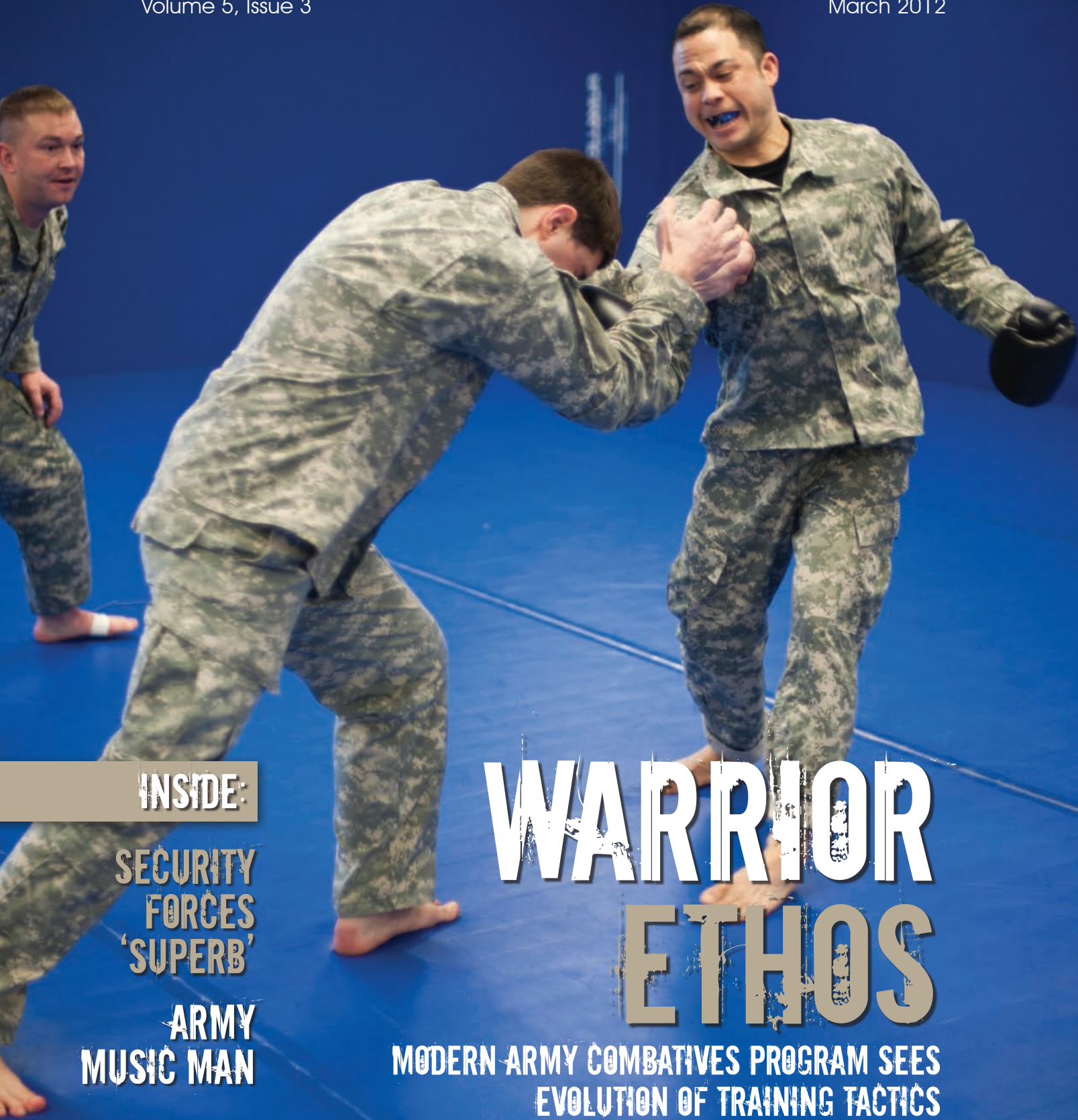




NORTH DAKOTA GUARDIAN

Volume 5, Issue 3

March 2012



INSIDE:

**SECURITY
FORCES
'SUPERB'**

**ARMY
MUSIC MAN**

WARRIOR ETHOS

**MODERN ARMY COMBATIVES PROGRAM SEES
EVOLUTION OF TRAINING TACTICS**

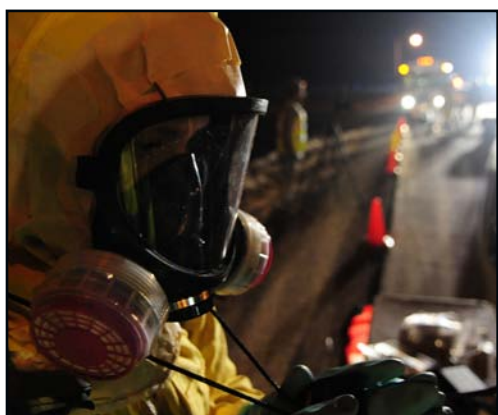
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FEATURES



6 Fight Club

The Modern Army Combatives Program teaches military members techniques for hand-to-hand combat. Members of the Pre-Mobilization Training Assistance Element certified 22 National Guard and Reserve members from across the nation in Basic Combatives last month.



14 Minot Roughriders

Former President Teddy Roosevelt might have used the expression "Bully!" to describe the 219th Security Forces Squadron's latest achievement. In conjunction with Minot's 91st Missile Wing, the Airmen received the highest possible rating from their latest Nuclear Surety Inspection.



16 Army Sound Machine

Spc. Christopher Hanson, of the 188th Army Band, has devoted his military career and personal endeavors to becoming an outstanding musician. That status was recently supported after he received the Col. Finley R. Hamilton Military Outstanding Musician Award.

DEPARTMENTS

- Guardian Snapshots Pg. 10
- News Briefs Pg. 18
- Sound Off! Pg. 19

INTERACT WITH US!

See even more N.D. National Guard highlights at our social media sites, and share your thoughts!



- www.youtube.com/NDNationalGuard
- www.twitter.com/NDNationalGuard
- www.flickr.com/photos/NDGuard
- www.facebook.com/NDNationalGuard

NORTH DAKOTA GUARDIAN

Commander in Chief
North Dakota Governor
Jack Dalrymple

The Adjutant General
Maj. Gen. David A. Sprynczynatyk

Chief of Public Affairs
Capt. Dan Murphy

Editor
Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen

Contributors
Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp
Staff Sgt. Amy Wieser Willson
Spc. Tyler Sletten
Spc. Mike Hagburg
Sgt. Sara Marchus
Chief Warrant Officer Kiel Skager
Chaplain (Capt.) Timothy Stout
Command Sgt. Maj. Harley Schwind
Bill Prokopyk
Sgt. Brett J. Miller
Senior Airman Jessica McConnell
Officer Candidate Matt Mitzel
Spc. Cassie Simonton
Sgt. Angie Jo Gross

The *North Dakota Guardian* is an authorized publication for members, families and retirees of the N.D. National Guard.

- Contents of the *North Dakota Guardian* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, or the Department of the Army or Air Force.
- Editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Joint Force Headquarters, N.D. National Guard (JFND) Public Affairs Officer.
- Printed by United Printing, a private firm in no way connected to the U.S. Government under exclusive written contract with the JFND. Reproduction is by the offset method with a circulation of 7,500.
- The *North Dakota Guardian* is published by the JFND Public Information Office, Box 5511, Bismarck, N.D. 58506-5511, 701-333-2007

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Contributions to the *North Dakota Guardian* are encouraged! Send articles, photos and art to Editor, JFND PIO, Box 5511, Bismarck, N.D. 58506-5511. Electronic submissions are preferred. Please e-mail stories in Word format to: eric.william.jensen@us.army.mil
Phone: 701-333-2195 Fax: 701-333-2017
Digital photos should be at least 300 dpi.

On the Cover



Primary Combatives Instructor for North Dakota Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Peck, right, strikes Sgt. Nathan Doll, of C Company, 2-285th Aviation Battalion, during an "achieve the clinch" drill as 1st Sgt. Russell Garrett, safety noncommissioned officer, looks on at Raymond J. Bohn Armory in Bismarck, N.D., Feb. 8. The drill was part of a Basic Combatives course facilitated by members of the Pre-Mobilization Training Assistance Element (PTAE). The PTAE advertised the course on the Army Training Requirements and Resources System giving National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers from outside states the opportunity to attend the training. (Photo by Sgt. Brett J. Miller, Joint Force Headquarters)

GUARD POSTS

Dispatches from the N.D. Guard Family

LEADING A NATION IN TRANSITION

It's Dec. 13, 1636, in the Massachusetts Bay colonies and the United States does not yet exist. Yet, a force is born this day. A force they called "militia," a force of citizen-Soldiers. This force of citizen-Soldiers would go on to serve, protect and secure the citizens of the Massachusetts Bay colonies. As these colonies and other colonies in this new world would grow and evolve into the United States of America, this militia also would evolve into a larger, better-trained and better-equipped force that we would come to call the National Guard.

That was a little more than 375 years ago, and interestingly enough, here and now our National Guard is being called upon to the lead the way for the United States, once again. This time, our nation is calling on us to establish, build and maintain partnerships with foreign nations throughout the world. These partnerships are designed to once again secure our nation.

This year's Unified Quest Seminar in Potomac, Md., was hosted by the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) in February. The Defense Department was exploring the means with which our future military will maintain extremely important and, at times, strategic relationships with foreign nations while drawing down our forces and pulling back several of our active units from overseas bases. Unified Quest attracts many experts from the Army, Defense Department, combatant commands, Special Forces and several other government agencies.

Many of this year's participants said one Army National Guard program could go far in expanding the capabilities for the

force of the future. Several of these agencies had very little knowledge of, or had yet to hear of, a program called the State Partnership Program. The State Partnership Program pairs National Guard commands with more than 60 nations around the world for training and civil-military operations. North Dakota is paired with the African nation of Ghana. North Dakota and Ghana have established an incredible relationship that I am sure will continue for several years to come.

"The utility of the National Guard in this operation is absolutely huge in shaping the military of 2020 and beyond. This program may become the focus in shaping the future operational environment for our military," Lt. Gen. (Ret.) James Dubik, who works for the Institute for the Study of War, said.

Also key to the discussion were points made by Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling, commander of U.S. Army Europe.

"We have 27 states working with 27 different countries here in Europe," he said. "The National Guard does a phenomenal job in building these relationships and training at the small unit level. Here in Europe, the National Guard in their partnerships is asked to address civil affairs, disaster relief, medical attention and the training of forces."

Gen. Robert Cone, commanding general of U.S. Army TRADOC, said he was aware that the National Guard was partnering with several foreign nations, but that when Hertling spoke of the efforts ongoing in Europe led by the National Guard, that his eyes were really opened.

Each and every year, the U. S. military focuses more and more attention on



COMMAND SGT. MAJ.
HARLEY SCHWIND

State Command
Sergeant Major (Incoming)

Africa. Our relationships with the nations of the African continent will be key in shaping the operational environment of the future. Our partnership with Ghana is just one of the many ways the National Guard will lead our military and our nation into the era that lies just beyond the transition of a nation faced with shrinking its active-component military.

So, here we are in 2012. We are a military in transition. We are a country in transition, but we must maintain our foreign relationships to ensure our nation's security. Securing the nation is nothing new for the National Guard. The State Partnership Program is building relationships that will go far in securing the United States, as well as securing the many nations we partner with now and into the future.

Hertling summed it up best by saying, "We need to listen to the National Guard. We need to listen very carefully to their concerns and to how they think we can best maintain these relationships into the future."

We are now leading our military in securing and maintaining relationships that just might shape how the rest of the world looks back at us and views us as we begin our transition.

This is an extremely important job. This is a very strategic job for securing our nation. It has been our job since 1636.

Sincerely,

Command Sgt. Maj. Harley Schwind



Learn more about the National Guard's State Partnership Program by visiting <http://bit.ly/20YearsSPP>. You also can watch video featuring North Dakota's partnership with Ghana at <http://bit.ly/SPPvids>.

DISPLAY OF VIGILANCE

Photos & Story by
Mr. Bill Prokopyk
Joint Force Headquarters

Civil Support Team Conducts 'No-Notice' Exercise

On a recent North Dakota night, an incident occurred at Bismarck Municipal Airport's main terminal. Several "passengers" waiting to claim their baggage became violently ill. Some were able to self-evacuate while others fell to the ground, requiring immediate emergency medical attention.

The incident was strictly a training exercise, and the scenario continued to transpire as various civilian medical, emergency and law enforcement personnel were called to the airport to respond



Feb. 7. Because the threat was not yet fully understood, the Bismarck Police Department bomb squad was placed on stand-by.

Members of the Bismarck Airport Fire Department were immediately on the scene and able to evacuate all of the simulated casualties to the grounds outside of the terminal building. There were three confirmed dead, while 15 others were transported by ambulance to area hospitals.

As authorities secured the area, the training scenario noted that the passengers displayed symptoms of asphyxia. Civilian emergency responders were unable to get readings of chemical or biological agents with their monitors. They needed immediate assistance in identifying the culprit responsible for the illness.

This is where the N.D. National Guard's 81st Civil Support Team (CST) came in. The unit was called out by the N.D. Department of Emergency Services due to its ability to detect and identify chemical, biological and radiological agents and substances. The team also can determine and assess hazards to personnel, animals and critical infrastructure.

The commander, Lt. Col. Larry Shireley, was notified via phone

Left, Capt. Shawn Markovic, left, survey team leader, discusses courses of action with Staff Sgt. Jason Horner, survey team member. Bottom left, members of the survey team, Staff Sgt. Dale Dukart and Staff Sgt. Jason Horner, search the airport looking for the cause of the chemical contamination. Below, Horner, of the 81st Civil Support Team survey team, is assisted by members of the CST to remove his protective suit after the exercise's conclusion.



Members of the CST set up equipment outside of the airport in anticipation of the survey mission training.



at about 11 p.m., and the 81st CST's portion of the 'no-notice' training exercise was under way.

After the CST's team members and vehicles convoyed to the airport, the team began to set up an operations center. Guardsmen unloaded equipment from trucks and vans and set up tents — one for decontamination and another to prepare the detection team.

"The 81st CST quickly responded, arriving within about an hour of the initial call," said 1st Sgt. Wallace Keller, the unit's senior enlisted Soldier and exercise coordinator. "Neither the CST, or the civilians involved with the training exercise were notified of the training until 11 p.m. in order to test their response time and further develop their skills in responding to emergencies."

Keller, as the exercise coordinator, was the only CST member aware of the pending drill.

The CST area was a flurry of activity. Once most of the CST equipment was ready to go, the Guardsmen analyzed the threat, reviewed operations and developed a plan.

A survey team comprised of Staff Sgt. Dale Dukart and Staff Sgt. Jason Horner

then entered the airport terminal to determine the source of the agent that sickened the passengers.

As soon as they assembled and loaded the detection equipment onto a pull cart, they donned yellow hazardous material suits and entered the terminal. They carefully scanned walls, doorways and all of the areas near baggage claim where the passengers became "sick."

Responders followed the team's movements through a video feed to a command center van. It took about 20 minutes for the survey team to detect a briefcase hidden in a large plant container.

The exercise's intent was to test and evaluate the CST's emergency response procedures while working with civil



The commander of the 81st Civil Support Team, Lt. Col. Larry Shireley, center, and the chief of the Bismarck Airport Fire Department, Tom Painter, foreground, point to the monitor displaying the source of the chemical contamination during a training exercise at the Bismarck Airport. The monitor provides real-time video from the camera carried by the survey team, which was inside the airport conducting survey operations. Maj. Mark Quire, deputy commander for the CST, is in the background.

authorities. The exercise was conducted with the coordination of the Bismarck Airport staff.

The 81st CST is comprised of 22 N.D. National Guard Soldiers and Airmen. The unit's mission is to support civil authorities in domestic incidents to include detection and assessment of chemical, biological and radiological incidents. The team also augments regional states with support through specialized skills and equipment.

The five-hour exercise ended around 4 a.m. Keller deemed the mission a success because the CST responded in a timely manner and, through all of their training, they were able to remain alert to dangers and respond accordingly to the environment. ■

 **INTERACT WITH US!** 
See video from past 81st CST exercises at <http://bit.ly/CSTvid>

A group of 22 National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers from across the nation received an intimate look at the realities of hand-to-hand combat during a Basic Combatives course at Raymond J. Bohn armory, Bismarck, N.D., Feb. 6-10.

Facilitated by instructors with the N.D. National Guard's Pre-Mobilization Training Assistance Element (PTAE), the level-one course is the first of four courses comprising the Modern Army Combatives Program (MACP). It was offered through the Army Training Requirements and Resources System (ATTRS), which advertises and resources training Army-wide. Soldiers from Texas, Florida, Mississippi, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Ohio were able to join their North Dakota counterparts to become level-one certified through the MACP course.

The placement of a North Dakota-led MACP course on ATTRS is a venture the PTAE has sought for some time. After an internal PTAE MACP test course in May 2011, Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Peck, the primary combatives instructor for North Dakota, was able to confer with instructors from the U.S. Army Combatives school in Fort Benning, Ga., to offer North Dakota-led training nationwide.

"All regulated schools should be advertised in ATTRRS and give everybody the opportunity to come, no matter what branch of service you're in," he said. "It was a learning process, to say the least, and I think it's the way we should do business in the future."

Capt. Robert Peleschak, PTAE officer-in-charge, said that while certified MACP courses are not required to be listed on ATTRS, it does help preserve an official record for Soldiers' certification. Being able to offer North Dakota-led training to other states is a benefit, as well, although the PTAE's primary focus is supporting members of the N.D. National Guard.

"Our intention was first for the Soldiers of North Dakota," he said. "We support participants in the 'Best Warrior' competition, as well, and this is a great venue to do train-up with them."

"Best Warrior" competitors are encouraged to be MACP level-one certified before competing.

Interested participants in MACP courses, however, should have no illusions about attending the training to become a professional mixed-martial artist.



Spc. Andrew Birrenkott, of the 815th Engineer Company, achieves a wall clinch position on Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Peck, tactical combatives instructor, as 1st Sgt. Russell Garrett, safety noncommissioned officer, looks on.

"We're in the business of taking care of full-spectrum operations around the world, whether we're in peacetime or wartime. And, sometimes, part of those operations may rely on hand-to-hand (combat). Combatives bridges the gap between lethal to non-lethal force, or the other way around," Peck said.

During the past two years, MACP has been reconfigured to introduce tactical techniques based on operations in the field. This includes hand-to-hand maneuvers and weapon techniques in close-quarter environments.

"Fighting has to be full-spectrum. So, you have to train for the realities of real fighting," Peck said.

Those realities call for a robust arsenal of fighting techniques. The MACP program touches upon a variety of styles from the ground on up. While the old MACP program focused on the ground fighting maneuvers of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, modern MACP runs the hand-to-hand combat gamut with Muay Thai (clinch), Judo (throwing an opponent), freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling (stand-up grappling and takedowns), striking (boxing and kickboxing) and weapons, which can include using knives, pistols or rifles.

The weapons portion is influenced by the Special Operations Combatives Program, which complements MACP, but is designed specifically for the unique needs



Staff Sgt. Jon Conklin, of the State Medical Detachment, is propelled into the air as a Basic Combatives course student "achieves the clinch" during a class exercise. To see video from past Modern Army Combatives Program courses, go to <http://bit.ly/MACvid>.

HEAVY HITTERS

UPDATED COMBATIVES PROGRAM HOLDS NO PUNCHES

• STORY BY STAFF SGT. ERIC W. JENSEN, JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS •

• PHOTOS BY SGT. BRETT J. MILLER, JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS •



Lt. Col. David Skalicky, plans and operations officer fends off Staff Sgt. Tami Wentz, of the 3662nd Maintenance Company, as PTAE Instructor Sgt. 1st Class Chad Finck (Black Shirt) and Garrett look on. Right, Col. Lannie Runck, 141st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade commander grapples with Skalicky.

of the modern day Special Forces Soldier.

Peck said MACP courses are designed to teach participants to "always go back to what you were taught as a Soldier first, which is always go back to your (primary) weapon. That will nullify 90 percent of any type of conflict."

One of the exercises taught at the level-one course in February focused on controlling the distance between a MACP student and an aggressor by using techniques to gain control during a confrontation. Called "achieving the clinch," Peck said the drill is designed for three things: instilling the warrior ethos, instilling confidence through practical application and, perhaps the most disconcerting aspect, desensitizing a service member to being hit.

"Because if you're in a confrontation ... and you don't know what to do, it's going to end up being a bad day," Peck said.

He cites three responses to being struck by an opponent: flight, fight or freeze.

"That helps them take care of the freeze part," Peck said. "It doesn't get any more real than that."

Additionally, North Dakota-led MACP courses and the realistic training they offer are highly regarded assets for the N.D. National Guard.

"There are limited opportunities across the nation to attend a certified combatives course without going to Fort Benning (U.S. Army Combatives school)," Peleschak said. "When this (course) did populate on ATTRS, it was like wildfire."

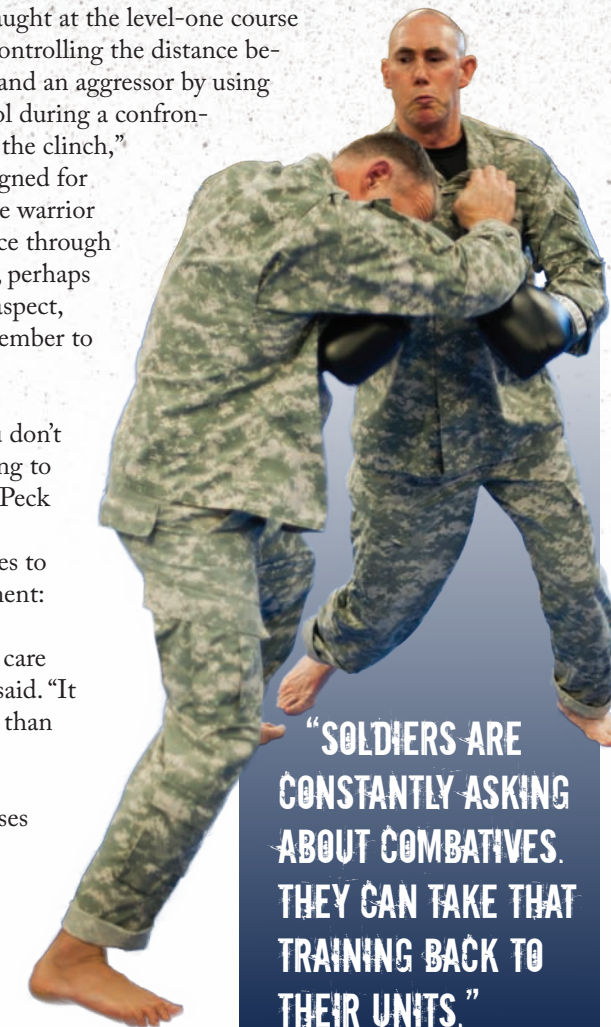
Peleschak has seen the enthusiasm for these types of courses first hand. As commander for B Battery, 1st Battalion, 188th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, he constantly fields requests for MACP training.

"Soldiers love it," he said. "Soldiers are constantly asking about combatives. They can take that training back to their units. They know (learn) the safety procedures and they know the proper techniques."

Peck agrees that the combatives courses help with unit sustainment training and help Guardsmen keep up-to-date with evolving tactics, techniques and procedures. As for the PTAE, they plan on delivering MACP training as often as their schedule allows, and that can be hard to do since their primary mission is preparing units for mobilizations during drill weekends and annual training periods.

"Based on our response ... we're definitely going to try to make that happen more often than not," Peck said.

The next level-one combatives course is scheduled for May 21-25 in Bismarck. For more information about the MACP, e-mail Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Peck at anthony.t.peck@us.army.mil. ■



"SOLDIERS ARE CONSTANTLY ASKING ABOUT COMBATIVES. THEY CAN TAKE THAT TRAINING BACK TO THEIR UNITS."

RANK & FILE

A Day in the Life of Recruit Training Company

Story and Photos By Spc. Tyler Sletten
116th Public Affairs Detachment

If they're moving, they're running. If they're not moving, they're quiet. If they're responding to a question, they're expected to present the answer with confidence and volume. This isn't basic training, though. This is the Recruit Training Battalion.

In this "day-in-the-life" installment, I was able to follow the Recruit Training Company (RTC) in Bismarck during their monthly unit drill Jan. 14 and meet with their cadre, new Guardsmen fresh from their Advanced Individual Training (AIT) and even a Soldier who enlisted and swore in only days prior.

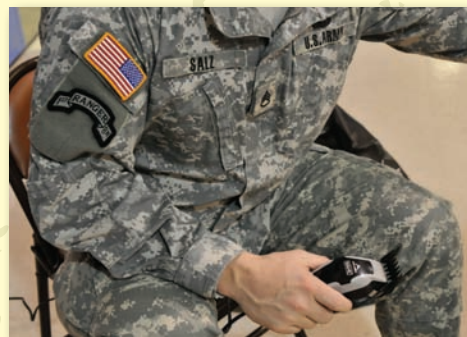
Their drill starts off like a drill at most any unit. People congregate on the drill floor awaiting formation and visit with Guard buddies.

"RTC, fall in," Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Sayler, the platoon sergeant for the RTC, yells out to the recruits.

RTC is comprised of Soldiers who have been through AIT. Some have graduated Basic Combat Training (BCT). But, for many, it is their first exposure to military life. More experienced Soldiers respond with muscle memory-like reflexes to the fall-in command as the newest Soldiers scramble and uncertainty creeps into their eyes. The Soldiers with some training do try to help the others along while remaining inconspicuous to the watchful eyes of Staff Sgt. James Jefferson, a qualified North Dakota drill instructor; Staff Sgt. Jason Salz, an Army Ranger, and Staff Sgt. Derek Delorme, all of whom are cadre with the RTC.

RTC is taken seriously — very seriously. While the pushups are real and the shouting is loud, it is always reinforced with the message that the process is meant to help new Guardsmen with Soldiering skills. So,

Left, Drill Instructor Staff Sgt. James Jefferson administers a round of push-ups to new Guardsmen at the Recruit Training Company at Raymond J. Bohn Armory in Bismarck Jan. 14. Below, Staff Sgt. Jason Salz prepares a set of clippers to give free haircuts to Soldiers not within Army regulations. Bottom right, Staff Sgt. Derek Delorme gives Pvt. Logan O'Brien a trim.

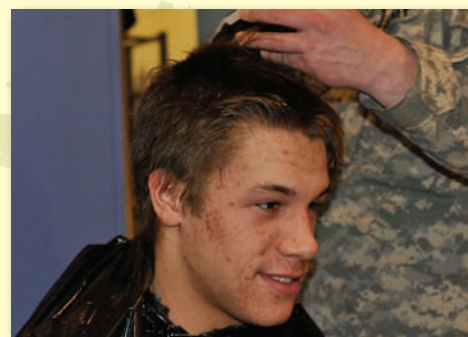


Left, Bismarck Recruit Training Company cadre take accountability before moving recruits to a running track in Bismarck for their Army Physical Fitness Test. Above, Cpl. Demetrous Few inspects recruits during morning physical training.

why does the Recruit Training Battalion exist? And why not let new recruits gain experience with their units prior to shipping?

"Several years ago, the National Guard Bureau noticed that they were having a lot of Soldiers going to (Basic Combat) training not prepared and falling out. What they came up with was a pilot program to give Soldiers some training and show them what it would be like before they left," said training noncommissioned officer Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Mitteldeier.

After the Saturday morning formation, the battle hand-offs, or those who've completed AIT, are excused for out-processing in preparation to join their new units next month. One of those graduates, Pvt. Lindy McCollum, of Crystal, N.D., explained her experiences with the RTC and how they impacted her experience at BCT and AIT.



"RTC got me prepped for what was to come. My first drill was a combined drill (with the other RTCs) at Camp Grafton. We got dropped, yelled at, training ... you name it, it happened," she said. "It helped me get my Army values in order. (I was told) 'No matter what you do, don't break down.' And I didn't. RTC helped me realize that it was more of a mental game than a physical game. I didn't have any problem with the getting up at 0400. It was the yelling in your face that I struggled with."

McCollum attended BCT at Ft. Sill, Okla., and AIT at Fort Lee, Va. She graduated as a 91B, or light-wheeled vehicle mechanic.

She says she'll be, "working on anything from Humvees to LMTVs (light utility trucks). I chose that MOS (military occupational specialty) because I'm a hands-on type of person. I like fixing things."

McCollum, who was an honor graduate at both BCT and AIT, said her preparation though RTC was valuable.

"Being from North Dakota definitely helped," she said. "We are a little more organized, (we) set goals and (are) hard working."

She advises new Guardsmen to "make sure you work out now, before you ship."

Throughout the drill weekend, Soldiers in the various phases of RTC experience training that will be helpful to them down range at BCT and AIT. Combat lifesaver skills, learning ranks and proper saluting techniques and disassembling weapon systems are just a few of the classes taught. However, much of the day is focused on that one skill that gets so many new recruits in the "front-leaning rest" during boot camp — drill and ceremony.

Drill Sergeant Jefferson gave a class on these tasks by splitting recruits into two squads with each Guardsman

taking a turn at being the squad leader. However, rather than just having the recruits march around the drill floor, he makes things interesting by assigning one squad leader to intentionally crash his squad into the other. The squad leader being tested does their best to avoid the collision.

The training is an eye-opening experience and, occasionally, recruits will only experience one drill before shipping out. Jefferson tells his Soldiers to "never quit. Tomorrow's a new day."

Pvt. Jamie Schwartzwalter, a 17-year-old volleyball player from Scranton, N.D., attended her very first drill and plans to ship out this July. Schwartzwalter had recently returned from an experience all Soldiers go through at the beginning of their journey in the Guard — a trip to the Military Entrance Processing Station in Fargo.

"MEPS was an experience. That was a long day," she said. "MEPS is six hours from my home, so I arrived in Fargo the night before. I woke up around four in the morning, arrived and immediately began the medical portion. Later, I picked my dates for basic, they took my fingerprints and then I swore in. Both my parents had to work, so I was alone."

For the most part, Schwartzwalter came prepared for her first experience with the RTC.

"I think this is what I expected physically, doing the push-ups and the PT (physical training) tests, but not the yelling or people being in your face," she said. "I think my PT was ok, but I need to work out more before I go. I need to go running."

Schwartzwalter said she joined the National Guard because "it's something I've always wanted to do. I want to do something big, something that will benefit other people. I want to serve the country."

The Guardsmen's final formation came a little before 9 p.m. on Saturday. Soon after, they were racing around, gathering their gear and standing in a long line at parade rest before boarding the bus to the hotel. The privates had had quite a day, and the next one would be starting in a few short hours, when they would learn about everything from responding to combat casualties to how to open those tricky MRE bags. For a few, their next drill might consist of building a bridge or fixing your Humvee. ■

Gracie and Sammy Watson create cards to send to their father, Lt. Col. Bill Watson, commander of the 1st Battalion, 112th Aviation Regiment, which is deployed to Kosovo, Jan. 21 at the Radisson Hotel in Bismarck. The N.D. National Guard Yellow Ribbon Reintegration program hosted a "During Deployment Event" for family members of the 1-112th Soldiers, where they were provided information, services, referrals and proactive outreach programs for all phases of the deployment cycle.



Sgt. Sara Marchus



Courtesy Photos



Officer Candidate Matt Mitzel
Bailey Garnett and her dad, Tech. Sgt. Allan Garnett, of East Grand Forks, Minn., pose for a photo to commemorate the 1,000th and 1,001st customers to the N.D. National Guard's Military Service Center at 2219 12th St. N. in Fargo. The new facility officially opened its doors Dec. 15, 2011.



Top, Members of the N.D. Air National Guard's 119th Civil Engineer Squadron pose for a group photo in Southwest Asia in February 2012. About 60 members of the squadron deployed in December 2011 for a six-month mission to provide construction and electrical support overseas. Above, Maj. Gen. Timothy Byers, second from right, Civil Engineer for the Air Force, visits with Master Sgt. David Wosick, right, an electrical power production superintendent for the Civil Engineer Squadron, during a Jan. 27 visit to the squadron's deployed location. Wosick said, "We are all doing well over here. Very, very busy." To see video of the Civil Engineer Squadron departing for their mission and holiday greetings from overseas, go to <http://bit.ly/CESvid>.



Spc. Cassie Simonton

Staff Sgt. Russ Roth, of the N.D. National Guard's 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge), left, has his blood drawn by Spc. Kayla Beckman, of the State Medical Detachment, as a part of the annual Personal Health Assessment (PHA) at the Raymond J. Bohn armory in Bismarck Jan. 28. The medical wing at the armory recently finished expansions and the weekend of Jan. 27-28 was the first time the new facility had been used during the annual PHAs. The new facility helped streamline the PHA process. Last year, the average wait time for each Soldier was about 45 minutes, whereas this year it has been between 15 and 25 minutes, with the fastest time, so far, being only nine minutes.



Sgt. Angie Jo Gross

Snow covers the living quarters of the 1-112th Aviation Regiment (Security and Support) Soldiers who are serving with Kosovo Force (KFOR) 15 in Kosovo for a yearlong NATO peacekeeping mission. The "sea huts" on Camp Bondsteel provide office quarters and housing for the KFOR Soldiers there.



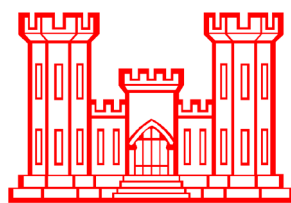
Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp

Capt. Penny Ripperger, 119th Wing public affairs officer, left, facilitates a bystander intervention training class Feb. 4 at the N.D. Air National Guard, Fargo, N.D. The training helps people to learn the skills to intervene in potentially harmful situations concerning sexual harassment and assault. The month of March is nationally recognized as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.



Chief Warrant Officer Kiel Skager
Spc. Whitney Wild, of the 816th Engineer Company, based out of Dickinson, N.D., reads from her script for the formal portion of her unit's Dining Out event Feb. 1. The annual gathering gives the Soldiers a chance to build morale, strengthen relationships and celebrate the previous year of hard work and dedication to country, state and community. Unit members wear their Class A dress uniforms, which display and elaborate the history and courage of each Soldier. It also is a time where the Soldiers formally recognize their fallen brothers and sisters with an empty set table dedicated to those they have lost.

GUARDIAN Snapshots



By Staff Sgt. Amy Wieser Willson
Joint Force Headquarters

Hammering Away

188th Engineers Provide Wealth of Construction Support in Kuwait

One hard-driving person would need to work 24/7 for four-and-a-half years to accomplish what Soldiers with the 188th Engineer Company (Vertical) have achieved in just a handful of months in Kuwait. That only counts what the group of about 160 Guardsmen has done on the jobsite. There's still the time spent resourcing, planning, maintaining and more.

"Numbers cannot bring justice to the support driven by the company," said Capt. Lucas Klettke, 188th commander. "However, in relation to our predecessors, the company has nearly doubled the amount of projects that have been completed within a five-month period of time. This is an astonishing accomplishment when considering the initial three weeks in country we had no organic tools and were required to find most of our materials."

Since rolling into Kuwait in October, the company has completed about 25 battalion-level projects and 35 company-level projects, from building trailers to hard-wiring rooms for conventional and secure Internet access. They've even built stadium seating in some Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities.

As coalition forces moved out as part of the drawdown from Iraq late last year, electricians in the construction-oriented company played a pivotal role. They established "jump TOCs" — temporary tactical operations centers — to facilitate the continual movements across the Iraq-Kuwait border. With that complete, the company's focus turned toward "reshaping the Kuwaiti Theater based upon future military operations," Klettke said.

Under the skilled leadership of Klettke and 1st Sgt. Eric Binstock, the company's senior enlisted leader, younger Soldiers have been finding ways to develop skills, learn and grow during the mission.

"I have learned more this year, than I have in my entire military

career," said Spc. Nathan Bauer, one of the unit's first-time deployers. "This company has NCOs that are very knowledgeable and passionate about engineering. They have a great wealth of knowledge that they are more than willing to share. Our leadership has provided opportunities to work outside our MOS (military occupational specialty) and do other engineering jobs, as well as letting the lower enlisted run projects of our own. Letting us run our own projects has been the biggest learning experience here. It showed me what my leadership goes through to get work for us and all the planning and preparation that goes into even the smallest projects."

Bauer volunteered for the mission and is serving alongside his wife, Spc. Abby Bauer, which he says "has its ups and downs" since while they can see each other, life is still very different than it would be at home.

Spc. Mackenzie West also is a first-time

By the Numbers

As of Feb. 14, the midway point of the 188th Engineer Company's yearlong deployment, the unit had:

- Completed 38,662 hours of work directly on the jobsite
- Operated equipment for 980.5 hours
- Acquired more than \$5 million worth of building materials that would have otherwise been destroyed or sent elsewhere; any of those supplies not used will be transferred to the unit's replacements later this year
- Along with the entire battalion, received nearly 14,000 care packages during Christmas and into the new year



Spc. Aaron Jones III, of Fargo, N.D., uses a skidsteer to unload the tool inventory for the N.D. National Guard's 188th Engineer Company (Vertical) in Kuwait.



Staff Sgt. Jeffery Arth works to connect power to a trailer as Spc. Brianna Thompson waits patiently. Both Soldiers are deployed to Kuwait with the 188th Engineer Company (Vertical).

Engineer Soldier Makes Special Visit While Home on Two-Week Leave

A number of Soldiers with the 188th Engineer Company exchange letters with schoolchildren in North Dakota thanks to some pen pal connections made by the N.D. National Guard Youth Program.

One Soldier is Spc. Kris Schaller, of Fargo. When Schaller was home on leave recently, he called his pen pal, Max, to let him know he'd be passing through Bismarck and had time to meet with him and his mom there.

"He is an extremely valuable Soldier, and now this just speaks to what kind of person he is," said 1st Sgt. Eric Binstock. "I am totally impressed and in awe of this amazing citizen-Soldier we acquired when Schaller volunteered to deploy with us."

Max seems pretty in awe, too.

"The picture says it all," Binstock wrote when he passed along a photo of the writing buddies. "I think this made Max's year!"

Here's what his mom had to say in a letter to Jessi Clark-Woinowicz, state youth program coordinator: "I just wanted to share an exciting story of our day with you. Today the pen pal you set Max up (with) gave us a call. He is home on his two-week leave and was coming through Bismarck and wanted to see if he could meet Max! We



Photo Courtesy of Rena Dwelle

met with him at Perkins for soda and a cookie, and he told us about Kuwait and showed Max some pictures of his grandpa in WWII. I must say, North Dakota produces some very respectable Soldiers. Again, thanks for all you have done to help make this possible for my son! Kris is a wonderful person, and we are very blessed to have the chance to meet him!"



Spc. Daniel Bettin holds a roll of insulation as Spc. Reily Altenburg cuts. Right, Spc. Brianna Thompson cuts down tile flooring for a trailer project in Kuwait.



deployer, and she says the most memorable part so far is "knowing that what we are doing is making a difference in the future and hopefully making better working conditions for those who follow."

Young and old alike are performing their missions well, leaders say, and others are noticing.

"The amount of effort that every Soldier puts into each mission has not gone unnoticed," said 1st Lt. Dennis Huffman. "Ever since they have seen the work that the Soldiers are capable of, we have been approached by numerous people asking if we could do projects for them. I am very proud of the quality of the missions that

have been accomplished and are currently being conducted."

It's a rewarding feeling, he said. "Besides getting to spend the last half of the year with a great group of Soldiers, the most rewarding feeling is watching the expressions of the people that we do our projects for," he said. "Their look of happiness and amazement never grows old. It justifies all of the hard work that each Soldier puts forth and makes this deployment that much better."

Klettke, Binstock and Huffman all say the morale and camaraderie is good in the unit. The Soldiers back that view up.

"My first deployment has

been a great experience," Bauer said. "I'm glad I volunteered to come. I've met a lot of great people and made some lifelong friends. This year will be something I will remember for the rest of my life."

Those at home have really contributed to the deployment's success, too, they say.

"The support of our Families and local communities has been phenomenal," Klettke said. ■

Interact With Us!

See more photos of the 188th Engineers at <http://bit.ly/188ENphotos>

Bully!

Intensive Inspection Places 'Roughriders' on Top

By Staff Sgt. Amy Wieser Willson
Joint Force Headquarters

In a rousing briefing highlighted by a retired master sergeant dressed as Teddy Roosevelt, Minot's guardians of the nation's nuclear arsenal were again declared the best of the best. In honor of Minot's Airmen, called "Roughriders," "Roosevelt" had the crowd of uniformed men and women shouting "bully" before firing his pistol into the air and being met with a round of applause.

In Roosevelt's day, "bully" was synonymous with "superb" or "wonderful."

The reason for the enthusiastic response?

Minot's 91st Missile Wing, in conjunction with the N.D. Air National Guard's 219th Security Forces Squadron, had just received the highest possible rating from the latest Nuclear Surety Inspection. To ensure the utmost professionalism and accountability where nuclear weapons are concerned, the inspection brings in more than 100 inspectors from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and Air Force Global Strike Command.

"When reviewing this report, a couple words and phrases are going to stick out," Col. Thomas Bussiere, Air Force Global Strike Command inspector general, said of the investigation results. "Some of those phrases include 'best seen in 18 months,' 'best in command,' 'passion,' 'professionalism,' 'dedication' and 'steely-eyed defenders.'"

The extremely detailed Nuclear Surety Inspections take place at least once every 18 months as a way to consistently test, assess, evaluate, compare and hone processes, procedures and readiness.

"The results were excellent across the board," said Lt. Col. Tad Schauer, 219th Security Forces Squadron commander, of the report. "We received a 'satisfactory' overall rating, which is the highest you can get. One special note is that four of the 219th Security Forces defenders were recognized for their outstanding performances during this inspection."

Those four Guardsmen include Tech. Sgt. Matthew T. Sinkhorn, Staff Sgt. John F. Chalupa, Master Sgt. Harold Goodwin and Tech. Sgt. Ronald Walter.

"I'd like to think that all members, both in the 91st and 219th, are superior performers," Sinkhorn said. "Unless we all do our job, then we're all going to fail."

Sinkhorn and Chalupa had two hours of sleep when they got called back out for the exercise response and assaulted the oppositional forces, successfully completing the exercise.

"Those two guys, I've known them ever since I've been up here, and their day-to-day work ethic is outstanding and they more than



Airman 1st Class Tanner Bjerke, of the 219th Security Forces Squadron, responds to a simulated alarm at a missile alert facility training site March 17, 2011, during unit position training at the Minot Air Force Base, Minot, N.D.

deserve it, and they probably should've had it a long time ago," Goodwin said.

He and Walter serve on the Standard Evaluation team and helped prepare the Airmen for the intensive inspection. It involved "a lot of long days, not having a whole lot of days off, definitely helping out the 91st Stand Eval with exercises, prepping, getting all of the troops ready."

Their efforts paid off.

"That (recognition as superior performers) is significant

Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp



219th Security Forces Squadron commander Lt. Col. Tad Schauer, right, visits squadron members including Airman 1st Class Ashley Robbins, March 17, 2011.



Courtesy Photo

Airmen from the 5th Bomb Wing, along with the 219th Security Force Squadron, participated in a Nuclear Surety Inspection (NSI) at Minot Air Force Base during the week of Jan. 30 through Feb. 7. NSIs are extremely detailed and demand the absolute highest standards of compliance and accountability. NSIs constantly test, assess, evaluate, compare and hone processes, procedures and readiness. By design, it evaluates safe, secure and effective unit nuclear mission capability and takes place at least once every 18 months.

because ... out of the number of folks we had posted to the missile complex, nearly all of them were recognized for their excellence, and this is truly a testament to the dedication and the professionalism of the men and women of the 219th Security Forces Squadron, engaging in this mission, excelling in this mission, and taking personal pride in this mission and all of the hard work that goes with that to be successful," Schauer said.

Home to 140 Airmen, the 219th is the second largest security forces squadron in the nation. They serve directly alongside Minot's active-duty Airmen, and were the first National Guard unit to ever become nuclear certified. ■

Senior Airman Jessica McConnell, Minot Air Force Base Public Affairs, contributed to this story.

Interact With Us!
See video of the 219th Security Forces Squadron at <http://bit.ly/2012NSI>

Hitting a High Note

Band Soldier Named One of Top Musicians in Military

Story and Photos by Spc. Mike Hagburg
188th Army Band

If there were an all-star team for military musicians, Sgt. Chris Hanson would be on it.

Hanson, a member of the N.D. National Guard's 188th Army Band, has played in dozens of ensembles for thousands of people since joining the military in 1995.

He was recognized for his exceptional work as a musician on Jan. 28, when he was presented the Col. Finley R. Hamilton Military Outstanding Musician Award.

"It's like being picked as a Pro Bowl player in football," said Warrant Officer Dave Stordalen, commander of the 188th Army Band. "Only about 40 enlisted military musicians are selected from thousands in all five branches in the armed services for this award annually."

The award is a memorial to Hamilton, who served 35 years in the Army Band Program, retiring from service as the commander and conductor of the United States Army Field Band.

"I met Col. Hamilton twice during my active-duty time in Texas," Hanson said. "Winning the award means a great deal to me. I have worked hard to not only make great music personally, but have enjoyed the chance to make music with so many other fine musicians in this unit."

Hanson has spent a lifetime in music. "I loved to sing as a younger child and took quite an interest in music class,



Sgt. Chris Hanson, Fargo, N.D., a member of the N.D. Army National Guard's 188th Army Band, plays bass guitar with the band's jazz ensemble at a concert Mar. 5, 2011, in Bismarck, N.D. The concert was part of the 2011 Combined Conference, an annual event that brings together leaders of the N.D. Army and Air National Guard.

especially when we learned to play the auto harp, the guitar, the ukulele and the recorder — really any time there was an instrument being taught, I was very excited about it," he said.

Growing up in Minot, Hanson played trombone in band, sang in choir and attended the International Music Camp at the Peace Gardens. His parents supported his musical interests.

"My mom was always a very talented singer, and it was something that I always took note of," he said. "My father did not play any instruments, but he always enjoyed music and loved watching my sister and I perform."

Hanson's father spent more than a decade in the Navy on submarines, later joining the N.D. Army National Guard and serving in Operation Desert Shield

and Desert Storm. Hanson followed his father into the military in November 1995.

"I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do, and the military seemed like a good place to learn, to grow up, to make a few bucks for the future and to hone my skills," he said.

Hanson chose to become an active-duty musician in the military because he "wanted to get an edge on what it was all about to be a professional musician. I knew that I would learn a lot, grow personally and serve my country all at the same time."

After basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C., and music school at Little Creek Naval Weapons Station in Virginia, Hanson was sent to Fort Sam Houston. There, he met a fellow North Dakotan, his future commander.

"I was newly promoted to sergeant and



Hanson was presented the Col. Finley R. Hamilton Military Outstanding Musician Award by Warrant Officer Dave Stordalen, commander of the 188th Army Band, Jan. 28 for exhibiting superior musical and leadership qualities.

he joined my section as the newbie," Stordalen said. "Two guys from North Dakota in the same active-duty band, what are the chances? He was a strong trombone player right out of the chute."

During his four years on active duty at Fort Sam Houston, Hanson played trombone with the concert and marching bands, the jazz ensemble, the jazz combo, the brass quintet, the Latin Band and the trombone ensemble, and he played bass guitar with the country band and piano with the funk combo.

He also performed in civilian bands: country bands, big bands, Latin and salsa bands and German bands.

"Everything I learned during my active-duty time laid the groundwork for what I am musically now," Hanson said. "It taught me that you have to work hard to be noticed and that even though music is a business, you can never forget that the main objective is to indeed make music."

Hanson wanted to go to school, so he left active duty when his enlistment was up. He enrolled at North Dakota State University to study music, and he also joined the 188th Army Band. Hanson is now the full-time human relations and operations noncommissioned officer with the band.

"My job is to take care of the Soldiers of the unit," he said. "Ensuring that Soldiers can do their jobs when on duty is just such a great job with an enormous amount of satisfaction."

"He brings his meticulous musical mind and excellent



attention to detail to his admin work for the band," Stordalen said. "He won't let things lie; he digs to find the regulation, he digs to find the rule."

Hanson's work taking care of Soldiers has not slowed down his musical activities. In the band, he has created two new ensembles: Blues in Green, a blues rock band, and the Jazz Combo, a small group. Outside of the band, he has done jazz with big bands and combos and rock with area groups including Patents Pending, Tripp 40, Helena Handbasket, Salsa de Fargo and the Fat Daddy's Band.

"The great thing about music is that you communicate with so many people," he said. "You can communicate your feelings to everyone through music, and if you're playing with other people, they can do the same — a sort of conversation."

Along with all of his other musical projects, Hanson also created the Jazz Festival, which brings young musicians and experienced players together to make music. It started in 1995, when Hanson decided to get a large group of musician friends together for a last party and concert before he joined the military. A music festival evolved out of the going away party. Hanson started coming home on leave every August to run the event, and after leaving active duty, he continued to put the festival on each summer in Fargo.

"Since 1999, we have brought Guard Soldiers in to perform and serve as mentors and musical directors at each festival," he said. "In 2011, we were able to have both of the jazz ensembles of the Army Band perform at the festival. It felt like it was a crossing of my civilian musical efforts and my military musical efforts, and I was very excited to get the Guard involved."

Aside from being a musician and a Guard full-timer, Hanson is also devoted to the Military Funeral Honors Program. He applied for the program in 2007 because he thought it would be interesting work. Then, his father died.

"Through it all, I felt like it was a sign that perhaps the Military Funeral Honors job was a calling," he said. "My father received full military honors to include a six-man flag fold, and it was truly one of the most moving things I had ever seen. From then on out, it was my goal to be hired for that job."

Hanson has participated in nearly 300 funerals with the program.

Being in the military, as a Soldier and musician, has been "very cool," Hanson said.

"I have had the opportunity to meet a lot of Soldiers and Airmen over my 12 years in the N.D. National Guard and have made some very good friends," he said. "The opportunities that I have had to lead and mentor have been nothing but pure joy to me. We grow musically as a unit month to month, and to be a part of the musical force not only as a leader, but as a team member, is a wonderful feeling."

Interact With Us!

See video from some of the 188th Army Band's recent performances at <http://bit.ly/188thBandvids>. Photos also are available at <http://bit.ly/188thBand>.

Hanson and Sgt. DeAnn Fylling fold the U.S. flag during a ceremony at the 164th Infantry Association annual meeting in Valley City, N.D., Sept. 17, 2011.

'General Lightning' Reports for Duty as Pilot for a Day

Nine-year-old Jack Gellner couldn't stop smiling. The honorary general and "Pilot for a Day" at the N.D. Air National Guard wheeled from one exciting event to another Feb. 23 as part of the program that honors kids who are fighting or have overcome a life-threatening illness or condition.

"You're going to be my boss today," Col. Rick Gibney, 119th Wing commander, told Jack before pinning a general's star on the boy's new flight suit. "Today, whatever you say around here goes."

Jack has Type 2 Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a motor neuron disease. After a referral from the local hospital, he received his orders to "report for duty." He chose to go by the call sign "Lightning" for the day, "because my chair is fast as lightning, and it's dangerous," he said.

He's never been able to walk and has used a wheelchair since he was 2, "but it's never stopped him," his mom, Kristi, said.

"Jack, you're here because we admire you a lot. To us, you're a hero," Chaplain (Lt. Col.) John Flowers told the boy.

After his promotion, he headed to a simulated MQ-1 Predator pod — which ended up being his favorite part of the day — where he remotely "piloted" the aircraft as his family and friends took turns as his sensor operator.

Then, it was off to see a C-21 Lear jet. Jack sat in the pilot seat and even was greeted through the headset by another pilot before he was rushed out in a fire truck to put out a "fire" on base. He saw even more planes during a noontime pizza party at the Fargo Air Museum.

"He hasn't stopped smiling since he got here," Kristi said of Jack.

He wasn't the only one.

"It's incredibly rewarding for everyone involved," said 1st Lt. Andy Teigen, who coordinated the day's event.

Wilz Becomes First in State To Receive Quartermaster Award

A N.D. National Guard officer recently became the first in the state to receive the Distinguished Order of St. Martin award. Col. Giselle "Gigi" Wilz was recognized for her longtime service on behalf of the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps. The



Top, Jack Gellner, 9, sits at the controls of a MQ-1 flight simulator Feb. 23 at the N.D. Air National Guard, Fargo, N.D. Above, Col. Rick Gibney, the 119th Wing commander, left, and 1st Lt. Andrew Teigen, pin the rank of Brig. Gen. on Jack. Right, Jack poses for a "hero photo" near a C-21 aircraft during his visit. His day at the 119th Wing included a tour along with operating the controls of an MQ-1 Predator flight simulator, some time in a C-21 Lear jet cockpit and operating the fire engine water turret. Video from this event can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/GenLightningVid>.

Photos by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp

award criteria states that it's for an elite few whose careers have embodied the spirit, dignity and sense of sacrifice and commitment epitomized by Saint Martin.

"I'm the first one on the quartermaster side who had the years of service and different qualifications to qualify for it," Wilz said.

She didn't receive the award for any one single part of her career, but rather for the cumulative years of service as a quartermaster officer. She has experience as an engineer officer, as well.

The Honorable Order of Saint Martin award, which is specific to the quartermaster branch,

was presented to Wilz in February by Col. Mike Aberle, chief of staff. Saint Martin, the patron saint of the Quartermaster Regiment, is viewed as a Soldier-provider, which is a fitting theme for those focused on logistics.

Absentee Ballot System to Ease Voting Procedures for Deployed Service Members, Families

The North Dakota Secretary of State and the N.D. National Guard revealed a new absentee ballot system that will ease the voting process for North Dakota's approximately 275

Chaplain's Corner: What is Your Score on the ASFT?

By Chaplain (Capt.) Timothy Stout
1-188th Air Defense Artillery

What is the ASFT? It would be the Army Spiritual Fitness Test, if we had one. We have an Army Physical Fitness Test, and we regularly test your intellectual fitness by testing you on your Warrior Tasks and drills. But spiritual fitness is completely different. It has always been difficult to pin down proper care for the soul.

A story of two Soldiers helps to show the problem.

Agnus: "I've been working on my spirituality, so I bought this book."

Day: "The Ancient Healing Power of Crystals,' do you really think this will work?"

Agnus: "I thought it was good because it has the word 'Ancient' in it."

There are a lot of books out there that are supposed to help us with our spiritual well-being, but the real question is, what works. What is the spirit, and how do you keep it fit? Does transcendental meditation work? Does it help to listen to uplifting music? Maybe it has to do with actions, doing good deeds. Or, maybe placing certain crystals around the house will actually do the trick.

Many religions deal with the problems of spiritual well being by giving the person things to do to repair or improve their spiritual life, such as meditations, rituals, monastic lifestyles, good works, sacrifices and even the placement of special



Courtesy Photo

Chaplain (Capt.) Timothy Stout, right, and chaplain assistant Sgt. David Mohler, center, talk to Spc. MacKenzie Petersen, left, while performing a levee patrol during summer flood operations in Bismarck, N.D., June 10, 2011. The Office of the Chaplain had chaplains and chaplain assistants check on troops to ensure their spiritual and emotional morale remained high.

objects, such as crystals. The Christian faith is unique. In this faith, all that needs to be done to restore our relationship with God, to take away our fear of death and guilt, has been done by God himself. Spiritual care, then, is not a list of things to do to stay spiritually fit, but in being reminded regularly that it is already done, that you have nothing to fear.

For Christians, then, spiritual fitness involves spending time each day reading the Bible, praying and listening to and/or singing hymns. By attending worship services weekly, to do these same kinds of things with other Christians, and with the addition of a sermon meditation, it helps you to see what God, in His love, has done for you. ■

Find More Guard News Online!



View News on Your Smartphone by Scanning Our Barcode



deployed service members Feb. 23. North Dakota became the second state in the nation to sign the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act when Gov. Jack Dalrymple signed Senate Bill 2120 on April 7, 2011.

Over the last month, N.D. National Guard members have been actively testing this new absentee ballot system to verify the effectiveness. Now that this service has been built and tested, it was revealed to the public in Memorial Hall at the Capitol Building. During a news conference, Secretary of State Al Jaeger and Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, North Dakota adjutant general, revealed the system. Maj. Mike Corcoran, with the 1-112th Aviation Regiment in Kosovo, also joined the news conference via Skype.

"I want to thank all who have invested so many months developing a process to

support our service members; implementing an absentee ballot system to ease the process of casting a vote while serving our state, country and across the globe," Sprynczynatyk said. "This is the kind of cooperative effort that is necessary between the election officials who make the ballots available and the voters who need to make the effort to apply for, vote and return their ballot. Our service members and Families thank you for a simplified process to make their voices heard through the absentee ballot system."

This Act became national law on Aug. 1, 2011, and since that time, the North Dakota Secretary of State has been working to build the facilitating services now allowed by law. The new simplified absentee ballot system will now allow men and women and their Families stationed away from their North Dakota homes to:

- Easily and effectively apply for an absentee ballot through an online process
- Six extra days and faster transit means to apply for, receive and return absentee ballot.
- Easily know the ballot contents as far in advance of the election as possible.
- Receive their blank absentee ballot electronically.
- Mark their absentee ballot with a computer.
- Return their ballot electronically, if they so desire.
- Track the status of their absentee ballot delivery and return through online services.

The new absentee ballot voting system may be found at <https://vip.sos.nd.gov/absentee/>.



Courtesy Photo

F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft pilots with the N.D. Air National Guard's 119th Fighter Wing "Happy Hooligans" accept the trophy for top overall honors during the "William Tell" Weapons Competition Awards Ceremony at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., in 1994. The unit was named "world champions" among all fighter squadrons, much to the dismay of their active-Air Force competition. Alongside the controllers from the Western Air Defense Sector (three on the left) are the four North Dakota Airmen holding the trophy: Maj. George Lambirth, Maj. Robert Becklund, Maj. Robert Edlund and Capt. Rick Gibney. Despite the amazing achievement, when asked about the highlight of his career during a recent interview, Edlund, who retired as a lieutenant colonel, didn't mention the competition, but rather the unit camaraderie. "When I think back on my Air Force career, what stands out the most is the Hooligan Family and the friendships made, not my individual achievements." Lambirth also retired as a lieutenant colonel, while Becklund and Gibney continue to serve as Hooligans, both with the rank of colonel. See video at <http://bit.ly/1994WillyTell>.