

# THE NCO JOURNAL

VOL: 19, ISSUE: 6 JUNE 2010

A MONTHLY FORUM FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## BEST RANGER

COMPETITION  
2010

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*Hundreds compete  
in inaugural  
Warrior Games*

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### ON THE COVER

A competitor comes down the zip line during the 2010 Best Ranger Competition, held May 7 at Fort Benning, Ga.  
Photo by Linda Crippen



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**PUBLISHER** - Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston **BOARD OF DIRECTORS** - Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond F. Chandler III, Commandant; Command Sgt. Maj. Richard S. Rosen, Deputy Commandant; Charles E. Guyette, Chief of Staff; Jesse W. McKinney, MA, Director, Personnel and Administration **EDITOR** - David B. Crozier DSN 621-1046 **SENIOR MILITARY JOURNALIST** - Master Sgt. Antony Joseph DSN 621-1043 **JOURNALISTS** - Linda Crippen, Michael L. Lewis, Cindy Ramirez, Angela Simental, Stephanie Sanchez, Spc. Samuel Phillips **GRAPHICS** - Sgt. Russel C. Schnaare and Pfc. David Gafford. *The NCO Journal* is a professional publication for Noncommissioned Officers of the U.S. Army. Views expressed herein are those of the authors. Views and contents do not necessarily reflect official Army or Department of Defense positions and do not change or supersede information in other official publications. Our mission is to provide a forum for the open exchange of ideas and information, to support training, education and development of the NCO Corps and to foster a closer bond among its members. The Secretary of the Army approved funds for printing this publication in accordance with provisions of AR 25-30. **Distribution:** *The Journal* is distributed through the U.S. Army Publishing Agency, Distribution Operations Facility, 1655 Woodson Road, Overland, MO 63114-6128 (Phone: (314) 263-7305 or DSN 693-7305). Units or offices with valid publications accounts can receive the *Journal* by having their publications office submit DA Form 12-99 for inclusion in the 12-Series requirements (12-05 Block 0041). Submissions: Print and visual submissions of general interest to the NCO Corps are invited. Unsolicited submissions will not be returned. Photographs are U.S. government-furnished, unless otherwise credited. Prospective contributors are encouraged to contact the *Journal* to discuss requirements. Contacts: Our FAX number is DSN 621-8484 or (915) 744-8484. Or call, (915) 744-1046 or DSN 621-1046. Our e-mail is: ATSS-SCN@conus.army.mil Letters: Letters to the Editor must be signed and include the writer's full name and rank, city and state (or city and country) and mailing address. Letters should be brief and are subject to editing. *The NCO Journal* (ISSN 1058-9058) is published monthly by the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, 11291 SGT E Churchill St., Fort Bliss, TX 79918-8002. Periodicals postage is paid at El Paso, Texas and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The NCO Journal*, Commandant, USASMA, ATTN: ATSS-SCN, Editor, 11291 SGT E Churchill St., Fort Bliss, TX 79918-8002.

From the SMA

# Applying Master Resilience Training

This article is a follow-up to the article titled, “What is Comprehensive Soldier Fitness?” The vignette in this article reflects how Master Resilience Trainers are applying strength and resiliency skills in their assigned organizations. This article demonstrates some of the potential applications for MRT skills at the small unit level.

Selected by his battalion leadership, a sergeant first class (sergeant) attended the new MRT course at the University of Pennsylvania in December 2009. His unit was an infantry battalion that returned from a deployment in Iraq earlier that year. The unit planned and executed a block leave period over the Christmas holiday from Dec. 20, 2009, to Jan. 10, 2010. The sergeant opted to not take block leave during this period so he could focus on getting caught up on counseling and administrative work for the platoon.

During this block leave period, “Pvt. Joe” joined the unit directly from One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, Ga. Through the integration and assignment process, the private ultimately ended up with an assignment to the sergeant’s platoon on Dec. 28. During the scheduled half-day period, those Soldiers who did not take leave participated in classes, some typical house cleaning chores and daily physical training. The sergeant identified up front that Pvt. Joe was really slow in his running during their morning fitness training. However, his performance was neither a surprise nor an issue as acclimating to the elevation of the installation initially affects everyone’s performance. Overall, Pvt. Joe did not seem much different or out of the ordinary during the block leave period.

On Jan. 11, the company and platoon started getting all the Soldiers back to work. The company’s focus was preparing for a company change of command. Jan. 11-13 focused on platoon layouts and inventorying all of the unit’s assigned equipment and property. As the platoon finished its layout processes on the 13th, the sergeant directed the squad leaders to take their Soldiers and conduct some training in preparation for an upcoming range. The training initially consisted of fitting and adjusting the Soldiers’ body armor, and placing the MOLLE pouches on their vests in accordance with unit standard operating procedures. The squad leaders then performed some weapons drills with the new Sol-

diers, which included immediate action for stoppages, weapons malfunctions and magazine change drills for personal weapons. The squad leaders and their Soldiers then did some laps around the motor pool, sprinting for a distance and then jogging.

Pvt. Joe finished dead last on every task — from movement techniques to magazine changes to correcting a weapon malfunction. This was the first training experience for Pvt. Joe in full equipment with the guys in his platoon. He never complained about the tasks but admitted he was just not very good in his performance.

The platoon planned for training at the hand grenade range on the morning of Jan. 14. Their first formation was at 0630 for personnel accountability with a planned departure for the range after the weapons draw from the arms room. Yet, by 0700, Pvt. Joe was still not present for duty. The sergeant sent Pvt. Joe’s squad leader and team leader to check on him at his barracks room. Because of the lack of space in the unit’s barracks, Pvt. Joe was living in a barracks across post with another unit. The squad leader and team leader called back to the sergeant to report Pvt. Joe was not in his barracks room, and the Soldiers in the barracks reported they had not seen him since 2100 the night prior. The sergeant immediately thought the worst and executed a platoon mission to locate Pvt. Joe.

With some of the platoon already en route to the range, the sergeant had those Soldiers return to the installation to help look for their missing Soldier. They started their search with Pvt. Joe’s roommate from the other company and those Soldiers who lived in his barracks. The sergeant and the Soldiers of the platoon soon found out that no one really knew much about Pvt. Joe and what he did during his off-duty time.

One of the Soldiers from the other company said they sometimes dropped Pvt. Joe off at the USO because he liked to play online games utilizing their free Internet service. The sergeant sent Pvt. Joe’s team leader and two Soldiers to check the USO and his old barracks where he lived prior to in-processing the company. They found Pvt. Joe sitting outside of the old barracks huddled next to an outside door. He was tired, cold and hungry, but he was OK. The team leader placed him in his car and brought him back to the company area.



When the team leader brought Pvt. Joe into the company area, the sergeant immediately took the young Soldier into the company conference room. In years past, the sergeant reported, he would have normally lost his mind on this 19-year-old kid and “smoked the crap out of him.”

Looking at the larger institution of the Army, this destructive leadership style is increasingly becoming a factor in suicides. Research in the civilian sector shows this kind of leadership style can trigger an acute stress reaction in Soldiers who already have low self-esteem and poor resiliency. But after what the sergeant learned in the MRT training, he thought this was an opportunity to apply his knowledge and see how the training worked in a practical application.

The sergeant started by asking Pvt. Joe why he felt like he needed to leave his unit. Pvt. Joe explained to the sergeant that he did not think he was good enough to be in this unit, and that he would let everyone down if he stayed. The sergeant continued to question the young Soldier about why he felt this way. Pvt. Joe told the sergeant that he barely passed his Army Physical Fitness Test in basic training and that he was not going to be able to perform like the other Soldiers in the platoon.

The sergeant told him his physical training performance would get better; that it takes time and hard work. The sergeant then asked why he only stayed on post; why did he not try to go AWOL. Pvt. Joe said he did not want to be a deserter because that was wrong, and it was not good. The sergeant noted how Pvt. Joe cried throughout the questioning. Using the techniques he learned from the MRT course to identify the larger problem, the “ice-berg,” the sergeant asked him what family members Pvt. Joe had at home. The young Soldier looked at the seasoned NCO with a stone face and said, “What family?” Pvt. Joe told the sergeant that throughout his 19 years he was tossed from family member to family member — aunts and uncles to foster care and back to family. Pvt. Joe said if he had a problem, or someone had a problem with him, they would just throw him away to the next person. The sergeant learned that the longest time Pvt. Joe had spent in one place with the same people was the 13 weeks of OSUT at Fort Benning.

The sergeant was able to identify through his MRT training that Pvt. Joe had no communication skills and very low self-esteem. The sergeant then started to talk to Pvt. Joe about ATC skills — activating events, identifying his thoughts and consequences — learned in the MRT course, and how to apply them in his situation. In these discussions, the sergeant found himself using Pvt. Joe as a test case to apply the lessons he learned from the MRT classes. In teaching the private the MRT course content, it took the sergeant approximately 14 days to get all the class material to the young Soldier in a method the Soldier could learn about himself and how to apply the material. Today after two months, the platoon has a new Soldier, a warrior and a member of their team. Pvt. Joe’s turnaround would not have been possible without the MRT training to identify the deeper issues he had, and then work on building strength in his character and resiliency. The sergeant said he knows how to obtain the desired effects in any Soldier utilizing his rank, but the long-term effects on Soldiers are different when you can show a person how to change themselves.


In the vignette above, the sergeant realized the practical ap-

plication of what he learned in the MRT course very early after returning from school. This leader has since taught and applied what he learned in the course to all his Soldiers and many others throughout the battalion. The primary skills taught at the MRT course include:

- **ATC:** Understand the *Activating Event*, Identify your *Thoughts*, and Analyze the *Consequences*.
- **Avoid Thinking Traps:** Identify and correct counterproductive patterns in thinking through the use of critical questions.
- **Detect Icebergs:** Identify deep beliefs and core values that fuel out of proportion emotion and evaluate the accuracy and usefulness of these beliefs.
- **Energy Management:** Regulate emotions and energy levels to enable critical thinking and optimal performance.
- **Problem Solving:** Accurately identify what caused the problem and identify solution strategies.
- **Put Challenges in Perspective:** Stop catastrophic thinking; focus on what will likely happen, rather than dwelling on the worst case scenario.
- **Real-Time Resilience:** Shut down counterproductive thinking to enable greater concentration and better focus on the task at hand.

Each of these topics learned in the MRT course and now in our units is best taught to Soldiers in a classroom-type environment initially. Large forums provide the opportunity to understand concepts and ideas from a general perspective and establish a common understanding of the tasks among the group. Learning to apply the lessons of the course in practical applications comes from the small working groups that follow the lectures. MRTs in each small group act as facilitators to promote discussions and develop an understanding of past actions. The members of the small group then apply the lessons from the lecture to these previous real-world situations.

The MRT course now teaches those communication and leadership skills that were epitomized in the story Gen. George Blanchard, former U.S. Army Europe commander, established in developing the Sergeant Morales Club. In the story, the fictional Sgt. Morales was a squad leader who received the rehabilitative transfer of Soldiers rejected by other platoons. Sgt. Morales integrated all of these Soldiers into his unit making them effective members of his team while consistently performing the best in all team-, squad- and platoon-level competitions. The Sgt. Morales story served as the model that established the expectations for all NCOs assigned to the USAEUR. Today, through the MRT course and the incorporation of MRT lessons in all of our professional military education courses, the Army will focus on making our leaders better communicators and more adaptive for the challenges of the 21st century.



Kenneth O. Preston  
Sergeant Major of the Army

# Modernization strategy released



Courtesy U.S. Army

A Soldier evaluates the performance of the Modular Accessory Shotgun System, which combines the firepower and features of the M4 rifle in an over/under design with a 12-gauge shotgun. The MASS is scheduled to be fielded within the next two fiscal years.

## Army News Service

The Department of the Army released the 2010 Army Modernization Strategy in May.

“The goal of Army modernization is to develop and field the best equipment available to allow our Soldiers to be successful against our enemies,” said Gen. George W. Casey Jr., chief of staff of the Army. “We must continue to transform into a force that is versatile, expeditionary, agile, lethal, sustainable and interoperable, so that our Soldiers will have a decisive advantage in any fight.”

The Army plans to achieve its 2010 modernization goals by developing and fielding new capabilities; continuously modernizing equipment to meet current and future capability needs through procurement of upgraded capabilities, reset and recapitalization; and meeting continuously evolving force requirements through Army priorities and the Army Force Generation Model.

Equipping individual Soldiers and units is a core Army responsibility under Title 10 of the U.S. Code.

“Providing all of America’s sons and daughters who serve in our Army with the most capable equipment for the battles they’re fighting today and are likely to face in the future are the responsibilities that the Army takes seriously and is committed to accomplishing,” said Lt. Gen. Robert P. Lennox, deputy chief of staff G-8 and the Army’s chief materiel integration officer.

The complete 2010 AMS is available at [www.g8.army.mil](http://www.g8.army.mil).

# Guard Soldiers may be eligible for post-deployment compensation

## Army News Service

Thousands of Army National Guard Soldiers, including those who have retired or separated, have until Oct. 28 to apply for Post-Deployment Mobilization Respite Absence compensation for serving extended overseas deployments.

“We’ve got about 14,000 eligible Soldiers,” said Col. Dennis Chapman, chief of personnel and policy for the Army National Guard. “About two-thirds of those are still in service, and we’ve got packets submitted for about 87 percent of the Soldiers that are still in service.”

About 5,000 former Guard Soldiers are eligible for the benefit, Chapman said, adding that packets have been received from only about 20 percent of those no longer serving.

The Department of Defense developed PDMRA for service members who were

deployed longer than established dwell ratios. For reserve component service members, that dwell ratio is one year deployed for every five years at home station.

“If you have a tour ending today, you look back 72 months, and if you were (mobilized) for more than 12 of those 72 months, you may be eligible for PDMRA days,” Chapman said.

Initially, PDMRA allowed Soldiers to earn extra administrative leave days for the additional time spent deployed. However, Soldiers must have been in a Title 10 status to use those leave days. That meant that once they returned to Title 32 status, they were ineligible to use those days.

As a stop-gap measure, the policy was revised and allowed eligible Soldiers to apply those leave days to their next deployment. But those who left the service or didn’t deploy again couldn’t take advantage of the benefit.

“The National Defense Authorization Act allows the services to pay Soldiers at a rate of up to \$200 a day for any PDMRA days they earned but were not able to take,” Chapman said.

This applies primarily to Guard Soldiers serving on active duty between Jan. 19, 2007, and Aug. 18, 2007.

Typically, a Guard Soldier who serves longer than 12 months during the most recent 72 months gets one PDMRA day for each additional month or fraction of a month. The number of PDMRA days awarded increases after 18 months and again after 24 months served.

On average, those who are eligible receive credit for about 28 days, which translates to more than \$5,000, Chapman said. Soldiers who feel they may be eligible are encouraged to contact their unit leadership or their state military pay officer.



Courtesy U.S. Army

Louisiana National Guardsmen of the 2225th Multi-Role Bridge Company, 205th Engineer Battalion, construct a 300-foot temporary wharf in May that will be used to load boats with booms and supplies at Campo's Marina in St. Bernard, La.

## Guard supports oil spill response

### Army News Service

National Guard Soldiers and airmen are on the ground in Louisiana, Alabama and Florida supporting civilian authorities tackling the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill response.

The April 20 explosion on the deep-water oil rig 40 miles from the coast caused millions of gallons of oil to leak from the ocean floor.

Among the efforts, Louisiana Guard Soldiers have built a 300-foot floating pier to help block an oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico from reaching the coastline.

Lt. Col. Danny Bordelon, engineering task force commander, explained that the floating dock is necessary because the area of operations is very tight and shallow and doesn't allow vessels to access the commercial pier. The dock will allow four commercial vessels to load booms at the same time.

"The Soldiers are doing an excellent job and are very motivated to help out," Bordelon said.

The Soldiers are also assisting in the loading of booms onto ships, as well as providing support in the areas of logistics, command and control, security, aerial re-

connaisance, communications and clean-up. The Guard is also expected to provide medical and engineering capabilities.

"We are here as long as we need to be," Bordelon said.

In Alabama, troops from the 711th Bridge Support Battalion have placed barriers around Dauphin Island. The barriers are filled with a chemical compound that solidifies if oil seeps into them. The solidified material can be removed, disposed of safely and replaced as necessary. Florida sent Guard members to a unified command center in Alabama and to its own emergency operations center in Tallahassee.

## Soldiers invited to blog their true stories

### Army News Service

The Army Accessions Command has released "Version 3" of its blog, "Army Strong Stories." What the command needs now are more Soldiers to sign up to populate the site with real-world insight and perspective about the Army, officials said.

"Our efforts are to try to have bloggers and Soldiers tell their stories — there are such wonderful, rich, content-filled stories about what the American Army is doing," said Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, commander, Army Accessions Command, during a media teleconference in May.

The primary goal, he said, is to shed light on the Army so America's youth has

the real story about what happens with those in uniform.

"This is not a pitch; this is an awareness," he said. "This is not necessarily a recruiting tool; it is a tool to help tell stories."

Freakley said recruiters often talk about the future with the young people who visit their offices. The "Army Strong Stories" website will contain stories about what is happening now.

"The recruiter talks about *if* you join the Army," Freakley said. Bloggers on the site "are telling their Army story. They are not talking about what *might* happen; they are talking about what *is* happening — and I think the people ought to hear that. There is always friction in the Army, and not

every day is sunshine and roses."

Currently, there are 166 bloggers participating on the site, and about 800 entries have been posted. Each post is available for comment by visitors. The site gets about 30,000 visitors monthly.

The site is not really edited or screened and Soldiers are free to post their own perspectives, but must keep operational security and Army values in mind when doing so, officials said.

"When people hear what you've done in combat, especially our younger Soldiers, and then talk to you about that in the comments that are posted back, there's a healing that goes on," Freakley said. "It validates what people are doing."

# Army sponsors ethics contest

U.S. Army Center of Excellence  
for the Professional Military Ethic

The U.S. Army Center of Excellence for the Professional Military Ethic is sponsoring an Armywide ethics competition through Aug. 15.

Soldiers, civilian employees and family members may choose up to seven ways to share their stories and personal insights about maintaining the U.S. Army's high ethical standards.

The competition's seven categories include:

**Army Professional Exemplar:** The best personal account or profile of an individual that exemplifies an Army professional

**Army Values Exemplars:** The best accounts of individuals that exemplify each of the seven Army Values

**Articulate the Army Professional Military Ethic:** The best Army-written document outlining a recommended set of codes, principles, values, beliefs, ideals or other approaches to articulating what we stand for as an Army

**Professional Development Program:** The best unit professional development program

**Case Study/Vignettes:** The best moral-ethical case study or vignette (can be recent or historical)

**Monograph:** The best written monograph or essay articulating the Army professional military ethic and its place in the profession and culture

**Instructional Method:** The best methods or techniques for instructing the professional military ethic or character development

"Our professional military ethic is the system of moral standards and principles that define our commitment to the nation and the way we conduct ourselves in its service," said Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. in last year's *Joint Forces Quarterly* magazine. "In part, we articulate the professional military



**HELP ADVANCE THE ARMY PROFESSION:  
ENTER THE COMPETITION TODAY!!**

**THE UNITED STATES ARMY  
PROFESSIONAL ETHIC  
IS STRONG**

**MAKE IT STRONGER!!  
Share your professional experience – click on  
"Competition" at  
[www.us.army.mil/suite/page/611545](http://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/611545)**

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[www.us.army.mil/suite/page/611545](http://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/611545)

ethic through Army values, the Warrior Ethos, the Noncommissioned Officer's Creed, the Soldier's Creed and oaths of office. Yet, the full meaning of the professional military ethic extends beyond these beliefs and norms. More implicit aspects of our rich history and culture influence our moral compasses as well," he wrote.

The deadline is Aug. 15. The entry form and submission package can be e-mailed to [theacpme@usma.edu](mailto:theacpme@usma.edu) or submitted by mail to: U.S. Army Center of Excellence for the Professional Military Ethic, Attn: Competition, Taylor Hall, Bldg 600, West Point, NY 10996, or via fax to 845-938-0414.

**Information:** <http://acpme.army.mil>

# Comment on 'don't ask, tell' online

American Forces Press Service

A new online inbox that enables service members and their families to comment anonymously about the impact of a possible repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law has gone live.

The inbox allows respondents to offer their thoughts about how a repeal of the law that prohibits gays and lesbians from openly serving in the military might affect military readiness, military effectiveness and unit cohesion, recruiting and retention, and

family readiness, a defense official explained.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates created an intra-department, inter-service working group to conduct a fair, objective, comprehensive and dispassionate review of these issues, the official said.

The online inbox is one method the group will use to systematically engage with the force and their families.

A non-Defense Department contractor will monitor comments

made through the inbox and eliminate any identifiable information inadvertently submitted to ensure anonymity.

**Comment Online**  
Find the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" inbox at  
<http://www.defense.gov/dadt>  
Respondents must possess  
an official Common Access Card



# Bonuses, incentives offered for undermanned Army jobs

## Army News Service

New Army recruits with skills critical to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are eligible for bonuses, educational help and other incentives if they enlist to serve in the Army's most undermanned jobs.

Incentives include average bonuses of up to \$20,000 for a six-year active-duty enlistment for the most in-demand occupations. Perks such as student loan repayment and the Army college fund can also be offered for the 14 most critical military occupational specialties.

"It's supply and demand," said Jerry Pionk, chief of the enlisted incentives branch.

Pionk explained that recruiting quotas take into consideration the difficulty of each job's training. If a job's Advanced Individual Training school is characteristically tough or has stringent qualifications such as a top-secret clearance, the Army will have to recruit harder, knowing that not all Soldiers interested will make the cut.

"If all of a sudden we are recruiting real well, and retaining well, then we will focus bonus money elsewhere," Pionk continued. Recruiting and retention numbers are evaluated and adjusted quarterly, and MOSs are accordingly moved on and off the "critical" list, he said.

However, Pionk said the current, most incentivized Army jobs have traditionally been hard to fill.

Native language translators, air defense tactical operations center operators, satellite communication systems operator-maintainers, cryptologic linguists and explosive ordnance disposal Soldiers are the Army's current top five most in-demand occupations.

Other in-demand MOSs include:

- Microwave systems operator-maintainers
- Field artillery automated tactical data system specialists
- Fire support specialists
- Firefinder radar operators
- Multichannel transmission systems operator-maintainers

- Visual information equipment operator-maintainers
- Paralegal specialists
- Land combat electronic missile system repairers
- Radio and communications security repairers

"An incentive is designed to shape someone's actions," said Lt. Col. Mark Russo, chief of Army Human Resources Command's Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate Accessions Branch. "If that action is already shaped without the need of an incentive, we might not incentivize them."

Russo explained that many Army jobs which need high

enlistment numbers already meet their quotas without the addition of incentives.

For example, for 2010, the Army will need to recruit about 14,000 active-duty infantrymen; but not much in the way of extra perks is offered an infantry recruit, because he has so much competition.

"Some high-demand MOSs that the Army requires in large numbers are not given bonuses or incentivized at all

because there are folks out there that want that job," said Russo.

Jim Bragg, the retention and re-classification branch chief at Army Human Resources Command, said there are also several in-demand jobs within the Army that are only offered to current Soldiers. Eligible Soldiers are also offered incentives to reclassify to a new MOS in some of these career fields.

"We have a couple MOSs that we're having a very difficult time filling, which may offer Soldiers a better promotion opportunity," said Bragg. "We need qualified individuals to step forward and come do those jobs."

Electromagnetic spectrum managers and counterintelligence agents are among the top in-service MOSs that need to be filled from within the ranks.

Soldiers can contact their career counselor or retention representative to learn more about in-service jobs.

The Army has offered enlistment bonuses since 1973, when the Gates Commission ended the draft and the military became an all-volunteer force.



# Rangers Lead the Way through Best Ranger Competition 2010

Story and photos by Linda Crippen

*This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
but we in it shall be remembered  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with  
me shall be my brother.*

*William Shakespeare  
Henry V  
act IV, scene iii*

For many Rangers, competing in the Best Ranger Competition is like checking off a lifelong bucket list item. As a career goal, BRC is one of the big ones, yet one that many will never accomplish. For many of the past 27 years, Rangers, their friends, families and supporters have converged upon Fort Benning, Ga., to determine the best of the best.

This year's competition proved to be no less grueling than the previous. While 40 two-man teams began the event May 7, only 25 teams finished three days later. Fourteen teams were already out of the running before the end of day one, due to either injuries or the inability to complete events. Those who finished the competition covered more than 60 miles in about 60 hours. But as the saying goes, "There can be only one." The best this year was Team 6, Master Sgts. Eric Ross and Eric Turk, better known as "The Erics" from U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C.

The BRC is purposely designed to test the physical and mental mettle of the competitors, offering very little rest between any of the events. Historically, the attrition rate averages about 60 percent, according to the BRC website. Participants do not know the schedule or order of events until the competition begins. There are also several mystery events,

which remain secret until teams are briefed just prior to beginning the unknown activity.

Open to all airborne-Ranger-qualified servicemen on active-duty, Reserves or National Guard status, the competition only allocates a specific number of slots for each major subordinate command unit. For example, the 82nd Airborne Division was authorized to send two teams this year. If units want to send more than their allotted number, they are required to get approval from the Ranger Training Brigade command team: Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Smith, RTB command sergeant major, or Col. Douglas L. Flohr, RTB commander.

Additionally, airborne-Ranger-qualified servicemen from other military branches may participate. This year's competition included the first all-Air Force team, 1st Lt. Daniel Norwood and Master Sgt. Michael Miller, of the 820th Security Forces Group,

Moody Air  
Force Base, Ga.

## THE BEGINNING

The competition has always served to highlight the Ranger community and its

**Opposite page bottom:** Team 1, Sgts. 1st Class Mark Breyak (firing) and Steven Fields (spotter) compete on the machine gun range, during day one of Best Ranger Competition 2010. **Opposite page top:** Competitors get ready to begin day two of BRC 2010. **Above:** Sgt. 1st Class Vernon Kenworthy, Team 39, climbs down an obstacle in the Darby Queen event, on day three of BRC 2010.



contributions to the Army. “Over the last nine years, since we started this war, what it’s really done is serve as a recruiting tool within the Army to get young Soldiers interested in Ranger School,” Flohr said, explaining the benefit of the competition.

Smith agreed, saying the event has “evolved a great deal over the years, and since the war began, the [contestants have] changed focus.” He compared past participants (prior to the war) to professional athletes, like those who run the Boston Marathon or Ironman competition. But since the war began, it has changed to a “battle-focused, NCO-run type of competition,” Smith said.

The RTB command team explained that when retired Lt. Gen. David E. Grange Jr., former director of the Ranger Department, started the competition in the early 1980s, it was an informal, impromptu event that pitted the best men from the three Ranger Camps, or battalions, to see who would come out on top. Back then, the camps were known as the Ranger Department. In 1984, the competition was opened to other Rangers outside these units, and it has continued to grow ever since. The Ranger Department transitioned into the Ranger Training Brigade in 1987, with three battalions.

The manner in which competitors prepare for the BRC has also evolved. Flohr said many prospective competitors used to go on special duty status for six to eight months, allowing them dedicated time to train.

“I, quite frankly, wasn’t crazy about the competition at that time because it was more of a professional-athlete type thing, more of an Eco-Challenge type of event,” Flohr said. The war has changed that pattern, and participants don’t have the same luxury of time. “The competition has actually gotten back to the original spirit in which it was intended,” he said, describing Best Ranger



as a come-as-you-are competition. “Some of these guys may train for a month or two before they come here, but they’re not special duty anywhere. They’re doing their jobs.”

Flohr and Smith explained that several participants will deploy shortly after competing, like Spc. Cristobal Cruz (Team 26), 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Benning, who graduated from Ranger School last November. Cruz, the youngest competitor this year, was also the lowest ranking.

With less than three years of service under his belt, Cruz and his partner, Staff Sgt. Wilton Gleaton, also with 75th Ranger Regiment, finished 19th out of the 25 teams who completed the event. Cruz was scheduled to deploy within two weeks after the BRC.

“That’s the way this competition ought to be. That is the spirit of this competition,” Flohr said.

## HOSTING BEST RANGER

The RTB puts an enormous amount of work into hosting the BRC. RTB staff begin preparing almost a year in advance for the competition, with a series of information briefings. Within one week after the BRC, staff conducts its after-action review and starts planning for next year. Grange is still involved with the event, as Flohr typically speaks with him about once a quarter, and as the competition draws closer, on a weekly basis.

“He’s amazing,” Flohr said of Grange. “I was talking to him about this one orienteering event on the western side of post, and he said, ‘Hey, there’s a huge swamp over there. Make sure those guys ... .’”

“He remembers all the terrain, so it’s value-added. The planning definitely takes





us a year, and it takes us about a battalion-and-a-half of Soldiers to run the competition, plus the National Guard, to whom I've really got to give a lot of credit," Flohr added.

For some attendees, BRC is a reunion of sorts. VIPs this year included Phil Piazza, a Merrill's Marauder from World War II; retired Col. Ralph Puckett, who fought in Korea; two retired sergeants major of the Army, Glen E. Morrell and Julius W. Gates; and, of course, Grange, who was a 17-year-old paratrooper in World War II.

Family support is also important. While there are many legacy events within the competition, planners keep tweaking it. Flohr said there is a balance they must maintain: keep the



competition difficult, but keep it family-friendly. "A lot of these Soldiers' families have sacrificed the time to allow the Rangers to come here, and it's unfair to rob them of the opportunity to see it. That's why we keep it local at Fort Benning. We can, and we have in the past, taken it to Dahlonega, Ga., in the mountains — easy for us to do but not good for the families," he explained.

It's not just the Rangers who take this competition seriously; supporters do, too. Family and friends kept up with their teams, sometimes racing alongside competitors. Fans showed their support with signs and T-shirts declaring which teams they were backing. Supporters of the winning Team 6 boasted shirts that read, "Eric + Eric = BRC 2010," and "I'm with Eric."

## COMPETITION HIGHLIGHTS

**DAY 1** — Well before sunrise May 7, the RTB was bustling with action as every able body prepared for the kickoff at 0630. True to southern Georgia weather, the early hour was already thick with stifling humidity as competitors and fans lined up at RTB's Camp Rogers, the starting line for the first event: a four-mile buddy run that led to a 250-meter swim across Victory Pond.

By the time teams exited the pond, the top finishers were already securing their positions. Team 6 grabbed first place and held on to it the entire time.

After the Urban Obstacle Course and several firing ranges, teams made their way to the pickup point for the spot jump on Fryar Drop Zone. Teams conducted a full-combat



equipment spot jump from a UH-60 Black Hawk at 1,500 feet, using an MC-6 parachute while attempting to land inside a 35-meter-diameter target circle.

Standards included rigging for the jump in 30 minutes or less, or teams would incur penalties. Landing with any part of their bodies inside the target, jumpers received bonus time awards. Once on the ground, competitors raced to the event finish line, where the first few teams rested until the last team arrived, which would not be until almost 1900. Afterward, the next orienteering and foot march events began.

Prior to the 13-mile foot march at the end of day one, competitors had already racked up almost 20 miles. Capt. John Vickery, BRC project officer, said only the top 28 teams with the highest scores will place.

Cadre officials reported the last team to check in after the

**Above left:** Master Sgt. Eric Turk fires a Heckler & Koch pistol during the stress shoot on Krilling Range, day two of the BRC 2010. **Left:** Staff Sgt. Danny Shedd, Team 10, attempts to clear "The Dirty Name" obstacle on the Darby Queen course, day three of the BRC 2010. **Above:** Master Sgt. Eric Ross exits a UH-60 Black Hawk during the spot jump event on day one of the BRC 2010.

foot march arrived around 0400, at which time all teams conducted an equipment layout before starting Night Stakes, which included setting up several disassembled radios, administering an IV, and mystery event one: Borelight (zero the aiming laser or optic) an M68 Close Combat Optic on an M4 rifle.

**DAY 2** — Although the days seemed to run together, the remaining 26 teams found a few moments for rest. By this point, bodies were showing visible signs of stress, especially the feet. Many competitors tended to badly blistered wounds on their feet during Saturday morning hygiene, but all remaining teams seemed in good spirits when the briefing for the Day Stakes began at 0800.

The leading teams at this point would go on to secure their permanent positions in BRC 2010: 1st place — Ross and Turk; 2nd place — Team 5: Master Sgt. Kevin Quant and Staff Sgt. George Sankey; 3rd place — Team 7: Sgt. Maj. James Moran and Master Sgt. Evert Solderholm. All top three teams herald from USASOC.

Perhaps the most family-friendly day of the competition, day two took place mostly at Todd Field, as competitors moved through the Day Stakes in a round-robin of sorts. Day Stakes consisted of the grenade assault course, Ranger first-responder lane, weapons assembly, the Tri-Tower Challenge, mystery event two (rig an AT-4 anti-tank rocket to a parachute for an airborne operation), mystery event three (enter a building and clear rooms of enemy personnel by means of lethal or nonlethal force), and a stress shoot at Krilling Range.

A crowd favorite of the entire competition, mystery event three required competitors to perform close-quarters combatives. So-called lethal force could be used only on armed combatants. Teams had to clear three rooms, where one or two combatants awaited. Teams were penalized if they could not gain control or submission of the combatants; they were also penalized if they were overtaken. A few of the teams had difficulty clearing the



**Above:** Sgt. Anthony Vasquez of Team 9, low crawls through a Darby Queen obstacle, day two of the BRC 2010. Along with his partner, Staff Sgt. Keith Bach, the team placed 17th overall. **Below:** Team 6, Master Sgts. Eric Ross and Eric Turk exit a UH-60 Black Hawk during the helocast event on the third day of the BRC 2010.

rooms, and some were even overpowered by the enemy combatants, which led to the dreaded tap out. Spectators and competitors said they hoped this event would become a permanent fixture within the BRC.

The end of day two brought another night orienteering course, where competitors made their way to Camp Darby. Sgt. 1st Class Vernon Kenworthy, 4th RTB, Ranger Branch manager within Human Resources Command (Team 39) said this particular night orienteering course was the toughest event of the entire competition. “After already going through two days of the competition, it was rough to then do 12 hours of walking with that monkey on your back,” he said, referring to the equipment competitors had to carry in their rucksack. Again, those teams who finished quickly had another opportunity for more rest.

**DAY 3** — Around 0800, teams readied themselves for the legendary Darby Queen obstacle course, a one-mile trek over rolling terrain with 26 challenging obstacles. In particular, the second obstacle of the course is called, “The Dirty Name.” At first glance, the obstacle does not stand out as being exceptionally difficult; however, after the first few teams ran the course, spectators saw how challenging it really was.

Competitors had to climb on top of a log approximately 4 feet high. While standing on top of this log, they had to jump up to and climb over a second log, more than twice the height of the first — then climb down a rope. By the looks of the obstacle, it seemed simple; however, the crowd soon realized many competitors could never make it up to and over the second log. Subsequently, teams



were penalized for not completing it.

Competing on Team 39 (placing 22nd overall) with Sgt. 1st Class Justin Brekken, the Armor Branch manager at HRC and the first 19D cavalry scout to complete a BRC, was Kenworthy, who bruised a rib during the obstacle course. Kenworthy said the reason the second obstacle is called “The Dirty Name” is because “you want to call it any type of dirty name, everything under the sun, especially if you can’t make it.” Given his tall stature, Kenworthy had no trouble clearing it.

Once finished with the Darby Queen course, teams made their way to the pickup point for the helocast at Victory Pond, followed by the water confidence course. The helocast required teams to jump from a Black Hawk with a poncho raft carrying their equipment and swim to shore. Scores were determined by the fastest time.

Once teams reached the shore, they climbed up a 35-foot obstacle to conduct a log-walk and rope drop, after hitting the beloved Ranger tab sign. Next, competitors sprinted to the 75-foot tower for the suspension-traverse obstacle, also known as the zip line, followed by a canoe trip several miles down the Chattahoochee River, which brought them to the final event.

BRC 2010 ended the same way it started — with the buddy run. Organizers intentionally plotted the almost three-mile course to include a Fort Benning iconic feature: Cardiac Hill. The name implies all possibilities. First-place finishers Ross and Turk were the only team to run up the hill, perhaps enforcing the belief they truly were the best of the best that weekend.

As tradition stands, special guest speaker for the awards ceremony Gen. David Petraeus, commander of U.S. Central Command, presented the winners with Order of Saint Maurice medals and Colt 45 pistols as part of their prizes, including eternal bragging rights.

## THE RANGER BROTHERHOOD

Outsiders may never be able to understand the bond of brotherhood the Ranger community shares. As Kenworthy described, “During competitors’ week, we get to know each other, and we all want each other to do well. Completing the BRC is a brotherhood fraternity that only a few have done,” he said, congratulating all the competitors. He added that

**Above left:** Team 9, Staff Sgt. Keith Bach and Sgt. Anthony Vasquez take down an enemy combatant during mystery event three on day two of BRC 2010. **Above right:** Spc. Cristobal Cruz scales an obstacle on the Darby Queen course on day three of BRC 2010. **Right:** Master Sgt. Kevin Quant, Team 5, prepares to insert an IV for the Day Stakes’ Ranger first responder event on day two of BRC 2010. Team 5 finished in second place overall.

he will stay in touch with many of the men throughout the rest of his career.

Winners Ross and Turk both said there were many people they needed to thank for their support, not just friends and family, but also other competitors and those running the event. “There were some pitfalls we ran into, for example packing-list items, other things or bits of knowledge that many competitors know, but they aren’t written down,” Turk said. “We kind of came into this blind, and there were things we didn’t know. People helped us out.”

“The camaraderie among competitors was really good,” Ross added. “Fort Benning and the Ranger Training Brigade were welcoming, and several people offered assistance for anything we needed.”


This type of camaraderie forms during Ranger School. “For me,” Flohr said, “it was a pivotal point in my life. It’s something that you didn’t expect was going to have the impact it did. It’s a school; you show up, and you don’t think anything about it. But it changes your life,” he said of the experience.

“The competition has grown a lot because people



remember what Ranger School did for them, and it's difficult to move out of that. You wear that tab; it's Velcro here," Flohr said, pointing to the shoulder of his ACUs, "but it's really tattooed on your skin. The prestige of winning the event and being back in the community where you started — it's a big deal."

Although he sometimes doesn't remember his own relatives' names, Flohr can tell you who his Ranger School buddies were, as he called out names from 21 years ago. "You just don't forget that stuff."

Smith said he met his Ranger School buddy, a marine, the first day, and the two were lucky enough to remain buddies all the way through the course. "That Ranger buddy thing is very important. It's a partnership that starts in Ranger School, because there is no rank in Ranger School. It's a mutual respect that builds over the years, and that's what's important to the Ranger community. That's why we have so much success." 

*Sgt. 1st Class Godfrey Collins, 5th RTB S-4, contributed to this article. E-mail Linda Crippen at [linda.crippen@us.army.mil](mailto:linda.crippen@us.army.mil).*



Best Ranger Competition 2010 winners, Team 6, Master Sgts. Eric Ross and Eric Turk were presented with Order of Saint Maurice medals and Colt 45 pistols by Gen. David Petraeus, commander of U.S. Central Command, May 10.

## RANGERS WANTED

Less than one percent of the U.S. Army, to include all military occupational specialties and enlisted ranks, is Ranger-qualified, which equates to about 5,600 enlisted Rangers. The Ranger Training Brigade command is very concerned about the small numbers and fears not "getting enough guys into the course and getting them to graduate."

"The Army needs more NCOs to attend school, in shape and ready to train. The numbers are dismal," said Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis L. Smith, RTB command sergeant major. Although each class is filled, attrition rates are extremely high.

Smith said the first three days, known as the Ranger Assessment Program, are the most difficult, consisting of day and night land navigation, a 15-mile foot march, and rigorous fitness standards: 49 push-ups, 59 sit-ups, five miles in 40 minutes or less, 6 pull-ups.

"We lose half the class in these three days, but statistics show that 75 percent of the students who pass the RAP will graduate and earn the tab," he added.

According to Human Resources Command, Ranger sergeant slots Armywide are 75 percent under strength. In other words, only 25 percent of the allocated slots are filled by sergeants.

"HRC has told us that we're going to be 50 percent short in two years, 50 percent short of the staff sergeants we need to be Ranger-qualified," Smith explained. He added that he has put out personal invitations to major command units to send Soldiers to Ranger School. And Ranger instructors are "needed badly," he said. Some of his current instructors are on their fourth rotation at the school.

The influence of Rangers goes far beyond Ranger School and the Best Ranger Competition. Rangers epitomize good training and efficiency on the battlefield. Retired Lt. Gen. David E. Grange Jr, whose legacy includes the BRC, said, "There are second and third effects from the competition."

"Imagine the kind of talk at night in the barracks among new privates ... talking about Sgt. Jones, who is not only a Ranger but, two years ago, also went to the Best Ranger Competition and came in fifth, or sixth, or first. Imagine how they

feel knowing they are going to be taught by this man," Grange said.

Another effect is more practical. "Are you going to survive on that battlefield? Well, if Sgt. Jones is there with that Ranger tab on, the chances are a heck of a lot better than they would have been without the tab. Furthermore, if you have a boy going into the Army, and his sergeant or captain is a Ranger, you'll feel a lot better about it. In a combat zone, you'll feel very much better about it; I would," he added.

Grange poses a challenge to those contemplating going airborne or infantry. "If they have any sense of adventure or dedication in them, they're going to want to try it; they're going to want to become a Ranger. Those are exactly the kind of men we want in the Army, strong and athletic men, who really want to serve and be the best."

For more information about Ranger School go to <https://www.benning.army.mil/rtb/>, or contact the Ranger Training Brigade command sergeant major directly, Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis L. Smith, at (706) 544-7365 or DSN: 784-7365.



# Warrior Games

*In the military, there are many forms of courage. Men and women recovering from combat-related injuries, mental illnesses and other disabilities displayed their courage while competing in Olympic-style games.*

**Story and photos by Stephanie Sanchez**

**L**ilina Benning slowly walked to the black line. Her soft stare quickly turned into an intense gaze; her face became firm and her body stiff.

She stood in her stance – legs shoulder-length apart and upper body turned forward. She gradually lifted her bow, which was almost as tall as she is, and drew the bowstring. After fixing her eye on the target, she waited a few seconds then released the arrow.

More than 10 people also stood at the black line on both sides of Benning. They, too, released their arrows toward their targets about 100 feet across the gymnasium.

None of them knew their final score, but they were all winners in their own right. They were service members conquering combat-related injuries, mental disabilities and other chronic illnesses.

About 200 men and women from four military services were pitted against each other in May at the inaugural Warrior Games at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. They competed in archery, sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, shooting, swimming, cycling, and track and field. The message behind the five-day event was massive: life continues after traumatic, life-altering experiences.

Benning, a sergeant at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, lost her left foot and underwent several surgeries to repair her badly wounded right arm after being injured

Sept. 11, 2007. In between events at the Warrior Games, she vividly described what led to her injuries.

“I was driving my sergeant major from our camp to another camp [in Iraq]. We were still inside the wire; we didn’t go outside the wire,” she said in a quiet voice as she looked down. “We were already in the parking lot. We were close to the part where you say, ‘Mission accomplished.’ ... Then, all of a sudden, ‘Boom.’”

A rocket, propelled from outside the camp, landed behind Benning’s non-tactical vehicle and splattered shrapnel. Some of the shell fragments spilled into the vehicle, wounding Benning and her sergeant major. Several bystanders were also sprayed.

“I had to get my left foot amputated, and my right arm was injured. I have a lot of wires, plates and about 20 screws holding [my arm] in place. It can’t stay in place alone anymore. There is a lot of nerve damage and ruptured muscles,” she said as she grabbed her arm. “There was pain, but we have meds for it. I was just kind of upset because I thought, ‘Oh, I won’t be able to run or play sports.’”

An avid athlete, Benning doubted she would be able to continue participating in sports. She said her family and friends would jokingly tell her they would now play against her because she wouldn’t be as good as she used to be.

Those words served as motivation, and she made it a goal to prove her family







Far left, Soldiers walk out during the opening ceremony of the inaugural Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colo., in May. Near left, torchbearers from the Navy, Army, Marine Corps and Air Force stand in front of the U.S. Olympic Training Center. They were chosen to represent their services because of their leadership and dedication.



Gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded to service members winning competitions in sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, shooting, archery, cycling, swimming and track and field.

and friends wrong.

“It took me a while to start moving a lot and start being active,” she said. “The goal is thinking that I still can. I just have to keep moving and doing what I have to do. My injuries didn’t put an end to my life. I can still do everything I want, regardless. So I pushed myself to play in all of these games.”

In addition to archery, Benning competed in sitting volleyball and the shot put. Archery and the shot put were new experiences for her, and she dedicated countless hours to practicing. She even practiced while her husband, Marvin, a Soldier deployed in Afghanistan, was home on leave. The practice paid off – Benning won a bronze medal in the women’s shot put division.

For Staff Sgt. Curtis Winston of Fort Belvoir, Va., it only took a month of practice to master recurve archery. He won a silver medal in the sport.

“I picked this up about a month ago,” he said after receiving his medal. “I’m very excited. I came here with extremely low expectations, and I didn’t think I was going to do anything. But I finished second.”

Winston, who also competed in wheelchair basketball, said the games reinforce the idea that Soldiers “can push forward and keep moving” after being wounded in war.

Winston was injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq in June 2007. He suffered



Sgt. Lilina Benning of Fort Sam Houston, Texas, competes in the shot put. She won a bronze medal.



Sgt. Kisha Makerney of Fort Sam Houston, Texas, attempts to block the volleyball.



Sgt. David Bratton of Fort Drum, N.Y., prepares for the air rifle shooting competition. He won a gold medal.

multiple microfractures in his left leg and fractured his right hand. After three years, he must still do physical therapy.

“Before my injury, I was a real active Soldier. It was just the fact of trying to get back into physical activities that was difficult,” he said. “But there is a light at the end of the path. You have to just keep moving forward with your life and not get down about what you’re going through right now. I got down for a while, and then I figured I’m going to make what I can with my life.”

Being around people such as Winston and Benning at the Warrior Games has helped Staff Sgt. Ryan Turner of Fort Bliss, Texas. He said bringing together service members with similar experiences helps with recovery and boosts confidence.

Turner, who competed in track and field events, began suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep apnea and a dislocated shoulder after being deployed in Iraq. He cannot lift more than 10 pounds.

“To compete with all the other branches and meet everybody who has been wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan is good,” he said. “I believe [the Warrior Games] will help service members. We trained together, so it brought a lot of team cohesion. Even though we’re in different branches, everyone was the same. We all fight the same war and train the same

way. I think it will help in the recovery process.”

Turner has gone through many physical therapy sessions, and said in the worst-case scenario, he will be medically retired. Leaving the Army would be a disappointment for Turner, who always knew he wanted to be in the military to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and father.

Spc. Ronald Kapture of Fort Bliss said being medically retired is a disheartening reality for him, but participating in the Warrior Games lifted his morale.

**“You have to just keep moving forward with your life and not get down. ... I figured I’m going to make what I can with my life.”**

“It was really big for me. ... For a while there, I was [depressed] because everything I’ve known and done for X-amount of years, I’m losing,” he said. “I’m getting medically retired from the Army. I was upset because I didn’t want to get out. I wanted to stay in and keep going.”

Kapture, who participated in track and field events, swimming and sitting volleyball, said the Warrior Games and his NCO, Staff Sgt. Gabriel Rios, have helped him cope with leaving the Army. Kapture was

diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury after suffering numerous concussions during two 15-month tours in Iraq.

He said he plans to move to New Orleans to get involved in oil drilling. His dream is to one day start a charity that will assist wounded service members who are medically retired.

“For a lot of guys, once they lose the Army, they feel like they’ve lost themselves and their livelihood,” he said.

First Sgt. Robert Strunk said the Army has transformed his life and is a major part of his identity. He said he joined the late-entry program at 17 years old and became an infantryman.

“It was a whole new experience for me. I had been – I wouldn’t say sheltered – but just from a very small town. We had one high school in our county, and we graduated 150 people the year I graduated,” said Strunk, who has been assigned to Buckley Air Force Base, Colo., to recover closer to family. “The Army has been real good to me. It has pretty much given me everything I have in my life. I think I’ve been pretty successful just on my path of learning and education. I really attribute 90 percent to the Army – the values it has taught me and the guidance it has given me.”

Strunk said his Army career was going well until he suffered a painful shoulder separation and tore a ligament in his



Army team member Sgt. 1st Class Jacque Keeslar of the Balboa Warrior Athlete Program at Naval Medical Center San Diego attempts to make a shot during wheelchair basketball. Sailors play defense.

foot. He said the injuries happened during training in December 2008 in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

“We were doing a helicopter exit, and I was carrying a lot of weight on me. ... As I came out, I ended up tearing scarred tissue. I didn’t know that at the time. We had done the practice and stuff, and it was just kind of hurting. But I thought, ‘No big deal,’” he said. “Because I went in really hard, I also twisted my ankle. Again, I thought, ‘No big deal.’”

After completing the training, Strunk visited Army doctors in Afghanistan. But they told him he needed X-rays to determine how severe his injuries were. Strunk refused to end his tour early.

About a month later, he returned to the United States and learned he had completely separated his collarbone; the bone was splitting lengthwise. He also had torn a ligament in his left foot.

When asked how his recovery has been, Strunk said “It has been really hard. My entire military career has been [active].”

As an NCO, he said he always worried about his Soldiers and their problems. Not having Soldiers, he said, has allowed him too much time to focus on his disabilities, which has dampened his spirits.

“There were a couple of months that were really dark for me. I spoke to professionals, and I had a great family and friend

**“Sports helped me, and kept me in [the Army]. They got me back outside in the public again. I find them beneficial for some of these warriors.”**

support base. ... I, however, wondered if I would ever get back to that place where I could still jump out of helicopters and airplanes, and be a Soldier like I’ve always been. That’s a huge defining characteristic of who I am,” he said. “In a dark and depressing time, I know I have some problems and disabilities, and I may never be 100 percent. But, to see some of these young men and women, who are amputees, have traumatic brain injuries and PTSD, is humbling. It’s a very humbling experience to see that and to see them out here competing and doing these things. It really lifts your spirits.”

The Warrior Games, he said, give wounded Soldiers the opportunity to surround themselves with people who have similar disabilities.

“I’ve always been a proponent of enlisted – the NCO – and officer categories, but this creates a new component or subgroup in the military culture,” said Strunk, who competed in prone rifle and pistol shooting. The games “give wounded warriors the chance to get out there and understand one another’s experiences, sit

down and talk to each other, then share this [experience] with somebody else or several other people. We’re able to put it in perspective and find the tools others are using to succeed and continue, hopefully, in their military careers.”

Sgt. Robert Price, who carried the Olympic torch during the opening ceremony, said the games were important for him because sports were a big part of his recovery. Price lost his right leg when he was clearing a route in Iraq in January 2007.

“Sports helped me, and kept me in [the Army]. They got me back outside in the public again. I find them beneficial for some of these warriors. Many of them just sit around in their barracks and don’t do anything,” said Price, who competed in shooting, sitting volleyball, archery and track and field events. “I tried to get them motivated to come do something that is going to be beneficial for them [his comrades], either out in the civilian market or in their military careers.”

The Warrior Games, he said, give wounded Soldiers a chance to test their abilities. That is why he rallied Soldiers at his Warrior Transition Battalion and got them motivated to participate in the games.

“This brings Soldiers out of their shells and gets them out there. I’m living, walking proof that life doesn’t end at that

point” after your injury, he said. “You can always get up and move on and carry out your mission one way or another.”

Sgt. Maj. Ly M. Lac, senior enlisted advisor of the Warrior Transition Command, the office that created the Warrior Games, said he chose Price to carry the Olympic torch because of Price’s leadership and achievement.

Soon after his leg amputation, Price set a goal to walk his daughter to school within a few months. So, he went through physical therapy and did walk his daughter to school, Lac said. Then, Price set a goal to pick up a hobby; and within a few months, he was an indoor champion in archery.

“He then said, ‘I want to take a PT test with no alternate event.’ You know, as an amputee, you have to learn how to run again. They said he barely passed his PT test, but he passed without any alternate event,” Lac said. “The guy is just phenomenal. The guy knows his injury, overcame it, set some goals and achieved those goals. Junior NCOs need to follow in his footsteps.”

Active wounded Soldiers seem to recover faster, Lac said. He said Soldiers should think about their abilities instead of disabilities.

“We have seen physically fit Soldiers go through the rehab process quicker because they are fit. Therefore, I think this event will instill the ability to overcome the injury or illness, and aggressively go through rehab,” he said. “The purpose of this event ... is to bring the spirit back to the organization, the warrior transition units, and to develop an infectious disease of athletic competition and challenge Soldiers both physically and mentally.”

As of April, there were more than


**“The purpose of this event ... is to bring the spirit back to the organization ... and develop an infectious disease of athlete competition ...”**

9,600 recovering Soldiers in warrior transition units, and about 6,500 wounded veterans in the Army Wounded Warriors Program, Lac said. He said the military works to place rehabilitating Soldiers back into the Army and in jobs they are able to perform. The program also helps Soldiers transition back into civilian life by helping them find a job or get into school.

Of the active-duty Soldiers in rehab,

about 50 percent have returned to duty and the other 50 percent have been medically separated since the war began, Lac said.

“The key thing is trying to get these Soldiers to do whatever they want to do. If they are fit and mentally and physically tough, we’re going to help them transition back into the Army. ... They can stay in if they want to,” he said.

“Leaders always think about their Soldiers; they think about not being able to lead their group or individuals into combat. They think, ‘Do I have the ability and mental toughness to lead my Soldier through combat without putting them at risk?’ If they can do that, they will stay in. But if they think they’re going to put their Soldier at risk, they are obviously going to tell [their superiors they want to get out]. ... These Warrior Games gives them the ability, a kind of check-and-balance, and that perspective to say, ‘Wow, I didn’t think I could bike 60, 70 miles. I didn’t think I could swim 800 meters.’ This gives them the ability to see where they are and gives them a focus of where they need to be.” 

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This page, the Army basketball team rallies after being defeated by the Marines in the championship game. The Army was awarded the silver medal. Opposite page, Warrant Officer Johnathan Holsey and Navy Master Chief Petty Officer Will Wilson, who are leg amputees, comfort Sgt. Monica Southall after helping her finish the handcycle race. Southall suffers from torn rotator cuffs and had never handcycled.





# TRAINING INSIDE 'THE BOX'

NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER KEEPS IT REAL

Story and photos by Angela Simental



The 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Stewart, Ga., gets a taste of their worst day downrange in their first training lane in the town of Medina Wasal at NTC. The realistic scenarios challenge rotational units before they deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan.

*More than 10 Humvees approached the town of Medina Wasl on a bright, spring morning. Echoes of traffic, whispers of prayers at a local mosque and the shouting of street vendors filled the busy town. The lead Humvee stopped as it approached the middle of the town. Suddenly, an improvised explosive device hit a car, killing its four passengers as fire started to rain down on the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Stewart, Ga. Crowds of people ran shouting, agitated as Soldiers fired back at the piercing sounds of bullets coming from all directions. Wounded Soldiers lay on the ground bleeding while their comrades rushed to evacuate them, and others tried to calm the people around. More than an hour passed in total chaos.*

This is a typical training scenario rotational units go through as part of pre-deployment preparation at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.

“This training we have here is your worst day downrange. You are getting the opportunity to train in a realistic, tough engagement with no one getting hurt,” said Sgt. Kenneth Gallagher, a platoon sergeant with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. “The towns, the people and even the smells are so realistic.”

Stretching across 1,000 square miles in the Mojave Desert, NTC is considered the Army’s premier combat training center, said Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Martinez, post command sergeant major.

Fort Irwin’s isolated location, about halfway between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, makes it the perfect training spot, replicating the real warfighting environment of Iraq and Afghanistan, from landscape to climate. Fort Irwin also owns the terrain, electromagnetic field and even airspace.

“As far as the terrain and the altitude, it matches Afghanistan very closely. This is a prime place for training,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Martin E. Wilcox, regimental command sergeant major of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, which provides role-players of the opposing forces.

“For Soldiers coming here to train, the plus side is, if they are going to make a mistake, we’d rather have them make it here than in-theater. Here, they can learn from their mistakes without the real-life consequences,” Wilcox said.

“Training the Force” is not just NTC’s motto; it is its mission. For a complete month, 60 to 90 days before deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan, units receive rigorous training.

Like a Hollywood movie set, “The Box,” as Soldiers call the training ground, recreates a true-to-life Iraqi or Afghan city. The two towns, Medina Wasl and Medina Jabal, have 800 buildings

combined and could easily be mistaken for any real-life Iraqi town, Martinez said.

“When I returned to this station in 2009, I sometimes had to stop because I thought I was back in Iraq,” he added.

### Who’s Who?

Hard work and thorough planning goes on behind the scenes to make every scenario resemble what Soldiers experience downrange.

Successful training is made possible with the help of the 11th ACR, whose Soldiers role-play as insurgents or members of the Iraqi or Afghan police and army.

The 11th ACR’s mission is to “provide the U.S. Army with the most capable and lethal combined arms opposing force in the world,” its mission statement states.

A total of 1,965 role-players — Soldiers and civilians, including 300 Iraqi nationals who act as the civilian population — challenge rotational units in every aspect, from counterinsurgency operations to language and communication.

“The scenarios here are realistic and tough,” Gallagher said. “The environment is hot, dry and sandy — just like in-theater — and the role-players are very familiar with the culture and are not afraid to make things more challenging for us.”

Like downrange, units have to be wary of hidden IEDs and potential insurgents, including suicide bombers. Anything can happen, anywhere, at any time.

When visitors tour The Box, they are surprised at the level of realism within the scenarios, Martinez said.

With the help of makeup artists, Soldiers turn from warriors to casualties. Role-players, some of whom are amputees, act as casualties. They use prosthetic legs that squirt fake blood, bringing to life the most gruesome aspects of war. Others portray victims of gunfire and explosions, dripping blood from their false



During a medical training lane at Medina Jabal, a Humvee is intercepted by two suicide bombers in a truck. An OC approached the Humvee to hand out cards to Soldiers inside, letting them know they are casualties and have to be evacuated.



Right: A Soldier, who role-played as a casualty during the urban mounted patrol lane at Medina Jabal, shows his fake injuries.



Left: A U.S. Soldier from the 11th ACR role-plays as an Iraqi army soldier, helping the unit capture an insurgent during the first medical training lane at Medina Wasl April 17.

injuries. For units training, a laser-integrated device inside their vests lets them know when they have been hit.

“I have had 18- or 19-year olds straight out of basic training in the middle of the street just frozen because it is so realistic,” said Sgt. 1st Class Spencer Buck, who recently trained at NTC and is now deployed in Afghanistan.

To determine if units had a successful mission, observer controllers examine the training and make notes on the areas that units need to improve.

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Campbell, command sergeant major of NTC’s operations group, said observer controllers facilitate and control the fight, ensuring the units’ success.

“All of the OCs here are recent combat vets,” said Campbell, who is also a former OC. “Our purpose is to make sure that we

have increased their survivability, and we do that by coaching, training and mentoring.”

The 647 OCs use their personal experiences as well as their technical and logistical knowledge to train Soldiers — things they have learned from their years of service and a 90-day training session in Iraq.

## Training the Force

About 4,000 to 6,000 members from all military services are trained every month — those just out of basic training waiting to deploy for the first time as well as those who have experienced combat more than once.

Federal agencies also use the training facilities, and representatives from Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Australia have visited to observe training. In January, for the first time in NTC’s history, a foreign force trained there; the Canadian Task Force spent 6½ weeks preparing for its spring deployment to Afghanistan.

One of the most important aspects of training is keeping it in sync with what goes on in-theater because, as Martinez explained, things change constantly.

“We maintain communication with units that are deployed. We just had a video teleconference with the leaders, and they gave us feedback on what is going on over there. We take notes and immediately incorporate the changes into the training,” Martinez said. “We just talked to sergeants about the need for units to partner with Iraqi police (during training at NTC) and changes will be implemented (in the scenarios) today.”

There are two training lanes, the medical evaluation and the urban mounted patrol. In both, units are given a mission and must be ready to react to whatever happens in The Box.

“The medical training is one of the most important lanes because it incorporates a little bit of everything,” Martinez said. “Not only do they have to evacuate Soldiers and treat them, but they also have to establish security, get accountability of personnel and equipment, counter IEDs, other threats and conduct convoys.”

The urban mounted patrol scenario includes day and night missions, such as traffic checks and patrols, which also test how well Soldiers establish security and evacuate casualties.

Before units arrive in The Box, they are given tools such



Soldiers from the 4th IBCT, 3rd Infantry Division are given an after-action review before they do the medical training lane for the second time at Medina Wasl.





Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark L. Schenk

An amputee, acting as a wounded Soldier, receives help from the training unit during the medical training lane.



Soldiers evacuate casualties during an urban mounted patrol scenario after several bombs exploded at Medina Jabal.

as various maps of the terrain to plan their missions. They must follow five steps to ensure success: 1. set up security, 2. collect all casualties, 3. move casualties to cover and treat them, 4. use cover fire and counter IEDs and 5. have an over-watch sniper.

Based on the information they gather, rotational units will create a plan and establish a mission with the guidance of the observer controllers.

“Units will have a mission, but they still have to react to what happens in The Box. They need to have a plan and execute it,” Martinez said. “They have to be able to adapt. The environment is always changing, so we want them to be agile, adaptive leaders.”

Every mission that takes place in either town is taped and managed by OCs, most of whom are combat-experienced NCOs.

“The trainers, the OCs, the Soldiers who are coming down to the regiment have obviously been downrange,” Gallagher said. “I think the Army has done a great job of taking Soldiers’ experiences and incorporating them into the training plan and objectives.”

## Training week-by-week

Units train at NTC for four weeks, three to four months prior to deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan. Each week is dedicated to developing different skills. Training focuses on preparing units for the fight as well as nation-building. Through different scenarios, units are tested on mission planning and execution, as well as on cultural awareness. The goal is to prepare Soldiers for their worst day downrange, giving them the confidence to become better warriors.



Leaders train on designing campaign plans, building frameworks for counter fire, targeting and setting conditions for a successful mission.

Brigade-size rotational units are trained on organization and negotiation in accordance with Army Force Generation standards. They also prepare for media interviews and learn to establish digital networks. Brigades are trained to identify IEDs, and how to use robotics and biometrics to identify insurgents.



Small units experience live-fire training in The Box, perform mounted and dismounted combat patrol operations, personnel recovery and route clearance.

Rotational units are embedded in The Box. The civilian population, media, insurgents and criminal elements are present 24 hours a day to combine lethal and non-lethal operations. Units are expected to partner with the Iraqi or Afghan army and police force to complete the missions.



After units finish their training lanes, they are given after-action reviews, where OCs revise areas that need improvement. Before the day ends, units are given a chance to absorb the feedback and do the training scenario one more time.

To conduct after-action reviews, OCs must attend a five-week course, which includes learning all the rules of The Box as well as how to focus on improvements and help units feel confident about their performance.

When observing units, OCs take note of every detail, from whether Soldiers are wearing their protective equipment to how they execute the mission they planned. As Martinez told the 4th IBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. after its first training lane, “Even a dirty windshield can make the difference between life and death when you’re out there. Train — your lives depend on it. It doesn’t matter if you have deployed twice. Be prepared to learn.”

“Ten years ago when I was here as an OC, we would let the unit get to potential failure. We don’t do that anymore because we train for success, not failure,” Campbell said. “We are going to be ruthless in ensuring that these units are prepared when they leave here, whether to Afghanistan or Iraq. That is our focus; training the force. That’s our motto, and that’s what we do.”

## Cultural Awareness

Martinez explained that the Global War on Terrorism has changed the way the Army fights. Counterinsurgency has replaced the linear battlefield or enemy force- against -enemy force,

when Soldiers were only required to know how to fight and use equipment without regard to the enemy’s language or lifestyle. Now, part of the training involves cultural awareness. Soldiers must learn to partner with Iraqi or Afghan forces and police to execute their missions as well as the steps necessary for nation building.

“They need to overcome the culture barrier because that is a big challenge,” Martinez said. “If Soldiers don’t have cultural awareness, they do more harm than good. Soldiers not only need to be warriors, they also have to be ambassadors.”

Wilcox said part of the opposition forces training requires cultural awareness. “If Soldiers have never interacted with an Afghan or Iraqi national, they might not know their customs, and they might do something that in their eyes is an insult. So, we teach them about culture, too,” Wilcox said. He added that knowing basic words, in either Iraqi or Afghan languages, and understanding the culture can sometimes determine the outcome of a mission.

## The Role of NCOs

Noncommissioned officers are behind every area of operations at Fort Irwin. Their role is vital in training, mentoring and coaching rotational units in The Box, as well as in-garrison.

Command Sgt. Maj. Mark A. Harvey, garrison command sergeant major, said there are nearly 40 sergeants major in the entire installation. “This shows the dimension of the importance of noncommissioned officers working together to make sure we accomplish our mission.”

Because training Soldiers is the most important task at NTC, it is important to have NCOs at the forefront of every operation, Wilcox said.

“NCOs make things happen,” he said. “They ensure that we are at the right location, planning and executing the mission, and making sure those missions are executed to standard. They get to see how units interact, so when they go to another unit, they have a basis of what works and what doesn’t. That helps them with their leadership skills.”

Martinez emphasized that while rotational units learn a lot from NCOs, the expertise NCOs themselves acquire at NTC will help them throughout their military careers, making them better leaders.

“When NCOs are stationed here for, let’s say two years, they are going to observe at least 20 rotations of units coming through here. They get an opportunity to see the good, the bad and the ugly from across the Army,” he said. “NCOs will have all these tools to put in their kit. So by the time they leave here, they are going to know what to do when they become a first sergeant or a platoon sergeant, for example. Their experience here will make them better NCOs.”

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Top: A Soldier talks to a role-player during the medical training lane. Props such as live goats are used to give the towns a realistic feel.



Right: In both towns, role-players act as street vendors, helping units practice language and negotiating skills as well as experience the culture.



# Taking care of families

*Fort Irwin, Calif., which is known for housing the National Training Center, prepares different units every month for deployment. But, Soldiers and families stationed at the post are also taken care of, said Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Martinez, post command sergeant major.*

Story and photos by Angela Simental

**W**ith a population of more than 20,000, including rotational units, stationed Soldiers and their families, as well as civilians, Fort Irwin is on a mission to improve their facilities, providing a better quality of life.

“If we are the world’s premier combat training center, we have to have the premier facilities for our Soldiers and families,” said Martinez. “In order to have them want to come out here, we have to provide great housing, great programs, medical facilities and schools.”

To achieve that status, Fort Irwin is undergoing an ambitious expansion and renovation of its facilities to target all members of military families. A primary focus of the renovation has been revamping the housing facilities.

“Since 2004, we have built 715 homes. We have also renovated another 75. And, old homes will be demolished to build another 92 homes,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Mark A. Harvey, garrison command sergeant major. “Our goal is to have 509 new homes, and we will do it.”

The biggest project in 2011 will be Fort Irwin’s town center. It will be the second installation in the Army to have one.


“The town center will include shops like Starbucks, a bookstore and apartments,” Harvey said.

Along with the grand project, the PX and the commissary have also been expanded to provide families with higher-quality services, Harvey said.

In addition, a new child development center, which opens in July, will provide services to 152 children, helping single- and dual-military parents continue their training.

For teens, a state-of-the-art skate park designed by Tony Hawk, a water park and an 18-hole golf course, which will open sometime in September, make up some of the new recreational activities available at the post.

For Soldiers, a Warrior Zone will be available next year. “This is going to be a place where they can relax, eat, have fun playing billiards or fantasy sports,” Harvey said.

Martinez said that Fort Irwin’s future goals include constructing new barracks and having a new hospital to provide Soldiers with better and modern medical facilities. 

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Above: Crackerjack Flats community features green areas, basketball courts and parks where families can gather.

Top left: The new skate park, designed by Tony Hawk, provides activities for teens.

Bottom left: Families enjoy the community pool, which opened for the season April 17.





# SURVIVAL EVASION RESISTANCE ESCAPE

## SERE SCHOOL PREPARES SOLDIERS TO 'RETURN WITH HONOR'

Story and photos by Cindy Ramirez

**A** slight breeze can be heard whistling through the serene forests in Fort Rucker, Ala., creating a fine ripple on the cool lakes within. Amid the quiet, a group of camouflaged Soldiers from various occupational specialties treks carefully as they train to live off the rugged terrain and survive in isolation as part of the installation's Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape School.



**At left:** Soldiers fill their canteens with lake water in preparation for field craft training at the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape School at Fort Rucker, Ala., in March. The Soldiers were preparing to spend several days in surrounding forest to learn survival skills and employ the articles of the Code of Conduct.

captured; basic survival skills are indispensable should they become isolated in unfamiliar terrain, including the mountains of Afghanistan or the deserts of Iraq, officials said.

“We teach them how to adapt to that situation, to survive that situation and to return with honor,” said Fort Rucker SERE School instructor Steve, a non-commissioned officer. (Full names and ranks are being withheld due to security concerns.) “We give them the skills they need to survive and return with their pride, knowing that they’re American Soldiers, and that they served their nation proudly during that situation.”

## INTEGRAL TRAINING

Survival includes learning how to identify sources of food and water, maintain healthy sanitation and hygiene, construct a safe shelter, build fires, properly treat illness or injuries, and improvise clothing, equipment and weapons. SERE also offers marksmanship training with the M9 pistol and the M4A1 assault rifle, including the “stress shoot” used to teach students to shoot effectively with an elevated pulse and breathing rate. Students participate in a simulated downed aircraft scenario in which they have to break contact with the enemy.

Additionally, Soldiers are taught about cross-cultural communications and how to deal with physical and psychological stresses during captivity.

Fort Rucker’s SERE School was formed in 2006, offering its first course in January 2007 as part of the installation’s U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence. It was first open strictly to aviators who were required to take the course. It remains a mandatory course for aviation officers and warrant officers. With a few years experience under its wing, however, the school has expanded and now includes training for Soldiers from all MOSs, with their commander’s recommendation.

In fiscal year 2009, Fort Rucker’s SERE School graduated about 1,400.

Once a survival course specifically for aviators and special operations forces, SERE training at Fort Rucker has expanded to include Soldiers of all military occupational specialties. The opportunity to train at SERE School is especially important given the current state of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and other operations across the globe that puts an increasing number of Soldiers on the frontlines, installation officials said.

SERE is designed to provide Soldiers with the skills needed to evade being captured by the enemy, and if captured, to resist interrogation or exploitation and plan their escape. A major focus of SERE training is the Code of Conduct — the values and duties that guide Soldiers should they become prisoners of war.

However, SERE is not limited to teaching Soldiers how to survive if they’re

Today, Fort Rucker has about 80 slots in each SERE course cycle — two-thirds of them reserved for aviators and the rest for Soldiers from other MOSs. The 21-day program, which begins a new course every two weeks, expects to graduate some 2,200 students in fiscal year 2010.

One recent graduate is Dan, a medic who is now serving as an instructor at the school after graduating in February.

“Every Soldier should go through it, regardless of their MOS, even if their jobs are not in the spotlight,” Dan said.

Trusting fellow Soldiers — none of whom he’d met before — during the toughest times of the field portion of SERE School was both challenging and rewarding, he said.

“Keeping the faith with my fellow brothers in arms ... keeping the faith *with* and *in* each other,” he said when asked what he considered to be the course’s challenges and rewards, adding that he also learned to channel his inner strength when it was most needed.

“You learn to push yourself to a limit that you hadn’t before; to push yourself further when you think you have nothing left to give.”

Dan said he hopes his experience as a medic encourages Soldiers from various MOSs to apply for SERE School so that they will become more well-rounded and, in turn, help create a better mix of specialties among SERE students.

“This course is no longer just for aviators or special forces,” said Lt. Col. Michael Ash, commander of the 1st Battalion, 145th Aviation Regiment at the Aviation Center of Excellence. “It’s become an integral part of Soldier training for strength, survival and the Code of Conduct.”

## CODE OF CONDUCT

Perhaps more than survival, Ash said, SERE focuses on the intricacies of the Code of Conduct.

“We train them on the application of the Code of Conduct. Everything revolves around that,” Ash said. “In SERE, we emphasize that’s what is most important.”

Under the Code of Conduct, Soldiers are taught about the legal aspects of resistance and escape, including the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention, methods of resisting interrogation and indoctrination, as well as techniques for planning and executing an escape.

Ash said the goal is not to teach memorization of the code's articles, but to instill in Soldiers "the true knowledge, spirit and intent of the code."

"It all comes down to coming home safely to your family having served proudly, without disgracing yourself or your country, and knowing that you were the best Soldier possible," Dan said.

Others agree, saying delving into the Code of Conduct beyond basic training was the most important aspect of SERE.

"Anyone can read the articles," said a SERE course chief who asked that his identity be withheld. "What this course does, more than anything, is provide a true intent of the Code of Conduct. That is, in my opinion, what makes a better Soldier."

## ORIGINS AND EXPANSION

SERE was created by the U.S. Air Force at the end of the Korean War to teach pilots how to resist and survive extreme abuse should they be captured.

The program started in the Army and Navy following the Vietnam War.

The Army's flagship SERE School is at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, N.C.

SERE training is offered at three levels: Level A is taught to all Soldiers during initial entry; Level B is for Soldiers whose jobs, specialties or assignments entail a moderate risk of capture, such as ground combat units and security forces; and Level C is for those at high risk of capture, including combat air crews and special operations forces. In fact, Level C is an integral part of the Special Forces Qualification Course. All course objectives are based on Department of Defense and Joint Personnel Recovery Agency guidance.

Fort Rucker and Fort Bragg have two of only five schools within the Department of Defense authorized to conduct Level C training. The others include Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash.; Naval Air Station Brunswick, Maine; and Naval Air Station North Island, Calif.



The SERE School at Fort Rucker is one of only five within the Department of Defense authorized to conduct Level C SERE training.

"Everybody has realized the importance of this training," said Steve, who first attended SERE School at Fort Bragg in 1993. "It's very sought after by all ranks, all MOSs. Word of mouth is out, and Soldiers who have been or will be at

the frontlines want to attend this course."

"We've kept up with the change in modern warfare," he said about the current Fort Rucker course. "It's adapted to deal with the Global War on Terrorism. It has grown to fit into today's Army."



## SURVIVAL, EVASION, RESISTANCE, ESCAPE

SERE School at Fort Rucker, Ala., is accepting applications for students and instructors.

To enroll in the school, Soldiers can go to the Army Training Requirements and Resource System and search for SERE start dates. Fort Rucker's code is 011 with a course number 2C-F107/600-F17(CT).

Soldiers interested in becoming instructors must apply to the school directly and undergo an internal review process. Applicants must be staff sergeants or warrant officers or higher, must be SERE School graduates, must have been previously deployed and have combat experience, must hold security clearance and must pass psychological and physical exams.

**Information: 334-255-9875**  
[www.army.mil/info/organization/rucker/](http://www.army.mil/info/organization/rucker/)

## TOUGH REWARDS

Scott, another instructor, said the course is as tough as it is rewarding.

"Soldiers have to be physically and mentally fit and be ready to train hard," said Scott, who graduated SERE School in 2001.

Scott said while more Soldiers are taking the course before deployments, the sheer number of them deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan has meant many more don't participate until after they've been in combat.

Regardless of when they attend SERE, Scott said, participants "leave as better-trained Soldiers and spread the word to their NCOs."

Aside from producing better-trained Soldiers, SERE graduates stronger men and women.

"I love watching them succeed," he said.

"Soldiers come into the course thinking they know what they know, but they come out stronger, knowing more about themselves than they could have ever imagined."

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## ARTICLES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

### I

I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

### II

I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

### III

If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and to aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

### IV

If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

### V

When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.

### VI

I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.



Aside from survival skills, Soldiers are trained and tested to uphold the Code of Conduct as part of SERE School.



FORT LEO

# MAN SUP

CENTER O

Chemical, engineer and military

BY



In May, the armor community officially bid farewell to its longtime home at Fort Knox, Ky., heading south to join with the infantry community at the new Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning, Ga. A few weeks later, the Army's Human Resources Command cased its colors in Alexandria, Va., to unfurl them later this month as a component of the new Human Resource Center of Excellence at Fort Knox.

With these two monumental moves, the final puzzle pieces of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission were moved into place, a multi-billion-dollar militarywide transformation that directed branches and regiments to leave the installations they'd called home for decades to establish new, synergy-focused foundations in other parts of the country.

However, for the regiments that make up the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., the upheaval, angst and uncertainty generated by this year's BRAC moves are but a distant memory, for the transfer of the military police and chemical schools from Fort

McClellan, Ala., to the engineers' home in south-central Missouri occurred more than a decade ago. Indeed, the successful colocating of the three maneuver support branch schools at the MSCoE served as the template for today's new centers of excellence.

"I was fortunate enough to be one of those guys who got 'BRAC-ed' from Fort McClellan. I moved the NCO Academy here back then," said Command Sgt. Maj. Charles Kirkland, regimental command sergeant major of the military police corps. "We really enjoyed Fort McClellan; we were well established there. The biggest challenge that we perceived coming here was integration, because [engineers] owned all the land, they owned the facilities and it was very much an engineer mentality. But, we started the process early, and it worked out very well; they were very accommodating. So, it was kind of painless, in reality."

After narrowly escaping closure under BRAC twice before, Fort McClellan was permanently shuttered in 1999. The congressional commission determined

that the Army's interests would best be served with three schools being colocated at Fort Leonard Wood under the auspices of MANSCEM, a combination that was considered novel and untested at the time.

"Nobody grumbles anymore," Kirkland said. "It's obvious our facilities are way better [here], which increases our ability to give better instruction so we put out a better Soldier into the field. This is the home of the Military Police Corps and regiment. That's what we refer to it; it's ours now."

Moving to a place where all the branches have shared responsibility for the installation has been hugely beneficial, said Command Sgt. Maj. Ted Lopez, regimental command sergeant major of the chemical corps. "It's a little bit of an adjustment because you're not in charge anymore at the post level. But, I think you focus more as a regiment; it helps you focus on your core pillars.

"You have one person in charge, really, and that's MSCoE — the post commander and the post sergeant major. The regiments are underneath this umbrella," he said. "So, if you came from another post where you *were* the post, you're going to lose a bit of that level of responsibility. Instead, the post commander and post command sergeant major are running the entire installation, making sure we're getting all the stuff we need. Quite frankly, that's OK with me, because all I have to worry about is the school and the corps."



N A R D W O O D , M O .

# EUVER PORT

F E X C E L L E N C E

police Soldiers: Together for more than a decade

MICHAEL L. LEWIS

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: A Soldier from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, sprays safety foam during chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training at Camp Taji, Iraq, last December.

Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski

A Soldier with the 66th Engineer Company, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, installs a Lapier culvert denial system north of Taji, Iraq. The system blocks the enemy's ability to plant explosives inside the culvert yet allows water to pass.

File photo courtesy U.S. Army Engineer School

Spc. Lauren Cummings of the 585th Military Police Company demonstrates the subdued personnel movement technique during personnel search training at Camp Korean Village, Trebil, Iraq, in April.

Photo by Spc. Michael Loggins



Above, engineer Soldiers inside an RG-31 mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle probe a suspected improvised explosive device hidden in the rubble pile at right.

Right, Command Sgt. Maj. Corbly Elsbury, the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence command sergeant major, observes as a convoy makes its way through the IED-clearing lane at Fort Leonard Wood.

Photos by Michael L. Lewis



Worrying about the smooth running of the entire center is partly the responsibility of Command Sgt. Maj. Corbly Elsbury, the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence command sergeant major, who has fought hard to eliminate antiquated notions of the post. A sapper by trade, Elsbury most recently served as a light infantry brigade combat team command sergeant major in Iraq.

“They used to call it ‘Fort Lost-in-the-Woods’ — there were even T-shirts in the PX that said that. But, we took all that out,” he said.

“Look, we trained almost 90,000 [troops] here last year. We’ve got the MPs, the engineers and the [chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological] Soldiers; we train all the [Department of Defense] truck drivers here; all sorts of federal agencies are being trained in our chemical facilities; the Marines train here; the Air Force trains here, as well as the Navy.”

Despite the varied programs of instruction, Elsbury tries to emphasize a significant common thread.

“If I can do anything during my time here, it will be to create a warrior cul-

ture — people thinking about ‘maneuver support,’ embracing maneuver, embracing the infantry. I just think like a warrior, but sometimes I find pockets of non-warrior-like thinking. And, that’s easy to do [because we are an] installation that’s not in a deployment mode. But, our relevance is increasing. It’s a huge improvement.”

Like the engineers who previously claimed ownership of Fort Leonard Wood, pre-existing communities at the new centers of excellence have to put themselves in the shoes of the displaced, incoming groups, said Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Wells, the engineer regimental command sergeant major.

“I wasn’t here during [MANSCEN’s] transition, but I can tell you this: whichever regiment is there first, they need to chill out a little bit, take a step back and understand that these other regiments are being uprooted and being dropped in here.”

“When we first got here, the mindset was that this was an engineer post, and we were just [tenants] here,” Lopez said. “But, you won’t get that now because folks concentrate on what we do together. What we try to concentrate on here is not, ‘Who’s in charge?’ It’s, ‘What makes sense for the Army?’”

The three regiments found themselves discovering many opportunities for collaboration and cooperation, despite their technically divergent missions.

“Synergy is what you look for in a center of excellence — people getting

over their prejudices and looking toward the similarities between regiments to solve the Army's problems," Wells said. "We've found that within the three regiments, there are similarities or at least missions out there that require all three regiments. I think that's what other centers of excellence have to do: find the similarities and start working together. I mean, two heads are better than one."

"We've built a good relationship," Lopez said. "Right now, we use each other's facilities and team together on a lot of stuff. The big thing now, with the wars, is countering improvised explosive devices. Really, you've got three avenues there: the avenue to clear those devices, the avenue for forensics to catch who's doing it and, of course, the side part is the CBRN effects that are part of it. All three [regiments] work together putting all our energies into that."

"There's a lot of coordination between the branches on major initiatives to make sure we're on the same sheet of music," Kirkland said.

"Now because we're colocated, we're more likely to pick up the phone or walk down the hall and say, 'This is what we've got going on. What do you guys think about it, and how can we share resources?' Or, 'What do you guys have going on that might be better than what we're thinking?' We're not too proud to share ideas back and forth, or steal somebody's ideas."

Perhaps the largest example of inter-branch integration is Fort Leonard Wood's NCO Academy, the largest in the Army.

"This academy is like a miniature Maneuver Support Center of Excellence," said Command Sgt. Maj. John Longcor, the academy's commandant. "We teach 22 different curricula; it's like a five-headed monster."

But, it's teaching young NCOs how to work together regardless of branch that is Longcor's primary mission.

"It's all about mutual respect. It's a matter of occupying the same training area at the same time and saying, 'All right, what can we do together?' It's taking initiative and having imagination. Here, we say, 'We're going to build a team here. We're going to be the role model of what synergy looks like, right here in this academy.'"

From the perspective of the one center of excellence that has more experience

than any with finding those synergies, Kirkland offers advice to leaders in the midst of current BRAC moves.

"Expect growing pains," he said. "Get outside and be candid and talk through the issues. Accept the fact that it's going to happen; you're not going to change it. So, if you don't get on board with it, all you're going to do is prolong the difficulties and the pain. The quicker you sign up and own it, the better off you're going to be."

Ultimately, BRAC-mandated changes have only strengthened his regiment and its training, Kirkland said.

"Hands down, the training that military policemen receive at Fort Leonard

Wood is the best that it has ever been, and that is related to the integration."

It's a sentiment that Lopez echoes.

"I tell our Soldiers all the time, 'In the fourth quarter, you're going to be called off the bench to execute this mission.' I want to make sure that we have trained them, so when they come off that bench cold, they can catch that pass and make that first down. That way, they can say, 'I was trained on that and can execute this mission to save lives and do the right thing for our nation.'"

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Above, a Soldier hands a shovel to another Soldier as a team builds a dam to contain a simulated fuel spill from an overturned tanker during first-responder training at Fort Leonard Wood.

Left, Staff Sgt. Paul Elliott, a military police instructor, supervises Pvt. Jamie Francis as she demonstrates a take-down move on Pvt. Le Ann Smith during close-combat training at Fort Leonard Wood.

Photos by Michael L. Lewis

# Composite Risk Management

**A**part from actual combat, there are myriad other ways a Soldier could be hurt or equipment damaged. Mitigating and moderating the causes behind such accidents are the goals of the Army's Composite Risk Management decision-making process.

Designed to combat the "enemy of human error," risk management seeks to aid Soldiers in identifying hazards and controlling risk across the full spectrum of Army missions, functions, operations and activities. Whether in combat operations downrange or off-duty on rest and recuperation leave, CRM is intended to be a part of all mission or activity planning. It is not "a stand-alone process, a paperwork drill or an add-on feature," the Army's guiding CRM document, FM 5-19, *Composite Risk Management*, states. "Rather, it must be so integrated as to allow it to be executed intuitively in situations that require immediate action."

Indeed, while CRM is designed as a leadership tool, effective implementation is up to leaders themselves, said Command Sgt. Maj. Tod Glidewell, former command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center, Fort Rucker, Ala., in a message from the center last year. "There is a long list of programs produced by this center and other Army agencies that have been effective in reducing Army accidents, but none compare to effective leadership.

"The single most effective tool against accidents, suicides and indiscipline is still a trained and competent first-line supervisor," he said.

The Army's Composite Risk Management program is defined by five guiding principles:



Photo courtesy 1st Cavalry Division Safety Office  
A Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle rests on its turret and hood after a rollover in Baghdad last year. Soldiers can avoid accidents like this through training and by employing composite risk management.

**INTEGRATION INTO ALL PHASES:** Effective CRM requires that the process be integrated into each phase of mission or operational planning, preparation, execution and recovery — downrange or at home, on- or off-post.

**RISK DECISIONS MADE AT APPROPRIATE LEVELS:** CRM is only effective when information is passed to the appropriate levels of command for decision. Commanders are required to establish and publish approval authority for decision-making via policies, regulatory guid-

ance or training guidance. Authority for risk decision-making is usually based on guidance from higher levels.

**ACCEPT NO UNNECESSARY RISK:** Leaders should not accept a level of risk unless the potential gain or benefit outweighs the potential loss. CRM is a tool to assist leaders in identifying, assessing and controlling those risks inherent to the mission or activity so informed decisions can be made that balance risk costs (losses) against benefits (potential gains).

**A CYCLICAL & CONTINUOUS PROCESS:** CRM is intended to be a continuous process applied across the full spectrum of Army training and operations, individual and collective day-to-day activities and events, and base-operations functions. It is a cyclical process used to continuously identify and assess hazards, develop and implement controls, and evaluate outcomes.

**DO NOT BE RISK AVERSE:** Being a Soldier naturally incurs risk, and that risk can neither be eliminated nor avoided entirely. However, Soldiers employing good CRM practices can identify and control the hazards while ensuring the mission is completed successfully.



## 5 steps: The CRM process

Composite risk management is a cyclical decision-making process used to mitigate risks wherever Soldiers are operating — on- or off-duty. While in the past the Army separated risk into two categories, tactical risk and accident risk, the primary premise of CRM is that it does not matter where or how the loss occurs. The result is the same: decreased combat power or mission effectiveness.

### 1 IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS

Hazards are conditions with the potential to cause injury or death to personnel, damage to or loss of equipment or property, or degradation of the mission. When planning for a mission or activity, factors to consider will fall into the categories of **mission/activity, enemy/disrupters, terrain and weather, personnel and support available, time available, and civil/legal considerations.**

### 2 ASSESS TO DETERMINE RISK

This step asks, “What is the probability of something going wrong, and what would be the effect if that does occur?” There are three sub-steps: **Assess the probability** of the hazard, **estimate the expected result** or severity of an event or occurrence, and **determine the level of risk** for a given probability and severity using a standard risk-assessment matrix.

### 5 SUPERVISE & EVALUATE

This step asks, “Are risk controls **being implemented and enforced** to standard?” This step also provides the means of **validating the adequacy** of selected control measures. This should be a **continuous process**, so that one can make changes or adjustments to controls based on changing situations, conditions or events.

### 4 IMPLEMENT CONTROLS

The critical check for this step is to convert the controls into clear and simple execution orders. **Leaders must explain** to their Soldiers the control measures, **how the implementation** of the measures takes place and the **individual's role** in the process. To aid in the understanding of the control measures, leaders can conduct rehearsals, drills and briefings.

### 3 DEVELOP CONTROLS

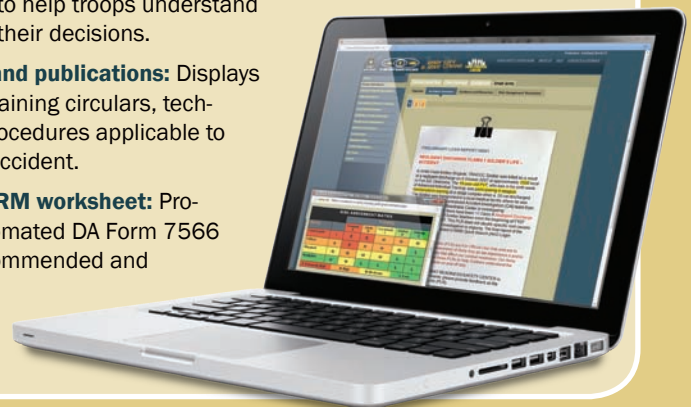
Controls are developed and applied and risk is reassessed until an acceptable level of risk is achieved, or the risks are reduced to a level where benefits outweigh the potential cost. Controls are typically categorized as **educational, physical** or **avoidance**. Controls must be evaluated as to whether they are suitable, feasible and if they justify the cost in resources and time.

## MAKING USE OF THE GRAT

*Introduced in 2008, the online Ground Risk Assessment Tool is designed to help Soldiers identify accident hazards and develop controls for both ground operations and off-duty activities. Accessible at [https://craapps3.crc.army.mil/ako\\_auth/grat/](https://craapps3.crc.army.mil/ako_auth/grat/), the tool consists of five sections that are frequently updated:*

- ✓ **Current accident statistics:** Features a graph depicting the most recent Armywide accident data.
- ✓ **Accident vignettes:** In various operations categories, scenarios describe different accidents and summarize hazards, results and suggested controls.

- ✓ **Preliminary Loss Reports:** Actual, recent PLRs are provided for wide dissemination in formations to help troops understand the impact of their decisions.
- ✓ **Regulations and publications:** Displays regulations, training circulars, techniques and procedures applicable to each type of accident.
- ✓ **Automated CRM worksheet:** Produces an automated DA Form 7566 based on recommended and input hazards and controls.



# NCO Stories

*A selection of Valor*



## *Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez* *Citation to award the Medal of Honor*

Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez, who was assigned to Detachment B56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam, distinguished himself with a series of daring and extremely valorous actions on May 2, 1968.

Early that day, a 12-man special forces reconnaissance team was inserted by helicopters in to a dense jungle area west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam. They were to gather intelligence information about confirmed large-scale enemy activity. This area was controlled and routinely patrolled by the North Vietnamese Army.

After a short period of time on ground, the team met heavy enemy resistance and requested emergency extraction. Three helicopters attempted extraction but were unable to land due to intense enemy small arms and anti-aircraft fire.

Benavidez, then a staff sergeant, was at the forward operating base in Loc Ninh monitoring the operation by radio when these helicopters returned to off-load wounded crewmembers and to assess aircraft damage. At that moment, Benavidez voluntarily boarded a returning aircraft to assist in another extraction attempt. Realizing that all the team members were either dead or

wounded and unable to move to the pickup zone, he directed the aircraft to a nearby clearing area where he jumped from the hovering helicopter. He ran about 75 meters under withering small arms fire to the crippled team.

Prior to reaching the team's position, he was wounded in his right leg, face and head. Despite these painful injuries, he took charge. He repositioned the team members, directing their fire to facilitate the landing of an extraction aircraft and boarding of wounded and dead team members. He then threw smoke canisters to direct the aircraft to the team's position.

Despite his severe wounds and being under intense enemy fire, he carried and dragged half of the wounded team members to the awaiting aircraft. He then provided protective fire by running alongside the aircraft as it moved to pick up the remaining team members. As the enemy's fire intensified, he hurried to recover the body and classified documents on the dead team leader.

When he reached the leader's body, Benavidez was severely wounded by small-arms fire in the abdomen and grenade fragments in his back. At nearly the same moment, the aircraft pilot

was mortally wounded, and his helicopter crashed. Although in serious condition because of his multiple wounds, Benavidez secured the classified documents and made his way back to the wreckage, where he aided the wounded out of the overturned aircraft and gathered the stunned survivors into a defensive perimeter.

Under increasing enemy automatic weapons and grenade fire, he moved around the perimeter distributing water and ammunition to his weary men again, instilling in them a will to live and fight.

Facing a buildup of enemy opposition with a beleaguered team, Benavidez mustered his strength, began calling in tactical air strikes and directed the fire from supporting gunships to suppress the enemy and permit another extraction attempt. He was wounded again in his thigh by small arms fire while administering first aid to a wounded team member just before another extraction helicopter was able to land. His indomitable spirit kept him going as he began to ferry his comrades to the craft. On his second trip with the wounded, he was clubbed from additional wounds to his head and arms before killing his adversary. He then continued under devastating fire to carry the wounded to the helicopter. Upon reaching the aircraft, he spotted and killed two enemy soldiers who were rushing the craft from an angle that prevented the aircraft door gunner from firing upon them. With little strength remaining, he made one last trip to the perimeter to ensure that all classified material had been collected or destroyed and to bring in the remaining wounded. Only then, in extremely serious condition from numerous wounds and loss of blood, did he allow himself to be pulled into the extraction aircraft.

Benavidez's gallant choice to voluntarily join his comrades who were in critical straits, to expose himself constantly to withering enemy fire and his refusal to be stopped despite numerous severe wounds saved the lives of at least eight men. His fearless



Photo by Ron Hall

Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez, center, is flanked by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, left, and President Ronald Reagan at his Medal of Honor presentation ceremony in 1981. The special forces Soldier was cited for heroism in Vietnam in 1968.

personal leadership, tenacious devotion to duty and extremely valorous actions in the face of overwhelming odds were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect the utmost credit on him and the United States Army.

## The life of a young South Texas boy

By Stephanie Sanchez

As a young boy, Roy P. Benavidez would sneak into a cotton gin, climb into the loft and leap onto fluffy cotton. He would imagine he was an airborne Soldier jumping 34 feet from a jump tower.

Becoming a Soldier seemed a faraway dream for the impoverished South Texas boy, who was orphaned at a young age. His family had long worked as sharecroppers, and he dropped out of middle school to help pick sugar beets and cotton. Benavidez, however, conquered life's challenges.

He grew to become a war hero, an advocate for disabled veterans and a Medal of Honor recipient, according to his book *Medal of Honor: One Man's Journey from Poverty and Prejudice*.

At 19 years old, Benavidez joined the Army and went to

Airborne School. While deployed in Vietnam, he was injured by a land mine in 1964. He was told he would never walk again.

But Benavidez overcame his disability, became a Green Beret and returned to combat. During his second tour in Vietnam, he rescued at least eight men who were ambushed by North Vietnamese troops.

Benavidez recovered from his multiple injuries. President Ronald Reagan awarded Benavidez the Medal of Honor on Feb. 24, 1981. He went on to become an advocate for disabled veterans. In 1983, he spoke before the House Select Committee on Aging about the cost-cutting review that planned to terminate disability assistance to 350,000 people.

Benavidez suffered respiratory failure and died at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio in 1998. He was 63.

# Former NCO and son receive Silver Stars during special long-distance ceremonies

By Spc. George Welcome  
101st CAB Public Affairs

Nearly 30 years separate the conclusion of the Vietnam War and the start of the Global War on Terrorism. While time, tactics and technology make today's military very different from the one that fought in the jungles of Vietnam, a common denominator in the two conflicts has been the bravery and sacrifice of the American Soldier.

The Silver Star is the nation's third-highest award for such displays of bravery and sacrifice. Chief Warrant Officer Jonathan Harris became one of the few Soldiers to receive the prestigious award on the evening of Nov. 28, 2008. But the fact that his father, former Staff Sgt. Gary Harris, was also presented with a Silver Star at the same time made the event all the more meaningful.

Through a video teleconference during a ceremony at Combined Joint Task Force-101 headquarters, Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, the Harris family watched from a conference room at Fort Campbell, Ky., as the younger Harris was presented the Silver Star by Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser, CJTF-101 commanding general. Meanwhile, Soldiers from CJTF-101 watched a video screen at Bagram as the elder Harris was pinned with not only the Silver Star, but also a Bronze Star he earned while serving in Vietnam. Neither had been formally presented to him.

"It's very rare that we present the Silver Star," Schloesser explained to those in attendance at both Fort Campbell and Afghanistan. "We have a very high standard, and we make sure that the few who do earn it have done so through selfless sacrifice. It's clear that Mr. Harris did that, and it is also clear that the nation owes a debt to [former] Staff Sgt. Gary Harris. It was almost 40 years ago that he earned it, and I hope that in some small way we can pay back that debt by presenting him his award with his son's today."

Personal courage and selfless service could be said to run in the Harris family bloodline, as both father and son reacted similarly in their encounters with enemy forces. Both risked their lives to ensure the safety of their comrades.

The elder Harris displayed this courage on Aug. 15, 1969, as a squad leader in Vietnam. He and his company were patrolling the outer perimeter near Gol Ree and were attacked with mortars and rocket fire. He quickly directed the members of his squad to

return fire on the enemy.

As the attack died down, he moved his squad closer to the perimeter, which had been weakened during the barrage. As the enemy resumed its assault, he directed his squad to return fire once again, breaking the enemy attack. During the engagement, he risked his life by helping medics aid wounded marines and bring them to safety.

The younger Harris also displayed bravery in the face of danger. On July 2, 2008, Harris, a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot assigned to Charlie Company, 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, landed his helicopter at a landing zone near Gardez, Afghanistan, to pick up Soldiers for transport when his aircraft came under attack by enemies using rocket-propelled grenades, a heavy machine gun and various assault rifles.

With the aircraft on fire, Harris and his crew managed to fly it a short distance before putting it down again. After safely exiting the burning helicopter, the entire crew took up a defensive position. They managed to contact a CH-47 Chinook that was in the area to help extract them from the battlefield. As the Chinook landed, the enemy resumed fire.

It was then that Harris, who was helping one of his wounded crew chiefs to the helicopter, exposed himself to fire by engaging and killing an approaching enemy combatant. He entered the helicopter only after ensuring that the members of his crew, the ground forces and the quick-reaction force were safely aboard.

"Mr. Harris has been great since the incident," said Sgt. DeeJay Norby, a crew chief who was also involved in the action at Gardez. "He didn't get down or anything afterward; he went right back to business doing his job. It's really awesome getting to fly with a great group of pilots and crew chiefs."

This is not the first award that Harris has received during this deployment. He was also presented with the Air Medal with "V" device.

In his short address, Harris thanked his flight crew and the crew of the Chinook who performed the rescue operation.

"I'm so lucky to serve with so many great heroes," said Harris. "Without them, the outcome might not have been so good."

He also gave a heartfelt "thank you" to his father, whose life and service set the example for him.

"Every time people thank us for our service, I tell them to thank a Vietnam vet. So Dad, I want to thank you today."



Photo by Spc. George Welcome, 101st CAB Public Affairs  
Chief Warrant Officer Jonathan Harris receives a handshake from Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser, commander, 101st Airborne Division, after being presented the Silver Star.





# Three NCOs among U.S. Army Africa Soldiers honored for bravery

By Rick Scavetta  
U.S. Army Africa Public Affairs

Six Soldiers – including three noncommissioned officers – were honored for their bravery more than a year after being ambushed.

Early July 13, 2008, about 200 insurgents attacked a vehicle patrol base in Wanat, Afghanistan. Nine Soldiers died, but Soldiers from Chosen Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, gallantly fought to defend their comrades.

Those men received medals of valor for their actions that morning. Maj. Gen. William B. Garrett III, commander of U.S. Army Africa, presented medals to the Soldiers during a March 20 ceremony held at Caserma Ederle, Vicenza, Italy.

Receiving the Silver Star was bittersweet, said Spc. Jeffrey Scantlin, 24, of Anchorage, Alaska.

“It’s a big deal. But it brings back a lot of memories of people who should be here but aren’t,” Scantlin said. “For me, the medal is more of a group achievement, something I wear to remind me of those who didn’t come back.”

The Silver Star Medal was also presented to Sgt. 1st Class Erich Phillips and Sgt. John Hayes. Bronze Star Medals with “V” device for valor were awarded to 1st Lt. Aaron Thurman, Sgt. Hector Chavez and Spc. Tyler Hanson.

As the ceremony began, the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team stood silently to remember those who died. Then, Garrett spoke about the bravery Soldiers displayed during the battle.

“Their courage under fire, valor and loyalty to each other was absolutely astounding,” Garrett said.

The platoon was near the end of a long deployment in Afghanistan, having endured many firefights along the way. The morning of the battle, the Taliban surrounded the remote base and its observation post. Insurgents then attacked the village and its surrounding farmland.

American heavy munitions were destroyed, U.S. lines were broken and the base was invaded. Faced with enemy fire near Wanat – outnumbered and, in some cases, wounded – the paratroopers fought desperately for each other, overcoming fear and willingly risking their lives to save others, Garrett said.

Soon after, the Taliban insurgents were repelled by artillery



Photo by Barbara Romano

Maj. Gen. William B. Garrett III, commander of U.S. Army Africa, speaks with Spc. Jeffrey Scantlin, 24, of Anchorage, Alaska, after presenting him with the Silver Star during a March 20 ceremony at Caserma Ederle, Vicenza, Italy. Also pictured, from left, are Sgt. 1st Class Erich Phillips and Sgt. John Hayes.

and aircraft.

“Incredible acts of courage and valor were commonplace on the battlefield that day,” Garrett said. “Today, we recognize these six Soldiers for their courage. We are thankful for the opportunity to serve with such men.”

Garrett stepped forward and orders were read detailing each of their actions. The six paratroopers paused for photos, the bright ribbons and shining stars standing out against their green-gray digital fatigues.

Scantlin, like most of those awarded, knew he had been nominated for a medal. Other Soldiers learned the same day. But it meant little to them at the time, still reeling from the combat they had endured.

“We just lost nine guys. Everyone was still in shock. It was surreal – it still is,” Scantlin said. “The guys who died there were my friends.”



Read another story about the Battle of Wanat in the September 2009 issue of the NCO Journal or visit <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal/default.asp>.

# It's time we encourage reading in our units

By Command Sgt. Maj. William Moore  
U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy

NCOs at all levels, it is time we create an internal reading list that encourages the Soldiers under our direct leadership to READ! There are various reading lists suggested at different levels in the military, and each appears relevant and contemporary. It is important that we, as NCOs, read and understand these recommendations, as well as motivate our Soldiers to do the same. Equally vital, we should create localized reading lists that focus on the topics that we, as leaders, consider important. Additionally, to check our learning, we should create a method to have Soldiers report what they've learned.

We urge our soldiers to read a plethora of military publications, for example: *Army Times*, *The NCO Journal*, AUSA's magazine and *Armed Forces Journal*. However, to fully appreciate the contemporary operating environment, Soldiers need to look beyond articles that deal exclusively with military topics. They should up to understand the philosophy, sociology, customs, history and general mindset of our enemies and other groups. By perusing a greater variety of literature, our subordinates can gain a broader understanding of our mission and our world.

Officers at every level have created reading lists for their officer brothers and sisters. A typical battalion commander will have subordinate officers read from a battalion reading list and tie it into their COE, typically with an informal case study presentation or written report as part of their professional development. They may share their understanding of the readings over a brown-bag lunch.

Unfortunately, seldom are their NCOs and Soldiers encouraged to follow that great example. Senior NCOs are typically invited but not required to participate in the unit reading program. Yet, the senior NCO who does engage will find the discussions invigorating as he or she relaxes with educated and articulate Soldiers to compare and contrast the readings, as well as attempt to relate them with current events.

Officers' method of providing reading lists and requiring subordinates to read is a useful tool at any level in the military.

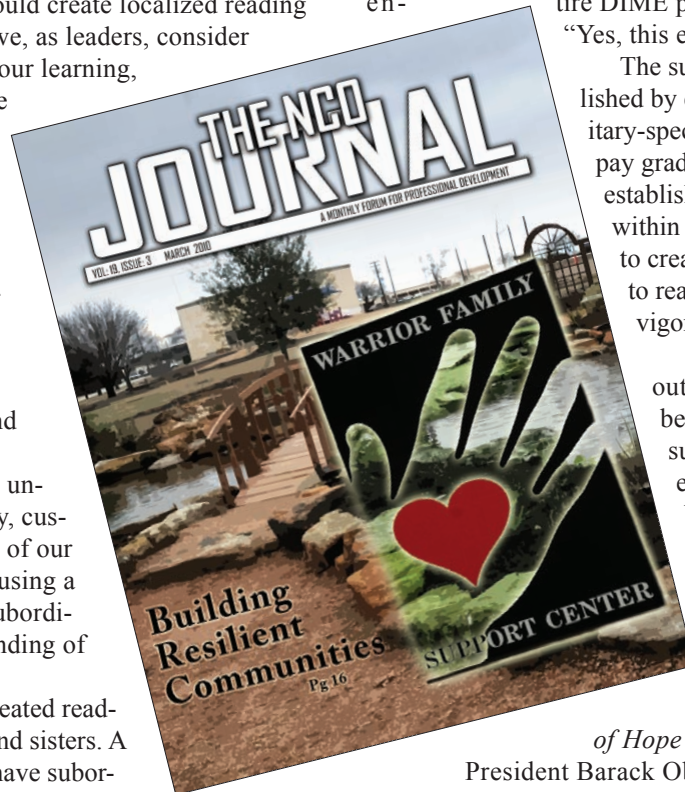
The command sergeant major should follow the officers' example and implement a reading program for the enlisted in his or her battalion. Reading will set a solid foundation concerning where we are now, how we got here and where we are heading as a force. Additionally, it will give our Soldiers some insight into our leaders, both military and elected representatives. Reading will also help Soldiers grasp and understand the political and strategic processes underlying world events. Peripheral readings will arouse and assist with an appreciation of the entire DIME process. The Soldier will think, "Yes, this effort makes sense holistically."

The suggested reading lists that are published by each of the armed services are military-specific and involve readings at each pay grade. However, it is important that we establish some fidelity to the requirement within our individual units. The object is to create a fire within our Soldiers, a drive to read a broader array of literature with vigor and alacrity.

Create a reading list in your outfit with resources that you find beneficial outside of the typically suggested topics. Here are a few examples: *The Accidental Guerilla* by David Kilcullen, *Eating Soup with a Fork* by John A. Nagl, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, *American Soldier* by Tommy Franks, *The Powers of War and Peace* by John Yoo, *The Arab Mind* by Raphael Patai, *Audacity of Hope* and *Dreams from My Father* by President Barack Obama.

What this very brief index suggests are writings in various areas that will hopefully provoke thought and discussion, as well as an appreciation of our leaders. The intent is to give our Soldiers some skills in critical reasoning. This is only accomplished if one is reading material with a message that one could cognitively challenge. Realistically, any literary work that you think will be beneficial to Soldiers and will give them a broader picture of world events is vital. Focus on serious books for serious Soldiers. The occasional fiction read is entertaining, but typically is not relevant, with the exception of the classics, which give one an appreciation of the beauty of the written word – a topic for another article.

By encouraging your Soldiers to get involved in reading beyond thumbing through a professional publication,



you are creating the true warrior-scholar. This is the person who will have an understanding of the “why” behind what we do as protectors of this country. Some may argue there is not enough time; this is an issue regardless of where one serves. Your challenge as a leader is to develop that thirst for reading in your subordinates. Opportunities take care of themselves as one becomes hungry for the continuous knowledge that only reading can provide.

Allow an old ranger to offer a technique. To get your outfit into the habit of reading, have your Soldiers read a book instead of watching a sports event or any television program. The people of the United States do not care if the professional Soldier knows how some silly sports personality chases a ball or drives a car in circles. But, a civilian will feel safe and protected if the Soldier can articulate why he does what he does.

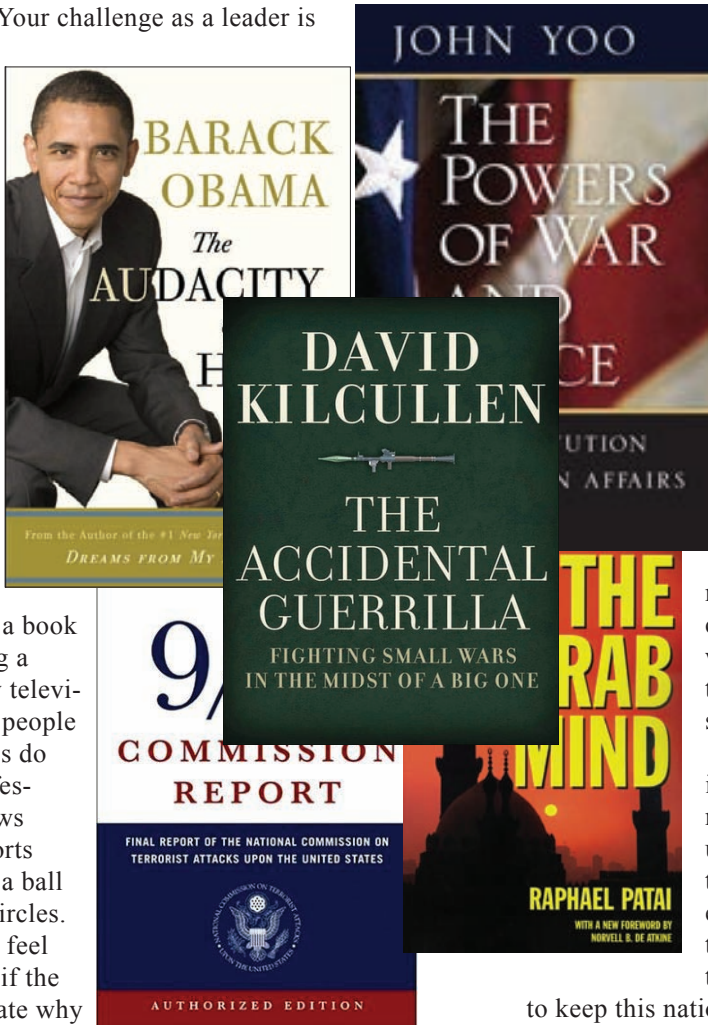
Sadly, after eight years of the Global War on Terrorism,

many of our subordinates and leaders do not understand why we are in this fight. A mindset and appreciation for second- and third-order of effects come from a continuous effort in reading and looking beyond one’s military specialty. Developing a lifelong reader is no different than encouraging your Soldiers to conduct physical training throughout their lives. Reading is PT for the mind, and it reaps benefits immediately and continuously.

The benefits of creating a reading list and energizing your outfit to read are too many to list. At a minimum, your Soldiers will develop a better vocabulary, thereby speaking and communicating with erudition. They will develop clarity in understanding and critical-thinking skills. Soldiers will begin writing to share their experiences; they will seek additional schooling beyond our Noncommissioned Officer Education System. Collateral benefits will come to the Soldiers in how they carry themselves. They will move more professionally as they become more confident in their additional knowledge. They will pass their thirst for knowledge and reading to others and, in turn, others will pass these new skills to yet more.

A secondary benefit suggests the developing warrior-scholar may now articulate the mission outside of his or her MOS and better understand the cultures of the world. Possibly, the well-read Soldier may also be able to influence civilians to move them beyond a “support the Soldier, but not the mission” mindset into truly understanding and supporting our efforts to keep this nation free and assist the peoples of the world.

The best time to start reading seriously is the 5th grade, the second best time is NOW!



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# IRR SOLDIERS MUSTER IN PUERTO RICO

By Master Sgt. Brian Kappmeyer  
U.S. Army Human Resources Command Public Affairs

Spc. Juan J. Perez was concerned he was getting recalled to active duty and expected to leave his wife and three kids again when the Army contacted him in February. In 2007, Perez had completed a 16-month mobilization, including a one-year tour to Iraq with the Puerto Rico National Guard.

Although Perez feared the worst before attending an Individual Ready Reserve muster here in March, he quickly discovered that he was not being recalled to serve his country for another combat tour.

Perez was not the only individual in attendance who was apprehensive. A few hands rose when the officer in charge of the IRR Muster Program for U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Lt. Col. Craig Smith, asked during his welcome if the Soldiers thought they had been summoned to Fort Buchanan for mobilization.

Concerns subsided when the Soldiers realized the intent of the muster was not to recall them to active duty but to provide helpful information and services for the attendees and to update personal information.

Smith told the Soldiers and family members that, if they had questions, the muster team and support staff owed them a response and he urged everyone not to leave before all questions were answered.

“One of our biggest challenges is ensuring that Soldiers understand this is a muster, not a mobilization,” Smith said. “We do not mobilize Soldiers at musters. We are here to ensure Soldiers are getting registered for the benefits they have earned. The VA, the Army, and other service organizations have more to offer than most Soldiers can even begin to realize. Musters are all about taking care of Soldiers.”

Several attendees raised their hands again when Brig. Gen. William D.R. “Razz” Waff, deputy commanding general of U.S. Army Human Resources Command, asked if they had deployed for Operations Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom; a few hands remained up when he asked if there were Soldiers who had deployed more than once or twice. He thanked everyone for their service and told the group, “Whatever decision you make (regarding your future), we want it to be an informed decision.”

U.S. Army Human Resources Command is reaching out to nearly 36,000 IRR Soldiers from January to August to complete an annual readiness check. The Army began mustering IRR Soldiers in 2007 to validate their readiness levels and to ensure they were prepared if called upon to support Overseas Contingency Operations.

A Soldier typically becomes a member of the IRR after successfully completing several years of active duty or selected

reserve membership. Soldiers may transfer to the IRR to fulfill the remainder of their contractual military service obligation, which is normally eight years.

“The muster program gives us the chance to collect required information from our IRR Soldiers, but it also gives them a chance to learn about the services and benefits available to them,” Smith said. “A lot of opportunities can open up for them through either more active IRR participation, membership in a reserve unit, or volunteering to mobilize in support of overseas contingency operations. We are giving the IRR Soldiers the tools to make an informed decision and help them determine what works for them.”

An annual requirement, mustering is a one-day event for which IRR Soldiers are paid about \$200. While many IRR Soldiers complete a Personnel Accountability Muster, a one-on-one visit with an Army reserve career counselor, several thousand Soldiers will gather at group events called Readiness Musters.

The number of Readiness Musters has increased each year from the initial four musters held in 2007 to eight in 2008 and 13 in 2009. Last year, U.S. Army Human Resources Command partnered with Veterans Affairs to hold five Readiness Musters at VA facilities, which proved such a successful venture that nine Readiness Musters will be held at VA facilities this year, with the remaining musters conducted on Army posts and Army Reserve centers.

In 2010, 19 Readiness Musters are being held at locations across the United States and – for the first time – outside the continental United States in Puerto Rico.

“The team is venturing outside the continental United States this year for the first time because we realized it was important to offer our services to those Soldiers as well,” Smith said. Future overseas musters are planned in the coming years.

Readiness Musters have not only increased in number but in scope and services offered, as the IRR Soldiers mustering at Fort Buchanan learned.

One of the first individuals to arrive here at the muster site was Johnny Dwiggin with the Armed Forces Employer Partnership – formerly called the Army Reserve Employer Partnership Initiative. Dwiggin said the organization partners with more than 900 public and private sector employers and attempts to match the needs of the employers with Soldiers in thousands of job opportunities.

“The Soldiers already have many of the skill sets the employers are looking for and already meet many of the job requirements,” Dwiggin said. “The partners are eager to hire the Soldiers because of their experience and qualifications.”

Spc. Maria Sepulveva was pleasantly surprised when she thought she would just be completing paperwork at the muster. “There were a lot of job opportunities that we were told about and how to go to the website to find out more,” she said. A former guardsman, Sepulveva was also excited to learn that IRR

Soldiers can go to schools, get promoted and volunteer for active duty tours.

“I would tell other IRR Soldiers in my situation that they should come to the muster with questions and find out about the benefits of being an IRR Soldier,” Sepulveva said.

Seventeen veteran support agencies attended the Puerto Rico muster to share information on their services and opportunities that could benefit the Soldiers and their families. U.S. Army Human Resources Command partnered with the 81st Regional Support Command and the 1st Mission Support Command to support the muster and coordinate the effort to bring these agencies to Fort Buchanan.

“Lt. Col. Gayle Scott and Sgt. 1st Class Beverly Robinson of the 81st Soldier Readiness Processing Team provided outstanding personnel support during the Puerto Rico muster,” said Maj. Gerald Bradford, Muster Team operations officer. “The 81st SRP team personnel were professional, and they catered to the needs of the IRR Soldiers. They also assisted IRR Soldiers’ family members who attended the muster by answering their questions and provided them with information that would be of help to them during the time their service member is serving in the IRR.”

Along with the 81st SRP team, Capt. Domingo Cartagena of the 1st MSC and Master Sgt. Madeline Santiago, area leader for Army Reserve Careers Division Region 5, assisted in coordinating with local agencies to send representatives to the muster and were a major reason that the event was a success, Bradford said.

“It has been awesome to help all of these Soldiers – to bring them together to find out all of the benefits that they can receive,” said Santiago, who is responsible for 11 career counselors in Puerto Rico. “Our goal was for all of the IRR Soldiers to make contact with the career counselors. I wanted the IRR Soldiers to know from the counselors all of the benefits that are out there for them.”

Santiago also echoed Bradford’s comments of the importance of the efforts of Scott and Robinson from the 81st RRC. “They were very helpful in organizing and setting up the event,” she said.

Army Reserve Career Counselor Sgt. 1st Class Gabriel Almodovar said many of the issues he dealt with were medical concerns of the Soldiers, and he ensured they received attention from the medical personnel at the muster. Many of the repeated comments he heard from the Soldiers included: “Nobody told me

I could have an ID card, or that I could get promoted, or that I could shop in the post exchange or commissary.”

The IRR Soldiers also learned about the benefits of transferring to the Selected Reserve, such as the opportunity to enroll in health, dental and life insurance plans. In the last three years, 7,195 IRRs transferred to the Selected Reserve through the IRR Muster Program.

Almodovar stressed how important it is for IRR Soldiers to keep their contact information up-to-date. “For someone to miss everything here today because we didn’t have a good address or phone number is too bad.”

Perez felt fortunate that he attended the muster following his medical screening. “The medical screening helped me learn that I had high blood pressure, and now I can get additional medical treatment and take care of it,” he said. The VA staff on site also

helped him register and learn more about benefits available such as home loans, he said.

Sgt. Johnny Quiles previously attended a one-on-one Personnel Accountability Muster with a career counselor and said the thought of being mobilized didn’t go through his mind when he was scheduled to attend the Readiness Muster here. One of the many benefits the former active duty Soldier and Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran said he discovered at the muster was that, as an IRR Soldier, he remained eligible to use



Photo by Master Sgt. Brian Kappmeyer

Career Counselor Sgt. 1st Class Gabriel Almodovar with Army Reserve Careers Division Region 5 in Puerto Rico answers questions and discusses opportunities with Spc. Abimael Marrero.

the post exchange and commissary. Quiles’ military obligation ends next year, but as a husband and father of two girls, he said he plans to remain in the IRR because of his family.

The Army continues to evaluate and change the muster format to provide more services to the Soldiers and enhance the value of the experience. Smith says he would tell Soldiers unable to attend a muster that they are missing out on one of the best opportunities the Army has to offer.

“Mustering is a great return on investment for Soldiers. On top of the opportunity to enroll for VA health care, receiving opportunities for public and private sector jobs, and being connected with numerous veteran support agencies, Soldiers receive a \$200 stipend for completing muster duty,” Smith said.

IRR Soldiers seeking additional information about the muster program may contact the Muster Team at 877-303-2400.

For more information about U.S. Army Human Resources Command, visit [www.hrc.army.mil](http://www.hrc.army.mil). For more information about the Armed Forces Employer Partnership and to search for job opportunities, visit [www.usar.army.mil](http://www.usar.army.mil) and click on the Employer Partnership tab.

# PHOTO JOURNAL





*Photo by Sgt. John Young*

**Cpl. Tomas Kleefisch, a military policeman assigned to 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team of the Vermont National Guard, launches the RQ-11 Raven into the twilight sky of Afghanistan. Kleefisch used the Raven to gather video surveillance around the compound, where he and the rest of his platoon spent the night.**

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# PHOTO JOURNAL

▶ Staff Sgt. William Rose, a heavy equipment operator with the Tennessee National Guard, explains the gauges on a dashboard. Rose, along with six other U.S. Soldiers, were conducting a Heavy Equipment Transport System Familiarization Course for a class of 22 Royal Moroccan Army motor transportation drivers and mechanics.

*Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Lydia M. Davey*



▼ Soldiers and airmen receive a briefing on Joint Base Balad, Iraq, before going out on a patrol to look for weapons.

*Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Quinton Russ*



▶ Afghan National Army soldiers receive medical treatment from Farah Forward Surgical Team and Provincial Reconstruction Team Farah medics at Forward Operating Base Farah.

*Photo by 2nd Lt. Christine Darius*







▲ Soldiers practice parachute landing falls during a joint forcible entry exercise at Pope Air Force Base, N.C. The Soldiers are assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division. The division's brigades use forcible entry exercises to train for real-world contingency operations.  
*Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Kamaile O. Long*



▲ Sgt. Colin Unverzagt provides security after exiting a CH-47 Chinook helicopter with other Soldiers during an operation in Afghanistan's Khost province. The operation was conducted to reintroduce a coalition presence, help Afghan forces clear the Shembowat Valley and communicate with village elders in the province.  
*Photo by Sgt. Jeffrey Alexander*

▼ Sgt. Robert Hicks reenlists on Red Square in Moscow during a celebration of the 65th anniversary of victory in Europe after World War II. Hicks, from Mansfield, Ohio, is part of Company C., 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 170th Brigade Combat Team. *Photo from U.S. Army Europe*



# Roll call

o f t h e f a l l e n

## Operation Iraqi Freedom

*Sgt. Keith A. Coe, 30, Auburndale, Fla., April 27, 2010* ◆ *Maj. Ronald W. Culver Jr., 44, Shreveport, La., May 24, 2010*  
*Staff Sgt. Esau S.A. Gonzales, 30, White Deer, Texas, May 3, 2010* ◆ *Staff Sgt. Amilcar H. Gonzalez, 26, Miami, May 21, 2010*  
*Sgt. Anthony O. Magee, 29, Hattiesburg, Miss., April 27, 2010* ◆ *Sgt. Ralph Mena, 27, Hutchinson, Kan., May 4, 2010*  
*Spc. Stanley J. Sokolowski III, 26, Ocean, N.J., May 20, 2010*

## Operation Enduring Freedom

*Pfc. Billy G. Anderson, 20, Alexandria, Tenn., May 17, 2010*  
*Staff Sgt. Shane S. Barnard, 38, Desmet, S.D., May 19, 2010* ◆ *Pfc. Christopher R. Barton, 22, Concord, N.C., May 24, 2010*  
*Lt. Col. Paul R. Bartz, 43, Waterloo, Wis., May 18, 2010* ◆ *Lt. Col. Thomas P. Belkofer, 44, Perrysburg, Ohio, May 18, 2010*  
*Spc. Jeremy L. Brown, 20, McMinnville, Tenn., May 9, 2010* ◆ *Master Sgt. Mark W. Coleman, 40, Centerville, Wash., May 2, 2010*  
*Capt. Kyle A. Comfort, 27, Jacksonville, Ala., May 8, 2010* ◆ *1st Lt. Salvatore S. Corma, 24, Wenonah, N.J., April 29, 2010*  
*Pfc. Jason D. Fingar, 24, Columbia, Mo., May 22, 2010* ◆ *Spc. Eric M. Finniginam, 26, Colonia, Federated States of Micronesia, May 1, 2010*  
*Sgt. Nathan P. Kennedy, 24, Claysville, Pa., April 27, 2010* ◆ *Spc. Denis D. Kisseloff, 45, Saint Charles, Mo., May 14, 2010*  
*Col. John M. McHugh, 46, West Caldwell, N.J., May 18, 2010* ◆ *Sgt. Edwin Rivera, 28, Waterford, Conn., May 25, 2010*  
*Spc. Wade A. Slack, 21, Waterville, Maine, May 6, 2010* ◆ *Staff Sgt. Richard J. Tieman, 28, Waynesboro, Pa., May 18, 2010*  
*Spc. Joshua A. Tomlinson, 24, Dubberly, La., May 18, 2010* ◆ *Sgt. Grant A. Wichmann, 27, Golden, Colo., April 24, 2010*

*You are not Forgotten*

*Editor's note: This is a continuation of a list that was started in the October 2003 issue of the NCO Journal and contains those names released by the Department of Defense between May 1, 2010, and May 28, 2010.*

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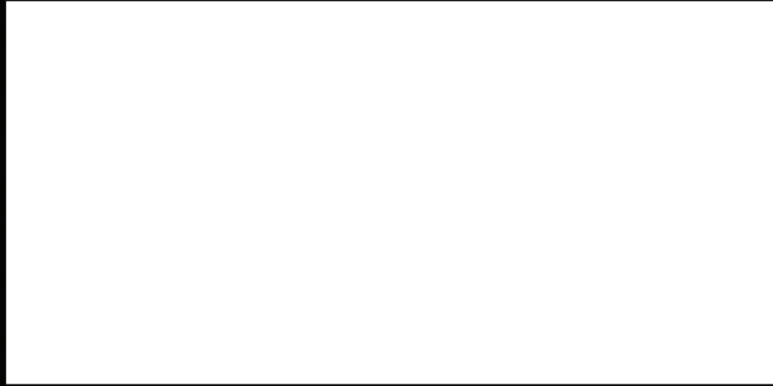
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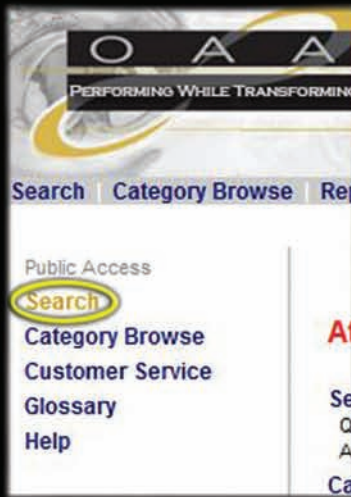
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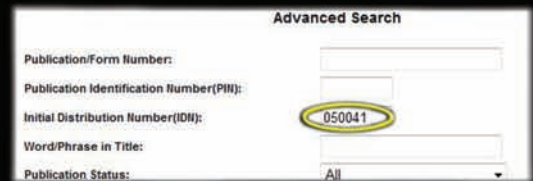
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