

# THE NGO JOURNAL

VOL. 20, ISSUE 7 JULY 2011

A MONTHLY FORUM FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## WOUNDED, ILL & INJURED WARRIORS: SOLDIERING ON

*2011 Warrior Games ■ New Warrior Transition Complexes ■ Center for the Intrepid*



pg **20**



## ON THE COVER

Sgt. Benjamin Thomas competed in the 100- and 200-meter wheelchair dash during the track and field events of the 2011 Warrior Games held May 16-21 in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Photo illustration by Clifford Kyle Jones and Spc. David M. Gafford

# July 2011 CONTENTS

## THE NCO JOURNAL

### Features

WOUNDED, ILL & INJURED SOLDIERS: STILL IN THE FIGHT **10**  
*Clifford Kyle Jones*

HARBOR OF HOPE: CENTER FOR THE INTREPID **20**  
*Linda Crippen*

CALL: FROM LESSONS LEARNED TO EDUCATING THE FORCE **24**  
*Jonathan (Jay) Koester*

THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICA'S TANK DIVISION **32**  
*Jennifer Mattson*

### EDITORIAL

FROM THE SMA: STRUCTURED SELF-DEVELOPMENT WILL PROPEL NCOS TO SUCCESS **4**

### NEWS TO USE

NEWS AND INFORMATION AIMED AT BENEFITING TODAY'S NCOS/SOLDIERS **5**

- Patrol cap now the default headgear* ■
- Work remains to improve PTSD, TBI science* ■
- Advancements made at Arlington cemetery* ■



# Celebrating 20 Years 1991 - 2011



pg **10**



pg **24**



pg **32**

## FROM THE FIELD **44**

- World's top NCOs experience American life ■
- What does being the 'backbone of the Army' mean? ■
- Conference of European Armies for NCOs ■

**40**

## NCO STORIES

*2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment*  
*Sgt. Scott D. Brooks*  
*Staff Sgt. Kevin P. Sanders*

**50**

## ROLL CALL

*We honor the men and women who have sacrificed their lives in current operations around the world.*



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS** - Command Sgt. Maj. Rory L. Malloy, Commandant, USASMA; Command Sgt. Maj. Wesley J. Weygandt, Deputy Commandant; Charles E. Guyette, Chief of Staff; Jesse W. McKinney, MA, Director, Personnel and Administration **DIRECTOR & NCOIC** - Master Sgt. Antony M.C. Joseph DSN 621-1043 **EDITOR** - David B. Crozier DSN 621-1046 **WRITERS/EDITORS** - Clifford Kyle Jones, Jonathan (Jay) Koester, Michael L. Lewis, Jennifer Mattson, Sgt. Samuel J. Phillips **GRAPHICS** - Sgt. Russel Schnaare and Spc. David M. 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 NCO 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 email 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

# Structured Self-Development will propel NCOs to success

In this new era of technology, Soldiers gather and process information differently today than they did even 10 years ago. With advancements on the Web and the invention of collaborative sites like Facebook and Twitter, the youth of today are able to glean information instantaneously via computer screens and cellphones. Understanding how our potential recruits learn is critical to our success as an Army. We cannot force our Soldiers to learn by using outdated methods of content delivery.

Structured Self-Development is many things: It is planned, goal-oriented learning that reinforces and expands the depth and breadth of an individual's knowledge base, self-awareness and situational awareness.

It complements institutional and operational learning. It enhances professional competence and meets personal objectives. It is required learning that continues throughout a Soldier's career and is closely linked to training and education in the NCO Education System. It promotes lifelong learning. It also sets conditions for continuous growth as a warrior and a warrior leader. All Soldiers are required to participate in SSD. It will also be a prerequisite for attending NCOES courses and will affect future promotions.

SSD 1 prepares Soldiers for the Warrior Leader Course. Soldiers are automatically enrolled upon completing Basic Combat Training or One-Station Unit Training. SSD 1 tasks are focused primarily on the team and squad levels and center on common leader and tactical skill sets. Privates through command sergeants major can self-enroll.

There is no SSD 2. The Advanced Leader Course Common Core, or ALC-CC, is taken in lieu of SSD 2. Enrollments are selected by Headquarters, Department of the Army.

ALC-CC focuses on preparing unit and subordinate elements for peace and wartime missions and contingencies, and replaces the old Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course.

SSD 3 focuses on tasks at the platoon level and prepares sergeants through sergeants first class for the Senior Leader Course, previously known as the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course. It offers lessons on implementing measures to reduce combat stress, developing a physical security plan, supervising the NCO's professional development, supervising ceremony setups, and applying ethical leadership decisions at the small-unit level. Soldiers will be automatically enrolled in SSD 3 after

they have completed all phases of ALC. Senior enlisted leaders — master sergeants through command sergeants major — may self-enroll.

SSD 4 focuses on tasks at the battalion level and prepares staff sergeants through command sergeants major for attendance at the Sergeants Major Course. Soldiers may start SSD 4 upon completing the Senior Leader Course. The U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy recommends completing SSD 4 prior to assuming duties as a first sergeant. Graduates of the SLC are automatically enrolled. Current graduates of the SLC may self-enroll.

Although the SMC is the capstone of the NCOES, learning does not stop after graduating the course. Soldiers must complete SSD 5 after they have completed the SMC. It focuses on nominative- and joint staff-level tasks, and prepares Soldiers for the strategic levels of Army leadership. It offers lessons on employing nation-building operations and resolving conflicts between civilian employees and the military. Master sergeants through command sergeants major are automatically enrolled after they graduate from the SMC. SSD 5 will become a prerequisite for nominative and joint assignments.

To date, 52,597 Soldiers have been registered for SSD 1. Yet, at this point, only 671 have completed the course.

Even though Soldiers have three years to complete SSD 1, I find these numbers disturbing. Less than 15 percent are currently on track to graduate before WLC. Leaders at all levels must ensure our Soldiers are taking these modules and not trying to "cram" them all in before ALC. SSD is both an individual and first-line leader responsibility.

One of the biggest complaints I hear about SSD is a lack of computers at units, especially in the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. Guard and Reserve command sergeants major are actively seeking a resolution to this problem.

I require your help to ensure that we embrace this new learning tool. SSD will be the key link in the Army Career Tracker and will improve Army readiness by integrating self-development into a lifelong-learning strategy. I charge all leaders to give their Soldiers time throughout the week to work on their SSD courses.



Raymond F. Chandler III  
Sergeant Major of the Army



## ACU CHANGES

# Patrol cap now the default headgear; Velcro optional

By C. Todd Lopez  
Army News Service →

The voice of the Soldier has been heard: The Army announced June 14 that the patrol cap will replace the black wool beret as the default headgear for the Army Combat Uniform.

Also changing are the options for how Soldiers can attach certain items to their ACU shirts. The Army chief of staff, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, said Soldiers will now be able to sew on name tapes, service tapes, rank insignia and skill badges, instead of using Velcro.

The changes were made after Dempsey received input from Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III, who had been tasked to gather opinions from Soldiers in the field.

“I am a scout for Gen. Dempsey, who asked me to look into everything a Soldier wears from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet,” Chandler said. “These are changes that the field said they wanted to see.”

Typically, uniform changes come as a result of a board that meets twice a year. But Chandler said issues surrounding both the ACU headgear and the use of Velcro were changes Dempsey wanted to bring to the secretary of the Army immediately.

Chandler said he spoke with “several thousand” Soldiers and also received comments via social media sites such as Facebook.

“I have also discussed this with my board of directors — the most senior sergeants major of our Army,” Chandler said. Post-deployment combat uniform surveys were used.

The No. 1 and No. 2 issues, Chandler said, involved the beret and Velcro.

“The Soldiers didn’t like the fact that the beret was hot — it was not something that they wore the majority of the time,” he said. “They didn’t like the fact it didn’t shade the sun and it took two hands to put on. And, they didn’t like to carry two pieces of headgear to do different functions during the day.”

The new policy will make the patrol cap the standard. But the beret isn’t going anywhere. It will remain as the standard for the Army Service Uniform and as an optional uniform item with the ACU at the discretion of commanders.

“They could choose to say for an event, like change of command, that they want them to wear the beret,” Chandler said.

The change in the beret policy will save the Army about \$6.5



Photo by Staff Sgt. Brandon Moreno

Sgt. Matthew Berg and his wife, Sgt. Ashleigh Berg, re-enlist Oct. 21, 2010, in Baghdad. The patrol cap they are both wearing has become the Army’s new default headgear.

million over the lifecycle of the ACU. New Soldiers had been issued two berets, now they will be issued one.

The Army’s new policy on attaching accouterments to the ACU will allow Soldiers to sew on rank insignia, the name tape and the service tape. Additionally, skill badges such as the Airborne, Pathfinder, Combat Action, Combat Infantryman, and Expert Infantryman badges will also be authorized for sewing.

Currently, those badges are provided in painted metal and have to be pinned to the uniform. Pinning badges to the uniform can be a lengthy process because they have to be aligned using a ruler. The new policy will allow Soldiers to sew those badges to the uniform.

Combat and unit patches on the left and right sleeve and the U.S. flag will remain Velcro-only, Chandler said. Additionally, the ACU will continue to come with Velcro in the same locations it is now. Where a Soldier is authorized to sew something on, they can sew it on top of the Velcro.

Chandler also said Soldiers had asked for changes to how cargo pockets are fastened. Velcro had been used. Now, ACUs are available with buttons used to keep the pockets closed. A similar change is being discussed for how sleeve cuffs are fastened, but Chandler said that decision will be made by the July uniform board.

For full details on the ACU changes, Soldiers should read Army Directive 2011-11.

# Chiarelli: Work remains to improve PTSD, TBI science

By Terri Moon Cronk  
American Forces Press Service

Therapies used for the treatment of brain injuries lag behind the advanced medical science employed for treating mechanical injuries such as missing limbs, the Army's vice chief of staff, Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, told reporters May 13.

Chiarelli said more work must be done to properly diagnose and treat service members suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and suicidal thoughts.

"There's a lot of criticism with how we handle PTSD, TBI and other behavioral health issues," he said. "I think a lot of that is unfair, because if you study this, we don't know as much about the brain. That is the basis of the problem."

Meanwhile, Chiarelli said, the stigma that some service members associate with actively seeking treatment for mental health issues is still prevalent.

"Breaking the stigma of mental health issues is the hardest part," the general acknowledged.

Chiarelli said military medicine has been very successful in replacing injured service members' lost limbs with high-tech prosthetic devices in tandem with rehabilitation training.

"None of you has asked what we're able to do with Soldiers who lose arms and legs," Chiarelli told reporters. "I've been using my bully pulpit in the last year or so to say that, as an agency, we do everything we can to understand the brain as well as we do the rest of the body."

Chiarelli said progress has been made in diagnosing and treating PTSD and TBI, though he acknowledged that much work remains.

"We're beginning to get some traction," Chiarelli said of new information provided by recent studies of PTSD and TBI. The general said he's heartened by the Army and National Mental Health Institute all-Soldier study of PTSD and TBI, now into its fourth month.

The study starts with monitoring new trainees — a process that has never been done before, Chiarelli said. The Army study will track Soldiers during their careers to monitor them for potential risks.

"Our hope is we'll get algorithms," Chiarelli said, "and will be able to tell someone: 'You're at a higher risk of developing some kind of behavior health issue, and this is what you ought to do about it.'"

Traumatic brain injuries that occur in combat are difficult to



Photo by D. Myles Cullen

Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli discusses the Army's "Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention Report" during a press conference July 2010 at the Pentagon.

identify because the majority of cases are caused by a blast, and the service member's head usually doesn't hit the ground or any hard surface to produce a visible wound. Therefore, Chiarelli said he wants to develop the ability to collect data on combat explosions inside vehicles to better understand blast injuries to the brain.

Chiarelli said studies show that blasts occurring inside a military vehicle can result in an 11 percent chance of occupants losing a limb; a 65 percent chance of occupants developing PTSD or TBI; and a 16 to 17 percent chance of occupants suffering some other form of a brain injury.

The Army hopes to develop a tracking system for brain injuries that's similar to methods used to identify and track diseases that occur in organs such as the heart, the general said.

The Army also is working with the Department of Veterans Affairs to aid veterans experiencing PTSD, TBI and other issues, he said.

"We are working closely with the VA in ways we've never worked before," Chiarelli said. "We're working on how to improve the disability evaluation process, and lessons learned — what's working and what's not working."

Meanwhile, military health care providers "need to do a better job of screening, with [better] science that has some kind of certainty to make the proper diagnosis and [prescribe the best] treatment," Chiarelli said.



# 'Green' bullet as effective as M855

By C. Todd Lopez  
Army News Service

Since June 2010, the Army has fielded about 30 million of its new 5.56 mm M855A1 "enhanced performance rounds" in Afghanistan.

The cartridge, sometimes called the "green bullet" because it has an environmentally friendly copper core instead of the traditional lead, has been getting mostly good reviews in the 11 months since it was first deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"The vast majority of everything we've got back from the field is positive," said Lt. Col. Jeffrey K. Woods, product manager for small-caliber ammunition, during a May 13 media event at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

Reporters learned the benefits of the new cartridge, compared it to the round it is designed to replace and had the opportunity to fire the round from both an M16 and M4 rifle.

Perhaps the biggest plus of the enhanced performance round is the consistency it brings to the fight — more so than the 5.56 mm M855 round it replaces.

Woods and other officials were reti-



Photo by C. Todd Lopez.  
The 5.56 mm M855A1 Enhanced Performance Round, shown here, is sometimes called a "green round" due to its copper-only core.

cent to talk specifically about the effects of the new bullet, or any bullet, on a "soft target" — a euphemism for enemy personnel. But, they made clear the M855A1 is at least equal to the M855 and it targeted with more consistency.

The M855 is a good round, Woods said, but it is "yaw-dependent" — like all bullets, it wobbles when it travels along its trajectory. Its effectiveness depends on its yaw angle when it hits a target. Not with the M855A1. The new enhanced performance round is not yaw-dependent — it delivers the same effectiveness in a soft target no matter its yaw angle.

"On M855's best day you're going to see that type of performance out of the EPR. But, you will see it every time,"

Woods said.

The EPR cartridge is the same length as the M855, though the bullet it contains is about one-eighth of an inch longer. The weight and shape of the EPR is also the same as the M855, so it fits anything an M855 fits — including the M16 and the M4.

The bullet itself has been redesigned completely. It features a larger steel "penetrator" on its tip, that is both sharper than what is on the M855 and

is exposed. Both bullets feature a copper jacket, but the EPR's jacket is "reverse drawn." Perhaps the most notable feature of the EPR is that its bullet features a copper core, versus the M855's lead core, making it more environmentally friendly.

There's also a new propellant in the EPR, designed to enhance its performance in the M4 carbine rifle, what most Soldiers are carrying today in Afghanistan. The M4 has a shorter barrel than the M16 rifle, and barrel length is directly related to a bullet's velocity.

Wood said Soldiers have been told to turn in M855 cartridges and switch now to the EPR. February was the first month there was more expenditure in-theater with the EPR than with the M855, he said.

## Army produces enhanced Stryker with double-V hull

Army News Service

This summer, Soldiers in Afghanistan will be riding in new Stryker armored combat vehicles that have an improved hull design to protect them from improvised explosive devices and roadside mines.

Soldiers in Afghanistan recently began seeing new Strykers with a double-V hull design that deflects blasts away from the vehicle and the Soldiers inside.

The Stryker DVH, with its enhanced armor, wider tires and blast-attenuating seats, went from conception to production in less than one year.

The DVH design is a proven technology similar to that found on mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles currently being used in Afghanistan.

"The rapid turnaround of the DVH is responsiveness at its best," said Col. Robert Schumitz, Stryker project manager of the brigade combat team project management office. "Soldier survivability is the Army's number one priority. Once we determined that the DVH effort was an achievable and acceptable risk, we swiftly engaged in executing the robust program."

Engineers at General Dynamics Land Systems conceived of the DVH design and tested it at Yuma Proving Ground, Ariz.; Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.; and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. Vehicles went through live-fire, developmental and operational testing that concentrated on force protection, safety, performance, reliability and durability.

There are 140 DVH Strykers already in the Army supply chain with 450 vehicles scheduled to enter the field.

# Soldier 360° takes shape, adding more extensive Physical Readiness Training

By Denver Makle  
Joint Multinational Training  
Command

As drill sergeants at Initial Military Training schools introduce Soldiers to the Army's Physical Readiness Training, Soldier 360°, a military leader development course offered exclusively in Europe, provides seasoned noncommissioned officers instruction on the new standards while being supervised by a physical therapist.

"Soldier 360° provides direct, hands-on training in all areas of health and wellness for military leaders," said Col. Mary S. Lopez, director of strategic initiatives for the Bavarian Medical Command. "We develop the NCOs' 'muscle memory' and provide them tools to identify, respond and manage physical, psychological, relationship, marital and financial challenges."

"Everything we do is based on research and reflects cutting-edge approaches," she said.

NCOs receive instruction on stress management and resilience, and get extensive training on the Army's new PRT. The program is supervised by Dr. Robin Baker, a licensed physical therapist and an Army spouse.

"Not only does the course teach them to be mentally and emotionally fit, we take the time each day to review different training aspects of the new PRT," Baker said. "The new PRT builds variety into the program while helping to prevent injury and developing overall functional physical strength."

Lopez said Soldier 360° is a franchise concept.

"We are working on building courses in other communities to show how Soldier 360° can be replicated anywhere," Lopez said. "The curriculum uses service providers and medical staff who are available in local programs and services."

Many of the Soldiers have already begun implementing PRT during unit training.

"My unit is just switching over now, so it is helpful to get a refresher and get



Photo by Denver Makle

Staff Sgt. Phillip B. Caldwell of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, at Grafenwoehr, Germany, demonstrates the prone row exercise during instruction in Physical Readiness Training as part of the Soldier 360° program.

instruction from a physical therapist," said Staff Sgt. Phillip B. Caldwell of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. "The workouts are intense."

His unit is not limited to just one hour for morning physical training, Caldwell said. There is a workout plan, and from warm-up to cool-down, they complete the training no matter the time it takes. Other NCOs said the required conditioning in the PRT might be cut short in a unit environment to accommodate time constraints.

"We've already implemented most of what Dr. Baker taught us," said Sgt. Brandon S. Samples of Battery C, 177th Field Artillery Battalion, in Schweinfurt, Germany. "There are some good things about the PRT. I like the pace, there are smooth transitions from one exercise to the next and it doesn't require a lot of time in between."

Samples said he has the ability to influence what Soldiers do in PT, so he's glad he attended the course to get the additional information. Now that he has been trained, he also said that he has the responsibility of using this training to

benefit others.

"I read somewhere that knowledge without use is not knowledge at all," Samples said. "I think a lot of people don't know a lot about the new PRT, and integration will be a slow process."

Staff Sgt. Amy L. Hurst, a student attending the course from Bamberg, said being away from her leadership position to focus on her own development has made it easier to absorb the knowledge.

"If used properly, it's good for adding variety to your everyday physical training sessions," said Hurst, who is the rear detachment NCO in charge for Company G, 54th Engineer Battalion.

"Soldier 360° has a far reaching impact," Lopez said. "We have trained 298 Soldiers, but collectively, these Soldiers supervise more than 6,000 Soldiers and civilians."

During the first week, the NCOs are removed from day-to-day work and home environments to receive instruction on pain and anger management, stress reduction and the "mindful" use of alcohol. Spouses are integrated during the second week to practice communication skills.



# Advancements made at Arlington cemetery in wake of investigation

## Army News Service →

Just one year after an investigation directed by Secretary of the Army John McHugh reported breakdowns in accountability and record-keeping at Arlington National Cemetery, the new management team there released June 10 a list of achievements that have strengthened the cemetery's management and oversight.

Kathryn A. Condon, executive director of the Army National Cemeteries Program, and Patrick K. Hallinan, cemetery superintendent, took over management of Arlington National Cemetery in June 2010, after the previous management team was ousted in the wake of the Army's investigation.

"Arlington National Cemetery leadership, with the full support of the Army, has taken numerous steps to address and correct the problems found by the Army Inspector General and to restore the nation's confidence in the operation of this most hallowed ground," Condon said.

The Army Inspector General's report contained 74 corrective actions and recommendations — all of which have been acted upon over the past year.

Cemetery management also implemented a comprehensive plan to strengthen management, oversight and accountability in the cemetery's operations, developed a strategy for sustaining the cemetery for the future, and worked to restore trust and confidence in the Army's stewardship of Arlington National Cemetery.

One of the first priorities has been reconciling more than 146 years' worth of data related to burial records.

The accountability effort includes digitally capturing the front and back of each grave marker, and using aerial photography and global positioning technology to digitally map the cemetery's 624 acres.

Images from the headstones will be matched with digitized paper records, then compared for accuracy. More than 330,000 people are currently interred or inurned at the cemetery.

Arlington management's efforts will continue to focus on using technology to develop programs and products that not only

digitize historical records and improve record-keeping, but also create a searchable database for use by the public.

The leadership team has also employed new chain-of-custody procedures, rebuilt the work force, overhauled the automated interment scheduling system, and implemented a financial management system and contracting process.

The team also took steps to improve the facilities, equipment and infrastructure on the grounds of the cemetery — none of which were in place a year ago.



Photo by Adam Skoczylas

Flags placed by members of the 3rd. U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) stand vigil May 22, 2008, at gravesites in Arlington National Cemetery.

"We have greatly strengthened our interment procedures with training and equipment that equal the best national cemeteries, all while conducting 27–30 military funerals a day," Hallinan said. "What makes Arlington so unique is that it is the only cemetery in the nation that performs gravesite burials and renders full military honors."

The senior management team was recently completed with the hiring of James Gemmell as deputy superintendent. Previously, Gem-

mell, an Army veteran, was the director of Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minnesota, the third largest cemetery in the National Cemetery Administration.

The Army also has its first-ever agreement with the VA — worked out between McHugh and Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki — that allows Arlington employees to enroll in the training center.

The IG's 2010 investigation criticized the cemetery's contracting procedures, noting that those in charge of executing contracts lacked training and expertise.

Cemetery officials have since slashed the number of contracts by nearly 40 percent, and provided a trained, certified contracting officer representative to oversee and monitor performance for each contract.

Another change made to better serve families was the creation of a Consolidated Customer Service Center. The center handles more than 240 calls each weekday, with nearly one in five calls requesting funeral services.



# WOUNDED, ILL AND INJURED SOLDIERS

# STILL IN THE

STORIES AND PHOTOS BY CLIFFORD KYLE JONES



Spc. Brian Johnson, of Joint Base Lewis-McCord in Fort Lewis, Wash., won a silver medal in the seated discus competition at the Warrior Games, which took place May 16-21 at the U.S. Olympic Training Facility in Colorado Springs, Colo.





# FIGHT







Members of the Army team make their way down the Olympic walkway during the opening ceremony for the 2011 Warrior Games.

**BEFORE** the first ball was tossed, before the first bow was drawn, before the first pedal turned, the athletes at **Warrior Games 2011** had already proven they were champions.

The approximately 200 athletes who competed at the second annual event, organized by the Department of Defense and the U.S. Olympic Committee, had already faced debilitating hardships — traumatic injuries to their brains, combat wounds that left them missing limbs, post-traumatic stress disorder and illnesses requiring years of care — and found a way not only to survive, but to excel.

“I am so honored to be here with you,” Navy Adm. James Winnenfeld said during the opening ceremonies May 16 at the U.S. Olympic Training Facility in Colorado Springs, Colo. “It is truly humbling to be among so many young men and women who have given so much while wearing the cloth of our nation. These

games and those of you who participate in them combine the best of our nation’s warrior spirit and our attitude that we cannot be defeated — either as a nation, or as a military, or as a unit or as a person.”

Winnenfeld, the commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, as well as President Barack Obama’s nominee to be the next vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, represented the Department of Defense as the games opened. He told the hundreds of wounded warriors and their families, friends and supporters that the games were about much more than the athletes.

“The benefits to our military members,



Medal of Honor recipient Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta was the honorary torchbearer at the Warrior Games. He said being able to take part in the event was one of the highlights of his career.

physically and mentally, are unbelievable and immeasurable,” he said. “But sometimes, I think the biggest winners at these games are those lucky enough to see you,



to meet you and to be inspired by your example of service and determination.”

Count the first living Medal of Honor recipient since the Vietnam War, Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta, among those inspired. Although since receiving the nation’s highest military award, he has been an honored guest at the Super Bowl, helped ring in the new year at New York’s Times Square, appeared on television with Stephen Colbert and David Letterman, and personally received high praise from the nation’s commander in chief, Giunta counted his role as honorary torchbearer at the games among the highpoints in his life.

“In the last six months, I’ve gotten to do so many amazing, incredible things. But, to be able to stand up there in front of all the men and women from all the different branches, and to just be part of this, it gives me goosebumps,” he said. “To be able to salute them, to receive the torch from them and to see the spirit and the will behind all these men and women who are competing, it just blows my mind. ... There are people with no disabilities at all who spend the whole day sitting on the couch, and you have these people out here with some severe disabilities, and they’re just attacking the world for all it’s worth and living to the best of their ability. Thank you for showing us that, because we need to see that. That motivates the heck out of me.”

None of the athletes did it alone, though. Capt. Elizabeth Merwin, a former NCO who won a gold medal in the women’s cycling event and competed in the 50-meter freestyle swim, was serving as a quartermaster officer in the 101st Aviation Brigade in Kandahar, Afghanistan, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. In addition to the “awesome” medical care she received at all points of her treatment — from her unit’s medics, who sent her to Landstuhl, Germany, for initial treatment, to the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Campbell, Ky., where her mastectomy and recovery took place — she also received inspiration from the WTB’s commander.

When she first arrived back at Fort Campbell, she had noticed a flyer for a bike race. During her deployment, she spent much of her free time working out on a stationary bicycle.

“While I was in Afghanistan, I did



Retired Sgt. Margaux Vair returns the volleyball during the gold-medal sitting volleyball match between the Army and the Marine Corps. The Army team members won silver medals.

spin class all the time; I was just a crazy, avid spinner,” she said. “That was my mental break and my mental salvation. ... So I thought, ‘All right, I don’t know when my surgery is going to be, but if I can do this bike ride, I’ll do it.’”

Her surgery took place about a week later. The day after her surgery, she was lying in a hospital bed in recovery when the WTB commander paid her a visit. She

said, he “introduces himself and he says, ‘Well, Lt. Merwin, do you think you’re going to want to do that bike ride?’”

She thought, “I’m in a hospital gown, sir. I’m in a hospital bed. It’s like two weeks away. Do you really think I’m going to be ready to ride a bike in two weeks?”

That’s what she *thought*.

“Of course to him, my answer was, ‘Yes, sir! I’ll do it.’ And sure enough,

## WARRIOR STORIES: SGT. KENNETH HARKER



## 'Soldiers need to know about this'

One of the great things about the Warrior Games is that athletes often discover abilities they didn't know they had.

Sgt. Kenneth Harker, for instance, had hardly touched a bow or arrow before being selected to attend about three months before the competition. Now he has a silver medal in compound archery. He also earned

a bronze medal in the sitting discus event.

"I can't wait for next year," he said. "Hopefully, we get to train a little more this time."

Harker, whose legs were amputated after an explosively formed penetrator hit his vehicle June 2008 in Baghdad, is a patient at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Harker said he asked many Soldiers at Walter Reed about the Warrior Games.

"They were like, 'What are you talking about?' I think Soldiers need to know about this. Even though they might see it on a calendar or a poster, they should know this is awesome for warriors, for wounded Soldiers."

14 days later, after having a mastectomy, I was on a bicycle for a multiday ride."

Merwin had a similar pace for her recovery — and her career. "While I was at the WTB, my transition plan was pretty aggressive to get me back to duty," she said. "I wanted my career to be moving forward."

She first entered the Army as an enlisted Soldier and spent eight years serving

as a linguist. She took a 13-year break from duty before rejoining the Army, this time as an officer. She was commissioned in 2008.

"I come from a military family, so it's in my blood. Although I was in the Army in the first (Iraq) war in the '90s, I never really deployed. So, I wanted to get what I consider the real Army, the real Soldier experience to actually deploy."

Now, she's on her way to the Captain's Career Course, and then she'll be heading to civil affairs training.

"My goal is to make it as far as lieutenant colonel," she said. "I don't have a whole lot of time left (in the Army), but I'm going to do everything I can to get there as fast as possible."

Brig. Gen. Darryl Williams, com-



## WARRIOR STORIES: SGT. KINGA KISS-JOHNSON

‘These are just baby steps ... for every one of us’

A little more than a year ago, retired Sgt. Kinga Kiss-Johnson was barely able to leave her home.

Kiss-Johnson, who was medically retired from the Fort Gordon, Ga., Warrior Transition Battalion in November 2010, suffered from several combat-related injuries, including a traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, left and right hip injuries and a spinal cord injury.

However, with the help of her family and friends, a service dog (her “puppy,” Balto) and a new-found passion for adaptive sports, she not only made the trip to the Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colo., by herself, she helped her wheelchair basketball team earn gold.

“I really have got my life back, because I hadn’t left my house for a really long time,” Kiss-Johnson said. “My husband had to leave his job to support me, and just now, little by little ... I started to get back and start to walk with [my dog] and get out in the community with him.”

The 6-foot-7 Kiss-Johnson was born in Romania and played college basketball for Missouri State from 2000 to 2002. She took the U.S. oath of citizenship in November 2007 while stationed in Afghanistan.

As part of her therapy, she was introduced to archery and wheelchair basketball. Now she plays for the Augusta, Ga., Bulldogs in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. But, her Warrior Games team



was something special.

“The group’s diversity is so incredible on my team. Everybody has their own stories and struggles. But, at the end of the day, all of us come together as a whole team,” she said. “Everybody pretty much in

their own way has the same experiences — and life — after war. ... These are just little baby steps, one foot in front of the other, for every one of us, and it’s just pushing each other and encouraging each other that there is life after injury.”

mander of the Army’s Warrior Transition Command, said, “She’s an example of the Comprehensive Transition Plan — how we move folks through the process to meet their life goals.”

Soldiers in the Army’s 29 Warrior Transition Units work with their squad leaders, doctors and nurses to develop a personalized plan, the CTP, for recovery

that encompasses all aspects of life: physical, social, spiritual, emotional, family and career.

“The warrior is responsible for his or her way ahead — the success of this program,” Williams said. “They make the decision whether they continue on active duty or retire.”

Army participants in the Warrior

Games came from a Warrior Transition Unit, which is for Soldiers who require at least six months of rehabilitative care and complex medical management, or from the Army Wounded Warrior, or AW2, Program, which assists and advocates for more severely wounded, ill and injured Soldiers and veterans. AW2 is also under the Warrior Transition Command.

WARRIOR STORIES: STAFF SGT. SEYWARD MCKINNEY



# 'We're still out there; we're still fighting'

This was retired Staff Sgt. Seyward McKinney's second trip to the Warrior Games, and she got even more out of it this year.

"I'm having a lot of fun, especially this year. Last year, I came with my dad because I couldn't really walk around well," she said. "This year, I came by myself and ... I got to meet a whole group of people I didn't get to

hang out with last year, and it was fun getting to know them, ... just being able to get that camaraderie."

McKinney competed in high-school athletics in Salem, Ore., and served as an operating room technician in the Army. She suffered a stroke in March 2009 and was at Walter Reed Army Medical Center until she

was medically retired in April. At the Warrior Games, she competed in recumbent cycling and women's shot put.

"Just because we got injured due to war or whatever happened to us, we're still out there; we're still fighting," she said. "We're still carrying out the fight, just in a different way."

"The Warrior Games is a manifestation of what these athletes do every single day," Williams said. "They compete every single day, either on active duty, in one of our Warrior Transition Units or as they retire as veterans. So, you're going to get to see this week an example of their great resilience and strength."

This was Sgt. 1st Class Landon

Ranker's second year at the Warrior Games. Last year, he competed in swimming and track events and earned three medals — two gold and one silver. This year, he took part in the Ultimate Champion competition, in which 10 athletes competed to be the top finishers in five events — swimming, shooting, track, shot put and cycling. (Marine Capt. Jonathan

Disbro took the title.)

During his 19 years in the Army, Ranker deployed four times as a light infantryman, the first time to Iraq during Desert Storm, then once more to Iraq and twice to Afghanistan in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

"In the course of some training and then on three of those tours, I was injured



## WARRIOR STORIES: SPC. ANDY KINGSLEY

## 'People who think that they have limits learned that there are no limits'

Spc. Andy Kingsley knows how to use the encouragement of his fellow Soldiers and his family — and he knows how to provide it.

Kingsley lost his right leg when an 88 mm recoilless rifle round came into his bunker in July 2010 in Afghanistan. He also suffered burns on his right side, received a brain injury, lost vision in his right eye and lost his left big toe and right middle finger.

"I ended up at the Warrior Games because ... I'm pretty much done with my recovery, and I needed ways to burn the excess weight that I was getting," he said. "You know, when you get injured you gain a lot of weight."

He tried out for the swim team, "and when I came out here I was one of the fastest amputees on the team." And he wasn't just fast; he was a leader.

"Even though I'm a junior enlisted, they voted me to be captain. I went out there, did a good job. I got everyone hyped up, and I'm proud. On our team, 14 out of 20 Soldiers made it to the finals, and we brought home 15 medals today."

Kingsley himself won two bronze medals in individual events and a silver medal as part of the Army's relay team.

But it wasn't just the swim team that supported him. Several members of the 82nd Airborne Division carried signs and whooped when Kingsley competed.



"Having my division out here, it's a dramatic boost of morale and confidence in myself. ... It made me feel like the paratrooper and the 82nd Soldier that I am. So, to know that, that camaraderie and that moral support was here, it definitely helped me in my races today."

Like any good leader, he has some lessons from this experience: "People who think that they have limits learned this week that there are no limits," he said. "I learned that I can do anything that anyone can do despite the injuries that I have, and being at the Warrior Games has proven that to me."

four times — head injuries. I'm a 'good' example of the buildup of sustained concussions and moderate head injuries."

Ranker compares his traumatic brain injury to dropping a laptop. If you turn it on again, it might at first appear to be working OK. "But, you have those errors and malfunctions for the rest of the life of that device," Ranker said. Likewise, he

said, the effects of his TBI are often not apparent when people first meet him. But, once they've gotten to know him, they notice "little things."

"All that stuff you hear in the press about the effects adding up or building up, it's all true," Ranker said. "Normal, everyday activities of driving a car or trying to send an email out on your com-

puter, putting a key in a lock — they're extremely difficult when you start dealing with this. ... I'm a big coffee drinker, and when I was still going through the early parts of my rehab, I don't know how many times I brewed coffee with no water, with no coffee for the grounds or I brewed coffee without the pot underneath the coffee maker."





From left, Brandon Norris, from the Navy/Coast Guard team; Staff Sgt. Kenny Griffith; Staff Sgt. Robert Laux; and Sgt. 1st Class Landon Ranker cross the finish line together at the 2011 Warrior Games cycling event at the U.S. Air Force Academy's Falcon Stadium in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Ranker said the Army has really “stepped it up” in treating TBIs in the past several years. After returning from his 2008 deployment to Afghanistan with his fourth injury, Ranker was treated at one of the military’s premiere TBI treatment centers at Fort Campbell.

“I went through about 15 months of rehab and therapy there, and learned how to walk properly again, how to go to a grocery store and shop, how to deal with the multiprocessing stuff — like when you’re in a big public setting and there’s people talking and several conversations going and people walking all over the place. A traumatic brain injury [patient] can get overloaded by that. But, they teach you how to deal with that and how to expose yourself to it step by step. I could go on and on about it, but the point is, we really stepped it up. And if it were not for that program, I would not be here competing, without a doubt.”

Because of his injuries, Ranker couldn’t return to duty in the infantry.

But, through the Army’s Continuation On Active Duty program, he has found a new role in the Army. COAD allows Soldiers who have special skills or experience to remain on active duty. Ranker is now in charge of adaptive sports and fitness at the Fort Campbell Warrior Transition Unit.

“I’ll stay in the Army as long as they let me. I’m still a Soldier at heart. Like I said, I was a light infantry guy and that was my passion. I thought I’d always do that,” he said. “Now, I’ve found a new purpose in working with adaptive sports and fitness at the Fort Campbell WTU, helping brand-new (wounded) warriors start with adaptive sports and fitness. That’s helped me with a new purpose, and I’d like to demonstrate to them and set an example for them: Look, you can do something that you didn’t think you could do anymore.”

But, the lessons of the Warrior Games aren’t just for wounded warriors. Command Sgt. Maj. Benjamin Scott, the WTC’s command sergeant major, called

witnessing the games “life-changing.”

“As I say often about these games, they’re a display of the indomitable human spirit,” he said. “The human spirit cannot be conquered by physical limitations. It’s just extraordinary. People’s lives were changed in those few days in Colorado Springs.”

Scott hopes that Soldiers exposed to the Warrior Games’ athletes drive, determination and willpower will realize something: “Whatever you want to accomplish in life — and not just only for a noncommissioned officer, but for every young private who’s in the Army now who has those aspirations to be the sergeant major of the Army (because you know he or she is in our formation right now) — if that’s what you want, you too can accomplish it. If you don’t believe me, ask Sgt. 1st Class Ranker or Capt. Merwin.” **J**

*To contact Clifford Kyle Jones, visit the NCO Journal website at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal>.*



# Fort Bliss unveils latest WTC

## NCO Journal staff report

Last month, Fort Bliss, Texas, became the latest Army post to unveil a new Warrior Transition Complex during a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the \$57 million facility, built to house wounded, ill and injured Soldiers while they recover.

The Fort Bliss WTC has 232 beds. It is the seventh of 21 complexes the Army began constructing in 2008.

The complexes are intended to create a healing environment near medical treatment facilities and offer a full range of care. The complexes include barracks that are accessible to individuals with disabilities and may be modified to accommodate specific medical needs. The Bliss facility has 116 suites, all with walk-in closets, high-definition TVs, wireless Internet access and kitchens. Larger suites have washers and dryers. The complexes also include a Soldier Family Assistance Center, which can provide services such as counseling to family members of wounded Soldiers.

"These are world-class facilities for world-class warriors," the commanding general of Fort Bliss and the 1st Armored Division, Maj. Gen. Dana Pittard, said at the ceremony. "They're very, very comfortable. We want them to be comfortable, but it's transition. *Transition*. We want you to heal, and then move on."

The other recent WTC projects completed or under way are:

➤ **FORT BELVOIR, Va.:** A \$76 million, 288-bed WTC will be completed in the fourth quarter of this fiscal year.

➤ **FORT BENNING, Ga.:** A \$53 million, 200-bed WTC will be completed in the first quarter of fiscal year 2012.

➤ **FORT BRAGG, N.C.:** An \$88 million, 256-bed WTC will be completed in the third quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **FORT CAMPBELL, Ky.:** A \$7.4 million SFAC has been completed, and a \$43 million, 240-bed WTC is to be finished in the fourth quarter of this fiscal year.

➤ **FORT CARSON, Colo.:** An \$8.1 million SFAC is finished, and a \$56 million, 160-bed WTC is scheduled to be com-



Photo by Clifford Kyle Jones

U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes, who represents West Texas, cuts the ribbon on the new Warrior Transition Battalion Complex at Fort Bliss, Texas, with help from members of the battalion and Deputy Undersecretary for Defense Sandra Richardson.

pleted in the second quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **FORT DRUM, N.Y.:** A \$38 million, 144-bed facility has been completed, and a \$21 million, 48-bed facility is scheduled to be finished in the third quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **FORT HOOD, Texas:** A \$73.1 million WTC is to be completed in the first quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **FORT KNOX, Ky.:** A \$70 million, 224-bed WTC is to be completed in the third quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo.:** A \$19.5 million, 48-bed WTC is to be finished in the second quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **FORT POLK, La.:** A \$4.9 million SFAC has been completed, and a \$32 million, 112-bed WTC is to be completed in the third quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **FORT RILEY, Kan.:** A \$50 million, 156-bed facility has been completed.

➤ **FORT SILL, Okla.:** A \$22 million, 72-bed WTC is to be completed in the third quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **FORT STEWART, Ga.:** A \$6 mil-

lion SFAC has been completed, and a \$49 million, 240-bed WTC is to be completed in the fourth quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **FORT WAINWRIGHT, Alaska:** A \$28 million, 32-bed WTC is to be completed in the first quarter of 2012.

➤ **JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska:** A \$43 million, 80-bed WTC will be completed in the first quarter of 2012.

➤ **JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS, Va.:** A \$28 million, 80-bed facility WTC is to be completed in the third quarter of FY 2012.

➤ **JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash.:** A \$110 million, 408-bed WTC will be completed in the fourth quarter of this fiscal year.

➤ **JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO, Texas:** An \$87 million, 360-bed WTC will be completed in the first quarter of 2012.

➤ **SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii:** An \$85 million, 120-bed WTC will be finished in the third quarter of FY 2013.





# Harbor of

Center for the Intrepid offers warriors state-of-the-art care

By Linda Crippen →

To look at Staff Sgt. Paul Roberts,

everything seems fine, normal. There's no noticeable limp when he walks. His speech is coherent and clear during con-

versations. And perhaps most apparent of all — he has all his limbs.

Most people would never guess Roberts has second- and third-degree burns covering half his body, because his uniform covers up the compression garments he must wear to move and walk, which he is learning to do again. He also had to re-learn how to speak, because the





Photo by Linda Crippen

# Hope

improvised explosive device that nearly killed him on June 2, 2009, caused a good deal of memory loss, including many of his childhood memories.

Roberts' team from the 549th Military Police Company, 385th MP Battalion, out of Fort Stewart, Ga., was headed to Alhaj Mangal, Afghanistan, to assist a special forces operational detachment alpha.

While traveling on an isolated mountain road, Roberts' driver ran over a hidden incendiary IED. They were the lead vehicle in the convoy and took the brunt of the blast.

Spc. Roberto Hernandez, the team's interpreter, died almost instantly, and Spc. Jonathan O'Neill, the driver, later succumbed to his fatal wounds.

The force of the blast blew off Roberts' vest and rendered him unconscious. The only reason he came to, he said, "was because fuel started rolling into my face. I was on fire."

As soon as Roberts exited the burning vehicle, the enemy opened fire. After dumping his helmet and glasses because they were on fire, he had little protection left. He ran to a nearby ledge to avoid the hail of gunfire, and with nowhere else to go, he jumped.

Luckily, he landed in water. Roberts jokes about it now. "It was a nice current. But, I can't swim," he said. "Thankfully, the water extinguished the fire on my body."

Roberts said that at that point, he was convinced he was going to die, so he began to pray, asking God to take care of his family back home and his Army family, his squad, which was desperately trying to fight off the enemy.

While floating down the stream, Roberts tried to return fire, but his 9 mm pistol jammed. After suppressing the enemy, what was left of the squad rescued Roberts from the water and called for a medevac. Three days later, he woke up in Germany and eventually was sent to one of the most technologically advanced facilities the medical community has ever seen, the Center for the Intrepid in San Antonio, Texas, where he continues his rehabilitation with other veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

## THE CENTER

Since January 2007, the \$50 million state-of-the-art rehabilitation facility has been serving traumatic amputees, burn patients requiring advanced rehabilitation and patients undergoing limb salvage. The four-story, 60,000-square-foot facility was specifically constructed to serve wounded warriors with private donations collected from more than 600,000 Americans through the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund.

The center falls under the direction of nearby Brooke Army Medical Center, and more specifically, its department of orthopedics and rehabilitation. The CFI's assistant administrator, Kathie Rasmussen, a retired sergeant first class, describes the CFI as a "small clinic that has a greater abundance."

Admission to the center is based on



## The CFI

### FIRST FLOOR

➤ **GAIT lab:** This component of the military performance lab analyzes the angles and forces involved in movement, for example, walking. The system uses highly sensitive infrared cameras to track the reflection of markers placed on patients' bodies. This information is used to analyze patients' movements: walking, running, stair-climbing, etc. The system's main walkways have force plates that also provide feedback, and plasma monitors provide caretakers and patients real-time displays. This technology can be used to analyze the fit of a prosthetic.

➤ **Computer Assisted Rehabilitation Environment:** This system re-creates virtual environments, allowing patients to interact with real-time stimuli displayed on a 21-foot diameter dome that uses eight projectors on a 300-degree screen. The system is heralded as the most advanced and only domed computer rehab system in existence.

➤ **Natorium:** This 50-foot, six-lane pool provides therapy options such as lap swimming, water volleyball and basketball, and adaptive kayaking.

➤ **FlowRider:** This wave-making device was originally designed for water parks and cruise ships. The CFI now uses the technology for therapeutic activities to help balance, coordination, agility, core strength and endurance.



Staff Sgt. Paul Roberts, a patient at the CFI, competed in the Warrior Games' wheelchair basketball competition in May.

evaluations by a patient's health care providers the availability of space, with precedence given to those injured during Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

The center also serves military service members and veterans who were severely injured during other military operations and regular duty, whether

combat-related or not.

The idea of CFI originated in the spring of 2005 by Arnold Fisher, the director of the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund and nephew of Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher, founders of the fund and the Fisher House Foundation. The center's staff is composed mostly of government civilians and contrac-





Photo by Clifford Kyle Jones

tors to maintain continuity of services.

No matter whom you ask, everyone proudly says that there is one standard of care at the center: the best rehabilitative care possible to those who have been intrepid for the nation.

To accomplish that mission, the center has some of the most advanced facilities in the United

States, such as its own prosthetics fabrication lab, as well as ways to participate in extreme sports as a means for physical therapy, such as rock climbing and body surfing. The program of rehabilitation blends a variety of activities: therapy, simulation and extreme sports.

## THE REHAB

Some visitors may leave with the impression that the high-tech equipment makes rehab easy. But, that couldn't be further from the truth; patients going through rehabilitation and therapy must work hard to improve. There is no "easy" button here, the center's therapists are quick to point out.

The ultimate goal is to maximize patients' potential, helping them achieve the highest level of independence and function.

"We want to make sure patients can go back to all the activities they once had a desire to do, or introduce them to some new ones if we can," Rasmussen said. "We want them to be independent."

Currently, 18 percent of the CFI's patients desire to return to active duty, and Rasmussen said that if that is their true desire, "then that's where our focus will be."


Rasmussen said that progress is measured in degrees, meaning patients are tasked with minor objectives and then work their way up to more complex tasks. It's important for patients to figure out what they are capable of doing, she said.

"We never tell anyone that they can't. We merely give them varied degrees of tasks to perform, and they are able to determine if they are ready to return to duty or if they should move on to something else in their lives."

Christopher Edner, a staff occupational therapist and a former Army captain, treats patients at the CFI to help get them back to doing what are called "activities of daily living."

"They need to be able to get up [out of bed], perform hygiene, dress themselves, prepare meals, drive and get back into their day-to-day occupations — both work- and family-related occupations," Edner said. "Really, we're talking about daily activities that we take for granted."

Patients have a wide variety of departments and programs at their disposal: physical medicine, case management, behavioral medicine, pharmaceutical, occupational therapy, physical therapy, wound care, burn treatment, prosthetic fabrication and fitting.

Though numbers fluctuate all the time, Rasmussen said the center worked with about 650 patients in March, and during an average week, the CFI will see around 150 patients. During its first year of operation, the center documented more than 28,000 patient visits. 

## The CFI

### SECOND FLOOR



Photo by Linda Crippen

- Prosthetics fabrication lab

### THIRD FLOOR

- Physical therapy clinic
- Indoor track

### FOURTH FLOOR

- Firearms training simulator
- Occupational therapy
- Driving simulator
- Activities of Daily Living apartments

### THE STAFF

- The facilities and services offered at the CFI are beyond what many patients said they had ever imagined or hoped for, but perhaps, what truly makes the CFI so unique is its staff. For example, the center has nine Veterans Affairs employees on site, and each patient receives individualized attention for his or her unique circumstances.

...S ARE THE LEADING CAUSE OF U.S. CASUALTIES IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN • IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES  
...ERS NEED TO LEVERAGE JOINT INTELLIGENCE FOR EFFECTIVE EXECUTION OF JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS  
...DANGEROUS CONVOYS IN AFGHANISTAN ARE LEADING TO DEADLY ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ENEMY  
...SUCCEEDING IN AFGHANISTAN REQUIRES GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE RULING TRIBES • SUCCEEDING IN AFGHANISTAN  
...MY IS COUNTERING IEDS NEEDS TO REMAIN SECURE • INFORMED  
...TRAINING TO MAKE SURE JOINT OPERATIONS DON'T PRODUCE FRATRICIDE OR COLLATERAL DAMAGE  
...ONTO BECOMING A STRONG, SOVEREIGN STATE • AFGHANISTAN NEEDS GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE TO TRANSITION TO BECOMING

# From lessons learned

# CA

BY JONATHAN (JAY) KOESTER



# to educating the force



TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES • IED-DEFEAT LEADER'S HANDBOOK: TACTICAL  
INSIGHTS, AND LESSONS • TACTICAL LEADER HANDBOOK: OBSERVATIONS, INSIGHTS,  
AND LESSONS • CONVOY OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN HANDBOOK: OBSERVATIONS,  
NEWSLETTER: OBSERVATIONS, INSIGHTS, AND LESSONS • TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT NE  
FROM THE BAD COMPANY BULLETIN VII: SAFEGUARDING CIED INFORMATION FROM  
ARMY INTEGRATION POINT OPERATIONS NEWSLETTER: OBSERVATIONS, INSIGHTS,  
L RECONSTRUCTION TEAM HANDBOOK: OBSERVATIONS, INSIGHTS, AND LESSONS

**T**he headquarters of the Center for Army Lessons Learned at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., isn't much to look at.

Inside a boxy, brick building overlooking the Missouri River, you won't find anything fancy, just utilitarian, mostly windowless offices.

But that's OK, because the NCOs, officers, civilians and contractors who fill up those offices are there to focus on matters a world away from their riverside location. They are part of a life-and-death mission to make sure the lessons being learned on the battlefield are quickly passed down to the next generation of Army warriors.

The men and women of CALL know the information they impart throughout the Army saves lives. Because of that, they are always pushing forward, finding new and better ways of doing things.



Photo by Jonathan (Jay) Koester

Colin Anderson, a Center for Army Lessons Learned senior military analyst, gives a CALL briefing to an incoming class of Sergeant Major Course students in May at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas.

“Our role is to be part of the fight,” said Col. Thomas Roe, director of CALL. “We want to truly look at how we can help the Army do its job better. ... We have lessons learned in blood, sweat, tears and treasure out there. We need to use those, whether it be at the tactical, the operational or the strategic level.”

## RAPID ADAPTATION

CALL celebrated its 25th anniversary of learning lessons in 2010. The organization has gone through many transitions during the years, coming under the Combined Arms Center-Training in 1990, adding an Information Systems Division in 1993, and after 9/11, bringing an increased focus on anti-terrorism efforts.

The newest change in the way CALL does business is the Rapid Adaptation Initiative. CALL has long been known around the Army for its books, bulletins and handbooks. But publishing lessons

takes time. The past 10 years of war-fighting has shown the need for quicker alternatives.

In the past, NCOs attending various Army schools were introduced to CALL by the bookcases of CALL materials found at those schools, said deputy director Col. Robert Burns.

“Those bookcases, you see them everywhere you go in the Army,” Burns said. “This is what made CALL famous, and this is what changed the Army. The problem is, that doesn’t work in 2011. It’s still important, but that’s not rapid adaptation. There’s nothing printed in a book that happens fast enough for the speed of war.”

To that end, CALL is changing tactics. Though still publishing books and bulletins when appropriate, CALL leaders are turning their focus to digital products, whether that’s DVDs, websites or online forums.

“We’ve got to go digital,” Burns said.

“And we don’t have months to do this stuff anymore; we’ve got to do it right now. We have the largest constellation of LNOs (liaison officers) in the entire U.S. Army. We’ve got LNOs with home station units. We’ve got LNOs in schools and centers. We’ve got LNOs deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and with the Horn of Africa headquarters. We are pumping, pushing and pulling information and doing it digitally — not in paper — because we don’t have time for this stuff. It’s happening way too quickly. When the enemy evolves a new counter-IED (improvised explosive device) tactic, people have to know now.

“Everybody around here has got friends, family, people they know, who are either deployed or getting ready to deploy,” Burns continued. “I have a nephew out of Fort Carson (in Colorado). The kid’s 24 years old; he’s a first lieutenant; he’s a tank company XO (executive



## LESSONS LEARNED SUCCESS STORY

# Bouncing back in Iraq

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. Soldiers were injured and killed by a device called the RKG-3, a grenade that would detonate on contact.

“It was causing a lot of damage to our Soldiers, and it was very hard to detect because [the enemy] just threw it,” said David Bialas, deputy director of operations and plans at CALL. “Somebody could be standing in a crowd, a vehicle comes past, they just give it a toss and, in a second, it’s going to hit.”

Soldiers began online discussions of ways they could defeat the enemy tactic. But there was no way to see the attacks coming because Iraqi insurgents would just pop out of crowd, throw the RKG-3 and quickly disappear.

“In our old structure, we would have done a lot of research and development, and maybe two years later, something would have come out,” Bialas said. “But, one of the Soldiers said, maybe if you could deflect it, or maybe if you could bounce it off — kind of like a trampoline or something — maybe deflect it so can’t hit at the proper angle. So, they started talking it out online.”

The Soldiers began experimenting with using pipes and tarps to make shields that would make the RKG-3s bounce off their vehicles without detonating.

“Some of the designs were just amazing,” Bialas said. “It boiled down to three or four types of designs, then sharing among themselves. They put them on the vehicles right away, and they found it was really significant. In a very short period of time, with the effectiveness of that particular device, the casualties went down tremendously.”

CALL facilitated the discussions and made sure the ingenious solution was pushed out to other units deployed in Iraq.



U.S. Army photo

By sharing information online, Soldiers deployed in Iraq discovered they could repel hand-thrown grenades by adding a trampoline-like device to their vehicles.

“With our old methods, it would have taken years for something to come out, and it would have probably cost millions of dollars,” Bialas said. “But the bottom line is our Soldiers can fix this. It never ceases to amaze me the innovation of our young Soldiers. Those guys can come up with anything to fix it and adjust it.”

officer). I see things here every day that I want him to know because he’s getting ready to deploy next month. I pray that things like the MRAP (mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicle) handbook are in his hands.”

Leaders at CALL are adjusting — paying attention to what information needs to be pushed to Soldiers immediately, what needs to be put out in printed form, and what needs to be eventually put into doctrine.

“You have to know what stuff needs to be pushed out right now,” said David Bialas, deputy director for operations and

plans at CALL. “You have to recognize what falls into the category of saving lives. If you had information right now that would help that guy on the ground to execute his mission more safely and effectively, you can’t afford to sit on that information and say, ‘OK, in a month, it’s going to come out in a publication.’ It did that guy no good.”

## TARGETED PUBLICATION

What it comes down to is getting information to Soldiers in any form they can use it, said John Pennington, chief of

CALL’s media division. Printed material will remain an important part of the CALL mission because deployed Soldiers often don’t have access to electricity, let alone a computer.

“I’m investigating every possible avenue there is to get this information into Soldiers’ hands as fast as humanly possible so they have a chance to use it and succeed,” Pennington said.

Roe agreed that CALL’s emphasis on going digital doesn’t preclude traditional printed learning materials.

“People learn differently, study differently,” Roe said. “One person may want



Photo by Prudence Siebert, Fort Leavenworth Lamp

Maj. Karl Asmus, the former attaché to Senegal, currently working in Army International Affairs at the Pentagon, escorts a Senegalese group — Capt. Thienella Fall, Capt. Moa Diop, Col. Mar Ndoye and Lt. Col. Saifoulaye Sow — during a March 17 visit to the Center for Army Lessons Learned at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. The center has helped many organizations and international military groups set up lessons learned divisions.

the print, another person may want the digital; another person wants something more interactive, another one wants something more defined. What we are trying to do is offer as many tools as we can, based upon resources.

“Situation is very important, too,” Roe added. “The MRAP handbook that we recently published, for instance: For that, the hard copy is probably the best way, because it’s sitting out there in the field in a vehicle. We need to be flexible enough to offer the products in a range so that leaders and Soldiers can find what they need for their situation.”

## SHARING INFORMATION

Publicizing and facilitating Army professional forums like NCO Net is one of the ways CALL leaders are getting the Army’s lessons rapidly disseminated. NCOs are encouraged to get on NCO Net to share ideas, fixes, and even their problems and failures.

“Most of the time, we learn more from something that failed,” said Ron Pruyt, chief of knowledge management at CALL. “Knowledge has to hurt sometimes. We need to create a culture where

a guy is not afraid to put his failures out for all to see. We’re making strides toward that.”

There are currently more than 39,000 members of NCO Net, Pruyt said. The forum can be found at <https://nconet.army.mil/> and after a quick registration, NCOs can post their questions, stories and lessons.

“One of the things we always look for is the stories coming out of not only Afghanistan and Iraq, but all over the world,” Pruyt said. “There are a lot of great ideas out there that Soldiers think of, and we need to encourage people to share that across the Army. We need NCOs to help do that.”

Joe Pearson, chief editor of NCO Net, said the forum is a good place for NCOs to start a search for any kind of information or advice. If there is a better place to find the information being sought, the NCO Net facilitators and participants will help direct the NCO to it.

In a way, NCO Net becomes an alternative to CALL’s traditional request for information process. CALL answers Soldiers’ requests for information within 72 hours while in-garrison, or within 24 hours if they are deployed. Though RFI

used to be the main way Soldiers received information from CALL, it is just one of many ways now, said Dale Steinhauer, chief of the strategic knowledge division at CALL.

“If you think of the tools that Soldiers have in their hands to get information, they can actually find stuff themselves on the CALL website. They can submit a request for information, or they can go into a forum and ask a question there,” Steinhauer said. “The real difference is, if you go into a forum and ask a question, what you’re going to get is somebody’s answer off the top of their head. If you submit a request for information, you are going to get documents that address the matter that concerns you. What you get is not an answer; it is information. The assumption is that you will then select from this information what you want.”

## OUT OF THE BASEMENT

Any Soldier with a Common Access Card can now access the Army Lessons Learned Information System, or ALLIS, and the Joint Lessons Learned Information System, or JLLIS, said Chuck Raitchel, rapid adaptation chief.

“We’ve taken away that isolated system that only we could see. By using ALLIS, everybody can see what we have,” Raitchel said. “You don’t have to just do an RFI or wait for a product to come out. You can go into this database on your own and make a search, and you’ll see the current documents. ... With just CAC access, you can get on there and do a data search and find the stuff we used to hide downstairs in the basement until it turned into a handbook, or it was turned into a publication or it was used for an RFI.”

All of these changes come back to CALL’s Rapid Adaptation Initiative — taking the Army’s lessons learned and making sure Soldiers have them quickly in their hands. That sometimes means the editing process is truncated or even eliminated. Getting the information out quickly is more important than making sure it’s perfect, CALL officials said.

“The fastest thing we used to put out was an RFI,” Raitchel said. “You called and asked a question, and 24 or 48 hours later, you’d get an answer. If it was a handbook, you’re looking at about 6 months because





Photo by Spc. Chris McCann

A humvee door is pulled off during a demonstration of the Rat Claw, a flat, steel hook developed by Bill Del Solar, safety officer for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division. Del Solar developed the Rat Claw to aid in the extraction of Soldiers from humvees when the doors are damaged or wedged shut.

## LESSONS LEARNED SUCCESS STORY

# Finding a way out

For Soldiers, war zones pose many dangers, many of which are hard to anticipate prior to deploying downrange.

When boots hit the ground at the start of the Iraq War, Soldiers knew they would be facing the dangers of enemy firepower. What wasn't anticipated were deaths that occurred when Soldiers became trapped in humvees that overturned in Iraq's many irrigation canals. Soldiers drowned after being unable to escape. With doors wedged shut, Soldiers often had no way out.

Bill Del Solar, a safety officer with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, came up with a device to help Soldiers rip the doors off a humvee, allowing rescuers to quickly get in and remove those trapped inside. The simple device was called a Rat Claw.

One of CALL's liaisons in Iraq witnessed the device in

action and sent information about it back to CALL, said Colin Anderson, CALL senior military analyst at USASMA.

"Once CALL got a hold of it, it was pushed out Army-wide," Anderson said. "In a 24-hour period, the feedback we got was really good, because a lot of other units that were in-theater at the time didn't have a clue that it existed. They were able to take it and use it."

Making sure the lessons of war are quickly disseminated is what CALL is all about, said Chuck Raithel, military analyst, Army Lessons Learned Information Systems.

"CALL's big contribution wasn't that we developed the Rat Claw," Raithel said. "[It was that] we had a guy on the ground to capture this thing that was made in the field. It didn't cost a bunch of money. We got it spread throughout the Army within days."

it's perfection — it's edited, it has pictures, it has cool charts in it. But with a lot of stuff happening in-theater, 6 months means it's overcome by events; it's too late. So, we've gone with more of a 65 percent solution: Get it now, get it out to everybody, and later, it might turn into one

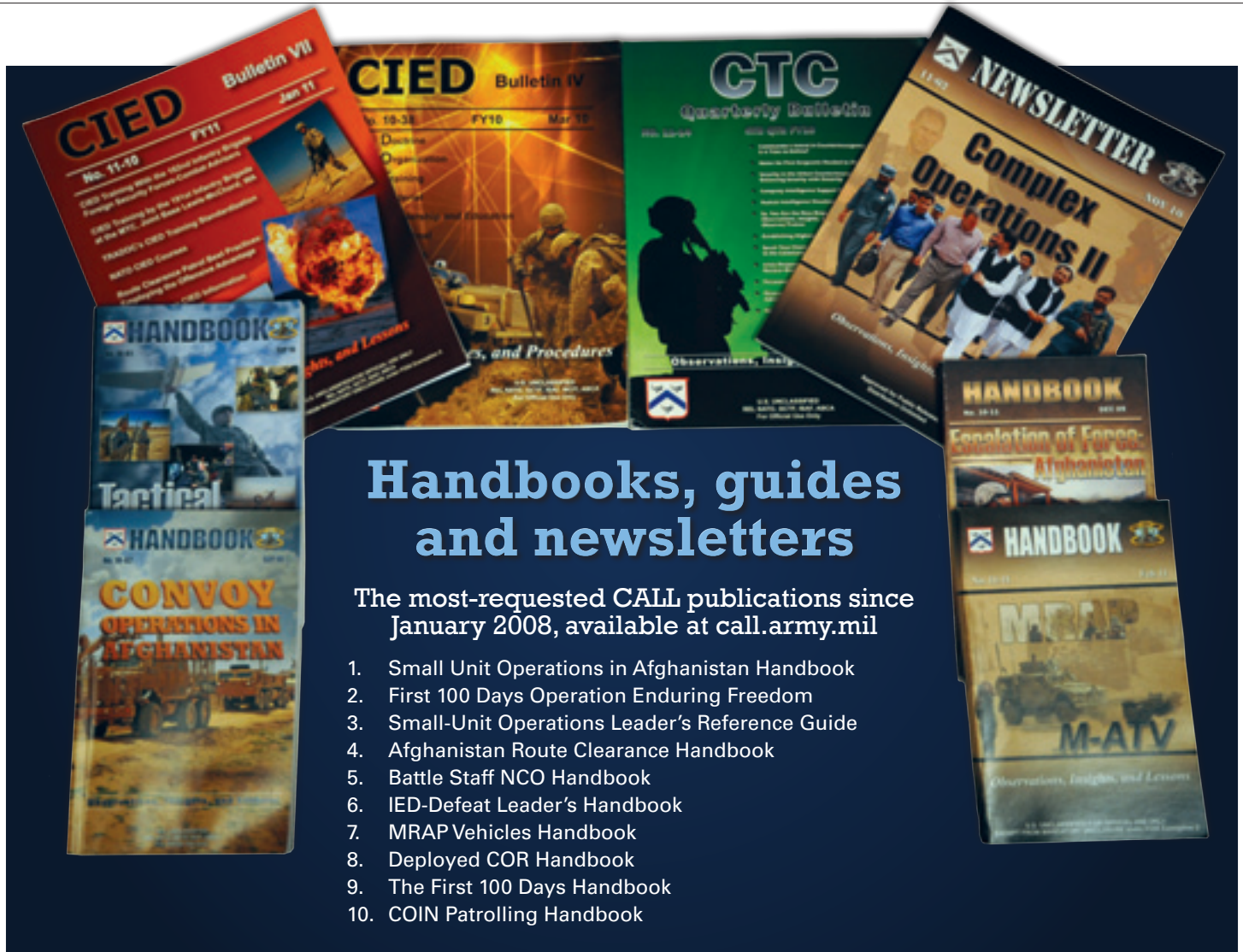
of those products."

Before CALL can push information and lessons learned out to Soldiers, it has to pull that information in. There are several ways CALL accomplishes this.

The most important way is through LNOs. CALL deploys liaisons to Af-

ghanistan and Iraq with most assigned to either a division or corps headquarters. The LNOs collect lessons learned and best practices and send them back to CALL.

"Our capabilities allow us to see the battlefield in virtually real time," Bialas said. "We have LNOs on the ground, so



## Handbooks, guides and newsletters

The most-requested CALL publications since January 2008, available at [call.army.mil](http://call.army.mil)

1. Small Unit Operations in Afghanistan Handbook
2. First 100 Days Operation Enduring Freedom
3. Small-Unit Operations Leader's Reference Guide
4. Afghanistan Route Clearance Handbook
5. Battle Staff NCO Handbook
6. IED-Defeat Leader's Handbook
7. MRAP Vehicles Handbook
8. Deployed COR Handbook
9. The First 100 Days Handbook
10. COIN Patrolling Handbook

we know exactly what's been briefed the day before, both in classified and unclassified venues. We can then take that information and decide what needs to be pushed back very quickly to Soldiers."

But CALL officials say they need NCOs' help to add to the database of knowledge. CALL hopes noncommissioned officers will add to the database of lessons learned by writing papers, participating in online forums or uploading videos. For example, CALL recently began seeking "Leader Challenges Videos" to illustrate the challenges ahead for those about to deploy. Basically, if NCOs have lessons they'd like to share, CALL will take them in any form. It doesn't need to be perfect; CALL has writers and designers who can help create a finished product.

"NCOs can send us a video or write a professional article," Pruyt said. "We need help doing that. That helps us help the self-development of our junior leaders.

If NCOs can start writing, if they can start sharing, realize that sharing their experiences is a good thing, we can definitely help facilitate that."

### HISTORY

The impetus for the creation of CALL was 1983's Operation Urgent Fury in the Caribbean nation of Grenada. The United States' invasion of the island, though ultimately successful, revealed problems in the way the armed forces worked together. A year later, the Army Studies Group proposed a system for capturing lessons learned, and in August 1985 the Army activated CALL.

Starting with a staff of 16 military personnel and six civilians, CALL has grown to include more than 200 people, with more than 100 of those being contractors. CALL headquarters has been located at Fort Leavenworth all along, though in different buildings.

In no small way, CALL changed the culture of the Army, Burns said.

"CALL just celebrated its 25th anniversary last year, and in that 25 years, CALL literally changed the Army," he said. "This place was part of the renaissance of leadership that occurred in the early 1980s and the whole reigniting and redirection of the Army as an organization. CALL played a significant role. I am proud to be part of the outfit.

"Before the 1980s, there was no process whereby the Army as an organization looked at itself and asked itself what did we do right and what can we do better," Burns said.

In 2006, CALL launched the expanded Lessons Learned Integration, or L2I, program, which brought military analysts to all U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command schools and division and corps headquarters. That change was pushed by Gen. David Petraeus because leaders were



**“The first time I saw a CALL product, an IED defeat handbook, it was sitting on some guy’s desk in the embassy. ... It infuriated me that my Soldiers and I were not exposed to the knowledge found in this handbook until the very end of our 16-month deployment. We have got to do a better job.”**

— MASTER SGT. CHAD WALKER

seeing too many repeat problems, said Colin Anderson, CALL senior military analyst at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas.

“The Army kept seeing that units were going in and out of deployments, and, almost to the same timeline, making the same mistakes,” Anderson said. “They kept wondering why the learning effect wasn’t kicking in. And a lot of it was because the information wasn’t being pulled and given to these warfighters in a quicker manner. It wasn’t being injected into training as quickly as possible.”

Anderson briefs each incoming class of Sergeants Major Course students about CALL to make sure the word gets out.

“Even now, a lot of Soldiers don’t know that CALL exists,” Anderson said. “So, we let people know that CALL is there, the capabilities and resources that CALL has, what CALL can do for them, and, in turn, since our mission is a push-

pull mission, what they can do for CALL.”

Master Sgt. Chad Walker, CALL’s senior enlisted advisor, said getting the word out about the work CALL does and the information CALL can provide has been one of his major endeavors.

“We need to get better at marketing,” Walker said. “Back in 2005, I deployed with the 172nd Stryker Brigade out of Alaska. The first time I saw a CALL product, an IED defeat handbook, it was sitting on some guy’s desk in the embassy. This was a month prior to our redeployment. It infuriated me that my Soldiers and I were not exposed to the knowledge found in this handbook until the very end of our 16-month deployment. We have got to do a better job as a professional organization in getting the information that will save lives into our Soldier’s hands.”

Marketing doesn’t come easy to the leaders of the center; Seeking glory is not their way. But they want Soldiers to know

they are there to help make things easier and save lives.

“This is more of a way of thinking than anything else,” Roe said. “We are only helping. Real success is not that CALL is the name on this; it’s that the Army is able to use rapid adaptation, based on lessons learned, as a way of doing business.”

Wherever a Soldier is, the Center for Army Lessons Learned is there. There are liaison officers at every Army installation, at every training center and as part of deployments.

If a Soldier can’t find that representative, there are plenty of people waiting and willing to serve in that boxy, brick building at Fort Leavenworth. Just give CALL a call. 📞

To contact Jonathan (Jay) Koester, visit the NCO Journal website at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal>.

## CONTACT CALL

- ▶ **To request information or a product from CALL:** Visit [call.army.mil](http://call.army.mil). Click on the “RFI or CALL Product” button and fill out the form.
- ▶ **To view a list of current CALL publications:** Visit <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/Products.asp>. The publications can be downloaded in PDF format, or you may request a hard copy of the publication.
- ▶ **To provide observations, insights and lessons, or submit an after-action review:**  
Telephone: DSN: 552-9569 or 552-9533; commercial 913-684-9569 or 913-684-9533  
Fax: DSN: 552-4387; commercial: 913-684-4387  
NIPR e-mail address: [call.rfimanager@conus.army.mil](mailto:call.rfimanager@conus.army.mil)  
SIPR e-mail address: [call.rfiagent@conus.army.mil](mailto:call.rfiagent@conus.army.mil)
- ▶ **Mailing address:** Center for Army Lessons Learned, ATTN: OCC, 10 Meade Ave., Bldg. 50, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1350
- ▶ **Army Professional Forums:** 35 different Army forums, including NCO Net, can be found at: <https://forums.army.mil/secure/>. Some forums are open only to select groups. For instance, NCO Net is open only to NCOs. Registration is required for all forums. No anonymous posting is allowed.
- ▶ **Newest forum:** One of the most-recent additions is Rapid Adaptation Net, which is being used to speed adaptation of the lessons learned on the battlefield and to improve Army readiness against emerging threats.

THE HISTORIC

# TRANSFO



Photo by Jennifer Mattson



# FORMATION



## OF AMERICA'S TANK DIVISION

The 1st Armored Division moves from Germany to Fort Bliss

BY JENNIFER MATTSON







Photo by Jennifer Mattson

The last division headquarters to hold a post in Europe is returning home to the United States.

The 1st Armored Division's relocation from its home of 40 years in Germany to Fort Bliss, Texas, has launched the Army's largest installation construction program. The division is transforming not only geographically but is also becoming more modular by converting its namesake armored units into infantry and Stryker brigades.

The division has fought in nearly every major conflict, from World War II to Afghanistan, earning it the moniker "America's Tank Division."

Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport, command sergeant major of the 1st Armored Division and Fort Bliss, said the move to West Texas is another chapter in the division's rich history.

"There's something special about the 1st Armored Division. Being an 'Iron Soldier' is right up there with being a ranger or a paratrooper, to me," Davenport said.

The 1st Armored Division Headquarters moved from Germany to Fort Bliss as part of Base Realignment and Closure

Commission recommendations mandated in 2005 — one of the largest moves of a division back to the United States in the last 50 years.

In November 2007, Davenport learned that the Army's garrison at Wiesbaden, Germany, would be closing and that he would help lead the 1st Armored Division from Germany to Fort Bliss.

In January 2008, Davenport moved to Fort Bliss to assume responsibility for the 5th Brigade as its command sergeant major. He oversaw its stand-up with the Army's Experimental Task Force mission and saw that responsibility shift to 2nd Brigade after the 5th Brigade deactivated.

"[The move] allows 1st Armored Division to take advantage of the vast maneuver space and great range facilities that you just couldn't find anywhere else," Davenport said.

The Army chose Fort Bliss, situated in West Texas and southern New Mexico, in part because of the 1.1 million acres of training area it has available. The Army identified the need to maintain these types of installations to accommodate current and anticipated growth, according to the

report, "Analysis and Recommendations for BRAC 2005," which explained the rationale for the division's move.

### THE LOGISTICS OF CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

The teamwork required to move the division's headquarters and thousands of pieces of equipment from Germany to Fort Bliss spanned several continents and included U.S. Army Forces Command, Army Materiel Command, U.S. Army Europe and Fort Bliss.

Sgt. Maj. Jose Alegado, logistics sergeant major for the 1st Armored Division, helped coordinate the movement of equipment.

"Logistics is always going to be a challenge," Alegado said. "It's nothing new to the Army. They do have their lessons learned, so they improve it all the time — just like the UPS commercial. You think of logistics; that's what we do."

"I have senior supply sergeants, and their expertise is in ensuring property accountability," said Maj. Todd Wise, assistant logistics officer. "Without that type of senior NCO leadership, most





company commanders would fail miserably at their own inventories without those supply NCOs saying, ‘Sir, this is how you do this.’”

Equipment that was deployed to Iraq was sent back to Germany or to places that handle equipment restoration after combat stress — Michigan and Alabama, for example — where it was refitted, refurbished and retooled. Everything coming to Fort Bliss from Germany had to go through an agricultural clean as well as a customs inspection. A few thousand pieces were moved — items as varied as bayonets, humvees and generators, Wise said.

### ACCOMMODATING A DIVISION

To accommodate the division, many changes occurred at Fort Bliss. Historically, the post was the home of air defense artillery, but ADA moved to Fort Sill’s Fires Center of Excellence because of BRAC changes.

Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Pandey, the Fort Bliss garrison command sergeant major, previously served as the command sergeant major for 1AD’s 4th Brigade Combat Team.

“I haven’t been stationed anywhere else where you’ve got the space and the level of combined arms that you can use on those ranges — ground force, dismounted force, air force. They’re all in a scenario where they can maneuver,” Pandey said. “The space is pretty vast.”

Having been stationed at Fort Bliss before deploying to Iraq with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, Pandey was able to experience firsthand the growth at Fort Bliss. Before he deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, just one brigade headquarters, its barracks and a dining facility had been constructed in East Bliss near Biggs Army Airfield, Pandey said.

Before the 1AD’s move to Fort Bliss, the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Acad-

emy was the end of the road — where the desert landscape took over.

“When I redeployed a year later, there were two brigade level footprints that just grew out of the desert,” Pandey said.

That growth included more than simply moving people; it involved a transformation of Fort Bliss.

Construction occurred on three fronts: operations facilities, training areas and quality of life. New facilities include battalion, brigade and division headquarters, company operations facilities, barracks, dining facilities, and motor pools. Training areas also had to be updated to accommo-

date tanks and other armor vehicles.

“We had to transform our ranges so that they could accommodate tanks, Abrams and Bradleys, as well as aviation,” said Col. Leonard Wells, the deputy garrison commander for transformation at Fort Bliss. “We have a combat aviation unit coming as well as a fires brigade — a field artillery brigade — so we had to [update] our ranges as well.”

Fort Bliss, along with the Army Corps of Engineers, constructed more than 150 buildings as part of the BRAC accommodations. At a total price tag of \$4.9 billion, the post sees about \$5 million



Photo by Spc. David M. Gafford

Above: Lt. Col. Karen M. Wrancher stands at attention as she prepares to receive the 1st Armored Division’s Headquarters Battalion colors from Command Sgt. Maj. Dana Mason.

Previous pages and opposite: Soldiers from the 1st Armored Division stand at attention during the headquarters activation ceremony May 13 at Noel Field on Fort Bliss, Texas.







Photo by Jennifer Mattson

Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, prepare to receive Strykers on May 10. The unit drew its first Strykers in January and continues to receive new-equipment training.

to \$10 million spent each week on construction projects.

“We think that this is the largest continental United States expansion of any installation in the last several decades in terms of the size of population, the sheer size of the construction and the growth of the end state,” Wells said.

### THE TRANSFORMATION OF EL PASO

Fort Bliss’s transformation extends outside of its gates to the neighboring city of El Paso. The community worked with Fort Bliss to accommodate the influx of Soldiers and family members, most notably by building the Spur 601 freeway, known as the Liberty Expressway, that connects East Fort Bliss to El Paso.

“It’s a highway that did not exist in 2005. But, the Texas Department of Transportation, the mayor, city council and a private contractor came together to establish that highway to support the growth of Fort Bliss — but not just the growth of Fort Bliss, but the growth of El Paso, as well,” Wells said.

With the relocation of the 1st Armored Division, Fort Bliss went from being home to 9,000 active-duty Soldiers

in 2005 to more than 34,000 in 2011.

“We really went from a small post, which was under Training and Doctrine Command, to a Forces Command installation,” Wells said. “In June 2009, we were designated a FORSCOM post.”

The new units that now occupy Fort Bliss each have their own unique missions that are accommodated by Fort Bliss and contribute to the 1st Armored Division.

### AN INFANTRY BRIGADE IN AN ARMORED DIVISION

The 3rd Brigade Combat Team, the “Bulldogs,” is designated as an infantry unit, giving it the unique distinction of being the only active-duty infantry brigade assigned to an armor division.

“The Army is trying to get a more modular concept,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Capps, command sergeant major of 3rd BCT. “It gives the division more flexibility in a mission. You’re able to respond to a wider venue of challenges. You’re more flexible.”

While they are gearing up for deployment to Afghanistan later this year, Soldiers are also reaching out to the El Paso community to create strong bonds.

To grow the relationship, 2nd Bat-

talion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, created a partnership with Franklin Mountains State Park. The Soldiers cut trails in the park’s mountainous terrain, where the unit sometimes practices foot marches like the ones it will soon experience in Afghanistan.

The terrain at Fort Bliss is ideal for preparing for deployments to Afghanistan as the post’s mountain ranges replicate the type of terrain Soldiers can expect to see in Afghanistan, Capps said.

Before their deployment, the Bulldogs transformed into an infantry brigade from their roots as a heavy mechanized unit.

“We’ve been a heavy brigade since the 1940s off-and-on, but that’s a significant undertaking — the expeditionary role. It makes us more mobile,” Capps said.

The transformation was transparent and seamless as the unit had deactivated in 2006 at Fort Riley, Kan. It reactivated at Fort Bliss in July 2009 as the 44th brigade in the Department of Defense’s “Grow the Army” program, Capps said.

### MOVING AVIATION ASSETS

Currently, the 1st AD’s combat aviation brigade is flagged under the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood,





Texas. It is scheduled to reflag at Fort Bliss in September after its deployment to Afghanistan, said Sgt. Maj. Steven Odom, the sergeant major of the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade advance party group.

“We’re the aviation asset for the division,” Odom said.

While some of the CAB’s aircraft will go to shops for maintenance after their deployment, other aircraft will go directly to Fort Bliss’ Biggs Army Airfield, which has prepared for the brigade by building four hangars, a brigade headquarters, a dining facility, three company operations facilities, barracks and two tactical equipment maintenance facilities (the combat aviation equivalent of a motor pool), Odom said.

“In my 18 — almost 19 — years in the Army, this is the best facility I’ve seen,” Odom said.

As a heavy combat aviation brigade, the 1st Armored Division’s CAB will have two battalions of attack AH-64 Apache helicopters. A light combat aviation brigade, on the other hand, has only one battalion of attack Apaches and one reconnaissance squadron of OH-58D Kiowa Warriors, Odom said. When fully constituted, the brigade will have Apaches, UH-60 Black Hawks and CH-47 Chinooks — a total of 113 aircraft that will be added to Biggs Army Airfield.

## TRANSFORMING FROM TANKS TO STRYKERS

The division’s 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team experienced another transformation — from a heavy brigade to a light brigade — in January. The brigade was previously designated a heavy armor unit until turning in their tanks and Bradleys for Strykers.

Sgt. 1st Class Branden Thelander, of 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment, described the change.

“You’re more vulnerable to antitank fire because we don’t have



Photo by Jennifer Mattson

An M1A2 Abrams tank assigned to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, stands outside of the Children’s Hospital at Providence in El Paso as part of the “Touch a Tank, Thank a Soldier Day” on May 14. Soldiers gave tours of the equipment to children from the hospital.

that heavy hitting asset. But, you’re faster, more nimble and more silent, and you don’t move with such a heavy footprint,” Thelander said.

Though the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team will still retain the Stryker’s one mobile-gun system, the Stryker is equipped to help the brigade face a different type of fight.

“In the HBCT, you’ve got that sustained fight, that heavy fight, where your whole task in the battlefield — if you imagine two heavy hitters, they’re just slugging it out,” Thelander said. “That’s where the HBCT is. On the other hand, the SBCT — the Strykers — are like a UFC

fighter. They’re quick and nimble on the battlefield.”

## IRON SOLDIERS, TESTING SOLDIERS

Amid the changes in the other brigades, perhaps none’s mission is changing as much as the 2nd Brigade Combat Team’s — at least temporarily. In November, the “Iron Brigade” absorbed the 5th Brigade Combat Team’s mission and personnel.

Until September 2012, the unit is designated as a testing brigade that reports both to FORSCOM as well as the Brigade Modernization Command, which falls





under TRADOC. Its new mission enables Iron Soldiers to be on the cutting edge of the fight, said Sgt. 1st Class Joel White, a tank commander with 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment.

“We have the premiere test brigade of the Army,” White said. While other units may test on a case-by-case basis, the 2nd Brigade is the only brigade in the Army to be designated as a testing unit.

The 3,768 Iron Soldiers assigned to the 2nd BCT are the first in the Army to get their hands on new equipment and test it in the field, White said.

That “laboratory” is Fort Bliss’ ranges, which have been updated to accommodate tank units with digital equipment that enable Soldiers to see how their engagements play out on the battlefield.

“If they’re not in Afghanistan or in Iraq drawing down, then the most important mission in the Army is here with 2nd

Brigade,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Torres, command sergeant major for the Brigade Modernization Command at Fort Bliss.

Iron Soldiers’ credibility is important because Congress and the Defense Department look to 2nd Brigade Soldiers to determine whether equipment works and is needed on the battlefield, Torres said.

The brigade will also be testing six weapons systems this summer with 22 other systems in the queue for future testing. Most of the tests deal with network radios placed inside of tanks, Bradleys, Strykers and humvees to see if they will work in-theater and can support a brigade’s communication load, said Command Sgt. Maj. Antonio Dunston, command sergeant major of the 2nd Brigade.

“We just get to tell [the test operators] what works and what doesn’t,” Dunston said. “If it doesn’t work, we have to ex-

plain what would make a better enhancement for the battlefield.”

Though the unit won’t deploy while it reports to the Brigade Modernization Command, Dunston said 2nd BCT Soldiers are professionals who will not only be ready to deploy when sent to other units, they’ll be better trained.

“What better subject-matter expert to have on the battlefield than a Soldier who has tested the newest equipment and knows how it works?” Dunston said.

The Iron Soldiers will continue to test the Army’s latest equipment at least until 2012, when its mission with Brigade Modernization Command is set to expire. The Army may decide to continue to designate 2nd Brigade as a testing unit, do away with the brigade’s testing mission or rotate the mission to a different unit, Torres said.

## THE HEAVY BRIGADES

In the U.S. Army’s last active-duty Armored Division, only two heavy brigades remain — the 2nd and 4th Brigade Combat Teams.

“We’re the only deployable heavy brigade now,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Eppler, command sergeant major for the “Highlanders” of the 4th BCT.

The 4th BCT is the youngest brigade in the 1st Armored Division; it stood up on March 4, 2008. The Highlander Brigade, so named because of the Franklin Mountains that border Fort Bliss, carry on the legacy of the armor community within the 1st Armored Division.

Though the youngest brigade, it’s also been deployed the most in the last two years; it returned from Iraq in May 2010 and is slated to deploy there again this summer.

“We think we’re going to be the last brigade in Iraq,” Eppler said.

In Iraq, the 4th Heavy Brigade Combat Team will take over the mission of the 1st Cavalry Division’s



Photo by Jennifer Mattson

A museum staff member paints a three-dimensional set for the new Old Ironsides Museum at Fort Bliss. The museum currently depicts conflicts in Kosovo, Italy and Germany, and is scheduled to include Iraq and Afghanistan displays.





4th Brigade Combat Team from Fort Hood. Coincidentally, it was the remnants of that brigade, which recently relocated to Fort Hood from Fort Bliss, that helped constitute the Highlanders, Eppler said.

“We can do anything that the Army asks us to do because we have tanks, Paladins, self-propelled [howitzers] and engineers,” Eppler said of his brigade’s spectrum of capabilities.

### BUILDING A NEW MUSEUM

The way Fort Bliss tells the story of its history is changing as well with the relocation of the 1st Armored Division Museum from Baumholder, Germany, to the former post exchange building at Fort Bliss, now called the Fort Bliss and Old Ironsides Museums.

The museum moved out of its old home to the 180,000-square-foot building in October. The move cost \$2 million, but the exhibit displays are not funded by federal appropriations or grants. Instead, the museum relies on the generosity of visitors and units that adopt and refurbish some of the museum’s tanks.

“A corporal who paints that tank today and comes back years later as a sergeant first class can say, ‘That’s my tank.’ It builds cohesion, esprit de corps, pride,” said Peter Poessiger, the museum’s director.

While the 1st Armored Division brought many new exhibits and artifacts to Fort Bliss, Poessiger said he was sad to see the U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Museum go to the Fires Center of Excellence at Fort Sill, Okla.

“That’s 11 years of work going out the back door in a week,” Poessiger said. “But that’s transformation. Gotta live with it; otherwise, you get left behind.”

To contact Jennifer M. Mattson, visit the NCO Journal website at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal>.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Charles Lovitt

Sgt. 1st Class Joel White operates the command station of an M1A2 Abrams tank. A new monitor and other equipment enable the commander to scan the battlefield simultaneously with the gunner.

### 1ST ARMORED DIVISION UNITS

Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion “Gladiator”

#### 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Ready First”

4th Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment  
1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment  
3rd Battalion, 41st Infantry Regiment  
6th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment  
2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment  
501st Brigade Support Battalion

#### 2nd Heavy BCT “Heavy Metal” (Currently under TRADOC)

1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment  
1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment  
1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment  
4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment  
2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion  
47th Brigade Support Battalion

#### 3rd Infantry BCT “Bulldogs”

1st Battalion, 41st Infantry Regiment  
2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment

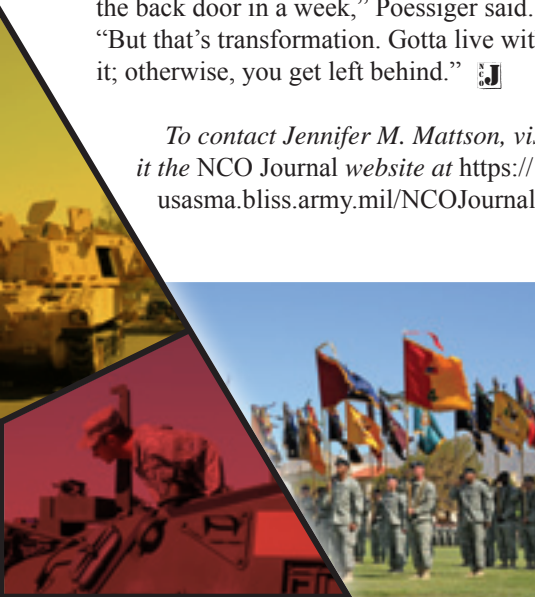
1st Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment  
4th Battalion, 1st Field Artillery Regiment  
3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion  
125th Brigade Support Battalion

#### 4th Heavy BCT “Highlanders”

4th Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment  
1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment  
2nd Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment  
2nd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment  
4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion  
123rd Brigade Support Battalion

#### Combat Aviation Brigade “Iron Eagle” (Arr. Sept. 2011)

Headquarters and Headquarters Company  
1st Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment  
2nd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment  
3rd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment  
4th Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment  
127th Aviation Support Battalion





# NCO Stories

*A selection of Valor*



## *Rangers recognized for combat action in Afghanistan*

Story and photos by Sgt. Christopher M. Gaylord  
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

With the quiet, picturesque Puget Sound as a backdrop, members of 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, were distinguished April 29 for the first time in a public setting for exceptional gallantry while engaged in recent combat operations in Afghanistan.

Lt. Col. Dave Hodne, the battalion commander, awarded two Bronze Stars for valor; 11 Army Commendation Medals for valor; four Joint Service Commendation Medals for valor; 16 Purple Hearts; five Orders of Saint Maurice; and one Order of Saint Martin on the stadium grounds at Stadium High School in Tacoma, Wash. Ten rangers who couldn't be present also received awards.

The Order of Saint Maurice is special to the infantry community and recognizes individuals who, in the eyes of their senior leadership, have contributed significantly to the infantry and served it with distinction. The Order of Saint Martin singles out those who have rendered conspicuous, long-term service to the Army Quartermaster Corps.

Hodne's decision to honor his rangers in the local community — marking the battalion's first-ever recognition ceremony outside Joint Base Lewis-McChord — was simple: to give the rangers some much-needed face time with the public.

"It's too easy to do an award ceremony in the confines of the unit area in front of our families. But it's important that the community see these guys, because they give so much to their country and their nation," Hodne said.

Hodne said there were civilians who showed up that otherwise wouldn't have been afforded the opportunity had the ceremony been held on-post.

"There were some civilians from the local community who showed up because they heard about it through word-of-mouth," he said.

"A lot of rangers live off post, and their neighbors don't have access to the installation. They invited some of them out here," he added.

In the true fashion of most heroes, Sgt. 1st Class Eric Echavarria, a platoon sergeant with the battalion who was awarded the Bronze Star for valor for outstanding leadership during combat operations in Kandahar province last fall, said he did nothing more than what was expected of him.

"I don't think I was doing anything other than what I should have been doing. It was my job," said Echavarria, who was quick to assemble a landing zone for the medical evacuation of a wounded comrade and continued to lead security and litter teams to the landing zone before personally signaling the incoming evacuation helicopter, even though it exposed him for several minutes to a barrage of enemy fire.



“I know they (the other rangers) would have done it for me just the same way,” he added. “There are other guys who deserve the same recognition because they went out into that hot area just like I did, knowing the risk.”

Capt. Brendan McCarthy, Echavarria’s platoon leader during the operation, doesn’t necessarily agree with Echavarria’s modesty.

“Just because everyone here (the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment rangers) would do it doesn’t mean it’s not a valorous act,” McCarthy said of his platoon sergeant’s exceptional courage. “Everyone here would do it because everyone here would gladly put their life on the line for another ranger.”

“Any normal person probably wouldn’t,” he added.

McCarthy refers to the rangers on Joint Base Lewis-McChord as “dark matter” — something most people don’t fully understand, if at all.

“Being in the ranger battalion, a lot of people don’t really know what we do or who we are,” he said.

For this reason, McCarthy says, it’s good for the public to witness the unit and know of its accomplishments — its uniqueness.

“It’s nice to see the unit publicly recognized,” he said.

“Just being put out here on public forum, I think that’s the best thing.”

“For me, personally, it’s not about being awarded. It’s about recognizing the unit,” he added. “It’s about showcasing ourselves and that we are something special.”

As the words of the coveted Ranger Creed roared from the mouths of hundreds of combat-proven rangers, echoing between a canyon of high-rising concrete bleachers, wives gazed upon beloved husbands; children upon fathers; a proud community upon a group of extraordinary Soldiers who are perhaps now a little less mysterious.

“This is the template for the 2nd Ranger Battalion,” Hodne said of the ceremony. “We’re the Pacific Northwest Rangers, and doing this in a venue with the Puget Sound behind us — there’s nothing more fitting.”



**Above:** Lt. Col. Dave Hodne, the commander of 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., shakes hands with one of the battalion’s noncommissioned officers after pinning a Purple Heart on him April 29 during an award ceremony at Stadium High School in Tacoma, to recognize the valorous combat actions of 46 members of the battalion. The event marked the very first award ceremony the battalion has ever held off-post and in a public setting. The colonel recognized 39 Soldiers with various awards and commendations during the ceremony.



Hodne pins a Bronze Star on Sgt. 1st Class Eric Echavarria, who distinguished himself last fall during combat operations in Kandahar province, Afghanistan.



# NCO's quick action saves countless lives

By Sgt. Ricardo J. Branch  
8th Theater Sustainment Command

Soldiers of the 130th Engineer Brigade gathered to pay tribute and honor one of their own during a Silver Star award ceremony March 10, 2010, at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

Sgt. Scott D. Brooks, 82nd Engineer Support Company, 65th Engineer Battalion, 130th Engineer Brigade, was awarded the Silver Star for his actions during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On June 25, 2007, while serving as a heavy equipment operator for the 618th Engineer Company, 82nd Airborne Division, Brooks was involved in a firefight when insurgents detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, blowing a large hole in the perimeter wall at Forward Operating Base Summerall, Iraq.

While the enemy was seizing the initiative, Brooks took well-aimed shots to stop the flow of insurgents attempting to enter the breach, before sprinting to a bulldozer and moving debris and scrap metal as a stop-gap into the wall.

"I was working a dozer to push debris into a breach created by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device," Brooks said. "There were people, Soldiers and Iraqis — lying injured in harm's way and another VBIED could come through the breach at anytime while I was busy moving things to block the hole."

The 25-year-old Middleville, Mich., native woke up that morning not realizing he'd be helping save lives that day.

"I had no idea I'd be involved in something like that," Brooks said. "I was just doing what I had to do because people were hurt. You never ask to be involved in something like that, but when it happens, you just do what you have to do."

During the ceremony, Maj. Gen. Michael J. Terry, commanding general, 8th Theater Sustainment Command, hailed Brooks as a hero.

"These days we use the term hero too loosely," Terry said. "Every time something goes on, we describe someone as a hero; however, there's no doubt that from the actions Brooks took in June of 2007, the only fitting definition is 'hero.'"

Terry went on to speak to the Soldiers witnessing the momentous occasion.

"Those of us who have been there often have to look deep down within ourselves and consider how we would react to a



Photo by Sgt. Ricardo J. Branch, 8th Theater Sustainment Command

Sgt. Scott D. Brooks of the 82nd Engineer Support Company, 65th Engineer Battalion, 130th Engineer Brigade, receives the Silver Star from Maj. Gen. Michael J. Terry, commanding general, 8th Theater Sustainment Command, during an award ceremony March 10, 2010, at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Brooks received the award following his actions on June 25, 2007, when his bravery resulted in saving the lives of five Iraqi policemen and untold American Soldiers following a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that struck the walls of Forward Operating Base Summerall in Iraq. Also pictured are wife Kristen and son Nolan.

given situation, and there's no doubt that Brooks performed heroically," he said. "Sgt. Brooks came into our Army in 2004; he's part of the 9/11 generation, and you all here are that generation — the next 'Greatest Generation.'"

Also present for the occasion were close members of Brooks' immediate family: his wife, Kristen, and three children — Aiden, Conlan and Nolan — as well as his father, Robert; brother, James; and cousin, Sue.

Although his family always knew their father, brother and son was a hero, it was his wife, Kristen, who put it best: "You all call him a hero for that day, but I call him a hero every day."

Brooks enters the ranks of heroes awarded the Silver Star, such as Gen. Douglas McArthur, Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester and Vice Adm. James Stockdale. The Silver Star is the third-highest military award given for valor in combat and can be awarded to any member of any branch of the armed forces.

"I'm really speechless, I have no words today to describe what this all means," Brooks said.

"I'm really blessed, thinking back, because I must have had someone watching out for me that day."





# NCO receives Soldier's Medal for saving young boy in Afghanistan

By Staff Sgt. Adora Medina  
3rd BCT, 1st Infantry Division

Staff Sgt. Kevin P. Sanders believes that he was born to be an infantryman.

Having completed five deployments, he understands the sacrifice and bravery that accompanies combat. So when he witnessed an Afghan boy near death, his instincts immediately came into play and he didn't hesitate to free the child from the electricity entering the boy's body.

"I didn't think about it. I didn't think anything," said Sanders, from St. Ann, Mo. "What I saw was my son when I looked at this little kid, and when his body went limp I thought, 'Oh God, please do something,' and I didn't say it out loud. I was talking to myself, and that's when I lunged forward, and I grabbed the kid, and I pulled him off."

The young boy, who according to Sanders was no older than 6, had touched exposed wires from an electrical box that had been tampered with on the side of the road near where Sanders and his team of infantrymen were pulling security in October 2009.

Sanders said he heard buzzing and didn't realize that it was the sound of electricity searing the boy's skin until he thought it was too late. He remembers the boy helplessly looking at him and then going limp as if he had given up.

"I thought he was dead," Sanders said. "It all happened in the span of five seconds."

He knew he had to do something, so he acted fast with no regard for his personal safety. He pulled the boy toward him risking the chance of being electrocuted.

"I jumped toward him, and I snatched him up by the back of his neck, and I pulled him straight up to me and he was still shaking profusely," Sanders recalled. "I turned around, and I kicked my medic's door three times, and I said, 'I need a medic!' as loud as I could scream it."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Adora Medina

First Sgt. Michael Klein of Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, congratulates Staff Sgt. Kevin P. Sanders, recipient of the Soldier's Medal for his heroism. The award ceremony was held April 14, 2009, at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Afghanistan.

Still shaken up by the incident, he held the child in his arms as he quickly explained the situation to the medic on patrol, who acted immediately to bandage the child's burns while Sanders' team retrieved an interpreter to explain to the child's father that he needed to be taken to a nearby hospital.

Nearly six months after the incident, while on patrol, Sanders was relieved to see the young boy playing with his little sister around the same area.

For risking his life, Sanders was awarded the Soldier's Medal on April 14, 2009, at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Afghanistan, with his fellow infantrymen and the Combined Task Force-101 commander, Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser, in attendance.

"Putting me in for an award as high as this is ...," Sanders paused to think. "I'm humbled; it's almost overwhelming. I'm not used to being credited for

anything that I do."

Sanders, who is a team leader for the personal security detachment of Col. John Spitzer, the 3rd Brigade Combat Team commander, plans to continue on in his military career, explaining that it's the structure he's always needed in his life.

"They're going to have to throw me out of the military," he said jokingly. "I've been doing this job for eight years, and I wouldn't give it up for anything."

Sanders emphasized the importance of his job as a Soldier and why he chose the infantryman's path.

"I do what I do not because of the man to the right and to the left of me," Sanders said. "I do what I do not because of college, not because of the things that people see you for. I don't do it for glory, honor or integrity, and I don't do it for my country. I do it for my countrymen and women, but not so much in the sense that you would think. I do it so they won't have to."



# WORLD'S TOP NCOs *experience* AMERICAN LIFE



Italian Sgt. Maj. Matea Luca, a student at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, explores the operation of a historic wet stone grinder in Johnson City, Texas.

Story and photos by Spc. David M. Gafford

**M**ilitary representatives from various countries around the world on a road trip to San Antonio is not a sight you see every day. Warrant Officer 1 Wee Giap Chua of Singapore, a passenger in the van, flipped through the static on the radio until he found “Don’t Stop Believin” by Journey. As the song echoed through the van, senior enlisted personnel from such places as the Netherlands, Afghanistan and Germany began singing the lyrics together. As the tune faded, they peered at road signs to see how much farther they had to go.

The international students of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy’s Class 61 visited San Antonio from March 26 to 31 to better understand culture, customs and traditions in the United States. Later in May, they visited Colorado and Washington, D.C., to further their education of American life.

The students visited several places in Texas to experience America, including the Alamo, the factory where the world’s Toyota Tundras are made, the Texas Capitol and Johnson City, the birthplace of President Lyndon B. Johnson. They also visited San Antonio’s famous Riverwalk and other cultural and historic landmarks in Texas’ heartland.

The first stop on the trip was the Alamo.

“The Alamo plays such a significant part in our history. It’s a good learning experience for the soldiers,” said Joyce Stophel, the field studies program manager for USASMA’s International Military Student Office.

A tour guide spoke of the brave “Texians,” what the group called themselves before becoming part of the United States. The Texians in 1836 held off Mexican troops during a 13-day siege before succumbing to the onslaught. The battle inspired many Texians in their quest for independence, which ended with





the defeat of the Mexican army at the Battle of San Jacinto near present-day Houston.

“If you want to be free, you have to fight. You may die, but the next generation will be free,” said Master Sgt. Kaba Tsirekidze of the Republic of Georgia.

While at the Alamo, the students learned about Davy Crockett, the famous American folk hero, frontiersman, Soldier and politician.

“Something that the students see in the whole battle is the determination and the bravery with which young Americans fought for their freedom,” said Michael Huffman, director of IMSO.

As the tour guide led the students through the historic building, representatives from Singapore, Georgia, Canada and many parts of Africa said they were intrigued by the story.

“A sergeant major in any army should know about other countries’ history,” said Master Sgt. Oyunbold Daribish of Mongolia. “In the military, history plays a big role.”

The next day, the students visited the world’s only Toyota Tundra plant. The students toured the factory to see how the pickup truck is made and to learn about the history of the company.

“We took the students here to introduce them into our industry,” Huffman said. “A lot of international students don’t realize that we produce foreign companies’ products in the U.S. It gives the students exposure to the free-market system and our trade agreements with other countries.”

“Visiting Toyota was impressive because we could see how

Jeffrey Peppers, a retired U.S. Army Soldier and Alamo tour guide, speaks to the international students of USASMA’s Class 61 during their visit to the San Antonio landmark.

technology is developing. My son was very excited to see how they build cars,” Daribish said.

At the next stop, the students visited the Texas state Capitol in Austin. There, they met with Rep. Joe Pickett, who represents east El Paso in the Texas House of Representatives. Pickett, a 16-year veteran of the House, showed the students around his legendary office, which is decorated like a movie theater with posters of movies that were filmed in El Paso. He spoke to the students about the history of Texas and shared some interesting facts, too. He also thanked the students for their service and for being allies to the United States.

“He helps educate the students on the state government and how it functions. He familiarizes the students with the state legislative process,” Huffman said.

The last day of the trip, the students visited Johnson City, Texas, President Johnson’s home.

They went through a tour of the Lyndon B. Johnson Museum and then watched two documentaries covering the life of Johnson and his wife, Claudia Alta “Lady Bird” Johnson.

“A lot of times when international [students] think about America, they think about New York City; they think about Washington, D.C.; they think of a metropolitan area. This shows



them the foundation of America,” Huffman said.

The students then walked across the street to Johnson’s boyhood home, which still has all of the furniture and appliances the home had when Johnson lived there.

The next stop on the trip was the pioneer family settlement located on the Johnson ranch. Here, students toured homes, barns and farmland set up as it was when Johnson lived there. The international visitors saw the way these farmers lived, including how they made everything, from soap to sausage.

“My family lives in a city, so my kids are not exposed to a countryside environment. That was a good experience for them to see how ranch life was like,” Daribish said.

The final stop was the “Little White House,” a place on Johnson’s ranch where he spent much of his time running the country when away from Washington. This attraction not only had an old Air Force One presidential plane but also an Oval Office-style podium and backdrop. A garage housed many of Johnson’s classic cars. Nearby was a large house where Johnson and his wife lived and where Lady Bird Johnson lived after Johnson’s death.

“He spent so much time actually running the office of the presidency from his home. That highlights the modesty of his lifestyle and that he was well-rooted,” Huffman said.

By visiting these locations in Johnson City, the students were able to experience the life of the former president in a personal way, Huffman said. They saw where he grew up, where he enjoyed walks with his wife and where he did business as the president of the United States.

“He started his career as a teacher in a very poor environment, saw how education was vital in poor societies, and then took those experiences to the capital and helped develop those great programs in education and for society,” Daribish said.

“He played a major role in civil rights. He saw families that were poor, and they didn’t get an education. He wanted to change that,” Stophel said.

The trip was full of similar learning experiences for the inter-





*Celebrating 20 Years 1991 - 2011*

## What does being the 'backbone of the Army' mean for NCOs?

*Editor's Note: This piece originally appeared in the Spring 1997 edition of The NCO Journal.*

By Sgt. 1st Class Cornell Swanier

The NCO Creed has many attributes I can identify with. Quite a few could be highlighted for discussion, but none can be debated.

There is, however, one attribute that rises above the others. When this attribute is viewed and understood by the men and women who wear this uniform, it should produce a renewed excellence toward duty and an acute awareness of one's self. That attribute states: The NCO is the "backbone of the Army."

What is a backbone? I envision a spinal column where the different vertebrae join together, enclosing and protecting the spinal cord. I see many vertebrae, regardless of size or position, working together for that common goal of protection. Whether twisting, turning or bending, each vertebra performs its task to the fullest of its ability. And here we are, varying in rank and job title, working together as one. Knowing that, we depend on each other to execute our duties to the best of our abilities.

So when the twists, turns and bends come in our individual lives, in our sections or in our units, we will still be able to stand.

The word "backbone" symbolizes a strength that is rarely seen, not often talked about, but always present.

The backbone, the foundation, the NCO, has a groundwork not laid with mortar or cement, but with a strong sense of pride. The backbone is pride that weathers the elements of change, a pride that turns a task into a job of excellence, a pride, though encompassed by hard stripes, still has a heart of compassion. That compassion reaches our fellow comrades, inspiring them to be the best they can be. The backbone is a pride that goes on from sunup to sundown and from sundown to sunup. It shelters and blankets a nation.

That pride, that compassion, that strength of character, is the infallible proof you are the backbone of the Army.

*Cornell Swanier retired from the Army as a first sergeant and currently lives in Atlanta, Ga. He is the executive director of the Ketia4Kidz Foundation, a charity for the children of active-duty military personnel. The foundation was started by his daughter, Ketia Swanier, who is a guard for the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury.*




Above: Forces Sgt. Major Raphael Oa of Papua New Guinea reads a display during a tour in Johnson City, Texas.

Left: Texas Rep. Joe Pickett speaks to the international students of USASMA's Class 61 during their visit to the Texas Capitol.

national students of Class 61. During their visit to central Texas, the students not only learned about American life, but they also learned about its rich history.

"I hope that the San Antonio trip added to their understanding of the vast diversity of America as a country, because they will be comparing it to the Colorado and D.C. trips," said Master Sgt. David Tookmanian, who will be a student of Class 62 at USASMA.

"I hope that from this trip the students receive a better understanding of our way of life," Huffman said. "So, when they're working with Americans in any theater of operations, they understand us. By understanding someone, you help break down barriers." 

To contact Spc. David M. Gafford, visit the NCO Journal website at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal>.



CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN ARMIES

# Building lifelong PARTNERSHIPS

FOR NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Maj. Lisa Hunter  
U.S. Army Europe

Senior NCOs in U.S. Army Europe took American Soldiers' "train as you fight" concept international during the fifth annual Conference of European Armies for Noncommissioned Officers May 24–27 in Székesfehérvár, Hungary.

This year's conference, co-hosted by the Hungarian Joint Forces and USAREUR, focused on the challenge of lifelong learning, a conundrum facing NCOs from every country.

"This conference is unique in that it brings together some of the most senior noncommissioned officers from armed forces all over Europe," explained Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Capel, senior enlisted advisor of USAREUR. "The purpose of the conference is to encourage professional development among the European land forces and to establish relationships and networks among the senior noncommissioned officers."

NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan's command sergeant major, U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Beam, gives a briefing to senior enlisted leaders May 26 at the Conference of European Armies for Noncommissioned Officers in Székesfehérvár, Hungary.

NCOs from 38 European countries, the United States and Canada attended the conference. The participants were all senior enlisted leaders. Most are their nations' highest-ranking enlisted leaders, equivalent in rank to the sergeant major of the Army in the United States. Many are graduates of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. The conference is designed to strengthen partnerships and facilitate cooperation, Capel said.

This year, participants gathered at the Hungarian Joint Forces headquarters in Székesfehérvár, about 40 miles from Budapest. The conference focused on topics near and dear to every NCO's heart — training and education — as well as subjects as diverse as an overview of NATO's Afghanistan training mission and a briefing on the mission of the U.S. Army Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization.







The conference gave everyone a chance to learn and to teach, said Command Sgt. Maj. László Tóth, command sergeant major of the Hungarian Joint Forces Command.

“The issue of lifelong learning is a big challenge for the future of all armies,” Tóth said.

The sergeant major said he knew the Hungarian armed forces were in for a major change when, in 1990, both U.S. and Soviet aircraft landed at the air base where he was stationed. Since then, building the Hungarian army’s NCO corps has been the biggest challenge facing his armed services. Tóth explained that Hungary has followed the examples of other armies to construct a unique Hungarian force.

“Twenty-five years ago, the army reflected the Soviet style. Everything was in the officers’ hands.” Now, Tóth said, the army is radically different. “NCOs have power as leaders. That means they have to accept the responsibility that comes with that power.”

Other conference participants echoed those sentiments. For example, Command Sgt. Maj. Darius Masiulis, a member of the National Defense Voluntary Forces of the Armed Forces of Lithuania, said his forces used the U.S. Army’s enlisted promotion system as a model for their own.

Masiulis, a graduate of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Course, also noted that his own professional development has been enhanced through partnership and interaction with his international colleagues.

“I brought back a lot of ideas and suggestions [from USASMA] that were implemented,” he said. Masiulis said the nine-month course also enabled him to build a multinational network of European and U.S. sergeants major.

Likewise, the conference offered something of a reunion for many participants — an opportunity to reacquaint with coalition partners from previous deployments, conferences and academy classes — in addition to its professional development opportunities.

Slovenian Armed Forces Sgt. Maj. of the Army Janez Šmid has attended all five of the annual NCO conferences. They are opportunities to learn while seeing old friends and making new ones, he said.

Because it is a small nation, Slovenia must be clever in its approaches to change and innovation, he explained. So, it adopts good ideas from other armies.

“Training and development are the areas that are changing most in the Slovenian military right now,” Šmid said.

To help them focus on those areas, Slovenian forces have trained with the

European and U.S. senior enlisted leaders discuss training during a tactical display event during the conference. The Hungarian Joint Forces and U.S. Army Europe co-hosted the fifth annual event.

U.S. Army quite a bit, particularly with USAREUR. To illustrate that partnership, he pointed to the fact that Slovenian troops who deploy to Afghanistan or Kosovo train with American Soldiers at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany.

Šmid, a graduate of the U.S. Army First Sergeants Course and Sergeants Major Course, said his network of professional NCO colleagues has been invaluable.

“You meet these guys again — all over the world, in places like Iraq. They make your job that much easier,” he said.

Capel said it has taken just a few years for European forces to embrace the conference, and member countries’ senior NCOs are already looking forward to next year’s event.

“This whole concept may have started slowly, but it’s really picked up speed. We used to emphasize joint training, but now, it’s all about the international training. Most of these countries are our coalition partners in Afghanistan, so this conference is an excellent example of training as we fight.”



# Roll Call

## OF THE FALLEN

### Operation New Dawn

*Sgt. 1st Class Clifford E. Beattie, 37, Medical Lake, Wash., May 22, 2011 ♦ Spc. Emilio J. Campo Jr., 20, Madelia, Minn., June 6, 2011  
 ♦ Spc. Michael B. Cook Jr., 27, Middletown, Ohio, June 6, 2011 ♦ Spc. Christopher B. Fishbeck, 24, Victorville, Calif., June 6, 2011 ♦  
 Spc. Robert P. Hartwick, 20, Rockbridge, Ohio, June 6, 2011 ♦ Pfc. Ramon Mora Jr., 19, Ontario, Calif., May 22, 2011 ♦ Pfc. Michael C.  
 Olivieri, 26, Chicago, Ill., June 6, 2011*

### Operation Enduring Freedom

*Sgt. Amaru Aguilar, 26, Miami, Fla., May 13, 2011 ♦ Pvt. Thomas C. Allers, 23, Plainwell, Mich., May 23, 2011 ♦ Staff Sgt. Martin R.  
 Apolinar, 28, Glendale, Ariz., May 29, 2011 ♦ Sgt. Christopher R. Bell, 21, Golden, Miss., June 4, 2011 ♦ Sgt. Aaron J. Blasjo, 25,  
 Riverside, Calif., May 29, 2011 ♦ Pfc. William S. Blevins, 21, Sardinia, Ohio, May 23, 2001 ♦ Sgt. Thomas A. Bohall, 25, Bel Aire, Kan.,  
 May 26, 2011 ♦ Spc. Richard C. Emmons III, 22, North Granby, Conn., May 31, 2011 ♦ Pfc. Matthew J. England, 22, Gainesville, Mo.,  
 June 8, 2011 ♦ Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bradley J. Gaudet, 31, Gladewater, Texas, June 5, 2011 ♦ Spc. Adam S. Hamilton, 22, Kent, Ohio,  
 May 28, 2011 ♦ Pfc. John C. Johnson, 28, Phoenix, Ariz., May 27, 2011 ♦ Cpl. Brandon M. Kirton, 25, Centennial, Colo., May 18, 2011  
 ♦ Pvt. Andrew M. Krippner, 20, Garland, Texas, May 23, 2011 ♦ Staff Sgt. Kristofferson B. Lorenzo, 33, Chula Vista, Calif.,  
 May 23, 2011 ♦ Spc. Bradley L. Melton, 29, Rolla, Mo., May 16, 2011 ♦ Staff Sgt. Edward D. Mills Jr., 29, New Castle, Pa.,  
 May 26, 2011 ♦ Pfc. Anthony M. Nunn, 19, Burnet, Texas, May 30, 2011 ♦ Staff Sgt. Ergin V. Osman, 35, Jacksonville, N.C.,  
 May 26, 2011 ♦ Spc. Adam J. Patton, 21, Port Orchard, Wash., May 26, 2011 ♦ Sgt. Joshua D. Powell, 28, Quitman, Texas, June 4, 2011  
 ♦ Pvt. Cheizray Pressley, 21, North Charleston, S.C., May 16, 2011 ♦ Sgt. Louie A. Ramos Velazquez, 39, Camuy, Puerto Rico,  
 May 26, 2011 ♦ Spc. Brian D. Riley Jr., 24, Longwood, Fla., May 15, 2011 ♦ 1st Lt. John M. Runkle, 27, West Salem, Ohio,  
 May 26, 2011 ♦ Sgt. Robert C. Schlote, 26, Norfolk, Neb., May 14, 2011 ♦ Capt. Joseph W. Schultz, 36, Port Angeles, Wash.,  
 May 29, 2001 ♦ Staff Sgt. David D. Self, 29, Pearl, Miss., May 16, 2011 ♦ Sgt. Jeffrey C. S. Sherer, 29, Four Oaks, N.C., June 2, 2011  
 ♦ Spc. Devin A. Snyder, 20, Cohocton, N.Y., June 4, 2011 ♦ Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher R. Thibodeau, 28, Chesterland, Ohio,  
 May 26, 2011 ♦ Pvt. Lamarol J. Tucker, 26, Gainesville, Fla., May 16, 2011 ♦ Pfc. Robert L. Voakes Jr., 21, L'Anse, Mich., June 4, 2011  
 ♦ Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kenneth R. White, 35, Fort Collins, Colo., June 5, 2011*

*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 13, 2011, and June 10, 2011.*



SOLDIERS LEADERS  
CIVILIANS FAMILIES

# Take 5

before lighting  
that fuse!

## Don't be a Dud

- Only use fireworks outdoors
- Obey local laws
- Always have a garden hose or bucket of water nearby
- Don't alter or combine fireworks
- Wear safety glasses
- Never allow children to handle fireworks
- Never use homemade fireworks
- Never relight a dud firework. Soak it in water after 20 minutes
- Alcohol and fireworks don't mix. Have a 'designated shooter'



What Have You Done  
to Save a Life Today?

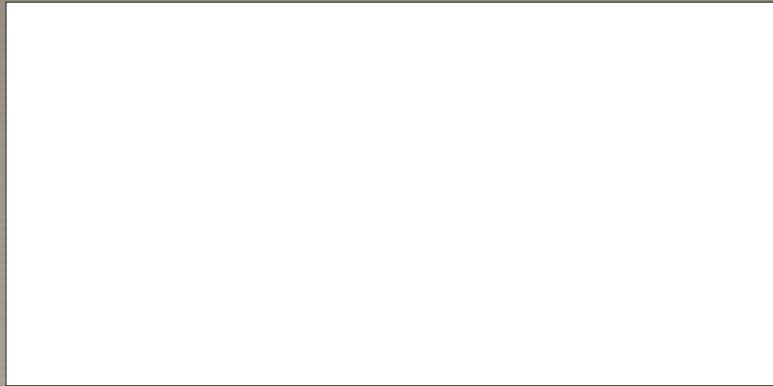


ARMY SAFE  
IS ARMY STRONG





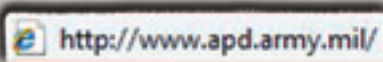
OFFICIAL BUSINESS



## How to get *The NCO Journal* at your unit.

Individual subscriptions to *The NCO Journal* are available through the Government Printing Office. The subscription program is open to all individuals and non-government organizations. Individual copies are available for \$5 domestic and \$7 foreign. To order online, visit the GPO Bookstore at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov> and type in "NCO Journal" at the search field. After the search completes, click on the shopping cart next to the title and follow the instructions provided. The GPO also accepts orders by calling toll-free at 866-512-1800. Any unit with a publications account can update its 12-Series to request *The NCO Journal* using the same procedure it uses to request all other publications. Units can update their 12-Series at <http://www.apd.army.mil>. The IDN for *The NCO Journal* is 050041.

1. Go to Internet Explorer and type "www.apd.army.mil" in the address bar



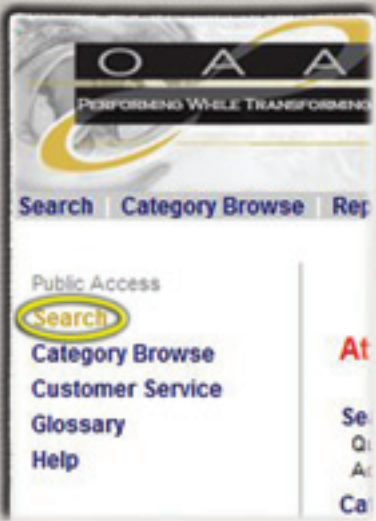
2. Click on the "Ordering" link



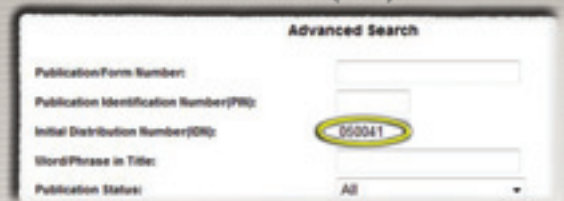
3. Log in via AKO Password or CAC



4. Find and click on the "Search" link



5. Type 050041 into the Initial Distribution Number(IDN)



6. Find the Latest Issue, then click "Available"

Publication Title	Issue	EA	000	Date	Availability
THE U.S. ARMY, COMMANDANT,		EA	000	07/01/2009	Available
THE U.S. ARMY, COMMANDANT,		EA	000	09/01/2009	Available
THE U.S. ARMY, COMMANDANT,		EA	000	10/01/2009	Available
THE U.S. ARMY, COMMANDANT,		EA	000	12/01/2009	Available
THE U.S. ARMY, COMMANDANT,		EA	000	01/01/2010	Available
THE US ARMY, COMMANDANT,		EA	000	05/05/1992	Available
THE US ARMY, COMMANDANT,		EA	000	07/01/1992	Available
THE US ARMY, COMMANDANT,		EA	000	09/01/1992	Available
THE US ARMY, COMMANDANT,		EA	000	01/01/1993	Available

7. You will need to set up an account if you don't have one with OAA to continue the ordering process

*Celebrating 20 Years*  
 1991 - 2011

Visit us online:  
<https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal/>



We are also on AKO:  
<https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/138349>