

Riders Sharpen Skills During Operation Gryphon Glide

STAFF. SGT. WILLIAM WHITESIDE
201st Battlefield Surveillance Brigade
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

The 201st Battlefield Surveillance Brigade conducted its first brigade-wide motorcycle safety ride July 15, 2011. After recent motorcycle deaths on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, one of which involved a brigade Soldier, unit Leaders decided it was time to bring all of the brigade's riders together to promote motorcycle safety. Col. Paul Norwood directed the 109th Military Intelligence Battalion to take the lead for the brigade, due to the level of riding experience in the unit, and recruit personnel to execute a safety ride to standard. The battalion's motorcycle mentor took the lead in planning this event.



The purpose of this ride was to ensure the battalion's riders brought in their motorcycles, registration, insurance, Motorcycle Safety Foundation Certification Card, and all personal protective equipment for validation; and to allow senior Leaders to recognize and interact with riders. Each motorcycle was inspected per the Joint Base Lewis-McChord privately owned vehicle inspection sheet and each rider was interviewed on their experience, safety and routine maintenance of their motorcycle.

Staff. Sgt. Tyrone Greggs joined the battalion's motorcycle mentor in personally conducting the inspections and providing each rider with a brigade safety inspection card. The inspections were conducted on July 8, 2011, so riders could correct any deficiencies before the ride. The majority of the deficiencies involved worn brakes — nearly half of the bikes inspected

revealed brake pads with only 30 percent of the wear remaining. Another common deficiency was loose drive chains or belts. Pointing out these deficiencies allowed the inspectors to show each rider how to identify and correct them in the future.

The ride started at the Northwest Harley-Davidson in Lacey, Wash. Prior to the ride a safety brief was conducted, followed by opening remarks by the 109th Military Intelligence Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Douglas Woodall, who is the brigade's senior rider. The ride was supported by a lead vehicle with a navigator who was combat lifesaver certified. A chase vehicle transported the battalion's medics, extra fuel and towed a trailer in case of a breakdown.

The weather at the beginning of the ride was sunny, perfect for the riders as they traveled down U.S. Highway 101 to Ocean Shores, Wash. The riders stopped in Montesano to stretch their legs, get coffee and top off on fuel as needed. From there, they rode through Aberdeen along the coast to their destination at the Ramada Ocean Shores. There they enjoyed a full buffet lunch and then the brigade conducted a safety stand down supported by a visit from Lt. Michael Turcott of the Washington State Patrol. Turcott, who has been involved in promoting motorcycle safety for more than 20 years, answered questions about common riding problems and state riding laws. Following that there was a discussion on the importance of good quality safety gear by a rider who had been involved in a serious motorcycle accident in November 2008. He brought the helmet and gloves he was wearing that day to show the riders how important it is to wear quality safety gear.

Upon completion of the safety stand down, Woodall discussed the motorcycle safety program and invited all riders to participate in the battalion's safety activities. After another safety brief, the riders prepared for the return trip. On the way back, the riders encountered rain, which proved to be a great learning experience with the support and safety provided by the ride.

The overall ride was successful, not only for the brigade's leadership but for the riders as well. Riders had a chance to build upon their riding skills, better equipping them to be safe as they enjoy the sport of motorcycle riding.