

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Newly-formed Guard unit moves out on first deployment

■ 1st Infantry Division Main Command Post-Operational Detachment Soldiers wished farewell during August ceremony

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**
Acting Editor

Soldiers, their families and distinguished guests graced Lincoln's Haymarket Park stands on Aug. 5 for the mobilization ceremony of around 90 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the new Nebraska Army National Guard headquarters detachment of the active Army's 1st Infantry Division.

The Soldiers are members of the newly-organized 1st Division Main Command Post - Operational Detachment, commonly called a MCPOD. The MCPOD is a new type

of unit designed to augment and enhance an active division headquarters staff during mobilizations.

The detachment has a number of Soldiers assigned to it who are specialists in such areas as intelligence, legal affairs, infantry, artillery, aviation, signal, administration, military police, engineers, chemical, logistics and public affairs.

According to a senior 1st Infantry Division leader, the Nebraska Soldiers are now an important part of the organization's efforts.

"There couldn't be a better time to join the 1st Infantry Division," said Brig. Gen. William Turner, 1st Infantry Division deputy commanding general. "You will be part of history as we springboard into the 100th year anniversary of our great division. You are joining a long line of Soldiers that have served in every major conflict, with the exception of the Korean War, since the formation of the division in 1917."

An estimated 750 - 1,000 people attended the send-off ceremony at Haymarket Park. According to the Nebraska National Guard's adjutant general, that turnout was extremely important in sending a message to the Soldiers and their families as they prepare for the challenges of a deployment.

"What you, all of you, are doing here is extremely important," said Maj. Gen. Daryl



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Final Touches: Sgt. Megan Liekhus, an intelligence analyst with the 1st Infantry Division Main Command Post - Operational Detachment, adjusts Pfc. Mariah Robinson's beret before the start of the MCPOD's send-off ceremony on Aug. 5 at Haymarket Park in Lincoln.

Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general. "It has meaning, and it continues a long tradition of Nebraskans standing shoulder to shoulder together in collective support of our National Guard members, of all our military members and their families who over the last 15 years have been called upon to do so much, to sacrifice so much, for their fellow Americans, for their fellow Nebraskans. It's a proud moment for the Nebraska National Guard and all of Nebraska."

Bohac reminded the Soldiers that while they should be proud to wear the patch of the 1st Infantry Division, they are still members

of the Nebraska National Guard.

"You come from a long line of proud, committed Citizen Soldiers from this state who have done tremendous work in support of their state and nation," Bohac said. "Never forget that. Never forget where you come from. Take pride in this, Nebraska pride, because it will serve you well."

While all the ceremony's speakers thanked the families for their role in the upcoming deployment, Lt. Col. Darin Huss, MCPOD commander, expressed his gratitude through heartfelt words and an overwhelm-

See MCPOD on 4.

Nebraska National Guard Museum reaches major milestone in July

By **Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes**
State Public Affairs Officer

After years of near-constant planning, construction, significant fundraising and preparations, the vision for a state-of-the-art Nebraska National Guard Museum took a major step toward ultimate reality when the first phase of displays were dedicated, July 4, in Seward, Nebraska.

During a nearly hour-long, patriotic ceremony that served as the kick-off for Seward's 4th of

July festivities, the museum's new temporary exhibit gallery, learning center, theater and two temporary exhibits detailing the Nebraska National Guard's history from 1854-1940 were officially dedicated.

The ceremony brought senior Nebraska National Guard leaders, Nebraska National Guard Historical Society members, local community leaders and approximately 400 others together on the street in front of the new museum under brilliantly blue skies that were complimented by patriotic

bunting and flags flying in front of the facility.

"Today, I am honored to be with you to offer my thanks to many of the individuals involved... the members of my staff at the Nebraska National Guard and Nebraska Military Department, the volunteers of our Nebraska National Guard Historical Society, and the members of the greater Seward community, many of whom have generously supported our efforts to preserve and to tell the stories of our Nebraska National Guard Soldiers

and Airmen, their families and the communities that supported them during times of peace, during times of local, state and national emergencies, and during times of war," said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general.

"For it is through your efforts that we have achieved what we have here today: the opening chapter of what we believe will be one of the best National Guard museums in the country."

From its inception, the new Nebraska National Guard museum

was viewed as an opportunity to build upon the work of the old Nebraska National Guard museum, which had been housed in the historic State Arsenal building on the old State Fair Grounds in Lincoln from the mid-1980s until its movement in 2013 to make way for the new University of Nebraska Innovation Campus. Unlike that museum, which was open primarily during the 10 days of the annual State Fair and was staffed by volunteers from the Nebraska National Guard

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Lierz installed as state's top enlisted Airman

By **Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton**
Staff Photojournalist

At a Joint Force Headquarters change of responsibility ceremony, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, handed the enlisted sword of responsibility of state command chief master sergeant to Chief Master Sgt. Douglas Lierz, Aug. 6, in Lincoln.

Lierz takes the reins as the state's top enlisted Airman from retiring Nebraska Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster, who served in the position since his appointment in September 2012. Before his appointment as state command chief, Lierz served as the command chief master sergeant of the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln.

According to Bohac, Forster's legacy

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Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton

New Chief In Lincoln: Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, presents the state command chief master sergeant sword to Chief Master Sgt. Douglas Lierz during an Aug. 6 change of responsibility ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln.

Army Guard paratroopers seize international title

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**
Acting Editor

Four parachutists from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, out of the Mead Training Site earned the top team award at the 33rd Annual Leapfest International Static Line Parachute Competition on Aug. 6 in West Kingston, Rhode Island.

The 165th Quartermaster team, comprised of Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Borrell, Staff Sgt. Isvi Machuca, Sgt. Beau Meuhling and Sgt. Trace Thompson, placed first out of 30 international and 30 state teams - including two from the Nebraska National Guard: Company C, 1-134th Cavalry (Long-Range Sur-

veillance), from Beatrice, and the 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) from Omaha.

This is the third consecutive year Nebraska has sent teams to Leapfest in recent memory, according to 165th team leader Borrell. He said all three teams went in 2015 where they learned how the event worked and how to be competitive. This year, they "cherry-picked" teams based on total jumps and overall performance - using the competition as an incentive to motivate Soldiers.

"The individuals that go to Leapfest are all experienced and there's a lot of value we get from this," Borrell said. "It gives us an opportunity to interact with the

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Inside

Nebraska Army Guard engineers add to Greenleaf Training Site's capabilities

See story and photos on 3.



Cavalry Soldiers use annual training to polish gunnery skills

See story and photos on 7.



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NEWS DIGEST

■ Carter: 'Force of the Future' requires everyone's commitment

WASHINGTON (DoD News)—The Force of the Future takes commitment by all service members to modernize the U.S. military and keep it strong, Defense Secretary Ash Carter told Sailors, July 28, at Naval Station Great Lakes in Illinois.

The secretary said in his troop talk that continually improving how the Defense Department manages, develops and recruits its people "does not mean we're not doing a good job. It only means we could do it better."

Carter said he develops ideas for the Force of the Future by visiting with and speaking to service members, adding that he appreciates their insights.

The secretary talked about some of the initiatives he's instilled to strengthen the Force of the Future, such as ensuring the military has the best in technology, accessing particular talents the military needs in its force recruitment, the ability to train outside DoD for personal development, improving the parental leave policy and opening up all military specialties, including combat, to women.

"It doesn't mean that everybody meets standards and everybody gets selected, but the principle of the all-volunteer force is we

get to pick and choose. That's why we have such good people," he said.

And people comprise DoD's greatest asset, Carter said.

The U.S. military stands for good things, the secretary said. "People like us for that ... they like us because of how our people conduct themselves, and what they stand for," he said.

When he travels around the world, the secretary said he hears how other nations enjoy working with the U.S. military.

"It's a strength of America, but the biggest strength we have is our people. That's where you all come in," Carter told the service members.

The secretary said he swore in seven Navy recruits that morning at a local Military Entrance Processing Station, and told them serving in the military is the noblest thing they can do.

"There's nothing better than being part of feeling or protecting our people, leaving a better world for our children," he said.

"You can see in those young eyes the beginning of them getting that and that they feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves. And it's an inspiration that, for me... never stops," the secretary said.

■ Defense Department studies 'Terminator' weapons conundrum

WASHINGTON (DoD NEWS)—Maybe the idea behind the "Terminator" movie franchise isn't so far-fetched.

In the "Terminator" films and TV shows, a worldwide computer defense network becomes self-aware and sees humans as the enemy and attacks.

Scientists around the world are currently working on artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, uses for big data and other innovations and technologies that pose ethical questions. DoD is examining those questions, said Air Force Gen. Paul J. Selva, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He spoke about some of these ideas, Aug. 25, with Kathleen Hicks, the senior vice president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The idea of computers driving cars, landing airplanes, delivering packages or exploring planets is already here. Singapore is testing driverless taxis. Google is looking to do the same in Pittsburgh shortly.

There are a number of autonomous vehicles on Mars. The U.S. military has a fleet of remotely piloted vehicles that operate worldwide and oceanographers have been using remotely piloted submersibles for years.

But the idea of autonomous weapons systems poses some real ethical challenges, Selva said. DoD is working with experts on ethics — both from inside and outside the department — on the issues posed, he said. They are looking at the pitfalls of what happens when technology is brought into the execution of warfare.

"I am not bashful about what we do," Selva said. "My job as a military leader is to witness unspeakable violence on an enemy. In the end, when you send me or any Soldier, Sailor,



U.S. Air Force photo

Automated Patrol Vehicle: A mobile detection assessment response system patrols the perimeter of an airfield in Djibouti, July 9, 2016. It is an automated patrol vehicle able to navigate paths and detect threats in the vicinity.

Airman or Marine from the United States ... out to defend the interests of our nation, our job is to defeat the enemy."

How service members accomplish the mission is governed by laws and conventions, he said. "One of the places where we spend a great deal of time is determining whether or not the tools we are developing absolve humans of the decision to inflict violence on the enemy. That is a fairly bright line that we are not willing to cross."

A true autonomous weapon system would be programmed to perform a mission and the decision to use deadly force would be left up to the on-board computer within the program parameters. That is unacceptable to the

Lengyel becomes National Guard Bureau's 28th chief

WASHINGTON (DoD News) — Citizen-warriors and the entire National Guard family are vital to the security of the United States, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said at the National Guard Bureau change-of-responsibility ceremony at the Pentagon, Aug. 3.

The secretary also promoted Air National Guard Lt. Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel to general. Lengyel takes the National Guard Bureau chief reins from retiring Army Gen. Frank J. Grass. Lengyel had served as bureau vice chief, and Grass had served as the first Guard bureau chief on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.



Lengyel

The days of the National Guard serving exclusively as a strategic reserve that was called up only in emergencies are over, Carter said. "The post-9/11 environment has proven the Guard is an indispensable component of the Total Force, in day-to-day activities and large-scale operations, in planning and execution, and in conventional conflicts and novel threats," he said.

The more deeply integrated the Guard becomes, the better prepared the nation becomes, the secretary said. "The presence, skill and readiness of citizen-warriors across the country give us the agility and flexibility to handle unexpected demands, both at home and abroad. It is an essential component of our total force, and a linchpin of our readiness," Carter said.

That critical element the Guard brings to the Total Force is one reason why the Guard bureau chief position was elevated in 2012 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff level, the secretary pointed out.

"General Frank Grass has led this historic transition with character and skill," Carter said. "He's helped increase our rapid deployment capability to respond to any crisis and strengthened the Guard's partnerships at the local, state, federal - and international - levels. He has been a strong and steady voice at the table for the men and women of the National Guard."

The Guard keeps the skies free from danger, responds to disaster with compassion and professionalism at a moment's notice and stands watch at home and abroad, Carter said, telling Guard members, "You responded when we needed you during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan all those years."

Those qualities have been the spirit, mission and enduring commitment of the Guard through the centuries, "and never more so than over the past 15 years," Carter noted, adding, "Since Sept. 11 (2001), the men and women of our Army and Air National Guard, and their families, have answered the nation's call to deploy over 787,000 times."

Today's Guard is battle-tested and is an agile, flexible, deployable force with combat experience and a broad range of skills gained both on the battlefield and in civilian life, the secretary said.

"As history has shown that we can never perfectly predict the strategic future, we must also be flexible and agile in preparing for unknowns that we can't anticipate today," Carter said.

"As chief of the National Guard these past four years," he told Grass, "you've been a courageous and skillful leader - exactly the one the nation needed, and you've seized every opportunity to make progress, and our Total Force is stronger as a result."

The National Guard family will remain in the good hands of another proven strategic thinker in Grass' vice chief and new bureau chief, Lengyel, the secretary said. Perhaps most importantly, Carter said, Lengyel "knows what it means" to be a military family member after his military pilot father was shot down in Vietnam and became a prisoner of war in 1969, only to return to service there as just one of two former POW pilots in 1975.

"We cannot predict how, or when, or where, the men and women of our National Guard will be called on to serve their fellow citizens," the secretary said, adding that because of Grass' strong leadership, the National Guard is an indispensable force, trained and ready to respond wherever it's needed.

United States military, Selva said.

"We have insisted that as we look at innovations over the next couple of decades that one of the benchmarks in that process is that we not build a system that absolves our human leaders of the decision to execute a military operation, and that we not create weapons that are wholly and utterly autonomous of human interaction," he said.

But the U.S. decision does not mean an enemy would follow suit. In the world of autonomy, a completely robotic system that can make a decision on causing harm is already possible, he said. "It's not terribly refined, it's not terribly good, but it is here," the general said. "As we develop systems that include things like artificial intelligence

and autonomy, we have to be very careful that we don't design them in a way where those systems actually absolve humans of that decision."

The discussion needs to occur, the general said, and the United States must be prepared for nations or nonstate actors to violate any convention that the world draws up with respect to autonomous weapons.

"Until we understand what we want the limits to be," Selva said, "we don't have a baseline to use to determine if someone is moving down the path of violating a convention that could create something like a Terminator that adds an incredible amount of complexity and with no conscience to what happens on the battlefield."

Governor honors Guard's top Soldier



Photo by Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Sgt. Calvin Koziol Day: At a ceremony at the State Capitol Building in Lincoln on July 5, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts signed a proclamation making July 5, 2016, Sergeant Calvin Koziol Day in honor of the Nebraska Army National Guard member who recently was named National Guard Soldier of the Year. Koziol of Albion, Nebraska, competed in the Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition in the Soldier Category to earn this prestigious title. He is the first Nebraskan to become National Guard Soldier of the Year.

Prairie Soldier

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Letters, articles, notices of events, photographs and art are welcome, but may be edited for clarity or brevity. Publication of any submission is at the discretion of the editor. Submissions can also be emailed to kevin.j.hynes.mil@mail.mil. All photos must be high resolution and include complete caption information.

The views and opinions expressed in this newspaper are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the Military Department of Nebraska or the U.S. Department of Defense.

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Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Exterior Additions: Staff Sgt. Brandon Lee, Sgt. Alexander King and Sgt. Christopher Hansen of the 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) work to add siding to the newly renovated pistol range command tower, July 18, at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

Vertical Victories

■623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) spends annual training renovating Greenlief Training Site ranges, building new full-length obstacle course

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Acting Editor

Soldiers assigned to Wahoo's 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) spent their 2016 annual training putting their skills to good use to further the state's overall readiness mission at Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, July 9-22.

Two platoons from the 623rd steadily worked to complete simultaneous construction projects at two of Greenlief's ranges, while also making progress on a new full-length obstacle course.

"This is one of the most satisfying aspects of being a vertical engineer," said 1st Lt. Tyler Billings, platoon leader. "We provide a great, stable product the state can use to train and have ready for future missions."

One of the two range projects included

replacing the command tower at the pistol range. The Soldiers disassembled the original rickety tower down to only its posts, and then completely rebuilt a sound structure of their own design, which included siding, windows and electricity.

The second project included uprooting the old M203 grenade launcher range and replacing all the worn-out targets and bunkers. The Soldiers worked on both projects congruently, which gave them the ability to cross-train on a variety of skills.

"We tried to have the (non-commissioned officers) help mentor the junior enlisted Soldiers more," Billings said. "We had them cross-train not only with certain (military occupational specialties), but with civilian specialties as well to help the unit function better overall."

Spc. Damian Schneider, a carpentry and masonry specialist, was able to cross-train

with electrical work on the pistol range's command tower. He said he enjoyed the consistency with and importance of building bunkers for the M203 range during the two-week annual training, as opposed to the usual monthly two-days of training.

"It's nice to know it's going to get some use," Schneider said. "I hope it lasts for a long while."

Third platoon's construction supervisor, Sgt. Alexander King, shared the same proud sentiment that accompanies building something for the state to use.

"It's nice to be able to come out here and know you built it," King said. "It's a good feeling."

While many of the Soldiers appreciated this year's annual training at Greenlief, it wasn't the mission they had first prepared for. Originally, the unit was slated to travel overseas for a construction project in Slovenia, a country in Central Europe. However, that plan changed last minute over budget and travel concerns, according to the 623rd 1st Sgt. Curt Koehler.

"We have a very resilient bunch," Koehler said. "When the overseas AT was scrapped, we found the next best thing. They're still getting good training here and there will always be other opportunities in the future."

While the two range projects were complete and ready to use after just 10 days, the third project has a longer construction timeline. Still, the 623rd made quick work laying the foundation for the state's new full-length obstacle course.

According to 2nd Lt. Trevor Bellows, officer-in-charge of obstacle course construction, the 18-obstacle project is expected to be complete by October. However, at the rate the 623rd was working during their annual training, it might be finished ahead of schedule.

"The guys are working really hard, but that's what they do as engineers," Bellows said. "They're motivated to see something they built used for training."

Bellows said many of the 623rd Soldiers at Greenlief helped build the training site's grenade course during last year's annual training. He said each year, the goal is the same regardless of where the Soldiers train: to learn new skills they can use in their military careers, and that they can carry over to the civilian side.



Heavy Lifting: Spc. Damian Schneider carries fresh-cut logs used to rebuild bunkers for the renovated M203 grenade launcher range at Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.



Saw Job: A Soldier assigned to the 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) uses a saw to cut a post for one of the 18 obstacles being built for a new course at Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.



Just Right: Soldiers assigned to the 623rd Engineer Company work together to level and align posts needed for one of the obstacles being built for a new course at Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb. The Soldiers built the obstacle course as part of the company's 2016 two-week annual training.

Chemical battalion's leadership team changes in June

By Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen
Staff Photojournalist

Units of the 126th Chemical Battalion conducted a change of command and change of responsibility ceremony at Camp Ashland this past June.

Lt. Col. Tom Mortimer III, the outgoing battalion commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Hansen, the outgoing battalion command sergeant major, both moved on from their battalion responsibilities much in the same way they started – together.

“(Hansen), this has been a great journey together,” Mortimer said. “It has been a rare privilege to be able to come into command and have a change of responsibility occur on the same day as I go out of command.”

The senior battalion officer recognized Hansen as a valuable asset during his command.

“One of the most valuable relationships I’ve maintained in the military was my relationship with the NCOs,” Mortimer said. “They have been important in shaping who I’ve become and you have added to that list.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Jeremy Ten Kley replaced Hansen as the new senior enlisted leader in the battalion. “Command Sergeant Major Ten Kley, welcome to the State of Nebraska,” Mortimer said.

“It’s a great day to be in the



Photos by Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

New Assignment: Lt. Col. Brian Metcalf holds the colors of his new battalion command during a change of command ceremony.

Army,” Hansen said.

Hansen gave a heartfelt speech and recognized the extra work his family has contributed to overall effort at home. Talking to his children, Hansen said, “Thanks for picking up the slack when I wasn’t around.”

Hansen also credited several senior officers in the audience.

“Mortimer, you took a risk on me, and I thank you for taking that risk,” he said. “General Bohac, thank for not hesitating...your confidence is absolutely contagious.”



Sword Presentation: Outgoing 126th Chemical Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Tom Mortimer, presents the non-commissioned officer sword to Command Sgt. Maj. Jeremy Ten Kley.

Speaking very highly about his former troops, Hansen gave a glowing review about the 126th Chemical Battalion.

“Most folks in this state have absolutely no idea what you guys have to do,” Hansen said. “You’re one of the most relevant units in the state; you’ll continue to be so. I know you’re ready in a moment’s notice to stand up and go wherever you need to go. Lastly, Ten Kley, congratulations on your selection. Welcome to Nebraska—it’s a great state. You’re getting a great battalion. These guys will fight every step of the way, there’s no worries there. So, again: It’s a great day to be in the Army.”

As the sergeants major made their way off the parade floor, the

change of command party was forming and making its way in front of the battalion.

“It’s kind of a unique day having both the sergeant major and commander go out at the same time,” said Col. Eric Teegerstrom, commander of the 92nd Troop Command.

Teegerstrom remarked positively about the outgoing battalion commander.

“This guy has been around; he’s done everything we’ve ever asked of him,” Teegerstrom said. “He has a positive influence on people; he makes people around him feel better about themselves. (Mortimer), good luck when you go up there to the brigade—I know you’ll do very well up there.”

MCPOD continued from page 1.

ing display of emotion.

“As your commander, I feel an inexpressible gratitude for the sacrifices you are making to be away from your own families in service to the American family,” Huss said. “One cannot put a price tag on the time away from your family. There are no makeup days for missed births, first steps, birthdays...”

Huss paused mid-sentence to compose his thoughts as tears began to fall.

“...dance recitals, football practices or graduations,” Huss continued. “There’s no compensation that can replace you missing the joys of every moment with your children and loved ones. However, just know their thoughts, their prayers, their love and respect will be with us every day during our service in Iraq.”

Huss then, while wiping tears from his eyes, recognized those family members who he called the “true unsung heroes of American security”—the children of the deploying MCPOD Soldiers.

“I know this is a difficult day for you,” he said. “As a father myself, I want to tell you this: you should be immensely proud of your parents. When you miss them the most, just remember that they are serving our nation because of their love for you and for the hope of making a world a safer place for not only you but your generation.”

“And to the loved ones of those leaving today, you might not be wearing our nation’s uniform, but you truly are serving our nation through your personal sacrifices and separation from your loved ones,” Huss added.

Among the families in attendance were Spc. Adam Pierce, his wife Cori, their 8-year-old son and about two rows of siblings, parents, cousins and more.

“I’m excited, nervous, a little all of the above,” Pierce said. “To my family, just stay strong. We’re going to get through it and it will be done in no time.”

Pierce said he’s looking forward to the uniqueness of the deployment and building camaraderie even more between the team. “It’s very interesting that we get to set the footprint and make the precedent of what is going to be expected of the Nebraska

National Guard when you compare us to the active Army,” he said. “We are now going to be the picture of what we’re supposed to be.”

Staff Sgt. Yvonne Wadas has 15 years of experience with the National Guard and has been deployed herself. She attended the send-off ceremony to support her sister, Sgt. Cheri Wadas, who is assigned to the MCPOD.

“I’m excited,” Cheri said about her first deployment. “It’s going to be different deploying with an active duty component from Fort Riley, so it’s kind of interesting not knowing what is really going to happen.”

“I’m just really proud of her,” Yvonne said. “She asked me what I thought (of the deployment), and I think she’s going to be happy she did it. Just try to stay positive because you can get kind of homesick and miss a lot of things, but she’ll appreciate a lot of the experience when she gets back home.”

Meredith Spears, wife of 1st Lt. Ja’Price Spears, a former active duty Air Force Airman and an Omaha police officer, said she is very proud of her husband’s willingness to sacrifice for others. She said she also feels the anxiety and pressure of experiencing her first deployment as a spouse.

“His general safety, that’s my primary concern,” Meredith said. “I know the training is top notch but it’s very unpredictable over there, so just not knowing what will happen on a day-to-day basis.”

Ja’Price has been through deployments before while in the Air Force, and Meredith said the emotions she’s feeling are similar to when her brother, a U.S. Marine, deployed in the past, but with additional concerns unique to a loving spouse. Still, the MCPOD deployment will be the first of its kind, so the family exchanged advice to one another.

“Try to maintain as regular of a routine as possible and trust that we are good at what we do, and we’ll be home soon enough,” Ja’Price said to his family.

“Stay safe, rely on that training and remember that we love you and we support you and try not worry about us back home,” Meredith said. “Just focus on the mission.”

The family plans to use iMes-



Welcome To The 1st Infantry Division: Members of the 1st Infantry Division Main Command Post - Operational Detachment, receive their new 1st Infantry Division hats and handshakes during the Aug. 5 send-off ceremony.



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Commander’s Comments: Lt. Col. Darin Huss, commander of the 1st Infantry Division Main Command Post - Operational Detachment, gestures to make a point while addressing the Haymarket Park crowd, Aug. 5.

saging, Skype and other electronic means to communicate throughout the deployment, while also sending care packages with all of his favorite things to share with the other Soldiers.

“Mom is an amazing baker,” Ja’Price said. “I’m interested in finding out what her cake tastes like after going through the mail.”

The official party for the cer-

emony included Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts, U.S. Senators Deb Fischer and Ben Sasse, U.S. Representatives Jeff Fortenberry and Adrian Smith, with a representative for Congressman Brad Ashford plus Bohac, Turner and Huss.

Ricketts said he was thrilled to learn there were more volunteers for the MCPOD than there were positions available to fulfill. “I can’t

“I am a guy that feels thankful every day,” Mortimer said. “This moment is special for me for a lot of reasons. It is a culmination of more than I could see or understand over 28 years ago, when I enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard as an armored crewman.”

Mortimer reflected on a military history that has involved the chemical battalion for many years as he turns over the command to Lt. Col. Brian Metcalf.

“Today marks the last day I will hold a leadership role in the 126th Chem Battalion,” he said. “I’ve been a company commander here. I ended that role and went into the S3 job and then into the (executive officer) job. Then, I left for a deployment and came back two and half years ago to command here—910 days ago today.”

“I did very little,” Mortimer said. He claimed that the Soldiers were the ones who did it all. They’ve stayed the course and they’ve trained—they’ve proven it through the eyes of others with external evaluations, he said proudly.

“I look back on many significant times in my life. Rarely do I understand the importance of a moment when I’m at that moment,” Mortimer said. “For me, this change of command and change of responsibility, today, represents one of those moments. Thanks for letting me be a part of this with you. Thank you for my new most significant experience as an officer.”

tell you how proud that makes me of your young men and women who agree to serve in the Nebraska National Guard,” Ricketts said. “It says something about their dedication, their commitment, their patriotism and of course it aligns exactly with the First Infantry Division’s motto ‘Duty First.’”

The MCPOD first formed earlier this spring. Since then, the detachment has participated in several major training exercises with their active Army counterparts at Fort Riley, Kansas. Following the Aug. 5 ceremony, the MCPOD is attending additional training with the Active Army’s 1st Infantry Division Headquarters at Fort Riley before departing overseas for a mission expected to last between nine months and a year.

“We acknowledge the great sacrifice that it is for both you and your families as you part ways from your loved ones in the near future,” Turner said. “But please be assured you will be well taken care of in the best way possible as you are now members of our own Big Red One family.”

“We don’t say goodbye today,” Huss said at the conclusion of the ceremony, “because we’re looking forward to our return, to the hugs of our families and the warm Husker welcome home.”

Former Nebraska Guard infantryman dreams big, lands sky-high gig

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Acting Editor

As a young boy growing up in West Point, Nebraska, Maj. Nick Krajicek set high goals for himself, hoping to one day leave the farm he lived on and experience “something different.” Never once did he envision those goals would lead him miles into the sky traveling just under the speed of sound.

Krajicek is currently the No. 4 Thunderbird for the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds Air Demonstration Squadron, flying an F-16C Fighting Falcon. But his journey to become part of this prestigious and third-oldest formal flying aerobatic team wasn’t a usual pilot’s trip into the air.

Krajicek started his career as an infantryman when he enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1995 in Wayne, Nebraska – his first taste of adventure and a way to pay for college. A year later, while riding on his first helicopter, Krajicek said he knew he was destined for a career in aviation.

“I was at Fort Polk in the summer of 1996, and we were able to fly into a (helicopter landing zone),” Krajicek said. “I remember it was exhilarating and it instantly excited me in terms of aviation.”

He graduated from the University of Nebraska Lincoln in 2000, shortly after attending U.S. Army’s flight school at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and becoming a warrant officer. He began flying UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters on air ambulance missions as a member of the Lincoln-based 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) through multiple deployments, looking at his role as a way to personally support the ground troops he came from.

“My grandfather was a private pilot, so I think it was always in my blood,” Krajicek said. “Looking back, I think his love of flying genetically made it into my body and my mind.”

Eventually, that love of flying pushed him well beyond helicopters and the Army National Guard all together. “We have a lot of good pilots in Nebraska, but Nick was one of those guys that you knew was special,” said Col. Lynn Heng, who served with Krajicek during a year-long deployment to Kosovo.

During that time, Krajicek served as Heng’s co-pilot during an intense, heavy-weather flight. “Young guys like him might be rattled, but he was calm and cool from the get-go. I knew then he was going to be a really good pilot.”

Heng said Krajicek put so much effort into becoming a good pilot that he could only support him when the young pilot began looking

Bringing the THUNDER



Submitted Photos

Fighting Falcon: Former Nebraska Army National Guard infantryman Nick Krajicek currently flies an F-16C Fighting Falcon as part of the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds Air Demonstration Squadron.



Humble Beginnings: Nick Krajicek began his pilot’s career flying UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters as a member of the Lincoln-based 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance).

into pursuing a commission with the active Air Force in 2004.

“We don’t like losing good pilots, but we (as leaders) should never hinder a career, be it in the Army or the Air Force,” Heng said. “He had the desire and ambition to reach for something many others wouldn’t reach for. You couldn’t help but support him.”

Krajicek said his sense of service was at an all-time high following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and he began looking at ways



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

No. 4 Fans: Nick Krajicek’s family members wear matching No. 4 shirts to the 2016 Air Show at Offutt Air Force Base July 30.

to apply his skills in the most effective manner. After working with the Air Force during his deployments and seeing their close air support capabilities, he said he decided that becoming an active duty Air Force pilot would be his next goal.

Heng joked that he – of course – tried to talk Krajicek into staying with the National Guard, but always supported his choice to further his career.

“My ultimate goal is to get every Soldier in the Nebraska National Guard to reach their goals,” Heng said. “Nick is a perfect example that the sky’s the limit and you can go as far as you want to go.”

Krajicek began as a second lieutenant in the Air Force and served in a variety of roles including the wing director of staff and an F-16 instructor pilot, logging more than 3,300 flight hours as a military pilot, with more than 650 hours of combat experience. He reported to Las Vegas in September 2015 to train as a Thunderbirds pilot for nearly five months before finally taking to the skies to perform.

“It’s an amazing opportunity to represent the Air Force this way,” Krajicek said. “We go out and demonstrate pride and precision, and represent 680,000 Air Force members on a weekly basis. I’m humbled and privileged by that.”

While most of the public considers the Thunderbirds to be just the six main pilots, the Thunderbirds crew includes more than 120 enlisted members and 12 officers serving in more than 25 different career fields. And when the Thunderbirds aren’t flying air demonstrations, they’re conducting community outreach. Krajicek said after working with former Thunderbirds and watching how their experiences shaped them into amazing leaders, he began to work on becoming a Thunderbird pilot himself.

“It was an instant fit for my career progression, as a way to inspire next generations of Americans – and potential Airmen – to be good citizens,” Krajicek said. “If I can inspire kids to be something better than what they think they can be, that is success to me.”

Krajicek credits Heng’s support as one of the reasons he worked hard to become an officer and ultimately a Thunderbird pilot. He said he plans to keep pushing himself to do something different for as long as he can make a difference in others’ lives.

“That’s the hallmark of being a good leader,” Krajicek said. “You help support and push people. I want to inspire others to have a dream and to not be afraid of failure. Surround yourself with people who will help you achieve your dreams and keep pushing forward.”

Krajicek and his wife of 16 years have two daughters who have traveled the country with him throughout his military career. The majority of his immediately family, most of whom live in the Omaha-area, were able to watch him perform as a Thunderbird pilot for the first time during the 2016 Air Show on Offutt Air Force Base, July 30-31.

Air Guard engineers practice disaster skills at Camp Ashland

By Senior Airman Marshall Maurer
Staff Photojournalist

Past the railroad tracks and the gravel roads, where the Platte River ebbs and flows through cottonwood trees and cornfields, an all-diesel convoy stops in a cloud of Ashland dust.

Over the past couple decades, tornadoes have wreaked havoc within miles of this stretch. Today, June 6, 2016, only the trucks are stirring up dust.

The diesel engines shake to a stop, shift knobs jiggle to neutral and parking brakes apply. Twenty-five Nebraska Air National Guard Airmen exit the navy blue vehicles and check each other’s gear. An unlucky few, despite the mugginess, don sweaty, heavy-duty “chainsaw chaps.” Senior Master Sgt. Sara Bredthauer, 155th Civil Engineer Squadron operations branch superintendent, huddles the group around her and then briefs them a final time on what this exercise entails.

Today, Bredthauer said, the Airmen will test their mettle – so if disaster strikes – they will be more than ready to test their mettle.

“In the months leading up to this, we’ve trained with the chainsaw, dump truck and Kubota, to make sure we’re on point,” Bredthauer said. “Everyone is eager... it’s good to come out here and see what we can do (and) measure our capabilities.”

The Airmen then break into elements. Two head for the towering navy blue dump trucks in the middle of the convoy, each of which towing a newly-acquired Kubota SVL-90 track loader.

Airmen will dismantle downed trees – some the size of telephone poles – that are blocking nearby forest trails to simulate a tornado’s destruction. Others will haul wood while skid loaders transport pieces to waiting dump trucks. In an urban setting, the equipment can move concrete with equal ease.

The track loaders and the Husqvarna chainsaws, coupled with the training to use them, were recently allocated directly from the state of Nebraska, to augment capabilities of emergency responders in the event of



Photo by Senior Airman Marshall Maurer

A Cut Above: A member of the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron cuts logs to clear a road during disaster recovery training at Camp Ashland, Neb., June 4. Airmen used Kubota track loaders and Peterbilt dump trucks allocated by the state of Nebraska to remove debris as part of a natural disaster annual training implementation.

a natural disaster.

According to Bredthauer, the training is vitally important in keeping the engineers ready in the event that they’re suddenly needed for a natural disaster recovery operation.

“I know that if there was a natural disaster in our state or local area, anyone in Civil Engineer would be raising their hand and wanting to go,” she said.

As members of the Air National Guard, Civil Engineer Airmen can and will be activated in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

On June 16, 2014, a supercell tornado ravaged the small town of Pilger, Nebraska. The F-4 tornado demolished barns, mangled cars, snapped telephone poles and destroyed the majority of the town’s structures. Sturdy brick buildings were no match for the winds

speeds that reached 200 miles per hour.

Afterward, Nebraska Guardsmen were sent to assist local and state officials in recovering from the disaster.

On this particular June day, nearly two years after the Pilger tornado, Larry Fichtner, exercise training officer from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, gets an up-close view of what the Airmen have to offer the state.

“We know what our assets are when we come into a town like Pilger, and how we can clear up and help them resume operations, so knowing what the Guard has, it’s (very important),” Fichtner said.

A decade before Pilger, the town of Hallam, Nebraska, 27 miles south of Lincoln, was slammed by the largest-ever recorded

tornado at the time, 2.5 miles in diameter. The cyclone was strong enough to toss cars into trees and rip a freight train off its tracks. Guardsmen were there, too, patrolling and helping locals clean up.

While Hallam and Pilger represent two of the stronger twisters on the Enhanced Fujita Scale of tornado intensity, they were both just one of the roughly 53 tornadoes that make landfall on Nebraska each year, said Cathy Zapotocny, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Omaha.

According to Zapotocny, Nebraska averages the fourth-most tornadoes each year among all states.

Tornado records and future trends are hard to determine concretely. However, Zapotocny said, as climate change impacts the globe, higher rainfall rates could lead to increased flooding in the summer and ice storms in the winter. Both are weather events which Airmen from the 155th Air Refueling Wing, with today’s training fresh in their heads, could activate for in the future.

Being trained and relied upon to respond at a moment’s notice, to drive toward destruction even as civilians and their own family members drive away, is part of what makes these Airmen “uniquely Guard.”

Master Sgt. Thomas Thompson, 155th Civil Engineer roads and grounds shop, is helping lead the training of those Airmen.

“Honestly, (the equipment) is invaluable,” Thompson said. “What we do with it and the personnel, coming into a town that’s been hit by a tornado—debris and concrete everywhere—we’ve got a K-12 saw for cutting up concrete... (if) people are trapped, we can reach them faster.”

Thompson said having the new equipment is nice, but the hope is to put the pieces to good use in the event of an emergency.

For today, the Airmen and their equipment have successfully cleared the forest trails, revealing the Platte River before them. Next time, however, they could be clearing a suburban cul-de-sac. Next time, lives could depend on the team’s efforts.

Brigade staff begins transformation's first steps

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Years from now, when the Nebraska Army National Guard's 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade is up and running with multiple exercises or deployments under its belt, the Soldiers of the organization may very well look back on 2016 as the year when the brigade took its first critical steps forward in a historic transformation from a battlefield surveillance brigade.

At least that's what the current leaders of the brigade hoped when they set out to plan this year's June annual training at Fort Riley, Kansas.

The goal, said Col. Rick Gray, 67th BfSB commander, was to use this year's June 4-18 annual training to get a step ahead in its transformation into a maneuver enhancement brigade that will effectively kick off in 2017.

"Even though during this A.T. we were still a BfSB, it allowed us to shed that piece of it and really focus toward the transformation," Gray said. "For a normal Guard unit, (a transformation) takes a good couple of years. For a brigade-level staff, though, there are just so many details."

These details included helping subordinate battalions conduct their transitions, while also moving some organizations under the 92nd Troop Command umbrella while welcoming new organizations—such as the new 128th Engineer and Nebraska's current 126th Chemi-



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Getting Down To Work: (From left) Maj. Mitch Tessendorf and Maj. Mike Chappell work on updating their portions of the new 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's standard operating procedures from the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's tactical operations center during the organization's annual training at Fort Riley, Kan.

cal battalions into the new 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Gray said.

"It's always best for the higher level headquarters to be ahead of its subordinate organizations, so our goal was to ensure that we weren't behind; that we could set those organizations up for success, because the Army fights really at the platoon level or maybe the company level," he said.

"My job is really to ensure that those platoons and companies are

successful in every way. And that means energizing the battalion command teams as well as those company command teams."

According to Lt. Col. Craig Strong, brigade executive officer, in order to accomplish these goals, the brigade staff focused primarily on learning what a maneuver enhancement brigade does and how it needs to configure itself to successfully conduct its mission.

"Really, we looked at this year as an opportunity as opposed to a chal-

lenge since it afforded us an additional year of reset, if you will, to convert," Strong said. He said that by focusing its energy on building the foundation it needed to change to an MEB, the brigade staff essentially gaining a second year of preparation.

"(This) allowed us to lean forward and assess our operational systems under a maneuver enhancement brigade configuration."

During this year's annual training, Strong said, the brigade staff conducted a number of exercises designed to verify its plans standard operating procedure, which it had been working on for nearly eight months, while also verifying that it was configuring its command post correctly so that it could successfully coordinate an MEB mission.

Those are important goals, considering that the MEB mission is distinctly different than that of a battlefield surveillance brigade.

"(The MEB mission) puts more emphasis on the protection warfighting function as opposed to the intelligence warfighting function of the BfSB," Strong said.

Helping Nebraskans through the process was a six-person assistance team from Camp Dodge, Iowa.

"Camp Dodge is the proponent for MEBs," Strong said, adding that the training team consisted of specialists in a variety of MEB fields. "They provided us insights and recommendations on how to conduct a planning process for an MEB field problem."

That experience was invaluable, Gray said.

"A staff's primary job is to conduct proper staff functions, such as running estimates and the military decision-making process to ensure that the commanders and the command team can really make good decisions for all of their subordinate units," Gray said.

Strong said the annual training included several command post exercises in which the staff was required to think through the various steps they would take when conducting missions as a maneuver enhancement brigade.

Those experiences helped put the staff into a good position moving forward.

"We did some shaping operations to really put down a firm blueprint of how a MEB command post is configured, how the planning process is conducted and a first draft on our operational standard operating procedure," Strong said.

"It gives us a firm starting point in the train up and readiness model. We build a strong base to grow from."

And that should have major implications for the entire brigade as the transformation efforts continue to pick up steam across the state.

Artillery spotters put Kansas annual training to good use

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

When it comes to making things go "BOOM," few have a more powerful job than Soldiers assigned to the 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) fire support section. As a part of the Cavalry Squadron's headquarters unit, the Soldiers are responsible for coordinating and directing devastating artillery fire onto distant targets with near pin-point precision.

It's an important – possibly decisive – capability that takes precision skills and constant practice to ensure Soldiers are able to direct lethal artillery firepower where and when it's needed.

So, it shouldn't come as any surprise that this year's annual training was considered to be an extremely important event for four 1-134th Cavalry fire support Soldiers who had the somewhat rare opportunity to direct live artillery rounds onto targets at the Fort Riley, Kansas, range complex.

"Right now, this is a huge opportunity for us to come out and actually train on our skill sets," said Capt. David Burnette, 1-134th Cavalry fire support officer, as he stood beneath a green camouflage net that had been set atop of a steep, chalk-rock hill surrounded by late-spring prairie wildflowers.

The netting was designed to both hide Burnette's position while also providing some shade from the warm Fort Riley, Kansas, sun as Burnette and three other 1-134th Cavalry fire support Soldiers prepared to conduct a live fire mission. "We don't get to do a lot of shoots with live rounds."

According to Burnette, the opportunity was brought about by a partnership with the Kansas Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery, which was in the middle of its two-week annual training and conducting live-fire missions with 155mm M109A6 self-propelled Paladin howitzers.

By teaming together, Burnette said, both units were able to receive some much-needed training. "It worked for them that they needed some assistance on this end of it and we're getting to train on our skillsets," Burnette said.

To understand what that means, one must first understand how fire support specialists and artillerymen work together. For fire support Soldiers like Burnette and his team, their job is to spot potential targets and relay the prospective targets' coordinates and composition to the awaiting artillery units.

Those artillery units then make the necessary adjustments to their guns and fire artillery shells onto the target's coordinates. Burnette's team is responsible for watching as the rounds land and then communicat-



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Eyes On Target: Spc. Doug Shaw from the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) and Spc. Kamaris Dickson of the Kansas Army National Guard's 1-161st Field Artillery watch as artillery rounds begin to impact at Fort Riley, Kan.

ing back any needed adjustments to ensure the artillery fire is having the needed effects.

Needless to say, coordination and clear communications are a must. Especially considering Burnette's outpost can be upwards of two or three miles away from a target area while the artillery batteries may be as far as five miles away from Burnette's position.

For example, from atop Burnette's position, that overlooked the vast Fort Riley landscape and range complexes, a person could barely make out the intended targets – in this case old military vehicles placed on the impact range approximately two-and-a-half-miles away – with the naked eye. To aid in their work, the fire support spe-

cialists have a number of high-tech targeting systems that enable them to quickly identify targets and determine their coordinates and other geographic or atmospheric data that is then sent to the awaiting artillery position.



Pointing Out The Objective: Capt. David Burnette, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) fire support officer, points out distant targets that he and his team of fire support specialists were attempting to engage with distant artillery fire.

wanted us to get back to really understanding what our job is."

Augmenting Burnette's crew of four 1-134th Cavalry Soldiers were additional fire support specialists from the 1-161st Field

The artillerymen, who during annual training were located nearly five miles away from Burnette at the opposite side of the range complex, use the data to make necessary adjustments to their rounds and guns before opening fire onto the targets.

Burnette's specialists observe the impact of the rounds to determine if they're hitting where intended and then radio any needed adjustments. Due to the nature of the exercise and the precision of their instruments, few adjustments are often needed.

According to Burnette, the goal of the exercise was to become extra proficient in conducting fire support missions. "I really wanted to focus on the basics this year," he said. "I really



Smoke On The Range: Artillery rounds explode at the range at Fort Riley, Kan., during the 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) annual training in June.

Artillery. "We're all working together well," Burnette said. "We're really developing some good teamwork."

The practice, said Spc. Doug Shaw, a 1-134th Cavalry fire support specialist who works as a mechanic in North Bend, Nebraska, in civilian life, was sorely needed.

"It's amazing," Shaw said as he watched as a series of explosions erupted onto the range plateau miles away. "It's been a long time since I've been able to call live rounds. The last time I did was in (Advanced Individual Training) in 2013, so it's been a long, long wait to be able to actually do this."

"It's very, very fun," he added. "And it's very useful, too. It's really nice to be able to get into our (Military Occupational Specialty) and train on what we're here to do."

That didn't mean that there weren't a little bit of nerves prior to calling for live artillery fire the first time, though. Shaw said he and his fellow Nebraska Soldiers were a little apprehensive, considering how long it had been since their last live fire calls and the potential dangers that could occur if they did it wrong.

They soon realized that they needn't have worried.

"To be honest with you, (the skills) came back like the snap of a finger," Shaw said. "All of us were a little nervous coming out here after having not done it in a long time, but as soon as we got that first call and sent up that first command, it just all snapped back. Our confidence and our morale just jumped from there."

According to Burnette, he and other unit leaders are hoping that this year's partnership with the 1-161st Field Artillery isn't the last, either. "Hopefully, we are able to (build upon) this partnership and continue to work together," he said. "It really has been beneficial to both sides."

On Target!

■Nebraska cavalry squadron fires up Fort Riley ranges during gunnery annual training

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

The rolling hills of Fort Riley, Kansas, took on a distinctly Cornhusker Red hue, June 4-18, when Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) descended upon the northeastern Kansas post for some much needed training.

According to Lt. Col. Tom Golden, squadron commander, after last year's validation exercise at Camp Ripley, Minnesota, during which the 1-134th Cavalry conducted a variety of evaluated training scenarios under near-combat conditions, he wanted to use this year's annual training at Fort Riley to build upon his organization's strengths while also laying the foundation for its upcoming transformation into a larger cavalry organization.

"The goal was to maintain our readiness through our available year," Golden said following the annual training. "We were in the available year of our (Army Force Generation) cycle. So, even though we are transforming at the end of this year, my goal was to maintain our ability to do our collective (Mission Essential Task List) tasks."

"In order to do that, we wanted to go out and focus on our reconnaissance mission and also to perform our ability to fire our weapons systems," Golden added. "We were validated on our METL tasks last year in Minnesota, and I wanted to maintain that validation



How Do They Look? Sgt. Bo Fisher inspects a belt of machinegun rounds before attempting to qualify at the multipurpose range complex at Fort Riley, Kan., in June.

going through our available year, just in case we were called up to do our mission for a deployment. And beyond that, Soldiers simply love training hard."

The 1-134th Cavalry is made up of four



One Last Pause: Sgt. Carlos Romoromo takes a moment to steady his nerves while preparing to qualify on his Humvee-mounted machinegun at the multipurpose range complex at Fort Riley, Kan. This year, Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry spent the majority of their annual training conducting gunnery qualification training.



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Ready To Engage: Spc. Matthew Miller, Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance), makes some last-minute calculations before engaging targets with his Humvee-mounted Mk-19 automated grenade launcher at the multipurpose range complex at Fort Riley, Kan., in June, as part of the squadron's gunnery exercise during this year's annual training.

units spread across southeastern Nebraska at Hastings, the Mead Training Site and Beatrice. For Troop A and B, this year's annual training focused primarily on gunnery skills, which required teams of Soldiers from Mead and Hastings to successfully engage targets at Fort Riley's multipurpose range complex using a variety of Humvee-mounted machineguns.

Additionally, Soldiers from the Beatrice-based Company C (Long Range Surveillance), 1-134th Cavalry, focused on their reconnaissance skills while conducting airborne drops at both Fort Riley and Camp Guernsey, Wyoming, and a helicopter-borne water insertion exercise at Fort Riley's Milford Lake.

"The LRS performed missions across a large geographical area in two different states," Golden said. "They conducted multiple types of missions that enabled them to expand and challenge their ability to conduct mission command."

Nearly 200 1-134th Cavalry Soldiers participated in the annual training, while an additional 30-40 Soldiers from other Nebraska Army National Guard units supported the exercise.

Golden said this year's training focus definitely kept his Soldiers busy, as well as smiling.

"Whenever you shoot a weapon, Soldiers are going to like that," he said. "But we did get back to some of the fundamental tasks that we need to be able to perform, which is identify an enemy, be able to engage that target and knock it out. Alpha and Bravo Troops definitely did that and the LRS did as well. They conducted live-fire exercise in which they moved under combat conditions. They all performed in an outstanding manner under demanding conditions."

And that definitely had the Soldiers of the organization excited.

"Things have been going pretty good so

far," said Spc. Jacob Garrelts, a Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, scout shortly after he and his four-person Humvee team completed a live-fire qualification range at Fort Riley's MPRC complex, which tested their ability to successfully engage a variety of close and long-range targets. "We've had a few hiccups, but nothing major."

Garrelts, who is normally a student at the University of Nebraska-Kearney where he is majoring in Family Studies, said he was learning a lot during the two-week training event. "This is my first annual training, so I'm learning all of the different positions within the truck... kind of seeing what all the different roles (do) during gunnery."

He said he had quickly learned that the key is communication.

"Knowing the command and making sure you're listening to everything and paying attention," Garrelts said. You also have to know your weapon really well."

Spc. Bradley Pierce, a fellow Troop A cavalry scout, echoed those thoughts.

"This year is kind of a culminating event for us. We've been working up to this for the last few years. We've been training our crews - our drivers, gunners, (truck commanders) - this is kind of us just proving that we're capable of doing our jobs," said Pierce, an Omaha-based construction worker in civilian life. He added that the stress definitely builds up as the crew finally hits the firing line during its qualification phase. "It's a little stressful... there are a lot of eyes on us, but we have a great crew and everyone has been practicing hard leading up to this."

According to Golden, the overall annual training was a complete success.

"I was amazed," he said. "It was beyond my expectations on how the Soldiers performed. We had some challenges, but at the end of the day, the Cavalry Soldiers proved beyond a doubt they can execute their mission and do it well."

Cavalry squadron grows with new Beatrice troop activation

By Tech. Sgt. Andrew Nystrom
Staff Photojournalist

The transformation of the Nebraska National Guard continued with the July 23 activation of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Company E (Long Range Surveillance), 1-134th Cavalry, at the Beatrice Armed Forces Reserve Center in Beatrice, Nebraska.

The activation of Company E is part of a major restructuring of Nebraska Army National Guard units, primarily centered on the Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade that affects roughly one-in-three Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers. The transformation is the largest reorganization of state units in 20 years and will affect Citizen Soldiers in 16 communities across the state during the next three years.

LRS units are tasked with providing real-time battlefield situational awareness to commanders from enemy-held territory all while remaining undetected. According to Company E's incoming commander, Capt. Joshua Metcalf, this means LRS members undergo rigorous training and remain at the highest state of readiness 24/7.

"We conduct our missions and operate



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Andrew Nystrom

Gathering His Unit Together: Capt. Joshua Metcalf, commander of the Nebraska Army National Guard's newly-activated Company E (Long Range Surveillance), 1-134th Cavalry, talks to the Soldiers in his unit shortly after the July 23 ceremony in Beatrice, Neb.

as small teams, oftentimes, miles away from friendly-forces," Metcalf said.

"That means each team member must be mentally and physically ready to meet any challenge they might face. It requires, what could be viewed as, unorthodox training sometimes, but we have the support of our leadership and the buy-in from our Soldiers to ensure we're ready for anything."



New Unit Colors: Lt. Col. Thomas Golden, commander of the 1-134th Cavalry, unrolls the guidon of the new Company E (Long Range Surveillance), 1-134th Cavalry, July 23.

LRS Soldiers are trained and skilled in techniques ranging from airborne to maritime insertions using platforms including C-130 Hercules aircraft and CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

Members of the unit honed those skills in June at Fort Riley, Kansas, when they collaborated with Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas National Guard assets to conduct parachute jumps and water insertions while

jumping from helicopters hovering over Milford Lake.

The majority of the Soldiers assigned to the newly-created Company E were formed from former Co. C (LRS), 1-134th Cavalry Squadron. That unit will remain in Beatrice, but is shifting its focus to ground cavalry missions as part of the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron, which grew by an additional cavalry company through the transformation.

■Nebraska Army Guard aviation units take part in Wisconsin domestic support exercise

Patriot North 2016 tests Guard's response

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Grand Island-based 1st Battalion, 376th Aviation (Security and Support), took their aviation skills on the road in July when they traveled to Volk Field, Wisconsin, to participate in a massive exercise designed to help Guardsmen from across the nation work more effectively with civilian emergency responders.

The July 18-21 exercise—named Patriot North 2016—involved more than 1,200 National Guard Airmen and Soldiers from more than 30 states and U.S. territories, as well as a variety of local, state and federal emergency management officials. The exercise, said Lt. Col. David “D.J.” Spisso II, is designed to help Guard units assess their military skills and “life-saving capabilities” when called to respond to a major domestic emergency.

According to Spisso, Patriot North 2016 director, the exercise provides units with realistic training while also increasing their ability to successfully work with civilian emergency response officials following a major domestic emergency or natural disaster. “We try to make this as realistic as possible,” Spisso said during training on July 20. “This is a civilian-led effort with military support assets.”

This year's Patriot exercise involved a fictitious outbreak of major thunderstorms over east-central Wisconsin that then spawns several tornadoes that wreak havoc over a large area. Centered over Volk Field, the exercise also include training sites at Fort McCoy and several nearby civilian communities.

Guardsmen were charged with supporting civilian response officials as they worked to conduct swift-water rescue, search-and-rescue, mass casualty and medical evacuation operations.

According to Kevin Bierce, a Wisconsin civilian fire chief, along with the training that the Guardsmen receive, the exercise also helps civilian first responders and Guardsmen learn how to better communicate and coordinate operations. That's not always easy, Bierce said, considering that military and civilian authorities often use different communications systems and language to describe similar things.

“After a week here, we're talking the same language,” Bierce said. “It's really an amazing transformation.”

For the 156 Nebraska Soldiers who supported the exercise, the benefits were numerous.



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

On The Go: A pair of Nebraska Army National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopters launch after receiving a request for medical evacuation support during Patriot North 2016, a massive domestic support exercise conducted July 18-21 at Volk Field, Wisc. The exercise involved more than 1,200 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from across the nation.

“We're getting back to our (domestic operations mission essential task list) tasks – responding to a mass casualty event and providing incident awareness and assessments to the exercise,” said Lt. Col. Robert Kadavy, battalion commander. “A lot of the company-level tasks we can do back in Nebraska very well. But at the battalion-level, trying to interact with other agencies and civil support groups that we would work with in an emergency, is very hard to simulate.”

“Here we get to work with those players—those non-governmental organizations like the Red Cross and other Army and Air assets. We get to interact and learn from them their best practices.”

Along with the battalion headquarters, the exercise also involved Soldiers from the Grand Island and Lincoln-based Companies A and D, 1-376th Aviation, and Companies D and G, 2-104th General Support Aviation Battalion. This included both UH-72 Lakota and UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter crews and aeromedical personnel, flight operations specialists, maintenance crews and support personnel.

Kadavy said the goal for the Nebraska Soldiers supporting the exercise was pretty straight-forward. “Good, hard, realistic training in their military occupational specialties,” Kadavy said. “They joined up to be Soldiers. They want to do the

tasks that they signed up for. This exercise lets us test all our medics, our pilots, our mechanics, our operations people, fuelers... we all get to do our tasks at this exercise.”

For example, for Capt. Ryan Carlson, battalion communications officer, Patriot North 2016 allowed him to develop the communications “footprint” for the battalion so that it could communicate more effectively with civilian first responders, other military units as well as within the battalion itself. “We've been working with the Air Force as far as gaining frequencies so that we can understand the footprint for the exercise, which we can then utilize within the battalion,” Carlson said. He said this involved developing the systems needed to communicate via radio and the internet.

The impact, he added, can be extremely important during a natural disaster response.

“(The aircrews) have to be able to talk from the aircraft and they have to be able to talk in a variety of directions,” Carlson said. “They have to be able to talk back to the headquarters. They have to be able to talk to each other in the air. And they have to be able to talk to all of the elements on the ground.”

“So it's really important that we have all of these frequencies worked out... that we understand what kind of frequencies they are, what systems need to be loaded, because we're talking on various different bands,” Carlson said.

He added that this often means pre-programming the units' communications systems before the missions take place so as to “ensure that once they're in the air, it's easy for them to be able to talk to the individuals that they need to talk to.”

This was no-more evident than in a tiny, single-story hut near the flight line where the battalion's various Lakota and Blackhawk helicopters waited for requests for aeromedical or assessment missions to arrive. In this tiny building, approximately a half-dozen Nebraska flight operations specialists stood shoulder-to-shoulder monitoring various radios and communications systems and making up-to-second notations into their log boards as they charted the progress of various missions and monitored what might be needed next.

According to Spc. Nathan Graber, a flight operations specialist with Company D, 1-376th Aviation, the experience he and the other Soldiers were receiving was extremely important.



Keeping Track Of The Missions: Capt. Steve Jacobs, a 1-376th Aviation battle captain, tracks missions from the battalion's tactical operation center during Patriot North 2016. The Nebraska Army National Guard aviation battalion was responsible for providing a variety of aviation support during the exercise to include aerial medical evacuation and incident awareness and assessments.



Hands-On Training: Pfc. James Brown, a Company D, 2-104th General Support Aviation Battalion UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter mechanic, receives some training on how to run an intravenous (IV) line from Sgt. Jeremiah Kline, a Co. G, 2-104th GSAB flight medic.

“We're busy, which is a good thing,” Graber said between radio calls. “It's better than sitting around, twiddling your thumbs. We want to be doing missions... learning.”

Spc. Adam Weisenberger, a flight operations specialist with Co. G, 2-104th GSAB, agreed.

“It's good because it gives us (experience) on domestic operations versus the out-of-country operations that we just came back from,” he said, referring to a recent unit deployment to Kuwait about nine months earlier. “It gives us a different look at how we're supposed to do things for our dual missions as National Guard Soldiers.”

The value of gaining experience in a domestic operations situation also extended to the various pilots supporting the exercise. According to 1st Lt. Adam Rosendahl, a newly-graduated UH-60 Blackhawk pilot with Co. G, 2-104th GSAB, Patriot North 2016 offered him an important opportunity to sharpen his new skills while also learning more about his roles and responsibilities within his unit and his helicopter crew.

“Being new to the unit, I'm learning specifically how medevac units run,” Rosendahl said. “I'm learning about the coordination between crew chiefs and flight surgeons... what they need from us, what we need from them.”

Rosendahl said he's also learning as much as he can, about the aircraft, including speed functions.

“You have to know your checklists inside and out,” Rosendahl said, adding that getting an aircraft

into the air quickly and safely is extremely crucial when responding to a medevac call where time can mean the difference between life and death.

“I'm still learning. I'm trying to learn from all of the other more experienced pilots. I'm just trying to pick up everything that I can to get better at my job to go out and help somebody.”

Rosendahl and his fellow pilots weren't the only ones working to refine and enhance their individual and collective skills, either. During breaks in the action, unit medics and helicopter crew chiefs also worked together to ensure they can be effective teammates should a mass casualty disaster occur.

For example, during one such break on July 20, Co. G, 2-104th GSAB, medics gathered the unit's helicopter crew chiefs around them in a sweltering hangar to conduct some impromptu medical training, such as how to hook up and monitor electrocardiogram (EKG) monitoring equipment on a patient, or how to run an intravenous (IV) line.

The goal, said Sgt. Jeremiah Kline, a Co. G, 2-104th GSAB, flight medic from Gothenburg who works as a paramedic in Kearney in civilian life, was to train the crew chiefs so that they can help out should the pace of aeromedical evacuations pick up substantially.

“It's designed to help them assist the medic who can become pretty saturated with patient care,” Kline said. “The medic can focus on good patient care and the crew chief can

See PATRIOT NORTH 2016 on 9.



Helping Manage A Busy Flight Line: Spc. Nathan Graber, a flight operations specialist with Company D, 1-376th Aviation, talks with the crew of a UH-72 Lakota helicopter as it prepares to lift off in support of an aeromedical evacuation request, July 21, at Volk Field, Wisc. According to Graber, the experience he and other Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers received during the exercise was invaluable. “We want to be doing missions... learning.”

Army Guard medics hit road in Iowa

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Acting Editor

Soldiers assigned to the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), don't often get the opportunity to strap 35-pound rucksacks to their backs and march six miles in 90-degree summer heat. However, when they got the opportunity to do exactly that on July 25 during the company's two-week annual training at Camp Dodge, Iowa, the Soldiers grabbed it.

"It's different, but it helps with unit cohesion," said Spc. Colton Oswald, who tied with another 313th Med. Co. Soldier as the first to finish the ruck march.

"Plus," said Oswald, who carried the company guidon throughout the taxing six-mile march, "it brings out our competitiveness and makes being here more fun."

According to unit leaders, the primary reason the 313th Med. Co. traveled to Camp Dodge for annual training was to utilize the installation's Medical Simulation Training Center. The unit's goal was to achieve Table VIII validation for all medical personnel and to focus on Army warrior tasks and drills, said Capt. Mathew Field, company commander.

"We're getting some good real-world practice here," Field said. "It's not just all the usual medic training. These conditions – long days out in the field with the heat – helps put our medics in the right mindset to get an idea of what will be expected of them when they attempt the expert field medical badge."

Field said the ruck march the Soldiers completed in July was an abbreviated version of the one required to achieve the EFMB – the highest award non-combat medics can earn. Nebraska will send three Soldiers to compete for the EFMB in October, the most the state has sent in more than a decade, he said. The ruck requirement usually covers 12 miles in three hours, so the 313th Medical Company attempted six miles in 90 minutes, with more than 90 percent meeting the standard cutoff time.

Members of the Nebraska



Leading The Way: Spc. Colton Oswald carries the guidon for the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) during a six-mile ruck march July 25 at Camp Dodge, Iowa.

National Guard's command team made a special trip to observe the company's annual training and ultimately decided to accompany the Soldiers on their ruck march. The command team included State Command Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker, state inspector general Lt. Col. Julie Burmeister, state Command Chief Warrant Officer Teresa Domeier and government affairs officer Capt. Doug Carlson.

"The ruck march went really well," Field said. "The Soldiers really enjoyed having the command group visit. They were excited to get to see leadership, and anytime they get to sweat with them gives them a sense of pride."

At the MSTC, Soldiers refreshed their skills with hand-on tactical and technical medical training on skills required to save lives during small unit operations. The Soldiers worked on their trauma assessment and treatment; airway management; intravenous access, medications and management; medical assessment and treatment; triage and evacuation; force protection treatment and management; and obstetric, gynecology and pediatric skills before finally completing their annual skills validation testing. All the testing is done with oversight by the MSTC staff.

"It's great to come here to have an objective body assist in validation to give an honest opinion on how our medics perform under pressure,"



High Fives: Soldiers assigned to the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) support one another with high-fives and verbal encouragement during a six-mile ruck march, July 25, as part of the company's two-week annual training at Camp Dodge, Iowa.

Field said.

Sgt. Sherry McBride, who serves as a medic with the 313th Med. Co. and is also a medication aide in her civilian life, said the MSTC validation training helps her in both careers. "I like doing the medical training," McBride said. "The validation training helps us keep up with our continuing education units needed to stay medics."

McBride said her time serving as a medic in the Army gave her the goal of becoming a nurse. A current student at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, she said her continuous medical training has helped further her education, adding that she's grateful to already know things before they are taught in her nursing courses.

The MSTC at Camp Dodge trains more than 3,000 Soldiers annually in a state-of-the-art facility that includes more than \$1 million in robotic mannequins. Mike Thul, MSTC site leader, said the center incorporates realistic external stressors into its training scenarios



Practice Supplies: Mike Thul, site leader for the Medical Simulation Training Center (MSTC) at Camp Dodge, Iowa, gives a tour of the facility to the Nebraska National Guard command team, including Chief Warrant Officer 5 Teresa Domeier (left). The MSTC provides state-of-the-art medical training to more than 3,000 Soldiers annually.

to give Soldiers the opportunity to showcase their life-saving skills while combating sensory overload.

As part of the training's culminating event, Soldiers would enter and clear, and then extract and/or treat life-like mannequin "victims"

found in rooms filled with smoke, strobe-lights and loud music.

"Anyone can do medicine under a bright white light and be okay, but the rubber meets the road when you put more external stressors on them," Thul said.

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be responsible for monitoring vital signs for us. Our patient (count) can be anywhere from one to three patients in the back of the helicopter, so the medic can be extremely task saturated. (This training can help the crew chiefs) assist with anything they can."

Spc. Ryan Green was one of those helicopter crew chiefs who participated in the impromptu training. He said the medical training and the experience of doing his job during flights was invaluable.

"I've been pretty busy because we didn't bring that many crew chiefs along. We're flying every day, multiple times every day," Green said. "I don't have a lot of real-world training in a medevac, so getting to practice with patients and loading equipment has been extremely valuable."

The same went for literally every other section as well.

Members of the battalion staff and the organization's maintenance staffs had opportunities to work on helicopters and vehicles, unit refuelers had numerous opportunities to practice their craft during the high-tempo reconnaissance and medevac missions, while multiple members of the battalion and companies had the opportunity to use the National Guard's new Domestic operations Awareness and Assessment Response Tool (DAART).

DAART is a document sharing capability that can be accessed either by computers or smartphone that allows National Guard and civilian emergency response personnel to receive critical information that is



Starting Up: A UH-72 Lakota helicopter crewchief speaks to a Nebraska Army National Guard Lakota helicopter crew as they prepare to start up their engine during a July 21 mission.

then utilized to assist in the planning and coordination of response activities. Included within this information is full-motion video that during the Patriot North 2016 exercise was provided by members of the Company A, 1-376th Aviation's, Lakota helicopter crews.

"Alpha Company supports the (domestic operations mission) and support to civilian

authority missions directly," said Capt. Greg Beran, Co. A commander.

"Part of our mission is to work with law enforcement and border patrol and any other agency working with domestic operations to include disaster relief."

Beran said his helicopters do this by using the various sensors and cameras aboard the

Lakotas to provide real-time video and assessments to civilian authorities so that they better understand the scope of the disaster and can then place emergency response assets where they're needed the most.

"So this exercise, especially in the communications piece, has been extremely valuable to us," said Beran.

That value extends throughout the helicopter crew and unit as well. Spc. John Wilson is a maintenance UH-72 crew chief with Co. A, 1-376th Aviation. A heating, ventilation and air conditioning specialist in civilian life back in Scottsbluff, Wilson recently earned a crew chief position within the unit, so the Wisconsin exercise was his first opportunity to learn more about his responsibilities as part of the aerial flight crew.

He said the experience he was gaining during the exercise flights was extremely important. "You get to see how everything works together," Wilson said, "and then you get into the flying and see how everything integrates together in the backseat."

"It's really been a good experience," Wilson added. "And it's fun... absolutely."

Ultimately, Kadavy said, the Wisconsin exercise gave his battalion the much-needed experience to truly be ready should their capabilities be needed during a major natural disaster.

It's a readiness that, should the time come, literally could mean the difference between life and death for those affected by a natural disaster.

Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes



TRX Training: Maj. Jason Barber, a Nebraska Army National Guard senior aeromedical physician assistant and strength and conditioning coach for the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program, teaches Soldiers how to use TRX bands at Offutt Air Force Base near Bellevue, Neb., during Nebraska's inaugural Fit for Life annual training.



Step It Up: Spc. Donnie Cadwalader, a cavalry scout with Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, climbs a stair machine at Offutt Air Force Base's field house during the inaugural Fit for Life annual training.



Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Bend And Reach: Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from all across the state participate in the inaugural Fit for Life annual training at Camp Ashland, July 24 to Aug. 7.

Fit for Life

Nebraska Army Guard breaks out new annual training program to give Soldiers' fitness major boost

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Acting Editor

This year, 132 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from units across the state participated in an inaugural annual training experience called Fit for Life.

Many of the Soldiers selected for the FFLAT program were in a "flagged" status, either for not meeting the Army's height and weight requirements or for failing a portion of their Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The annual training wasn't a form of punishment for the Soldiers, though, but rather for the Nebraska National Guard to educate and give Soldiers opportunities to improve through an intense two-week annual training period dedicated to improving physical fitness and improving physical readiness rates.

"The basic intent of Fit for Life was to help the commanders in all units have ready forces in their formations," said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Niles, FFLAT's non-commissioned officer in-charge. "If it's with the APFT we can teach them ways to strengthen themselves in specific areas. If it's height and weight we can get them on track with nutrition. We're just giving them the tools to succeed as they move forward."

According to Brig. Gen. Richard Dahlman, assistant adjutant general, Army, the mission of Nebraska's Fit for Life Annual Training (FFLAT) is to improve Soldier physical readiness, prepare Soldiers for their next level of professional military education (PME) and develop essential leadership skills to be all that they can be.

"Fit for Life Annual Training is truly an investment in our Soldiers," Dahlman said. "It promises to be a rewarding, challenging and fun opportunity."

The ultimate goal, according to Dahlman, is for each Soldier to be in accordance with Quality Boots Initiative standards, which will make each Soldier eligible for re-enlistment, posture them to successfully attend his or her next level of PME, and remain a relevant member of Nebraska's great force.

The program, which debuted on

July 24 and continued until Aug. 7 at the Camp Ashland Training Site, is new to the Nebraska Army National Guard, but several National Guard units of other states have already implemented similar programs.

"A lot of states have their own flavor of what we did for Fit for Life, but the way we executed ours, we made it our own," Niles said.

The program started as an idea from Staff Sgt. Andrew Siemek almost two years ago, and ultimately formed into a 15-day annual training opportunity with 15 specialized volunteer cadre members, including Maj. Jason Barber, a Nebraska Army National Guard senior aeromedical physician assistant and strength and conditioning coach for the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program.

"Bringing such a high-level of expertise to our Fit for Life was instrumental in our success," Niles said. "By using a preventative care method, we were able to build on the mechanics and help Soldiers steadily fix their problems, instead of causing more injury."

The program balanced twice-a-day physical training activities with classroom learning on nutrition, running mechanics, goal setting, etc. Soldiers learned how best to meet Army standards using a combination of skills included in the Army's Physical Readiness Training program with other mainstream and traditional physical training exercises. Soldiers completed body-weight and cardio workouts at Camp Ashland, and also learned to use specialized gym equipment at the Field House at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue, Nebraska.

"I really like being at Offutt and learning different things from cardio exercises to strength training on the TRX (suspension training equipment)," said Spc. Donnie Cadwalader, a cavalry scout with Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry. Cadwalader said while he struggles with physical training, he understands why it's important to be at FFLAT for improvement.

"Soldiers have to be physically fit," he said. "I signed up to serve my country and took an oath. I'm here to be able to obey that oath. Taking care of yourself first in the most important thing. If you can't

take care of yourself, you can't be trusted to take care of anyone else."

Pfc. Elyse Lyons, a supply technician with the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, said she hopes to take everything she learned at FFLAT and share it with others at home and in her unit.

"I want to try and pass the torch," Lyons said. "We learned a lot of different types of workouts. I'm ready to get home and get going. I've even already made plans with my roommate."

"It's been super motivating, and I would love to come back and be cadre support in the future," she added. "There's been such a difference between day one and the final day. Originally I came here to lose weight and pass my PT test, but now it's about the lifestyle change and being an inspiration to myself and others."

"Came here to improve my PT and meet a long-term goal to re-enlist," said Sgt. Brian Elliott, an automated logistics specialist with the 1167th Brigade Support Company. With 15 years of military service, Elliott said he wants to stay mentally and physically ready to make it to 20, and what he's learned at FFLAT has him well on his way toward reaching that goal.

"Fitness to me means being healthy, eating right, exercising and being without pain and stress; and how to deal with it when you do," Elliott said. "It's been a unique learning experience and a unique training. And it's good for the more senior guys to be out here with the junior enlisted. We provide each other support. We all have things to go through and struggles at times no matter in life; but we all wear the same uniform."

According to Niles, the FFLAT annual training was important for two reasons. First, readiness: It's always important for units to have forces ready to go at a moment's notice.

"Secondly, this is very important for the simple fact that a lot of Soldiers when they showed up, had their heads hung low, they thought they were just going to get smoked for two weeks," Niles said. "Instead, we were there as mentors, as coaches, as teammates, to let them know that, 'Hey, we're here to



Prone Row: Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers complete the "prone row," an Army Physical Readiness Training activity, at Camp Ashland during Fit for Life annual training. The Fit for Life annual training program was a chance for Soldiers to improve their physical readiness through two weeks of intense physical training and classroom learning.

help, we're extending a hand, and that they matter. They lost sight of the reasons they used to have pride in wearing the uniform, and we're here to reinforce those values that once motivated and drove them."

One of those Soldiers who anticipated that FFLAT would be like re-living basic combat training was Pvt. Tyna Taylor, a motor transport operator with 1057th Transportation Company. "I thought they would smoke us all the time, and that it was going to suck, but it's actually been pretty fun," Taylor said. "This has given me the tools I need to stay in shape – to be fit and strong. I just feel a whole lot better about myself and myself-confidence is through the roof. They are setting us up for success here, even beyond this A.T."

Taylor, a cheerleader at Chadron State College, said she has always struggled with her weight and exercise. In the past, she'd start an exercise program, but become frustrated when the scale wouldn't move, so she'd quit. And while she didn't lose weight at FFLAT, she was excited to see she lost inches.

"In nine days I've lost two inches off my hips and one and a half inches off my waist, and I lost 9 percent body fat," Taylor said. "I was frustrated because my weight wasn't changing on the scale, but then I got taped and it was awesome. The scale really isn't everything. Learning how to eat healthy and doing the type of exercises you personally enjoy really makes a difference."

Niles said there was a visible transformation from day one when the Soldiers were struggling with the preparatory drills and right before the final APFT on day 15.

"It's a night and day difference," Niles said. "You wouldn't recognize the Soldiers in that formation. As Fit for Life progressed, the Soldiers carried themselves with more pride. They stood taller, their chest was proud and they were emotionally invested in the process."

Having unit first sergeants and company commanders visit FFLAT over the course of the annual training was appreciated as it showed the Soldiers their leadership cares, and it continued to validate the program, Niles said.

"Us as leaders have a responsibility to our Soldiers, to let them know that we care," Niles said. "That's not shown through public shaming or extra duty. It's shown by taking the time and doing things right, and getting to know your Soldiers one-on-one."

Niles said the Soldiers at FFLAT reminded him why it's important to be a leader. He added he was humbled by the experience, but he attributes a lot of the program's success the cadre's caring devotion, endless dedication and continuous motivation.

"They helped Soldiers remember those intangible reasons why they joined and they harnessed that motivation and turned it into tangible success," he said.

Still, it was the Soldiers who were ultimately responsible for the changes made at FFLAT. "A lot of the Soldiers thanked us, and it means a lot, it really does, but we only facilitated the process," Niles said. "They did all the hard work."

Overall results from the two-week training saw about 75 flag removals, an increase of APFT scores across the board and significant improvements in body mass.

Niles said he hopes to see the program become an annual event.

"This program is a force multiplier for our units," Niles said. "Not only are we returning Soldiers ready with flags removed, but they are also ready to lead formations in physical fitness and talk to Soldiers about nutrition."

"They have all the tools out there are they are extremely motivated to keep crushing it."

(Editor's Note: Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton contributed to this article)

Camp Ashland teacher takes top transportation title

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Acting Editor

Each year the U.S. Army's chief of Transportation recognizes excellence for the Transportation Corps Regiment with the "Of the Year Awards." This year a Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier was chosen as the Transportation Corps' Reserve Component Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

Staff Sgt. Larry Jackson, 3rd Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), traveled with his wife Lorrie to Virginia, where he was recognized July 27 at Fort Lee for his achievements as a motor transport operator.

"It was really unexpected," Jackson said. "I'm due to retire pretty soon and it's definitely a nice end-of-career presentation to be recognized nationally by the chief of Transportation."

Jackson joined the armed forces in 1980 through delayed-entry into the Marine Corps where he served as a combat engineer until 1993. After the attacks on Sept. 11, 2011, Jackson began looking at re-enlistment opportunities and finally joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in 2004. He has completed two deployments and currently works full-time as an instructor at Camp Ashland Training Site.

"I love being an instructor. I love to teach," Jackson said. "I like to see what the Soldiers understand, when you show them and their light comes on when they get it. It's very rewarding as an instructor to know that you taught your Soldiers something that they now understand, and they can take back to



Photo by Lorrie Jackson

Transportation Award: Staff Sgt. Larry Jackson proudly displays the certificate of achievement and Transportation Corps 2015 Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year (Reserve Component) award he received July 27 at Fort Lee, Virginia.

their units."

According to Lt. Col. Steven Collins, Jackson was nominated for the award due to his sustained high-level of performance while instructing the 88M military occupational specialty transition course at Camp Ashland. The course, which is in a unique position, routinely accepts students from many distant states and U.S. territories.

"Soldiers come to Nebraska because of the instruction received from Sergeant Jackson

and the rest of the team," Collins said. "They don't get a go until they demonstrate mastery of a myriad of driving and motor operating concepts, and Sergeant Jackson modifies his instruction style to get through to each and every Soldier he teaches to make that happen expeditiously and thoroughly."

"When a Soldier leaves here," Collins added, "I want their receiving commander to know, with confidence, that their Soldier has received the best training available.

Sergeant Jackson and the team ensure that this happens class after class."

Jackson said winning the award came as a total shock. In fact, he said, he didn't even know he had been nominated until a "Congratulations!" email came directly to him, instead of his nominators. Regardless of how he learned about the award, Jackson said he is very grateful his leadership felt it important enough to recognize him with their nomination.

"I got to read over (the nominations) and there were touches of personal opinions on how I do," Jackson said. "It was all really very touching. It's one thing to even be nominated, but then to go through the selection process? And they selected me."

Still, Jackson said, it meant more to him knowing what his fellow Nebraska colleagues thought of him. He said he's always tried to be a mentor for others, adding that he hopes upcoming transportation Soldiers will strive to do the same.

"You need to work hard and know your job," Jackson advises all Soldiers. "Become the subject matter experts on everything. If you want to know something, get in the (manuals) and look. I've been through all of them. Become the person everyone else asks instead of asking for answers yourself"

As Jackson looks forward to his military retirement, he said he'll remember this award as one his greatest achievements. He added that he and hopes other Nebraska National Guard Soldiers are recognized in the future.

"We need to remember to recognize Soldiers for their achievements," Jackson said. "The more often you recognize them, the better Soldiers you'll have."

Support unit inactivates as ongoing Nebraska transformation heats up

By Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen
Staff Photojournalist

Soldiers with the 1167th Brigade Support Company (BSC) ceremonially furled the unit's colors during an inactivation ceremony, Aug. 14, at the Nebraska Army National Guard's Spirit of '76 Armory in Lincoln.

The unit was activated along with the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade (BfSB) in 2008 and headquartered in Lincoln. Besides the BSC in Lincoln, the BfSB was comprised of units in Hastings, Beatrice and Fremont. The company's first commander was Capt.

Christopher Weskamp, and its first senior noncommissioned officer was 1st Sgt. Clark Bednar.

Among the unit's first assignments, the 1167th saw its first major operation when it was mobilized in support of Hurricane Gustav in September 2008. Gustav was one of the most destructive hurricanes during the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season—causing several deaths and costing billions of dollars in damage to the U.S. and elsewhere.

Less than two years later, the BSC saw combat action after it mobilized in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn from July 2010 through June 2011.

Elements of the company were

directed to Mosul, Balad, Baghdad, and Talil Iraq. Supporting the 67th BfSB, it provided direct support maintenance, maintenance teams in remote locations and food service oversight in dining facilities located in Baghdad.

The company was again called in to service in support of domestic emergency operations during the flood of summer 2011. Its mission was to provide relief to civilians affected by the flood water of the Missouri River.

Over the years, the battle-tested support company saw its fair share of recognition for a job well done.

In 2012, the unit was awarded the Philip A. Connelly Award –



Rolling Colors: (From Left) Col. Richard Gray, Capt. Benjamin Harper, 1st Sgt. Joseph Jackson and 1st Lt. Seth Roskens roll and case the company guidon for the 1167th Brigade Support Company during an Aug 14. inactivation ceremony in Lincoln.

Runner-Up—for excellence in food service in the field kitchen category. In 2013, the water purification section was awarded the Unit Safety Award during a National Maintenance Training Center rotation

in Camp Dodge, Iowa. Lastly, the company was recognized as the national runner-up in the category of Medium MTOE-National Guard for the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence.

Army Guard journalists cover international exercise in Grenada

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Acting Editor

Nebraska Army National Guard journalists assigned to the 111th Public Affairs Detachment from Lincoln, Nebraska, had the unique opportunity of spending their annual training overseas when they participated in Tradewinds 2016.

Tradewinds 2016 is a joint combined exercise conducted in conjunction with partner nations to enhance the collective abilities of defense forces and constabularies to counter transnational organized crime and to conduct humanitarian and disaster relief operations. The exercise is sponsored by the U.S. Southern Command and conducted in cooperation with Caribbean Basin partner nations

The 111th PAD was tasked as the main public affairs asset for the first phase of this year's exercise, taking place on the island of Grenada. The unit worked with U.S. Navy and Coast Guard public affairs personnel to document events and disseminate command information through photography, video and written communications.

"Participation in Tradewinds 2016 presented a unique opportunity to train under a joint command as well as hone our skills as a deployable PAD," said 1st Lt. John McNally, unit commander. "The opportunities to cross-train as well as cooperate with other national and military branch public affairs assets reinforced our skillset and provided invaluable experience that will greatly enhance our contributions to the Nebraska National Guard."



Caught On Camera: Spc. Lisa Crawford, a public affairs broadcast specialist with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 111th Public Affairs Detachment, interviews a volunteer during Tradewinds 2016 in Grenada.

During the 10-day overseas exercise, the 111th PAD worked cohesively in unfamiliar circumstances. This was the first overseas training for many of the Soldiers involved, and the PAD's first full-unit mission in nearly a decade.

"My favorite part of the training was getting to lead Soldiers for the first time in an actual exercise," said Staff Sgt. Amy Jacobson, non-commissioned officer in charge. "I learned a lot about being an NCOIC and how to effectively communicate with Soldiers to complete the task at hand. I hope my team took away some great hands-on training in a fast-paced environment. I also hope they know that their skills are just as good as those that are active duty, doing this every day."

Jacobson, who has participated in a joint forces training exercise in Germany, said overall this was a good training experience that helps the unit effectively prepare for



Photos by Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Photo Sharing: Sgt. Jason Drager, a public affairs specialist with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 111th Public Affairs Detachment, shows a local Grenadian boy his photos during Tradewinds 2016, June 11, near Grenville, Grenada.

future state and federal missions.

"The training provided a chance for the PAD to make an immediate impact in a multinational training event while allowing time to interact with the local population," McNally said. "It left a lasting impact on all the Soldiers involved."

The 111th PAD's coverage of Phase I of Tradewinds 2016 included littoral patrolling, small boat operations, engineering administration, maritime law enforcement and operations center procedures. Land

operations focused on the challenges of conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations while dealing with the associated security challenges that occur during a disaster. Personnel from Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago joined military personnel from the United States, Canada, France and the United Kingdom for Tradewinds 2016.

Taking A Leap

754th Chemical Company's 'Retention Day' takes Soldiers to new heights

By Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen
Staff Photojournalist

Soldiers from the Omaha-based 754th Chemical Company (Reconnaissance/Decontamination) participated in an exciting training exercise at Camp Ashland Training Site this past June.

As part of a unit retention day, Soldiers were given the opportunity to rappel down the side of a static rappelling tower. For many participants, it was the first time in years they descended down the wood planks of the tall training tower.

"I think it's a great opportunity to give Soldiers that fun experience in the Guard," said Staff Sgt. Amanda Menke.

Menke, who demonstrated multiple rappelling techniques, said the team building is evident when you have a Soldier who is unsure of themselves on the tower.

"Maybe they have issues with heights and you realize that you can come around and encourage and support them to make that first step over the edge," she said.

The Army uses rappelling towers to demonstrate a variety of techniques used to tactically exit military aircraft, such as the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. For many Soldiers, the rappelling tower can be an excellent confidence builder prior to the U.S. Army's Air Assault School—something Menke spoke about during the training.

Another rappeller, Spc. Austin Alm, who is a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) specialist with the 754th Chemical Co., took advantage of the opportunity to hone in on skills not developed since basic training. "We only



Rappel Ready: Maj. Christopher Hansen monitors a Soldier descending the side of a static rappel tower at the Camp Ashland Training Site near Ashland, Neb., this past June. Soldiers from the 754th Chemical Company took advantage of the tower training during a unit retention day.

get to do it once in basic training, and it's just fun to get back on the rappel tower," Alm said.

Events like these also help develop strong unit cohesion for its Soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers.

"There are a lot of people who

got together and are having fun with this," said Spc. Sterling Reeves, a CBRN specialist with the 754th Chemical Co. "This builds confidence and everyone keeps encouraging (others) to keep going."

Rappelling down the side of a tall tower is something most Americans



Photos by Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

Head First: Staff Sgt. Amanda Menke descends head first down a static rappel tower at the Camp Ashland Training Site near Ashland, Neb., this past June. Menke was one of several Soldiers who took advantage of the opportunity to train on the static rappel tower during a unit retention day.

will never do, but it is also a unique and fun way to say thanks for all the hard work Soldiers do on a regular basis, said Capt. Michael

Kilgore, commander of the 754th Chemical Co.

"We're making sure we take the time to say thank you," Kilgore said.

Civil Support Team welcomes new commander, first sergeant

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Acting Editor

Fellow Soldiers, Airmen, friends and family gathered July 12 at the Nebraska National Guard's East Campus Readiness Center in Lincoln for a change of responsibility and change of command ceremony for the 72nd Civil Support Team.

The ceremony began with outgoing 1st Sgt. Lucas Poppe relinquishing responsibility of the 72nd CST to incoming 1st Sgt. Adam Kosch. As the senior enlisted advisor and principle advisor to the commander on all facets of operations, the first sergeant upholds the traditions, customs and the history of the command to the highest standards.

Before a formation of nearly two-dozen 72nd CST Soldiers and Airmen, Poppe traditionally passed a sword to Lt. Col. Jan Behn, 72nd CST commander, and then on to Kosch to physically symbolize the change.

"The (noncommissioned officer) sword signifies the first sergeant's commitment to his responsibility for and his authority over the soldiers of the command," said Maj. Jocelyn Kuta, the ceremony's emcee. "The first sergeant, like the NCO sword, remains razor sharp."

Poppe shared some words of advice for the members of the CST and the incoming first sergeant.

"Take every opportunity that presents itself, don't sweat the small stuff, maintain a positive attitude in light of change and keep performing at 110 percent," Poppe said. "Performance and attitude will take you far."

Kosch concluded the change of responsibility ceremony with a quick glimpse of his expectations for the CST while he serves as first sergeant.

"Poppe, I know, has been a mentor for you guys," Kosch said. "He's been a mentor for me. He's helped develop me throughout my career. I hope to carry that on and provide that same type of leadership, mentorship and development of the team. He said give it 110 percent, and I expect 110 percent. I look forward to seeing the performance of



Hand Off: Maj. Spencer Giles, after assuming command of the 72nd Civil Support Team, hands the company guidon over to incoming 1st Sgt. Adam Kosch as a sign of his confidence in the non-commissioned officer corps.

each and every one of you because I've heard about it. This is probably the strongest team the CST has ever had."

Following the change of responsibility ceremony, Kosch took charge of the formation as first sergeant while Col. Eric Teegerstrom, Behn and Maj. Spencer Giles took center-stage as the official party for the change of command ceremony.

Through the tradition of passing the guidon as the transfer of colors, Giles assumed command of the 72nd CST from Teegerstrom,



Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Former Chiefs: The outgoing 72nd Civil Support Team first sergeant and commander pass a ceremonial sword during the change of responsibility for the incoming first sergeant.

replacing Behn as acting commander. Behn will be taking a new assignment at the Brigade.

Behn and Poppe came to the CST at the same time three years ago, and did not anticipate leaving at the same time. Still, Behn said, with the two replacements they selected, they feel the CST is in good hands.

"Every commander wants to have that senior enlisted advisor that you know is going to take what you want to accomplish with the team and speak with one voice," Behn said

"Take every opportunity that presents itself, don't sweat the small stuff, maintain a positive attitude in light of change and keep performing at 110 percent. Performance and attitude will take you far."

— 1st Sgt. Lucas Poppe

Outgoing 72nd Civil Support Team first sergeant

during the ceremony. "I think First Sergeant Poppe and I definitely had that type of relationship where we could talk about things and I knew when he spoke, he was speaking for me, and I never questioned his guidance for you guys. It felt like my intent. I couldn't ask for a better first sergeant."

"And First Sergeant Kosch, I know if you lead the same way First Sergeant Poppe has done, you and Maj. Giles will be a great team. I look forward to seeing just great success from the CST."

"I'd like to thank the team for welcoming me as a member," Giles said, after assuming command of the team. "I look forward to our time together. I know that we as a team will continue to approach all of our training and the missions in front of us with the highest level of expertise, integrity and respect."

"This is just the beginning of a lot of transitions going on in the state," said Teegerstrom, the ceremony's presiding officer. "Nobody will ever question Spencer Giles' work ethic, his professionalism or his judgment. And as far as (Behn) has brought the unit, (Giles) is going to bring it even higher."

The 72nd is one of 57 CSTs throughout the National Guard. Each U.S. State is assigned at least one CST, as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Two states have two CSTs, they are California and New York.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Soup's On: A food service specialist with the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion prepares pepper pot soup.

Soldiers cook for next title

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Acting Editor

Before winning the national Philip A. Connelly award in the National Guard field kitchen category, Pvt. Md Hossain, a food service specialist and team member of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, thought his time in the kitchen—and uniform—was over.

But when his unit took top honors at the state and regional cooking competitions, and ultimately was recognized as the Army's best food-service professionals during the 2016 Philip A. Connelly Awards Program in Chicago, Illinois, May 20, he flipped his entire career outlook.

"This is the kind of thing that really makes you feel important," Hossain said. "So I chose to extend my contract, to continue to compete."

Hossain wasn't the only one excited to get back to competing. Lt. Col. Peter Hunt, 110th MMB commander, said he was thrilled when he heard his unit's team decided to compete for a second year with the goal of defending their national title.

"I think it's great they took the initiative to do this again," Hunt said. "The medics, maintenance crew and the cooks immediately threw

it all together on a whim and all worked hard together. It's great to see the teamwork and for them to be able to do it all so quickly."

Those efforts culminated on July 19 when the 110th MMB team set up their mobile kitchen trailer and field sanitation system at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Nebraska, to compete in the regional level of the 48th Annual Philip A. Connelly competition. According to those involved, the work needed to prepare for the competition paled in comparison to what the Soldiers were committed to accomplishing.

"This is a really special and unique group," said 1st Lt. Travis Kirschner, company commander. "The more they compete, the more they are practicing and training. It's great to see the Soldiers understand their jobs more and more, and get the mission done. Their development is exciting to watch."

Kirschner said the competition helped many of the company's Soldiers better understand the planning and preparation that goes into completing their everyday mission.

"It's really helped them gain a lot of ground on being more respected and appreciated," Kirschner said. "Even something like the name 'culinary specialist' helps. It really is a better term than 'cook,' as it show-

cases their unique skillsets better."

Joseph Cook, a competition evaluator and food program manager for the State of California, said the team was well prepared for the evaluation.

"They are very organized in their setup," Cooks said. "From this evaluation...the organization is what's helping them out a lot. Not that other groups don't have good teams, but this team appears to be working better."

The team's menu for the regional competition included pepper pot soup, spring salad, roast pork loin, brown gravy, home fried potatoes and black eyed peas with devil's food cake for dessert. Evaluators judge competitors not only on the full meal itself, but all the preparation before, communication and procedures used during and meal service as well.

"It was a little rough getting started, but it's exciting and I love being out here, training the troops and the cooks," said Staff Sgt. Katherine Struck, unit food service manager. "Our goal this year it to try and get into a rotational habit with meal positions so that each cook can cross-train more."

"Ultimately, they provided a top quality meal to hungry Soldiers," Cook said. "They completed their mission."

And of course, the team has a



Food Prep: A Soldier from the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion handles meat and vegetables as part of the regional Philip A. Connelly competition.



Black Forest Cake: Pvt. Md Hossain, a food service specialist with the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, pours cake batter onto a cooking sheet during the regional Philip A. Connelly competition, July 19, in Lincoln.

goal of doing much more than just cooking and serving Soldiers. Their aim is to win at the national level,

to become back-to-back champions. "We won once, and hopefully we'll do it again," Hossain said.

LEAPFEST

continued from page 1.

entire airborne community from across the country and internationally. There were a lot of great international teams this year. We all do things differently internationally, so it's great to network, make connections and share thoughts and ideas on how to more easily conduct our training."

Borrell said the competition is also a lot of fun, especially since many of the Soldiers who go to Leapfest are usually responsible for safety aspects during airborne operations at home, but at Leapfest they get to "just be a jumper."

The competition includes both individual and team events. The 2016 event saw 268 jumpers from 10 different countries and 12 U.S. states expend 1,082 parachutes. All jumpers also participated in a foreign jump exchange, and were awarded foreign jump wings issued either by Mexico, Italy, Germany or the United States.

Each team consisted of four to five participants (with the fifth team member serving as an alternate jumper). At an altitude of 1,500 feet (457 meters), the jumpers exited from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter using an MC-6 static line, steerable, parabolic parachute and aimed to land as close as possible to a pre-designated landing zone. Once jumpers landed and completed a parachute landing fall, they were timed until they all



Photo by Sgt. Austin Berner

X Marks The Spot: Staff Sgt. Luke Katz, Company C, 1-134th Cavalry, dives onto the X after landing on the drop zone during Leapfest 2016 in Rhode Island.

reached the landing zone.

Borrell said his team attended this year with the goal of just being in the top 25 percent of competitors. He added they were shocked to land the first place slot.

"We were able to win because we were consistent," Borrell said. "None of us scored individually well, but as a cumulative our score was low enough to win."

Borrell said winning this year with Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, was especially meaningful for him because it's the last year the team will get to compete under that name.

"I started at Det. 2, 165th, when we stood the unit up," Borrell said. "We've done a lot of amazing things and now that this unit is coming to a close, it means a lot to me and the rest of the team to be able to rep-

resent as a premiere airborne unit. We're proud the state of Nebraska as a whole was able to represent so well, and now they'll never forget we have this amazing community."

With the state's reorganization of Nebraska Army National Guard units across the state, Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, will become the 195th Rigger Support Team. Another Nebraska team, Company C, 1-134th Cavalry (Long-Range Surveillance), had already completed its transition to Company E before the competition. Company E ranked as the fifth best team at Leapfest 2016.

This year's top individual award winner was Staff Sgt. Dean DeAngelo of the Georgia National Guard. The event is hosted annually by the Rhode Island Army National Guard's 56th Troop Command.

LIERZ continued from page 1.

can be described in one word: 'Relentless.' "Relentless in his ability to see where things were not serving Airmen well, and relentless in making sure that enlisted Airmen were taken care of. I am profoundly grateful for the nature of your service and your relentless pursuit of excellence on behalf of the Airmen that you served."

Then, turning to Lierz, Bohac said: "I charge you with that same passion and same style of deliverance. I know you will be magnificent in the role of state command chief and I look forward to serving with you, serving the Airmen and Soldiers of the Nebraska National Guard."

In accepting his new position, Lierz gave credit to Forster for the work he did in protecting and enhancing the interests of the Nebraska Air National Guard's enlisted Airmen.

"Chief Forster has been a great command chief," Lierz said.

"My goal is to continue with the processes that Chief started, and I want to deliberately develop our Airmen. As a leader, I want to go and talk to our Airmen, find out what it is they want to do in their careers and help them achieve that accord-

ingly. Developing people, getting to know what they want and getting them to where they need to be is my goal. I truly believe that the Nebraska Air and Army National Guard are the best in the nation."

Lierz entered the Nebraska Air National Guard in April 1984 as an avionic specialist in the 155th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and became a flight scheduler in 1994 when the 155th converted to KC-135R aircraft.

Since 1994, Lierz has worked in a variety of capacities in the Nebraska National Guard including as the air operations superintendent, chief enlisted manager and resource advisor, and he has managed operating funds and pay and allowances for the 155th Operations Group.

Throughout his 32-year Guard career, Lierz has deployed in support of numerous combat operations including Decisive Endeavor, Northern Watch, Deny Flight, Joint Forge, Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Lierz earned a bachelor's degree in business management and a master's degree in organizational management from Peru State College in Nebraska.



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Honoring Nebraska's Fallen Aviators: (From left) Col. Eric Teegerstrom, Ramona Muntz and Capt. Margaret Ingerslew place a wreath of flowers in front of the Nebraska Air National Guard Memorial in honor of the Nebraska National Guard's fallen aviators, July 4.



'This Is Your Museum': Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac addresses the 4th of July crowd during the dedication ceremony.



Taps: (From left) Vilynn Decker and Meghan Meyer play taps in honor of the Nebraska National Guard's fallen aviators during the July 4 dedication of the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward, Neb.

MUSEUM continued from page 1.

Historical Society – a non-profit group dedicated to preserving the Nebraska National Guard's artifacts and stories – the vision for the new museum, currently open free of charge to the public Monday through Friday, is much larger and more far-reaching.

According to Gerry Meyer, Nebraska National Guard state historian, the goal is to create a "state-of-the-art" National Guard museum that tells the story of the Nebraska National Guard since its inception as a territorial militia in 1854 until the current day utilizing historic artifacts, newly built displays, high-tech systems and a future immersive exhibit.

"(The goal is to take) on a more learning center approach to museums," Meyer said. "(Some museums) are very static and you've got cases and cases of artifacts and displays, and people come. You call it a one-and-done. You come once and you never return."

"This museum (is designed to be) living and breathing where we have a learning center, we have a theater, we have a temporary exhibit area, we have main displays that are permanent but can be tweaked a little bit," he said.

One of the museum's key exhibits will be a future display that will tell the story of Nebraska's 134th Infantry Regiment and the bloody fight it encountered in the Norman hedgerows while trying to liberate the strategic city of St. Lo, France, from the Germans in July 1944. That display, Meyer said, will immerse museum patrons into the battle as detailed in artist Keith Rocco's 1996 National Guard Heritage Painting, "From Cornrow to Hedgerow."

Meyer said museum organizers hope to unveil that exhibit for the 75th anniversary of the Battle of St. Lo in 2019.

"To have a Cornrows and Hedgerows exhibit as a mainstay in the back of the museum that will be state of the art and interactive; that will bring people," Meyer said. "You always need to have the focus that (the museum not become) one and done. You're here to see and to participate and to be part of the history of the Nebraska National Guard as a visceral learning experience."

Meyer said the biggest goal is helping educate the public and the

Guard's internal membership about the roles Nebraska Guard and its Soldiers and Airmen, their families and communities have played throughout its history.

"We're here to tell our story from 1854 to the present, Army and Air (National Guard), and the story of the people who served," Meyer said. "Every artifact that is in the museum tells a story. We don't put anything on a wall or in a case for display unless it tells some specific story."

The July 4 dedication ceremony marked the completion of the first phase of museum displays and galleries, which were funded primarily by private donors from the local Seward area. Among these were the dedication of a newly-built, \$75,000 full-scale replica of a 1913 Curtiss Pusher airplane that was flown by the Nebraska National Guard from 1913-16, the new John W. Cattle Sr. Exhibit Area, the new Jones Bank and Trust Company Theater, the new Concordia University Learning Center and two galleries of temporary panels that detail the Nebraska National Guard's stories from 1854 until the Nebraska Guard's mobilization in 1940 for training that would ultimately lead to its participation in World War II.

According to Bohac, the museum is designed to tell a critical story that is often overlooked.

"This museum really belongs to you, all of Nebraska, for it is the story of Nebraska," Bohac said during the dedication ceremony. "Within these walls are the stories of countless Nebraskans, many of whom raised their hands voluntarily to serve and offered their lives to the service of others. This is a story about those early Nebraska pioneers who volunteered to help save our union during the bloody Civil War, to date the highest casualty figure of any conflict we've been involved in."

"This is a story about Nebraskans who served during the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection, both World Wars and the conflicts that followed, including the one we currently find ourselves in today. It is a story about those brave Nebraskans who saw the value that powered flight bring... and who risked their lives in experimenting and developing skills truly needed to utilize the newly invented airplane.



Learning More About The Nebraska National Guard's Early Service: Fourth of July visitors to the new Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward, Neb., stand in front of a series of temporary panels detailing the early days of the Nebraska Territorial Militia. The panels are part of a number of new exhibits, to include a new display honoring Nebraska's early military aviation, that were dedicated on July 4 in Seward, Neb.

"A story about those Nebraskans who responded to assist their fellow citizens in need following tornados, floods and civil strife. And a story about you, the families and communities that supported them," Bohac added. "This is a story about Nebraska, ladies and gentlemen. This is a story about the United States. This is a story about us as Americans. And so, this museum is our museum... all Nebraskans... for it is within these walls where those stories will be preserved."

Meyer said the response to the museum has been tremendous. On July 4 alone, nearly 8,000 patrons entered the museum and explored the new exhibits. Since then, the museum continues to attract roughly 30 to 50 visitors a day.

Meyer said the Seward community is already a tremendous supporter of the Guard's museum activities. "(Seward) is just now really understanding the implications of having something this big here," he said. "They have accepted it as their museum, but they also understand that it's the state's museum and they backed it 100 percent."

This is particularly evident in the fact that multiple Seward organizations are now the chief sponsors of the museum's major exhibits and gallery areas.

"All I can say is wow," said Ryne Seaman, president and chief executive officer of Seward's National Bank and Trust Company, which was the main donor behind the John W. Cattle Temporary Exhibit Area and Curtiss Pusher aircraft display unveiled in honor of the late John W. Cattle Sr., a World War II artillery officer who came home to Seward from the war in Europe, founded the bank and became a major civic leader in the community. "Isn't it amazing what we can do in Seward when we work together?"

"I think that it is only appropriate that home businesses and institutions, such as Hughes Brothers, Concordia University, Jones National Bank and Cattle National Bank are the donors for the development of Nebraska National Guard Museum."

That support is definitely appreciated, said both Bohac and Meyer, especially as the museum now turns to developing the next phases of the

project.

"Make no mistake, this is an extremely important endeavor," Bohac said. "If we do not preserve and tell the story of our Nebraska National Guard, then who will? Who will tell the future generations about those who served before them and protected their fellow citizens and defended the freedoms that we hold so dear?"

"So, again, thanks to all of you who have so graciously given of your time and your talents to help us get to where we are today," Bohac concluded. "Thanks to all of those individuals and organizations who so generously contributed to our effort to help us achieve the successes we have to date. And thanks to the citizens of Seward for so generously welcoming us and making us a part of your family."

"Today, we mark a significant milestone. We have achieved that milestone in great part because of you... all of you... and for that I and all of my fellow Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are extremely grateful."

'Wow' exhibit arrives at museum

Curtiss 'Pusher' display kicks off 100th anniversary of Nebraska National Guard aviation history

By Gerry Meyer
State Historian

When a Daws Trucking truck reached the outskirts of Seward, Nebraska, they were met by a police escort, which brought the truck's cargo — a shiny, new Curtiss Model D exhibit — to the new Nebraska National Guard Museum in grand style.

The aircraft, also called the Curtiss Pusher, is the centerpiece to the "Century of Nebraska National Guard Aviation (1915-2015)" display that was unveiled during a July 4 dedication ceremony at the Guard's new museum. The plane represents the birth of aviation in the Nebraska National Guard.

"The addition of the Curtiss Pusher above our exhibit area is incredible and reflects the great relationship the museum has built with the people of Seward and Seward County," said Darin Krueger, president of the Nebraska National Guard Museum Historical Society. "We are so thankful for the tremendous support that has been shown to us."

A crew of volunteers, led by Ken Meyer and this nephew, Nathan, showed up to offload the precious aviation cargo. Wing struts and the main fuselage area were carefully hauled up the south loading door to the main floor for assembly. There it was met by Dave Claussen of Durango, Colorado, lead designer for the replica plane, and his partner, Mike, who then quickly started the eight-hour process of putting it



Aviation Pioneer: The new Curtiss Model D "Pusher" airplane exhibit at the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward, Neb., honors the exploits of such early Nebraska National Guard aviators as Capt. Ralph McMillen who experimented with aircraft capabilities — such as aerial bombing and photography — from 1915 until his death in an aircraft accident in 1916.

together.

This is the second Curtiss Pusher Claussen's company has built. The first is now a centerpiece exhibit at the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and Museum in Durango, Colorado, which memorialized the 100th anniversary of a flight by Capt. Ralph E McMillen, a Nebraska National Guard aviator. Many aviation experts claim that the Seward plane is the best replica of a Curtiss Model D "Headless Pusher" outside of the original in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

The museum gave donors and sponsors a special sneak-peek of



Photo by Gerry Meyer

Up We Go, Into The Wild Blue Yonder: For the first time since July 1916, a Nebraska National Guard Curtiss Model D "Pusher" airplane takes flight as a team of volunteers, including Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster (top center), Nebraska Air National Guard state command chief master sergeant, carefully moves the new aircraft exhibit into place at the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward, Neb. The aircraft replica is the centerpiece of a exhibit honoring the 100th anniversary of Nebraska National Guard aviation.

the assembled plane on the main floor of the museum on July 1. Virginia Cattle, one of the first major sponsors of the plane, was given the christening honor of sitting in the "cockpit" and testing out the controls of this early aviation masterpiece. The Cattle family and members of the Cattle National bank and Trust Company—significant sponsors of the plane—joined Virginia in celebrating the arrival of the plane.

Helping join in on the celebration were Dr. Brian Friedrich, president

of Concordia University Seward, and several of his staff members.

The City of Seward's mayor, Josh Eickmeier and his father, Jerry, stopped by to visit the facility. Also present during the celebration were Marilyn Schulz, daughter of Capt. Erle Smiley, and her family. They posed next to the WWI aviator and *Barnstormers'* oil painting in front of the early 20th Century aircraft.

Mark Forster, former Nebraska Guard state command chief master sergeant and project leader for the

Curtiss Pusher, and Dave Geis of Geis Steel Tech—along with other volunteers such as Dale and JoAnn Wallman, and Forster's son Will — spent the next five hours carefully hoisting the aircraft into its permanent display position above the John W. Cattle Sr. exhibit area near the front of the museum's interior.

Patrons visiting the museum will now have an almost immediately visible "wow exhibit" in their view when they walk through the main doors.

Parachute exhibit unveiled at museum on National Airborne Day

By Gerry Meyer
State Historian

More than 75 people gathered around the Concordia University Nebraska Learning Center and celebrated *National Airborne Day* on Aug. 16 with a dedication of the new "Airborne!" exhibit towering over the room at the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward, Nebraska.

The new exhibit features, with lifelike accuracy, the life-sized mock-up of the side of a C-130 Hercules with a jumper standing in the door and one jumper exiting into the learning center is a very powerful display. The exhibit is designed to honor the Nebraska National Guard's airborne heritage, including the last Nebraska Army National Guard unit to be stationed at the Seward armory — Detachment 2, 189th Quartermaster Company, a parachute rigging company — prior to the conversion of the facility into the new Nebraska National Guard Museum.

The display was sponsored by the Berry Law Firm of Lincoln and the Nitz family in memory of Charles Nitz, a Korean War paratrooper with two combat jumps. The exhibit was created by Omaha artist, Dave Jenkins.

The final display was a product of a mix-up on the size of its parachute. The architect designed the upper parts of the room to the size of a T-10 parachute that would have a jumper gently descending into the learning

center.

When the new, modern parachutes arrived, the size was about double the older T-10 chute.

The museum design group came up with a more aggressive design that included a parachutist coming out of an aircraft mock-up attached to the shroud overlooking the room. The jumper's chute would be pulled back and cigar rolled to simulate the exit from the aircraft.

On Aug. 16, the display was unveiled on National Airborne Day at the Nebraska National Guard Museum. The day commemorates the first United States Airborne unit jump at Fort Benning, Georgia known as the "Test Platoon." The Nebraska National Guard Museum Historical Society sponsored the event and Darin Krueger, society president, served as master of ceremonies.

The ceremony opened with welcome remarks from Krueger, Nebraska Army Guard Chaplain (Capt.) Steve Thomlison provided the invocation and benediction for the event and Roger Glawatz lead the assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The special assistant to the Nebraska adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Michael Navrkal, welcomed the attendees to the facility and talked about the importance of remembering our heroes. The creator of the exhibit, Dave Jenkins, spoke about the process it took to make the mock-up including traveling to St. Joseph, Missouri to photograph a real

C-130 for authentic and to-scale production. He also introduced scouts from Troop 597 of Omaha who helped with the rivets and installing the panels at the museum.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was performed by Margaret and Kelby Nitz, John Berry, Sr., Mike Koberlein, of the Berry Law Firm, and Dr. Brian Friedrichs, president of Concordia University Nebraska.

Following the ribbon-cutting, sponsors had the opportunity to speak about the significance of the exhibit. John Berry, Sr.,



Photos by Gerry Meyer

Leap Of Faith: The new airborne exhibit at the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward, Neb., is designed to replicate the feeling of an airborne jump with one Soldier waiting in the door of a C-130 Hercules aircraft while another paratrooper experiences the rush of jumping from the aircraft with his parachute beginning to deploy.

Vietnam Veteran and author, spoke about the need to remember those who served. His son, John, is currently serving with the Nebraska National Guard at Fort Lewis, Washington.

Berry Sr. spoke about his family and the firms' commitment to the exhibits that promote a greater understanding for what the military does in our society. He spoke of seeing the airborne Soldiers in Vietnam and seeing his own son become an Airborne Ranger and how that has always brought a sense of gratitude for service members that dedicate their lives in defense of the greatest country in the world.

Margaret and Kelby Nitz spoke of the memory of Charles Nitz and how he would have enjoyed the airborne exhibit above a learning center so students in the future can appreciate what he had done so long ago. Next to Margaret and Kelby was Charles' Ike jacket with combat airborne wings and numerous pictures of him.

Concordia President, Dr. Brian Friedrichs, spoke about the impressive display being part

of the Concordia University Learning Center that will bring students together in a state of the art facility that will inspire.

Following the benediction, the society hosted a post dedication party with an "Airborne" cake and refreshments. Mary Meyer and Jan Matzke hosted the social. The Nitz family was well represented at the ceremony and following the dedication had an opportunity to do some family pictures. The airborne soldiers in attendance were very pleased with the detail of the display.

The museum has started a collection of airborne artifacts to display every year on National Airborne Day. The collection of Buzzy Hermann is extensive and includes his parachutes from Normandy (D-Day, June, 1944) and Market-Garden. This personal collection covers his time from joining Company M in Seward to all his jumps and battles in World War II with the 101st Airborne Division.

Have artifacts related to the airborne? Please call the Nebraska National Guard Museum at (402) 309-8763 or 8761.



Creating Realism: 1st Lt. Cody Cade works to create a realistic impression of an airborne Soldier's parachute beginning to deploy as part of the new airborne display at the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward, Neb.



Guard Family NEWS You Can Use



Financial readiness key to successful military service

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Acting Editor

The Department of Defense has increased its focus on helping military personnel and their families with their personal finance. As part of this push, Nebraska National Guard members were able to meet with Ayo Samaiye, a personal financial counselor (PFC) from the Military and Family Life Counseling Program, during the months of July and August.

"We have gotten terrific feedback from service members and family members for his service," said Capt. Melissa Kramer, state family program director for the Nebraska National Guard. "Meeting with the PFC face-to-face to discuss issues has been a great help for our service members. He is familiar with the military, so he understands the military terms and resources available to our National Guard members."

Kramer said she's received only positive feedback on Samaiye's financial knowledge and flexibility to schedule appointment times that work with the service member's schedule, including nights and weekends.

Due to high demand, Samaiye's contract was extended by the DoD and his services will also be available by appointment throughout September as well. The PFC's services are available to all Nebraska service members, family members and recent

retirees who need help with basic budgeting, retirement planning, evaluating insurance or investment needs, estate planning, teaching kids about money management, tax planning and more.

"Having finances in order affects the overall readiness of our service members and their families," Kramer said. "It affects their ability to drill, ability to be prepared to leave to go to annual training or a military school, and the ability to focus on our jobs instead of worrying about paying rent, utilities or a vehicle payment. Financial concerns and crises are the number one issue we see in our office when we're helping our Soldiers and Airmen."

"Every unit in the Nebraska Guard has leaders who have worked with one of their Airmen or Soldiers about financial concerns. Using financial counseling services can stop emerging problems before they get out of control and affect our ability to do our jobs," she added.

Since coming to Nebraska in July, Samaiye has traveled to at least seven different cities across the state and met with more than 100 service members.

Samaiye said the biggest financial concerns he hears most from service members

are about budgeting, followed by retirement savings and debt.

"Sometimes they all overlap," Samaiye said, "because you need a spending plan to get out of debt and to save for retirement."

Samaiye said service members' financial issues aren't much different from other Americans, except that since people usually join the service at a younger age and they leave their families earlier, they don't always have a strong support system. Instead such a steady paycheck at a young age – without the experience of paying bills and other responsibilities – can pose a challenge to some.

"There is this assumption that the more money you make, the wealthier you are," Samaiye said. "But that's not the case. It's really the more money you save, the more money you have. So, it's not how much you make, it's how much you save."

Samaiye also said Soldiers and Airmen need to set the right priorities and make sure that saving is their number one habit, regardless of income.

"You need to save as much as possible, and use every opportunity that you have to do so," Samaiye said. "The habits that you have on a low income will be the same habits you have when making more. So, break those bad habits now before you have even more to lose."

While meeting with service members and their families, Samaiye mentions the many

different savings options available through the military, including the Thrift Savings Plan, the Saving Deposit Program and the newly-founded Blended Retirement System.

Samaiye is also knowledgeable on traditional savings opportunities including bank and credit union savings accounts, money market accounts, CDs, 401(k)s, IRAs, insurance options and more.

His best advice, in line with his push for taking advantage of every opportunity to save, is to diversify funds across multiple savings vessels, at to "not keep all your eggs in one basket."

As a PFC, Samaiye's is responsible for talking to a set minimum of Soldiers and Airmen about their finances each week, but there's more than the requirements that keeps him in front of service members. "I'm like a preacher," Samaiye said.

"I'm just trying to save souls. It's my passion and I'm just trying to save people financially. As many people as I can help, I will. For me it's a calling, and I enjoy what I do."

To set-up an appointment before Sept. 30, call PFC Ayo Samaiye directly at 402-309-4281, or email PFC.NE.ANG@zeiders.com.

For additional support year-round, call Military OneSource to request financial counseling, or contact the Nebraska National Guard Warrior and Family Support office at (402) 309-7332.

Military retirement doesn't mean one's National Guard affiliation ends

Retirement is great! How many times have you heard that since hanging up the uniform? After having dedicated a major portion of your life to the military, it's truly an honor to wear the mantle of "retiree." But, once you retire, don't become a stranger to the National Guard. Too often, we lose track of our fellow retirees, causing them to not receive updates to benefits or changes to policies.

Please keep the NMRC, if you are a member, and the National Guard Retirement Services Office updated on your email and mailing addresses. We will not share this information with anyone and will only use it to communicate valuable retiree benefit information to you. Thanks!

Prairie Soldier

Print copies of the *Prairie Soldier* are available in all armories and reserve centers. Make sure you get your copy to take home and read. It's truly amazing to see how active our National Guard continues to be in these hectic times. Many of you have seen information on the recently announced transformation of the Army National Guard – wow! This certainly isn't the Guard of old, is it? Today's Army and Air National Guard service members would love to hear some of the old "war stories" of days gone by – share them as you can!

Retiree Briefing

The recently held retiree briefing in Kearney was well attended and participants received a lot of updated information on Tricare, Space A, SBP, funeral honors, etc. Don't miss out on these events when they are scheduled in your area. This is your best chance to meet with fellow retirees and learn about changes or updates to your benefits.

National Guard Museum

The National Guard Museum in Seward, if you've not had the chance to go, is on the "to do" list to visit! What a beautiful facility showcasing the Nebraska National

Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

DEERS/ID Card Stations

- G1 – 2433 N.W. 24th Street, Lincoln, NE 68524: (402) 309-8167/8168/8169;
- "Spirit of 1776" Armory 1776 N. 10th St. Lincoln, NE 68508 (402) 309-7359/7373;
- Penterman Armory at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln (402) 309-1724/1719;
- Air Guard (Lincoln Air Base) Bldg 600 Room E209: (402) 309-1542;
- Norfolk Armory 817 S. 1st St. Norfolk, NE 68701 (402) 309-8900/8908;
- Kearney Armory 5710 Airport Road Kearney: (402) 309-7758/7752;
- 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), 220 County Road A, Bldg. 508, Ashland, NE 68003, (402) 309-7809/7628;
- Offutt Air Force Base: (402) 294-2374;
- The number for DEERS is 1-800-538-9552.

Remember, you need two forms of ID when you arrive for your appointment.

License Plates

Do you have your distinctive military service plate from the DMV? It's easy to do and a good way to showcase your proud service as a member of the Army or Air Guard (or any other service, for that matter).

If you haven't done so, and wish to get a plate, either a generic or personalized, you have to register with the Nebraska Department of Veteran's Affairs to have a Veteran's designation displayed on your Nebraska license or ID card. It's easy, painless and quick.

Go to the registry site at <http://www.veterans.nebraska.gov/> or contact the VA at 402-471-2450. Questions related to this registry should be directed to: Nebraska Department of Veteran's Affairs, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, NE 68509. If the "Veteran" designation is added when you renew your driver's license, there is no extra fee to do so. If you want to apply for a replacement license to have the des-

ignation shown, you will have to pay a replacement fee. All veterans and retirees who are eligible and who want to add the "Veteran" designation to their driver licenses or State ID cards are encouraged to do so at www.CLICKDMV.Nebraska.gov. They may also do so at any driver licensing office.

Once that's done, you can then apply online for a veteran's plate. Very easy to do.

If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us at 402-309-7303. We'll get you pointed in the right direction to ensure you start receiving your retirement benefits on time. We strive to ensure all our members receive quality information and service. We look for suggestions and comments to make our product better.

ID Cards

Check the expiration date on your ID card! Have you updated your ID card? Your Retired ID Card is your identification for Tricare, Tricare for Life, and to validate your Medicare eligibility. Have you moved, changed a phone number or added an email address? Please contact us to update your information so we can keep our information current. Thanks!

Retiree Breakfasts

For the early birds, here's the breakfast site information as we know it:

Army National Guard retirees: **FIRST** Monday of each month, 7:00 AM, Virginia's Travelers Café, 3820 Cornhusker Highway, Lincoln.

Air National Guard retirees: **LAST** Monday of each month, 7:00 AM, Stauffer's Café, 5600 S. 48th St, Lincoln.

North Platte area retirees: **SECOND** Saturday of each month, 8:00 AM, Airport Inn, North Platte.

If any other towns have retiree breakfasts and want to share that information, please let us know and we'll add you to the list so others can join you.

From the desk of Sgt. 1st Class Ed Luhn

I thought it would be important to remind all "Gray Area" retirees that filing for your Age 60 Non-Regular Retirement does not come automatically, and is up to the retiree to take action. Human Resource Command is no longer mailing out a notification or the applications to the retiree. Therefore, it is very important that they contact their State Retirement NCO to set-up an appointment to gather the necessary supporting documents and retirement forms to fill out their application.

Retired applications should be submitted around 9 months but not less than 90 days prior to 60th date of birth to ensure all documents are received and processed correctly through Human Resource Command and then on to Defense and Finance Account Service (DFAS) at Fort Knox for pay.

The retirement service NCO will provide them with a benefit brief that will provide helpful and timely information to the retiree to assist them in making the right choices prior to them turning age 60.

This benefit brief covers such areas as Tricare choices, Space A Travel, Funeral Honors, Retiree Dental Options and Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) choice or review of the retirees Reserve Component Survivor Benefit plan they have already chosen.

It is very important that the spouse attends the briefing as well so they understand the benefits and the process of passing on the benefits if the retiree passes away.

Another service we can provide to Soldiers and Retirees of the Nebraska Army National Guard is Historical Record research. Former Soldiers and Retirees can contact the Historical Records personalist at 402-309-8191 and fill out the necessary request forms to obtain past records that they have lost or need for service validation.

Thank you retirees for your service and a BIG thank you to the family members who gave their support.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Colonel
Craig W. Strong

Lieutenant Colonel
Spencer W. Giles
Jeffrey C. Searcey

Major
Kristen L. Auge

Captain
Luke C. Ritz

First Lieutenant
Joseph F. Kumor

Chief Warrant Officer 3
Richard C. Davis
Nick J. Gruber

Chief Warrant Officer 2
Justin T. Kurtz

Sergeant Major
Mark A. Smith
Clint J. Thompson

Master Sergeant
Austin J. Behnk
Christine L. Raftery

Sergeant First Class
Erik J. Singasas
Brandi M. Vbra

Staff Sergeant
James G. Halstead
Cyle L. Kling
Joel R. Kosnjek
Johnathan R. Mejia
Matthew A. Poppe
Johnathan E. Weinmaster
Seth A. Weyeneth

Sergeant
Andrew C. Broers
Michael A. Clark
Joshua A. Hamilton
Derek M. Harden
Brandon J. Kapke
James J. O'Malley IV
Jeremy K. Paulson
James A. Rashilla
Christopher C. Reagan
Christopher A. Damian Reddish

Specialist
Joseph G. Barelagoodwin

Connor M. Besse
Harrison G. Bourne
Devon C. Brogdon
James J. Brown
Austin R. Chab
Brent S. Hellbusch
Justin D. Hillebran
Jameson W. Hittle
Jauregui J. Iniguez
Keenon J. Kincheloe
Nyayan J. Koung
Dustin J. Luethke
Jacob W. Mayer
Cody A. Miller
James R. C. Moore
Jeromy P. Naslund Jr.
Nicholas L. Nekolite
Dylan T. Nielsen
Arditha M. Pitre
Sterling J. Reeves
Cassandra M. Richters
Ryan J. Roberts
Christopher M. Third
Tyrell D. Turner
Joshua D. Wilshusen
Brady J. Wilson
Trevor J. Wood

Private First Class
Gabriel J. Bernhagen
Daniel L. Betts
Wyatt J. Brauckmuller
Liam T. Christensen
Nichlaus J. Clement
Thomas S. Cuevas
Kevin W. Knowles
Raya M. Neujahr
Wesley R. Orr
Luis M. Rocha Jr.
Ashton B. Schaefer
Michael L. Schmidt
John S. Woruo

Private Two
Ryan M. O'Dell
Alejandro R. Trejo
Erin E. Wilson

Air National Guard
Colonel
Annmarie K. Anthony

Lieutenant Colonel
Jennifer A. J. Hasslen

Major
William R. Torson
Joseph R. Remmenga

Anthony Purdy

Captain
James O. Fox
Corrina J. Bartels

First Lieutenant
Phillip M. Tran
Joshua A. Stevenson
Stephanie R. Miller
Amanda C. Kottas

First Lieutenant
Trevor D. Piening

Master Sergeant
Brian W. Gayer
Jason D. Koch
Matthew L. Stebbing

Staff Sergeant
Brandon A. McClintock
Matthew C. Mohatt
Matthew R. Vondrasek

Senior Airman
Brandon Arias
Megan C. McGahan
Tanner M. Mutlu
Jeffrey L. Witter

Airman
Jacob A. McNeese

TAPS

Sgt. James O'Malley IV
Mr. Luke Heritage

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard
Maj. Robert J. Mendez
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ryan N. Gonderinger
1st Sgt. Chad A. Lingenfelter
Master Sgt. Manuel D. Lopez Inzunza
Sgt. 1st Class Michael E. Martinez

Air National Guard
Col. Scott A. McPherson
Col. Tami S. Thompson
Lt. Col. Robert K. Barnhill
Lt. Col. Mary A. McGahan
Lt. Col. David E. Severson

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal
Col. Gary A. Ropers
Col. Craig W. Strong
Lt. Col. Philip G. Houser
Lt. Col. Darin E. Huss
Maj. Eric P. Baptiste
Maj. Daniel L. Behn
Maj. Troy W. Dannehl
Maj. Matthew S. York
Capt. Ryan M. Carlson
2nd Lt. Cassandra M. Day
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Dustin R. Guenther
Sgt. Maj. Barry L. Read
1st Sgt. William C. Cary
Master Sgt. Carl K. Dehling
Sgt. 1st Class Christine L. Gonzales
Sgt. 1st Class Jessica A. Zimbelman

Army Commendation Medal
Capt. Michael J. Koch Jr.
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kc Sohl
Sgt. 1st Class Michael S. Kreffit
Sgt. 1st Class Scott R. Stanley
Sgt. 1st Class Douglas D. Stephens
Staff Sgt. Jason C. Brooks
Staff Sgt. Kameron E. Graham
Staff Sgt. Jerod W. Ideus
Staff Sgt. Eugene T. Schroll
Sgt. Samantha M. Garcia

Army Achievement Medal
Maj. Kyle O. Lythgoe
Maj. Michael P. Sullivan
Capt. Brian R. Riekenberg
1st Lt. Bradley D. Larson
1st Lt. Nathanael J. Rutherford
1st Lt. Bradley D. Steinman
2nd Lt. Stephen M. Graham
2nd Lt. Brody C. Telfer

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dallas W. Bundy
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Bradley D. Kuhn
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kevin C. George
Chief Warrant Officer 2 John T. Nicola
1st Sgt. Steven R. Brewer
Master Sgt. John R. Willis
Sgt. 1st Class Eric J. Martin
Staff Sgt. Christine L. Baack
Staff Sgt. Nicholas C. Christy
Staff Sgt. Glenn J. Cox
Staff Sgt. Luke E. Katz
Staff Sgt. Zachary J. Kaufman
Staff Sgt. Andrew P. Liss
Staff Sgt. Joseph L. McMurtrey
Staff Sgt. Ryan A. Pella
Staff Sgt. Jillian L. Petersen
Staff Sgt. Alex D. Peyton
Sgt. John R. Bartel
Sgt. Aaron A. Dickey
Sgt. Justin T. Doerr
Sgt. Zachary D. Findley
Sgt. Brandon S. Gathye
Sgt. Parker J. Gilbert
Sgt. Keith B. Jorgensen
Sgt. Ashley L. Larrington
Sgt. Zachary T. Manley
Sgt. Danny D. Rogers
Sgt. Daniel Salinas
Sgt. Melissa A. Schmit
Sgt. Keith W. Tinnell
Sgt. Jason W. Trumble
Sgt. Andrew J. White
Sgt. Levi J. White
Spc. Alexander Calderon
Spc. Zachary M. Cronin
Spc. David M. Foley
Spc. Miguel A. Guardilola
Spc. Jacob N. Kamphaus
Spc. Christopher Matiasantos
Spc. Matthew C. Miller
Spc. Cody A. Renner
Spc. Alexis E. R. Rowell
Spc. Alexander J. Svitak
Spc. Kristopher A. Vodicka
Pfc. Johannah M. Bergerson
Pfc. Kiefer J. Kotrous
Pvt. Colton M. Dittman

Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal
Sgt. 1st Class Gregory F. Smithburns

Nebraska National Guard
Commendation Medal
Staff Sgt. Nathanael J. Rutter
Staff Sgt. Kimberly M. Smith
Sgt. Jordan T. Hopwood

Nebraska National Guard

Individual Achievement Medal
Capt. Joshua Metcalf
1st Lt. Paige M. Glynn
1st Lt. Jacob I. Lee
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Stephen P. Oppiger II
Sgt. 1st Class James G. Dinville
Sgt. 1st Class Adam C. Junck
Sgt. 1st Class James C. Mendoza
Sgt. 1st Class Chad M. Pokorney
Staff Sgt. Joshua C. Ames
Staff Sgt. Corey A. Hackbart
Staff Sgt. Derek J. Harris
Staff Sgt. Luke E. Katz
Staff Sgt. Isvi S. Machuca
Staff Sgt. Philip J. Merlino
Staff Sgt. Joshua M. Meyers
Staff Sgt. Dustin E. Schlote
Staff Sgt. Thomas M. Shirey
Staff Sgt. Joel W. Tapsoba
Sgt. Taylor R. Beck
Sgt. James G. Berger
Sgt. Michael S. Boesen
Sgt. Brycen L. Gillming
Sgt. Dakota A. Kingham
Sgt. Kevin G. Nelson
Sgt. Christian R. Norseen
Sgt. Michael L. Olberding
Sgt. Freeman S. Sandquist
Sgt. Schuyler D. Schoenhofer
Sgt. Ernest W. Short
Sgt. Jordan M. White
Spc. Jesse W. Anderbery
Spc. Jordan J. Burival
Spc. Caleb J. Greenrod
Spc. Triston A. Grieser
Spc. Damian R. Hort
Spc. Conner R. McHugh
Spc. Tyler J. Miller
Spc. Jeremy B. Roldan
Spc. Jacobi D. Spencer
Spc. Marcus J. Steed
Spc. Chasen J. Welch
Spc. Jacob D. Zeiss
Pfc. Brookelyn A. Orcutt
Pfc. Xavier R. Sagaste
Pfc. Spencer D. Volden

Air National Guard
Meritorious Service Medal
Col. Scott McPherson
Lt. Col. Larry Whitmore
Master Sgt. Jeffrey Howard

Air Force Commendation Medal
Tech. Sgt. Michael Wellman

Air Force Achievement Medal
Staff Sgt. Bret Frohner

Shorttakes

Teegerstrom to lead changes as 92nd Troop Command commander

By Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen
Staff Photojournalist

The Nebraska Army National Guard's Lincoln-based 92nd Troop Command continued its long history of installing top-notch commanders this past spring.

Col. Lynn Heng ceremoniously passed along the colors of one of Nebraska's largest troop-governing units to Col. Eric Teegerstrom in the presence of family, friends, general officers and Soldiers at the Penteman Army, April 17.

"To really have that chance to perform this duty over the last 13 months has truly been a blessing and I'll never forget," said Heng, the outgoing commander.

"I've been very impressed and I'm really going to miss working with you, excellent, excellent Soldiers," he added.

Heng is transitioning out of the unit at a time when the Nebraska Army Guard is undertaking some major transformations across the Cornhusker state.

"I'm leaving you in good hands...Colonel Teegerstrom has been there—he's done that," Heng said. "He's an old Cav guy; got the Cav guy coming back again, that's gonna help tremendously with the transformation."

Teegerstrom spoke positively about the challenges ahead of him and the unit.

"It's got to be a team effort, and that's what I expect out of Troop Command is a team effort as we go forward," Teegerstrom said.

"Everybody that has an idea out there has value, and that's what makes the team strong – when every single person can contribute and make a difference. I'm looking forward to the next couple years with Troop Command," Teegerstrom added.

Brig. Gen. Kevin Lyons, Nebraska's land component commander and an integral officer in Nebraska force structure change, expressed his confidence in the 92nd Troop



Photo by Staff Sgt. Amy Jacobson

Passing The Torch: Brig. Gen. Kevin Lyons hands the colors of the 92nd Troop Command to incoming commander Col. Eric Teegerstrom.

Command's ability to accept the upcoming challenges.

"As far as (Teegerstrom) taking over, you know, I'm going to set the bar high," Lyons said during the ceremony. "With the transformation right now, we have a couple of battalion guidons that will be changing in the near future. There's going to be a lot of changes with the individual Soldiers, and I know with your effort and contribution to this organization it is only going to enhance that transformation and make it a success."

"The challenge is there; I know you can handle it—best wishes to you in your command," Lyons said.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mary Thach

Equipment Check: In this file photo, Army Sgt. 1st Class Jacob Bramhall, a platoon sergeant with the 623rd Engineer Company, helps a search and extraction team member don his gear during a simulation training exercise in 2013.

623rd Engineers honors Soldier as 'Best Engineer'

By Sgt. Jason Jensen
Guest Contributor

While completing their 2016 annual training mission, the 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) named Lincoln native Sgt. 1st Class Jacob Bramhall, a 623rd platoon sergeant and full-time supply sergeant, as their best engineer of the year. This best engineer award is presented to the Soldier who exemplifies what being an engineer is all about.

Before enlisting in the Nebraska National Guard, Bramhall served six years as a generator mechanic in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve out of Omaha. During his time with the Marines, he completed a year-long deployment to Iraq while attached to the 2nd Marine Division based out of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

After his discharge from the Marine Corps Reserve, Bramhall joined the Nebraska National Guard and has served for the past 10

years. He deployed to Afghanistan with the 623rd (as a vertical engineering unit) from 2010-2011 and was a squad leader in charge of the material supply yard on base.

When asked how the mission and training events impact him as a Soldier, Bramhall said, "It definitely challenges me, in a good way, to account for a platoon-size element at multiple construction sites and insuring they have the materials needed to keep them going."

The 623d has two highly visible missions in the state: construction and CERF-P.

"It's a very fulfilling mission knowing your training is to save someone's life in their time of need. The Soldiers that volunteer for this mission take it very serious; it's a lot of extra time and training that they are willing to do," Bramhall said.

Bramhall said he would like to improve himself by learning to become more proficient at ordering material and the construction process. And for his military career, he hopes to become a company first sergeant someday.

Street Talk

“What’s the best training you’ve ever attended in your military career?”



Maj. Matthew Siemsen
173rd Air Refueling Squadron
“Pilot training was the best and most intense training I have received because it had the most structure and I had the most to gain from it.”

Staff Sgt. Erica Daugherty
155th Security Forces Squadron
“When I went to 7 Level (upgrade training) we did combatives. They had just changed the program, so it was a lot more intense, and we definitely earned our paychecks.”



Sgt. Austin Dutcher
195th Forward Support Company
“Our recent trip to the Czech Republic for annual training to conduct convoy operations, because we were able to shoot their machine guns and RPGs.”



Spc. Jonathan Houser
1057th Transportation Company
“My favorite training was this year’s A.T. We transported explosives across the country from North Carolina to Oklahoma. I’m an 88M (truck driver), and I actually got to do my job.”



Airman Jennifer Andersen
155th Operations Group
“Technical school in Biloxi, Mississippi at Keesler Air Force Base for my aviation resource management systems apprentice course.”



Museum efforts about preserving Nebraska National Guard’s story

This past 4th of July the Nebraska National Guard Museum took a major step forward when its first phase of displays were dedicated during a ceremony that attracted several hundred people to Seward, Nebraska, before the start of the day’s holiday activities.

They were just the first of nearly 8,000 people who toured the new Nebraska National Guard Museum, which has been built within the old National Guard armory in Seward. It was a good opening day for what organizers hope will be a long-lasting effort of preserving and telling the Nebraska National Guard’s story to both present and future generations.

Which begs the question: What is the true value of preserving our National Guard history?

That’s a good question, especially as the bulk of our focus as an organization rightly continues to be squarely on preparing the organization and its members for current and future mobilizations in support of our state and our nation.

So then, why should we as an organization place importance on our history... on the trail that we’re leaving behind... as we move toward the future?

The answer is this: If we don’t at least understand where we came from and how we got to the point we are at today, and if we don’t take the time to help our state’s citizens understand the roles that Nebraska National Guardsmen and their families have played since the founding of this organization as a territorial militia in 1854, it’s all the more tougher to focus on the road ahead and be prepared for the occasional bumps and sudden route changes that will undoubtedly occur.

History – our history – is essentially the story of us.

It is a story of Nebraska citizens and their families who have, time and time again, put their private lives on hold and answered their state’s and their nation’s call. It is a story about the role that Nebraska Soldiers played in defending the Union during the bitter American Civil War. It is a story about the role that Nebraska Guardsmen played in the development of this state during the latter part of the

My Turn

State Public Affairs Officer

Kevin J. Hynes



and us as Americans. Unfortunately, though, it’s not a story that’s been well-told over the years. At least not until now.

The Nebraska National Guard we are now a part of was built over numerous generations, each one contributing to the Guard’s ongoing story while also utilizing their experiences and lessons-learned to help guide the organization’s preparations for the future.

By putting at least some focus on our past, we as Nebraska Guardsmen can learn more about our future because in a lot of ways, the challenges we face – while modern in technology – are often ancient in composition. By learning how past generations faced and overcame these challenges, we can gain insight into the potential problems and promises that the future may bring.

At the same time, by developing a Nebraska National Guard Museum that is open and free to the public, we are helping our fellow citizens and possible future members learn more about us, where we came from and where we are going. This knowledge is vital because, as we have all learned over the past 15 years, the active and enduring support of our fellow Nebraskans gives us immense strength to overcome the challenges that have been presented to us. It is also this support that helps guide future generations interested in military service to choose us.

So, the efforts going on in Seward have extraordinary merit and importance. By preserving our heritage and our stories, the Museum is actually helping preserve our future.

If you haven’t yet had a chance to get out to see the new Nebraska National Guard Museum, please take the time to do so. While the overall goals are still a long way into the future, the vision is now apparent. There are already several major and minor permanent and temporary displays that help tell vital parts of the Nebraska National Guard story since 1854.

Preserving our history... telling our stories... they’re all important endeavors that can have a significant impact upon the future of the Nebraska National Guard.

19th Century.

It is a story about those Nebraska Guardsmen who departed their homes in response to tornados, floods, wildfires and domestic disputes. It is a story about the organization’s first overseas deployments during the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection, the Mexican border dispute and World War I, and the lessons they learned during those conflicts. It is a story about the experiments that early Nebraska Guardsmen conducted in aviation during the early 1900s, and how their work helped influence the development of future powered military flight.

It is a story about how our training areas, such as Camp Ashland, developed and thrived during the early part of the 20th Century and became not only state-of-the-art training facilities, but also scenes of local pride and entertainment during the annual training seasons. It’s also a story about the price of freedom that was paid in enormous amounts of blood and tears during the brutal combat in Europe during World War II.

It is a story about how after that war, Nebraskans led the effort to help reorganize the modern National Guard, including the founding of a new Air National Guard, and helped make the entire Guard become an important part of America’s Total Force following the Vietnam War. It is a story about the on-going effort to ensure that our state’s Soldiers and Airmen have appropriate places to train and prepare for their state and federal missions.

It is a story about the Nebraska National Guard’s contributions to Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Joint Guard, Joint Forge, Allied Force and the many other peacekeeping missions that followed. And it is a story about the Nebraska National Guard’s ongoing efforts following the terrible events of Sept. 11, 2001.

In short, it’s a story about us; us as a Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen, us as Nebraskans,

Just say ‘Yes!’ to career opportunities

The start of October marks the official start of my third year in the Nebraska Army National Guard. Two years down already? It feels like just yesterday I was doing the duck walk in my underwear at the military entrance processing (MEPs), hoping to even get approved to swear-in to the service.

It’s been a quick two years, but that’s because I’ve already had some amazing opportunities along the way – opportunities I always said “yes” to.

When I enlisted at 27-years-old, I really had no idea what I was getting myself into. In fact, when everyone asked me the question, “Why? Why did you join the Army?” I didn’t have much of an answer, other than it’s something I’ve always wanted to do.

That answer is mostly true. I grew up an Army brat. My dad served in Desert Shield and Desert Storm, putting in nearly 30 years between active duty time and the Army Reserves. I surprisingly enjoyed living on military posts and bases, and traveling quite a bit. I always figured my life would be similar someday, and after the attacks

A Different Perspective

Specialist

Lisa Crawford



I could. I served as a platoon leader, student first sergeant and a student officer, and I said “yes” to myself – pushing myself to do the best I could – and ultimately completed my advanced individual training course as the distinguished honor

graduate. When I returned to Nebraska in December 2015, I met my unit and learned we would be attending an overseas training exercise in Grenada the upcoming summer. How great to get to your first unit and have such an amazing opportunity? Then, after a few months with my unit, I was offered temporary active duty orders to work for public affairs at the Joint Force Headquarters, which of course I accepted. And now – months later – here I am, still saying “yes.”

Of course, I know you can’t say yes to everything, but so far in my short military career, saying yes, being available and volunteering for every opportunity has paid off, and I can’t be more grateful for the experiences.

Now I’m just looking forward to see where ever “yes” will take me next!

Did You Know?

In 1957, the Nebraska Air Guard’s 173rd Fighter Interceptor Squadron transitioned from the F-80 Shooting Star to the F-86D/L Sabre.

The Sabre was an all-weather fighter equipped with radar that could identify targets at 30 miles out and could accelerate at through 620 mph, or Mach 1.

Running to Remember

New 'Run to St. Lo' race aims to honor Nebraskans lost during critical battle

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

On July 15, 1944, the Nebraska National Guard's 134th Infantry Regiment began its first combat mission of World War II when it was ordered to seize the strategic Hill 122 and capture St. Lo, widely considered to be the lynchpin of the German defenses in Normandy, France.

Over the course of the next week, 44 Nebraskans would die in achieving their objectives, while hundreds of other Nebraska Soldiers would be wounded. Today, it still stands as one of the bloodiest chapters in the history of the Nebraska National Guard.

On June 10, the Nebraska National Guard Museum helped remember the sacrifices of those Nebraska Soldiers when it hosted the first "Run to St. Lo Memorial 5-Kilometer and 1-Mile" runs in Seward. A satellite 5-K race was also held in Kansas by members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade headquarters who were conducting annual training at Fort Riley, Kan.

According to Gerry Meyer, Nebraska National Guard state historian, the race was sponsored by the Nebraska National Guard Historical Society, Berry Law Firm of Lincoln, and the Kiwanis Club and 4th of July Committee from Seward, Nebraska, along with assistance from a number of other organizations.

Interestingly, the actual race length has a historical tie to the battle as well. When the 134th Infantry Regiment went into the frontlines on the outskirts of the French village of Villiers-Fossard on the evening before the battle, the distance to the outskirts of St. Lo was almost exactly five kilometers. The amount of lives it took to move this distance during a battle fought through wooded hedgerows and open killing fields speaks to the ferocity of the combat that the Nebraskans faced.

During the June 10 run, which began and ended at the Nebraska National Guard's new museum, 44 honorary sentinels held the names of each of the Nebraska Soldiers killed during the battle, a vivid reminder to the runners of 2016 of how horrendous the fighting was.

One particular name had an ex-



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

On The Run: (Above photos) Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade run in formation during a satellite "Run to St. Lo" five-kilometer run at Fort Riley, Kan., on June 10.

tra-special meaning to one of the runners who participated in the satellite race at Fort Riley.

Spc. Jordan Hopwood is an administrative sergeant within the 67th BfSB's headquarters. He is also the great nephew of Floyd Whittaker who was one of the 44 Nebraska Soldiers killed at St. Lo. Hopwood said his family has long made his fallen great uncle a major part of their holiday tradition.

"Usually, every year around Christmas time, my grandma has a crate of all of his military stuff and (she) would pull out his Purple Heart, his dogtags... it was really cool,"



Photo by Gerry Meyer

Final Steps: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) complete the final steps of the "Run to St. Lo" five-kilometer race in Seward, Neb., on June 10.

said Hopwood, adding that he and his two brothers each now serve in the military. "It was really cool to look at and see my grandma's eyes

light up every time she pulled it out." Hopwood said he had no idea that his unit was planning to conduct a satellite run of the Seward race until a few days prior to the event. He added that the brigade Soldiers received their white race t-shirts the evening before the race, which he immediately put on without really looking at it.

A few minutes later when he saw a fellow Soldier wearing a race shirt he said he realized that the back of the shirt included the names of the 44 Soldiers killed during the battle of St. Lo. And there, nearly at the bottom of the list was his great uncle's name.



William E. Tombrink - Omaha - Omaha Cemetery, NE
Horace E. Vanhouten - Unknown - Brittany American Cem
Floyd E. Whittaker - Blue Springs - Blue Springs Cemeter
Richard H. Wiesler - Beaver Crossing - Normandy Ameri
James W. Wilbur - Big Springs - Normandy American Cem
Lestie G. Wilson - Omaha - Omaha Cemetery, NE

Photos courtesy of Spc. Jordan Hopwood

Running For More Than Himself: Spc. Jordan Hopwood, administrative sergeant, poses with his "Run to St. Lo" T-shirt that featured the names of those Nebraska National Guard Soldiers who died during the Battle of St. Lo, in 1944. Among those killed was Hopwood's great uncle.

"I sent a picture of the shirt back to my grandma. She said it made her tear up when she saw it," said Hopwood. "The military is really big in my family. Being able to see that... it was really cool being able to run for him and my grandma."

According to Meyer, a total of 115 runners made the 5-kilometer trek in Seward while an additional 85 participated in the 67th BfSB's satellite run at Fort Riley.

Winning the Seward race were Thomas Hynes and Lisa Ostwinkle. And taking top honors at Fort Riley was.... Hopwood.

"(My uncle and my grandma) were my motivation," Hopwood said. "I'm not much of a runner, myself, but I had both him and my grandma in my mind while I was running."

Hopwood added he was glad to see the work being done to honor the sacrifices of those who came before.

"I'm really glad that we did it," he said. "It's a great way to bring awareness and appreciation for all of them. It was just a huge day for everyone."



(Above) Members of the Nebraska Air National Guard carry a massive American flag out of Seacrest Field following the singing of the national anthem. (Center) Sgt. Calvin Koziol administers the Oath of Athletes. (Right) Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard Honor Guard present arms during the singing of the national anthem.



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Nebraska National Guard pulls out stops for Cornhusker State Games' opening ceremony

The Nebraska Army and Air National Guard had the opportunity to continue its support of an annual statewide amateur sports festival when it participated in the annual Cornhusker State Games opening ceremony at Seacrest Field in Lincoln, July 15. The Cornhusker State Games is an annual statewide amateur sports festival for all Nebraskans. This year's July 15-24 event offered more than 60 competitive and non-competitive events, from traditional sports such as soccer and track and field, to adventure sports such as sport skydiving and adventure race, to more recreational events as us the CSG walk and cycle tour.

The ceremony included the traditional parade of athletes, a motorcycle performance by Nitro Circus, and the lighting of the CSG Torch by the University of Nebraska Volleyball Team's Kadie and Amber Rolfzen. Additionally, the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard participated in the presentation of the colors while Sgt. Calvin Koziol, the 2016 National Guard Soldier of the Year, administered the Oath of Athletes. The Nebraska Army National Guard also conducted a static display of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter earlier in the day.



Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Pistol Match: A Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier competes with an M9 pistol during the 2016 Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise, or TAG Shoot, at Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb., Aug. 5-7. The TAG Shoot provides Soldiers an extra opportunity to practice their marksmanship skills while competing against fellow Guardsmen.



On Target: A National Guard Soldier shoots an M16 rifle at his targets during on the known-distance range Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.



Prone Position: Soldiers lay in the prone unsupported firing position as part of the 2016 Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise at Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.



Getting Ready: Staff Sgt. Christopher Talavart, Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, eyes his targets and prepares to shoot from the kneeling position, Aug. 7.



Tallying Points: A rifleman and a grader add together points from hits made on a target at the known-distance range, Aug. 7, at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

Taking Aim

Nebraska Guardsmen compete at annual marksmanship exercise

By Sgt. Jason Drager
Staff Photojournalist

The annual Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise, took place at the Greenlief Training Site in Hastings, Nebraska Aug. 5-7.

Approximately 135 Soldiers and Airman from across the state made up this year's field of competitors.

Shooters gathered and put their talents to the test in the hot and humid weather to determine the best shooters in the state. The shooters competed individually and as part of four-person teams in eight different live-fire scenarios.

"This event is one of the largest, if not the largest, state level marksmanship competitions in the National Guard," said Col. Todd Stevens, the match director.

During the competition, shooters competed against each other by class. The classes were divided by novice, which are those who've never competed; open, which are those who've competed before but are not pro; and lastly pro, those who are distinguished in rifle and pistol.

After three days of competition and thousands of rounds fired, those who separated themselves from the rest of the field and won the matches were recognized at the exercise's award ceremony.

The winner of the event's top individual awards, the State Command Sergeant Major Match and the Gary Anderson Trophy, was Sgt. Maxwell Maguire of 1195th Transportation Company.

"It's a great feeling to win," Maguire said. "It was a very tough competition."

This wasn't the first time Maguire won the event either. Maguire also won the top award in 2014.

"I practice all the fundamentals," Maguire said. "I dry fire every night, I work on reloads, I study the match bulletin, I basically live and breath the shooting matches."

The top overall team was also recognized at the ceremony. "Best of the West" won the Adjutant General's Combat Team Trophy. The team, from the 1057th Transportation Company (Light/Medium Truck), was comprised of Spc. Levi Loomis, Spc. Cade Vackiner, Spc. Deon Allen and Sgt. 1st Class Scott Krul.



Brass Beauties: Rifle ammo sits atop a picnic table ready for competitors at Greenlief Training Site.