

Prairie Soldier

The Joint Newspaper of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard

Governor taps Lyons to be 32nd adjutant general

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Colonel Judd Lyons, 47, was selected by Gov. Dave Heineman to be the 32nd adjutant general, Aug. 7. He was promoted to the rank of brigadier general and sworn in as commander of the 4,800-member Nebraska Army and Air National Guard and director of the Nebraska Emergency Management during an Aug. 23 ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard air base.

“Colonel Judd Lyons has demonstrated that he has the ability and the
See LYONS on 4.



Col. Judd Lyons

Kadavy named Army Guard deputy director

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska National Guard's adjutant general is headed to Washington, D.C., to become the new deputy director of the Army National Guard.

Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Kadavy, 45, assumed command of the Nebraska National Guard on Nov. 3, 2007, when he succeeded retired Lt. Gen. Roger Lempke as the 31st adjutant general. In his new position, Kadavy will now
See KADAVY on 4.



Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy

Annual Training 2009



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Room With A View: Sgt. Hector Lima Bermudez, a crew chief with the 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion in Lincoln, Neb., dumps water from a “bambi bucket” onto a simulated fire from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during the GSAB's annual training, June 10, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Helicopter unit tackles unique challenges during June exercise

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

Sixty-four members of the 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion used their June 6-20 annual training at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln to complete some critical training tasks.

The training was meant to increase the knowledge and overall proficiency of GSAB Soldiers. For example, members of the 2-135th GSAB completed Army warrior tasks, conducted maintenance and refueling support for the unit's UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, and flew several training missions.

The 2-135th GSAB actually has several units assigned to the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, the largest being Company C, 2-135th GSAB. According to Maj. James Siedenbueg, commander of Co. C, 2-135th GSAB, his unit's primary mission is to provide medevac support using the Black Hawks.

“We refer to it as a lifesaver”
See GSAB on 3

Offutt Guardsman adds another title to resume

■Nebraska Air Guard master sergeant top senior NCO in U.S. Air Force

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A Nebraska Air National Guard sergeant serving in the 170th Group at Offutt Air Force Base has been named the top senior sergeant in the U.S. Air Force.

Master Sgt. Tyrone Bingham, the chief host aviation resource manager at Offutt Air Force Base, was recently named the Air Force's Outstanding Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. The announcement means that Bingham is the top senior sergeant in the entire Air Force, which consists of approximately 491,000 active, reserve and Guard Airmen.

The award comes on the heels of another announcement in

April when Bingham was named the top senior NCO in the Air National Guard.

“It's still surreal,” said Bingham, a native of Hopkinsville, Ky., who graduated from Oscoda High School in Michigan. “I'm just trying to grasp the reality of all that has happened.”

“I'm definitely honored.” Bingham's military career began in 1995 when he enlisted into the U.S. Air Force. After assignments in Virginia, Texas

and Missouri, he joined the Missouri Air National Guard, serving in assignments with the 131st Fighter Wing and another unit at Jefferson Barracks, Mo.

He transferred to the Nebraska Air Guard in 2005 to take an assignment with a newly-created Air Guard organization at Offutt Air Force Base, in Bellevue, Neb.

At Offutt, Bingham is responsible for ensuring that pilots and
See BINGHAM on 18.

Nebraska infantry regiment, fallen commander honored 65 years after historic fight



Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen
3rd Battalion,
134th Infantry
Regiment, commander mortally wounded on July 30, 1944

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

ST. LO, France, — After 65 years of waiting, Soldiers of the Nebraska National Guard's 134th Infantry Regiment finally got their moment in the sun during a drizzly late afternoon ceremony, July 18, in this beautiful Norman city that was once the site of one of the fiercest battles of World War II.

For about an hour this normally bustling community of 25,000 residents came to a standstill as hundreds gathered in misty rain at the base of the city's ancient rampart walls to recognize the 35th Infantry Division near the location where members of the 134th Infantry Regiment entered the city on
See ST. LO on 13.

*Prairie Soldier
Exclusive Coverage*



National Guard heritage painting by Keith Rocco

Cornrows To Hedgerows: The 134th Infantry Regiment's battle to seize Hill 122 near St. Lo, France, in July 1944 was depicted in the 1996 National Guard heritage painting by Keith Rocco. The regiment, which was part of the 35th Infantry Division, helped liberate the critically important city of St. Lo, France. The Nebraska National Guard infantry regiment finally received credit for helping liberate St. Lo, France, on July 18 during a ceremony in Normandy.

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NEWS DIGEST

■ Army National Guard to inform members of data loss

ARLINGTON, Va. (National Guard News) – Members of the Army National Guard who could be affected by the theft of a laptop containing their personal data, will be notified through an official letter, Guard officials said Aug. 4.

About 131,000 former and current Army Guard members could be affected by the data loss, which occurred July 27 when a personal laptop owned by an Army Guard contractor was stolen, said Randy Noller, a spokesman for the National Guard Bureau.

The stolen laptop contained personal information on Soldiers enrolled in the Army National Guard Bonus and Incentives Program. The type of data includes names, Social Security Numbers, incentive payment amounts and payment dates.

The Army Guard will inform those Guard members who are determined to be impacted by this incident by mailing a letter to them, Noller said.

He added that notification of all individuals was to be completed in approximately a week.

The National Guard Bureau has set up a special Web page at www.ng.mil, and the Army Guard will have a toll-free call center available from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday beginning Aug. 5. The number is 877-481-4957. Each features up-to-date news and information on the data compromise.

The Website provides steps on how to check credit reports, how to guard against identity theft and who to call if a Guard member believes any fraudulent activity occurs with his or her personal information.

■ Air Force revising, clarifying fitness program, officials say

WASHINGTON (AFNS) — The need for a “clear, understandable and simpler” fitness program will mean significant changes to the Air Force’s current fitness program, said the service’s top officer during a senior leadership conference held June 4-6 at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz met with the service’s other four stars at CORONA TOP where one of the key agenda items was Air Force fitness.

His intent was to fine-tune fitness testing, promote a year-round fitness culture and send a clear message that health and fitness are critical to mission readiness.

“Fitness is a vital component of Air Force culture,” Schwartz said. “These

challenging times underscore the importance of properly caring for our most valuable resource: our Airmen.”

Perhaps the most significant difference in fitness testing will be its frequency, Air Force officials said. Full-time active-duty Airmen will now test twice each year, while most reservists or Guardsmen will continue to test once per year.

To maximize objectivity, the AFI designates trained civilian proctors to conduct fitness tests at new centralized locations called fitness assessment cells.

Aerobic fitness is the best indicator of current and future health risk, followed by body composition, said Lt. Col. Scott Arcuri, the chief of promotions, evaluations, and fitness policy at the Air Staff. Because of this, the aerobic run will now account for 60 percent of the test (previously 50 percent), body composition will account for 20 percent (previously 30 percent), while sit-ups and push-ups remain at 10 percent each.

“We developed evidence-driven, health based criterion standards for aerobic fitness and body composition and muscle fitness,” Arcuri said.

“Airmen can be confident the new standards and corresponding points have sound rationale behind them.”

Arcuri also stated that the points awarded within each component directly reflect health risk and fitness and are designed to reward incremental fitness improvements.

Senior leaders said in order to pass the test, Airmen will be required to have a composite score of 75, but also will need to meet minimum requirements for each component.

Air Force officials said age range requirements will be simplified to five-categories: less than 30, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60-plus years of age.

Additionally, because overall fitness is a readiness issue, fitness results will be categorized using operational readiness or unit compliance inspection-type ratings.

Those scoring 90 and above will be “Excellent;” those scoring between 75 and 90 will be “Satisfactory;” and those scoring under 75 will be “Unsatisfactory.”

■ Pentagon officials weighing social networking benefits, security vulnerabilities

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – A Defense Department review is weighing the benefits of social networking and other Web 2.0 platforms against potential security vulnerabilities they create.

In a memo issued in late July, Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn III directed a study of social media sites

Nebraska Guard preparing for potential reemergence of H1N1

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Even though the H1N1 influenza virus’ spread seems to have abated slightly during the summer months, local, state and federal officials are predicting the virus will make itself known once again later this year as the annual flu season kicks into gear.

Nebraska officials are making plans should a serious pandemic break out in the state later this fall or winter.

“The threat of pandemic flu is real,” according to Dr. Joann Shaefer, chief medical officer at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, on the departments Website. “This is something that would affect your family, your community and your business.”

“The Nebraska Health and Human Services System has been planning for a pandemic flu for years and we have a state pandemic flu plan in place.”

The plan is located at www.hhs.state.ne.us/pandemic/preparedness.htm.

Nebraska National Guard officials are also planning for a possible outbreak, however it has not been tasked to support any pandemic missions at this time. As part of the organization’s preparations and to preserve the ability of military members to respond to a mission, Guard officials are encouraging members to use common sense during the upcoming flu season.

“Our Soldiers and Airmen just need to stay home when they’re sick,” said Brig. Gen. David Petersen, deputy adjutant general. “As I walk around the Lincoln complex and the Air Guard base, I see dedicated employees who feel the weight of the upcoming year end or some other deadline and think that everything will stop if they don’t show up for work.”

like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube in hopes of establishing a policy by October, Pentagon Spokesman Bryan Whitman told reporters.

“We’re addressing the challenges from a security standpoint, but also the impact and the value that they have to the department to be able to communicate in a 21st century environment,” Whitman said.

Per his deputy’s memo, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates is slated to receive a report on the threats and benefits of Web 2.0 tools before the end of the month. Both Gates and Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have embraced the new technologies.

“But the reality is, if they come to work sick, especially with the potential spreading of the H1N1 virus, they could be making things worse for themselves or the Military Department,” Petersen said. “So, the bottom line from the command group is, if you are sick, just stay home and get better. The agency will survive.”

According to Guard officials, the Nebraska Military Department’s chief recommendations for people feeling ill are:

- ◆ Stay home.
- ◆ Report illness of service member or family to unit officials.

The Nebraska National Guard is also making the following recommendations:

Personal Hygiene

- ◆ Do not come to work sick. Stay home until all symptoms have resolved;
- ◆ Be aware of flu symptoms – fever, body aches, headache, sore throat, possible nausea and vomiting. Seek care and get evaluated by health care professional;
- ◆ Cough or sneeze into crook of elbow or use a tissue (then discard tissue);
- ◆ Wash hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially after coughing or sneezing;
- ◆ Limit personal contact (such as shaking hands);
- ◆ Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with hands.

Care of Family Members

- ◆ If caring for a family members with H1N1 flu, discuss issues with health care provider;
- ◆ Try to keep sick person in a separate room and keep door closed as much as possible;
- ◆ Caregivers should use a mask when providing care within six feet of a sick person;
- ◆ Wear gloves, if available, when providing care (wash hands before and after.)

The Pentagon’s chief information officer is taking the lead on the review, which was catalyzed by concerns raised at U.S. Strategic Command, Whitman said. Stratcom is responsible for overseeing the use of the “dot-mil” network.

In the meantime, there are no department-wide orders banning the use of social networking and other Web 2.0 applications, Whitman said, adding that standard local restrictions to such sites may occur due to bandwidth or security concerns.

“But as a department, we recognize the importance of taking a look at this issue because there are legitimate security concerns,” he said.

Nebraska Air Guard finance office earns national management award

By Capt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

The 155th Air Refueling Wing Finance Office received the Air National Guard’s 2008 Financial Management and Comptroller Organization of the year award at the Comptrollers Conference in Orlando in May at Shades of Green hotel.

The award, given yearly, not only evaluates how a finance office performs their day-to-day responsibilities, but also how a section reaches out and participates in financial activities throughout the Air National Guard.

“It helped that we are always rated number one in the ANG metrics,” Lt. Col. Allen Simpson, 155th Comptroller and acting deputy United States property and fiscal officer for Nebraska. These metrics look at six areas of finance including government travel card, travel voucher timeliness and accuracy, military pay, budget management and interest paid to vendors.

In addition to excelling in many areas compared to other units in the Air Guard, members of the finance section went to other wings and

helped them prepare for a number of inspections, helping them achieve the standards maintained by the 155th ARW.

“I think we are a respected unit and if someone needs help, they call here,” said Simpson. “This is a reflection of the good people we have working in the finance section and from the help by the people on base.”

The award also looks at what a unit does outside of the normal day-to-day operations.

“We also had a fitness program within finance that we encouraged people to participate in,” said Master Sgt. Michelle Smith, Financial Management superintendent.

The 155th ARW had almost 100 percent participation in this area, said Smith.

“It was a collaborative effort for the whole office. I thought it was something that we could be proud of because it wasn’t just an individual award. It was something that we all did as a team,” said Capt. Nancy Curtis, 155th budget officer and interim comptroller.

This is the third Management and Comptroller Award that the 155th ARW has been awarded, the previous years being 1996 and 2000.

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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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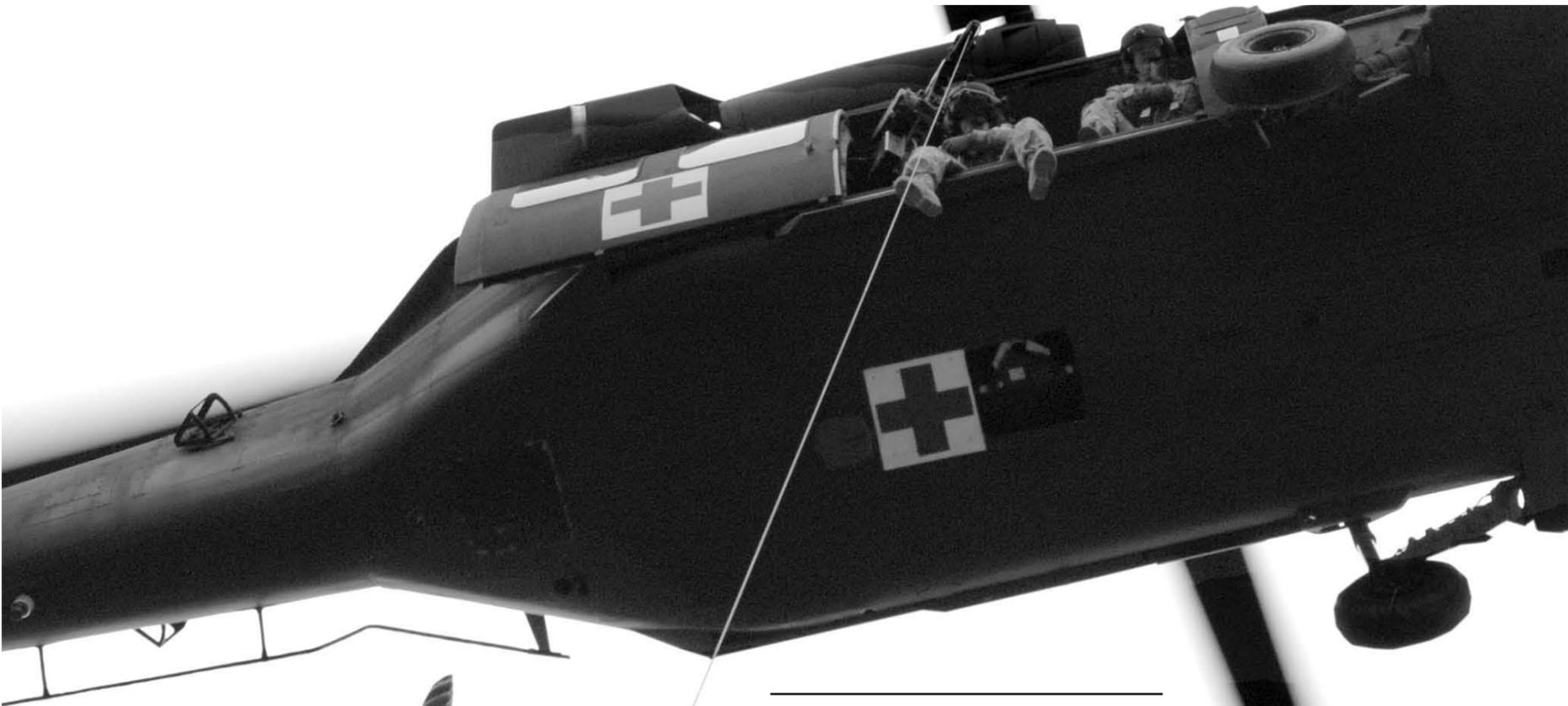
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GSAB

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ing mission,” said Sieden- burg said he wanted to keep his unit’s Soldiers at their home station in Lincoln this year so they could focus strictly on training and developing teamwork.

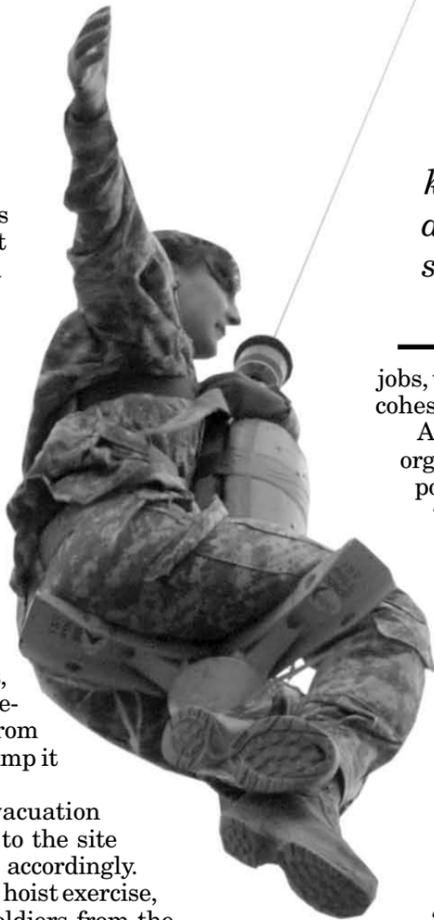
“My main focus is to bring the GSAB together,” said Sieden- burg. “Making sure that we’re working together as a team, understanding what everybody’s role is and supporting the medevac mission.”

The first flying training consisted of practicing firefighting procedures, where aircrews used a large orange- colored ‘bambi bucket’ to scoop water from a pond at Camp Ashland, Neb., and dump it on simulated fires.

Another mission was medical evacuation training where aircrews flew medics to the site of simulated injuries and responded accordingly. The flight training culminated in a live hoist exercise, where aircrews used a hoist to lift Soldiers from the ground to a hovering Black Hawk.

Members of the 2-135th GSAB also performed a reverse cycle, performing the same flight training missions during the night.

Sieden- burg said the 2-135th GSAB has many new members, which made this year’s training all that much more important. He said he hoped the June exercises would expand the young Soldiers’ proficiency in their



“We know that we’re here to support the state. We are literally on call 24/7. If there’s a flood we know that we might have to send an aircraft out with a hoist and pick someone off a roof.”

— **Sgt. Michael Trebelhorn**
2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion

jobs, while also building teamwork and cohesion within the group.

Along with the flying exercises, the organization’s maintenance and support crews also received valuable

Catching a lift:

Capt. Rebecca Mockelman is hoisted up to a hovering Black Hawk helicopter during her annual training.

“My job is to keep the aircraft up and running so the aircrews can get all of their qualifications done,” said Sgt. Michael Trebelhorn, an aircraft mechanic with Detachment 1, Co. D, 2-135th GSAB, one of several Lincoln-based maintenance units that supported the June training. “Our goal is to get all aircraft fly- able at any point.”

Trebelhorn, who has been working on Black Hawk helicopters for 21 years, said he spent much of his AT helping the younger Soldiers become more familiar with the aircraft.

“(I want to) get some of my new mechanics more exposure to the aircraft,” said Trebelhorn. “Get some lower enlisted more proficiency.”

Spc. Tyler Villwok, Det. 1, Co. D, 2-135th GSAB, is one of the new Soldiers trying to gain proficiency in

the maintenance of the Black Hawk. An aircraft mechanic and traditional Guardsman for two years, Villwok said he was excited to get more training from the full-time staff.

“We do a little bit of main- tenance on the weekends, but there are not a whole lot of people that can teach us,” said Villwok. “We get better training these 15 days because there are more people to help.”

Trebelhorn is also happy to work on the aircraft and help new Soldiers in training. “I get to do what I love,” he said. “I love working on the aircraft. That’s why I’ve been doing it so long. I like teach- ing the kids.”

Although the mechanics don’t fly the actual missions, they understand the importance of maintaining the aircraft because it can directly affect lives.

“We know that we’re here to support the state,” said Trebelhorn. “We are literally on call 24/7. If there’s a flood we know that we might have to send an aircraft out with a hoist and pick someone off a roof.”

Villwok echoed Trebelhorn’s comments, adding that the training he received helped him gain increased confidence in his mechanical abilities.

“It gives me self-confidence that I know everything is going to work,” said Villwok. “There are several aircraft I’ve worked on that may have played a part in helping someone. We make sure the aircraft is safe to fly and do the mission it needs to.”

Performing the mission of the GSAB is a team effort. Mechanics, refuelers, aircrews and many other support staff make sure the Lincoln- based 2-135th GSAB is trained and ready to go at a moment’s notice. Annual training that encompasses all aspects of the mission is essential for every Soldier, from the newest members of the team, to the most senior officer to ensure the mission is fulfilled, said Sieden- burg.

“Seeing it build from day one to day 15 is really gratifying to me,” he said. “Watching the progression of the Soldiers through the training and the leadership potential of a lot of the new leaders.”

Sieden- burg said he wants to make sure every member of his team takes ownership in their job and is as well trained as possible.

“It’s important for us to be proficient for our war-time tasks... make the training relevant, get them engaged... every individual is important in sup- porting the mission for the company.”



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Carried Away: Spc. Cody Howell, a helicopter crew chief, leads flight medics Sgt. McKenzie McCarter and Sgt. Katie Flynn toward a Black Hawk helicopter as the trio move an “injured” Soldier during the 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion’s annual training.



Maintenance: Sgt. Michael Trebelhorn works on a UH-60 Black Hawk during the 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion annual training. Unit mechanics practiced keeping their helicopters mission ready.

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experience to be the next leader of the Nebraska National Guard," Heineman said during a press conference at the state capitol. "He understands the deployment challenges our Guard personnel face and he cares about our military families. I know he will be an outstanding adjutant general and I look forward to working with him."

Heineman added that Lyons was chosen from a very select group of officers.

"We have very capable and very skilled people in many leadership positions within the Nebraska National Guard," Heineman said. "Each of the finalists exemplified that description in their experience and commitment, and I want to thank them for their service with the Nebraska National Guard."

Lyons attended the ceremony with his wife Amy, a lieutenant colonel and a judge advocate general officer in the Nebraska Army Guard, and the couple's youngest son, Sam. In thanking Heineman, he said he looks forward to the challenges awaiting him as adjutant general.

"Thank you for this opportunity to lead and support the Soldiers, Airmen, Emergency Management personnel and other state personnel in the Nebraska Military Department. Sir, it is truly an honor for me and my family to be given this opportunity," Lyons said.

In becoming the newest adjutant general, Lyons succeeds Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, who is becoming the deputy director of the Army National Guard in Washington, D.C. Lyons pledged to remain focused on ensuring that the state's Soldiers and Airmen, and their families and employers continue to receive the support they need as the nation continues to depend upon their service.

"As the adjutant general I will remain focused, as my predecessors have, on ensuring that our people and our units are prepared to respond both here in Nebraska and abroad in our federal mission."

"Equally important, though, I will continue to focus on the support that our families and our employers need and deserve as they lend us their loved ones and their employees to serve here in Nebraska and overseas," Lyons said.

Lyons recently became the director of the joint staff where he was responsible for budget, personnel management, training, and equipment for the Nebraska National Guard.

Lyons is a graduate of the Missouri Military Academy. He enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1980. He attended Officer Candidate School at Camp Ashland and was commissioned as an infantry second lieutenant in 1983.

His first assignment as an officer was as a battalion assistant operations officer with the 1-134th Infantry in Omaha. During the next eight years he held several positions with the 1-134th Infantry and the 1-195th Armor including platoon leader, company executive officer, communications and electronics officer and



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Moment of Reflection: Governor Dave Heineman announces Col. Judd Lyons as his selection to become the 32nd Nebraska adjutant general during an Aug. 7 press conference at the State Capitol in Lincoln, Neb.

tank company commander.

In 1991 he became the operations and training officer with the Guard's Military Academy at Camp Ashland and later with 92nd Troop Command in Lincoln.

He was the executive officer of the 1-167th Cavalry Squadron for more than three years, before returning to the Guard's headquarters where he helped plan mobilizations. He also spent nearly three years as the recruiting and retention manager. His next command assignment was as executive officer of the 92nd Troop Command.

In 2003, he became commander of the Guard's Training Site Command at Camp Ashland, Mead and Hastings. He then served as the Guard's human resources officer before being promoted to deputy chief of staff for operations within the Guard's Joint Force Headquarters. There, he coordinated the deployment of Nebraska Guard personnel to the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina.

In 2006 he deployed to northern Afghanistan to serve as commander of the 209th Regional Security Assistance Command, which was responsible for training and equipping the Afghan National Army's 209th Corps and national police forces as part of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix.

After the seven-month deployment, Lyons resumed his position with the Joint Force Headquarters. He took command of the 92nd Troop Command in early 2008. He also led the state support element for the nearly 1,000 Nebraska Guard personnel who deployed following Hurricane



Family Portrait: Col. Judd Lyons (center), his wife Amy and their son Sam pose for a photograph with Governor Dave Heineman shortly after the governor named Lyons to be the next Nebraska adjutant general, Aug. 7. Lyons' stepson Alex Baldwin and middle son Ben were unable to be at the announcement due to their military duties.

Gustav, the largest domestic mobilization in recent history.

Lyons has received numerous awards and decorations, including a Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal and the Army Achievement Medal. He attended Creighton University and received a bachelor's degree from Bellevue College in 1993 and a master's degree in Strategic Studies from the Army War College in 2005. He is a graduate of the Joint and Combined Warfighting School at the Joint Forces

Staff College.

In addition to commanding Nebraska's military forces, Lyons will serve as a member of the governor's cabinet and director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, working with the state's civilian emergency preparedness and disaster response personnel.

Editor's Note: Due to the printing schedule, the adjutant general change of command ceremony coverage will appear in the October *Prairie Soldier*

KADAVY continued from page 1.

be responsible for assisting the director of the Army National Guard in formulating and coordinating all programs, policies and plans affecting the Army National Guard and its more than 350,000 Citizen-Soldiers.

He will be assigned to the National Guard headquarters in Arlington, Va.

In announcing Kadavy's selection and pending departure, Gov. Dave Heineman thanked the Nebraska general for his work during nearly two years as the commander of the Guard and director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

"I want to congratulate General Kadavy," Heineman said in a news release. "He has been an outstanding adjutant general."

"This is great news for him and it speaks well of his leadership," Heineman said. "It also speaks highly of Nebraska. The fact that the number two person leading the Army National

Guard comes from Nebraska is a high honor for the Nebraska National Guard."

Earlier that morning, Kadavy addressed his staff in Lincoln about his pending departure.

"This is very bittersweet," he said. "This is the best job that I've ever had and working with this group and those that serve along with us is something that I will treasure forever and ever. You couldn't ask for a better team to work with."

"We accomplished quite a few things over the last almost two years. So, I thank you for your support and whoever the governor selects as my replacement, I know that you're going to give that individual the same type of support and commitment because it isn't about who is at the top of an organization, it's about the organization," Kadavy said.

"It's always about the team, it's never about the guy."

As adjutant general, Kadavy

was the senior uniformed Nebraska National Guard officer responsible for leading the more than 4,800 Army and Air National Guard personnel in the state. He is also a member of the governor's cabinet and directs the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

During the past two years, Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen have mobilized for overseas deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Greece and Kosovo.

Domestically, men and women of the Nebraska National Guard responded to last year's tornadoes in Omaha and Kearney as well as the California wildfires.

Additionally more than 1,000 Guard Soldiers and Airmen deployed to Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi with just days notice for last September's Hurricane Gustav and Ike relief efforts, believed to be the largest domestic emergency response mission

in the history of the Nebraska National Guard.

Other highlights of Kadavy's tenure include exceeding recruiting goals in the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, as well as the completion of the Guard's Army Aviation Facility in Grand Island and readiness centers in Kearney and Hastings.

According to Sen. Ben Nelson, Kadavy accomplished much during his time as the adjutant general.

"General Kadavy was a proactive leader who ensured the proud men and women of Nebraska's National Guard received the resources and training needed for success as they shoulder unprecedented portions of the National Defense effort," said Nelson in a news release.

"It has been an honor to work closely with General Kadavy on a number of issues affecting our National Guard troops. I very

much look forward to continuing our work together to ensure that the National Guard has the resources it needs to continue its vital support to the defense of our nation and its allies."

Prior to becoming the adjutant general, Kadavy served as operations officer for the Army National Guard Directorate. He also commanded the Nebraska Army Guard's 1-167th Cavalry during its 2002-03 deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina for Operation Joint Forge. He also has served a tour as the chief of the Reserve Component at Camp Victory, Iraq, Multinational Corps, in 2006.

Kadavy received his bachelor of Science degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and master of Arts degree from Webster University.

He is also a graduate of the U.S. Army War College Fellowship Program with the Drug Enforcement Agency.

Historic first for Nebraska Guard women

■ Roma Amundson makes history as first Nebraska Army Guard woman to be promoted to brigadier general

By Capt. Andrew Nelson
Editor

One by one, group by group, the newly-pinned brigadier general called the women up to the stage.

The first three to enlist in the Nebraska Army National Guard. The first female Nebraska Guard Soldiers to deploy overseas. The first Nebraska Guardswoman to earn a Bronze Star with V device – for valor.

That was because the ceremony honoring Brigadier General Roma Amundson was not just an event marking her promotion; it was a commemoration



Amundson

of how far women have come in the Nebraska Army National Guard since the first enlisted in early 1973.

“In that time they have grown to be an extremely vital force within the Guard,” Amundson said. “I thought it was important to recognize those who served.”

Amundson is the first female general in the Nebraska National Guard. She was promoted in a ceremony at the Penterman Army in Lincoln on July 11. Hundreds of military members, local dignitaries, Amundson’s family and friends, and representatives of the local news media attended.

“It’s nice to be a part of a progression in things,” said Linda Plock, 59, who was the

first non-prior-service woman to enlist in the Army Guard in Nebraska and one of the women who shared the stage with Amundson. “I’m just glad I was here to see this.”

For Amundson, the path to general began a little more than 30 years ago. It was the mid-1970s and as part of her graduate studies she attended the Goethe Institute for Language Study in Germany. The experience of living overseas strengthened her patriotism, she said.

And when she came home to a country still not treating its Vietnam War veterans very well, she decided to do something about it.

“I said, ‘You know what, I want to make a statement,’” she told a television reporter after the ceremony.

So in 1978, Amundson joined the Army Reserve and then soon transferred to the Nebraska Army National Guard. She attended the state’s Officer Candidate School and was commissioned into the Signal Corps.

It was a different world back then. A few years before when Plock enlisted, she had been the only female in her Advanced Individual Training class. By the late 1970s, women in the military were still viewed with askance.

But as Amundson rose through the ranks, her superiors gave her challenging duties and supported her.

“I always had new challenges,” she said. “And I always had new things that were assigned to me.”

Perhaps her most-important



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Pinned: Brig. Gen. Roma Amundson has her new rank “pinned” on by her daughter, Dawn, son, 1st Lt. Justin Amundson, and husband, retired Lt. Col. Randy Amundson, during her promotion ceremony July 11. Amundson became the first woman to become a general in the Nebraska National Guard.

mentor was Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Roger Lempke, a now-retired Nebraska adjutant general.

“He gave me a great deal of latitude when doing my job,” she said. “He respected my decisions. He supported me.”

A lesson there is that superiors should always provide subordinates challenging assignments, she said. And subordinates should always do the things they need to do, such as completing necessary schooling, so they are prepared to take opportunities when they arise.

“What they need to do is to grab opportunities when they come,” she said. “Most of all, they need to accept any assignment that comes to them.”

That statement was echoed by Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, the current adjutant general for

Nebraska. Lots of senior officers could make good generals, he said, but the timing was right for Amundson to become the assistant adjutant general (Army) for Nebraska and be promoted.

“General Amundson was the right Soldier at the right time,” he said. “She has a tremendous amount of energy and a tremendous amount of passion.”

The promotion ceremony had all the pomp and circumstance such ceremonies do. A Soldier sang “The Star Spangled Banner.” An honor guard posted the colors. Kadavy told the audience it was a big day for the National Guard; Amundson’s promotion showed that the Guard is an inclusive organization and that if you work hard you can rise to the highest of levels.

But Amundson spent much of

the ceremony honoring others. And not just the women who had helped pave the way. She gave flowers and ceremonial coins to her family and those who mentored her over the years.

People like Lempke and retired Maj. General Edward Binder, who 30 years ago first administered the oath of office to Amundson the day she was commissioned and did so again July 11 when Amundson was promoted to brigadier general.

Before the ceremony in a brief interview, Amundson said while preparing one’s self for future assignments is important, it is vital to maintain one’s integrity as well.

“This is not to serve yourself, she said. “So don’t let your ambition get in the way of service to your state and nation.”

Nebraska Guardsmen continue to help Afghans re-grow nation

Soldiers teach Afghan farmers about bee care

By 1st Lt. Lory Stevens
Task Force Warrior

BAGRAMAIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Representatives from Zinzee and Turkman villages, along with staff members from Al Bironi University, journeyed to Bagram Air Field, June 13, for a day of activity that had them buzzing with questions.

Nebraska Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Erik Singaas, intelligence sergeant of Task Force Warrior’s Agriculture Development Team, provided classroom and hands-on training about bee anatomy and bee hive care to the many guests on-hand.

“The training was offered in support of Task Force Warrior’s recent Commander’s Emergency Response Program projects that placed over 400 bee hives and equipment in Parwan and Kapisa,” Singaas said, while explaining plans to provide similar future training.

The training consisted of a classroom

presentation given by Singaas where he covered multiple topics. Included were discussions on bee anatomy, behavior, bee hive design, bee hive care and management, processing honey and wax, catching a swarm, bee sting care, vectors and benefits of pollination to crops.

Agriculture equipment was also on display and demonstrations provided for the Afghans during the classroom training.

“The Afghans had many questions and were very interested and grateful for the information,” said Sgt. 1st Class Eldon Kuntzelman, ADT agronomist from the Nebraska Army Guard.

He said he feels the Afghans gained knowledge and will use the new hives to their potential.

The ADT research bee hives on BAF provided an opportunity in the afternoon for Afghans to use equipment and work on hive maintenance.

“This training puts actual working agricultural products in the hands of Afghans, and trains confident and capable individuals to work within the scope of bee projects,” Singaas said.



Photo by 1st Lt. Lory Stevens

Bee Care 101: 1st Lt. Brandon Burton and Staff Sgt. Erik Singaas of the Task Force Warrior ADT pose for a picture with local Afghans from Parwan and Kapisa attending agricultural training held on Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, June 13.



Photo by 1st Lt. Lory Stevens

Nebraska Aid: Members of the Task Force Warrior agribusiness development team work alongside Afghan farmers who went to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, June 24, to learn how to assemble grain bins. A Nebraska group shipped the bins to Afghanistan, which are designed to store seed and harvested grain.

Cornhuskers show Afghans how to build bins

By 1st Lt. Lory Stevens
Task Force Warrior

BAGRAMAIRFIELD, Afghanistan — A Nebraska National Guard agriculture development team is helping Afghan farmers capitalize on their investments.

The Task Force Warrior agribusiness development team trained farmers from nearby provinces, June 24, showing them how to store seed for the next planting season.

Farmers from Parwan, Panjshir and Kapisa provinces learned how to assemble grain bins, which will keep harvested grain from spoiling.

“Our team set up the bottom ring, top ring, and some roof pieces,” said Nebraska Army National Guard Master Sgt. John Herron, an agronomist and

hydrologist with the team who helped to set up the training site with more than a dozen Afghan workers.

Herron and his team showed the Afghans how to assemble the grain bins, using silicone caulk at the seams to keep moisture out during the harsh Afghan winters.

“A local truck was contracted to transport [the] bins to several locations in Kapisa,” said Sgt. 1st Class Eldon Kuntzelman, a Nebraska Army Guard team agronomist who coordinated with a group in Nebraska to have the bins shipped to Afghanistan.

The grain bins will be built at eight locations throughout Parwan, Kapisa and Panjshir. The farmers received tool sets to use to assemble their grain bins once they arrive, officials said.

Vigilant Guard 2009

■Nebraska Guard units travel to Iowa to participate in disaster exercise

By Capt. Andrew Nelson
Staff Writer

As the strange people in gray protective suits approached the toppled railroad cars and wrecked automobiles, dazed- and mangled-looking people splayed about began behaving hysterically.

"Please help us!"

"She's got a bone sticking out!"

"Are you getting help?"

By then, those in the gray suits were moving among the people. One of them said, in a transistor/canister voice through a gas mask: "We're getting help. I promise."

The place: An old recycling center in an industrial neighborhood of east Des Moines.

The situation: A training exercise, fortunately, and the blood, the burns and the bones protruding from legs were all simulated.

The men and women in the protective suits were Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the Nebraska National Guard's (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosive) Enhanced Response Force, more commonly referred to as a CERF.

Made up of Army and Air National Guard personnel and units under the control of the Omaha-based 126th Chemical Battalion, the CERF is charged with rescuing, decontaminating and providing initial medical treatment for people in an accident, natural disaster or terrorist attack involving chemicals or nuclear materials.

The scenario: An irate employee of a railroad company detonated a bomb on a train, derailing it, releasing chlorine

and other gasses from tanker cars into the sky, the wind carrying them towards downtown.

The exercise was part of Vigilant Guard '09, which was being conducted as part of Ardent Sentry 2009, a national emergency exercise. Vigilant Guard included Guardsmen from Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska and events took place across the central plains.

The scenario is the kind of emergency the Nebraska CERF – and 16 other CERFs in the National Guard – were created to help deal with. CERF units can respond to emergencies inside or outside their home states, falling under the control of local authorities when they get to a disaster area.

It is, "really what the National Guard was meant to do," said Maj. Troy Paisley, operations officer for the 126th Chem. Bn. "When you think of the National Guard, you think of domestic response."

The exercise definitely wasn't easy.

The high temperature in Des Moines on June 18 – the first brutally hot and humid day of training – was 92, according to the National Weather Service, with highs in the mid- and upper-80s on the two subsequent days.

And each day the Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen had to assemble and reassemble their tents and equipment at the site, with the air heavy with the humidity from recent rains.

The Level C protective suits worn by Guardsmen entering the contaminated area or dealing with contaminated people were another complicating factor. The materials in the suit that would keep them safe from killer chemicals or deadly



Photo by by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy

Helping Hand: A member of the Nebraska National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Nuclear, Radiological and High Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force evacuates a "casualty" from a simulated train derailment and explosion during the Vigilant Guard Iowa training exercise in Des Moines, Iowa, June 18.



Photo by Sgt. Michael Coleman

Careful Movements: Spc. Daaron Kiefer, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 126th Chemical Battalion, directs other members of his unit to move an "expectant mother" to a safe location, June 19, during the Vigilant Guard Exercise in Des Moines, Iowa.

radiation are necessarily thick, restricting air flow that would have cooled those wearing them.

Sgt. 1st Class Derek Whisenhunt likened the experience to being a baked potato or a steamed vegetable.

"As soon as you put that Level C suit on, you immediately start sweating," said Whisenhunt, a medic. "Once you put it on, your body can't breathe."

The suits limit communication, visibility and mobility.

"It's all the little bugs that interfere with completing what's normally a simple job," he said.

In the kind of temperatures the CERF Soldiers and Airmen were working in, they should have consumed an entire CamelBak of water during the hour or so they were in the suits, Whisenhunt said.

On the first day of training in Des Moines, there were a handful of heat casualties. But terror attacks and accidents don't

always happen in nice weather. So the oppressive conditions had training value.

"It's hard, but it's healthy in a way," Paisley said. "Even though we had people who went down and got sick, it teaches us how to operate in that environment."

But during the stress of the mission, even the heat could be forgotten. Senior Airman Sara Chadwick, a Nebraska Air Guardsman who is a member of the CERF medical team, was suited up and sweating as she and other medics trudged toward the railroad cars, thinking about how awful the heat was. But then she saw the groaning and mangled people who needed her help and her discomfort didn't seem to matter anymore.

"For me," she said, "patient care comes first."

Ultimately, the members of the Nebraska CERF wheeled or walked the victims to the treatment area, where other Soldiers and Airmen processed them, decontaminated them, treated them and handed them off to local medical personnel.

"Going through all these exercises just gets you more prepared and more experienced," Chadwick said. "So if a real-world incident does happen, you are ready."

Nebraska response team demonstrates capabilities during Iowa exercise

By Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy
National Guard Bureau

For many people, the acronym CERF may be an unfamiliar term. But not for participants of Vigilant Guard Iowa, a training exercise designed to foster working relationships between National Guard units and local first responders.

They saw firsthand what a CERF can do in a disaster.

Part urban search and rescue and part hazardous materials decontamination team, the CERF, or Chemical, Biological, Nuclear, Radiological and high-yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force, is able to fill in should a situation become overwhelming for the capabilities of local authorities.

"It's basically a 180-200 person team that has decontamination, extraction, medical and command and control (capabilities) that is designed to provide mass decon and medical treatment to victims," said Lt. Col. Kimberly Sencindiver, National Guard

Bureau Collective Training branch chief.

As part of Vigilant Guard, which featured a chemical spill from a derailed train as its main training challenge, the CERF teams provided a unique capability to local authorities.

"Where this is unique is local authorities, specifically firefighters, generally have a very limited amount of equipment or personnel that can go into a contaminated zone and provide the decon, extraction, search and rescue and medical care that would be critical to save lives and property," said Sencindiver, who added that the CERFs can provide that capability.



Photo by Sgt. Michael Coleman

On The Job: Members of the Nebraska National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Nuclear, Radiological and High Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force decontaminate a role player "injured" during a simulated train derailment and explosion during the Vigilant Guard Iowa training exercise in Des Moines, Iowa, June 18. Vigilant Guard provided a realistic training environment where National Guard units worked with local civilian first responders during disaster scenarios.

The teams were developed specifically to fill the gap between local responders and

disasters situations that necessitate a larger response force, said Sencindiver.

"It was actually developed after a capability gap was looked into years ago on a national level," she said. "That gap was that we needed to provide mass decon and extraction capabilities for both military and civilian populations in the event of a (use of Weapons of Mass Destruction) or a natural disaster. That's the void that this team fills."

And for those on a CERF team, Vigilant Guard provided a venue to interact and work with local authorities on a large-scale basis.

"It's learning by doing," said Lt. Col. Chad Stevens, commander of the Nebraska National Guard's CERF, which

took part in the exercise in Des Moines. "Everybody gets to get their hands on and actually visually see what a CERF is instead of seeing it on a (briefing) slide or in an SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) book."

That allows for local authorities and the CERF teams to understand each other's capabilities, said Stevens, which in turn allows for a more fluid communication and integration should the need arise.

"It's very important to have good communication with local authorities," said Sencindiver. "These teams are designed and set up to support local authorities."

And that was the underlying goal of Vigilant Guard.

"(It is) designed to facilitate the interaction between the civilians and the military personnel above and beyond what may already be occurring out there," said Sencindiver.

But for those on the CERF team, Vigilant Guard had an additional end result. "It's a great honor," said Stevens.

Exercise helps prepare Guard for many different disasters

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

Disasters, whether natural or the result of human actions, strike quickly and usually with little warning.

The response to those disasters determines the ultimate cost in lives and reconstruction.

The Nebraska National Guard recently joined local, state and federal response agencies in exercising their response capabilities to a number of disaster scenarios.

The Vigilant Guard exercise took place June 18-24 and was designed to provide an opportunity to refine and enhance homeland security training.

"It was an exercise to enhance our preparedness of not only our National Guard assets, but the state emergency management assets to perform homeland security and defense support to civilian agencies," said Col. Scott Gronewold, state operations officer for Joint Force Headquarters. "It also allowed the (Adjutant General) to assess where we're at overall."

As part of Federal Emergency

Management Region 7, Nebraska joined Kansas, Missouri and Iowa in participating in the exercise.

Four disaster scenarios were designed to give the exercise the most realistic feeling possible.

"The exercise focused on a number of scenarios designed really to overwhelm us, which includes flooding, mass casualties, toxic chemical release, civil disturbances and foreign animal disease" said Gronewold.

In response to the exercise scenarios, Nebraska deployed approximately 240 Soldiers and Airmen to Des Moines, Iowa, to assist with a simulated train derailment leading to a toxic chemical release.

Dealing with disastrous scenarios taught the Nebraska National Guard a lot about its response capabilities and those of the other agencies involved, said 1st Lt. Melissa Kramer, Joint Operations Center officer-in-charge who helped with the months of planning for the exercise.

"What was learned was how we would actually accomplish the mission and of course what

other pieces need to be in place that we didn't even think of," said Kramer.

Kramer said the exercise was also useful in increasing interaction with other agencies that would also be involved in a true disaster response.

Some of these agencies included FEMA, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, local law enforcement, health and human services, and the Department of Agriculture.

"We really got a chance to interact with a lot of different agencies the way we would in a real emergency," said Kramer. "It was good to make contacts just to know who everybody is and put a face to the name."

During an exercise of this scope there were bound to be obstacles.

"One of the biggest things for us to overcome is communication issues," said Gronewold. "Not only are we communicating between states... we, amongst the military, have to communicate with each other and with law enforcement agencies."

Working out that communication was also a large hurdle

during the planning of the exercise, said Kramer. Many of the agencies involved had only general plans to respond to emergencies and interact with each other.

"During the planning phase it was tough to find some of those plans," said Kramer. "Frankly, some of them didn't exist."

This exercise allowed response agencies without a plan to create one for any number of emergency scenarios, she added.

Along with creating or perfecting response plans, the Nebraska Guard was able to show how it can support other states in their times of need.

"The National Guard role has always been to respond to the governor for state emergencies, however, since Katrina we've realized it's a much larger role, not just within our own state but on a regional and national level," said Gronewold. "Just last year we deployed to Hurricane Gustav, Hurricane Ike, the California fires, the Democratic National Convention and then also had units on alert for the presidential inauguration."

Responding to emergencies

within Nebraska or in other states is far from an exact science and the Vigilant Guard exercise exposed the need to continually train the Nebraska National Guard's leadership, Soldiers and Airmen on disaster response.

"We really learned that we have to interact," said Kramer. "The Nebraska Guard is not an independent stand-alone. We definitely are operating with everybody else and we need to make sure our processes intermix with everybody else so we're as effective as possible."

The Vigilant Guard exercise showed how the Nebraska National Guard, along with other response agencies, would handle a true emergency.

"It certainly gives the adjutant general reassurance in our capabilities and gives the Soldiers a sense of purpose in their mission," said Gronewold.

"They felt the training they had to prepare them for this was good, that the training was demanding and they felt they played a vital role in protecting the civilians of Nebraska and neighboring states."



Photo by Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith

Briefing the Sergeant Major: Master Sgt. Ken Lonowski (right) and Sgt. 1st Class Derek Whisenhunt (left) brief Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch from the Nebraska Army National Guard on equipment they are using in Vigilant Guard Iowa.

Vigilant Guard relationships key to effective disaster response says Nebraska sergeant major

By Master Sgt. Mike Smith
National Guard Bureau

The Guard is not in charge in a disaster response, but it's always ready and always there to help when the call arises, said the Nebraska Guard's top enlisted Soldier, June 19, during a multi-state disaster exercise in Des Moines, Iowa.

State Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch from the Nebraska Army National Guard was at Exercise Vigilant Guard Iowa where a large number of his state's Guardsmen were training with the Iowa Guard and other civilian and governmental agencies.

"Joint exercises like this are critical toward developing the U.S. Northern Command relationships that need to be developed so that we can respond to any domestic issues, be it a natural disaster or defense of the homeland," said Burch.

The exercise included domestic terrorism with a mock train derailment and the simulated release of toxic chemicals.

There were also hundreds of fictional injured and dead role players at the exercise site. Burch walked around the area,

which was surrounded by civilian and military emergency response vehicles, tents, fire hoses and other equipment.

"It's critical that we are able to work, not only amongst the military entities here, but with the civilian and governmental agencies that are crucial to such operations," said Burch.

The eight-day exercise was designed to enhance the interaction of local, state, federal and military responders to perform roles and responsibilities related to homeland defense and military support to civil authorities.

Burch said the noncommissioned officers in his state's first-response units are key coordinators during a disaster because they communicate face-to-face with civilian agencies in a response.

Burch visited with the Nebraska civil support team's NCOs who were surveying and analyzing the disaster site and advising civilian responders on the presence of weapons of mass destruction.

"Our civil support team NCOs are instrumental in developing an interaction with civilian organizations," said Burch. "They have to establish relationships with the local government and the first responders."

Nebraska National Guard specialists create communication bridge in Iowa

By Spc. Cassandra Monroe
Iowa National Guard

Despite approaching storms, service members from the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard, provided support and assistance to police and fire departments from Des Moines, Iowa, during Vigilant Guard 2009, a training exercise designed to test emergency response capabilities and strengthen the relationships between the National Guard and emergency response agencies.

For this exercise the Nebraska National Guard brought in their Joint Incident Site Communication Capabilities team to provide communication abilities to the surrounding area and agencies. The JISCC, made up of personnel from the 155th ARW as well as the Nebraska Army Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, is designed to provide a communications bridge between military, first responders and local and federal agencies through Internet access and radio network interoperability.

Because a JISCC team is deployed in each state, it is expected to arrive at an incident site within an hour of a request and provide global communications.

"Our purpose here at this exercise is to bring the Joint Incident Site Communication Capabilities package and work in coordination with the (others in the exercise)," said Capt. Chris Ganshert of the Nebraska JISCC.

The JISCC brings unique, specialized communication equipment to provide communication networks.

"Some of the equipment we have in our trailer includes a video terminal console, which has the capability to communicate to other agencies through video conferencing," said Staff Sgt. Tim Yablonski, a communications specialist with the JISCC.

Yablonski's role in the exercise was to provide support and reach-back capabilities for



Photo by Spc. Cassandra Monroe

Preparing For A Storm: Staff Sgt. Tim Yablonski, a communications specialist with the 155th Air Refueling Wing from Lincoln, Neb., straps down equipment as a storm heads his way during the Vigilant Guard exercise in Des Moines, Iowa, June 19.

communications, video and wireless networks for those around the site.

"We have a connection set up with the fire department right now so we will be able to provide Internet for them," said Yablonski. "With maximum capabilities, we can provide an Internet network that stretches out to 30 miles."

But with storms heading their way shortly, the team took action and prepared for the worst, although this was not their first time dealing with storms. Some of the members of the Nebraska JISCC went to both Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav to provide communications support by assisting with video conferences between civil and military agencies.

Precautions for the weather

start with simply reinforcing the tie downs holding the equipment in place, but if conditions worsen then it would mean taking down the equipment, said Staff Sgt. Derek Hollrah, a ground radio communications specialist with the JISCC.

Although the weather was not the best, the team was still in high spirits because they were gaining valuable experience through the Vigilant Guard exercise.

"It's been a great exercise," said Ganshert. "Part of what we're gaining from this is to develop our own processes because then we can set it up quicker and easier and get service out to our customers in the shortest amount of time. It's about getting the processes ironed out and how to make it seamless."



Pre-Flight Inspection: Capt. Adam Shaw, an OH-58 helicopter pilot with Grand Island's Company A, 1-376th Aviation, conducts a pre-flight inspection of his helicopter before taking off on a mission, June 6, at Camp Ashland, Neb.



Tracking Progress: Spc. Matt Baughman, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-376th Aviation, tracks the progress of a mission on a map board in his battalion's tactical operations center, June 5.

Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Eye of the Hurricane

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Looking at a map, it's easy to see that Nebraska is separated by nearly 1,000 miles from the nearest coast.

Yet, despite that geographic anomaly, approximately 100 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to aviation units in Grand Island spent the bulk of their May 30 – June 13 annual training preparing for a hurricane.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Troy Johnson, the top enlisted Soldier for the 1st Battalion, 376th Aviation (Security and Support,) leaders of the OH-58 Kiowa helicopter battalion wanted to use this year's two-week training period to iron out the procedures they will use if they're sent to the Gulf Coast later this year to assist in emergency relief operations should a hurricane hit Louisiana.

"We're simulating domestic operations, in particular hurricane relief and functioning as an aviation task force," said Johnson during a break in training at Camp Ashland, which for the purpose of the exercise was now dubbed Camp Bureaugard, La.

Johnson said the idea behind the exercise came from the experiences battalion helicopter crew and support staff gained last September when they and more than 1,000 Nebraska Guard Soldiers and Airmen were sent to Louisiana and Texas to support the Hurricane Gustav and Ike relief efforts.

"A lot of us were at Gustav last year. Fortunately, it was our sister unit in Arkansas – a battalion just like us – that was the command and control element," Johnson said. "We sent airframes down to help in the disaster relief, so we saw how Arkansas did things."

"And Arkansas did some really good things," Johnson said.

Johnson said the Nebraska organization recently learned that their battalion very likely could be assigned a role similar to Arkansas' should a hurricane slam into Louisiana again this year. In order to be prepared to support such a huge contingen-

■ Grand Island aviation units spend two-week exercise practicing for potential Gulf Coast mission

cy operation, he added, battalion leaders decided to focus on such things as how to receive helicopter crews and support staff from across the United States, how to billet them, how to feed them, and how to get them their missions.

"It's just a lot of 'nit-a-noid' things that you have to take care of," said Johnson.

He said the first four days of the annual training were spent developing the battalion processes and procedures they will use if they do indeed head south later this year. "If you show up and you don't have them, you don't have time. Then you're just reacting."

Complicating matters, he added, is the fact that the battalion might be operating with different National Guard units in an area it's not completely familiar with.

"There's a lot of challenges," he said. "And if you show up unprepared with the basics of how to do this, you're really shooting yourself in the foot."

To practice for the possible mission, the unit first deployed from its base at Grand Island to a field site located at Camp Ashland. However, in the exercise Camp Ashland was now a base in central Louisiana where the unit was required to make final preparations for a hurricane's landfall.

Finally, on June 7, after spending the previous day simulating the hurricane's landfall by conducting a "Hurricane Party," or in this case a battalion family day event, the organization shifted into gear and spent the next



Putting Wrenches To Use: Pfc. Austin Crowell, a construction equipment mechanic, reinstalls a service line to a trailer following a convoy movement from Grand Island to Camp Ashland, Neb.

72 hours conducting a variety of reconnaissance missions to assist local civilian authorities in searching for potential flooding and infrastructure damage, much as they would in a real event.

Mother Nature even added some realism to the training by pelting the Camp Ashland site with a thunderstorm at approximately the same time that the unit would've been experience similar weather in an actual hurricane.

Getting the Soldiers to work and act as though they were actually in Louisiana was a major challenge of the initial days of the exercise, said Johnson.

"We've been prepping them that when we left Grand Island we were going to Louisiana. It's not Camp Ashland," Johnson said. "So much of this involves role-playing. You've got to bring them along with you."

"It takes a couple days, but once the stage is set then they kind of get into it," he added.

Take the unit's ground me-



Mother Nature Lends A Hand: A truck stands next to a puddle of water the morning after a Nebraska thunderstorm pelted the 1-376th Aviation's training site at Camp Ashland, Neb., adding a bit of realism to the battalion's annual training, which revolved around a simulated deployment to the Gulf Coast in support of a hurricane relief effort.



Keeping The Water Out: Pvt. Caleb Schoneman purges water from a tail rotor during a pre-flight maintenance inspection, June 6, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

chanics, for instance. During the days leading up to the hurricane's landfall, mechanics assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Co. A, 1-376th Aviation, were busy in a nearby motorpool making

adjustments to generators and fixing unit vehicles.

"It's important to have all of our equipment up and ready all the time," said Sgt. 1st Class Monte Davidson, Co. A, 1-376th

See HURRICANE on 9.

Chemical Soldiers practice war-time skills in South Dakota

By Capt. Andrew Nelson
Staff Writer

For many members of the Nebraska (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosive) Enhanced Response Force, more commonly referred to as a CERF, the Vigilant Guard exercise was the second chapter in their 2009 annual training.

For them—the Soldiers of the 126th Chemical Battalion—the first chapter unfolded under very different circumstances more than 500 miles from Des Moines, Iowa, a few days earlier.

The battalion trained for a little more than a week in the Buffalo Gap National Grassland in South Dakota practicing its “green,” or wartime mission: nuclear, biological and chemical reconnaissance and decontamination.

The training there, while similar in nature to the training in Des Moines, unfolded in radically different environmental circumstances. Whereas Des Moines was rainy, humid and hot, South Dakota was rainy and chilly, with temperatures as low as 38 degrees.

“You could see your breath,” said Maj. Troy Paisley, 126th Chem. Bn. operations officer.

Paisley said it rained almost every day the Soldiers of the

126th Chem. Bn. were in South Dakota.

Compounding the misery (or enhancing the training, depending on one’s point of view), the Soldiers had to assemble and sleep in tents at a notional forward operating base atop a hill.

“I would judge they probably got 10 to 12 inches of rain while we were out there,” Paisley said.

“We learned some fieldcraft from people not being in their happy place... learning that fieldcraft was invaluable.”

Just like a terrorist attack, a war isn’t necessarily going to take place in the nicest of weather and Soldiers have to be prepared to operate in all kinds of environment, Paisley said.

The Omaha-based battalion headquarters had three company-level units working for it during the exercise: The battalion headquarters detachment, the 754th Chemical Company of Omaha and O’Neill, and the 631st Chemical Company from



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Final Instructions: Maj. Troy Paisley (right) gives final convoy instructions to Staff Sgt. Jason Rumbaugh and Staff Sgt. Andrew Stratton as they prepare to convoy into their Black Hills training site.

the Montana Army National Guard, a configuration similar to what the battalion might look like if it went to war overseas.

Most of the headquarters detachment Soldiers, along with the 754th Soldiers, participated in the CERF mission while the Montana National Guard Soldiers did not.

The convoys from Nebraska to South Dakota and back, plus the difficult field conditions tested the chemical Soldiers, but the training, they said, was well needed.

“We are by no means ready for war,” said Sgt. 1st Class Brian Kuss. “But we are a lot closer now.”

Building Up



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Engineers Put Annual Training To Good Use: Pvt. Seth Jacobs, a light wheeled mechanic with the 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) from Wahoo and Hastings, Neb., helps lay out footings for new construction at the Mead Training Site. The construction was one of many mission for members of the unit during this year’s June 6-26 annual training.

Look for this and other annual training stories in the October Prairie Soldier



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Close Up Look: Staff Sgt. Mike Uhing, flight platoon sergeant, conducts a daily inspection on the main rotor of an OH-58 helicopter, June 6, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

HURRICANE continued from page 8.

Aviation, motor sergeant. “It’s our job to be ready to go at any-time, so that’s what we do. If we need to go somewhere, we need to be 100 percent ready to go.”

The organization’s aircraft mechanics were also busy. After the late-evening thunderstorm passed over the Camp Ashland field site, June 5-6, the unit’s helicopter mechanics swarmed over the OH-58 helicopters, inspecting the aircraft for potential problems, removing water from mechanical parts, making needed adjustments.

“I’ve been getting a lot of good training,” said Pvt. Caleb Schone-man, an OH-58 mechanic who is currently studying Landscaping and Turf Grass Management at the University of Nebraska-

Lincoln.

“We’ve gotten a lot more hands-on training,” he added as he purged a helicopter’s tail rotor of rain condensation from the evening’s storm. “With the rain and everything, we’re conducting a lot more checks to make sure everything is working alright. There’s a lot more to do in two weeks than there is on a drill weekend.”

That’s the kind of training that will undoubtedly help the battalion should it actually deploy, Johnson said.

“Arkansas did a great job last year,” he said. “They knew where they were going each step of the way and it paid huge dividends.”

“We need to be able to do the same thing.”



Hamburgers From A Packet: Chief Warrant Officer 4 William Jepsen shows his nephew how to prepare a Meals, Ready to Eat (MRE) hamburger patty during the 1-376th Aviation’s June 6 family day at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Hurricane Party

■ Battalion family day gives Soldiers’ loved ones opportunity to learn more about what Guardsmen do

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

When it comes to making training realistic, there’s nothing like taking advantage of every opportunity.

In the case of the 1st Battalion, 376th Aviation (Security and Support), even the organization’s planned family day was part of the simulation.

For two weeks in late May and early June, members of the Grand Island-based helicopter battalion practiced responding to a simulated hurricane relief mission in Louisiana. The exercise included operations both before and after the simulated hurricane made landfall on the Gulf Coast.

However, when a hurricane comes ashore in real life, it

typically means that units take shelter wherever they’re at, hunkering down until it’s safe to resume operations again.

In order to simulate the break in operations during its late spring exercise, the 1-376th Aviation Soldiers conducted a family day at their Camp Ashland field training site, inviting unit family members out to see what their Soldiers do for the Guard before spending the second half of the day participating in a number of different family activities.

“We’re essentially having a hurricane party,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Tim Johnson, senior enlisted Soldier for the 1-376th Aviation.

According to Lt. Col. George Harris, commander of the 1-167th Aviation, the most important goal of the family



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Heads Up: Capt. Nathan Loose, daughters Kyra, 6, and Riley, 2, and his wife Stacey take in the sight of a Nebraska Army National Guard OH-58 helicopter as it passes overhead during a family day visit to the 1-376th Aviation’s annual training, June 6, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

day was to give unit family members a chance to actually see their Soldiers at work.

“These Soldiers’ families very seldom get to see their Soldiers doing their actual jobs,” he said, watching as groups of family members huddled around their Soldiers as they inspected an OH-58 Kiowa helicopter, many of the younger children standing with mouths agape as they pointed at a second helicopter as it flew by overhead.

“We have a lot of family events, like Christmas and Easter, but when it comes to actually seeing their family members doing the jobs that they do for the Guard, they never get to do it. So we thought this would be a great opportunity to show them,” he added.

Nebraska, Afghanistan kick off new relationship

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska National Guard and the Afghan National Army and Police forces kicked off a new bilateral relationship, Aug. 2-5, when two Afghan surgeons general traveled to Nebraska for talks about ways Nebraska can help Afghanistan develop its medical infrastructure.

The visit was part of a much larger bi-lateral partnership between the Nebraska National Guard and Afghanistan that, officials hope, will strengthen ties and ultimately enable the Nebraska National Guard to assist in helping develop Afghanistan's infrastructure.

"This is the first of what we hope will become a very long and very productive partnership," said Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, as he greeted Maj. Gen. Ahmad Zia Yaftali, Afghan National Army surgeon general, and Brig. Gen. Qandahar Shinwari, Afghan National Police surgeon general, to the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Aug. 3.

"We feel like there is much that we can accomplish together and we're excited to begin."

According to Col. Scott Gronewold, state operations officer, the August talks are the first step of what Nebraska Guard officials feel will develop into a much larger long-term relationship between the Nebraska Guard and Afghanistan.

"The end objective is to create a very effective and accountable government for the Afghan people," said Gronewold.

In order to accomplish that goal, Gronewold said, the Nebraska Guard is looking to use its resources and expertise, in partnership with the state's university system, governmental agencies and businesses, to help the Afghans develop their infrastructure.

Gronewold said this will be accomplished through military-to-military, civilian-to-military and civilian-to-civilian exchanges between Afghanistan and Nebraska.

"The end objective is to build capacity within the Afghan government that they currently do not have or must obtain from other countries. This will give Afghans more confidence in their own government institutions."

During the August visit to



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Building Relationships: Patti Carsten, director of the clinical skills lab at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha talks to Maj. Gen. Ahmad Zia Yaftali (far left) and Brig. Gen. Qandahar Shinwari (center) about the state-of-art training facility while Maj. Samantha Keech, Nebraska Army Guard, listens in.

Nebraska, Generals Yaftali and Shinwari met with Nebraska National Guard and University of Nebraska Medical Center officials and health professionals about ways the two Nebraska organizations can assist in developing the overall capabilities of the two Afghan organizations' medical corps, particularly in the areas of clinical rotations and residency programs, nursing and allied health education, and the delivery of health care through distance technology.

While in Nebraska, the two dignitaries visited the Nebraska

National Guard air base in Lincoln and UNMC's campus in Omaha. While at UNMC they toured the center's state-of-the-art clinical skills laboratory and anatomy lab.

They also discussed ways that UNMC and the National Guard can help develop the medical education system in Afghanistan.

Currently, Afghan doctors learn their trade through an apprenticeship-style system where new doctors learn from older ones. Modern medical training often isn't available. Additionally, many Afghan doctors have modern equipment, like MRIs, but lack the expertise on how to use or maintain the equipment.

One of the ways that the Nebraska National Guard and UNMC may help is through outreach programs where UNMC doctors will give week-long lectures on a variety of health-related subjects while Nebraska National Guard medical professionals will spend up to several months in Afghanistan helping doctors and nurses there learn how to use and maintain their

equipment.

According to Yaftali, the relationship being developed in Nebraska must be long-term to be effective.

"Afghanistan is starting everything anew," he said. "With the support of the United States, we want to build the country."

"We are looking for a very highly modern education system, which is what you have here in Nebraska," the general added.

According to Dr. Ward Chambers, director of UNMC's international health program, UNMC is ready to help.

"Through these efforts in education, we can build a sustaining medical system where they can educate their own health care providers," said Chambers.

"This is a real opportunity for the state of Nebraska to be involved in medical education with the military and throughout the entire country," he added. "I think it's something the state can be quite proud of."

Gronewold agreed.

"This really has national and global implications," said Gronewold. "What we do here in Afghanistan also enriches the people of Nebraska because we learn just as much from them as they learn from us."



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Never Forgotten: A Soldier shows a young girl the plaque dedicated to the 755th Chemical Company and its two fallen warriors after the emotional dedication ceremony in O'Neill, Neb., Aug. 1. The memorial sits in front of the Nebraska Army National Guard armory in O'Neill.

Fallen Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers memorialized in O'Neill

■ **Statue honors 755th Chemical Company Soldiers, two comrades killed during Iraq mission**

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

A statue honoring two fallen Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers was dedicated during a ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard Armory in O'Neill, Neb., Aug. 1.

The statue honors all of the Soldiers who deployed with the 755th Chemical Company including two fallen warriors: Spc. William L. Bailey III, Bellevue, and Sgt. Jacob S. Schmuecker, Norfolk.

Bailey died on May 25, 2007, near Taji, Iraq, while Schmuecker died on July 21, 2007, near Balad, Iraq. Both Soldiers were deployed with the 755th Chemical Co., which was serving as a security force in

Iraq, at the time of their deaths.

The life-sized statue of a Global War on Terror-era Soldier was purchased and donated from contributions by the family members of the Soldiers deployed with the 755th Chem. Co. Community donations and Family Readiness Group funds also supported the memorial.

The 755th Chem. Co. was comprised of 180 Soldiers from units across Nebraska and deployed to Iraq in 2006-07. The statue represents the community of O'Neill remembering the sacrifices the Soldiers made, said Capt. Vincent Dvorak, commander of the 755th Chem. Co. when it first deployed.

"It's a symbol of support not only from the community of O'Neil, but the entire state of Nebraska," he said. "That's what the statue really represents for me: the community support for the Soldiers."

Capt. David Benak, who was the commander of the 755th Chem. Co. toward the end of the deployment, echoed Dvorak's comments, saying he appreciates the work from the community.

"Today was the culmination of about three years of hard work from the city of



Unveiling: A memorial plaque remembering two fallen members of the 755th Chemical Company is unveiled during a statue dedication ceremony at the O'Neill Armory, Aug. 1. The statue was purchased with donated funds in honor of the 755th Chem. Co.'s deployment to Iraq.

O'Neill and all the people here, the businesses in the community and a lot of the Soldiers," said Benak. "They put together a statue in remembrance for not only the deployment of the 755th to Iraq, but to two fallen Soldiers that we had over there."

Upon returning from Iraq, the 755th Chem. Co. was disbanded. Officials say the statue will be a symbol of a melting pot of Soldiers who came together and formed a strong unit during a trying deployment.

"We were put together from all over the state so there wasn't a unit identity when we left country. We forged it while we were there," said Sgt. 1st Class John Williss, company personnel sergeant who now serves as a now senior personnel sergeant with the 126th Chemical Battalion in

Omaha. "We came out of country a strong and cohesive unit."

"The 755th was disbanded right away and it's like the ties that brought us together kind of got separated as soon as we came home," he added. "This is a three-dimensional reminder of what we achieved."

Although the unit no longer exists, the statue will forever serve as a reminder of what it accomplished during their deployment to Iraq. It will also ensure Spc. William L. Bailey III and Sgt. Jacob S. Schmuecker are never forgotten, said Dvorak. "This statue etches their efforts and their contributions in time so all those Soldiers, past, present and future will see they made that sacrifice."



U.S. Army Photo

Finally!

65 years after bloody battle, Nebraska regiment honored for heroic actions in St. Lo

City Of Rubble: Infantrymen from the 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division, wind their way through a maze of rubble to enter St. Lo, France, in July 1944. The 134th Infantry Regiment, which began World War II as a Nebraska National Guard infantry organization, was among the first American units to enter St. Lo after a bloody battle to seize the critical city. The 35th Infantry Division, of which the 134th Infantry Regiment was a part, was finally honored for that feat on July 18 when a monument was dedicated on the city's rampart walls, seen directly ahead of the pictured infantrymen.

Fallen Nebraskan memorialized in Norman village

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

LE MESNIL ROUXELIN, France—For a few moments, July 17, retired Col. James A. Huston was no longer a 91-year-old World War II veteran.

Instead, the former intelligence and operations officer from the 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, was once again a 26-year-old first lieutenant leading a group of people through the tangled hedgerows of Normandy in search of an important objective, just as he had 65 years earlier.

Unfortunately, much had changed over the decades. Many of the hedgerows have been removed to give the local French farmers more room to plant their crops. New houses and gardens have sprouted around what on July 30, 1944, was a bloody, confused battlefield, remembered by the survivors as simply “Bloody Sunday.”



Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen

On this morning, though, the sounds of battle were no longer. Instead, the sounds of peace—passing cars, twittering birds, mooing dairy cattle, barking dogs—replaced the sounds of machineguns, mortar shells and artillery explosions.

Walking down a lane, Huston looked around, trying to make sense of the modernity. To his side, one of his French guides pointed toward a lane approximately 100 yards away. Looking at his guide, Huston said sternly with the directness of a 26-year-old infantry officer: “No, it wasn’t down there. It was right here... right here up this lane.”

Huston’s guide tried once again to guide the veteran further down the main lane, explaining that the morning’s objective couldn’t have been where Huston was pointing.

“I’m telling you I know where I’m at, where I was at back then and it’s right



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

‘Right Over There...’ Retired Col. James A. Huston (center) points out the location where the late Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen, Omaha, was mortally wounded on July 30, 1944, to Thomsen’s son, Neal (far left), during a July 17 visit to Conde-sur-Vire, France.

up there,” he said, pointing at a driveway that wrapped around a shuttered Norman house.

“But this is private property,” the guide protested. “We can’t go up there.”

“It was private property the last time I was here, too, and that didn’t seem to bother the homeowners,” he said, smiling with quick wide grin.

Then, with a swiftness that belied his advanced age, Huston moved up the driveway and disappeared around the house. A few moments later, the rest of the contingent followed.

Standing in a shaded garden, Huston took a few moments for his eyes to adjust to the filtered light of the surrounding hedges and trees and then, looking outward from the fenced yard, he smiled quickly. Pointing first with his cane and then with his finger, he turned back to companions and announced: “Right there.”

“I was set up under that tree. And over there... over near that hedgerow...” Huston said, using his hand to indicate a second hedgerow about 50 yards in front of ‘his’ tree before turning to talk to one particular member of his ‘patrol,’ “... that is where your dad was hit.”

Huston’s fellow traveler was Neal Thomsen, 79, from Indianapolis, Ind. His father was the late Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen of Omaha, Neb., who had commanded Huston’s battalion, part of the 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division, in July 1944 when the organization fought to liberate the strategically critical St. Lo, France.

During the bloody and confused July 15-18, 1944, battle, nearly one out of every three regimental Soldiers was either killed or severely wounded.

It was Nebraska National Guard regiment’s first taste of combat. It would not be its last.

After helping take the city on July 17-18, 1944, the regiment spend several days defending St. Lo from a near constant onslaught of German artillery and mortar shells before it was ordered south toward the Vire River to protect the flanks of Lt. Gen. George Patton’s 3rd U.S. Army, which was already cutting through the German defenses into the Brittany peninsula.

The movement was part of an effort that would eventually place the German defenders in an unsustainable pocket between the American, British and Canadian armies.

That is what had taken Thomsen’s battalion to Conde-sur-Vire on July 30, 1944.

It was here that Thomsen was mortally wounded when a German artillery round exploded above his command post as his battalion fought a bloody engagement against entrenched Germans.

Thomsen died 16 days later in England from a blood clot caused by his wounds.

Nearly 65 years later, Thomsen’s sacrifice was memorialized in granite when the tiny village of Le Mesnil Rouxelin, a tiny hamlet of about 550 that lay on the right-hand border of the 134th’s Infantry Regiment route into St. Lo, unveiled a monument in memory of the fallen Nebraska Guard commander.

“Lieutenant Colonel Thomsen was a hard man, but brave; respected and admired by his men, always implied with an accurate sense of duty,” said Andree Chan, president of the current 35th Division Association in Normandy who was instrumental in getting the memorial to Thomsen created. “The admiration by his men is so deep that they informed us of their wish that an homage is owed to him here where he saved the battalion from a possible massacre without taking his life into account.”

“This very important hero among heroes has sacrificed his life for our liberty,” said Chan, who, as a young girl hid with her parents as the battle raged around their home near St. Lo in 1944. On the late afternoon of July 17, 2009, she addressed a crowd of several hundred people who had

See THOMSEN on 12.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Honoring A Fallen Nebraskan: Members of the Nebraska National Guard color guard stand with French color bearers during the July 17 ceremony honoring the late Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen in Le Mesnil Rouxelin, France. Thomsen was mortally wounded on July 30, 1944, while fighting the Germans in Normandy.



Remembering a Father's Sacrifice: (From left) Neal Thomsen, son of the late Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen, stands next to Benjamin de Girard, mayor of Le Mesnil Rouxelin, France, and retired Col. James Huston and Huston's wife, Anne, after the July 17 ceremony in which the citizens of Le Mesnil Rouxelin dedicated a monument in honor of Thomsen's father.

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gathered in a drizzling rain near the Le Mesnil Rouxelin square to dedicate the granite memorial that stood beneath French and American national colors and a field of waist-high corn. "The honor given to him today is more than justified."

The mayor of Le Mesnil Rouxelin agreed, saying that the men of the 134th Infantry Regiment that Thomsen helped lead helped end four years of terror at the hands of the German occupiers.

"During four years of trying to obey the orders of the enemy invaders, we were deprived of the liberties of cars, radios, but also food, clothes and most of all... freedom," said Roland Lerouge. "For four terrible years, until the sixth of June 1944, we waited."

"This period of our history will remain forever in our memory and will be commemorated every single year," Larouge said. "The fights were awful and murderous. Step by step you conquered back our land. And for our city, thanks for the 35th Division (Santa Fe) we got back our freedom."

For Neal Thomsen, who was 14 when he opened a telegram informing his family of his father's death, it was a moment he'd waited to see for much of his life.

"This may sound funny, but he's at peace now," said a visibly moved Thomsen, who had been near tears as he thanked the villagers for the honor given to his father. "This brings closure to what I didn't know about his passing. He's got the monument he's waited for for 65 years."

Huston was also visibly moved by the memorial.

"In dedicating this monument to the memory of Colonel Thomsen, we dedicate ourselves to the principles for which he fought and died," Huston told the assembled crowd. "He was the embodiment of bravery, of a sense of purpose, a sense of humor. And those principles and those traditions honor both his family and all of the Soldiers who served with him."

Prior to the late afternoon ceremony, Thomsen spent most of the day touring some of the significant sites of the 134th Infantry Regiment's battle into and out of St. Lo in July 1944 with Huston. For Huston in particular, the day's events were extremely meaningful.

A native of Indiana, he had not only served as the fallen commander's intelligence officer, he also had developed a friendship with the Nebraska Guardsman during their training in the United States and England.

Huston remembered his former commander as not only a brave Soldier, but also as a man who loved to invent things and tell jokes.

"He loved to sit around and exchange stories... jokes," said Huston, who after the war, became a noted historian and wrote extensively about Thomsen in his 1950 book *"Biography of a Battalion."*

"He had this thick notebook and any good joke he ever heard, he would put it down. Then he and the executive officer would sit around and talk. We would say that they sounded like two old maids chit-chatting back and forth."

In Huston's book, he also re-



Honored Guest: Staff Sgt. Randy R. Freye, Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance), signs a book during a visit to a farm house near Conde-sur-Vire, France.

called how Thomsen, who served as a blacksmith for the Union Pacific railroad in Omaha before the war, loved to invent things. For example, he developed a way to send messages up to a truck from a jeep during a convoy by putting a clothespin on a stick. He also created his own clothing.

"Disgusted with the perpetual shortness of raincoats, he obtained two of the waterproof garments and had the lower half of the second sewed onto the bottom of the first," Huston wrote in *Biography of a Battalion*. "It fell all the way to the heels of his shoes; when he wore it he looked as though he were peering out of the top of a pyramidal tent."

"The men would refer to things of the Colonel's in making comparisons in the superlative: an especially large tent or balloon was 'as big as Colonel Thomsen's raincoat'; a massive pack or bulky load was 'as heavy as Colonel Thomsen's bed roll'; a big collection of papers was 'as thick as Colonel Thomsen's notebook'..."

At one point during their tour of the battlefield, Huston directed Thomsen and his wife Doris along the road where the elder Thomsen led his battalion into battle on July 15, 1944.

Also following were Brig. Gen. David Petersen, current assistant commander of the 35th Infantry Division, and seven members of a Nebraska Army Guard color guard from the 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) who traveled to France to represent the current historical lineage holders of the 134th Infantry Regiment.

According to Huston, the 3-134th Infantry had initially



Special Trip: Staff Sgt. Jacob Robinson takes Staff Sgt. Joseph Dunlap's photograph near a monument dedicated to the 35th Infantry Division in Conde-sur-Vire, France.

moved into position on the outskirts of Villiers Fossard to relieve two battalions of the 29th Infantry Division's 115th Infantry Regiment.

On the morning of July 15, 1944, 3-134th Infantry held the line as the regiment's two other battalions passed by to launch the attack toward Hill 122, a prominent plateau overlooking St. Lo that the German's had turned into a key observation point, which helped them defeat several earlier American attacks.

Several hours later, with the battle raging in the fields ahead and casualties mounting, Thomsen received the order to move forward. Within a short distance down the road, however, Huston said the battalion realized that the German defenders were now moving in to cut off the offensive.

Nearing a bend in the road, barely a football field length away from the start of the march, the battalion began receiving incoming artillery rounds. Huston said he was sent forward with several other Soldiers to see what lay in front of them.

Climbing atop a hedge he saw Germans moving in the fields in front of them.

Huston said he soon received a message that Thomsen was impatient and had ordered the battalion forward.

Rounding the bend, the battalion - which was marching along in a column on either side of the road - suddenly saw a German tank move out of the field in front of them. As the rest of the battalion scrambled for cover, Thomsen jumped up into a raised meadow, pulled out his .45 caliber pistol and fired five bullets at the tank.

"...And the tank turned around and fled," said Huston.

Because the battalion was spread out on the road and was

in danger of running into a potentially disastrous ambush against tanks, the executive officer - who was now out of contact with Thomsen - ordered the battalion to return to its starting point.

Thomsen would finally make his way back to the battalion command post several hours later after crawling through the frontlines under near constant bombardment. He then called the regimental and division headquarters - which were insisting upon a resumption of the attack - and insisted that the Germans were still in front of them very much in force.

Without American tank support, he argued, the attack would be suicidal.

"He was never afraid of anything and he had a sense of purpose," said Huston. "When he was given an objective, he tended to reach the objective and people never questioned his judgment."

"He looked out for us," he added. "If he received an order that was not practical because of the situation, he always wanted to know what we were doing for reconnaissance. He would protect us that way."

In the end, Thomsen won the argument, gaining permission to delay the attack until the next morning when armored support arrived.

According to Neal Thomsen, having the opportunity to spend time with Huston was an experience of a lifetime.

"It gives me a sense of closure after 65 years of not knowing the details that I'm now getting. It's quite an experience," he said.

Thomsen said he was equally impressed by the citizens of the French communities he visited.

"I've got a greater appreciation for what the French citizens suffered and gained as a result of what we did," he said.



Talking With A Veteran On His Battlefield: Staff Sgt. Joseph Dunlap (far left) and Sgt. Cody Trindle (far right) talk with retired Col. James A. Huston while walking along the road that Huston's unit - the 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment - took as it started its fight toward St. Lo, France, on July 15, 1944.

On Patrol: Members of a U.S. Army reenactment group from Belgium prepare to conduct a "patrol" through St. Lo, France, July 18. The reenactment group brought a number of vintage vehicles, including two Sherman medium tanks, that they drove through the streets of the Norman city to celebrate the 65th anniversary of its liberation after four years of German occupation.



Finally: Brig. Gen. David Petersen, assistant 35th Infantry Division commander and deputy adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard (far right,) joins other dignitaries in St. Lo, France, as they applaud the unveiling of a plaque honoring the 35th Infantry Division at the site near where patrols of the 134th Infantry Regiment, Nebraska National Guard, entered St. Lo on July 18, 1944.



Color Guard: Six noncommissioned officers from the 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) stand at attention before the start of the July 18 ceremony during which a monument dedicated to the Soldiers of the 35th Infantry Division was unveiled on the rampart walls of St. Lo. The Soldiers are members of a Nebraska Army National Guard unit that holds the historic lineage of the 1st Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment.

ST. LO continued from page 1.

the evening of July 17-18, 1944.

Prior to the war, the 134th Infantry Regiment hailed from 13 Nebraska cities and was the main combat organization of the Nebraska National Guard.

Called to duty in December 1940, the Soldiers spent the next 40-plus months training for combat and undergoing numerous reorganizations before finally entering the front lines of the month-old Battle of Normandy in mid-July 1944.

Commanded by North Platte native Col. Butler Miltonberger, the 134th Infantry Regiment's first assignment of the European War was to seize the critical Hill 122 — so named because on a map it rose 122 meters above sea-level.

The hill served as a lynchpin to the German's defense in the St. Lo region, allowing the Germans to defeat several earlier attacks because they controlled the high ground over the city and the major roads that intersected there.

Attacking behind a rolling artillery barrage in the early morning darkness of July 15, 1944, the 134th Infantry Regiment seized Hill 122 and nearby St. Georges-Montcocq after fierce fighting and by the evening of July 17-18 was sending patrols into the northwestern sections of St. Lo, which had been devastated by more than a month-and-a-half of constant bombardment.

While the Nebraska regiment was successfully making its way into St. Lo, American elements of the 29th Infantry Division were also attacking into the city along a separate path further to the east.

The 29th would be given official credit for liberating St. Lo, France, causing a controversy between the two organizations

“Our real monument, which we share with our sister divisions and all of the other American forces, is to see a strong and prosperous and free France and the other countries we came to liberate.”

— Retired Colonel James A. Huston
former member of the 134th Infantry Regiment

that still exists today.

All that was forgotten this afternoon, however, as retired Col. James A. Huston, who had been a 26-year-old battalion intelligence officer in 1944 and was one of the first officers to lead a patrol into the shattered city, sat next to several other 29th Infantry Division veterans who had traveled once again to Normandy to be part of the 65th anniversary celebrations of the liberation of St. Lo.

Sitting in a special tent reserved for the aged warriors, the Soldiers listened as local community dignitaries and Brig. Gen. David Petersen, assistant commander of the 35th Infantry Division and deputy adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard, spoke of the infantry divisions' numerous accomplishments before unveiling a rectangular plaque that officially recognizes the 35th Infantry Division's part in the liberation of St. Lo.

The dedication was one of three ceremonies held to mark the 65th anniversary of the liberation of St. Lo.

“The 29th and 35th Division belong to the battalion of our glorious liberators,” said Francois Digard, mayor of St. Lo. “All of their Soldiers had in common

an exceptional courage and the same ideal: go forward and bring peace back.”

“Today, 65 year later, we know that it is through this union of brave men that we owe our liberty,” he added. “In front of history there are St. Lo's heroes and the city of St. Lo and its inhabitants are proud to be able to honor them worthy of their sacrifice and bravery.”

According to Andree Chan, president of the current 35th Division Association in Normandy who was integral in having the plaque placed in St. Lo, the recognition is long overdue for the Soldiers of the Midwestern division who came so far to return freedom to France.

“The goal is reached today,” said Chan, who as a young girl fled her home with the rest of her family when the battle approached their village near St. Lo in 1944. Hiding from the battle, they were ultimately liberated by members of the 35th Division. “The city of St. Lo shows its appreciation to the 35th Division at this place.”

“The place of this marker is appropriate because it is on the arriving roads of the first patrols,” said Chan. “This marker honors action, valor, honor and commitment to the



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Honoring The Liberators: A group of children, dressed similarly to the way the children of St. Lo, France, dressed in July 1944, pose for a photograph near the new 35th Infantry Division monument in St. Lo, France. The children assisted officials in laying flowers at the site where 134th Infantry Regiment Soldiers entered St. Lo, France, 65 years earlier.

same cause... the one against tyranny and in favor of liberty.”

The St. Lo ceremony came a day after a similar ceremony at the village of Le Mesnil Rouxelin. There, a monument was unveiled in honor of the late Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen, a 134th Infantry Regiment battalion commander from Omaha who led his organization through the bloody fighting into St. Lo.

During that battle, one out of every three 134th Infantry Soldiers was either severely wounded or killed in the battle. Thomsen was mortally wounded on July 30, 1944, near Conde-sur-Vire and died 16 days later in England.

Thomsen's son Neal was also in attendance at the ceremony, sitting next to Huston as the plaque honoring the 35th Infantry Division was unveiled.

Petersen once commanded an infantry company in the 1-134th Infantry and recently served as the commander of the Nebraska

Army Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, which holds the historical lineage and honors of the old 134th Infantry Regiment. He said it was an honor to be part of a ceremony honoring the efforts and sacrifices of so many past veterans of the 35th Infantry Division.

“This is a very special event,” said Petersen, adding that he was extremely proud to have the opportunity to represent the division at a ceremony where former members of the organization were finally given their long overdue honor.

“I grew up hearing the stories of St. Lo. It's good to be here when those Soldiers, who sacrificed so much here, are finally given the honors that were due to them 65 years ago.”

After the war Huston became a noted historian and author of numerous books including several about the 134th Infantry Regiment. He also worked

See ST. LO on 14.

Nebraska color guard members overwhelmed by mission

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

For six Nebraska Army National Guard noncommissioned officers, a recent week-long mission to Normandy, France, was both the journey of a lifetime and a chance to help honor their military forefathers during more than a dozen ceremonies tracing the 35th Infantry Division's battles across this colorful region of France.

"This has been a great opportunity to showcase our NCOs," said Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, adding that the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) Soldiers who represented the Nebraska Army National Guard in France were chosen using a number of factors.

First, the 1-134th Cavalry holds the direct lineage to the original 134th Infantry Regiment that fought in Normandy in July 1944 and was among the first American units to send patrols into devastated St. Lo France. Second, because the Army is currently celebrating 2009 as the Year of the NCO, Valenzuela said officials wanted to use the mission as a way to demonstrate the highly professional nature of Nebraska's noncommissioned officers.

Finally, he said, it was a way to thank the six sergeants—all of whom have deployed overseas in the recent past—for doing such tremendous work for their units.

"We wanted to make sure

that we selected the right NCOs," Valenzuela said. "That's why we asked the squadron to select six of their best NCOs to thank them for doing such a good job."

Representing the 1-134th Cavalry were: Staff Sgt. Jacob Robinson, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop (Lincoln); Staff Sgt. Joseph Dunlap, Troop A (Hastings); Staff Sgt. Randy R. Freye, Troop B (Fremont); Sgt. Jerad E. Blocker, Troop B (Fremont); Sgt. Alan Rosenthal, Company C (Beatrice); and Sgt. Cody Trindle, Company C (Beatrice).

While in Normandy, the Soldiers participated in the unveiling of a monument in Le Mesnil Rouxelin honoring the late Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen, Omaha, who was mortally wounded south of St. Lo on July 30, 1944. They also participated in the unveiling of a monument honoring the 35th Division near the spot where members of the 134th Infantry Regiment entered St. Lo on the evening of July 17-18, 1944.

Additionally, the Soldiers participated in 11 other ceremonies in villages and communities liberated by the 35th Division in July and August 1944. They also assisted members of the 35th Division Association in Normandy—a French group committed to preserving the history of the



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Omaha Beach Cemetery: Members of the Nebraska National Guard color guard stand in formation in front of the memorial at the American Cemetery near Omaha Beach, France, July 19, before the start of a ceremony honoring the fallen Soldiers of the 35th Infantry Division.

35th Division—place flowers on 245 35th Infantry Division Soldiers' graves at the American Cemetery near Omaha Beach and 109 division graves at the American Cemetery near St. James, France.

According to the Nebraska Soldiers, having the opportunity to participate in the ceremonies was an extreme honor.

"It just kind of gives me a greater sense of pride," said Dunlap. "Holding the colors and honoring some fallen comrades... it just verifies your role as a Soldier and makes you understand what people have fought and died for."

Blocker agreed.

"For the last week it's given me a lot more respect for what past vets have gone through," he said,



Honoring A Fallen American: Staff Sgt. Joseph Dunlap and Benjamin de Girard, 12, pause to pay their respects to a fallen American 35th Infantry Division Soldier at the American cemetery near St. James, France, after placing a single rose on his grave.

adding that he was overwhelmed by the French civilians who constantly kept thanking him for being there. "It was awesome. It was something that I wished everyone would have a chance to go through and see what we did. It gives you more respect for the 35th Infantry Division patch."

Valenzuela said he was overwhelmed by how important the liberation still is to Normandy.

"It's been 65 years—65 years—since the liberation of St. Lo and they celebrate it as if it's been just last year," he said.

Dunlap agreed.

"As far as honorable and noble things in the military that anyone could do or get selected to do, (this mission) definitely has to rank up there," he said. "I feel extremely honored to have been selected to go to this ceremony.

ST. LO continued from page 13.

tirelessly with Chan and the members of the 35th Division Association in Normandy to have the 35th Division officially recognized in St. Lo.

"You see how many monuments have already been erected in different places, but St. Lo never had one," said Huston. "Now they have one."

According to Huston, he always felt that it was important to have the 35th Division's part in the battle recognized. "We considered that our first big battle... our first objective," he said.

He said he was particularly impressed by the care that the Normans took in locating the new monument. "The placement of the monument to the 35th I thought was perfectly placed because it's exactly at the end of the street where our people entered St. Lo," Huston said. "It's going to be seen by lots of people."

Huston recalled how much St. Lo has changed in the 65 years since he was ordered by the late Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, to take a lieutenant from each of the battalion's companies and lead a patrol into the battered city.

Leaving in full sunlight, the officers formed a diamond as they walked from stone to stone through the once vibrant community that had been transformed after weeks of bombardment into a city of ghostlike shadows, patrolling until darkness descended.

"You were sickened by the complete destruction of the central part of the city," Huston recalled. "There was nothing but rubble. You couldn't identify streets. You couldn't walk on a street. No vehicles could move."

Today, even though the city has been rebuilt, numerous trib-

utes to the battle still remain. Like the battered cathedral that still bears the marks of the bombing. Or a World War I statue that was peppered and sliced by shrapnel. Or the remains of the police station where hundreds of French civilians, including numerous members of the resistance, perished during the initial Allied bombing on June 6, 1944.

Like the 134th Infantry Regiment, which sacrificed dearly in less than a week of bloody, fearsome combat to seize the critical city, Huston said the French civilians also sacrificed greatly during the battle.

"Everyone (today) has such a good attitude. The people all seem friendly and joyful and appreciative... they're very appreciative for everything we've done," Huston said. "And you have to remember the sacrifice that they suffered... the bombings and the German occupation. So many of them were in the resistance and helped us along."

Huston said looking at what St. Lo and the rest of France and Europe have become in the 65 years since the war is the true lasting tribute to the American Army in Europe.

"Pericles in ancient Athens said 'Future generations will build monuments to our achievement.' And we see many monuments here built to our achievements as the 35th Division," he said.

"But our real monument, which we share with our sister divisions and all of the other American forces, is to see a strong and prosperous and free France and the other countries we came to liberate," he said.

"That's the real monument. That's the real satisfaction; to see things going the way we hoped they would when it was finished."

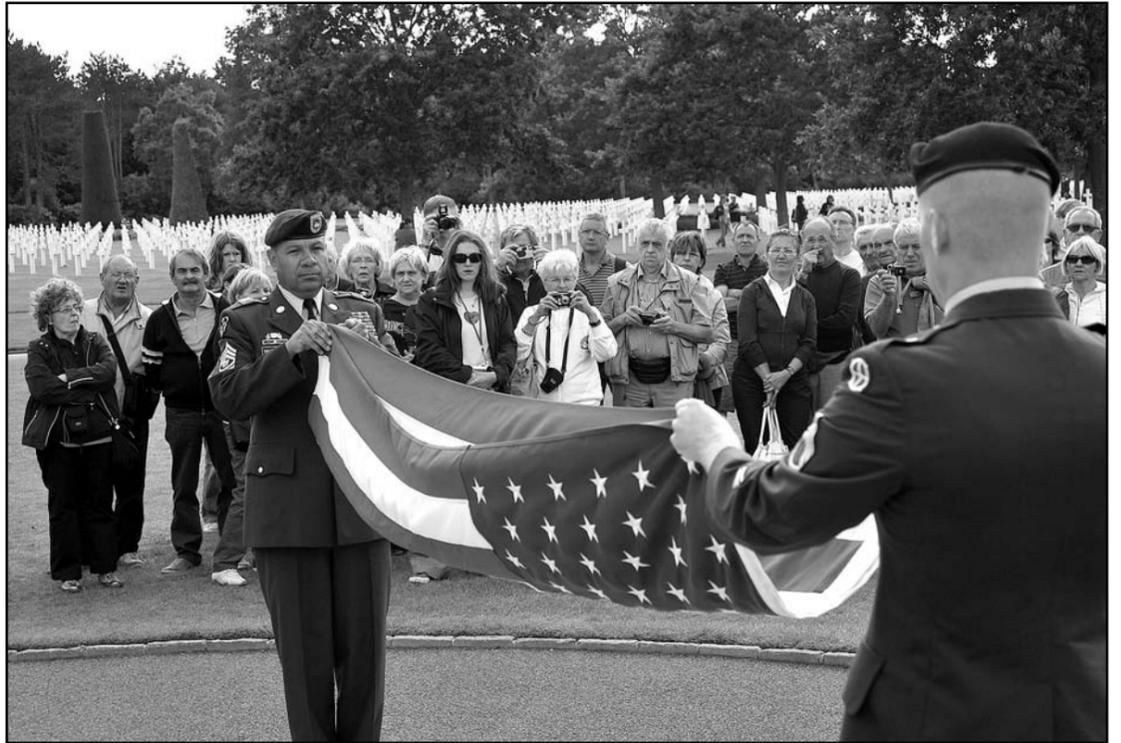


Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Folding Old Glory: Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela (center) and Staff Sgt. Randy Freye fold the American flag at the end of an emotional day at the American Cemetery near Omaha Beach, France, before a crowd of onlookers.

Guardsmen fold flag at Omaha Beach cemetery

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

As a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard honor guard, Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela has participated in dozens of ceremonies and has folded the American flag countless times during military funerals.

On July 19 Valenzuela and Staff Sgt. Randy Freye had the opportunity of a lifetime when they were asked to fold the American flag at the American Cemetery near Colleville, France, overlooking the historic Omaha Beach.

The request came shortly after members of the Nebraska Army National Guard honor guard rendered services at the cemetery during a wreath-laying ceremony honoring the fallen members of the 35th Infantry Division and then helped members of the 35th Division Association in Normandy place single flowers at the more than 200 35th Division graves in the cemetery.

With dozens of curious visitors watching, Valenzuela and Freye carefully and crisply folded the American flag, bringing the duty day

at cemetery to an end. Both Soldiers said they were so focused on doing a proper job that they didn't take time to think about the significance of the opportunity until some time later in the day.

"I think we did well," said Freye, a member of Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) from Fremont, Neb. "I was focused on doing the ceremony because I was really nervous about not screwing up... It wasn't until after we got done that I realized this is probably something I'll never get to do again."

"It was pretty cool," he added.

Valenzuela echoed those thoughts.

"I don't think there's any greater honor than folding the U.S. flag on U.S. soil in a foreign country," said Valenzuela, command sergeant major for the Lincoln-based 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade. "At the time they asked us to do it, I was more concerned about doing it right and not embarrassing ourselves so that people have a bad image of the Army."

"It hits me now that Staff Sergeant Freye and I are both pretty honored to have gotten to do it," he added.

Medics use June exercise to prepare for new Iraq mission

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

A small group of Soldiers clad in full individual protective equipment approach a wooden structure with several doors and windows.

Weapons drawn, they form up along a wall – ensuring they have cover from all angles – and then move quickly yet cautiously, entering each of the building's rooms, moving only after they're sure the room is clear of hostile individuals and weapons.

The Soldiers continue on, clearing building after building. Along the way they encounter friendly civilians, hostile suicide bombers and sniper-fire. Finally, after all the buildings are clear, they cross a gravel road, lower their weapons, which are actually paint-ball guns, and begin an after-action review detailing how they performed at "Smash Village."

Fortunately "Smash Village" is a Military Operations in Urban Terrain training area at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, Neb., and these are Soldiers from the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) who were performing annual training June 22-28

Although the main mission of the 313th Med. Co., composed mostly of medical personnel, is to provide medical evacuation to combat casualties, the June training was focused on preparing the Soldiers for other challenges they may encounter when they mobilize in October for their second deployment to Iraq.

Along with the MOUT training, members of the 313th Med. Co. completed day and night weapons qualification, heat casualty prevention training, convoy security exercises and country awareness training.

"If we weren't doing what we're doing now, you could see an addition of anywhere from 30-45 days," said Maj. Grant Siedenburger, 313th Med. Co. commander, about the benefits of the pre-mobilization training his unit conducted at the Greenleaf Training Site.

This is a departure from the unit's first deployment when the 313th Med. Co. spent weeks conducting training at its mobilization station before deploying Iraq, at which point the unit's one-year deployment clock began. That policy changed several years ago when Secretary of Defense Robert Gates limited Guard and Reserve mobilizations to one year, meaning that any training that has to be accomplished prior to deploying into Iraq now counts against that one-year clock.

Conducting pre-mobilization training during the months leading up to a mobilization is actually a 'win-win' situation, said Siedenburger. The Soldiers save several days of training while the Army ends up with "boots on ground" in Iraq longer.

In order to accomplish its pre-mobilization training, the unit has utilized regular weekend drills along with its



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Room With A View: Spc. Adam Wassung, an ambulance driver with the 313th Medical Company, is seen through a hole in the wall of a make-shift building during a Military Operation in Urban Terrain training at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, Neb., June 26.

annual training to take care of those pre-mobilization validation tasks that are required by the Army before deployment.

Although most of the tasks performed during the unit's June AT are mandated by the Army, Siedenburger said the goal of this training was primarily to get the Army Guardsmen ready to face life as a deployed, active-duty Soldier.

The Soldiers said they understand the Army skills training is geared to prepare them for some of what they may face when deployed.

"I think it helps when we're doing something other than medical (training)," said Pfc. Catherine Clark, a health care specialist. "When we're in a convoy, say if something does go wrong, something does happen, we need to know what to do... we'll be prepared by the time we get there."

Sgt. Andrew Jarvis, another health care specialist, echoed Clark's comments, saying the training was good for those Soldiers who don't normally get to practice combat skills.

"A combat environment is not what a normal person would live in," said Jarvis. "These skills give us the tools necessary to survive out in the combat theater."

Siedenburger said that training the Soldiers on Army Warrior Tasks also instills confidence that they will be able to make proper decisions as medical personnel during stressful situations.

ceremonies at Camp Ashland on Sunday, June 7, for the two children of Sgt. Corey Scheidemann of Hampton, Neb.

It was the first known baptism of children of a Nebraska National Guard Soldier by a Nebraska Guard chaplain.

"It's a wonderful opportunity," Houser said.

Scheidemann, 25, is a wheeled vehicle mechanic who started annual training with the 1-376th Aviation (Security and Support) on May 30 at Camp Ashland.

Shortly after arriving, Scheidemann was told he could have a chaplain baptize his two children, Skyler, 2, and Rylee, 6 months.

With a smile Sgt. Scheidemann said: "If you can't trust a military chaplain, who can you trust?"

Scheidemann, his wife Jami, 24, Skyler and Rylee, along with members of the 1-376th Aviation attended the service inside Building 50 alongside the Platte River at Camp Ashland.



Booby-Trapped? Pfc. Micah Roberts, an ambulance driver with the 313th Medical Company, checks an entryway for booby-traps during a Military Operation in Urban Terrain training session at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, Neb., June 26, as Sgt. 1st Class Robert Stokes, readiness noncommissioned officer, looks on.



Smoking Permitted: Members of the 313th Medical Company use smoke as camouflage as they move through the Military Operation in Urban Terrain training site at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, Neb., June 26. Members of the 313th Med. Co. were preparing for a deployment to Iraq in October.

"If you have a Soldier that's competent and confident in both skills and their own abilities, all that is going to do is emanate within the unit," said Siedenburger. "There's no telling what this unit is capable of once you get these Soldiers trained and they're to the point of being confident within the training."

The training has already had an impact on the Soldiers. "I think it makes me more confident definitely in the skills that I'm learning," said Clark. "I find that as I become stronger in my skills, I become

a better leader."

Seeing the leaders emerge from the training is gratifying, said Siedenburger. Beyond the training, he said he also hopes the time the unit spent together at the Greenleaf Training Site will also build upon the teamwork already evident throughout the unit.

"What I want them to get out of it is the opportunity to develop that camaraderie, or the esprit de corps within the unit," said Siedenburger. "A unit that has time to meld and be able to be that cohesive unit and to be exposed to what other members within the unit accomplish on a daily basis... it helps the unit as a whole."

Though the training was difficult and strenuous, the members of the 313th Med. Co. also made sure to have fun at the same time.

"I like the camaraderie," said Jarvis. "In the military, we're one big family."

"I'm having a blast," said Clark. "It's long days — very, very long days with little sleep — but I'm having a great time. We have to make it a little fun."

Knowing even more difficult training and a year-long deployment lie ahead, the Soldiers say they're already looking forward to putting their military skills to use saving lives.

"I'm ready to go. I want to go," said Jarvis. "I want to bring my medical knowledge to the Soldiers overseas."

"If I can change one person's life, then it was worth having me over there, worth having all of us over there."

Ashland chaplain performs rare baptism during annual training

By Spc. Koan Nissen
Staff Writer

A cloudy and overcast day at Camp Ashland was brightened by the inspirational words of Chaplain (Maj.) Philip Houser: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," he said while reading from the last chapter in the book of Mark.

Houser conducted baptism



Photo by Capt. Andrew Nelson

Blessings: Chaplain (Maj.) Philip Houser conducts a baptism ceremony for Rylee and Skyler Scheidemann, June 7, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

PRAIRIE SOLDIER SPECIAL FEATURE

The Nebraska Army National Guard simply couldn't do its mission without the hundreds of professional noncommissioned officers that make up its ranks. From the command sergeants major who are responsible for looking out for the morale and welfare of their troops, to the supply sergeants who makes sure that Soldiers have the equipment they need, to the medical sergeants who maintain Soldiers' health and treat their wounds, to the drill sergeants who ensure that Soldiers start their careers on the right foot, the Nebraska Army National Guard depends on the quality and professionalism of its NCOs to make sure that the hard jobs get done right the first time. They literally are the backbone of the Army.

As part of the Army's continuing Year of the NCO observance, the Prairie Soldier spotlights the work that Nebraska Army National Guard NCOs do on a daily basis to ensure that the Nebraska Army National Guard is ready, trained and capable to do its mission.



PATRIOTS

in Stripes

Getting Guardsmen started on right foot

Kearney sergeant helps new recruits blossom into professional Soldiers

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Few people ever forget their first drill sergeant or the memory of seeing that "Smokey the Bear" hat for the first time.

Often, too, memories of that drill sergeant are accompanied by some pretty traumatic thoughts about what it was like during those first few days and weeks of military service.

"It's an intimidating factor for a lot of new Soldiers," Staff Sgt. Troy S. Lewis said recently, smiling as he recalled his own memories of basic training some 10 years earlier.

Back in 1999, Lewis had just graduated from Pleasanton High School in Pleasanton, Neb. A new member of a Nebraska Army Guard armor unit based in Kearney, Neb., Lewis later realized he really wasn't ready for the rigors of basic training.

"When I got to basic training, I had no idea of what rank structure was. I didn't know anything," he said.

That's not the case anymore in today's Nebraska Army Guard.

Once a person enlists into the organization, they are assigned to one of five regional Recruit Sustainment Program sites across Nebraska where they then spend their drill weekends learning various different skills and essentially how to be a Soldier up until the time they graduate from Advance Individual Training and are sent to their units.

When Lewis joined the Guard, though, RSP didn't exist. Instead, individual units were responsible for getting their enlistees ready for basic training and AIT, with varying levels of success.

"When I first enlisted – and it's nothing bad on the unit... they were a Combat Arms unit and were busy with their mission – so I was kind of learning, but off to the side," Lewis said.

"I never really received any instruction on how to do anything."

Today, Lewis is doing his best to make sure his experience isn't repeated by the newest generation of Guardsmen.

He's a drill sergeant assigned

2009
YEAR OF THE
Strength from within **NCO**

Drill Sgt. (Staff Sgt.)
Troy L. Lewis

Hometown: Kearney, Neb.
Job Title: Drill Sergeant, Recruit Sustainment Program, Kearney, Neb.
Years of Service: 10-and-half
Family: Wife: Angie Lewis; Son: Talyn

to the Kearney, Neb., RSP site where he oversees approximately 70 new enlistees and a cadre of six part-time instructors.

It's a huge job.

"Basically, from the time Soldiers enlist, we take over their paperwork, their training, any medical issues, any legal issues," said Lewis, a native of Kearney.

"What we're trying to do is make the transition from civilian life to military life as easy as possible."

According to Lewis, who said he never imagined he would one day wear a drill sergeant hat back when he attended basic training, his march to becoming a drill sergeant actually began shortly after graduating from AIT as a motor transportation specialist.

He soon became a recruiter assistant where he helped local recruiters transport prospective enlistees to and from meetings and appointments.

"Basically, it was pretty low level stuff," he said.

Lewis, whose cousin was a Nebraska Army Guard recruiter when he enlisted, soon began learning more and more about recruiting, like how to fill out the volumes of paperwork required during the "prospect" to "enlistment" phases.

"I wanted to become a recruiter," he said.

That changed when Lewis' unit, then known as Company B, 735th Main Support Battalion, was mobilized in April 2003 for what would become a 16-month deployment to Kuwait in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

When Lewis returned, the recruiter he'd worked for earlier



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Guiding Influence: Drill Sgt. (Staff Sgt.) Troy S. Lewis oversees an Army Physical Fitness Test for new members of the Nebraska Army National Guard during a June weekend drill at the Recruit Sustainment Program in Kearney, Neb.

had been reassigned to help build the newly conceived RSP in Nebraska. Sgt. 1st Class Chad Bruce soon contacted Lewis.

"He asked if it was something that I would like to come and check out," Lewis said. "He thought I might be good at it."

Lewis' first impressions were anything but good, though.

"I went and did it and did not like it," he said. "It was a completely different pace than I was used to."

However, after a few more drill weekends, Lewis said he realized that he had a knack for working with newly enlisted Soldiers.

"It turned out that I enjoyed what I was doing," he said. "I just had not had the chance to work with Soldiers who had not been to basic training yet."

Working with the new enlistees, Lewis soon realized he needed to do more and to learn more so that he could better prepare the young Guardsmen.

"I realized that I had been to basic training eight-and-a-half years ago. So, I'm trying to tell these new Soldiers what basic training is like today from eight-and-a-half years ago," he said.

In order to do a better job, Lewis applied for drill sergeant school. On Jan. 1, 2006, he left for nine weeks of drill sergeant training at Fort Benning, Ga.

"They call it basic training on steroids," Lewis said, "which it was."

"As an NCO with 76 eyes on you on a drill weekend, you have to be on the top of your game."

— Drill Sgt. (Staff Sgt.)
Troy Lewis

While at the school, Lewis said he had to learn how to "strictly instruct," how to counsel, how to give classes on a myriad of military subjects by memorization. He also spent weeks out on various ranges, actually teaching initial entry Soldiers a variety of skills.

"The hands-on experience down there was amazing," said Lewis, who added that he's never enjoyed public speaking. Lewis said he also learned about the importance of being a professional and committed noncommissioned officer.

"As an NCO, we're not only instructing them on what to do, we're doing it with them," he said during a brief break during a rainy June drill morning, taking an occasional look

behind his shoulder as a group of about a dozen RSP Soldiers took a physical fitness test in the Kearney readiness center's physical fitness room. "If we don't know what we're doing, we're training them wrong."

"As an NCO with 76 eyes on you on a drill weekend, you have to be on the top of your game," Lewis added.

That means often having to take the extra step to give new recruits the counseling, the training and the time they need to reach their own personal goals.

Sometimes it also means giving some encouragement and motivation to recruits who need it. Other times it means spending extra time helping new Soldiers maintain their physical fitness.

"We get them where they need to be," he said as he prepared to go on a rainy run with the recruits taking their PT test.

Since returning to Kearney as a drill sergeant, Lewis said he's learned that he loves watching scared recruits blossom into confident and skilled Soldiers within a matter of a few short months.

"The experience and just seeing Soldiers who come in here who some people might think that they don't have a chance and six months later they come back from basic training and AIT with certificates of appreciation, honor graduates and numerous other things... it's just tremendous."



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Lifesaving Tools: Sgt. Andrew Jarvis, a health care technician with the 313th Medical Company in Lincoln, sits by some of the tools of his trade in an Army ambulance. Jarvis put his civilian employment experience as a paramedic to use in the Nebraska National Guard.

Keeping calm under pressure

Medical sergeant says skills from civilian experience help in often chaotic military climate

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

The son of a registered nurse he was always intrigued by medicine, so becoming a paramedic was an easy choice. When he decided to join the Nebraska National Guard, there was only one job he would settle for – health care technician.

Sgt. Andrew Jarvis, a Bellevue, Neb., native with the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company, joined the Nebraska Army National Guard as a health care technician to put the skills he has learned in his civilian employment to use for

2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

Sgt. Andrew Jarvis
Hometown: Bellevue, Neb.
Job Title: Health Care Technician, Lincoln, Neb.
Years of Service: Three
Family: Single

the military.

A traditional Guardsman for three years, Jarvis has worked as a critical care paramedic for Rural Metro Ambulance for four years and Bellevue Fire and Rescue for 10.

That civilian experience has allowed him to keep his lifesaving skills current and very valuable to the Nebraska National Guard.

"I wanted to do a job that I do all the time," said Jarvis. **See MEDIC on 18.**

Grand Island aviation sergeant loves helping others in need

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

When Jennifer Bakker decided to join the Nebraska Army National Guard five years ago, she enlisted with one simple goal in mind: she wanted to help people.

Today, as an aviation operations sergeant assigned to Grand Island's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 376th Aviation (Security and Support,) Bakker is still assisting people – both as a Guardsmen and in her civilian career.

"I joined because I like helping people," said Bakker recently in June while sitting near her battalion's Tactical Operations Center at Camp Ashland, Neb., where Soldiers from her battalion were practicing for a potential hurricane relief mission. "In my civilian side, I help people find new jobs. In the Guard, I'm in a security and support battalion where we get to go help people who have basically went from normal everyday life to winds and water destroying their everyday lives."

"We get to help them through one of possibly the most horrible times of their lives," she added. "They may never know who are, but we get to be that asset that brings them water, that brings them the support that they need."

Bakker, who grew up in Lincoln before moving to Grand Island, originally joined the Guard's Troop F, 1-167th Cavalry, as a helicopter refueling specialist. When the battalion reorganized a few years ago, she decided to accept a new job as an aviation operations specialist.

Typically, when the battalion operates in a field environment, Bakker spends most of her time working in the organization's Tactical Operations Center, more commonly referred to as a TOC. There, teams of aviation and operations specialists work around the clock keeping track of such things as the progress of the different ground and aerial missions, where battalion personnel are located at, how communications are flow-



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Nerve Center Sergeant: Sgt. Jennifer Bakker sits in the 1-376th Aviation's tactical operations center where she and other aviation operations specialists keep track of the on-going missions as well as the locations of battalion personnel and equipment during their annual training at Camp Ashland, Neb.

2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

Sgt. Jennifer Bakker
Hometown: Lincoln, Neb.
Job Title: Aviation Operations Sergeant, Grand Island, Neb.
Years of Service: Six
Family: Engaged

ing throughout the organization.

It's a big job. And it's also an extremely important job, said Bakker.

"We let the battalion commander know what his aircraft are doing," said Bakker, while showing off the various systems that the TOC personnel use to give their commander the information he needs to make quick, informed decisions.

For instance, there are radio logs that are constantly updated. Computers also keep track of information coming and going. Additionally, unit helicopters and vehicle missions are tracked on a huge map.

"(The information) all comes back to us so that when the battalion commander comes in and goes, 'Where are my people?' 'Where are they at?' 'What's going on?' we have it all displayed for him and are ready to go."

As a TOC sergeant, Bakker is responsible for making sure that the younger Soldiers receive the training and the hands-on expe-

rience they need to do their jobs.

The same goals, she added, that her battalion leaders hoped to accomplish during this year's annual training at Camp Ashland, Neb.

"We help them to prepare for those missions," she said. "Right now, it's a lot of learning... it's taking the missions and saying, 'Okay, how would we play this out if it was real?'"

"It's about picking up on our strengths and making sure that those weaknesses that we do have become strengths."

In a nutshell, she said, it's what being a noncommissioned officer is all about.

"An NCO is important because they are a leader. Without leadership, nothing would get done," Bakker said.

"An NCO has a vital role to not only make sure that the tasks that are done are completed successfully, but also to make sure that the people they are overseeing are okay," she added.

"There are a lot of things that happen when you're in the military that aren't just job-related. Even if it's just three weeks down in Louisiana or you're deployed overseas, you are responsible for making sure that your Soldiers are doing well physically, emotionally and mentally."

Taking care of people. For Sgt. Jennifer Bakker it's more than just a slogan.

It's a way of life.

Brigade intelligence sergeant says code must be part of leaders' lives

By Spc. Koan Nissen
Staff Writer

For more than 200 years, the missions of the United States Army have been diligently executed by professionals of a time-honored corps known as the backbone of the Army.

Staff Sgt. Lucas Smith is one of those professionals.

One need only look at Smith's resume and leadership style to truly appreciate what the Army expects from its leaders.

Smith, who deployed to Bosnia in 2002, returned to Nebraska in 2003 only to volunteer for another overseas deployment a little over a year later. There was never any doubt that he'd volunteer to deploy again, he said, adding: "We stick together."

Formerly a cavalry scout, Smith is now a senior intel-

2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

Staff Sgt. Lucas Smith-
Hometown: Wood River, Neb.
Job Title: Senior Intelligence Sergeant, Lincoln, Neb.
Years of Service: 11-and-half
Family: Single

ligence sergeant in Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance.)

Having first served as a scout, Smith says, "I know what the guys up front need to know. I know both sides of the picture."

Among his many titles, one might call Smith a Soldier's



Photo by Capt. Andrew Nelson

Map Training: Staff Sgt. Lucas Smith stands next to a map showing the intelligence overlays he prepares as an intelligence sergeant for the 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance.)

Soldier. He regularly puts the needs of his people above his own and can be found encouraging subordinates to do better and perform at their best. "I

always make sure my people know what the maximums are."

Originally from Wood River, Neb., the 29-year-old staff sergeant now calls Lincoln home.

For Smith, the NCO creed is more than just a motto to be recited; it's a way of life. He said he discovered the true meaning of being an NCO through two deployments.

In spring 2005, Smith deployed to Ramadi, Iraq, and served as the Hum-Vee gunner for the commander of the 2nd Brigade, 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania National Guard. He and many others in Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, had recently returned from Bosnia and did not have to go overseas again.

They went anyway. "We couldn't let our younger guys go without us," Smith said. "We're a family."

The NCO Creed says all Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership and NCOs are tasked to provide it, putting the needs of their Soldiers above their own.

Words like "teach," "train" **See SMITH on 18.**

Warrant officer workshop builds upon successes

Sometimes it seems that all the hard work and coordination required to conduct a warrant officer call might possibly be too much to accomplish, yet at the end of the day when all is done, after all the briefings, shared experiences, networking and positive feedback, you know it was all worthwhile.

On July 18, 76 warrant officers and 11 warrant officer candidates attended a Warrant Officer Call Workshop at Camp Ashland for warrant officer professional development.

Brig. Gen. William Kuehn provided command guidance and presented a State Legion of Merit to Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Hansel and an Army Commendation Medal to Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tollie Yoder. Several other chiefs were presented with General Kuehn's coin for excellent performance.

All of us in the Warrant Officer Corps thank General Kuehn for his almost 40 years of leadership, his exemplary service, his support of Nebraska's warrant officers and we wish him well in retirement.

Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch also attended the workshop and he talked about the "Year of the NCO" as well as new information on the "Quality Boots Indicators" initiative. I commend Command Sergeant Major Burch for his outstanding leadership of Nebraska's noncommissioned officers and I support the deserved recognition of NCOs in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

Fifteen different chiefs briefed a full

Chief's Business

By Chief Warrant Officer 5 Steve Weber
Nebraska Army National Guard
Command Chief Warrant Officer

range of topics representing the work warrant officers are doing to support the mission of the Nebraska Army

National Guard. Briefing slides are posted to the CCWO Website.

The current warrant officer class provided lunch (a fund raiser requirement of Warrant Officer Candidate School) and we appreciate their hard work.

Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy stopped by in the afternoon and commended the group for attaining the goal of 100 percent warrant officer strength, making Nebraska one of only three states to attain that number. General Kadavy said Nebraska's success can be attributed to leadership creating a climate where

NCOs desire to become a member of the Warrant Officer team.

He thanked all of us for being professional Soldiers and for our service in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

It's been an honor to serve with Major General Kadavy and we wish him well in his new assignment as the deputy director of the Army National Guard.

As General Kadavy leaves Nebraska and assumes responsibilities at the National Guard Bureau, he can know that his leadership has left an undeniably profound and positive effect on all Soldiers in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

I salute General Kadavy for his untiring support of all Soldiers and warrant officers. I'm excited for all of the Army National Guard and also proud to have a Nebraskan and a friend leading the way ahead at NGB.

Veteran, significant other support groups form across Nebraska

Fellowship groups have formed in Nebraska to help veterans and their spouses resolve issues related to combat stress and readjustment from trauma while on active duty

The goal of the group is to help individuals cope more effectively with a wide range of issues including: family and relationship discord, depression, anxiety, anger, guilt, impulse control, decision making, styles of communications and self-medication.

The group is also designed to assist members in coping with the impact of the combat experience and understanding how the war currently affects their lives while also providing them with an opportunity to interact with, support and learn from one another.

The discussion of issues, situations, and experiences are held strictly confidential.

The following support groups are hosted by the Lincoln and Omaha Vet Center. For more information contact the appropriate Vet Center. (L) Lincoln - (402) 476-9736, (O) Omaha - (402) 346-6735

Beatrice, Neb., (L): 1st & 3rd Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., Southeast Community College, Adams Hall;

Geneva, Neb., (L): 1st & 3rd Thursday, 7 p.m., Library;

VA Update

By Bonnie Bessler
Transition Assistance Advisor

Hastings, Neb., (L): 2nd & 4th Tuesday, 6 p.m., Crossroads Mission (702 West 14th Street);

Holdrege, Neb., (L): 2nd & 4th Thursday, 7:30 p.m., TierOne (4th and Burlington);

Kearney, Neb., (L): 2nd & 4th Wednesday, 7 p.m., Central Community College;

Lincoln, Neb., (L): Anger Group, 2nd & 4th Tuesday, 6 p.m., Lincoln Vet Center (3119 "O" Street);

Omaha, Neb., (O): Every Sunday, 2 p.m., Vet Center, 2428 Cuming St

Scottsbluff, Neb.: 1st Monday, 6:30 - 8 pm, Western Nebraska Community College (HATC Bldg B132); (Hosted by Western Nebraska Veterans and Families Coalition; For more information contact Marcia at (308) 635-6152 or Chris at (308) 635-6042)

For more information about these fellowship groups or other veteran transition benefits and programs, contact Bonnie Bessler, transition assistance advisor at (402) 309-1543.



Courtesy Photo

Top Sergeant: Master Sgt. Tyrone Bingham poses for a photograph in his office while deployed overseas. Bingham was recently named the top senior noncommissioned officer in the entire U.S. Air Force.

BINGHAM continued from page 1.

crewmembers are current in all their required training and flying hours while also managing their flight records. He supervises both Guard and active duty Airmen in his present position.

Bingham recently completed a 120-day deployment to the Persian Gulf. Approximately a year earlier he deployed to Afghanistan with a C-130 unit from the Rhode Island Air National Guard.

Bingham said much of the credit for his recent success lies with his fellow Air Guardsmen at Offutt Air Force Base.

"It's good to represent a world-class unit like the 170th Group," he said. "I've known they are world-class for a long time now, but it's nice to help other people learn more about what the Nebraska Air National Guard is

doing here at Offutt. We're such a new unit, very few people realize how big of a role we play here."

"Really, everybody I work with here deserves credit for this award. They have made me who I am today," Bingham added.

According to Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, the entire Nebraska National Guard is extremely proud of Bingham's accomplishments.

"Master Sgt. Bingham's accomplishments and recognition is indicative of the Airmen quality we have in the Nebraska Air National Guard. He is very deserving of this recognition and we could not be prouder of him," Kadavy said.

Bingham will be formally honored later this year. Details of that ceremony are still pending.

SMITH continued from page 17.

and "lead" are everyday vocabulary for Smith.

"I'm in the mindset of doing things for the team and not focusing on me," he said.

Smith credits the Army for who he is. "I wouldn't be who I am today without it," he said. "The Army has given me many opportunities to travel the world and see things beyond Nebraska and the surrounding states."

Smith said the role of an NCO should

not be taken lightly and should be on the mind of anyone wearing strips at all times.

Placing the needs of one's Soldiers above personal needs is "a way of life and how you have to live," Smith said.

More importantly, he added, it's also about knowing how important sergeants are to the overall mission of the Army.

"If officers make the plans, then the NCOs are the ones who execute them."

MEDIC continued from page 17.

"That way when I come do my military job, I'm proficient in it. I wouldn't want to do a job as a mechanic... when I don't work on vehicles at home. It's a skill. If you don't do it, you lose it."

As a health care technician, more commonly known as a 'medic,' Jarvis is a first responder to injured service members. Basically, the paramedics of the military, he said.

"We provide emergency care to Soldiers," said Jarvis. "We're not nurses, we're not doctors, but we can provide first line emergency care."

Considering the importance of his military occupation as a

noncommissioned officer, Jarvis said he understands why NCOs are so important. NCOs provide mentoring and training to the lower-ranking enlisted Soldiers, said Jarvis.

"They are the link between the upper leadership and the lower enlisted."

The experience an NCO brings is very important to the medical field as well, said Jarvis.

"The NCOs have more experience working in the medical field," said Jarvis.

"You know how to handle the stressors better. As a younger enlisted, something might happen (where) they get overwhelmed,

whereas you've seen it before and know it really isn't that bad. You can calm down and you can work through the situation."

Jarvis said he relies on his years of civilian and military paramedic background for confidence to remain calm in those stressful situations. He hopes to pass that on to the less experienced enlisted Soldiers that may be in his charge.

"As an NCO you have that experience, that confidence," said Jarvis.

"You can exude that confidence over to the younger Soldiers and that will help boost their confidence. If you're calm,

they're calm."

Serving in the Nebraska National Guard instills a sense of pride, said Jarvis.

And working as a medic means a lot to him and the military.

"I'm proud to be and American Soldier," said Jarvis. "I'm proud to serve for the country and our freedom."

As a medic Jarvis said he knows that he can be placed in life-or-death situations that can have an enormous impact on lives. He said he hopes he affects them for the better.

"Anytime I can help somebody it makes me feel good,"

said Jarvis. "It makes me feel that I've changed their life for the better."

Whether he's helping a Soldier or a civilian, every patient Jarvis deals with makes an impression on him.

"I think any patient that I take care of affects me," said Jarvis.

"Whether it's the little old lady that just needs some company, to the patient that's probably not going to survive the trip. If we don't have medics people don't survive."

Jarvis will be able to showcase his skills and experience when he is deployed with the 313th Med. Co. to Iraq in October.



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



Courtesy Photo

Under Cover Operation: A group of military kids learn how to build an outdoor shelter from their camp counselor during Operation Purple Camp, held June 21-26 at Camp Eagle near Fremont, Neb.

Operation Purple Camp rewards Nebraska military kids for service

Family Program Office

Approximately 60 boys and girls between the ages of 8-12 attended "Operation Purple Camp" at Camp Eagle near Fremont from June 21-26.

The common bond shared by all of these young people is that each is a child of a military service member who was, is or soon will be deployed.

Easter Seals Nebraska partnered with the National Military Family Association and the Sierra Club to host the week-long camp—the first of two free camps offered this summer here in Nebraska for military children.

The children were mostly from Nebraska. They enjoyed

swimming, fishing, horseback riding, shooting bb guns, zip line, crafting, going on nature hikes and campfire sing-a-longs.

Additionally, the children learned about GPS navigating, military Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), military canine units, the military alphabet and also had an opportunity to use the Operation: Military Kids mobile technology lab.

A major feature of camp is outdoor education—specifically, the "Leave No Trace" stewardship approach to taking care of the earth. Campers had unique opportunities to experience nature, while conserving the environment for future campers.

Campers also found out they are not alone, that there are other kids like them going

through a similar experience, with similar feelings and facing similar challenges as a member of a military family.

As stated by the National Military Family Association, "Operation Purple Camp is a time for having fun, making friends and reminding military kids that they are the nation's youngest heroes."

Children of National Guardsmen were among the camping "heroes" again this year, as in years past. Children have reported that they had a great time at camp this year, and hope to attend next year as well.

A second camp session was scheduled for July 26-31, for children 10-14. For more information about Operation Purple Camp, visit www.operationpurple.org.

Yellow Ribbon Program providing resources to help sustain families

Staff Sgt. Jenna Shelhamer
Family Program Office

Day 90 has arrived. Although your Soldier has only been in country for about 30 days, it seems as if it has already been a year.

You glance at your calendar every time you pass it; only 275 more days to go. The days seem to get longer and longer as the time draws nearer and nearer. The kids are anxious, you are anxious, even the dog is anxious.

What is it going to be like to have that missing family member home? What if the kids do not know them anymore? What if I am not over the anger of the deployment?

Being separated from a spouse, child, parent, etc., can be a very trying time.

Combat is more stressful than any training; not only for the Soldier, but for the rest of the family as well.

The more a person understands and feels a part of his or her Soldier's mission, the easier it will be to adapt to the separations brought about by their service.

The Yellow Ribbon Program was established to help ease the transition to and from a deployment. It is tough being separated from a loved one and it can be even tougher when unaware of some struggles that may arise.

The Sustainment Workshop has been made available through the Yellow Ribbon

Program and is designed to increase family resiliency while one's service member is deployed.

As questions arise, a person's stress level can increase. One may feel as if the questions are simple: "What if they do not like how I remodeled the bathroom?"

It is not as simple as the question of the bathroom; there is the stress of separations, a loved one being in a combat environment, anxiousness of homecoming and the overall unknowing of the situation.

When questions come up, write them down. Do not ever feel as if any questions you may have or struggles you endure are too minimal.

Let your Family Readiness Group leader(s) or your Family Assistance Center (FAC) know about your issue. They are there for you and they will let the Yellow Ribbon Team know and at the request of you and your fellow unit family members, we will organize a Sustainment Workshop made specifically for you and the struggles you are experiencing.

At your request, the Sustainment Workshop will be organized and will cover the topics you wish to address; the struggles that are specific to you.

You are not alone in your struggles and your Yellow Ribbon Team is here for you.



Photo by David Nore

Restaurant owners present 100,000 minute calling card to National Guard

Justin and Jennifer Jones, owner-operators of Raising Cane's Restaurant presented a 100,000 minute 'calling card' check to Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, during a ceremony June 26 at the National Guard headquarters in Lincoln.

According to Justin Jones the company has plans to donate 100,000 minutes per year from each store.

The generous donation could eventually consist of donations from 15 stores.



Courtesy Photo

Flat daddy greets new daughter

When Isabella Fiser was born on June 2, her mother's delivery room received quite a few second looks from the hospital nurses and staff members. Amelia Fiser, Isabella's mother, brought a large cutout photograph of her father, Capt. Erich Fiser, a former member of the Nebraska Air National Guard who is currently on active duty with the Air Force, with her to the hospital so that he would be on hand for the delivery.

The photo, more commonly known as a 'Flat Daddy' poster, is designed to help ease the anxiety of deployments among military kids separated from their parents serving overseas. The Fisers' received help in obtaining the Flat Daddy from the Nebraska National Guard's Family Support Office.

Isabella was also greeted by her two older brothers, Zachary and Max.

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Combat Action Badge
 Capt. Daniel L. Smith
 Chief Warrant Officer 4 Burdette B. Chappell
 Chief Warrant Officer 3 Matthew C. Stewart

Legion of Merit

Brig. Gen. William F. Kuehn
 Col. Thomas E. Schuurmans

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Brett W. Andersen
 CH (Lt. Col.) David L. Smith
 Lt. Col. Chad R. Stevens
 Lt. Col. Timothy M. Zegers
 Maj. Thaddeus D. Fineran
 Maj. Craig W. Strong
 Chief Warrant Officer 5 Steven C. Loftis
 1st Sgt. Richard D. Goodenberger
 Master Sgt. Shawn M. Griffith
 Sgt. 1st Class Stephen F. Wirth

Army Commendation Medal

Maj. James S. Oliver
 Capt. Daniel M. Benes

Capt. Nicholas J. Breen
 Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tollie H. Yoder
 Master Sgt. Willard D. Hageman
 Sgt. 1st Class Tyler E. Allgood
 Cadet William C. Alms
 Sgt. Tracey Mitchell

Army Achievement Medal

Maj. Thomas A. Hanson
 Capt. Fletcher J. Shires
 2nd Lt. Nathaniel C. Krcilek
 Chief Warrant Officer 4 Scott A. McKinney
 Sgt. 1st Class Michael G. Hayes
 Sgt. 1st Class Vincent E. Luhn
 Sgt. 1st Class Edward G. Whitehill
 Staff Sgt. Richard C. Snodgrass
 Staff Sgt. Michael G. Uhing
 Staff Sgt. Penny F. Winterburn
 Sgt. Brent J. Benes
 Sgt. Clint M. Boatman
 Sgt. Jeffrey D. Flint
 Sgt. Ryan H. Harris
 Sgt. Scott A. Kennec
 Sgt. Robert A. Market
 Sgt. Nicholas R. Noel

Sgt. Corey J. Scheidemann
 Sgt. Trevor N. Towler
 Sgt. Erin D. Youngblood
 Sgt. Jessica A. Zimbelman
 Spc. Reba A. Craig
 Spc. Jessica M. Delancey
 Spc. Michael L. Folkerts
 Spc. Jason D. Goodjohn
 Spc. Jonathan F. Haack
 Spc. David J. Koenig
 Spc. Tyler M. Miles
 Spc. Teddy M. Shiers
 Spc. Gary Sons

Nebraska National Guard

Legion of Merit
 Col. Michael L. Deger
 Chief Warrant Officer 5 Steven C. Loftis
 Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert E. Hansel
 Sgt. Maj. Randall E. Stucker

Nebraska National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal
 Master Sgt. Willard D. Hageman

Nebraska National Guard

Commendation Medal
 Sgt. Andrew J. Filips

Nebraska National Guard

Individual Achievement Medal
 Maj. Paul A. Borzekofski
 1st Lt. Timothy Buskirk
 Cadet Kevin Black
 Cadet Jessica L. Franco
 Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Byrne
 1st Sgt. Cory Barke
 Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Difenbaugh
 Sgt. 1st Class Keith Myers
 Staff Sgt. Michael L. Abraham
 Staff Sgt. Loren Eaton
 Staff Sgt. David Iverson
 Staff Sgt. Casey Loomis
 Staff Sgt. Tyler D. Powell
 Staff Sgt. Cesar Rivas
 Staff Sgt. Adren Uhlig
 Sgt. Lindsey Buckland
 Sgt. Chad Classen
 Sgt. Kyle DeMaree

Sgt. Dustin J. Douglass
 Sgt. Jacob Wilcox
 Spc. Matthew R. Buhlmann
 Spc. J. Heckt
 Spc. Robert Jones
 Spc. Kelly M. Lee
 Spc. Mitchell R. Peterson
 Spc. Nathan L. Sturges
 Spc. Lucreita L. Wilcox
 Pfc. Tiffany J. Holsten
 Pfc. Aloma J. Moncrief
 Pvt. Edward Alvizar
 Pvt. Brandon C. Girard
 Pvt. Enrique Rodriguez

Nebraska National Guard

Recruiting Achievement Medal
 Maj. Paul A. Borzekofski

Air National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal
 Col. Daryl L. Bohac
 Maj. Kevin J. Hynes

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Brigadier General
 Roma J. Amundson

Lieutenant Colonel

Henry M. Person

Major

Leslie L. Durr
 Theodore E. Hanger

Captain

Klint H. Benson
 Cory N. Huskey
 Jeanne M. Stokes
 Carlos A. VanNurden
 Brent T. Wiese

First Lieutenant

Aaron J. Fisk

Chief Warrant Officer Two

David M. Flores
 Jeffery D. Klingler
 Lloyd T. Morris III
 William C. Score
 Douglas A. Shively

Warrant Officer One

Sean M. O'Malley
 Boe J. Searight
 Robert A. Woita

Master Sergeant

Troy A. Redl

Sergeant First Class

James L. Gross
 Nicole D. Kordik
 John R. Price Jr.
 Daniel A. Taylor

Staff Sergeant

Crystal S. Alexander
 Brenda B. Erickson
 Andrew M. Gadwood
 Dustin R. Hampton
 Jonathan A. Hanseling
 Christopher P. Herndon
 Matthew J. Hunt
 Eric J. Martin
 Nora J. McGowen
 Justin R. Olson
 Natosha D. Vose
 Daniel J. Walford

Sergeant

Ean J. Bell
 Jessica M. Cabrales
 Jason S. Dillon
 Brenton J. Duryea
 Jacob A. Korbel
 Nicholas J. Mosel
 Wardell Newsome III
 Topacio A. Ortiz
 John J. Pfeffer II
 Drew P. Scott
 Dennis A. Sedlacek
 Joshua D. Starr
 Vernon R. Stokey
 Jennifer L. Stolle
 Shawn M. Sullivan
 Andrew J. Tarr
 Michael D. Victor
 Branden D. Wagner
 Patrick L. Walker
 Nathaniel J. Wyatt

Specialist

Alyssa M. Arlauskas
 Tasha A. Beckman
 Zachary S. Benson
 Peter A. Blackburn

Ryan D. Brassington
 Raquel D. Chavez
 Austin L.J. Crowell
 Daniel J. Diaz
 Andrea D. Edington
 Anna L. Ehlers
 Patrick D. Hahn
 Caleb L. Hyatt
 Bradley L. Keller
 Ethan J. Koinzan
 Melissa D. Lohman
 Dillon J. Lozo
 Ryan S. Olsen
 Arthur L. Robinson
 Ashley B. Ryun
 Jared J.M. Schanhals
 Micah J. Schroeder
 Jeffrey L. Stout
 Samuel N. Stutzman
 Lance S. Tyson

Private First Class

Laurette E. Beal
 James D. Bishop Jr.
 David J. Buller
 Robert L. Dunn

Kyle T. Gordon
 Andrew J. Gosselin
 Jonathan D. Gotschall
 Christopher S. Haag
 Caylul A. Hayes
 Adam L. Huryta
 Kayla R. Johnson
 Phillip M. Kapsa
 Trevor J. Kurtzhals
 Chase D. Maurer
 Jared M. Metschke
 Brooke M. Peters
 Andrea E. Pieper
 Preston H. Sheets
 Laura J. Staum
 Tony V. Steinhour
 Colton J. Stepp
 Daniel J. Wardyn
 Alec M. Zackery

Private Two

Justin N. Budd
 Morgan B. Collins
 Eric A. Kosmicki
 Michael L. Towle

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Brig. Gen. William F. Kuehn
 Chief Warrant Officer 5 Steven C. Loftis

1st Sgt. Mark R. Bigham
 Staff Sgt. John H. Schuttler
 Sgt. Tracey Mitchell

Air National Guard

Captain
 Camara J. Minks

Chief Master Sergeant

Mark G. Forster

Senior Master Sergeant

Matt Mittelstadt
 Carl Oestmann
 Donald S. Russell

Master Sergeant

Michael L. Buchholz
 Dennis P. McCoy

Staff Sergeant

Amber Bogle
 Allison J. Evans

Corey E. Hatfield
 Tyler Kronhofman
 Nicole Lecci
 Katherine M. Linden
 Benjamin Logsdon
 Scott McIntyre
 Nathaniel P. Norton
 Sara Rasmussen
 Paul Vasa
 Douglas A. Wiese

Senior Airman

Philip Francis
 Kishan B. Manning
 Paul Rutten
 Robert Simon

Airman First Class

Bryan A. Bach
 Michael R. Meyers

Shorttakes

Food service Soldiers overcome Mother Nature to win regional title

By Mark Roland

Unit Public Affairs Representative

The 267th Support Maintenance Company took the unit's motto: 'Excellence in Maintenance' to a new arena when their food service section prepared for an Army-level cooking competition after the Soldiers won the 42nd annual Phillip A. Connelly Award for Excellence in Army Food Service at both the state and regional levels.

Col. Mark Stockstell, Nebraska Army National Guard logistics officer, presented the Nebraska National Guard traveling trophy to Capt. Edwin Davis, company commander of the 267th SMC, at the Hastings Training Site on June 13.

"It's amazing how far we've come," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tollie Yoder, company food service officer. "When we started talking about the competition, the cooks didn't know what the Connelly Award was."

The competition is much more than an 'Iron Chef' for Army food service sections. It is an evaluation of their ability to follow menus and adhere to all Army policies and regulations during each step of the food preparation process.

"Within the actual competition there are 10 categories and (food service) happens to be only two of the 10 categories," Yoder said. "It's the field site setup. It's the equipment. It's the maintenance. It's making sure you know how to do (preventive maintenance, checks and services), making sure that you're licensed on the equipment, as well as other production schedules."

"On the administration side, (it's about) making sure you're filling out the paperwork correctly when you order rations, how you receive rations and how you're distributing them, making sure

that you're ordering and re-supplying in enough time," he added.

The unit's food service section put together a plan, added their requirements to the unit's training schedule and then conducted a trial run in March.

The food service section, which has been cooking out of the armory kitchen or supporting the unit with catered meals, hadn't used the mobile kitchen trailer (MKT) for a long time. They had to learn how to function with six cooks in the 87 square foot kitchen trailer, with much of room taken up by the cooking equipment, to prepare and serve all portions of the meal.

According to Yoder, the food service section Soldiers felt they were ready to hold their own when they were evaluated for the state competition during their drill weekend at the National Guard air base in Lincoln, April 25.

The evaluation team, led by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Teresa Domeier, Nebraska Army National Guard food service officer, arrived early in the morning to start the evaluation.

"They tell us when to be there (and) when they're going to start," Domeier said. "They can't do anything; they can't fill any water containers, start the coffee, anything until they start the evaluation. The unit (does) an in-briefing to the team and then (the evaluation team) goes off into their areas and observes."

When the evaluation team was done, they selected the



Photo by Mark Roland

On The Job: Spc. Adreann Janecek, 267th Support Maintenance Company cook, sanitizes the food preparation counter in the mobile kitchen trailer between baking the desert cake and cutting the chicken for the main course as the evaluator (background) inspects the kitchen during the regional Connelly Award competition at the Greenlief Training Site, June 18.

267th SMC to represent the state at the regional competition. That meant the food service section had to start it all over again.

"They had a lot of obstacles to get over because we let them do it at the armory. So we took that under consideration and we gave them some advice for when they get out to the field," Domeier said.

Plans were made and rations ordered for the scheduled regional inspection, which was held during the unit's annual training period at Greenlief Training Site near Hastings.

With the 267th SMC in their final phase of the Army Force Generation model, the annual training days were already filled with Army warrior task requirements, a combat life saver course, range fire, driver training and the many required briefings.

The food service section, with

the help of other unit Soldiers, spent its time off in the evenings setting up the area of operation for the regional evaluation.

The section spent six days to make sure everything on the site was "dress-right-dress" and conducted a trial run of the meal.

With another good practice run, everything seemed in order. And then Murphy's Law struck.

A night of intense storms that produced a tornado south of Hastings sent the members of the 267th SMC to the ammo bunkers to wait out the warning. By morning the storm had dumped four and a half inches of rain on the Hastings training area, leaving the competition site under deep water. Also swamped were the section's equipment and power generators.

The site was so bad that even the training site staff thought

the group would throw in the towel, but the food service section Soldiers would not give up.

To help the food service section recover the other members of the maintenance company halted most of their training for a day and went to work.

Nine hours later the entire food service site had been packed up, moved to a new site downrange and completely set back up. The move required digging new fighting positions, burying power cables and camouflaging of the entire area.

With one day left to ensure the site was prepared, the section was busy again and on June 18 the regional evaluation team was watching their every move.

The day started early with a 5:15 a.m. briefing and a question-and-answer period. From there the cooks got the equipment ready to prepare the meal.

With over 120 years of food service experience between the three evaluators, the inspectors knew what to look for. The evaluation team went as far as to measure the food temperatures throughout the serving process to ensure that every Soldier received a hot meal.

When the day was done the evaluators would only tell the section that they were in contention. The official decision would not be made until all regional competitions were finished.

When the 267th SMC food service Soldiers were selected regional champions, they began preparations for the next meal.

"We were able to put together a great team," Yoder said. "They had great motivation and it feels great that we are, among our peers, the best."

The next competition will be during the unit's October drill.

Street Talk

“What was your favorite film of the summer blockbuster movie season?”

Strong today, brighter tomorrow

As I depart for my next assignment, I believe it is appropriate we stop a moment and take stock of our current situation and future.

The Adjutant General
Major General
Timothy J. Kadavy



future. But strength, quality and reputation are on our side.

We have come a long way in facilities and ranges, but we have a long way to go.

The vision is “world class facilities for

world class warriors.” We have momentum and are positioned to continue our modernization.

There have been dramatic range and training facility improvements at Hastings and Mead...with more to come. We opened new or improved armories/flight facilities at Kearney, Grand Island and Hastings... have broken ground in Lincoln and Beatrice...and many others are in the final planning stages.

We are getting better every day.

Finally, we have fully embraced and implemented family programs...yellow ribbon, strong bonds, family and child wellness, etc. These programs are critical to the health of our organization.

A tremendous amount of responsibility and stress has been placed upon the National Guard by our nation and we are committed to helping those that bear that burden.

It is an honor to serve with you each and every day; it has truly been my honor and privilege to lead the Nebraska National Guard. As I depart for the National Guard Bureau, I do so as a Nebraska National Guardsman and will lead from that perspective.

If in Washington, D.C., my door is always open. As always, I hope to see you on the high ground in the future.

God bless you and the United States of America.

The themes associated with my command guidance over the past two years have been the “fierce urgency of now” and “tighten the shot group,” respectively.

One of the critical responsibilities of a senior leader is to provide an organization with a vision that provides strategic guidance on where it is going in the future.

I believe we have not only strengthened our organization today, but also have positioned the Nebraska National Guard for future success in support of both our state and federal missions.

During the past two years we have gained and maintained quality Soldiers and Airmen at a rate above 100 percent of end strength. This has allowed us to reset our units, deploy units and maintain readiness.

We cannot lose our focus on recruiting and retention. Our environment is changing, less bonuses and funding. So we must be adaptive to ensure Nebraskans continue to join our organization.

We will start telling our story, the Nebraska National Guard story...past, current and our vision for the future. You and what you have accomplished since Sept. 11, 2001, is a great place to start. The performance of the Nebraska National Guard has been exceptional, your performance has been exceptional... we will start by telling that story.

Starting this month we will

begin to roll out our Quality Boots Initiative. We live in dynamic times that have seen our Soldiers and Airmen deploy to the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, Louisiana and California.

I do not believe we have seen the end of trouble. National Guard Soldiers and Airmen will continue to be needed around the world.

The readiness of our units will continue to be a top priority. The best way to improve unit readiness is to improve individual readiness. The initiative will focus on specialty qualification, physical and mental health, physical fitness, and Soldier/Airmen skills. This will take support and effort from all; leaders, staffs, Soldiers and Airmen.

We are all accountable.

Equipment is coming in as the \$36 billion committed the past few years is turned into actual arrival. We will continue to ensure transparency and accountability as equipment is fielded by the respective program managers.

On the Air National Guard side, it is all about “Iron,” and will be for the foreseeable future. The focus will be to ensure the Nebraska Air National Guard has flying missions and owns the iron.

This will be difficult as the cost of airplanes and the capability of those airplanes both continue to increase... I think this will mean less airplanes in the

A few days with a member of the ‘Greatest Generation’

Over the past 20-something years of being a military journalist, I’ve been fortunate to have had enough professional experiences to last a lifetime.

Few of those, however, will beat the experiencing of spending a week with a member of the “Greatest Generation” who has dedicated much of his life to preserving the experiences he and his fellow Soldiers had during World War II.

This past July I had the opportunity to spend time with retired Col. James A. Huston, a former member of the 134th Infantry Regiment. Even at 91, Colonel Huston is still an amazing Soldier and an even more impressive man.

65 years earlier, Huston was a first lieutenant assigned as the intelligence officer for the 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry Regt. As such, he had a front row seat to history as the former Nebraska National Guard regiment fought its way through the bloody hedgerows of Normandy, across France and the snowy Ardennes and then into Germany.

If that was Huston’s only contribution, that undoubtedly would have been enough. But Huston is no ordinary officer.

On Dec. 7, 1941, Huston was in New York City preparing to work on his doctorate in History. After being informed of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he rushed to Times Square and read about the attack there.

College now on hold, Huston

soon reported for duty at Fort Benning, Ga., and then was assigned to the 3-134th Infantry.

After the war Huston, like many veterans, returned home to restart his life.

Unlike many veterans, though, Huston didn’t try to simply forget about the combat he had just survived. Instead, he has spent the past 65 years trying to ensure that others don’t forget what his comrades sacrificed in pursuit of freedom and peace around the world.

Completing his Ph.D. at New York University, Huston wrote his doctorate thesis on the history of his regiment in Europe. He also co-authored the regimental history book with Maj. Gen. Butler Miltonberger.

In 1950 he authored “Biography of a Battalion: The Life and Times of an Infantry Battalion,” which he dedicated to the late Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen, Huston’s first battalion commander who died in Normandy. He also wrote several other works detailing his experiences during World War II.

Today, Huston is still as sharp as what I imagine he was back in 1944. Even though he walks with the aid of a cane and the years have caused him to stoop slightly, there’s still a spark in his eyes when he talks about his old

regiment. And when recalls a particularly funny story, he is quick to break into a wide grin.

But what probably impresses me the most is that even though it’s been 65 years since the

battle of Normandy, Huston’s mind is still sharp and focused. Listening to him speak of the events of July 15-30, 1944, is like reading his books. His grasp of the facts are still remarkable.

He has also worked tirelessly to preserve the regiment’s history, both here in the United States and overseas in locations like the newly dedicated memorials in Normandy.

Probably the greatest thrill of my entire experience in Normandy this July was the opportunity to walk over several of the battlefields with Colonel Huston as well as the chance to spend a half-hour at dinner interviewing him.

Sitting there, talking with a person whose activities during and after World War II are, in my mind, legendary was an experience I don’t think I’ll ever forget.

Brig. Gen. David Petersen best summed up the experience of visiting with Colonel Huston when he said: “He spent a few months living history and the rest of his life attempting to teach the rest of us about what happened (there) 65 years ago.”

Thank you Colonel Huston, both for the work you’ve done for over 65 years and for taking a few minutes to talk to a very grateful journalist.



Staff Sgt. Casey Junck
189th Transportation Company

“I like the movie Taken because the guy basically takes down the mob on his own.”



Pfc. Ashley Koehler
1075th Transportation Company

“Transformers. It’s the only movie I’ve seen this summer and it has Shia LaBeouf in it.”



Sgt. Lindsay Loftus
754th Chemical Company

“The Ugly Truth. It’s a perfect perspective of a male and it’s a great laugh.”



Spc. Terry Haun
1075th Transportation Company

“Transformers 2. I loved all the action between the Transformers. I grew up watching Transformers and loved the effects of the Transformers coming to life on screen.”



Spc. Jason Kilcoin
754th Chemical Company

“Transformers 2. It had a lot of action from start to finish. I saw the first one in Balad (Iraq) and it was nice to see the sequel at home.”



Staff Sgt. Melanie Searight
189th Transportation Company

“I’m going to have to go with Death Race. It’s an interesting take on cutting government spending and generating income.”



Winning Form: Jeremy Hoefs, Lincoln, crosses the finish line to win the 2009 KFOR/National Guard Thunder Run 5-Kilometer race, Aug. 1. Hoefs won the race with a time of 17:31.



Capitol View: Runners pace themselves down the Lincoln Municipal Airport taxiway as the Nebraska State Capitol stands like a sentinel in the distance.

Runway runners take in unique sights during 2009 Thunder Run race

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

With the exception of a brisk north breeze, runners couldn't have hoped for a much better day when they traveled to the west side of the Lincoln Municipal Airport to compete in the annual KFOR/National Guard Thunder Run, Aug. 1.

A total of 327 runners tackled the five-kilometer race and an additional 152 athletes competed in the one-mile event. The runners enjoyed unseasonably cool weather as they ran along the flat airport taxiway and took in the unique sights of the sun rising above the state capitol and numerous aircraft located across the runway.

"It's my first time doing it. I've heard a lot about it," said Jeremy Hoefs, a 26-year-old personal trainer from Lincoln who won the men's 5-Kilometer race with a time 17:31, beating fellow Lincolnite Lucas Preister by 30 seconds.

Hoefs said that coming into the race, his strategy was pretty simple.

"Just get out early and set my own pace... don't get boxed in," he said. "One of the things with me is just getting out too fast, but you definitely wanted to get toward the front today."

He added that the entire Thunder Run experience was a treat.

"It's a fun race," he said. "Being out here at the airport... it's kind of a cool experience getting to run out on the runway. It's flat so it's a good place to come out and run a good race and set a personal best."

Hoefs said the wind, which gusted between 10-15 miles-per-hour into the face of the runners as they made their turn-around halfway through the race, proved to be a difficult hurdle to overcome.

"The wind was a little bit rough after the turn, so I didn't quite get the (personal record,) but it was still an awesome race," he said. "You're seeing airplanes taking off and come in, and in the background you can see the capitol. It's just an all around cool event."

Winning the women's race was 20-year-old Amanda Lee from Lincoln who will soon be competing as junior on the Middlebury College (Vt.) Cross Country Team. Lee finished 14th overall with a time of 19:31, beating Sherri Macfee from Lincoln by nearly two minutes.

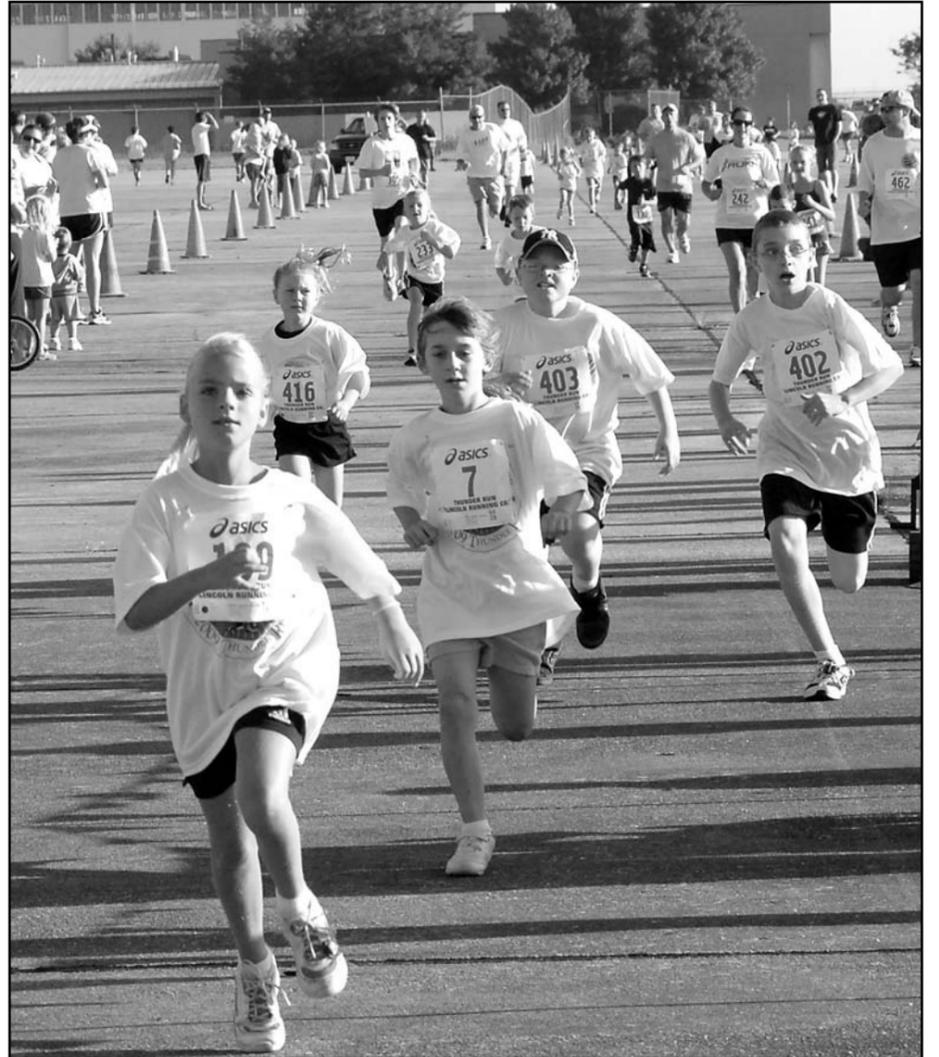
Lee said she simply was hoping to improve her five-kilometer time after winning a similar race a week earlier during the Cornhusker State Games in Lincoln.

"Today I just wanted to focus on getting my time better for the season," she said. "So, I just went out and tried to beat guys, basically."

According to Lee, the Thunder Run's unique course seemed to play mental tricks on her as she ran. "It feels like it just keeps going and going. Even though you've already run that part, you really don't know how much you have left because it all looks the same."

"But it's a nice course for getting really fast times because it's flat," added Lee.

Like Hoefs, Lee said the wind was definitely a factor during the race.



Photos by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Sprint To The Finish: Anna Keester (199), Anna Anderson (7), Brandon Warren (402), Joshua Warren (403) and Kaitlyn Wendt (416) all sprint toward the finish line of the 2009 KFOR/National Guard Thunder Run One-Mile race, Aug. 1, in Lincoln, Neb.

"The wind was pretty bad. I'm a small person, so I was getting knocked around pretty good," she said. "I was on pace to run 40 seconds faster when I made the turn, but then the wind just took it out."

"But I feel like it gives you strength

to work through it."

Winning the boys one-mile race was 12-year-old Brandon Rockers of Gretna, who recorded a time of 5:34. Taking the girls title was Jeralyn Poe, 12, from Lincoln who completed the course in 5:50.

Newest Guardsmen compete to be best during Warrior Challenge

By Mark Roland

Unit Public Affairs Representative - Omaha

National Guard Soldiers preparing to ship off for advanced individual training were given some final in-state training when they traveled to Camp Ashland, April 18, to compete in the annual Warrior Challenge Competition, hosted by the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP).

The competition brought together 'Green Phase' split-option recruits from across the state to show off their Soldier skills and leadership abilities.

"This weekend we have all five sites that came in here to Ashland," said Warrant Officer Jennifer Fotinos, RSP state coordinator. "We have our Scottsbluff, North Platte, Kearney, Norfolk and Ashland units."

According to Fotinos, the Warrior Challenge Competition is designed to give new Soldiers an opportunity to receive additional focused military training in a competitive setting.

"The Green Phase are Warriors that have completed their Basic Training. They're between their basic training and their AIT," said Fotinos, adding that the competition consisted of such things as a

physical fitness test, a variety of 'Warrior Tasks,' drill and ceremony skills, map-reading, medical evacuation operations, and weapons knowledge.

"They started their (Army Physical Fitness Training) test at 0500. It was pouring down rain, but everything went well. That's always good training."

The competitors rotated through the different stations during the day-long competition, where they were constantly tasked with demonstrating their newly learned skills and abilities to the cadre.

One station required the Soldiers to utilize terrain association on the land navigation course by finding their way between points on the ground and returning to the starting point within a set time limit.

At the weapons station, the Guardsmen's marksmanship was tested on the Electronic Skills Trainer, a computerized virtual range located in the former Camp Ashland hangar. There, weapons proficiency was tested in a timed M-16 rifle assembly race.

Another station required the Soldiers to enter an unsecured building, evaluate a casualty, provide first aid, call in a "9-line" medical evacuation request and move the casualty safely to the pickup location.

According to the Soldiers participating

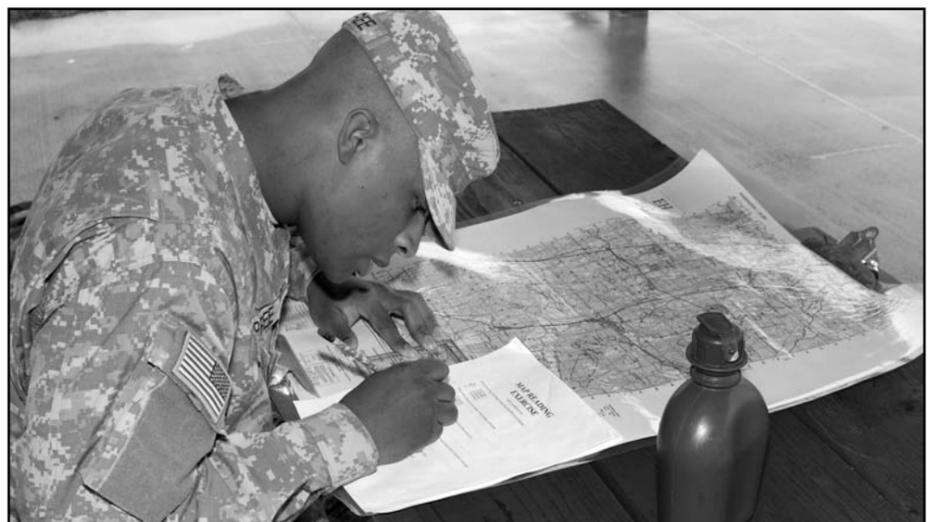


Photo by Mark Roland

Grid Coordinates: Pfc. Kenneth Dupree, supply specialist from the 126th Chemical Battalion, Omaha, completes the map reading test portion as the rest of his team completes a 2,800 meter course using terrain association to find four points in 45 minutes during the land navigation station of the Warrior Challenge.

in the competition, it was just another sign of how important RSP has become in getting Guardsmen ready for basic training and AIT.

"It's an excellent program," said Pvt. Tyler Jaffe, a military police officer assigned to the 402nd Military Police

Battalion and a member of the winning team. "Compared to the privates at basic training that did not go through the RSP program, we were way ahead."

"The RSP program helped a lot," he added. "I was promoted early in basic

See CHALLENGE on 23.

Torch Bearers

Wahoo Soldiers among 200 Guard runners to support 2009 Torch Run

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Staff Photojournalist

Motorists traveling on Highway 92 just a few miles west of Wahoo, June 24, may have wondered why eight grown men in pink shirts were running on the shoulder of the highway toward Wahoo.

Those who paid attention may have noticed the stark contrast between the pink shirt and camouflaged Camelback water holders on each runner.

A closer look at the front of the pink shirts revealed these runners were Soldiers; Soldiers from the Nebraska National Guard's 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) in Wahoo.

They were carrying the Cornhusker State Games' torch into Wahoo as part of the torch run that zig-zagged the state.

The Torch Run, signifying the beginning of the 25th Cornhusker State Games, began near the South Dakota border north of Chadron, May 30, and ended in Lincoln, June 25, covering nearly 1,200 miles, said Brian Kronberg, torch run coordinator for the Nebraska Sports Council.

The torch run was sponsored by the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, and relied heavily on more than 200 Guard members as part of the approximately 1,000 runners to carry the torch.

"Almost every stretch we've had a Guard presence," said Kronberg.

"It's a huge help. They are great people and they help cover a lot of miles," Kronberg added.

The 623rd Eng. Co., like many other Guard units throughout the state, was happy to represent their community in carrying the torch, said Staff Sgt. Christopher Herndon, recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer for the 623rd Eng. Co.

Herndon was responsible for lining up runners for the 623rd's portion of the run.

"I love going out and doing stuff in the community," said Herndon. "It is a chance for the community to see young people in their community as a Soldier, not just a citizen."

What makes this run extra special, is the fact that every runner has a tie to the Wahoo community, either currently



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Soldiers Of The Corn: Members of the 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) who participated in the Cornhusker Torch Run are (from left to right): Spc. James Benal, Spc. Jason Cromwell, Spc. Andrew Harford, Pfc. Adam Brodahl, Spc. Brandon Lee, Staff Sgt. Christopher Herndon, Pvt. Justin Htiz and Pfc. John Rogers.



Leading The Way: Members of the 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) carry the Cornhusker State Games' torch through the streets of Wahoo, Neb., on the way to the Wahoo Armory, June 24. Guard members from across the state helped carry the torch from northwestern Nebraska beginning May 30, zig-zagging the state until it finally ended up in Lincoln, June 25, to signify the start of the games.

residing there, or having graduated high school in Wahoo, said Herndon.

"We try to get local kids, new enlistees," said Herndon. "That way they're more

involved in their community, which is a big portion of what the Guard is – community based."

In addition to Herndon, the seven

runners who volunteered to run were: Pfc. James Benal, an equipment operator; Pfc. Adam Brodahl, a plumber; Spc. Jason Cromwell, infantry; Spc. Andrew Harford, an electrician; Pvt. Justin Hitz, infantry; Spc. Brandon Lee, an electrician; and Pfc. John Rogers, a carpenter.

It's nice to show the National Guard off this way, said Rogers. "(To) show our community that we're here for them."

Rogers, from Wahoo, said he is proud to represent himself as a National Guard Soldier within his community.

"It means a lot," said Rogers.

"I know a lot of people that live in Wahoo who know me and they notice that I've come a long way since early high school years," he said. "Then seeing me in an Army National Guard uniform, they always thank me. Getting involved in social activities like this...they just really appreciate what I do."

Another Wahoo native, Cromwell also feels proud to participate in events highlighting the National Guard.

"To get out there and represent our community is a big honor," said Cromwell. "It lets everybody know that we're here

and we want to do things to help out with the community."

According to Herndon, any community event that gives the Wahoo Soldiers recognition is good. He said events like the Torch Run remind people of the dual mission of the National Guard of supporting the state and the nation.

"It's all about being seen. That way people know who you are," said Herndon.

"It shows we're out there doing Nebraska things. This is the Cornhusker State Games; it's nowhere else. It's just Nebraska that we're out supporting."

Herndon hopes participating in the torch run not only helps the Cornhusker State Games, but gives people in Wahoo a new perspective on the role the young members of the 623rd Eng. Co. play in the community.

"It solidifies and reinforces that community notion that we try to have," said Herndon. "It reminds them that

there are people that are living in their community right now that are serving the United States of America, that are fighting the war on terrorism."

CHALLENGE continued from page 22.

training, which is very rare for someone in the National Guard to be able to do that."

Sgt. Katie Jones, a member of the 623rd Engineer Company and Green Phase cadre member at Camp Ashland for over two years, watched as her Warriors won the challenge. "This is my third (competition). I've been second for the last two years, so it's pretty good."

"I've learned so much (at the RSP)," Jones said, "how to actually become an NCO. It's been a really good experience and I've seen a lot of good Soldiers."

Green Phase Soldiers weren't the only ones receiving valuable training.

Over 220 of the more than 500 recruits assigned to RSP gathered at Camp Ashland to participate in a weekend full of military training designed to prepare them for their basic training.

Soldiers are divided by experience into a variety of different colored phases.

"The Blue Phase is (made up

2009 RSP Green Phase Best Warrior Competition winning team:

Echo (1) Company from the Camp Ashland RSP site. (Sgt. Katie Jones, Green Phase cadre)

Pfc. Taylor Ashcraft, 126th Chemical Battalion

Pvt. Dylan Holt, 402nd Military Police Battalion

Pfc. Cameron Oden, 1167th Maintenance Company

Pvt. Mark Fisher, 67th Battlefield Surveillance

Brigade

Pvt. Tyler Jaffe, 402nd Military Police Battalion

Pvt. Brandon Lucas, 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne)

of) the warriors that have to ship to their training within a month," said Fotinos, while Red Phase is made up of recruits who have just enlisted into the Guard.

"What we do with (the Red Phase Soldiers) is get them familiarized with the Army Values, (drill and ceremony), Army courtesies, military language, the (phonetic) alphabet, getting them familiarized with all that information they will need to

know at basic training."

"Our white phase (Soldiers) have gone to at least one drill. They've had all their familiarization classes, now they're getting a little more into the deep training with the weapons and (Military Operations in an Urban Terrain) training," Fotinos said.

"This morning they're going to get familiarized with all those different tasks to complete the training this afternoon. They're

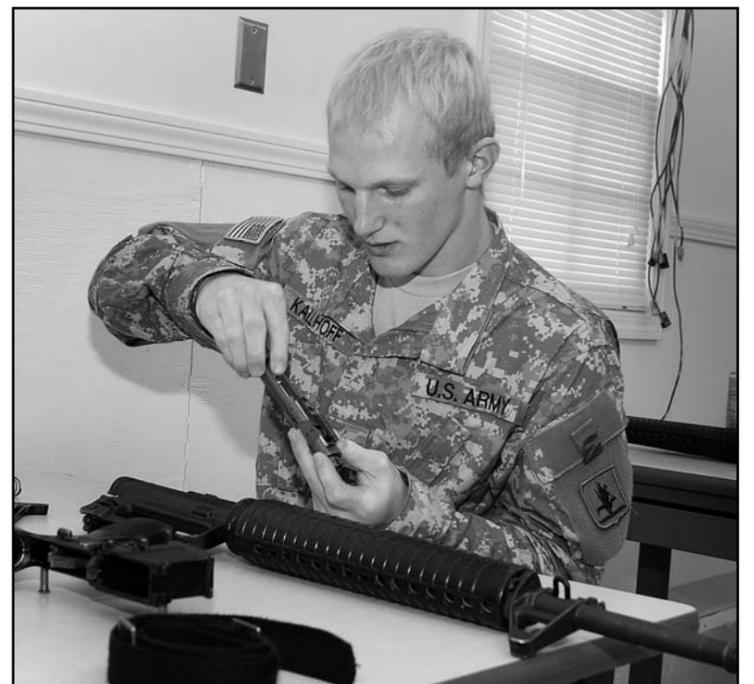


Photo by Mark Roland

All Together Now: Pvt. Andy Kallhoff, chemical specialist from Detachment 1, 754th Chemical Company in O'Neill, assembles the bolt carrier of a M-16 rifle during the Warrior Challenge.

actually going to do a convoy operation this afternoon from (Camp) Ashland and the Mead Training Site. They will have the

vehicles they will load up into and dismount, and then they will go along the buildings and actually do the MOUT training."



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Wet Wait: 1st Lt. Justin Hyde, a pilot with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, waits to be hoisted out of the water at Branched Oak Lake during his unit's water survival training on July 11.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

Water Wings: Capt. Randy Douglas, a pilot with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, prepares to enter the water by inflating his flotation device during his unit's water survival training, conducted July 11 at Branched Oak Lake near Lincoln, Neb.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

Helping Hands: KC-135R tanker aircrew members from the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron assist a member into a raft during water survival training at Branched Oak Lake near Lincoln, Neb., on July 11.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

Water Safety 101: Aircrew Flight Equipment technician Master Sgt. Ricky Valenta of the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron gives last minute safety instructions to aircrew members from the 155th Air Refueling Wing during water survival training on July 11 at Branched Oak Lake near Lincoln, Neb.

Water Training

■ Air Guard crews practice survival skills during weekend training exercise in July

By Senior Airman Brandon Kusek
Staff Writer

Flight crews from the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing got to spend part of their July training weekend at Branched Oak Lake near Lincoln, Neb.

However, even though the lake was filled with boats and jet skis, it was all about business. The members weren't there to soak up the sun that poked through the clouds after lunch, but to fulfill their survival training requirements.

The training, which is required every three years, took a joint effort to accomplish with help from the Nebraska Army National Guard, Lincoln water rescue dive team, Coast Guard Auxiliary, Raymond Volunteer Fire Department and Offutt Air Force Base Survive, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) personnel.

Master Sgt. Rick Valenta, life support survival coordinator, worked for three months to plan and coordinate the exercise.

"As soon as things wound down from our inspections, I was fully employed in getting this ready," he said. "It was a total team effort that worked out really well for everyone involved."

The classroom training involved water survival swim techniques, evasion tactics, water survival and how to signal or call in a rescue.

The training also included lessons on

the Code of Conduct, conduct after capture, aircrew flight equipment training, recovery, personal protection, sustenance, water procurement and basic survival skills.

In addition to the classroom training, the participants got a unique hands-on experience. With the assistance of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Company C, 1-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, the Air Guard aircrew members got to practice being rescued from the water via helicopter hoists.

The helicopters drew quite a crowd of recreational boaters and fishermen, but the Coast Guard Auxiliary members were on hand to keep them out of the exercise area and ensure the safety of the members in the water.

Valenta said this is the first time in almost

15 years that the wing has included the water extraction as part of the training

"When we did this three years ago at Camp Ashland, our main focus was on combat survival escape and evasion," he said.

Maj. Kent Peterson, flight commander for the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, participated in the 2006 exercise at Camp Ashland and the recent one. He said that although both the land training and water training were important, the water extraction was exciting and a good change of pace.

"It obviously took a huge coordination effort to get everyone out here and in my opinion it went really well...it was a great learning experience," he said.



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Shadowed: A member of 173rd Air Refueling Squadron gets a lift out of Branched Oak Lake from a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, July 11.



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

What A Ride: A member of Nebraska Air National Guard's 173rd Air Refueling Squadron is lifted upward toward a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.