

Prairie Soldier

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THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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Truck drivers welcomed as heroes

■Kearney rolls out red carpet for Nebraska Army National Guard unit returning from Iraq

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Thousands of Kearney residents made an early spring homecoming even more special for approximately 140 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers and their families when they literally papered the central Nebraska city with welcome home signs, April 16, as the 1195th Transportation Company returned from a year-long deployment to Iraq.

The 1195th Trans. Co. was mobilized for its latest duty in May 2009. While in Iraq, the unit was responsible for providing convoy support while stationed at Camp Liberty on the outskirts of Baghdad.

Among the family members who stood outside Kearney High School waiting for their loved ones to return were Tera Schmit and her 3-year-old daughter Stephanie, who came to the welcome home outfitted in a special dress and temporary tattoos on her face.

According to Tera Schmit, the year was a trial for the entire family.

"It's been difficult at times, but we're very proud of him," said Schmit, whose husband, Spc. Nicholas Schmit, served as a light wheeled vehicle mechanic for the 1195th Trans. Co. while in Iraq. "And we know that it's worth it.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Sweet Homecoming: Janna Mashek embraces her husband, Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Mashek, shortly after he stepped off a bus in front of the Kearney High School, April 16, after serving in Iraq for nearly a year. Mashek is the shop foreman for the Kearney-based 1195th Transportation Company, which has detachments located in Lexington and McCook, Neb.

He's doing a good thing."

Schmit said that as the end of the deployment approached, the excitement grew exponentially, adding that she could hardly believe that the day had finally arrived.

"It's a huge day," she said, smiling broadly as she bounced her daughter on her knee. "It's right up there with the birth of our daughter."

Stephanie Schmit said she had only one wish when she finally saw her father: "I want to hug him."

Also on hand to welcome home their Soldier were Amanda Wagner and her children, Creston and Colton.

According to Wagner, she was excited to finally see her sister, Sgt. Lauren Bunsen, step off the bus.

"It's awesome to have her back," said Wagner. "We're excited to make up for lost time."

Wagner said her family handled Bunsen's first overseas deployment fairly well.

"It wasn't too bad," she said. "We lost our grandmother while she was gone, so that was really tough.

See WELCOME HOME on 9.

Policemen wished farewell before Iraqi Freedom mission

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The third time was definitely the most difficult for Sgt. Ray Underwood.

Standing in the middle of a crowded Nebraska City Elementary School auditorium as groups of families, friends and dignitaries waited for the start of a send-off ceremony for the approximately 45

members of the 192nd Military Police Detachment, Underwood quietly bounced his 7-month-old son Derreck, May 22.

"This is my third deployment," said Underwood, a traffic accident investigator assigned to the Nebraska City, Neb., based law and order detachment. "But the first two deployments, I was single. So this is my first deployment married and with a kid."

"That's going to make it a lot harder," Underwood said, adding a little later: "I really don't want to even think about how much harder it's going to be."

This marks the second time that the 192nd M.P. Det. has mobilized. It served for a year in Kosovo from 2003-04. This time the unit was mobilizing for Operation Iraqi Freedom, during which it expects to perform law and order missions at

an installation within the Central Command Theater of Operations.

According to Sgt. John Ferguson, who sat holding hands with his wife Stephanie while rocking his son Archer on his lap, the unit is ready for the deployment. Still, Ferguson said leaving his family was especially tough.

"The last time I went, I missed the send-off ceremony, so this time

See MPS on 8.

Massive Wyoming exercise prepares brigade Soldiers for deployments

By Capt. Andrew Nelson
Staff Writer

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. —The battered blue Volvo with a Middle Eastern-looking man at the wheel lurched toward the checkpoint.

The Soldiers manning it, the Soldiers of Hastings' Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, already had their hands full. A civilian woman, who had limped to the checkpoint moments before, was lying on the ground, screaming, grabbing her left thigh. Her apparent husband, a middle-aged man in an old gray suit with white shoes and velcro straps, was agitated and blabbering in a foreign language. And there had been gunfire along the north perimeter.

The Soldiers halted the car and one Soldier stepped forward with a translator. After a few words with the driver, they removed him from the car. And as they did, a cloud of smoke burst from the trunk.

The Soldier jumped on the man, bringing him

See EXERCISE on 11.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman

Ready For Action: Members of Fremont's Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, take cover while keeping a close eye out for any possible "enemy" activity, May 15, at Camp Guensey, Wyo.

Nebraska Air Guard units earn high marks during recent logistics inspections

By Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube
Staff Writer

The 155th Air Refueling Wing's Maintenance Group and Logistics Readiness Squadron went through a week-long Logistics Compliance Assessment Program (LCAP) inspection recently and received high marks for their efforts.

The Lincoln-based Air National Guard wing received exceptional ratings based on 4,800 individual inspections/evaluations conducted by the All-Guard LCAP team. Of that total, 4,515 events were found in compliance with all guidance, for a compliance rate of 94.06 percent.

Only one observed safety violation occurred across the base, which reduced the compliance percentage by roughly .5 percent. The Wing's overall compliance percentage was graded at 93.54 percent, a very solid rating.

Individually, the 155th Maintenance

See INSPECTIONS on 2.

NEWS DIGEST

■Iraqis ready for U.S. drawdown, Odierno says

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Iraq's government and security forces have improved to the point that the commander of U.S. Forces Iraq says he is comfortable drawing down to 50,000 U.S. troops by September.

Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, who outlined the improved situation in Iraq during a Pentagon press briefing, said U.S. forces are ahead of schedule on the drawdown there.

"I can't overemphasize how much Iraqi Security Forces have improved. That's what's different today from a year ago," Odierno told reporters, June 4. "I think it's the right time to go to 50,000 and it's my assessment that they can provide the security necessary for the government formation to be completed."

U.S. and Iraqi forces have dismantled al-Qaida in Iraq's leadership, Odierno said, having captured or killed 34 of the terrorist group's top 42 leaders in the past three months.

The al-Qaida in Iraq insurgency appears to have lost connection with their counterparts in Afghanistan and Pakistan and is struggling to rebuild, the general said. The Iraq-based terror group continues to take credit for violence in Iraq and it makes other claims "so that people think they are still legitimate," the four-star general said.

Still, Odierno said, U.S. and Iraqi forces cannot become complacent, and U.S. forces are working to ensure Iraqi forces can sustain security gains after U.S. troops leave Iraq in 2011. "I will never take my eyes off al-Qaida," he said. "We will always watch them."

Meanwhile, Iran continues to be "very much involved in Iraq," Odierno said, despite its public statements to the contrary, by launching rocket attacks and training insurgents.

However, all indications are that this year's violence in Iraq has been the lowest level since 2003, Odierno said. "Every statistic continues to go in the right direction," he added.

Even after the current 88,000 U.S. troops in Iraq decrease to 50,000, Odierno said he's confident that Iraq's 250,000 soldiers and more than 500,000 police can maintain the improved security.

"I feel very comfortable with where we're at right now," he said.

Iraqi forces have improved efforts to collect and use human intelligence, and U.S. forces are working with them to improve technology-based intelligence, Odierno said.

■New security strategy touts Guard's partnership efforts

WASHINGTON, (NGNEWS)—Military-to-military contacts are a "critical component" of global engagement and support our nation's security, according to the new National Security Strategy presented to Congress, May 27.

"Our ability to sustain these alliances, and to build coalitions of support toward common objectives, depends in part on the capabilities of America's Armed Forces," the

strategy states.

The National Guard's State Partnership Program facilitates many of these military-to-military activities. Currently, there are 62 partnerships around the world with the most recent being added in Africa.

"We have to have the vision to engage those countries that can, or may be, influenced by those looking to exert control over them," Gen. Craig R. McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau told SPP workshop participants earlier this year. "Through state partnerships we can reach out and assist those nations in averting that influence."

President Barack Obama's national security advisor James L. Jones Jr. said during a news conference at the Foreign Press Center on May 27 that engaging with allies is key to the strategy.

He added that Obama has stressed that no one nation can solve the problems of the world.

"We will pursue comprehensive engagement around the world," Jones said. "We will strengthen old alliances, we will build new partnerships with emerging centers of influence in every region and we will push for institutions that are more capable of responding to the challenges of our time."

To prevent attacks on the homeland, the strategy calls for the combined efforts of intelligence, law enforcement and homeland security capabilities.

"We will continue to integrate and leverage state and major urban area fusion centers that have the capability to share classified information; establish a nationwide framework for reporting suspicious activity; and implement an integrated approach to our counterterrorism information systems," the strategy states.

This approach, according to the strategy will "ensure that the analysts, agents, and officers who protect us have access to all relevant intelligence throughout the government."

■Guard agency takes over Sinai air observer missions

ARLINGTON, Va., (AFPS) – The Army National Guard's Operational Support Airlift Agency recently accepted a new mission to deploy aircrews and aircraft to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

The mission, part of the Multinational Force and observers' mission of enforcing the 1979 Camp David Peace Accords, primarily entails flying civilian observers, who verify the continued observance of the 30-year-old peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

"It is a direct result of the 1979 peace accords," said Staff Sgt. Joe Garland, non-commissioned officer in charge of current operations at OSAA, which is based at Fort Belvoir, Va. "They have over 20-some odd countries stationed in two places in Egypt that do weekly verifications of the peace treaty to make sure one side is not encroaching on the other."

OSAA will take over the mission this month from the French military, which is withdrawing from the MFO mission after taking part since the late 1980s, said Gar-

INSPECTIONS continued from page 1.

Group hit high marks based on a compliance rating of 96.29 percent.

Lt. Col. Rich Coffey, a member of the 125th Fighter Wing and lead inspector for the 155th Maintenance Group, noted very strong leadership and supervision from the top down.

"Everyone was focused on safety and doing things by the book, which pushed right out to the flight line," said Coffey.

"The inspectors were impressed with the condition of the jets, which showed pride in everything you do and pride in ownership of the jets," added Coffey.

The LRS also performed well. Maj. Frank Dailey from the 180th Fighter Wing and lead inspector for the logistics squadron had similar comments about the 155th Logistics Squadron.

"You have very good people at the top of the squadron and good senior non-commissioned officers," said Dailey. "You have a very young squadron, but the young people you have in place are eager to learn and do everything correctly."

"I can see some great things coming from the 155th LRS," he

"The 155th Air Refueling Wing is a strong, safety focused organization. You have a proactive, professional and dedicated team."

— Col. Greg Muse
117th Air Refueling Wing

added.

Col. Greg Muse, 117th Air Refueling Wing and the LCAP team chief, summed up the inspection after spending the week listening to his inspection team: "The 155th Air Refueling Wing is a strong, safety focused organization. You have a proactive, professional and dedicated team."

"That doesn't happen unless you have strong leadership starting at the wing commander level, the group commanders, the squadrons, flights and down to the shop supervisors and shop workers," Muse added.

Col. Richard J. Evans III, commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, thanked Muse and his LCAP inspection team for a fair and honest assessment.

"Here at the 155th Air Refueling

Wing, we strive for 100 percent compliance in everything we do," said Evans, "However, we know that is very difficult to do."

According to Evans, as with any inspection, there will be areas identified that require improvement. "We will work to get better."

"Things to think about on the positive side were the LCAP team's comments on positive attitudes, leadership, teamwork, professionalism, safety and risk management," said Evans. "These are the things we preach every single day at the 155th ARW."

Tech. Sgt. Danielle Nuss and Tech. Sgt. Vincent Wellman were honored as outstanding performers.

The Top Shop Award went to the Avionics Shop and Best Practices Awards went to Master Sgt. Cole Foster and Tech. Sgt. James Kenning for their Auxiliary Power Unit Maintenance Stand, and Senior Master Sgt. Bradley Freeman for his supply log database.

Many other members from the maintenance and logistics organizations were mentioned for the LCAP honor roll.

Guard helicopter crew deploys to Gulf Coast to aid in oil spill recovery

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A four-person Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew departed from the Nebraska Army National Guard air base in Lincoln, June 2, on what was expected to be a 30-day mission to Louisiana where they assisted local officials in responding to the oil spill along the Gulf Coast.

After two weeks, they were replaced by a second four-person, which was expected to complete the 30-day mission.

The aviators are members of the Lincoln-based Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion.

While in Louisiana, the crew was involved in transporting personnel and sling-loading sand bags onto island breaches to stem the flow of oil into critical waters and marshes.

This is not the first time that Nebraska Army National Guard helicopter crews have been called assist during an emergency situation. Nebraska Army National Guard helicopter crews have also supported such recent emergencies as wild fire outbreaks in Montana, California, Colorado and Nebraska; flooding in Iowa and Nebraska; and tornadoes in Nebraska.

Nebraska Army National Guard aviators are also familiar with working along the Gulf Coast. They provided a variety of aviation support following Hurricane Katrina and Gustav, operating primarily out of Louisiana.

"Even though we are preparing to

deploy hundreds of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers to places like Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo during the upcoming months, we're proud to be able to support the citizens of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast during this time of need," said Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska.

"This is a good mission for our Nebraska Army National Guard aviation community due to the fact that they are constantly training to perform these types of missions and also due to the fact that

they are extremely familiar with the areas that they will be working in because of the experience they gained following Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav when they performed missions that are similar to the ones they are being asked to perform now."

Lyons said even though the Nebraska Army National Guard is being heavily tapped to support a variety of overseas missions as well as this latest domestic request, the state still retains enough trained and highly skilled Soldiers and Airmen to respond in the event of an unforeseen state emergency, like the recent flooding in eastern Nebraska.

"We are in the midst of an extremely busy year. However, should an emergency arise here in Nebraska, the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard is trained and ready to perform whatever mission we might be assigned to in support of our friends and neighbors here in our state."

"When the French let MFO know they were no longer going to support the mission, there was an evaluation done on several different types of aircraft," Logsdon said. "The C-23 Sherpa, which the Army National Guard is the only (U.S.) military agency that has that airframe, ranked highly in their evaluation criteria."

What makes the Sherpa aircraft, referred to by many as a boxcar with wings, ideal for the mission is its versatility and the line of sight it offers to those onboard, Logsdon said.

"The aircraft can go from passenger transport to cargo transport and it can even be used to transport patients in a casualty evacuation situation," he said. "And the visibility range to see outside the aircraft is ideal. That is a huge part of what MFO does."



Photo by David Nore

Heading South: A Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter lifts off from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility #1, June 2, in Lincoln, Neb., starting a flight that would take it to Louisiana in support of the gulf oil spill response.

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Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Hitting The Spot: A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter drops water from a "Bambi Bucket" during the Great Plains Army Aviation Fire Fighting Conference, April 29, at the Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb.



Protection: (Above) A Soldier practices using a protective fire shelter during the Great Plains Army Aviation Fire Fighting Conference in Lincoln, Neb., April 28. The fire shelter is used as a last resort if a firefighter is overwhelmed.

Monitoring The Progress: (Right) Jeff Going, a deputy state fire marshal, watches a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter dump water from a "Bambi Bucket" during the Great Plains Army Aviation Fire Fighting Conference, April 29, at the Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb. Crews on the ground communicate with the aircrews to instruct them where they want water dropped to fight a fire.



Exercise designed to build partnership capabilities

Firefighting from the sky

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Fighting wild land fires can be a very complex operation with incident commanders carefully choreographing firefighters on the ground and, if the fire requires it, fighting it with help from above.

With the fire season drawing near, the Nebraska National Guard hosted a multi-state Great Plains Army Aviation Fire Fighting Conference in Lincoln, April 26-30. The conference was designed to prepare Army Guard aviators for the various missions they might perform during a call-up in support of a fire emergency, particularly those involving aviation assets.

"The conference intent was to generate a regional support network for state and federal aviation firefighting," said Maj. Thaddeus Fineran, commander of Army Aviation Support Facility # 1 in Lincoln, who was in charge of organizing the conference.

According to Fineran, the U.S. Forest Service requires aviators to receive annual fire fighting training and hold a "red card" certification to fight fires on federally-owned land. The conference was started in 2007 after attempts to get help from neighboring states failed during a fire in Nebraska.

"In 2006 and 2007 we had wild land fires out in Chadron and Harrison and Valentine, and we exceeded the state's resources," said Fineran. "We only had enough aircraft to come out there with two or three aircraft. We tried to get some (support) from South Dakota, Wyoming, or Kansas to come help out with the firefighting, but they didn't have the aviation red-card certification that was required to participate."

"We came back from those fires with a lesson learned and that was to generate more of a regional response because no one state had enough assets to accomplish, or fight, a federal fire in their state without having some help from some neighbors," he added. "So we started this idea for this conference to create that capability."

This year's conference began with classroom academic training, pre-combat inspections and rehearsals. It culminated in a practical, hands-on exercise April 29 when aviators practiced dumping water from helicopters using "Bambi Buckets" on simulated fires at the Nebraska National Guard's Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb. and at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Nebraska's five UH-60 "Black Hawks," two CH-47 "Chinooks" and two OH-58's, were joined by eight additional helicopters and personnel from 11 different states for the hands-on portion of the conference. Other agencies involved were the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Nebraska Forest Service, State Fire Marshall's Office, California's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and Wild Land Incidents and Response Assistance Teams (WIRAT).

During this year's exercise, a helicopter management base was established at the Mead Training Site to oversee and direct the response to the simulated fires.

From there, ground firefighters were dispatched to mark locations where they wanted water to be dropped by the aviators. High above, OH-58 helicopters provided aerial command and control of the congested airspace.

The hands-on portion of the conference was intended to accomplish several objectives. "One is air crew training; to teach our pilots and crew members how to conduct water-bucket operations... in support



Preparing to fly: Officials from California's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection brief aircrews prior to participating in the Great Plains Army Aviation Fire Fighting Conference, April 29, at the Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb. Officials from Cal. Fire were brought in to provide a valuable real-world perspective on fighting wild-land fires.

of the civilian agencies," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Derek Simonds, a senior Nebraska National Guard aviator who worked closely with the ground coordination team. "So when the Nebraska Fire Marshalls need assistance and the governor allows us to go support that agency, then we're able to go drop water."

"But we're also practicing all the planning and the logistics and the integration between different agencies," he added.

Although Fineran's main goal was getting his aircrews trained, during a real-world wild land fire in Nebraska, NEMA would be running the operation and directing the response. So working with NEMA, other civilian agencies and the additional states during the conference was a great way to become familiar with those who would be working together during a real fire emergency.

"We got all of our aircrews trained, that was the primary objective," said Fineran. "We certainly established some great networking with the states that participated. We also built a great network with our NEMA folks."

"When we have to go out and perform these types of missions, ultimately we're gonna work for NEMA on the ground out there, so it was really good to spend this time meeting their people that would organize this in the event of a true Nebraska emergency response," he added.

According to Fineran, Nebraska Guard aviators conduct water bucket training annually to maintain their red-card certification, but the conference was created to put the crews in an environment as close to the real thing as possible.

"I wanted them to get practical application of their water drop tasks in the actual environment that they would do it in," said Fineran. "What I didn't want them to do is just go out and get water and drop it somewhere."

"I wanted to integrate the heli-base management. I wanted to integrate the ground crew coordination (and) I wanted to integrate the air-attack coordination," he said. "I wanted to make it bigger than the air crew, so they understood the environment that they were going to go in and perform this type of mission."

Fineran said the feedback received from the aircrews reflected that, adding that a common response was "Wow... I had no idea that it was that organized or that big or there's that much planning involved."

To provide valuable real-world knowledge for the conference attendees, California's Department of Forestry & Fire Protection was brought in to participate. The California officials said they liked

what they saw in the training put together by Fineran and the other civilian agencies.

"He has developed a relatively highly complex training exercise with a lot of airspace complexity and a lot of logistical support, which is a reality in a fire," said Terry Guerrero, a battalion chief with Cal. Fire. "By training in this environment, minus the fire, we're pretty well simulating a real fire scenario with NEMA, Nebraska Forest Service (and) Nebraska Fire Marshalls joining together."

Guerrero said with seemingly more and more disasters occurring, having a resource like the National Guard to call upon is significant.

"I think the Guard here has done an extremely effective job operationally - there's a big challenge when you're dealing with this big of an organization," said Guerrero.

"They bring a level of professionalism and equipment that they have that can really benefit an operation, so it's a pretty significant contribution."

One of the biggest challenges officials said they face during an emergency is communication.

"We don't work with (fire fighters) enough to know what they want and how they routinely communicate. So to get (the aviators) out there and to struggle through how's a guy on the ground communicate with an airborne asset, how they want the water... that was a struggle," said Fineran. "That was one of the objectives: to help us understand how they talk and think, and help them understand how we listen and what we perceive from the air."

"It's no simple task to put water where that guy on the ground needs it and that's why I wanted them to be a part of the conference," he added.

Fineran said the success of the conference provides confidence and reassurance in the training the Nebraska National Guard performs to respond to state emergencies.

"We got a lot of positive feedback from all the attendees saying that the way we conduct our fire operations and fire training was something that they wanted to take home to share with their aviation team," he added. "So that was really reinforcing to have guys from Cal. Fire come in and say 'Wow, you guys are doing a good job in your training here.'"

That's especially reassuring considering the types of job National Guard aviators could be called upon to provide.

"I think all Guard members want to give back to the community and to help and provide assistance," said Simonds. "When there's something we can do to save lives and protect property, that's one of the reasons we joined the Guard."

'Theater of War'

Nationally acclaimed actors to assist military, family members in addressing impacts of war during August Wellness Conference

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The stresses related to coming home from war are not a new circumstance brought on by the Global War on Terror. In fact, veterans and their families have long felt the traumatic psychological and physical effects of war going as far back as the ancient Greeks.

On Aug. 28, Nebraska Guardsmen and their families will have the opportunity to learn more about two ancient Greek warriors and the barriers they faced following the Trojan War when a nationally-recognized group of actors presents a dramatic reading of two ancient Greek plays during the Nebraska National Guard's State Wellness Conference in Kearney.

According to Chaplain (Capt.) Scott Ehler, this year's Wellness Conference will feature two performances of "Theater of War," a project of the Defense Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury.

"Theater of War" is an innovative new project designed to serve as a catalyst for town hall discus-

sions about the challenges faced by combat service members, veterans and their families today. The performances are typically given by nationally renowned actors.

"Going off to war has been happening for centuries," said Ehler, the full-time state support chaplain for the Nebraska National Guard. "Coming back with combat stress has been happening for just as long."

"It is our hope that by bringing in the Theater of War, military members and their families will get a chance to see that what they might be feeling is not unique to them. Getting help from family, friends, chaplains and/or Mental Health is not a sign of weakness, but of strength," Ehler said. "Theater of War is a unique way of presenting this timeless truth."

According to "Theater of War" producers, the presentation consists of two separate plays. The first is about Ajax, a fierce warrior who slips into depression near the end of the Trojan War, attempts to murder his commanding officer, fails and takes his own life. It is also a story of how his wife and troops attempt to intervene before it's too late.

The second play is about Philoctetes, a famous Greek warrior who was marooned on a deserted island by his army after contracting a horrifying and debilitating illness. The play was first performed in 409 B.C., yet the title character's sense of abandonment and search for meaning in his pain still resonates strongly with today's physically and psychologically injured combat veterans.

Ehler said a panel of veterans and support staff will discuss the plays after each performance.

The State Wellness Conference is open to service members and their adult family members. Along with the "Theater of War" performances, it will include briefings about such things as the Yellow Ribbon Program, Peer-to-Peer Program, Chaplaincy Program and other services offered by the Nebraska National Guard and State Family Program Office to support veterans and their families.

To learn more about the conference as well as the venue, which has yet to be chosen, contact the State Family Program Office at (402) 309-7331.

Nebraska Air Guard air refueling wing receives another major award

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing has earned its second major award of the year.

After receiving its 10th U.S. Air Force Outstanding Unit Award earlier this year, the Lincoln-based air refueling unit recently learned that it has also been named a recipient of the 2010 Distinguished Flying Unit Plaque.

Each year the National Guard Association of the United States recognizes the top six Air National Guard flying wings in the nation. The top overall unit receives the Spaatz Trophy while the other five each receive the Distinguished Flying Unit Plaques.

This is the third time the 155th ARW has received the award. It previously earned the Distinguished Flying Unit Plaque in 1986 and 2003.

According to Col. Rick Evans III, 155th ARW commander, the award

is a major accomplishment for the Nebraska Air Guard organization.

"This is recognition our Airmen truly earned," said Evans. "2009 was an incredible year for the 155th as we handled a myriad of inspection and evaluations while deploying personnel and aircraft around the globe."

"This award recognizes the impact our members made and how well they got the mission done," Evans added.

According to NGAUS officials, the Distinguished Flying Unit Plaque and other Air National Guard unit awards are based upon overall combat readiness during the reporting year and the unit's performance in respect to other Air Guard flying units.

Factors included in the evaluation are flying safety, aircraft operation readiness, weapons firing, unit alerts, unit manning, skill level qualifications, retention, drill attendance, operational readiness inspections, outstanding accomplishments, and special missions and exercises.

"The competition was extremely keen and each winner is commended for having been selected from an outstanding group of nominees," said Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, director of the Air National Guard, in making this year's award announcement.

"The dedication and commitment of the members of the organizations enable the Air National Guard to fulfill its commitment to the missions of peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, domestic improvement and, most important of all, defense of America," he added.

Evans said that earning such an important award speaks volumes for the work and dedication of each and every member of his organization.

"The entire wing came together to successfully tackle all challenges presented to it last year," he said.

"Whether it's in Nebraska or overseas, the members of this unit are, as the motto states, 'Ready and Able,' and amongst the top units in the entire Air National Guard."

Officials break ground on McCook's new armed forces readiness center

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Although construction had already begun, state and federal officials ceremonially broke ground on the new McCook Armed Forces Readiness Center in McCook, Neb., during a ceremony held at the AFRC, May 28.

According to Nebraska Army Guard officials, the new \$7.9 million McCook AFRC is one of five Nebraska projects designed to support Army Reserve and Nebraska Army National Guard mission requirements for the 21st Century. It includes approximately 34,978 square feet and will house more than 100 Soldiers.

The new AFRC will serve as the home for the Nebraska Army National Guard's Detachment 2, 1195th Transportation Company, and the U.S. Army Reserve's Detachment 1, 1013th Quartermaster Company.

According to Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, the new facility will be a major step forward in providing important support to the McCook-based units.

"This ground breaking today represents a significant step in our continuing effort to replace facilities with new energy-efficient, high-quality centers for our Soldiers and their families," said Lyons.

"These Armed Forces Reserve Centers really become the focal points for family and employer support, community outreach and the training and equipping of our Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers as they continuously prepare for overseas deployments in support of our federal mission, and in the case of the Guard, for emergencies here at home in support of our fellow citizens here in Nebraska."

A native of McCook, U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson said he was pleased to be home to participate in the groundbreaking and is excited for what the new AFRC will bring for the Soldiers, McCook and the country.

"This transformation will enhance military value, improve homeland defense capability, and greatly improve training and de-



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

All Together Now: Officials break ground on the new Armed Forces Readiness Center at McCook, Neb., May 28. The facility will be completed by early 2011.

ployment capability," said Nelson. "It will also create significant efficiencies and cost savings and is consistent with the Army's force structure plans."

Governor Dave Heineman, who also spent time growing up in McCook, said the new facility, which replaces a 48-year old facility, will ensure the Soldiers get the best training possible while staying near home.

"This facility will help ensure they have an opportunity to remain closer to home as they train for emergencies and prepare for future deployments," said Heineman. "This new facility will help ensure we provide quality training to our Soldiers in the most efficient way possible."

With the National Guard's pre-deployment model changing, this McCook AFRC will ensure McCook-based Soldiers are able to spend as much time as possible at home while they train.

"These are designed to help us spend more time at home with our families and employers as we prepare to answer the call for our overseas missions," said Lyons. "These Armed Forces Readiness Centers are vital and critical to what the Nebraska National Guard does both here at home and overseas."

With the ceremony held at the start of the Memorial Day weekend, Lyons, Nelson and Heineman all drew special attention to McCook native Army Sgt. Randy Matheny who died in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and expressed their hope that attendees would take a moment to remember the sacrifices of all of those who have or currently are serving in the Armed Forces.

Construction is scheduled to be completed in early 2011.

April exercise designed to prepare Air Guardsmen for future combat operations

By Capt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

Practice makes perfect, but perfection wasn't the goal of the annual Ability to Survive and Operate, or ATSO, exercise that members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln completed, April 11.

The training obtained from the day-long exercise was meant to teach members how to operate during various attack scenarios that were created by the on base inspection team in charge of the ATSO. The scenarios were based on real life events that have occurred around the world and simulate combat situations.

During the day members practiced first aid and buddy care, how to decontaminate after a chemical attack, how to doff and don their chemical warfare ensembles, and how to perform their normal jobs under stressful situations.

Base personnel were divided into different areas for the ATSO. Some were inspectors, giving guidance and feedback to those who were in the group practicing their skills. Some were aggressors helping to make the situation more realistic.

After the training was complete, leaders from many areas came together to discuss how the training went and what they could do in the future. Overall, everyone was very pleased with the results.



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Learning The Finer Art Of Decontamination Procedures: Senior Airman Adam Krotz (left) receives instruction from Staff Sgt. Jason Melton on how to properly process through a contamination control area during the Ability To Survive and Operate exercise conducted April 11 at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Keeping Current: Staff Sgt. Joel DeBauche of the 155th Civil Engineers Squadron changes the transition board signifying what protective posture the area is in during a recent operational readiness exercise at the Nebraska National Guard air base, April 11. The exercise is an annual requirement for the 155th Air Refueling Wing.

Heroic Intersection

Nebraska Army Guard Soldier honored for coming to injured Airman's aid

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Master Sgt. Rhonda McClellen left her home the morning of Sunday, Nov. 15, for her regular Guard drill at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

Little did she know, she wouldn't make it in that morning.

As McClellen, an 18-year Nebraska Air National Guard chaplain's assistant with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, exited the eastbound lane of Interstate 80 to head towards the air base she remembers deciding to use the northern lane because there were several cars in the other lane.

She slowed until the traffic light turned to green and entered the intersection.

The next thing she remembers is waking up in a hospital.



McClellen

As McClellen entered the intersection a northbound Chevrolet Blazer reportedly violated a red light and struck McClellen's Chevrolet Malibu in the driver's side of the vehicle.



Mutschelknaus

The force of the impact caused McClellen's vehicle to careen and strike a vehicle in the southbound lane.

McClellen was initially taken to BryanLGH Medical Center to be treated for her injuries which included a concussion, a hairline basal skull fracture, a jaw broken in three places, a punctured right lung, two broken ribs, breaks in each of the humerus, radius and ulna bones in her left arm, nine breaks in her pelvis, torn tissue in each ear causing hearing damage, and four knocked out teeth.

"I spent two weeks at Bryan..., three weeks at Madonna (Rehabilitation Hospital), and I was in a wheelchair the whole time," said McClellen. "I didn't get out of the wheelchair until February."

She underwent multiple surgeries and has a now has 10 plates in her body - three each in her pelvis and left arm, and four in her jaw.

McClellen said she remembers very little about the events of that day.

"I have no recollection of any impact," she said. "I woke up Thursday morning and I just kinda remember bits and pieces."

It wasn't until three to four weeks after the accident McClellen learned what transpired directly after the collision and was amazed by the story that emerged.

Army Cpl. Lucas Mutschelknaus also began that day making his way to drill at the same base. He didn't realize then that he would soon meet McClellen and forever be a part of her life.

Mutschelknaus, a special electronics repairman with the 267th Ordnance Company, was driving northbound on Cornhusker Highway about to turn west and head toward the air base when he came upon the unusually congested intersection.

Mutschelknaus parked his car knowing something was wrong and ran to the scene to see if he could offer any assistance.

"I ran over to the Blazer first... she was coherent and somebody was in there talking to her," said Mutschelknaus. "So I ran over to the Malibu and (saw) that the woman inside was hurt pretty bad."

Mutschelknaus said he knew something had to be done and instantly reacted.

"Somebody was already calling 911, so then I crawled in to the

car and saw that she was bleeding pretty bad," said Mutschelknaus. "I had somebody else crawl in the back seat to hold her head still and then I cut her seat belt off of her and folded her coat down out of her face."

"I cleared out her nose and mouth and then...got out of the car, ran around to the driver's side and pulled the window out and cut the airbags out to try to increase the airflow through the vehicle," he added.

Mutschelknaus waited with McClellen until an ambulance arrived while continuing to clear blood from her nose and mouth so she could breathe.

While recovering in the hospital, McClellen heard about all that Mutschelknaus and the other people gave to her. She said it was a bit overwhelming hearing the story.

"I had to step back a little bit," said McClellen. "Quite frankly it was amazing hearing all of the stories."

The story of Mutschelknaus' heroism also got the attention of others. He was honored with the American Red Cross Cornhusker Chapter Military Hero award during a ceremony held May 13 at the Champion's Club in Lincoln.

By the time of the ceremony, McClellen had recovered well enough to be able to attend and meet Mutschelknaus and thank him properly.

"I went to the dinner as a way to say thank-you for his efforts on my behalf so that other people would realize that it took a lot of courage to step up and be different...to step up and take action," said McClellen. "I was thrilled that he was honored."

"I think the world of him," she added. "I think he's just a great model of people that are in the military and people that we should aspire to be."

McClellen said she thinks Mutschelknaus epitomizes the hero award he received.

"I think that his hero award that he got really describes it," she said. "A hero isn't somebody that does things just that they do every day. It's something that they do when things aren't right and things are a little scary. So he was willing to just step up and help somebody he didn't even know."

For his part, Mutschelknaus thinks the accolades he is receiving are unnecessary. He just wanted to help and didn't want to regret passing by if there was anything he could do.

"I just figured that it wouldn't hurt if I just stopped to see if I could help," he said. "I'd rather take a butt-chewing for being late to drill than maybe finding out that I could have done something to help."

Seeing McClellen, who is married with 5- and 6-year-old sons, able to greet him during his award dinner was enough reward for Mutschelknaus.

"It was pretty overwhelming," he said. "When I had seen her in the car accident...she was pretty beat up... It's a pretty good feeling inside of me just being able to see how well she was doing."

"I know that she's got two young kids and a husband," he added. "It makes me very, very happy to be able to do everything and anything I could to make sure that they can keep enjoying the rest of her life with her kids and watch them grow up."

"That's the most gratifying part... just knowing that her kids still get to have their mom around and don't have to worry."

In addition to the Red Cross Hero award, Mutschelknaus was awarded an Army Commendation Medal, a Nebraska State Safety Impact Award and was named an honorary member of the Lincoln Fire and Rescue team. Still, he thinks the awards are unnecessary.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Thanking A Hero: Master Sgt. Rhonda McClellen, a 155th Air Refueling Wing chaplain's assistant, thanks Cpl. Lucas Mutschelknaus, a special electronics repairman with the 267th Support Maintenance Company, May 13, during the American Red Cross Cornhusker Chapter Military Award ceremony. Mutschelknaus was honored for helping rescue McClellen after she was involved in a major accident, Nov. 15, while driving to drill.



Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Rhonda McClellen

Lucky To Be Alive: Master Sgt. Rhonda McClellen's Chevrolet Malibu sustained massive damage when it was struck on the driver's side at an intersection near the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 15. McClellen sustained multiple injuries in the accident.

"I think he's just a great model of people that are in the military and people that we should aspire to be."

— Master Sgt. Rhonda McClellen about Cpl. Lucas Mutschelknaus

"Just knowing that I was able to help her was by far enough," said Mutschelknaus. "I just wanted to be able to help her out."

McClellen said she feels fortunate that the accident happened at the intersection that both the Army and Air National Guard use during Guard weekends.

She added that the training the Guard members have received definitely showed.

"I think if it was at any other intersection, I probably would have died," said McClellen. "On both sides, the Army and the Air Force, the training gave them the confidence to know that they could help and do something - not just sit back and watch."

"I just thought our training had worked well because everybody that stopped at the accident to help I think was in the Air Guard or Army Guard," she added. "They all just took action...they saw a

need and they took action."

Mutschelknaus also credits his Nebraska National Guard training for helping him handle the situation as well as he did.

"I think a lot of the training that I got kind of helped me to recognize some of the things that were happening," said Mutschelknaus. "She had a bad concussion and she was bleeding out of her mouth and nose pretty bad...I figured she had some kind of lung injuries or chest injuries so I think that some of that training definitely helped."

"The combat life-saver training that we received last summer...I think that that helped out quite a bit," he added. "Through all the repetition that they go through...to not panic whenever you see something bad - just to charge in and do everything you can and just try to keep them safe to avoid more possible injuries."

With the injuries McClellen suf-

ferred that morning, she said her military future is somewhat up in the air. She continues to recover with her main focus on gaining strength so she can pass the physical requirements to remain in the Nebraska Air National Guard to achieve the big plans she has for the rest of her military career.

"I had a lot of goals and now it's all kind of up in limbo...I would like to stay in the Guard," she said. "Before my accident I had 30 years in my brain."

"My personality lends itself, I believe, to being a first shirt," she added. "I was looking at pursuing that line."

McClellen said the support she received from Guard members the day of her accident is only rivaled by the support she has gotten since.

"Everybody has been very good to me and my family afterwards," said McClellen. "The Guard has always been important to me and that even made the Guard even more special when they just showed that extra level of caring when I was laid up and my family needed some help."

"It just made me even more proud that I was a part of the Guard and I was a part of people that would just jump up when they saw a need," she added. "Quite frankly, I think that's what they did when they joined the military, too. They saw a need and they said 'I can help here' and that's what they did and that's what they did at the accident too."

Mutschelknaus said he felt so strongly about helping at the accident scene because if the same thing happened to someone he cared about, he hopes people on the scene would have the courage to do the same thing.

He added that one person truly can make a difference, no matter how small or large their contribution.

"Always stop," he said. "Even if you're unable to be that somebody that's crawling into the vehicle, maybe you're able to try and direct traffic...there's always something you can do whenever there's a bad situation...the worst thing you can do is drive past."

"It's almost like there's never enough hands when there's an accident," he added. "You're not going to hurt anything by stopping, so people shouldn't be afraid to stop and see if they're able to help."

Camp Ashland battalion welcomes new commander

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The battalion charged with training the newest generation of officer leadership witnessed a changing of the guards, June 6, when the 2nd Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) welcomed Maj. Gary Ropers as its new commander.

Ropers replaces outgoing commander, Lt. Col. Georgia Kroese, who had served as top battalion leader since assuming command nearly two years earlier.

According to Col. Brian Saucerman, 209th RTI commander, Kroese accomplished much during her stint at Camp Ashland while overseeing the battalion charged with conducting the Nebraska Army National Guard Officer Candidate and Warrant Officer Candidate Schools.

"It's been a pleasure working with you Lieutenant Colonel Kroese," said Saucerman. "Command is a defining element in the Army and the highest achievement in our careers as officers. It is a job of immense responsibility and personal satisfaction. Our success is totally dependent upon the quality of our leaders."

"Those in position of command authority – be it officer or (noncommissioned officer) – know that this job of responsibility and accountability are absolute," added Saucerman, saying that Kroese was a model of what commanders must be during her assignment with the 2nd Battalion.

"I believe that the 2nd Battalion is in the best position ever. They are well trained, well led, a cohesive unit," he said. "There is excellent officer, warrant officer and noncommissioned officer leadership. They are dedicated to mission accomplishment, the Soldiers, the families and the employers."

"Lieutenant Colonel Kroese, you proved

yourself an exceptional commander. You're an example of the highest level of commitment and competence as a leader," Saucerman said.

Kroese was born in Lincoln, Neb. on Oct. 6, 1964, and grew up in Waverly, Neb., where she graduated from Waverly High School in 1983. She received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business Management from Doane College – Lincoln Campus in 1998.

She enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1982 with the 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized) in Lincoln, Neb., as an administrative specialist. In 1984 she was hired full-time with the Guard's State Area Command and served in multiple positions in the Comptroller Division.

She received her commission as a second lieutenant in 1993 after graduating from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Military Academy Officer Candidate School. Following her commissioning, Kroese served in such positions as a finance and accounting officer for the State Area Command, as a logistics officer for the 110th Medical Battalion headquarters, and as a comptroller in State Area Command.

Kroese took command of the 105th Personnel Services Detachment in 2000 and led the unit throughout its mobilization for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom in 2003, during which it served in Jordan and later Kuwait.

Kroese is currently the full-time military personnel officer in Joint Force Headquarters, Lincoln, Neb. She and her two children reside in Lincoln.

Kroese, who received the Meritorious Service Medal following the official exchange of battalion colors, said leaving command of the Camp Ashland battalion left her with mixed feelings.

"This is one of those days that you look forward to, but you're also sad for. I've really enjoyed my just under two years here," she said. "It's amazing how fast that two years goes by."

"I can honestly say that besides my company command, this was one of the greatest opportunities that I've had in my last 28 years in the Nebraska Army National Guard. To be involved with the candidates and watching



Kroese



Ropers



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

New Command: Maj. Gary Ropers (left) receives the colors for the 2nd Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute,) from Col. Brian Saucerman, June 6, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

them develop into successful commissioned and warrant officers is truly a great thing," Kroese said.

She said she was particularly happy about the growth and development of the two programs, adding that they are now able to offer more Nebraska Soldiers the opportunity to pursue their commissions than ever before.

"The work of the entire second battalion doesn't go unnoticed here," she said. "Whether it be having two annual training periods or working countless extra hours over each drill weekend, they continue to oversee the mission of the officer candidate programs and produce great leaders."

Ropers was born in Broken Bow, Neb., on June 17, 1964, and grew up in Sargent, Neb. where he graduated from Sargent High School in 1982. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Computer Science from Kearney State College in 1987.

Ropers is employed by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska and is currently working for the Pre-Mobilization Assessment Team in Joint Force Headquarters.

He enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1981 as a tank turret mechanic in Company C, 1-195th Armor, in Broken Bow, Neb. After receiving his commission from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Military Academy Officer Candidate

School in 1991, Ropers was assigned as a fire support officer in Detachment 1, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1-168th Field Artillery, in Ogallala, Neb. He then served in a number of rolls including executive officer and battery commander of Battery B, 1-168th Field Artillery, in Sidney, Neb. He has also served in the 1-134th Infantry, the 209th RTI and as the aide-de-camp for the late Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Roger Lempke.

Ropers was deployed from May 2007-08 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, during which he commanded one of the first U.S.-led Police Mentor Teams in the Kandahar Province in southern Afghanistan.

Ropers was assigned to the 41st Rear Operations Center as a plans officer in 2009.

In taking command of the organization, Ropers pledged to continue the progress made by Kroese. He also issued a challenge to the members of his new command.

"Soldiers, I challenge you to make the second battalion the best battalion in the state," Ropers said.

"I look forward to sitting down and working with each and every one of you. I hope you understand the importance you play in the success of the second battalion and the importance you play in either developing or becoming the next officer or warrant officer in the state of Nebraska."

Nebraska sergeant sets fitness standard at reconnaissance course

By Tech Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Members of the Nebraska National Guard have long known that the Guard is every bit as professional and fit as the active force. Now there is additional proof.

Sgt. 1st Class Randy Freye, a platoon sergeant with the Fremont-based Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance), recently completed the Army Reconnaissance Course and further distinguished himself with his physical fitness.

The ARC is a physically and mentally challenging 27-day course focused on mastering the fundamentals of reconnaissance, surveillance and security. The course was designed to educate and train reconnaissance leaders to effectively lead a reconnaissance platoon with the goal of developing competent and confident leaders who understand the fundamentals of reconnaissance, surveillance and security doctrine.

Freye said he attended the course to further his knowledge as a platoon sergeant and scout.

"You gain a higher understanding of a reconnaissance mission," said Freye. "Driving home those skills of what it takes to be the scout leader and how to effectively manage the mission and accomplish the mission and feed that higher commander with the intelligence that he wants and needs."

Physical fitness is an important aspect of successfully performing the duties of a recon mission, so ARC students participate in a fitness competition called the Validus Discipulus.

The Validus Discipulus competition is a grueling test of physical fitness and mental toughness.

The competition tests the stu-

dents on several activities including: push-ups for one minute; sit-ups for one minute; as many pull-ups as possible; as many dips as possible; how many times they can bench press 70 percent of their body weight; if they can successfully scale a rope; if they can successfully pull a full-size pickup approximately 50 meters; and if they can complete a five-mile rucksack march while carrying a 35-pound rucksack within 75 minutes.

The ARC is open to active-duty Soldiers as well as Guard and Reserve Soldiers. It is utilized primarily by junior officers who were several years Freye's junior, and based on PT sessions leading up to the event, Freye said he was wary of his competition.

"From our other group PT sessions I was thinking I'll be lucky to finish probably in the middle of the pack," said Freye. "I was thinking 'Well these guys are a little bit younger than me... I've got a few years on them, so I may have a little bit tougher time with this competition.' So I kind of went in thinking I'm going to do the best I can and hopefully I'll be able to finish every event."

After 70 push-ups, 60 sit-ups, 19 pull-ups, 50 dips, 49 reps of 70 percent his body weight on bench press, successfully navigating the rope climb and truck pull, and completing the five-mile march in approximately 65 minutes, Freye said he was happy with his performance.

Later when Freye's commander, Capt. Matthew Misfeldt, who was also a student in the course, informed Freye that he had actually won the competition, Freye didn't believe him.

"I thought he was joking with me," Freye said.

Freye's point total of 1,081 was 30 points higher than the second

place student, who happened to have been through the Army Ranger school.

"I was actually pretty proud about that – beating a Ranger," he said. "I thought he was the one that was probably going to win."

Freye, who spent two years on active duty before joining the Nebraska National Guard, was an admittedly "skinny kid" in high school. He said that physical fitness has been important to him for quite some time.

"Fitness has always been a hobby of mine probably since I was in high school," he said. "I used to run cross country and track. When I joined the Army and I got to my active duty station I started getting into lifting a lot."

Freye's accomplishments, not only in the ARC, but in the fitness competition, show the kind of a quality noncommissioned officer he is, said Misfeldt.

"He beat out active Army lieutenants and other NCOs to acquire the number of points to win the award," said Misfeldt. "It just shows his professionalism and commitment to physical fitness. He's a leader by example."

In winning the competition, Freye became the first NCO in more than two years to win the award, which further distinguished him as a leader.

"The course is pretty much junior-officer heavy and he was the first NCO to win that award for several years," said Misfeldt. "So stepping up as an NCO at that course really put the spotlight on him."

"All of the NCOs were really proud that he won it," added Misfeldt.

Freye sees his achievement as a platform to lead as a senior NCO. "We're the leader of Soldiers," said Freye. "We're the ones that



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Hard Work Pays Off: Sgt. 1st Class Randy Freye, a platoon sergeant with Fremont's Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, shows off the plaque he received for winning the Validus Discipulus award at the end of his Army Reconnaissance Course.

are supposed to lead from the front; set the example for our Soldiers. So by doing that it kind of means as an NCO you're able to lead from the front."

Misfeldt echoed Freye and said he is happy to have Freye as a leader under his command.

"The NCO Corps is the backbone of the Army," he said. "Sergeant First Class Freye...ensures that the Nebraska Guard is going to be in good hands with leaders like him."

Along with Freye's award, Misfeldt was also named the class honor graduate, showing that the Nebraska National Guard is well represented. Freye said it speaks volumes about the quality of the individuals in the Nebraska National Guard to take the two top honors

in the class.

"I think it says a lot for just the standards that we uphold in the Nebraska National Guard," he said. "To be able to go in with National Guard units from other states and active duty...basically both of us from the Nebraska National Guard took the top honors in the class."

Misfeldt said he is proud that he and Freye were able to represent the Nebraska National Guard so well.

"The Nebraska National Guard – we really stepped up," said Misfeldt. "It just shows our professionalism is on par with active duty, or even in these two cases, exceeded the standards and showed our commitment to professionalism and our commitment to our jobs and our duty and to our states."

Making An Elbow: Sgt. Nathan Meyer creates an elbow joint for a water heater during the 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) 'Castle Stakes' competition held Apr 20 - May 10 at the Mead Training Site.



Careful Cuts: Spc. Rene Olivares, a carpentry masonry specialist with the 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction,) cuts a piece of wood that will be used for trim on the roof and his fellow Soldiers were constructing at the Mead Training Site.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Team Building: A squad of 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) engineers work together to build one of six 12-by-12-foot structures the unit built at the Mead Training Site during the April 30-May 10 'Castle Stakes.'

Castle Stakes

■ Week-long construction competition allows new engineers to receive valuable training before deploying overseas

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

For most of the past year, Nebraska Army National Guard engineers from a unit based in Wahoo and Hastings have been busy training for an upcoming mission that will most likely take them overseas where they will be responsible for constructing buildings in support of American and Coalition troops.

Months from now, those engineers will most likely credit a recent training competition they conducted at the Mead Training Site in early May with giving them the skills and teamwork they needed to build quality structures that may serve as temporary homes for thousands of service members.

According to Capt. Christopher Pelchat, 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) commander, the goal for the unit's April 30 - May 10 "Castle Stakes" competition was pretty straight forward.

"The unit has been growing pretty fast, but we didn't have engineer (military occupational specialty) in the state," said Pelchat. "So, in trying to fill the unit up in a short period of time, we've got a lot of new people who were truck drivers, chemical (specialists or others.) We've had to convert them into carpenters, plumbers and electricians."

"So this A.T. was set up to train those Soldiers on those specific tasks," he said.

Dubbed "Castle Stakes," the exercise required each of the 623rd Eng. Co.'s three platoons to split into two teams, with each team constructing a complete 12-foot by 12-foot structure from scratch.

In order to give the Soldiers as much training as possible, the buildings included such things as a gabled and hip roof, two windows, a sink, a toilet, a water heater, electrical service entries, and floor and back-splash tiling. Each building also had to be completely sided and given two coats of paint.

The buildings were then judged by unit leaders on a variety of criteria including craftsmanship, quality, safety, job site cleanliness and organization to determine which team was the winner.

Pelchat said Castle Stakes allowed him to accomplish a number of different tasks.

First, it enabled him to see how ready his individual platoons are to tackle construction projects overseas while also finding out more about his new Soldiers, many of whom are bringing years of individual construction, electrical or plumbing experience with them into their new assignments.

"Breaking (the projects) into small teams, we've really, really realized where we could do some more training," he said. "But we've also identified some really strong people among the lower enlisted who were some big surprises, so that's working out great."

Take Spc. Adam Hazen, for example. A truck driver assigned to Det. 1, 623rd Eng. Co., Hazen has worked as a civilian construction contractor in North Platte, Neb., for more than a decade. He said that Castle Stakes gave him an opportunity to work with many of the unit's newest Soldiers and teach them how to apply their newly learned engineer skills to a construction project. He said that training is imperative considering the unit's upcoming deployment.

"You need to know (how to do) it before you get there," he said. "If you're building a house, you want to do it right. You don't want it to fall down."

"I think these guys have learned a lot. There are a lot of good teachers (here)," he said, adding that being able to construct a building from scratch in a little more than a week was extremely fun. "It's a blast. I'm enjoying it. I've done this for 14 years... it's just something that I really enjoy."

He said he also enjoys teaching his fellow Soldiers skills that they will undoubtedly soon be using over-



Finer Touch: Sgt. Tyler Wolfe, a 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Engineer) plumber, sands the newly installed drywall in side his squad's building.

seas. "The best part is, you're going to teach them the right way right off the bat," Hazen said.

Another benefit of Castle Stakes was that it helped simulate some of the conditions the Soldiers will be working in overseas, Pelchat said.

"One of the (issues) had to do with the tools that are set up by squad and platoon," he said. "What will happen is, each platoon will get a construction set. If they set out into teams, that construction set can only be at one place at one time."

"So, when we divided the platoons into two teams, they realized 'Hey, we need another one of these saws or we really need another set of this or another set of that.' That was kind of a challenge for the platoons for the first few days because I completely isolated them. There was no sharing of tools, no sharing of generators, no sharing of anything. You have to operate independently on your own."

"And that process right there identified some of the shortages that we were going to run up against," Pelchat said, adding that the unit is already planning to order some additional equipment to eliminate critical shortages.

According to the Soldiers involved in the competition, being able to construct six new buildings from the ground up in barely more than a week was a great opportunity to



Cleaning Up: Pfc. Adam Brodahl, 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction,) cleans up after working on the drywall in the 12-by-12-foot building that he and other members of the unit were constructing at the Mead Training Site. 'Castle Stakes' was a unit-run competition designed to get the newly organized unit some additional engineer skill training.

test their new construction skills.

"It's a good experience," said Sgt. Tyler Wolfe, a 623rd Eng. Co. plumber who is currently attending the University of Nebraska-Omaha where he is studying civil engineering. "Everyone gets to cross-train and learn new trades. Like me, I'm a plumber and I'm doing drywall right now. So, it's all a new experience for me."

Spc. Rene Olivares, a unit carpentry and masonry specialist from South Sioux City, Neb., agreed.

"This is great," he said as he cut roof trim for his team's building. "Three days ago we barely had anything up and now we're almost done here.... We're doing pretty good."

The same goes for Pvt. Christopher Lefrois from Bancroft, Neb. A civilian electrical engineer for a company in Beemer, Neb., Lefrois is also a unit electrician. He said that Castle Stakes was giving him valuable experience that he can use both in his civilian and military careers.

"It helps me out in my civilian career because we do exactly the same thing," he said. "Multiple trades there, multiple trades here."

That training will be especially important as the unit gets ready to deploy, Lefrois added.

"It helps you to get ready. To know everybody and to see everybody, then you can work with them hand-in-hand and you know that they're ready... just as you are."

Yet, even though Castle Stakes was designed to be a training exercise, it was also a competition... a competition that each of the teams was eager to win.

"That's what makes it fun," said Cpl. John Langley, a unit carpenter who also works as a civilian carpenter in Lincoln, "just looking around and seeing what other people are doing and trying to outdo them."

In Langley's case, that meant taking the building's roof vent and putting a creative spin to it. Instead of a standard rectangle or octagonal-shaped vent, Langley created a vent

by hand that prominently featured the Engineer Corps' castle insignia.

"We just did some brainstorming and thought that it would be something different from the other teams," he said. "We thought, 'Why not?'"

Langley wasn't the only one getting into the competitive spirit. Sgt. Shawn McMahan, a squad leader who works as a general contractor in civilian life, quickly closed the door to his building as he explained his plans to incorporate a similar castle insignia into the tile floor of his building, fearing that one of the other teams might overhear and exploit his ideas.

"Everybody wants to win, obviously," he said, his voice barely above a whisper. "There's always going to be a one-upmanship. Somebody wants to have a little bit better looking paint or little bit better looking outside."

He said that some of his secrets included trimming the windows in wood, creating custom-made wooden slats for his vent and rounding off the edges to his steps. The tile floor, he said, would be the final and hopefully game-winning feature.

"If I can get it under the table, I'm going to get some black and red tiles and build a castle. If I can't do that, I may cut some tile to make the castle," he said, smiling.

McMahan said the entire process had definitely given his team better skills.

"We've got a lot of young Soldiers in the company. All the training they have is their two weeks of training at MOSQ school," he said. "They've trained, but now they're seeing the pile of lumber to finished product. At school, you're being taught it. Now, you've learned it... you're responsible for putting up that building."

"This is what we're going to be doing (overseas)," he added. "We're engineers and we're going to be building buildings. This is a good project for us. What we're building overseas is single story structures and trying to make other Soldiers' lives better a maybe a little more comfortable."



Big Crowd: Families and Soldiers pack a Nebraska City elementary school auditorium, May 22, as they and other Guard, state and local leaders wish members of the 192nd Military Police Detachment well as they begin a mobilization in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes



See You Soon: Pfc. Robert Rasmussen hugs his mom, Cindy Slowik, moments before climbing on board a bus with other members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 192nd Military Police Detachment. Rasmussen is deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

MPS continued from page 1.

it's a little bit harder having a family and what not," he said. "My wife is taking it pretty hard, but she'll be alright because we have plenty of family support."

That's putting things lightly.

Accompanying Ferguson to the sendoff were several rows of family members, all of whom wore a special t-shirt designed by Stephanie Ferguson as a surprise tribute to her husband.

Among the dignitaries who spoke to the Soldiers and family members during the send-off ceremony were Gov. Dave Heineman and Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska. Both spoke of their confidence in the unit and the training it had accomplished as well as their gratitude to the families and friends for the sacrifices they were about to make.

Pointing to a handmade sign that hung from one of the elementary school walls that read: "We Love Our Soldiers," Heineman echoed the sentiment.

"We do love our Soldiers and appreciate what they do," he said. "And this is a difficult day because they are going to leave us for a period of time."

"But I want you to know as someone who served in the Army for five years, I know what they're going through," Heineman added. "They're ready to do it. They're prepared. And we appreciate their service."

That also goes for the family members involved.

"You make special sacrifices, too," he said. "And we want you to know that we're proud of you."

According to Lyons, the 192nd M.P. Det. has accomplished months of difficult training that has enabled the Soldiers to be ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

"There is a wealth of experience here in this unit," he said. "Our sergeants are what carry the day in our missions overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the 192nd has some of the best NCOs in the Nebraska Army National Guard."

That's especially important considering the detachment's new mission overseas.

"The mission is big. There's going to be a lot of trust and confidence placed in the 192nd Military Police



Affectionate Support: A Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier hold hands with his wife during the send off ceremony for the 192nd Military Police Detachment, May 22.

Detachment overseas in Iraq," Lyons said. "But, as the governor said, they are extremely well trained and well led and well equipped for this mission."

"There's a lot of experience in this unit and we know that you are going to represent the best of Nebraska overseas," the general added.

Lyons also lauded the family members for their continued support while pledging the Nebraska National Guard's assistance in helping them deal with the stresses that the deployment will place upon them.

"The Guard is truly family. I will tell you from a personal experience that I've sat in your chair as my wife headed off overseas a couple times and as my stepson headed off overseas with the Nebraska National Guard," Lyons said.

"So I take it very personally the role that the family plays in supporting our Soldiers and I want you to know that I'm dedicated and that all of the leadership (of the Nebraska National Guard) is dedicated to ensuring that family members have the support that you need while your loved one, mom, dad, brother, sister is overseas."

The commander of the detachment vowed that his unit will make the state proud.

"You know, the reason we're doing this is for this group here in this room today," said 1st Lt. Joseph M. Sanchez III as he thanked the Soldiers in his unit for their effort during the long months of pre-mobilization training and the support they have received from their families and employers.

Sanchez also talked about the sacrifices that were about to be made.



Lean On Me: Pfc. Jonathan Jerry and his wife Cassie share a quiet moment before Jerry and the other members of the 192nd Military Police Detachment depart Nebraska City, Neb., to begin their Operation Iraqi Freedom Mission.



Godspeed: Four Nebraska National Guard Soldiers stand on a Nebraska City street and wave to members of the 192nd Military Police Detachment as they receive a hero's departure from the southeastern Nebraska community, May 22.

"I really didn't know what sacrifice was until this last week when I was talking with my 7-year-old daughter," said Sanchez. "She said, 'Dad, you're going to miss my whole second grade year.' And that's when it hit me what sacrifice really is."

Sanchez said his family's sacrifices are shared by each and every member of the 192nd M.P. Det. and the their families.

"Each Soldier has their own reason for their sacrifice and they should be admired for it," he said.



Goodbye For Now: Tiffany Deines gives her boyfriend, Pfc. Jacob Martinez, one last kiss before he departs to begin his mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Thank you to the families for the trust you've given me for the training and well-being of your brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, husbands, wives and loved ones. I can assure you that they've all trained hard so that they can accomplish their mission and come home safely."



Husker Pride: Staff Sgt. Dustin Schlote, 1195th Transportation Company, hoots as he shows off the University of Nebraska-Lincoln flag that he flew over his quarters in Iraq during his deployment to Camp Liberty. Schlote served as the nightshift supervisor in the 1195th Trans. Co.'s tactical operations center.

WELCOME HOME continued from page 1.

But, between Facebook and Skype, we still got to see other a lot. She could see the boys grow up and how they've changed."

"You know, the computer age has really made it easy for us to stay in contact," she added.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, the sounds of distant sirens, motorcycles and cheers echoed toward the school, bringing a hush to the crowd.

A few seconds later, the buses carrying the 1195th Trans. Co. Soldiers emerged around a corner, bringing a roar of approving applause from the crowd.

One of the first people off of the bus was Staff Sgt. Dustin Schlote, who waved the red Cornhusker flag he flew over his quarters at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

He was greeted by the cheers of thousands of friends and family members of the unit had gathered in anticipation of the unit's return.

"This is crazy," he said, laughing. "All these people...from the highway all the way from the interstate...tons and tons of people right here right now who have come out as a community to support the troops."

This was Schlote's second homecoming to Kearney. An original member of Company B, 735th Main Support Battalion, Schlote was mobilized for duty in Kuwait from April 2003 until May 2004. After returning to Nebraska, the unit reorganized into the 1195th Transportation Company, which is based in Kearney with detachments in Lexington and McCook.

Schlote said that while the welcome he and fellow unit-mates received in 2004 was big, this year's ceremony dwarfed the first.

"It's so much bigger," he said. "It's so much nicer (today) so everyone can come out...it's amazing. You see everybody up and down the (streets) with their flags and stuff. It's crazy."

While Schlote was easy to spot, less visible was Spc. Nicholas Schmit, who spent several minutes trying to find his wife and daughter in the surging crowd. Finally, after what must have seemed like a lifetime, Schmit turned as he heard a familiar voice yell out: "We're over here."

Seeing his family, Schmit quickly rushed toward them and embraced them in a huge bear hug, tears streaming down both his and his wife's faces.

"It's awesome...it's awesome, said Schmit as he held his daughter

tightly and she gave her father's face her promised hug. He said the reunion was exactly what he'd hoped for. "Everything and more."

Tera Schmit agreed. "I'm thrilled," she said, her voice dripping with happiness as she dabbed at the tears streaking her face. "So excited."

A few steps away, Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Mashek, shop foreman for the 1195th Trans. Co.'s Maintenance Section, was also embracing his family in a huge bear hug.

"I'm just glad to be home," said Mashek, his cheeks glistening with tears. "Really glad to be home."

His wife Janna, who had traveled out to the welcome home ceremony with the couple's daughters, Carlee, 3, and Elizabeth, 5, agreed.

"It's really good to have him home. It's been a long year, that's for sure," she said as her eyes also filled with tears.

According to Mashek, a veteran of the earlier Co. B, 735th MSB, deployment, this year's welcome home eclipsed the earlier one.

"This is 100 times the turnout over the last time," he said. "This is awesome. I couldn't ask for anything better. It's just...incredible."

Following the initial reunion, the Soldiers filed into an overflowing Kearney High School gymnasium to the sounds of "Syrius" — better known as the "Husker Tunnel Walk" song, which ushers the entrance of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln football team into Memorial Stadium before the start of each home game.

It took more than a dozen playings of the song before all the Soldiers and their families were seated.

Once in the gym, the Soldiers and their families were congratulated by state and local leaders, who lauded the group for its performance.

"I want to say a special welcome home and a special thank you for your service to the United States of America and the state of Nebraska," said Gov. Dave Heineman. "We are enormously proud of you for what you have done."

"And to the families, you go through some special sacrifices and hardships, particularly during the past year," he added. "We're grateful for what you have done."

Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, echoed those sentiments while encouraging the Soldiers and their families to take the time they need to reintegrate after their long separations.

"Please take as much time with



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Is It Really You? Stephanie Schmit, the 3-year-old daughter of Spc. Nicholas Schmit, studies her father's face shortly after he stepped off a bus in front of Kearney High School in Kearney, Neb., ending a year-long mission to Iraq as a member of the 1195th Transportation Company. Schmit served as a light wheeled vehicle mechanic for his unit during its deployment to Camp Liberty, Iraq.



Home At Last: Hundreds of family members break into cheers as the first bus carrying members of the 1195th Transportation Company comes into view in front of Kearney High School in Kearney, Neb.



Wounded Veteran: Sgt. Jeffery Burton waves to the assembled crowd after his name was announced during the welcome home ceremony.

reintegration as you did in your preparation for your deployment," Lyons said. "For many, it's going to be a seamless transition. For others, there may be assistance needed from time to time. And what I want to say as your adjutant general is that we're all family. If you need assistance, please ask for it."

"It's a sign of strength," he added. "We're going to be there for you."

Kearney Mayor Stanley Klaus said the surrounding communities were particularly proud to be able to welcome their hometown unit back to Nebraska in a style fitting their service. He joked about a message he'd received earlier in the week.

"I had some e-mails the other day that said, 'Mayor, we've got a problem... we don't have any more

ribbons, we don't have any more markers, we don't have any more paper. The whole city is sold out in preparation for this return," he said, laughing.

"So, on behalf of the community of Kearney and I think I can speak for Lexington and McCook, we support you," Klaus added. "We always have and we always will."

As Capt. Eric Baptiste, company commander took the stage, he took a few moments to officially recognize a special member of his unit, Sgt. Jeffery Burton, a truck driver who was severely wounded when an improvised explosive device struck his vehicle earlier this year. Burton was able to travel back to Kearney from Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., where he was

convalescing from his wounds. After publicly acknowledging Burton, Baptiste turned to Lyons and said: "Before we left, I addressed family friends and leadership about the 1195th. I stand here today to announce that the 1195th has met all the requirements that were set forth before us. We have upheld the high standards that our unit and the state of Nebraska have put forward during every deployment."

"General Lyons, I made a promise to General (Tim) Kadavy that I would bring (these Soldiers) back," Baptiste said as the crowd began cheering loudly, "and I say to you, sir, that I'm proud to report that every Soldier in the 1195th, present or accounted for."

On The Job Training

Nebraska Guard officer learns cultural skills needed to help rebuild Afghanistan

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Russell Bartholow couldn't believe his luck.

After months of often soul-searching training and work, the 38-year-old Nebraska Army National Guard second lieutenant from Lincoln, Neb., was finally in the position he had dreamed about for years.

Stationed at Forward Operations Base Spann in northern Afghanistan, Bartholow was about to embark on an assignment as chief of a five-person Effects Cell responsible for a variety of humanitarian aid projects spread over the nine northern provinces of the war-torn nation.

As such, Bartholow was about to place himself squarely in the middle of making a difference in the lives of ordinary Afghan men, women and children.

It was precisely what Bartholow had dreamed of in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York City, Pennsylvania and the Pentagon near Washington, D.C.

The question now was, what would he do with it?

**22 Months In
Afghanistan**
Second of a
Multipart Series

Effects Cell

By mid-2008 2nd Lt. Russell Bartholow had already been in Afghanistan for several months when he made a deal with the base commander: by volunteering to extend an additional nine months past his original return date, Bartholow was given command of the local Effects Cell.

According to Bartholow, the Effects Cell was responsible for conducting a number of different types of civil-military operations such as road construction, digging wells, building new schools and clinics, ensuring that local civilians had access to food, water and shelter, and running weapons buy-back programs in the local provinces surrounding Camp Spann, located near Mazar-e-Sharif along the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan border.

Bartholow said he quickly realized his tiny team had an enormous job ahead of it, adding that one of his first priorities was to redevelop the region's educational resources.

"Priority number one was education of males and females," said Bartholow, adding that getting schools built in the region was typically a lengthy and often bureaucratic process that quickly tested his ability to work effectively between U.S. military and international agencies and local Afghan community leaders.

"We had a clear, hold, build strategy for this area," he said. "Different provinces were identified as priorities by the commander in charge of the north, based upon where the priorities existed."

Once provinces were identified, planners then looked at the needs of individual districts before settling in on which community within that district most needed a school. Once this was established it was Bartholow's job to go in with his team to work through issues with local leaders and Mullahs, essentially the religious leaders of a particular village or area.

Bartholow said the local Mullahs were extremely supportive of his efforts to get schools built in their communities.

"We empowered the local leaders," said Bartholow, adding that when a school was built in a particular community, the local villagers typically gave the credit to their local leader.

"(The leaders) knew when we showed up we were in some way, shape or form the means to their empowerment. Of course that's how they've existed for thousands of years... go with whoever gives them the most so that they can stay in power," Bartholow said.

Bartholow credits much of his initial success to the early days following 9/11 when he used to stay up late at night pouring over books, articles and blogs about Afghanistan, its people and the culture by which it is governed. He said that without those months of intense study he would have never been able to effectively work in Afghanistan as quickly as he ultimately did.

"The read-up did a lot to prepare me mentally. In other words, I knew facts," he said, before adding that his research still only took

him so far. "Visually, emotionally, spiritually, it did zero."

"Once I was there on ground, I had a factual understanding of how many people are poor, sick and what the history was," Bartholow said. "My cultural understanding I had to develop from ground zero."

Building Relationships

Bartholow said he quickly realized the key to success was going to be the relationships he developed with the individual Afghan leaders he was working with.

"Afghanistan is a male-dominated society," he said, adding that centuries have created a culture in Afghanistan where the males of society literally make every decision that affects the local populace. "Afghans do not track time on a clock. When they want to develop something in a business, when they develop something that they want to do, everything is based upon relationship development."

Bartholow said those relationships often take a long time to develop.

"If we can handshake and hug each other, our relationship is to one point," he said. "If we can handshake, hug each other and kiss each other's cheek, it's to another. If we can handshake, drink chai and talk about each other's families, males and females, then you've almost made it."

"If you meet the family," Bartholow said, smiling as he slapped his hands together in a way familiar to those who've deployed to Afghanistan, "that's it. You've developed a kinship that is like having another brother."

Bartholow said this was one of many real-Afghanistan lessons that he had to learn on the ground. "There's no way you can read and understand it. You read it again, it's a fact that you can talk in front of a class about," he said. "But to experience it over two years, you're part of that culture now."

School Building

During his 22 months in Afghanistan, Bartholow's team managed approximately 12 successful school building projects. Of those, Bartholow was the direct leader on five. He said that even though the numbers weren't as high as he would've liked, their construction did symbolize multiple successes.

"Any kind of construction in a combat zone where there are enemy present and the local population's form of business is bribery and backroom dealing, then building a school becomes a little less than impossible," Bartholow said.

"However, developing those relationships, understanding how to operate with the leaders – the decision-makers as we call them – and continuously being fair and open and honest as a U.S. Soldier, you in the end can cut through a lot of those obstacles and get to the point where you break ground," he said. "That's the key: getting to the point where you break ground. Then you're managing just like you're managing a construction site."

Simply breaking ground didn't always mean that the school would be constructed, however. In fact, Bartholow said he quickly learned how difficult and heart-breaking working to develop Afghanistan's educational infrastructure could be.

"Anything can happen," he said. "The locals are threatened by the Taliban or anti-government forces. Those who are working for four bucks a day to build the school get threatened, so construction can stop."

"You have land disputes. You have materials and supplies or labor disputes. Construction can stop," he said. "You have shoddy workmanship or craftsmanship. Work can stop. Priorities of the commander change or that district goes from pro-to anti-government – in other words we no longer hold that territory, its back in control of the Taliban – construction can stop."

Bartholow said Taliban resistance to some particular projects was especially heated.

"The resistance was to the point that we would get into gun battles and they would destroy our projects," he said, adding that the resistance was usually from small Taliban resistance groups, although at times the resistance was much larger.

Bartholow said one particular unsuccessful project still breaks his heart today.

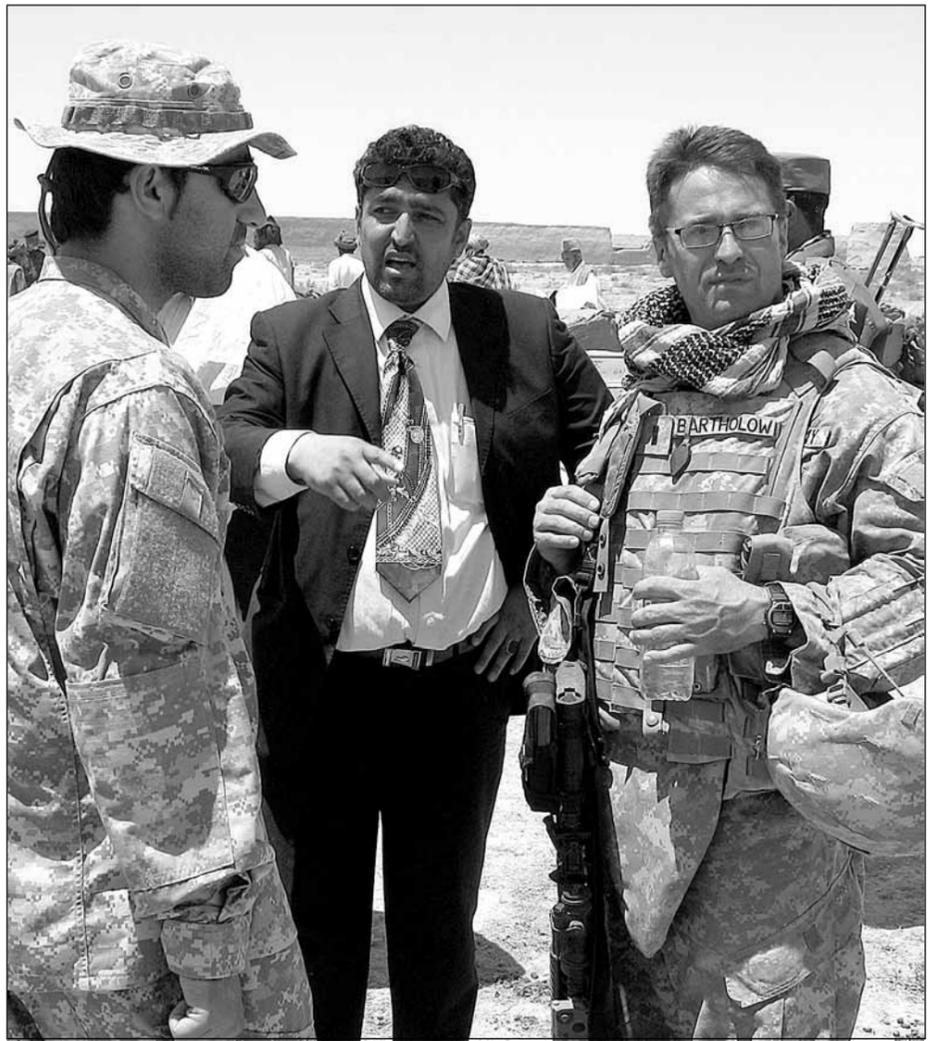


Photo courtesy of 1st Lt. Russell Bartholow

High Level Discussions: 1st Lt. Russell Bartholow (far right) discusses how to distribute humanitarian aid with the Jawzjan provincial governor following the floods of 2009. In what would become the largest military humanitarian aid mission in northern Afghanistan, Bartholow helped coordinate the delivery of over 15 tons of food, water, building supplies and farming tools, and 220 family-size tents to people who had lost their homes. The mission would involve 11 Afghan villages.

"They destroyed a school in Faryab (Province)," he said. "They went in and burned the school down maybe a week before we finished it."

"It tore me apart, not as a Soldier, not as an officer, but as someone with empathy for the locals," Bartholow said. "I went into this with the expectation that these are the battles I'm going to be fighting every minute, every hour of every day of my deployment. It's an uphill battle. I knew that face value going into it."

"But once you see something and work through the leaders and see the kids and feel the excitement in knowing that you're going to change a civilization to such a significant degree," he added, "to see somebody with the mentality of the Taliban or Al Qaeda come in and destroy that, that affect on them is the disheartening part. You just kind of see them shrink back into the shadows (and say) 'This is our lot in life. In Shala.'"

Helping Change A Society

Still, despite the difficulties, despite the setbacks, Bartholow said the Effects Cell did record a number of success stories. For example, along with helping build a dozen schools, the team also helped oversee the construction of over 300 kilometers of new roads, built six new medical clinics and helped dig 20 new wells.

All told, Bartholow's team was responsible for approximately \$12 million in civil-military projects during the 22 months he was in Afghanistan.

He said it's hard to describe the feeling of joy his team felt as each project was successfully completed.

"It's too much to absorb all at once because you're dealing with happiness... not just within myself because I finished a project (and) I did the military proud... but because the people – the inhabitants around me – are so happy and excited," Bartholow said.

"You know that you've had a direct affect... on educating decades of girls and boys who, until that point, didn't have a concept of even going to school," he said. "And if they did, it was on a rock."

"But now you've created a situation where not only are they going to go to school in a new building made of concrete with color and blackboards and books, but they're going to get educated and gain a better understanding of where they exist in the world civilization and improve their educational standards and their expectations of their elected leaders," he added.

"You know, it's too much to take in at once," Bartholow said. "Sometimes you have to take a step back... and understand."

Extending To Serve

As days turned into weeks and months, Bartholow said that it soon became apparent

that he needed to stay even longer than the nine month extension agreement he'd made initially with the base commander. He said he didn't mind.

"I was having too much fun... way too much fun," he said. "The benefit of what we were doing... of what we were accomplishing in that area of Afghanistan... far outweighed anything that I could be accomplishing back here in Lincoln, Neb."

Another factor, he said, was that after months of learning the job on the ground, he now felt that he had the needed cultural and situational knowledge to get the planned projects completed.

"Understanding the culture, understanding how to get projects up and running and operating smoothly, understanding how to do the analysis on the 5 Ws on who gets school, a road, a well... understanding the whole scenario 360 degrees and then making it happen... that was my motivation to stay," he said.

He added that he knew his friends and family back home probably really didn't understand, though.

"Everybody thought I was crazy," he said. "And not just family... people I worked with... because at this point two, three, four brigade combat teams are rotating through. They thought that maybe PTSD was already kicking in."

Retired Col. George Boshae, a former member of the Nebraska Air National Guard who had helped his nephew Bartholow join the Guard, was one of the many who was worried about Bartholow's state of mind.

"We were always worried about the fact that he was going over because the risks you take and the hazards that are over there," said Boshae. "And so we were always looking forward to the day that he would return. We were always praying and looking forward to the day... you know, counting down the days."

Boshae said he quickly sensed that Bartholow's dedication to his mission was leading him to extend longer than the typical deployment.

"He decided he was going to extend. He felt he was really contributing over there. He really felt like he was making a difference. I think he just felt an obligation to extend," said Boshae. "So again, we played our role. We supported him and just told him to be careful... to use his head in terms of making good decisions over there and that type of thing."

What neither Boshae nor Bartholow realized was that the Nebraska Army National Guard lieutenant would soon be faced with a situation that would ultimately test his understanding of Afghanistan and ability to get the job done under some of the most difficult and terrifying conditions imaginable.

Coming in August
Clarity Of Thought Under Fire

Being Understood: (left) A member of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade attempts to communicate with an Iraqi 'villager' during a mission at Camp Guernsey, Wyo.



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

Training For Any Possibility: (center) A member of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade tends to a wounded comrade.

Taking Cover: (right) A 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade Soldier takes cover after a van explodes a hidden device.



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

Charging in: Soldiers assigned to Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, and Company A, 325th Military Intelligence Battalion, begin to clear a building of potential insurgents while training in a mock Iraqi village at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., part of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise held throughout much of May.

Soldiers immersed in training during Wyoming exercise

By Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman
Editor

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. — "Contact, building six!" Gunfire echoed in the cold rain as Soldiers scrambled through the muddy street of "Al Halifayah" to engage the enemy. Above the sound of gunfire and panicking civilians a scream of "medic!" hammered home the seriousness of the situation for Soldiers from Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, and Company A, 325th Military Intelligence Battalion.

This isn't Iraq. At least not yet. In fact the battle was part of exercise designed to provide intense preparation for deploying Soldiers. The training is designed to immerse them in an environment as close as possible to what they will experience in the Middle East.

It's an immersion that the Soldiers were experiencing as a part of the eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise they participated in for three weeks in May.

Interaction with the locals is an integral part of the immersion.

"It was phenomenal," said 2nd Lt. Andrew B. Iler, a Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, squad leader.

"Not being able to understand the people and having to work through an interpreter, that is something that we are going to have to do everyday," said Iler. "The cultural aspect of it was great."

Sgt. Jason R. Sindelar, a medic with Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, added: "This was pretty comparable to downrange."

Sindelard said the civilian role players acted authentically. "People



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman

Battlefield Medicine: A member of Company A, 325th Military Intelligence Battalion, tends to a "wounded" Soldier while squatting on a muddy street in a simulated Iraqi village at Camp Guernsey, Wyo.

See IMMERSION on 13.

EXERCISE continued from page 1.

to ground, shielding him.

Fifty feet away at the checkpoint other cavalry troopers did the same for the man and woman. Someone yelled, "Gas! Gas! Gas!" A Humvee horn started honking and the Soldiers donned their masks.

Then they sped away, leaving the battered blue Volvo behind and its driver laying by the side of the road.

It was all training, of course, a rehearsal for the reality these Soldiers will have to deal with in a few months overseas.

And though their responses were not perfect — the Volvo's driver could have been a fountain of intelligence information — the instructors were pleased.

"You guys are getting this down," Sgt. 1st Class David Bollinger of First Army said during the hot wash immediately afterwards. "When you guys get to (mobe station), you guys are going to have this down. It'll be easy."

Bollinger was particularly impressed with how they handled the civilians.

Protecting the couple — and even the driver who delivered the suspected poison gas attack — was the right thing to do because it would give them a reputation as people who took care of others and could be relied upon, something that matters in what still amounts to a counterinsurgency.

"It goes a long way toward the local populace when we take care of theirs," he said. "We had a perimeter around them so they couldn't get hit. That's going to go a long way."

The whole thing was the kind of pre-deployment exercise most of the troopers had gone through before.

But this time was different. All of the Soldiers were wired into a remote electronic system



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

On The Look Out: Spc. David Halstead, Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, mans a .50 caliber machinegun while members of his unit conduct an exercise in a simulated Iraqi village.

that monitored their every move. And after chow that evening at Forward Operating Base Garry Owen, they would go through every move they made, seeing what they did on digital display during an after-action review.

The training was relatively close to home. And once it was over they would be able to spend a month or so with their families again before they mobilized and deployed.

The troopers were participating in an XCTC (eXportable Combat Training Capability) exercise, the culminating training event for the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, the Lincoln-based unit that the 1-134th Cavalry and two military intelligence battalions from outside Nebraska were under.

And the development of XCTC

program can be credited, at least in part, to the 67th BFSB's commander.

Developing XCTC

Colonel Philip Stemple was working in the training division of the National Guard Bureau in 2004 when the active Army presented the Guard with a problem.

"The Department of the Army, G3, came to the Guard Bureau and said, 'We don't have enough rotations at NTC and JRTC... to accommodate all the maneuver brigades, both Active Component and Reserve Component, in the course of the training year,'" Stemple recalled.

The assignment: Develop a program that would provide a combat-training-center-like experience,

See EXERCISE on 12.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman

Muddy Mission: Pfc. Carlos O. Aponte, Company A, 325th Military Intelligence Battalion, pulls security during a rainy training exercise at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., during the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise.



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

Snow Bound In June: Spc. Andrew Zach, Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, qualifies on a snowy Camp Guernsey, Wyo., range after a spring snow storm dumped several inches of snow on the Wyoming post.



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

Learning How To Work Together: Staff Sgt. Joseph Dunlap, Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, speaks with his interpreter before entering a mock village set up at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., as part of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise. Dunlap's squad conducted a search of the village and then interrogated a suspected insurgent they encountered there.

EXERCISE continued from page 11.

but hopefully be portable rather than forcing a unit to travel halfway across the country.

"So we put our thinking caps on and looked at some of the things that were out there and by the summer of 2005 we had done an initial rotation," Stemple said.

The program developed into XCTC. It was validated as a program of record by the Army in January.

XCTC is designed to be the culminating and collective training event for Year 4 in the Army Force Generation (AFORGEN) cycle, fitting in perfectly into the three-week annual training that soon-to-be-deploying units get.

"The program is really designed to take all the individual and lower-echelon skills – individual, squad, platoon – bring them there together in what we call a theater-immersion environment, also in a contemporary operating environment," Stemple said.

"It can be tailored for Afghanistan. It can be tailored for Iraq. It can be tailored for Kosovo. It can be tailored for any theater."

Compared to a combat-training center rotation, an XCTC exercise is cheap. It generally costs \$25 million to send a maneuver brigade to a training center, whereas it only takes \$7 million or so to bring XCTC to a maneuver brigade, Stemple said.

The BfSB was even less expensive than that at \$5 million.

Department of Defense edicts help make XCTC a necessity. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates instituted a policy in 2007 for bidding Reserve Component units from being mobilized more than a year.

Stemple pointed out that in 2005-06, the Nebraska Army National Guard's cavalry squadron trained at Camp Shelby, Miss., for five-and-a-half months before going to Iraq.

"And then they got extended in theater," he said. "Their mobilization ended up being 22 months. We can't do that now."

Like the combat training centers, XCTC immerses units into a theater-like environment. Actors playing Iraqi civilians, some of them actual Iraqis, worked throughout the training area. They were employed by contractors who supplied them with an elaborate wardrobe of Middle Eastern garments.

Indiana Army National Guardsmen served as the opposing forces during the exercise.

"We've got seven villages out there inside

the maneuver box," Stemple said. "These villages are designed to look like the theater that you're in. In our case we've dressed them to look like Iraq. That means inside the buildings are things you would find inside the homes, offices and work places in Iraq."

That realism, said 1st Sgt. David Schultz of Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, is important.

The first time a Soldier sets foot in country he goes through culture shock. The locals have a different way of living, and in much of the Middle East, it is much hotter than the Midwest, he said.

"To walk into a room and see a hair rug or two... All that stuff is realistic, it just adds to it," said Schultz, who has previously deployed to Kuwait, Bosnia and Iraq. "When I first got on the FOB here, I thought I was in Kuwait for a second or two."

Eyes On Soldiers

Another important aspect, and an improvement on the combat training centers, is the amount of technology used to track what each Soldier is doing.

Every evening after training, AARs are conducted that show full motion video 2D and 3D depictions of what each Soldier did. A figure comes up on the screen with his or her name on it.

"Not only does it track where he went and what he did, it tracks what his weapon did," Stemple said. "So if a fratricide happens, or if he shoots the right enemy, we see who did what to whom."

"It's kind of like watching game film of a football play. And then you can play it back and see what you did right or wrong. And then the next day, when you go back out, you take the lessons learned from your after action review, you incorporate them back into your training. And the quality is better each time out."

When the Soldiers watched the replay in special AAR tents on FOB Garry Owen, avatars of themselves bounced through digital villages on large screens alongside video of themselves as they searched houses, detained suspects and other combat-related activities.

"Having that video behind you, you see it through someone else's eyes, as if you had someone stacked behind you," said Sgt. Joshua Artherton of Omaha, a team leader with Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry. "You can see how you flow through the doorway or how



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman

Providing Cover: Spc. Sam Stutzman, Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, stands ready to provide security and support fire for his squad as they conduct a search of a mock Iraqi village during a mission conducted while training with other members of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade at Camp Guernsey, Wyo.

your vehicles move in."

One aspect emphasized in XCTC is the dispersed nature of the battlefield in Iraq and Afghanistan. Company commanders will have platoons over wide areas performing disparate missions. One platoon may be performing a humanitarian mission, say delivering a generator to a village, while another may be doing a cordon and search in an attempt to locate a suspected terrorist.

"So we're not operating in the days of two platoons up and one platoon back, and we rush against the Soviet threat," Stemple said. "It's a much more nuanced, in many ways a more thought-provoking requirement, for our company commanders and our battalion commanders."

In Iraq, the brigade will directly work for theater commander Gen. Raymond Odierno, watching the battlefield throughout Iraq and providing Odierno and his staff situational awareness.

"He'll translate that situational awareness into operations," Stemple said.

Under the brigade will be the 141st Military Intelligence Battalion of the Utah Army National Guard, the 325th Military Intelligence Battalion of the U.S. Army Reserve, the 1167th Battlefield Support Company out of Lincoln and the 67th Signal Network Support Company of the Montana Army National Guard.

The 1-134th Cavalry, though training with the 67th Brigade, will not go to Iraq with them. Instead, the Nebraska cavalry squadron will go to Afghanistan with the 2nd Brigade of the 34th Infantry Division, an Iowa National Guard outfit.

Deployment Training

The year before the mobilization involved more training than during a typical year, including some week-long drills. Some Soldiers, particularly those not married, preferred that to a longer deployment. Others did not like the frequent absences from job and family.

"The advantage to me would be to knock

See EXERCISE on 13.

Despite torrential rain, training goes on during exercise

By Pfc. Justin Zdan
Staff Writer

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. — First rain, then snow, followed by even more rain helped signify that the Soldiers at Camp Guernsey have been faithful to their warrior ethos: “I will always place the mission first.”

“The roads got sloppy,” said Sgt. Jerad Blocker, a team leader with Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry. “I’m surprised the rain didn’t shut down training.”

During one unrelenting down-pour on May 15, the Nebraska Army National Guard cavalry Soldiers from Fremont were given the mission of establishing and maintaining a traffic control point on a gravelly section of road in the rugged Camp Guernsey training area.

But rain caused more problems than just slick roads. It also gave the Soldiers a chance deal with the many different problems they may find in the real world.

“The radios got wet in two of the trucks,” said Spc. Andrew Zach, Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry. “We had to get a guy to re-time and fix the radios.”

Despite the hardships the Soldiers persevered and had a reality check: any combat situation can have last-minute changes and getting to know how your fellow Soldiers think and operate helps keep things running smoothly.

“It was good to work with everyone and see how they each deal with situations differently,” said Zach. “We had the gear, the wire and everything you need to establish and actual TCP.”

The movement itself was directly affected by the weather. When the Soldiers arrived at the TCP location, the unit’s staging objective had to be altered in order



Photos by Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman

Gather Around: Members of Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, prepare to conduct a traffic control point mission while training at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., May 15. Despite pouring rain that made the camp’s roads nearly impassable and caused problems with equipment, the training went on.

to avoid dangerous road conditions.

“We had to turn around and come from the north instead of the south,” said Spc. Nathan Trout, one of the scouts who was driving. “The terrain shifted on us in this aspect and we had trouble coordinating because no one had plans for this.”

When the Soldiers came under direct fire, the mission became even more difficult because they had to move around to avoid it and prevent themselves from sliding into the ditch. The gunners had problems as well because they, too, were also at the mercy of the elements.

“As a gunner I was exposed to the rain all day,” said Pfc. Adam Miller. “I got hit in the face with so many mud puddles.”

After being subjected to direct fire, indirect fire and gas, the Soldiers eventually forgot about the rain and moved on, said Trout.

“It made for better training by throwing the worst of the worst at us and putting us in the most extreme conditions,” he said.

“I think it’s something the Soldiers are going to need,” said Master Sgt. Gary Devore, an observer, controller trainer (OCT) from Fort

Sill, Okla.

“The training mimics places they’re going and I like the new technology for the training scenarios,” he added.

GPS, cameras and three-dimensional imagery were all utilized during the training process so the Soldier’s can review their training.

“The capabilities are good,” said 1st Lt. Yomil Leon, another OCT from Fort Sill. “But the challenges are making all the moving pieces work and be in sync with logistics and communications.”

“This is the first time we’ve used



Stopping Traffic: A Soldier from Fremont’s Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, sets up a road barricade designed to stop traffic during a traffic control point mission at Camp Guernsey, Wyo. The mission was one of many that Soldiers completed in all types of weather conditions.

XCTC,” said Leon. “We’re used to being on a station and controlling the lanes. This allows us to break routine and think outside the box.”

Even though the eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) exercise required a condensed 21-day training schedule, the standards were not lowered or compromised in the development of the intense training, said Devore.

“At our level we make sure they’re up to standard because the Soldiers take our training back to their units,” said Devore. “I believe the Soldiers are absolutely trained to standard. That is what we’re here for and we don’t move on until they get it right.”

IMMERSION continued from page 11.

start coming up and start crowding the trucks and asking for things.”

Bridging the language and cultural barriers is an important aspect of interacting with civilians on a modern battlefield. According to Iler, learning how to communicate through language and cultural barriers was an important lesson that will have long-lasting effects.

“One of the things the platoon took away is the difference in what you mean to say or project and how the population perceives it,” he said.

Another aspect of the immersion training was the integration of the cavalry troopers and the military intelligence Soldiers into “Pike Teams.” There, the Soldiers had to

learn to be adaptable while working with Soldiers from different elements with differing missions. The opportunity to work together in training also reduces confusion on real missions, said Sindelar.

“I learn their tactics and standard operating procedures,” said Sindelar. “I let them know what I need to do my job and then work with the platoon sergeant and platoon leader to work that into the (standard operating procedure).”

Staff Sgt. Chris Nuyen a First Army observer, controller/trainer (OCT), said that integration is especially important overseas, so any lessons the Soldiers can learn during training will ultimately help them once they deploy.

“It shows the capabilities of both units, maneuver and military intelligence,” he said.

The cavalry Soldiers agreed, saying that learning how to operate as a “Pike Team” took some getting used to.

“We had to slow down, look back and take their mission into consideration,” said Pvt. Bryson D. Wagner, a driver with Troop A, 134th Cavalry.

“Our techniques are different,” Iler added. “Not having worked together before, we didn’t understand their capabilities.”

They do now, said Nuyen. “If they do take contact in theater, they are going to know that they will take care of each other,” Nuyen said. “It helps build trust.”

The training was also an opportunity for

the Soldiers to work with Sindelar, their assigned medic. “We are really blessed to have him this early,” Iler said. “It has given us a chance to get to know him.”

“He is the kind of guy who would run into gunfire to help even if he didn’t know you,” he added.

Most importantly, Iler said, working with Sindelar in training helped the “Pike Team” Soldiers develop trust and confidence.

Ultimately, said the Soldiers, the goal is to make the exercise as realistic as possible.

“It seemed like a real world mission,” said Wagner.

By immersing the Soldiers in the difficult and realistic training, hopefully, their mission down range will seem easy.

EXERCISE

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out our AWTs (Army Warrior Tasks) and battle drills now, so when we get to mobe site we can concentrate on what we’re going to do once we get overseas,” said 1st Lt. Rob Schepers, executive officer of Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry. “It’ll get us focused on what our mission is there.”

The long train-up did allow the Soldiers to bond with each other.

“They’ve really grown together in the past six months, grown together into a real cohesive group,” said Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Smith, Headquarters Platoon sergeant for the 1167th Battlefield Support Company. “(The longer drill) was one of the major factors of growing together... because we lived with each other for seven days, whether we liked it or not.”

The bonding may be one of the top benefits of the XCTC and the ARFORGEN model, Stemple said. It’s a contrast from the days where some Soldiers might not get to know who they were deploying with until they got to the mobilization station.

“By the time we get to the point where we’re at now, we’re well-versed with each other,” Stemple said. “They’re no strangers to each other on the battalion or brigade staff.”

“It’s kind of like watching game film of a football play. And then you can play it back and see what you did right or wrong.”

—Col. Philip Stemple
67th Battlefield Surveillance
Brigade commander

Capt. Jeremiah Afuh, commander of the cavalry squadron’s Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, said XCTC’s training was much more relevant than the training he received as a scout platoon leader a few years ago when he was about to deploy to Iraq. Back then he and his men were trained almost solely on combat missions.

“I wish I had training like this on my first deployment,” he said. “It prepares you for what you’re actually going to see on the ground. Instead of just honing your military skills, it prepares you for all the aspects of the battlefield.”

There was another positive aspect to the current model as well, Afuh said.

“I really didn’t want to be at Camp Shelby for six-to-seven months again.”

Hollywood experts step in to give Wyoming exercise more realism

By Pfc. Justin Zdan
Staff Writer

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. — Every Soldier tying his or her boots before going on a mission in places like Iraq or Afghanistan could encounter an improvised explosive device. One tool in the National Guard’s arsenal to ensure Soldiers survive is realistic training.

Mike LiDondici, Allied Container System’s (ACS’s) managing field director, along with Erick Brennan, West-efx battlefield effects specialist, assembled teams at Camp Guernsey this spring to develop realistic battlefield-immersion training for the eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) exercise.

This is the first time ACS has worked with the Nebraska Army National Guard, but they’ve been working with First Army since 1992. They also work with the Canadian and British military, said LiDondici.

The Live Immersion Training (LIT) that was conducted during XCTC consisted of a number of elements. They use the same level of detail that they would for a Hollywood movie, while keeping the sites usable for training, LiDondici said.

“Scenario development, story line implementation and tracking continuity have made

See SPECIAL EFFECTS on 14.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Boom! A simulated explosive device hidden aboard a pick-up sends up a billowing cloud of dust and smoke after special effects specialists from West-efx set it off during a demonstration, May 21.

Maintenance company develops convoy skills

■ 1167th Forward Support Company uses Wyoming exercise to prepare maintenance crews to operate 'outside gate'

By Capt. Andrew Nelson
Staff Writer

Camp Guernsey, Wyo., — The grey smoke of the simulated IED billowed into the sky like a geyser as a hollow boom echoed through the valley. The convoy came to a halt.

Sgt. Daniel Prather, convoy commander, immediately started getting LACE (Liquid, Ammo, Casualties, Equipment) reports over the radio. Slowly, the convoy moved out of the kill zone.

It wasn't perfect. The Soldiers' reactions would have to be quicker after they arrive in Iraq in a few months. But the troopers were motivated, and since it was only their first time in the lane, perfection was not expected.

Lincoln's 1167th Forward Support Company was preparing for war and the simulated roadside bombs and vehicle-borne IEDs (Improvised Explosive Device) were the kinds of things some in the unit may face during its year-long deployment to Iraq as part of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

A lot of logistics units don't have to go through this kind of training, said Maj. Christopher Weskamp, the unit's commander, and technically, the 1167th doesn't have to either.

But many 1167th Soldiers will have to deliver supplies and recover damaged vehicles



Photos by Capt. Andrew Nelson

Over Hill, Over Dale: An 1167th Forward Support Company truck crew negotiates over a muddy Camp Guernsey, Wyo., road while conducting a convoy exercise. The training was designed to prepare the Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers for situations they might encounter while operating outside of their base.

outside the wire of the brigade's base, so the training is vital to the unit's success and the survivability of its Soldiers.

"I requested that my LOGPAC and recovery teams go through the CAT level-3 evaluated training because of the probability they will go outside the gate," Weskamp said.

The training reinforced the cleverness of the foe they would face. The convoy was vulnerable to the vehicle-borne IED because it came to a halt when the lead vehicle spotted a fake IED alongside the road. As it was stopped, a pickup truck pulled alongside and exploded a simulator.

"It channeled the convoy and allowed the



Talking It Over: Sgt. Daniel Prather, a 1167th Forward Support Company member, talks with members of his unit about a convoy they just completed at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., in May. Prather served as the convoy commander during the exercise, which was designed to give the Soldiers valuable road experience.

VBIED," said 1st Lt. Brandon Burros, 25, a Premobilization Training Assistance Element assistor.

Sometimes the training was designed to show Soldiers when not to shoot. At one point, a team led by 21-year-old Spc. Jessica Haynes was manning a traffic control checkpoint when a middle-aged Iraqi couple approached, each carrying a large plastic container. The Soldiers made the couple drop the containers, and through an interpreter, learned that the couple was in need of water. The Soldiers did not find any weapons, so they were allowed through.

"I think it pretty much teaches us that not everybody that comes through... is a combatant or means wrong," said Haynes, of Lincoln. "Before they entered the gate they said, 'Thank you, thank you.'"

Nebraska Guard mechanics keep exercise rolling along

By Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman
Staff Writer

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. — If vehicles broke down on the muddy roads around Forward Operations Base Garry Owen, Soldiers couldn't call AAA. But they could call on the members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance) and be assured that they would be taken care of quickly.

During the eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) exercise, Soldiers of the Lincoln-based 267th Ord. Co. traveled to Camp Guernsey, Wyo., where they were given responsibility for the maintenance of any equipment, vehicles, or armaments as well as vehicle recovery for the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and units supporting their training.

It's a huge mission, say members of the unit, but they're glad to be able to support such an important exercise.

"We are here for everyone. Nothing hurts more than when your vehicles don't work," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 K.C. Sohl, automotive warrant officer for the 267th Ord. Co.

To keep the wheels turning, precise coordination is required. A large part of the coordination is simply keeping track of all the moving pieces.

Spc. Ashley M. Bergantzel, 267th SAMS (Standard Army Maintenance System) clerk, said that making sure information about maintenance issues flows correctly is important in many different ways. "(The logistical leaders want) to be able to keep track of equipment, what's wrong with it and where it is," said Bergantzel. "It's our job to let the units know the status of their equipment."

There are challenges created by working in a remote area.

"Tracking down and getting parts takes a little longer," said Bergantzel. "In garrison there's a parts place right down the road if we need it."

Still, say unit members, the unit takes pride in ensuring that whenever possible, maintenance issues are taken care of before vehicles and equipment reach the field.

"We are in charge of the maintenance of all the vehicles and making sure they don't break down in the field," said Pfc. Caleb A. Pearson, a unit mechanic.

Spc. Aaron C Menke, a 267th mechanic agreed, saying: "We service their vehicles so they can continue their mission and we get good training."

That work ethic also helps keep the 267th Ord. Co. sharp. Providing maintenance sup-



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman

Getting Down And Dirty: Spc. Aaron Menke, a member of the 267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance,) works to repair a vehicle while supporting the eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise at Camp Guernsey, Wyo. Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard unit had a huge mission during the May exercise, during which they were responsible for maintaining vehicles, equipment and armaments assigned to the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

ports the BfSB and creates opportunities to train in areas that the mechanics wouldn't normally have available to them

"I am normally a generator mechanic, so I don't normally work on the vehicles," Menke said, adding that he was also able to do other things that he had never done before, such as practicing sling-load operations. "The experience I get is awesome."

"Not only is (this exercise) great training for the brigade, its great training for the 267th," Sohl said.

Maintaining the vehicles and equipment to keep around 1,400 training and support Soldiers moving takes a great deal of coordination and effort. Despite the challenges of supporting a brigade at Camp Guernsey, the 267th Ord. Co. delivers.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Realistic Setting: 1-134th Cavalry Soldiers search a mock Iraqi village during an exercise at Camp Guernsey, Wyo. Allied Container System, which supported the exercise, created a realistic setting that would allow the Nebraska Soldiers to be immersed into their training.

SPECIAL EFFECTS continued from page 13.

this the best training event I've been a part of," said LiDondici, May 20, during the third week of the three-week XCTC exercise.

"Every Soldier we've spoke to has said this is the most realistic training they've had," said LiDondici. "We're dedicated to the realism and strive to perfect immersion. We're also dedicated to culture integration and sensitivity. Part of what makes it so realistic is our attention to cultural details."

This particular exercise has been in conjunction with West-efx, a Hollywood company. "We're a 20-plus-year special effects business," said Brennan. "When we're not here, we're setting up for the stage."

While the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade Soldiers were conducting a training exercises in the field, either West-efx battlefield effects technicians or an operator controller/trainer (OCT) would hold a trigger to ignite either a simulated vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) or an IED.

An explosives signature replicates an explosion's audio or visual effect, said Brennan, adding that the goal is to try and make the explosion's signature as accurate as possible.

"The main difference I've noticed this rotation is the story thread," said Brennan. "Reality in the box has more continuity that we're starting to see more of."

"We want to raise the bar to get the best possible training for these guys," said Brennan.

This training can benefit the Soldiers

throughout the ranks. XCTC has evolved into a good battle rhythm and all the players are starting to get the big picture, said Brennan.

"We only have one take (time) to get it right, unlike in Hollywood, so we're constantly updating our technology," said Brennan, adding that 99.6 percent of their approximately 9,000 explosions have gone off successfully.

"The simulators accomplished what they needed to do," said Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Garcia, an OCT from First Army. "Our opposition forces enjoyed them as well."

During the simulated lanes, training officials used either VBIED or the Explosive Formed Penetrators (EFP) to simulate the different types of devices Soldiers might encounter overseas, said Garcia.

"The VBIED worked great on the convoy," said Garcia. "I could tell by the gunner's reaction that they got a lot out of it by utilizing their escalation of force."

"I'm sure these Soldiers going down range appreciate the realism," said Garcia.

In the real world, every Soldier does his or her own stunts, and there aren't any retakes if they make a mistake. That's why no expense was spared to ensure that the 67th BfSB Soldiers were given the training they need to possibly save one of their comrade's lives.

And with some Hollywood help, they'll be more likely to lace up their boots again for another mission.

Support commander says exercise valuable experience

By Capt. Andrew Nelson
Staff Writer

LINCOLN, Neb., – The recent XCTC did more than get the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade ready for war.

It also made the hundreds of Soldiers supporting it – the truck drivers, the medics, the staff officers and their organizations – far more prepared to handle a domestic emergency than they otherwise would be, said Col. Michael Navrkal, commander of the Support Task Force (STF).

“We have advanced our ability to operate domestically because of this, to really support our civil authorities,” Navrkal said. “I think that’s been a huge benefit for us.”

The reason is this: The STF’s job was to perform the logistical and support tasks for the 67th’s Soldiers that did not directly support their missions so they could focus on training for war. But in order to do that, Navrkal, as the STF’s commander, had to bring together Soldiers from his unit – the 92nd Troop Command – and the Nebraska Joint Force Headquarters, much like what would happen in a domestic emergency.

And that had to be pulled off while the 92nd TC and JFHQ still performed their regular missions.

“Yet, we could still export a large number of folks from the state to Camp Guernsey, Wyo., and do the things that necessarily needed to be done,” Navrkal said.

And it was an awesome task to



Photo by Capt. James Hewitt

Building The Connection: Capt. Carlos Van Nurden, Joint Force Headquarters, Nebraska, pounds stakes into the ground at Camp Guernsey to guide a tactical fiber optic assembly that was used to provide communication connectivity to different buildings being used by the Nebraska Army National Guard.

support the XCTC rotation. At one point 480 STF Soldiers were at the ground at Guernsey.

Add in 250 contractors and there was nearly one person supporting the training for every Soldier on the ground preparing to deploy.

The daily “Husker Express” that ran between Lincoln and Guernsey transported 183 people and “countless pieces of cargo and repair parts” more than 55,923

miles. The Aviation Task Force flew 180 sorties, burning 33,700 gallons of fuel in the process.

The result: The 67th BfSB Soldiers were able to focus on going downrange for their entire time during the rotation.

“I think what it shows, is that we have tremendously talented Soldiers in JFHQ and Troop Command,” Navrkal said. “This being our first shot at it, we did phe-

nomenal.”

Pulling off such a feat was not easy. Navrkal was asked in 2009 by Brig. Gen Judd Lyons, the adjutant general for the Nebraska National Guard, to command the STF.

To prepare, he traveled to the first XCTC rotation at Camp Blanding, Fla., to see how the Florida Army National Guard supported that event.

It was evident 92nd Troop Com-

mand could not do it alone. There were some things that would be needed – contractors, a communications shop – that would have to come out of state headquarters.

“It really had to be an ad-hoc, blended approach to fill out the STF staff,” Navrkal said. “There were certain capabilities that I didn’t have (that) we needed to have out there and the only place they really resided at was at the JFHQ level.”

Soldiers and contractors would spend months at Guernsey setting things up and getting them taken down. Much of the heavy lifting was done in April in terms of getting infrastructure built.

The rotation took up most of May and much of June was spent breaking it all down and repairing vehicles and equipment.

XCTC dominated Navrkal’s life. He estimated he spent two days a week at Guernsey in March and April, he spent most May out there and returned again June 9.

“It proved we could pick up, lock stock and barrel, move and sustain ourselves,” Navrkal said.

“We did it for a month, but we really could have done it for much longer.”

And the Troop Command and JFHQ Soldiers showed they could work in snow and extreme rain for long hours and still perform the mission.

“That’s what I saw in our Soldiers: They just adopted to whatever circumstances that came our way,” he said. “I think we couldn’t have been happier.”

Nebraska Army Guard organizations join forces to support training exercise

By Pfc. Justin Zdan
Staff Writer

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. – For every Soldier training on the battlefield, there’s an almost equal number of personnel behind the scenes supporting them.

The recent eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) was no exception.

Coordination of air transportation, ground transportation, food and supplies, personnel, networking, billeting, accountability and Red Cross messages were just a few of the necessities required to facilitate training during one of the largest Nebraska Army National Guard exercises put on in more than a decade.

That support was provided by troops from Joint Force Headquarters and the 92nd Troop Command, which totaled about 37 percent of the troops at Camp Guernsey on the ground for the duration of the exercise.

To get it all started, the Nebraska Army National Guard’s G-3 shop (operations) handled the planning that’s essential to training.

“Our job here is to facilitate the training for a unit that’s set to mobilize,” said Lt. Col. Matt Kelly, G-3 plans chief. “We’re in charge of organizing and synchronizing all of the training resources to make sure the unit is trained prior to mobilization.”

Communicating the brigade’s intentions for training and helping with problems along the way were also tasks handled by the G-3 office staff. “Before training even begins we made sure First Army’s tasks were able to be conducted and made sure there was a plan in place to get it done,” said Kelly.

The goal, Kelly said, was to keep the state abreast of training status. If opposition forces or Observer Control/Trainers (OCTs) are needed, G-3 was also responsible for letting the state know.

Getting that information back to Lincoln, Neb., or other locations in Nebraska is where the G-6 (information management) section came in. The G-6 provided all the

network support.

“Our staff has set up a network for voice, data, and video communications to get information back to Nebraska,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Pat Hegemann, information technology specialist (network).

According to Hegemann, the G-6’s goal was to provide the network communications necessary to inform Nebraska officials that the training was being accomplished and going as planned.

“We bring our work stations here to reach out just like you could at home,” said Lt. Col. Shelly Herrod, information services branch chief.

“Its primary use is the ‘proof of concept,’” Herrod said regarding XCTC.

Once the training plans were set, the location determined and communication established, the next step was to get people where they needed to go. “Everybody has to get somewhere,” said 2nd Lt. Erin Hanson, one of the officers in charge of transportation. Hanson works for the G-4 (logistics) shop, where she handles logistics.

According to Hanson, the G-4 was responsible for making sure buses, vans and other non-tactical vehicles were where they needed to be and when they needed to be there. That’s why it was necessary to create itineraries, said Hanson.

“The job requires a lot of resource management because we have a limited amount of resources,” said Hanson, who also coordinated with the Husker Express, a transportation system run by the state of Nebraska to move Soldiers and supplies to Wyoming.

Once the Soldiers’ transportation was set, it was time for the S-1 section to step up. The S-1 – or personnel – section’s personnel specialists were kept busy verifying which Soldiers were present.

In the S-1, having a name for every number is key, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Corey Baker, 92nd Troop Command personnel officer.

“Personnel accountability is needed in order to take care of the Soldiers,” said Baker. “If a Red Cross message gets to us, we verify it and process it down through the bat-

talions to make sure the message gets across.”

They were also responsible for the accountability of personnel from both the Logistics Task Force (LTF) and the Support Task Force (STF.)

The next step involved supplying the troops with the technology, gear, billeting and anything else needed to make the training mission a success. That’s where the 92nd Troop Command’s S-4 and the Joint Force Headquarters’ G-4 sections supported the exercise.

The S-4 and G-4 sections have separate, but equal responsibilities. The S-4 section, along with SRI International, test and implement the Multiple Integrated Laser Systems (MILS). S-4 specialists also installed the anti-improvised explosive device (IED) electronic warfare systems known as the DUKE system.

“We’re here to support the instrumentation and de-instrumentation of the MILS on people and on vehicles” said Capt. Raymond Phillips, 168th Quartermaster Petroleum Supply Battalion logistics officer. “We also coordinate supplies from the state.”

The G-4 and G-8 (finance) shops provided logistical support and funding for the Class I rations, Class II expendable supplies and any additional supplies required for training, said Lt. Col. Bret Allgood, surface maintenance manager.

They also managed the individual clothing and equipment, and did the receipts for all the equipment that was line-hauled to Wyoming.

“We want the Soldiers to get the maximum out of their equipment for their training, so it’s working when they need it,” said Allgood. “We take the burden of purchasing and contracting away from the BfSB, so they can focus on their mission and get a realistic view of what they’re going to see.”

That level of support was appreciated, said 1st Sgt. Troy Redl, first sergeant for the 67th BfSB’s Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

“Having this many people supporting us makes it easier to accomplish our mission.”



Photos by Pfc. Justin Zdan



67th Brigade Soldiers greet dawn with early morning run

Members of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade rose early to greet the sun as it appeared above the edge of Camp Guernsey, Wyo., May 18, when they participated in a brigade-wide run. According to brigade officials, the run was designed to bring all of the organization’s Soldiers together to participate in an organizational run, thus allowing them to feel a greater part of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

Nebraska bosses get firsthand look at training's benefits

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. — Approximately 60 employers and civic leaders had the opportunity to get a first-hand look at the training that members of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade were receiving when they travelled to Camp Guernsey, Wyo., in late May.

The employers and civic leaders were participants of two separate "Boss Lifts" conducted in conjunction with the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard and the state Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve committee.

The purpose of the trip was to give the employers an opportunity to better understand the training and preparations Soldiers of the brigade were conducting in preparation for their upcoming deployment in support of Operation Iraq Freedom, said Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, who accompanied one group to Wyoming, May 21.

"I want to thank you for lending us your Soldiers and Airmen so that we can get done what we need to do," said Lyons at the end of a long day during which the employers and state governmental leaders were airlifted from Lincoln, Neb., to Camp Guernsey and then back via a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker and a Nebraska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook.

"I know that it's a hardship when we take them away for three weeks to train before a deployment. I know that that's a hardship particularly if it's a small business, but I hope what you saw here is that we take it seriously to prepare them for the challenges that they're going to face in theater, either in Iraq or Afghanistan," Lyons said. "We want them to return to you safe and sound, so we invest the time and effort on the front end. But we want you to know that we couldn't do it without your support and we just can't thank you enough for that."

The bosslift effort actually consisted of two separate events. The first was conducted on May 18.

The bosses and employers selected to participate in the activities were nominated by Soldiers from within the brigade.

According to Bill Nelson, a retired Nebraska Army National Guard chief warrant officer who now serves as the director of the Nebraska ESGR committee, the goal of the bosslifts was to give the employers a better understanding of exactly what their Guardsmen do when away from work on military assignments.

"You'll see that it is pretty intense training that the Soldiers are conducting," Nelson told each group at the start of each day. "You'll also see that the Soldiers have an intense sense of pride."

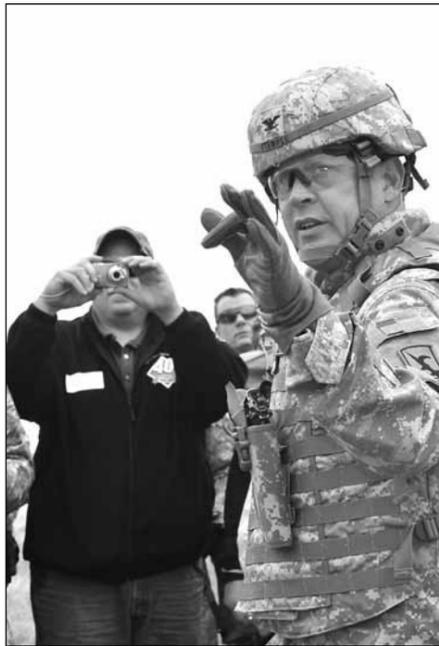
Each day's trip followed a similar pattern. After reporting to the Nebraska Air National Guard base in Lincoln, Neb., as the sun was rising above the eastern horizon, the employers were given several general briefings about the Nebraska National Guard before boarding a 155th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker for the one-hour flight to Scottsbluff, Neb.

During the flight, the employers had the opportunity to talk to members of the Nebraska Air National Guard air crew while also observing the different roles that the crew members perform on either the flight deck or down in the boom pod at the rear of the aircraft.

Once in Scottsbluff, the travelers were met by two CH-47 Chinook crews from the Grand Island-based Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, which was providing medium airlift support for the 67th BfSB during the three-week eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) exercise.

After an additional flight briefing, the bosses loaded onto the helicopters for the 45-minute flight to Camp Guernsey, Wyo.

During the next six hours, the employers and civic leaders were given an overall XCTC briefing by Col. Phil Stemple, commander of the 67th BfSB, as well as additional information from the contractors—SRI International, Allied Container Systems and West-efx—that were supporting the exercise by creating



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Explaining The Value Of Training: Col. Philip Stemple, commander of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, explains how Soldiers are using their eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise to better prepare for their upcoming overseas missions.

realistic Iraq settings and situations that would allow the participating Soldiers to become "immersed" in their training.

Throughout the morning's briefings and demonstrations, the bosses were continuously thanked for giving the Soldiers the time they need to conduct their training.

"You have a bigger part in this than you realize," said Stemple during his initial overall XCTC briefing about the impact the exercise will have on his brigade's ability to perform its mission overseas.

He added that employers also play a significant role in preparing the Soldiers, primarily in the work they do in training them to do their civilian occupations.

"The operations that we have been doing and will be doing over there in Iraq are not just warfighting skills," Stemple said. "There are also a multitude of what the Army like to call Stability Skills."

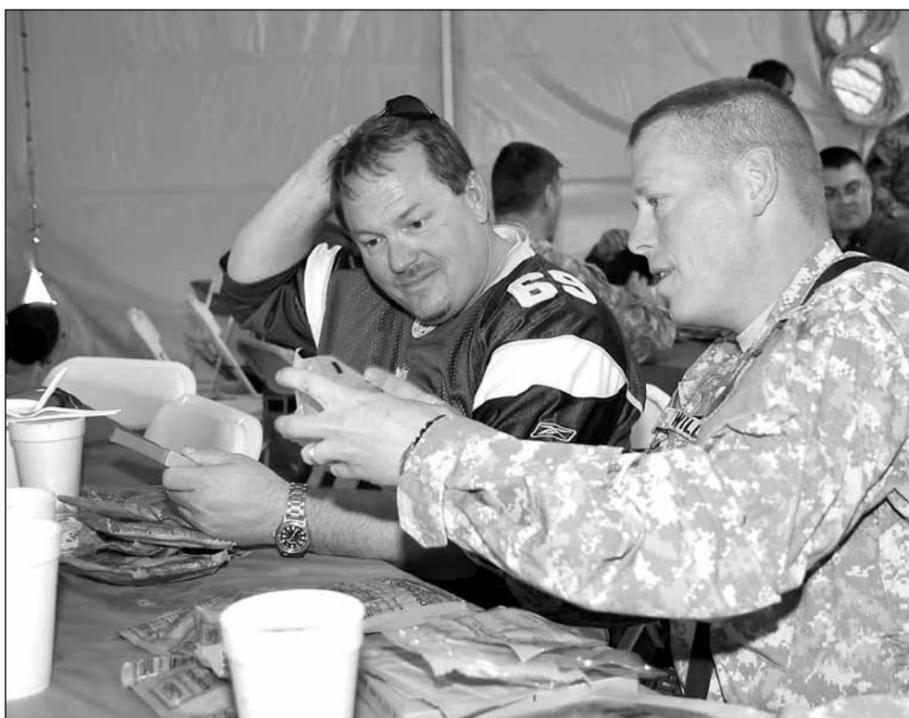
"We have plumbers, we have carpenters, we have school teachers, we have people who own their own businesses, we have bankers... all these people who work for you or who have their own businesses bring to Afghanistan or Iraq their own civilian skills sets. And that civilian skill set is something that active duty units don't have because they have just one career and they're very, very good at it."

"Our Soldiers have two careers and they're very, very good at both careers," Stemple added. "So, even though you don't realize it, when they're working with you, you are training them in that other career, which is just as important when they go into theater."

Following the morning demonstrations, the bosses were bussed into the rugged interior of Camp Guernsey to Tactical Training Base Garry Owen where members of the 67th BfSB were conducting their training. There the bosses were joined by their Guard employees for a Meals, Ready to Eat lunch and additional briefings and demonstrations on XCTC. These demonstrations included information on how modern, state-of-the-art technology was aiding officials in conducting their training.

The bosses also had an opportunity to watch as members of the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron conducted a mission at one of several mock Iraqi villages that had been constructed to simulate conditions Soldiers will encounter overseas. These conditions included realistic village settings, Arabic-speaking civilians and disguised insurgents who were looking for opportunities to snipe at the Soldiers or explode hidden improvised explosive devices designed to wreak havoc upon the Soldiers and civilians.

According to Staff Sgt. Steven Paulsen, a squad leader with Beatrice's Company C, 1-134th Cavalry, who works as a computer programmer for Union Pacific Railroad in ci-



This Is How It Works: 1st Sgt. John Wills, Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, explains how to warm up a Meals, Ready to Eat to Curt Smith, a commissioner for the Dickinson (Iowa) County Soil and Water Conservation District. In civilian life Wills works full-time as the environmental coordinator for Dickinson County in northwest Iowa.

Nebraska secretary of state amazed at technology's impact

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. — Along with helping educate Guardsmen's employers about the value the eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) exercise was having on preparing the Soldiers for their overseas deployments, the May 21 Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve "Bosslift" also gave the Nebraska National Guard the opportunity to educate several state governmental leaders about the training the Guard was receiving at Camp Guernsey, Wyo.



Gale

Among the state leaders who participated in the May 21 Bosslift was Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale.

Gale said he was extremely impressed by what he saw.

"It's just amazing the quality of training that your troops receive," said Gale during the flight back to Lincoln, Neb., after spending a day at Camp Guernsey. "It's almost a virtual world experience."

"That seems like an incredible step forward in regards to the completeness of the experience and I think that the troops, after

this level of experience, go abroad much more aware of the unusual circumstances that they face, not just militarily, but also culturally," Gale added.

Gale said he was also impressed at how new technology has given commanders an "incredible global view of their command field."

"I was just blown away by the experience of watching the computer screens as the actual troops were in the mock communities involved in the exercises," he said. "Commanders could watch them and give them an immediate reaction."

Most importantly, Gale said he enjoyed the opportunity to actually get to know the Soldiers involved in the exercise a little better.

"It's important that we get to know them in any way that we can so that we can thank them for what they do to defend our nation."

Among the other governmental and civic leaders participating in the May 21 Bosslift were State Sen. Scott Price; John Hilgert, director of State Veterans Affairs; Gerry Oligmueller, director of the State Budget Office; Mike Lovelace, advisor to the Legislative Fiscal Office; Dr. Ahsan Naseem, PTSD Clinic director for the VA Medical Center; and Dr. Jon Kayne, Peer-to-Peer Support director, Bellevue University.

vilian life, the opportunity to show his boss what he and fellow Nebraska Army National Guardsmen were doing was priceless.

"It shows them the important things that we're doing to get ready for the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq and it helps them understand how important their support is during our (upcoming) missions," said Paulsen.

His boss at Union Pacific, Mark Anderson, said he was definitely impressed by what he was seeing.

"This is giving me a better understanding of all the things that the Guard does to support the country and a better understanding of how we can support him while he's away doing his missions," said Anderson, a Union Pacific Railroad project engineer. "I'm just glad that he selected me to come."

Anderson said he was particularly impressed with the level of detail that was going into the XCTC exercise and how experts from Hollywood had been hired to ensure that the little details in the mock villages were as authentic as possible.

"The simulation of the damage and stuff that they might see in the field... this is just amazing," Anderson said. "Just seeing what the military is doing for our Soldiers before they go into the field makes us feel a lot more comfortable about our Soldiers coming back in one piece. It also makes us think a lot more about our government, too, in seeing all that the government is doing to ensure the safety of our Soldiers."

Other Soldiers and employers echoed those sentiments.

John H. Wills is the first sergeant of Fremont's Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry. He

also works fulltime as the environmental coordinator for Dickinson County in northwest Iowa.

During the May 21 Bosslift effort, Wills invited Scott Mitchell and Curt Smith, commissioners for the Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District, to attend so that they could see what exactly he and the other Soldiers were doing.

"I think it's extremely important," said Wills. "Just for me alone, to be able to show my employers that I'm not wasting my time, that I'm not wasting their time... things there are getting left done improperly sometimes and the reason for it is because we're doing some important things here."

Mitchell and Smith said they were both impressed by what they saw.

"It just gave us a chance to see what John is doing," said Mitchell. "We knew that he was training, but you didn't know (exactly what they were doing.) I think that when you see the amount of training, it's just about a 24/7 endeavor for them right now. We just have a lot better appreciation for the level of commitment they're making to be in the Guard and to be a good employee for us at the same time."

"It was a real eye-opener for us," added Smith, who said he was particularly impressed with the way technology was being harnessed to reinforce the lessons being learned out in the field. "It was an experience that we can take back with us and share with the people back home about what they go through, where they sleep, what they eat."

"It's a 14- to 16-hour day for them," he added. "It's crazy. It's crazy."

Nebraska National Guard History

1-134th Cavalry: 'All Hell Couldn't Stop Them'

By Richard Clark, PhD.

State Command Historian

The 134th Cavalry traces its lineage to the formation of the first militia companies of the Nebraska Territory.

In 1855, on orders from Acting Territorial Governor Thomas B. Cuming, Nebraskans joined the First and Second Nebraska Regiments of the state militia. With the Platte River as a natural division, the First Regiment included settlers from north of the river and the Second Regiment included those to the south.

Cuming's order assigned each regiment to protect its respective region. Commanded by Brig. Gen. John M. Thayer, the Nebraska National Guard's first adjutant general, the First and Second Regiments' primary responsibility was to protect settlers from hostile Native Americans.

These first units of the 1-134th Cavalry's lineage mustered as needed and served ad hoc without federal recognition.

Grey Coats and Indians

In early 1861, volunteers from Western Iowa and the Nebraska Territory gathered in Omaha to volunteer to fight in the Civil War.

On June 11 and July 21 volunteers entered federal service as the First Regiment Nebraska Volunteer Infantry under the command of Thayer.

Initially, the First Nebraska fought several minor skirmishes in Missouri. Then in 1862, under the command of Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, the First Nebraska participated in the capture of Fort Donelson, Tenn. Brig. Gen. Lew Wallace, commander of the Third Division, wrote that the First Nebraska "met the storm, no man flinching, and their fire was terrible."

Following the capture of Fort Donelson, the First Nebraska accompanied Grant's army to Pittsburg Landing in Tennessee where it fought in the Battle of Shiloh. On the second day of the battle, the First Nebraska broke through the Confederate line after a two-hour exchange of fire.

In November 1863, Special Order 278 reorganized the First Nebraska Volunteer Infantry as the First Nebraska Cavalry.

When the term of enlistment for the newly organized cavalry unit expired the following year, members reorganized as the First Nebraska Cavalry Veteran Volunteers and served in federal service at Fort Kearney to protect settlers and travelers from hostile Indians.

The unit mustered out of federal service at Omaha in 1866.

For 10 years after the Civil War, Nebraskans fought in several independent militias in ad hoc campaigns against hostile Indians.

In 1874, the state sought to reestablish a formally organized militia with the creation of the First Regiment of Mounted Infantry.

Several events occurred in the late 1870s to prompt the further revival of formally organized militias. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 in West Virginia demonstrated the need for military forces to preserve the peace, but the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 limited the use of federal troops in civil disturbances. Governors, fearful of public unrest, turned to the creation of state National Guards.

In 1878, Nebraska organized the Second Regiment of Infantry. In 1881, the First Regiment of Mounted Infantry and the Second Regiment of Infantry consolidated and reorganized as the First Regiment, Nebraska National Guard.

Spanish American War and Philippine Insurrection

In April 1898 the United States declared war against Spain and the



Weapons Training: Members of the 134th Infantry, 34th "Red Bull" Division, practice machine gun drills with an M1919 .30 caliber medium machine gun. Until the mass deployment of tanks in World War II, the machine gun defined the tactics and strategies of the modern battlefield.

Nebraska National Guard reorganized to meet the challenge.

On May 10, 1898, the First Regiment mustered into federal service as the First Nebraska Volunteer Infantry at the State Fairgrounds in Lincoln under the command of Col. John P. Bratt. Six days later, the First Nebraska left Lincoln for San Francisco where it joined the Eighth Corps and boarded ships bound for the Philippine Islands, a Spanish possession.

By the time the First Nebraska arrived in the Philippines, native insurgents had driven Spanish forces to the capital at Manila and the newly arrived U.S. troops lay siege to the Spanish in the capital. Spanish forces surrendered to American troops and the First Nebraska assumed constabulary duties.

Tensions between native Filipinos and Americans increased following the Spanish surrender. When Spain ceded the Philippine Islands to the United States for \$20 million dollars in December 1898, island natives began to fear that the United States intended to replace Spain as the island's colonial ruler. In February fighting erupted between U.S. and insurgent Filipino forces, beginning the Philippine Insurrection.

During an offensive against the Filipino stronghold of Malolos, Brig. Gen. Irving Hale of the Colorado National Guard watched as the First Nebraska advanced over two miles against insurgent forces. He then said: "There go those First Nebraskans again, and all hell couldn't stop them."

A version of this phrase eventually became the battle cry of the 134th Infantry Regiment. In July 1899, the First Nebraska began the voyage home and mustered out of service at San Francisco on Aug. 23.

Returning to Omaha, First Nebraska veterans rejoined the Nebraska National Guard to form the core of the newly reorganized First Infantry Regiment.

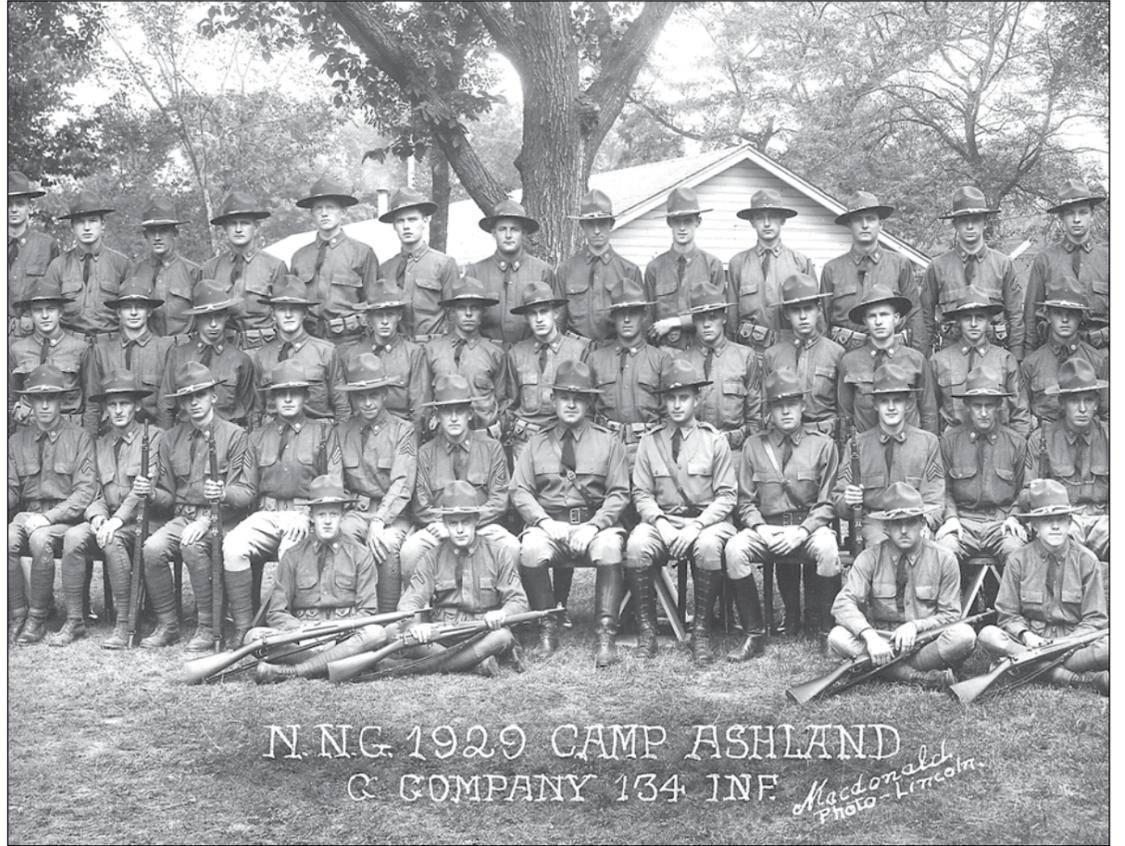
Reorganization

Between 1900-16, the Nebraska National Guard underwent important reorganization and professionalization.

The Federal Militia Act of 1903 mandated many of the features of the modern National Guard including annual training, weekend drills and attendance at regular Army schools. In 1908, the Nebraska National Guard held its first annual encampment at or near the modern site of Camp Ashland.

In 1913, the Nebraska National Guard built the State Arsenal in Lincoln at the State Fairgrounds. The building was strategically located near the railroad to facilitate deployment and served as storehouse for arms, ammunition, and supplies.

As part of a comprehensive state mobilization plan, the First and Second infantry Regiments



Nebraska National Guard Museum Photos

Annual Training At Camp Ashland: Members of Company C, 134th Infantry pose, for a unit photograph in 1929 at Camp Ashland, Neb. From 1923-36, the entire Nebraska National Guard held annual training at Camp Ashland. Annual training during the period was both community fairs and military training.

consolidated and reorganized to form the Fourth and Fifth Infantry Regiments.

Pancho Villa Expedition and World War I Service

In 1916 the Fourth and Fifth Infantry Regiments mustered into Federal Service to participate in the border campaign against Mexican insurgent Pancho Villa.

As America prepared to enter World War I, the Nebraska National Guard returned to federal service on July 15, 1917. National Guard units that entered federal service were redesignated to avoid the confusion caused by having the same numbered units from each state.

The Department of War reorganized Nebraska's Fourth Infantry as the 127th Field Artillery and the Fifth Infantry as the 134th Infantry Regiment. All of Nebraska's units, except the field hospital and band, became a part of the 34th Division.

Both the 127th and 134th served in federal service through the war until 1919. Veterans returning to the state who rejoined the Nebraska National Guard reorganized as the First Nebraska Infantry. On June 22, 1921, the First Infantry permanently reorganized as the 134th Infantry Regiment.

World War II Combat

Almost a year before the United States Entered World War II, the 134th Infantry Regiment mobilized to train for possible war. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, the infantry forces of the Nebraska National Guard were already in federal service.

In 1942, as the First and Second Battalions of the 134th engaged in stateside training assignments, the Army deployed the Second Battalion on a special assignment to prepare the Aleutian Islands for Japanese attack. Known as the "lost battalion," the unit was redesignated as the Second Battalion, 197th Infantry, while a new Second Battalion, 134th Infantry, was reconstituted from members of the First and Third battalions.

In May 1944, the 134th shipped from New Jersey to England in preparation for the upcoming invasion of France.

The 134th, under the command of Col. Butler B. Miltonberger, a future major general and National Guard Bureau chief, followed on

the heels of the Allied landing at Normandy and helped liberated the strategic city of St. Lo, France, in July 1944

The 134th then fought its way across Europe through Northern France, Belgium and Germany to the Rhine River.

Cold War Years

During the Cold War Era, the 134th Infantry did not participate in any overseas conflicts. Prejudices of regular Army leaders often meant that the Army National Guard was under-equipped and ill-trained in comparison to the active duty military. Additionally, military and political leaders were reluctant to call on the National Guard in times of military crisis.

President John F. Kennedy, a former naval officer, however believed that the National Guard was a valuable component of the United States' overall military strength. In an effort to create a military capable of a flexible response to international crisis, Kennedy and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara reorganized the U.S. Army and Army National Guard. In 1964, as part of President Kennedy's organization, Nebraska received a separate brigade.

By tradition, the Nebraska National Guard had been a part of the 34th and 35th Infantry Divisions, but as a separate brigade the Nebraska National Guard gained greater autonomy and flexibility. The 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized) included the First and Second battalions of the 134th Infantry and the Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 134th Infantry.

Through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the 134th Infantry remained an essential element of the Nebraska National Guard.

Global War on Terrorism

In the 1990s, the United States Army began a major reorganization to meet the needs of the modern battlefield.

The shift in emphasis included a reduction in the overall strength of the Army's infantry assets and spelled potential doom for Nebraska's 134th Infantry. Maj. Gen. Stanley M. Heng, then-adjutant general, initiated a comprehensive restructuring of Nebraska's combat arms units resulting in the transformation of the 1-167th Cavalry

and the reorganization of the 134th Infantry's assets.

In 1996, the 2-134th Infantry consolidated with the 1-167th Cavalry. In 2001, the 1-134th Infantry disbanded leaving the 1-167th Cavalry as the sole inheritor of its historical legacy.

Since the turn of the century, the 1-167th Cavalry has participated in four major overseas deployments. In May to October 2001, Troops B and C, 1-167th Cavalry, mobilized for service in Kuwait under then-Maj. Martin Apprich.

From November 2002 to October 2003, the 1-167th Cavalry deployed with 392 Soldiers to Bosnia under the command of then-Lt. Col. Timothy Kadavy.

From 2005 to 2006, Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, under then-Capt. Jeff Searcey, deployed to Ramadi, Iraq.

From 2005 to 2007, the 1-167th Cavalry served with the 134th Infantry Detachment (Long Range Surveillance) at Camp Anaconda, Iraq, under the command of Lt. Col. Martin Apprich.

On Dec. 11, 2007, the 1-167th Cavalry redesignated as the 1-134th Cavalry representing the ultimate culmination of General Heng's efforts to preserve Nebraska's combat arms heritage.

The 1-134th Cavalry is currently preparing for its first deployment for Operation Enduring Freedom.

Suggested Readings:

Hartman, Douglas R., *Nebraska's Militia: The History of the Army and Air National Guard, 1854-1991*. Virginia Beach: The Donning Company/Publishers, 1994.

Historian's Notes:

While in its simplest terms, history is a series of fixed events, our understanding of history is fluid. The job of the historian is to take facts and dates and turn it into a narrative with meaning for the reader.

This history of the 1-134th Cavalry is as accurate as the sources permit, but there is always more information that the historian does not have. I invite the readers of the *Prairie Soldier* with any additional information or a different interpretation to contact me at dennis.h.clark@us.army.mil.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Battle of Bismarck

Bonds forged during ambush continue on during annual reunions

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

For someone who didn't know better, the group of 20-something aged people probably looked like a group of former high school classmates gathering at a Columbus, Neb., bar for a Saturday evening reunion.

Not that a person could be faulted for such an assumption.

For an outsider looking in, that's exactly what they appeared to be — from the guys exchanging old jokes over beers in the corner to the couples showing off photographs of their newborns and toddlers.

But, if one were to factor in the setting of this reunion... well things get a little less obvious from that point.

Every March for the past five years, the VFW club in Columbus, Neb., has served as the staging area for an annual reunion for a group of current and former members of a local Nebraska Army National Guard transportation unit who, in 2005, were fighting for their lives when their convoy was ambushed by a force of about 50 Iraqi insurgents near Salmon Pak along a road that the U.S. Army had codenamed "Alternate Supply Route Bismarck."

For those involved in the March 20, 2005, firefight, the battle seemed to last for an eternity, but actually only took about 15 minutes. When the dust finally cleared, four members of the unit were wounded, several critically.

Later, four Nebraska Army National Guardsmen would receive Bronze Star Medals with Valor devices for their actions that Sunday morning. Several members of a Kentucky Army National Guard military police unit, which happened to be patrolling along that same stretch of desert road, would also earn awards, including the Army's second highest medal for heroism.

Ultimately, the battle would serve as the single-largest defeat of an Iraqi insurgent ambush up until that point in the war. It would also leave the participants with lingering feelings of uneasiness over their roles in the fight.

That's why the Soldiers made a commitment to each other during the days that followed the battle that they would try to get together each year on the anniversary of the ambush, said retired Staff Sgt. Jeff Uhl, who was the convoy commander during the ambush.

"It's a big event for us," said Uhl during the most recent reunion, laughing as he watched the much younger Soldiers and former Soldiers circulate amongst themselves. "(The ambush) had quite an impact on everybody. Even then I think we realized the significance of it."

Jay Schrad agrees.

Back in March 2005 he was a 1075th Transportation Company specialist, sharing a truck with Spc. Josh Birkel, who would earn a Bronze Star with Valor device during the ambush.

Schrad left the Nebraska Army National Guard about six months after returning from Iraq. He said he still makes a point of getting to as many reunions as possible.

"It's very family oriented," said Schrad, who now lives in Omaha where he works for PayPal. "I get around one of these guys and it just feels normal. I don't have to struggle."

Schrad said that even though it's been five years since the original battle, the ties that bind the Soldiers are still very strong. "If any of these guys needed anything, any one of us would jump at the drop of a hat and go do it."

"I don't get to talk to these guys a lot, but if they call me I get excited... It's just a really good feeling to just be around this group of people."

Of the 12 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who were involved in the March 20, 2005 ambush, approximately half have left the National Guard. Several others will soon join them.

Staff Sgt. Jennifer (Beck) Bos is one of them.

An assistant platoon sergeant in the 1075th today, Bos was a young, newly engaged truck driver back in 2005. Her fiancé, Spc. Tim Bos, was driving the lead truck with Uhl when the convoy began taking fire.

Uhl and Bos successfully made it out of the ambush zone, but those behind them —



Want to learn more about the Battle of Bismarck?

Check out the February, April and June 2006 editions of the Prairie Soldier newspaper at www.neguard.com

including Beck — were forced to stop when the insurgents successfully blocked the road by blowing up an approaching bus and then disabling a 1075th Trans. Co. truck being driven by Pfc. Ricky DeLancey and Sgt. Terrence Ricketts, both of whom were badly wounded.

Stuck behind DeLancey and Ricketts, Beck and her co-driver, Sgt. Anthony Bloebaum, were unable to move up the road for several long, seemingly unending minutes.

Finally, creeping ahead around groups of stopped civilian trucks, they finally reached a spot behind DeLancey and Ricketts' truck, which protected their vehicle from the fusillade of shots.

Beck then jumped out of her truck and helped DeLancey and Ricketts escape from their burning vehicle.

Beck's actions that day would earn her a Bronze Star with Valor device, making her the first female Soldier in the history of the Nebraska Army National Guard to receive such an award for battlefield heroism.

Five years later, Jennifer Beck is now Jennifer Bos. She and her husband live on a farm near Duncan, Neb., where she teaches Reading and English As A Second Language at a local elementary school.

The Bos' are also the parents of two young daughters, the youngest of which was just one month old this April.

With her family growing, Bos said she's decided to leave the Guard. Still, as one of the primary organizers of the annual reunion, Bos said she plans on continuing to help set up the event.

"I think it's just a chance to get together," she said, as she sat at a table next to Bloebaum, showing off photos of her two daughters. "(The ambush) is still significant, but I just don't focus on it anymore."

Still, she said she learned some significant lessons during the battle, lessons she said she still tries to pass on to her Guard Soldiers, many of whom aren't much older than she was five years ago.

"Just be calm," Bos said about the primary lesson she tries to pass on. "It will all work itself out hopefully. If you freak out, it will only get worse."

Another Guardsman who still works to pass on the lessons he learned that day is Sgt. Michael Sharples, another Bronze Star with "V" device recipient who earned his award by sprinting through small arms fire to get a group of civilian drivers back on the road again so that the rest of the convoy could move out of the ambush zone.

Sharples is still in the 1075th Trans. Co. and he still drives trucks. He said his unit recently added a number of new truck drivers to the company, so it is the job of veterans to make sure that the training they receive is appropriate for the jobs they're doing.

"We've been doing a lot of driving and stop-



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Reuniting Five Years After Ambush: Following the ambush of a 1075th Transportation Company convoy on March 20, 2005, members of the convoy vowed to have a reunion each year to commemorate the battle. This year's reunion marked the fifth anniversary of what has become known as "The Battle of Bismarck." Attending the reunion were (from left): Ricky DeLancey, Joshua Birkel, Jeffrey Uhl, Jacob Graff, Jenny Bos, John Harris, A.J. Bloebaum, Jay Schrad and Michael Sharples.



Enjoying Each Other's Company: (From left) Ricky DeLancey and Jeffrey Uhl share a joke during the March 20 "Battle of Bismarck" reunion held at the VFW in Columbus, Neb. Five years earlier, Uhl was serving as a convoy commander and DeLancey as a truck driver when they were engaged in a bitter ambush that would leave DeLancey and three other 1075th Transportation Company Soldiers wounded.

ping and going through scenarios," Sharples said. "And I guess there's usually at least one of us there who was there (in the ambush.) They always kind of look to us to talk about what happens in these scenarios.... They know what to do by the book, but they look to us and say, 'When this happens, what really happens?'"

"It seems like we're pretty good assets to the unit now," he added.

One of the lessons Sharples said he tries to teach is the fact that convoys typically will include non-English-speaking civilian drivers, most of whom have had little or no military training. Making sure that the civilian drivers understand what to do in the event of an ambush or other type of combat is critical, he said.

"We always stress that," said Sharples.

Sharples made it to the first two reunions, however this year's event was his first since. He said it was good getting to see his fellow ambush veterans again.

"(The ambush) doesn't really fade, but when we get together, we really don't talk about it," he said. "We talked about it so many times that it's kind of played out in our heads. So, we don't need to talk about it anymore."

"When we get together, we want to know how everybody's kids are doing and how jobs are going and stuff like that," added Sharples, who works as a lab technician in Tecumseh, Neb., in civilian life. "We're just a bunch of good friends now."

For two of the ambush veterans, the reunion was an extra special event.

DeLancey and Spc. John Harris were both wounded during the battle. DeLancey was wounded by shrapnel while Harris sustained wounds to his head and neck, causing the

left side of his face to be paralyzed.

According to Harris, who recently got out of the Guard and is now attending Columbus Community College, leaving the Guard and his friends was particularly rough.

"It was the toughest decision I ever made," said Harris, as he talked and joked with his fellow veterans over a beer. He added that this was just the second reunion he'd attended.

"I miss all of the stories," said Harris, adding that he doesn't dwell much on the ambush anymore. "I probably wouldn't think much about it except for these reunions."

Like Harris, DeLancey has also gotten out of the Guard. He now works at Office Innovations in Lincoln, Neb.

He said that he, too, tries not to dwell on the ambush, adding that he didn't even realize that it was the fifth anniversary of the battle until someone told him. "It only feels like a year if you ask me," he said, laughing.

DeLancey, who earned a Bronze Star with "V" device for climbing out onto the hood of his burning truck and holding off the approaching insurgents with his machine gun despite being wounded, said the reunions are a special event for him.

"I just like seeing everyone," he said. "We don't get together that much, so it's nice to get together."

"We're all friends and we've been friends for a real long time, so it's just great to hang out," he added, saying that he has no doubt that the battle created an incredibly strong bond.

"We all went through the same thing," said DeLancey. "It kind of bonds people together."

Bonds that, say the veterans, have helped them all deal with the stresses, pains and sacrifices of war. Bonds that are unlike anything any of them ever expected to grow.

"For me, I was little bit older than most of the guys in the convoy," said Schrad. "I was only 24, but most of them were 18, 19, 20..."

"It's a little bit emotional. I was riding with (Spc. Joshua) Birkel that day and I saw a boy turn into a hero," Schrad said about another one of the Soldiers who earned the Bronze Star with "V" device during the battle. "I saw Harris go through what he did and I saw (Spc. Jacob) Graff go through what he did."

"For me, it's pretty breathtaking to be around this group of guys now and see that they're all doing okay," he added. "It's a big day."



Solemn Oath: Newly promoted Brig. Gen. Daryl Bohac takes the oath of office from Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, May 1, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Bohac promoted to assistant adjutant general position in May

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Daryl Bohac was promoted to the rank of brigadier general, May 1, by Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, during a ceremony at the 155th Air Refueling Wing's operations group conference room.

Bohac, who had served as the vice director of the Nebraska National Guard joint staff and as director of staff for the Nebraska Air National Guard, is now the assistant adjutant general for Air.

According to Lyons, Bohac's diverse career will serve him well in his new capacities.

"Colonel Bohac is a consummate professional," said Lyons. "He brings significant service and joint experience to bear in his new positions. He has served in the 155th Air Refueling Wing and the Nebraska Air National Guard Headquarters, most recently as the director of Staff-Air."

"Colonel Bohac was the first Air National Guard officer to serve as the Joint Force Headquarters officer responsible for Nebraska National Guard Joint Operations. He has deployment experience serving in the Combined Air and Space Operations Center and has extensive legislative liaison experience at the state and federal level," said Lyons. "He has served in key committee assignments at both the state and federal level for the National Guard."

"Colonel Bohac is an experienced team builder who will be instru-



Thanks For Your Support: Daryl Bohac hugs his son Sam and daughter Erica after being promoted to the rank of brigadier general in the Nebraska Air National Guard. The new general's children both participated in the ceremony by putting his new rank on his shoulders.

mental in continuing our mission to be responsive and ready to meet the needs of our fellow citizens in Nebraska and in support of our federal mission when called upon," Lyons added.

Bohac began his career as an enlisted member in the United States Marine Corps Reserve in 1978 and served four years with the 4th Engineering Maintenance Company, Omaha, Neb. He transferred to the Nebraska Air National Guard in 1982 and was assigned to the Vehicle Operations Branch of the Resources Management Squadron. A distinguished graduate of the Air National Guard's Academy of Military Science, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant on Aug. 11, 1988.

While assigned to the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Bohac served as the commander of the Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and Aircraft Generation Squadron. He has deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Noble Eagle, Deliberate Guard and Decisive Endeavor.

Bohac earned his Doctorate of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology from the University of Nebraska. He and his wife, Kris live in Waverly with their son Sam. Their daughter Erica attends the University of Iowa.

Following the promotion, during which the new general had his single-star rank insignia pinned onto his jacket by his wife, Kris, and Lyons, and his new brigadier general's rank placed on his shirt by his daughter, Erica, and son, Sam, Bohac pledged to continuing working hard for the men and women of the Nebraska National Guard.

"From now forward, it's about us - Team Nebraska," said Bohac. "We're an organization of excellence, always have been and I think we always will be."

He then referred to his son's track team's slogan: "Excellence is never an accident," and how it also applies to the Nebraska National Guard. "It never has been in the Nebraska National Guard and it never will be," he said. "We have a committed team of people that makes this happen."

"I'm thrilled to be a part of this organization and help lead it into the future," Bohac added.

Transportation battalion welcomes new boss

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

The 734th Transportation Battalion welcomed a new commander at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., April 10.

In front of distinguished guests, fellow Soldiers, family and friends, Lt. Col. Kevin L. Garner assumed command of the 734th Trans. Bn. from Lt. Col. Gerald D. Meyer. During the ceremony Col. Michael Navrkal, commander of the 92nd Troop Command, thanked the families of both Meyer and Garner for their support through the years and said he has confidence Garner will be successful.

"I know that you are going to continue to do well in this assignment," said Navrkal as he addressed Garner. "You're the right guy at the right time for this organization."



Garner



Meyer

Garner said he's honored to command the unit.

"It is indeed an honor and a privilege for me to get the opportunity to act as battalion commander. (It's) especially an honor to have this particular organization," said Garner. "It's very unique in its history and its tradition...you guys earned yourself an absolutely fabulous reputation and it's indeed an honor to be here and be your commander."

Garner is a 1992 graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a bachelor's degree in Actuarial Science. He received a master's degree in Business Administration from Washburn University in Topeka, Kan. in 2001.

Garner received his commission in December 1992 from the UNL ROTC Program as a distinguished military graduate. He served as an active-duty field artillery officer for 11 years in Babenhausen, Germany, and at Fort Sill, Okla., as well as serving as the assistant professor of Military Science at the University of Kansas in Lawrence.

He has served as an Active

Guard, Reserve Soldier for the last six years as the assistant professor of Military Science at UNL, and in various leadership posts within the 867th Quartermaster Battalion, the 402nd Military Police Battalion, Joint Force Headquarters and most recently as the 92nd Troop Command executive and administrative officer in Lincoln.

Garner resides in Ashland, Neb., with his wife, Shannon, and their children, Gunnar and Kennedy.

Navrkal thanked Meyer for the work he did as commander.

"You've left this command better than when you got it," said Navrkal. "Jerry has really set the example - set the bar very high. I think, in fact, he leads troop command in what he's done to ensure

communities understand the important role of the Nebraska National Guard plays."

Meyer said he couldn't have done it without the people around him.

"I've been blessed to be surrounded by some very good people," said Meyer. "I've really enjoyed being battalion commander for such a great organization like this...it's been an honor and a privilege serving with you."

Meyer is a 1989 graduate of the University of Northern Iowa, receiving a bachelor's degree in History. In 2000, Meyer received a master's degree in Education from Wayne State College.

He began his military career when he enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard in June 1984 where he served as a UH-1 "Huey" helicopter crew chief from 1984 to 1987. Meyer was commissioned from the ROTC program at the University of Northern Iowa in 1987. He has served in field artillery, infantry, chemical and transportation positions. Meyer deployed to Honduras in 1999 following Hurricane Mitch and was also deployed to Afghanistan in 2003 to train members of the Afghan National Army.

Meyer resides in Lincoln his wife, Mary, and their three children, Jacob, Josh and Meghan.

Prairie Soldier, journalists earn national honors for work in 2009

Public Affairs Office

The "Prairie Soldier" and its staff were honored recently when the 2009 Media Contest results were released.

According to National Guard Bureau officials, judges sifted through a record-setting number of entries for this year's annual contest including more than 700 print stories and photographic entries from service members in the U.S., Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo.

The "Prairie Soldier" took top honors in the Army National Guard's tabloid-format newspaper category. The "Prairie Soldier" also placed second in the Special Achievement in Print Media category for 2009's "Patriots in Stripes" coverage of the "Year of the Noncommissioned Officer."

In the print competition, Nebraska led the way for the Air Guard with 12 winners, said Air Force Master Sgt. Greg Rudl, contest administrator.

Maj. Kevin Hynes, editor of the "Prairie Soldier," took the top spot for the Feature Photo and Pictorial Photo categories. He placed second in the Commentary, Photojournalism, Print Journalist of the Year, Photographer of the Year, and Special Achievement categories. Finally, Hynes also placed third in the Feature Story category.

Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon, assistant editor of

the "Prairie Soldier," took top honors in the Sports Story, News Photo, and Outstanding New Writer categories.

Army National Guard Journalists also performed very well.

David Nore, public information officer, placed second in the Moss-Holland Civilian Journalist of the Year category.

Spc. Koan Nissen, 111th Military Public Affairs Detachment, placed second in the News Article category and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mark Roland placed second in the Photojournalism category.

Winners were forwarded to the next level of competition which includes active-duty, Guard and Reserve entries - the Keith L. Ware contest for the Army and the Air Force Media Contest.

In the Air Force Media Contest, Salmon placed second in the Outstanding New Writer category. In the Keith L. Ware contest, Nissen took third place in the News Article category.

Judges were impressed with the entries from National Guard units all over the country.

"I was amazed by how much the Guard does all over our country, and by the contributions they make in ways big and small," said Jeri Robinson, a public affairs specialist at the IRS who was a new judge this year. "It was a humbling, yet proud, experience."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Honoring A Hall Of Famer

Retired Maj. Gen. Walter Zink II was honored May 1 during the Nebraska Army National Guard's May drill when he was officially presented with his Nebraska National Guard Military Academy Hall of Fame plaque. Zink was actually inducted into the Military Academy's Hall of Fame last August, however he was unable to attend the induction ceremony due to his son's wedding. Zink, who was presented with the award by Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, during the Joint Force Headquarters' staff meeting, said he was touched by the award and still considers the lessons he learned at Camp Ashland to be extremely important to his life.

Kids Corner

News & Features Affecting Nebraska's Military Children

Summer to be so busy with camps

By Pamela Stemple

Nebraska Army National Guard
Child and Youth Program

■ July camps are going to be fun.

July 9: Operation: Military Kids/Easter Seals Nebraska is hosting a one day camp in Wayne, Neb. We are still working on the actual venue right now, but it will be a sports day. So, bring your gloves and bats and soccer balls. We may even get tennis in there along with kickball.

July 18-23: National Military Family Association is hosting their second and final camp for the summer at Camp Eagle in Fremont, Neb., for kids between the ages of 9-12. Visit www.operationpurple.org to register your children.

July 25-29: Operation: Military Kids/Easter Seals Nebraska, will be holding a four-day camp for teens aged 12-17. There will be plenty to do with swimming, horseback riding, obstacle courses stargazing and campfires galore.

July 31: Operation: Military Kids/Easter Seals Nebraska, will be hosting a one-day camp in Kearney, Neb., at Yanni Park. There is a pavilion reserved with a fun day of fishing, paddle boating and so much more.

■ August Camp Dates: You would think summer is over, but guess again.

Aug. 1-3: Operation: Military Kids/Easter Seals Nebraska camps will provide a three-day camp at Camp Eagle near Fremont, Neb., with a fun getaway for kids 6-18 for 20 military youth as well as a healthy break for guardians from the daily challenges of caring for individuals with disabilities.

From campfire sing-a-longs and late night ghost stories, to nature walks, swimming, and arts and crafts, Easter Seals

Nebraska camps provide the same excitement and activity available at other summer camp programs.

Aug. 4-8: Operation: Military Kids/Easter Seals Nebraska is hosting another four-day camp at Camp Comeca in Cozad for teens ages 12-17. There will be plenty to do with swimming, horseback riding, obstacle courses stargazing and campfires galore.

In the month of August we will also be hosting a one-day camp in the Grand Island/Kearney/Hasting area. So be looking for a flyer coming out for that. We would like to have an outing in Grand Island at the Water Park.

So, that is what we have planned for the summer camping season. Thanks to Operation: Military Kids/Easter Seals Nebraska for their willingness to help us put on these camps. We would not have been able to offer so many choices throughout the state.

So, take advantage of these wonderful opportunities.

■ Teen Panel scheduled for August

We are holding our first teen panel meeting on Aug. 28 at Ashland, Neb. I would like to invite all of the teens ages 12-18 to come and join in. You will have a chance to get to know the teens in the National Guard here in Nebraska.

Some of the things that we will be discussing: what you want to see happen in Nebraska for the teens in the Guard. You will have an opportunity to make a logo for t-shirts, help plan our next meeting, set-up a facebook page and whatever else you decide is important. It will be about what you want and need.

Look for more information about this in July. Be sure to save the date on your calendar.

■ Month of Military Child support

The Family Program Office would like to

thank all the great companies and organizations that supported our Children during the Month of the Military Child in April.

Omaha Royals baseball game, Wilderness Ridge Golf Club, OMK/Easter Seals weekend camp in Fremont, Skate Zone in Lincoln, The Big Apple Fun Center in Kearney, Lux Center for the Arts in Lincoln, Hastings Museum in Hastings, YMCA across Nebraska, Fontenelle Nature Center in Bellevue, Opera Omaha in Omaha, Sun Theatre in York, Family Fun Center in Omaha.

■ Upcoming Yellow Ribbon events

We have had a busy two months with the homecoming of the 1195th Transportation Company and farewell to the 192nd Military Police Detachment (Law and Order.)

Welcome home to the Soldiers and the reunion of the families of the 1195th. We also share in the disappointment and heartache for the families of the 192nd.

Be looking for upcoming Yellow Ribbon Events this summer for the 1195th, 402nd Military Police Battalion and the 192nd M.P. Det.

We are planning to do fun things with the kids that will relate with the status of deployment they are in. It's our best way to get to know your children individually and for them to get to know us and meet the kids who are going through some of the same things they are going through. It's a great time.

In July we have the 402nd Pre-Mobilization coming up. Make sure your kids 6-14 attend. One of the crafts we will be making is the famous Nebraska Army National Guard Memory Boxes. They are a big hit with the kids.

We are also planning some family days this summer all around the state. Be looking for those dates and times also.

Military kids get all-star treatment at Memorial Stadium

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Around 30 military kids were treated like all-stars when they were given an opportunity to see what it takes to be a Nebraska Cornhusker during a 90-minute tour of the Huskers' facilities at Memorial Stadium, May 15.

The event, as well as a post-tour lunch, was sponsored by Woodmen of the World through the Nebraska National Guard's Family Program Office.

"This is a pretty special group here today and we're very proud to be able to show you a little bit about what we do," said Nebraska Linebackers Coach Mike Ekeler, who conducted the tour for the kids and their equally wide-eyed parents.

After introducing his 7-year-old daughter Cameryn to the group, Ekeler laughed as he gave the military kids some advice: "You can't hurt anything here, I promise. I've got four little kids and they run around this place like crazy. They think they own it."

And with that, the military kids were treated to a "Gameday" video before touring the stadium's weight room, practice facilities and the locker room.

The kids were also given the chance to pose for photographs in front of Husker lockers before Ekeler challenged them to run onto the field the same way that the football team does each game day.

"I want you to run out there like you're going to play a game," Ekeler challenged the kids.

"But before you do, I want each of you to make sure you touch the lucky horseshoe," he added, pointing to a famous plaque above the entrance to the field.

The kids also had a chance to see the Husker's training table, meeting rooms, press box and finally the players lounge, which was recently donated to the team by Dan Whitney (aka: Larry the Cable Guy.)



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Where Huskers Are Made: Nebraska Assistant Coach Mike Ekeler (far right) talks to a group of military kids about how University of Nebraska-Lincoln football players use Memorial Stadium's massive weight room to prepare for games.

While stopping at the team meeting room, Ekeler showed a pre-game tape that was shown to the team before the Nebraska-Kansas game on Nov. 14. The assistant coach also spoke about the first time Coach Bo Pelini addressed the Nebraska football team after being hired following the 2007 season.

"He came in and told the team, 'This meeting will last real quick. Two things. First thing, if there's anybody in this room who doesn't want to work harder than anyone else in the country, get out. This is the wrong place for you,'" Ekeler recalled. "And second thing, I'm willing to bet that not one guy in this room gets it. And it's my promise to you guys that by the end of this year, each and

every one of you will get what it's about. It's about playing for the guy next to you and the guy next to him.' And that was it. He walked out."

"That was the whole first meeting," Ekeler said. "And those words held true. At the end of the first year, our guys really got it. They understood what it was all about."

Following the tour, Ekeler thanked the kids for all that they and their parents are doing.

"We appreciate what everyone in the Armed Forces is doing for our country, including all of the kids," he said. "It gives us the opportunity to do our jobs and live. So, I tip my hat to all of you."

Capturing life's images

■ Families eligible
for MyAirForcelife.com
photography contest

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas — Air Force Services Agency officials are accepting photograph entries on MyAirForceLife.com, now through July 4, as part of the Year of the Air Force Family.

This is an opportunity for Airmen and eligible patrons of Air Force morale, welfare and recreation programs to express through photos what Air Force life means to them.

Eligible family members ages 12 to 17 years can compete in the youth category.

"We are really looking forward to seeing how our youth depict their Air Force life through photography," said Carol Sudy, a marketing specialist at the Air Force Services Agency.

Contestants may submit up to three photos. Click here for submission guidelines.

Visitors to the site can vote for their favorite photos. Entries with the highest number of votes will become finalists. The earlier a photo is submitted, the longer it can build up votes.

Even though online voting will determine the finalists, the winners will be selected by professional photographers.

One winner in each category (youth and adult) will receive a camera equipment package valued at \$2,000. Furthermore, the adult winner will receive a one-hour online mentoring session with Ansen Seale, a professional photographer.

Last year, Air Force Services Agency officials launched MyAirForceLife.com to help Airmen and their families stay connected, informed and engaged in programs as part of the Year of the Air Force Family.

To date, more than 492 prizes have been awarded, including computers, video cameras, eBook readers, MP3 players, netbooks, and more, said Debbie Karnes, an Air Force Services Agency spokeswoman.

"A list of winners can be found on the site," Karnes said. "For each competition, we add new prizes. During the photograph competition, those who register on the site are eligible to win (a digital camera and music gift cards)."

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz and Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley designated July 2009 to July 2010 as the Year of the Air Force Family, a period to recognize the sacrifices and contributions of the diverse Air Force family including active duty, Reserves, Air National Guard, single Airmen, civilians, spouses, children, retirees, and community partners.

"Taking care of families is a solemn promise we make to each Airman and family member," Donley said. "Sense of community is a cultural trademark of the Air Force, and we will seek ways to nurture it as part of the larger 'Year of the Air Force Family' effort."

To find details on the competitions and to enter, Airmen and eligible patrons of Air Force MWR programs can log on to <http://www.myaairforcelife.com>.

Museums offering free admission to military families

WASHINGTON (AFNS) — Active-duty servicemembers and their families will gain free access to hundreds of museums throughout the nation this summer, thanks to a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families.

More than 600 museums in 50 states and the District of Columbia have signed up so far to participate in Operation Appreciation: Blue Star Museums. The program offers active-duty servicemembers — including activated Guardsmen and Reserve members — and up to five of their immediate family members free admission to participating museums from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

People can visit <http://www.arts.gov/national/bluestarmuseums/index.php> for a complete list of participating museums that run the gamut from children's and fine arts to history and science museums.



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



Family Program Office leaders honor nine volunteers in April

'It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference.'
— Tom Brokaw

By Gregory Engler
Family Program Office

The Family Program Office's volunteers don't have to come and work just as hard as the paid staff, but from their hearts they donate their time, energy, smiles and experience to make a difference.

This year we honored our volunteers with the theme: "One Person Can Make A Difference."

On April 28, we recognized a few of the many volunteers that the Nebraska National Guard has amongst its ranks. These volunteers work with the Nebraska Prescription Program that services over 3,000 military retirees, Active Guard and Reserve employees, and active duty families from all services.

Jerry Hepp, Allen Neemann, Bill Fagerberg, Richard Norris, Jim Kirk, Larry Hennings, Lar-

ry Hansen, Linda Stoehr and Mary Brehm were recognized for a combined 2,250 hours of volunteer services to the Prescription Program.

Not only do they volunteer for the Prescription Program they step out and do additional volunteer work within the Family Program Office. They've also contributed their services during other events such as the Haunted Armory, Operation Hidden Egg and other items that contribute to care of Soldiers and their families.

If you would like to reach out contribute your knowledge and



Family Program Office Photo

Honoring Volunteers: Members of the Family Program Office and senior Nebraska National Guard leaders pose for a photograph with some of the nine volunteers who were honored recently for the work they're doing on behalf of veteran and current members of the military.

experience into the many volunteer opportunities such as Family Readiness Group Leaders, or to volunteer to work at special events that reach out and touch the families of the Nebraska National Guard, please contact a member of the Family Program Office today.

Getting to know you

New youth specialist brings decades of experience to Family Program Office

By Gregory Engler
Family Program Office

A warm welcome to Dave Hall who has recently been hired as a child and youth specialist for the Family Program Office.

Dave was born in Lincoln Neb., and graduated from Nebraska Christian College in 1985 with a bachelor's degree in Pastoral Ministry.

He has been a youth minister, involved in pastoral teaching and real estate land development.

Dave and his wife, Michelle, have been married for 25 years. Together they have four children: Alex, Amanda, Megan and James.

With over 30 years in the youth ministry area, Dave hopes that his skills, experience, and



Hall

knowledge will be a valuable asset as he works with the youth and families of the Nebraska National Guard.

Preparations aid in financial stability during mobilization, officials say

WASHINGTON (AFPS)—Preparation and a detailed spending plan can help service members and their families dodge the financial pitfalls that can spring up during and after a deployment, the Pentagon's personal finance director said.

"A deployment is a very demanding and intense time, and the service member and family need to be focused on their specific missions," Dave Julian said June 14 in an interview with American Forces Press Service. "It's hard to do that if there's a big financial situation lurking."

The most important step military families can take prior to a deployment is to sit down together and develop a spending plan, Julian said. The plan should

include what the existing bills are, who will pay them, how they'll be paid and where the money needs to be sent. Installation personal financial managers and Military OneSource consultants can offer help with developing a plan, he added.

To facilitate financial transactions, Julian recommended both spouses be listed on all accounts with equal access and suggested they share usernames and passwords prior to a deployment. For single service members, powers of attorney can give a family member permission to handle some types of financial transactions. The legal office is the best place to go for help with these documents, he noted.

In any case, service members and their families should notify their financial institu-

tions and creditors of an upcoming deployment. They may be able to get a break on car insurance or on interest rates, Julian said.

Another avenue for financial relief is the Service members Civil Relief Act. This act has provisions that can, for instance, cap interest rates for some debts incurred prior to being activated for duty at 6 percent or prevent court actions from taking place during a deployment. Certain provisions, such as the 6 percent cap, apply only to reserve component members, Julian noted, so it's important to be aware of the guidelines.

The pre-deployment discussion also should include how pay will change in conjunction with a deployment, Julian said, noting that in many cases service members

will receive a "sizeable increase" due to imminent danger pay and combat zone tax exclusion, which makes pay in theater tax-free.

"The plan should address what should be done with the extra money," he advised.

An increase in pay, while fortunate, can turn into a liability if families change their spending habits during a deployment without taking a post-deployment drop in pay into account, Julian noted.

"There's a temptation to adjust spending behaviors to accommodate the increase," he said. "People may make purchases that have monthly payments that are based on the increased deployment pay. That can present a problem later on."

Developing healthy coping habits important key to dealing with high stress

There has been much focus over time, by the military and society as a whole, on mental health and mental fitness.

It seems however that the majority of that focus has been on what is unhealthy rather than what is healthy.

We see each day on the evening news stories about arrests, broken relationships, and deaths related to unhealthy behaviors. Most individuals can identify what is unhealthy behavior. When asked, most will identify use or abuse of drugs and/or alcohol, infidelity to escape relationship conflict, excessive thrill seeking, poor diet, overeating, overworking, and most recently seeking inappropriate relationships via the Internet.

Most people will also deny that they would ever fall prey to such unhealthy ways of living.

What is not talked about is how does one get to the point where such unhealthy behaviors take over their lives? Truth is these unhealthy behaviors are ways of coping. What begins as short term solutions for long term problems become part of daily life that spiral out of control.

Coping is merely a pattern of behaviors that allows a person to manage or tolerate daily stressors

that cannot be avoided and/or to master or solve personal and relationship problems in the hope of reducing the number of stressors one encounters on a day-to-day basis.

Every behavior is comprised of three basic actions: thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Change any one of the three and the other two change as well.

So, when one looks at the above unhealthy behaviors, he/she can see that these behaviors allow them to tolerate stressors in these unhealthy behaviors, allow a person to avoid thinking about the stressors and allow the person to avoid feeling difficult emotions related to the stressor. They are quick, usually easy and accessible short term solutions to daily stressors.

In today's society we are increasingly looking for the quick easy solution for a variety of problems: a pill or surgery for weight loss, an electric shocker to improve your abs, the ever promised energy drink that will keep you going throughout the day without an eventual crash. These are short term solutions that can have long term consequences if overused.

In the long term these unhealthy

Healthy Coping

By Viola Raschke
Director of Psychological Health
Nebraska National Guard

coping behaviors can lead to increased stressors and often times worsen a person's ability to take on new challenges.

For example, one may start by drinking an energy drink to get through the afternoon, but in time build a tolerance until they are drinking two or three. Soon they may have trouble sleeping at night, which leads to being tired the next morning and the cycle continues.

Typically an individual will need to increase the use of these unhealthy coping behaviors to get the same satisfactory relief from distress. This leads to an eventual, often slow, downward spiral.

A person, usually in a moment of increased stress, will turn to an unhealthy coping strategy to temporarily reduce a stressor with the intent of finding a more healthful, manageable, solution in the future. If that person does find a healthy solution the pattern is usu-

ally interrupted. However, as stressors increase, the person continues to seek the quick and easy solution until eventually that unhealthy behavior becomes the person's primary manner of coping.

Since this is usually a slow process it can be difficult for an individual to see that his/her own behavior is increasing stressors rather than decreasing them.

Even when confronted by trusted others, the person often will not want to acknowledge the relationship to the unhealthy behavior and increased stressors as he/she sees the behavior as the only way to improve his/her day.

Thus, the cycle continues. So what can be done? The ideal solution is to not ever start coping in an unhealthy way. Not likely, we are all human and prone to imperfection.

So, what each person can do is make a conscious effort to develop healthy coping habits and be accountable to him/her to not take the easy way of unhealthy coping. In those moments of high stress, if he/she does rely on unhealthy coping he/she does later find a long term healthy solution to the problem that has caused the stressor.

The most important part of this process is to identify healthy coping strategies and to use and practice them daily when stressors are low in order to increase the likelihood that he/she will use them in times of high stress. Practice of the healthy coping when stress is low is the best predictor of continued use during times of high stress.

What works best for each individual person is different. Information about meditation, anger management and relationship improvement are all well publicized and can be easily researched online or in your nearby library or bookstore.

In the upcoming *Prairie Soldier* publications, I will be addressing ways in which each person can cope in a healthy way with life stressors. If there are specific questions or you have an idea for an article please feel free to contact me by e-mail at viola.raschke@ceridian.com or call me at (402) 314-4092.

No question or concern is too big or too small. I will try to answer as many questions as possible.

Your comments are welcome as well.

(Editor's Note: Viola Raschke is a Licensed Independent Mental Health Professional)

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel
Randall S. Ames
Craig A. Anderson
William J. Prusia

Major
Spencer W. Giles

Captain
Jeremiah A. Afuh II
Kevin A. Beavers
Edward C. Mezstista
Amanda L. Young

First Lieutenant
Matthew D. Hickey
Justin R. Vonloh

Chief Warrant Officer Four
Kenneth M. Henderson

Chief Warrant Officer Three
Michael S. Nagasawa

Chief Warrant Officer Two
Bradley W. Adams
Keal S. Bockelman
Jessie F. Harris
Ross W. Hazelhorst
Kevin E. Monismith

Warrant Officer One
Nicholas R. Blecha
Kathryn L. Jones

Master Sergeant
Manuel D. Lopezinzunza

Sergeant First Class
Sean M. Beckman
Nicholas R. Brand
Michael J. Dennis
Daniel G. Falcon Jr.
Jamie R. Frey

Staff Sergeant
Christopher W. Brammer
Michael G. Brown
John M. Erny
Scott A. Kennec
Timothy N. McCaslin
Jesse J. Meints
Ashley R. Mitchell
Michael D. Petersen
Alexander Ramos

Cody A. Trindle
Noel C. Vergith
Benjamin L. Wolfe

Sergeant
Jonathan D. Andreasen
David S. Bolli
Casey G. Campbell
Nicholas C. Christy
Trevor T. Dredla
Travis J. Engler
Jarod C. Fuchser
Anita J. Hays
Jeremy J. Hellbusch
Carl L. Jamshidi
Chad A. Kingham
Samuel J. Kinnett
Logan M. Klinkman
Stephen R. Kuchar
Jana C. Lampe
Casey J. Lindsay
Andrew T. Lutt
Christopher T. Martin
Justin L. Modrell
Justine J. Newquist
Harry J. Plendl
Gary A. Redden
Theodore A. Saunders
Shawn C. Sheets
Jason R. Sindelar
Aaron T. Smith
Cody B. Spry
Zachary V. Stika
Jake A. Winterburn

Specialist
Dirk E. Ameson
Brian J. Bruce
Caleb A. Buffington
Casey L. Edelman
Levi L. Focken
David A. Howard
Jeffrey D. Milner
Dannyil D.A. Pesek
Sirus J. Price
Chantelle M. Reicks
Enrique Rodriguez

Private First Class
Nicole M. Miller
Austin J. Peterson
Robert M. Reichert

Air National Guard
Brigadier General
Daryl L. Bohac

Colonel
Wendy K. Johnson

Lieutenant Colonel
Joseph G. Conrad
Elizabeth D. Curtis
Phillip L. Fields Jr.
Michael A. Hostins
Arthur J. Newsome

Major
Connie M. Holen
Wade R. Holen
Christopher M. Shannon

Captain
Marlene R. Marshall
Matthew H. Roby
Virginia L. Witulski

First Lieutenant
Yolanda Canter
Troy M. Martin

Technical Sergeant
Robert Carlson
Isaac A. Cepek
Kyle L. Hester
Jason D. Jones
Trent M. Puhalla

Benjamin R. Wilkins
Benjamin B. Winston

Staff Sergeant
Ryan L. Armes
Brian E. Baack
Angella D. Cooper
Alexis A. Frazee
Meghan M. Schneider
Brittney C. Truscott

Senior Airman
Joshua R. Barker
Jordan G. Reas

Airman First Class
Alexander D. Harris

Airman
Darren D. Davlin

AWARDS

Army National Guard
Legion of Merit
Sgt. Maj. Ted L. Guenther

Meritorious Service Medal
Col. Chris F. Maasdam
Lt. Col. Donald E. Kneiff
Lt. Col. Georgia K. Kroese
Lt. Col. Gerald d. Meyer
Maj. Kenneth J. Boatman
Capt. Jocelyn J. Kuta
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robrenna M. Redl
Master Sgt. Scott W. Langan
Master Sgt. Leon C. McConnell
Master Sgt. Kent L. Ropers
Sgt. 1st Class Joel S. Alliso
Sgt. 1st Class Sean C. Bowden
Sgt. 1st Class William T. Buettner
Sgt. 1st Class David J. Erickson
Sgt. 1st Class Douglas V. Manly
Sgt. 1st Class Sherri L. Read
Staff Sgt. Scyler W. Foss

Army Commendation with "V" Device
Spc. Alex B. Young

Army Commendation Medal
Lt. Col. Brent W. Andersen
Maj. Steven M. Padilla
Capt. Edwin W. Davis
Capt. Franklin J. Huskey
Capt. Kevin L. Janousek
Capt. Carlos A. VanNurden
Warrant Officer Gregory L. Nun
Sgt. 1st Class Allan D. Kerl
Staff Sgt. John C. Moore
Sgt. Joshua A. Armon
Sgt. Lindsay S. Goodrich
Sgt. Jason B. Libal (Posthumous)

Army Achievement Medal
Sgt. 1st Class Carl K. Dehling
Sgt. 1st Class Lucas L. Poppe
Staff Sgt. Shad L. Rehnberg
Sgt. Waylon M. Lippold
Sgt. Jeremy L. Samples

Military Outstanding
Volunteer Service Medal
Col. Michael D. Navrkal

Nebraska National Guard
Legion of Merit
Col. Chris F. Maasdam
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Scott A. McKinney
Command Sgt. Maj. Richard J. Burch

Nebraska National Guard
Commendation Medal
Chief Warrant Officer 3 David W. Wiese
Master Sgt. Chris L. Saltzgeber
Staff Sgt. Tonya S. Schwanke
Sgt. Gregory S. Wortman
Spc. Craig D. Worley

Nebraska National Guard
Individual Achievement Medal
Lt. Col. Shelly M. Herrod
Lt. Col. Dale R. Vrana Jr.
Maj. John S. Berry

Maj. Craig W. Strong
Capt. Christopher M. Perrone
2nd Lt. Justin M. Hochstein
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Teresa A. Domeier
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Derek H. Simonds
Sgt. Maj. Boyd L. Navratil
1st Sgt. John A. Snoozy
1st Sgt. Stephen J. Stanislav
Master Sgt. Kent Ropers
Sgt. 1st Class Teresa A. Flynn
Staff Sgt. Shane R. Prather
Staff Sgt. Penny F. Winterburn
Sgt. Amanda L. Hillgren
Sgt. Jon L. Johnson
Sgt. Lindsay M. Loftus
Sgt. Donne E. McKimmey
Spc. Cameron J. Araujo
Spc. David C. Konig
Cpl. Kristopher D. Lydon
Pfc. Casey J. Carpenter
Pfc. Justin M. McBride
Pfc. James J. O'Malley IV
Pvt. Michael Johnson
Pvt. Christopher M. Marshall

Air National Guard
Air Medal
Maj. Christopher L. Hesse
Maj. Andrew J. Malousek

Air Force Commendation Medal
Capt. James L. Otte
2nd Lt. Ryan E. Watson
Senior Master Sgt. Michele J. Carlson
Tech. Sgt. Elliott R. Blake
Tech. Sgt. Lisa C. Tupper
Staff Sgt. Allison J. Evans

Air Force Achievement Medal
Master Sgt. Angel K. Freeman
Master Sgt. Rick L. Ehlers
Tech. Sgt. Rusty A. Zortman
Staff Sgt. Christopher A. Bauer
Staff Sgt. Frank E. Holman
Staff Sgt. Nathaniel P. Norton
Staff Sgt. Mark A.R. Young
Senior Airman Matthew J. Dieckhoff
Senior Airman Philip J. Francis
Senior Airman Luis A. Zendejasgarcia

Maj. Donald M. Neff
Capt. Joseph R. Remmenga
Master Sgt. Mark E. Fusco

TAPS
Staff Sgt. Allen Abbott
Sgt. Jason B. Libal

Retirements
Army National Guard
Sgt. 1st Class Sean C. Bowden
Sgt. 1st Class John A. Brezile
Sgt. 1st Class Douglas V. Manly
Sgt. Kourtney K. Kaminski

Retirements
Sgt. Thomas J. Smith IV
Tech. Sgt. Phillip V. Kaup
Tech. Sgt. Vadra L. Stutzman
Staff Sgt. Adolph E. Parra III

RETIREMENTS

Shorttakes

Military Department employee earns national diversity award

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

More than 18 years ago, then-Nebraska Adjutant General (Maj. Gen.) Stanley Heng approached Pam Makovicka, a civilian employee with the Nebraska Military Department, and asked her if she would be willing to tackle issues facing women in the Nebraska National Guard.

Somewhat hesitantly, Makovicka accepted and she was appointed the Military Department's Federal Woman's Program Manager.

Since then Makovicka has discovered she has a knack for working with women's issues while her work with diversity issues has expanded to include working with other races, cultures and heritages.

Her efforts were recently recognized when she won the 2009 Nebraska National Guard's Excellence in Diversity Award and the 2009 National Excellence in Diversity Award, which was presented to her during the National Guard Bureau's diversity conference in Atlanta, Ga., March 11.

Now a management analyst, Makovicka balances her time between her daily job and the many additional duties she has taken on for the sake of diversity.

She said when she began working on diversity issues she drew inspiration from the hardships her grandparents faced when they immigrated to the United States from Czechoslovakia.

"I started looking into all that stuff and finding out how they got here and what they had to do to fight to get the land that they have...and how hard it was for them," said Makovicka. "I'm thinking, 'I need to do something for the people that are just coming in now.' They have it just as hard, if not harder, than my grandparents did."

In addition to the position of Federal Woman's Program Manager, Makovicka helped found the Heartland Federally Employed Women's Chapter and currently serves as its president. She participates in a Special Emphasis Program as an editor of "Bridging the Gap," a newsletter that promotes gender equality and educates readers on different races, cultures and heritages. Makovicka also works closely with the Asian, Native American, Hispanic and African American

organizations to further promote diversity. Makovicka said she believes that by exposing people in the Nebraska Military Department to differences in gender, race or heritage, it will help them be more accepting of others and lead to a richer working experience for everyone.

"I see a lot of people have problems communicating with each other," said Makovicka. "So I try to bring in ideas that would help us, like bringing in gender speakers or something like that just to help people realize that there's a difference in these people and we need to accept their differences and that their ideas are just as important as ours."

Makovicka said she was honored to receive the state excellence in diversity award, but gives the credit to her supervisors, who encourage her work in promoting diversity, along with all of the members of the Nebraska National Guard.

"To me it was a great honor," she said. "But it was actually very humbling because I feel that the Soldiers are more important and they're the ones that deserve all the awards. They are the ones that are really working in all these countries where they need to work with diversity."

By taking home the state diversity award, Makovicka qualified for to compete for the national award. During the National Guard Bureau's diversity conference in Atlanta, Ga., Makovicka said she was stunned to hear her name announced as the winner of the national award, especially because she became the first civilian to win it.

"When they announced that the lady from Nebraska should please come to the stage, I started to cry," admitted Makovicka with a laugh. "I had just never expected it to be a civilian because no civilian had ever won this award before, so it was very surprising to me."

Once again Makovicka could think of nothing but the military members in the crowd who shared her passion for promoting diversity.

"It was just such a humbling experience to think that I had won something... out of 54 states," she said. "All I could think about (was) all the wonderful Soldiers that were there and I'm thinking, 'You know, they really deserved this more than I did.'"

"But it was a great honor and I was very



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Congratulations On A Job Well Done: Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, congratulates Pam Makovicka after officially presenting her with the Nebraska Excellence in Diversity Award. She was presented with a national diversity award during a conference in Atlanta, Ga. Makovicka serves as the Military Department's Federal Women's Program manager.

pleased that I had won it," she added. Makovicka is a firm believer that promoting diversity and accepting differences in the workplace will only make it better.

"It just makes people realize that differences are important," said Makovicka. "That everybody's ideas are important and everybody's heritage is important and learning about other people's heritage just enriches your own life."

"Excellence in diversity means caring about a diverse society," she added. "We must respect others cultures and be models of respectful treatment of all individuals."

Makovicka's advice to promoting diversity is simple, yet personally rewarding. It's also rewarding for the Nebraska National Guard.

"Make everyone feel welcome," said Makovicka. "Talk about their heritage and share yours. Make them feel like they are part of the Guard family. When people feel like they're

part of this family they do so much more for the Guard."

"I think people are so much happier when they feel like they are part of this group and they can actually give something and somebody is listening," she added.

Makovicka said she loves the Nebraska National Guard and is happy to help promote the diversity within to further strengthen the force. And although she has now been recognized on the state and federal level for her tremendous contributions to promoting diversity, she humbly continues to give all of the credit to the members of the Nebraska National Guard.

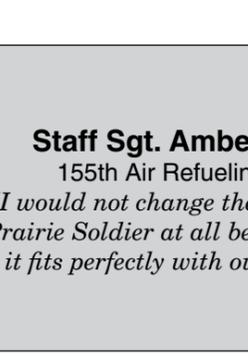
"I just want everybody to know that I really think that the Soldiers of the Nebraska National Guard are the ones that deserve the award because they're the ones that put their lives on the line for us all the time," she said. "It's a real honor for me to represent them."

Street Talk

"If you could change the name of the Prairie Soldier, what would you change it to and why?"



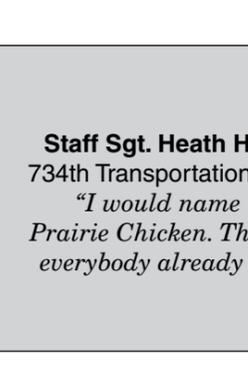
Lt. Col. Gary Krupa
155th Air Refueling Wing
"I would not change it from the Prairie Soldier as it reflects our rich history here in Nebraska of being in the prairie going back to the pioneer days. It also reflects our service to our county."



Staff Sgt. Amber Bogle
155th Air Refueling Wing
"I would not change the name of the Prairie Soldier at all because I think it fits perfectly with our location."



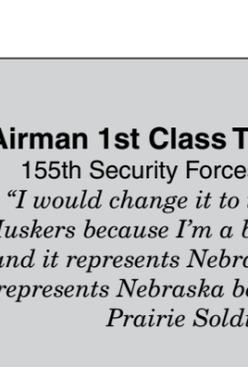
Spc. Tyffani Lerma
Detachment 2,
1195th Transportation Battalion
"I don't think I would change it because Nebraska is mainly known for prairies, so it fits."



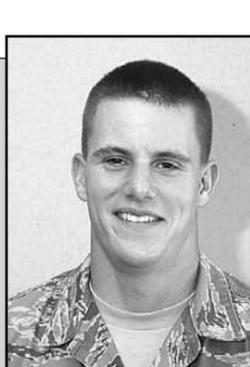
Staff Sgt. Heath Hamilton
734th Transportation Battalion
"I would name it the Prairie Chicken. That's what everybody already calls it."



OC Aaron Schimm
Officer Candidate School
"I think Prairie Soldier is relatively accurate. I'm originally from Michigan, so coming out here into the Nebraska National Guard, Prairie Soldier kind of says it all."



Airman 1st Class Trevor Meier
155th Security Forces Squadron
"I would change it to the Fighting Huskers because I'm a big Husker fan and it represents Nebraska. The title represents Nebraska better than the Prairie Soldier."



National Guard demonstrates capabilities during exercise

I would like to highlight the recent execution of the eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) operation conducted at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., from May 8-28.

XCTC was designed to validate the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's individual Warrior Tasks and Battle Drill training in a collective training environment.

The brigade, squadron and company leadership as well as their staff teams did a fantastic job of planning and executing the XCTC training plan in close coordination with the Joint Force Headquarters G-3 and the Premobilization Training Assistance Element.

There will be separate coverage of the XCTC training itself, so I will focus on another aspect of this highly successful operation.

About one year ago, it became apparent that we would need a significant support organization for this training event that would allow the 67th BfSB HQs, 1-134th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, 1167th Brigade Support Company as well as the 67th Signal Company (Montana Army National Guard,) elements of the Utah Army National Guard and the Army Reserve's military intelligence battalions to focus strictly on premobilization training.

Late last summer the staff did the analysis and recommended formation of a Support Task Force (STF) with a subordinate Logistics Task Force (LTF). It was immediately apparent that our 92nd Troop Command was the right organization from which to build the STF. It was quickly determined that the 168th Quartermaster Petroleum Supply Battalion, headquartered in Scottsbluff, would execute the LTF mission.

Col. Mike Navrkal, STF commander, determined that additional augmentation from the JFHQ staff was needed. JFHQ quickly responded in great fashion and was seamlessly integrated into the STF.

So, conditions were set for support operations to the 67th BfSB

The Adjutant General Brigadier General Judd Lyons



•The Joint Operations Center staff and IT staff collaborated with the STF for daily update briefings via video teleconference.

•Our Air National Guard provided valuable support for Employer Support for the

Guard and Reserve bosslifts to help us tell our story and continue to expose our employers to the great training their employees experience through membership in the Nebraska National Guard.

A phenomenal support operation then began well in advance of the actual training event itself. Hundreds of vehicles were moved from Nebraska to Camp Guernsey and back again. Virtually every class of supply was planned for, resourced and executed by the STF and LTF. Every staff section in JFHQ and the STF contributed to the operation.

Here are some, but in no way represent all, highlights of the collaborative effort:

•An innovative "Husker Express" was conceptualized and then flawlessly executed by the STF, LTF, JFHQ's G-4 and J-8 staffs before, during and after XCTC, creating a daily two-way supply line from Nebraska to Wyoming. The "Husker Express" transported 183 personnel and over 300 pieces of cargo and repair parts over 55,923 miles.

•The LTF fulfilled 114 separate transportation requests; 15 bus missions over 848 miles, seven cargo missions over 5,469 miles and five internal missions over 3,266 miles.

•All weapons qualification ranges were externally supported by the LTF facilitating the roll on/roll off of BfSB's Soldiers. The STF dealt with establishing and supporting Tactical Training Base (TTB) Garry Owen.

•At peak operations, over 1,200 Soldiers per day were fed at two separate temporary downrange dining facilities.

•Our G-6 Information Technology staff was able to create a "cloud" for our network so that the STF and LTF staffs in Wyoming were connected to our network as though they were still at their desks.

•Our G-3 Operations and Training and Premobilization Training Assistance Element staff coordinated daily with the BfSB staff to track training completion.

Guard and Reserve bosslifts to help us tell our story and continue to expose our employers to the great training their employees experience through membership in the Nebraska National Guard.

•Mother Nature was a constantly changing factor for both the BfSB and the STF. Short of hurricanes and locusts, there wasn't much in the way of challenges that wasn't seen at Camp Guernsey. Through it all, the BfSB, STF and LTF maintained flexibility and exhibited great resourcefulness.

•Despite the inclement weather, our aviation task force flew approximately 180 sorties in support of XCTC.

•Our medical staff evaluated over 200 Soldiers through sick call.

I am certain I have fallen short of adequately describing the scope of the operation and have overlooked many examples of the outstanding support to XCTC.

I would close by adding that the experience of deploying a STF and LTF to support brigade operations outside Nebraska, with the exception of our support operations for Hurricanes Gustav and Katrina, harkens back to the days of the 67th Separate Infantry Brigade and annual training at Fort Carson, Colo. (If you remember this, you have dated yourself.)

The experience of standing up a Support Task Force and Logistics Task Force demonstrated that the Nebraska National Guard is well positioned to support our fellow citizens here in Nebraska.

Certainly the members of these organizations, as well as those in the 67th BfSB who trained so hard to prepare for deployment, showed that our Soldiers and Airmen are the best of what Nebraska has to offer.

As always, I am honored to support you as Adjutant General.

After nearly nine years of conflict, public support to military seems as strong as ever

This coming September will mark the ninth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, which means that we have been at war with the shadowy al Quaida network and its Taliban supporters for nearly a decade.

Those words seem almost too surreal to believe. Just think for a second how much the world has changed during that time, how many things we now take for granted and how much we as a National Guard have evolved.

There are times when it seems almost too easy to say the world we live in today is different than the one we did back then, but it really is different. Still, as much as the world around us is changing, many, many things still remain as constant as ever.

Take the support we continue to receive from the American public for example. Back when the war was just beginning, many national experts questioned whether the American public had the stomach for a long war or whether it would continue to support the American military after initial patriotic fervor had abated.

Yet, here we are about to enter our tenth year of fighting a determined enemy, yet the public still seems

to staunchly support the men and women in uniform charged with taking the fight to our adversaries.

One merely has to attend a send-off or welcome home ceremony, or read a list of all organizations continuing to line up to support military members and their families, or listen to the myriad of small efforts that occur each and every day to get a sense of the deep support we still enjoy.

Let me relate a recent example. About a week ago I decided to grab a quick sandwich at a local deli shop. After ordering my sandwich, I stood in line waiting to pay for my lunch. However, by the time I got to the cash register, I found out that a young lady standing in front of me had already paid for it.

It was an extremely simple gesture, but the impact of it still left me amazed.

After trying to repay her unsuccessfully, all I could say was a sheepish "thanks." To which she responded, "No, thank you."

My Turn Editor, Prairie Soldier Kevin J. Hynes



Driving back to work, I started wondering what would cause a person like this spend her hard-earned money on someone like me. I also wondered how many times similar episodes have occurred.

I once read an editorial about how America has matured much since the Vietnam War when returning veterans and members of the military were treated with scorn and often much, much worse. On occasions like this, I can't help but feel that that writer was on to something.

We in the military are living in a special era in which we are constantly being challenged to complete often exceedingly difficult mission and for which, the general public seems extremely grateful.

At the same time, we should always remember that such support is not absolute nor is it guaranteed. It can be easily dissipated if we take it for granted, if we are careless with it, or if the public begins to feel that we really aren't as honorable as they once thought.

I just hope that the lady who bought me that sandwich understands how much that simple gesture touched me and how extremely grateful I am to have received it.

Oregon, Utah runners top Lincoln field

Thousands take to Nebraska streets during annual National Guard marathon

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Nearly 8,000 runners hit the streets of Lincoln, Neb., May 2 for the annual Lincoln/National Guard Marathon. Of those runners, 260 represented 47 different states and territories for the National Guard.

The Oregon Army National Guard's 1st Sgt. Seven Richmond, a first sergeant at the 249th Regional Training Institute in Monmouth, Ore., took top honors for National Guard men and fourth place overall with his time of 2 hours, 42 minutes, 24 seconds.

Richmond is unlike many marathoners in the fact that this is only his second year of running seriously. At 35 years of age, he said a runner's background doesn't matter. All that matters is the work you put in prior to the race.

"I am a great example. I didn't start running until I was 34," said Richmond. "Look at me now... you don't have to be a high school runner or college runner. I beat a bunch of those guys today."

"It just solidifies that if you do the work ahead of time it will pay off at the end," he added.

A long-time member of the women's All Guard Team finally broke through to win the Guard women's race after finishing in second and third place several times in the past.

Capt. DeAnne Trauba, secretary of general staff, Utah National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters, crossed the finish line with a time of 3:21:16 to take the top National Guard female spot while finishing 10th overall in the women's race.

A member of the All Guard Team each time she has competed in the National Guard Marathon, Trauba said she was happy to finally take the top spot, especially because she is not as young as she once was.

"It's quite an honor," said Trauba. "It's quite an accomplishment to me, especially because I'm older.

I'm almost 45 and so I'm getting in the not going as fast mode, so it's quite an honor."

The Guard Master's Race also saw a familiar face grabbed the top spot. The Wisconsin Air National Guard's Tech. Sgt. Mike Zeigle was the top National Guard runner in the Age 50 and Over Master's Category with his time of 3:06:37, good enough for 55th place overall.

At 58, Zeigle has competed in the National Guard Marathon every year but one since it began in Lincoln in 1984.

He said the National Guard aid stations and the thousands of fans cheering the runners along the 26.2-mile course makes a big difference.

"There (are) people all along the course and it means a lot," said Zeigle. "There's a lot of National Guard support out there...you couldn't go a quarter mile without someone mentioning National Guard."

For the third year in a row the Oregon National Guard team took home top team honors after the state's three team members ran an average time of 2:55:05.

Although winning the team title is not new to the Oregon team, this year's accomplish was significant according to Army Master Sgt. Bill Kaemmer, team captain.

"This year was pretty special because we were two-time champs, so we three-peated," said Kaemmer. "It's even more exciting because we lost three of our top runners - two to injury and one to deployment - so we were basically scrambling around last minute to field a team. So it was exciting for us the fact that we basically ran with new runners and we were able to pull it off."

The 2010 edition of the National Guard Marathon included some course changes, most notably a new finish line. For the first time in race history the finish line was on the 50-yard-line of the University of Nebraska Lincoln's Memorial Stadium with images of



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Early Morning Takeoff: The first of thousands of runners begin the opening steps of the 2010 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon, May 2, in front of the University of Nebraska's Memorial Stadium. This year's marathon attracted 260 National Guard runners from 47 states and territories.

the runners showing on the stadium's big screen television for the crowd to enjoy.

According to race officials, finishing the race in the stadium is a big step in the growth of the National Guard Marathon.

"I think it means it's a big step that it's becoming larger and a more popular venue for this area," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hagen, the National Guard Bureau marathon coordinator. "It sold out in a record amount of time this year, a record number of people. Next year they want to try and go ten thousand and Memorial Stadium will allow for that and also allow the popularity to rise."



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Top Guard Runner: 1st Sgt. Seven Richmond, Oregon National Guard, runs along a Lincoln, Neb., street while enroute to winning the men's title at the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon.



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Winning Form: Capt. DeAnne Trauba, Utah National Guard, wins the National Guard Women's Marathon title as she crosses the finish line at the University of Nebraska's Memorial Stadium.

that filled the a portion of the eastern stadium and the boost it gave them to complete their last few strides.

"This was probably a huge step for Nebraska to let us finish on their football field," said Trauba. "It's quite an honor to be on this football field."

"It was great," said Richmond. "The stands were full of fans and everybody was up on the jumbo-tron... it was pretty awesome."

So awesome, in fact, that Richmond credited the atmosphere of the UNL stadium with helping him finish strong.

"I was falling apart," he said. "My wheels were coming off, so if it hadn't been in the stadium I'd probably been a little slower."



Beginners Motorcycle Rider courses available

If you are a current member of the Nebraska National Guard, you are eligible for reimbursement if you attend The Motorcycle Safety Foundation approved Basic Rider's Course. Completion of the Basic Rider's Course is required to operate a motorcycle on military installations.

The two- to three-day course (depending upon provider) includes classroom instruction and practical riding experience in a controlled setting. It is designed for beginners and re-entry riders above the age of 19. Once completed, the training allows riders to waive the Nebraska State motorcycle test for an operator's license and may also qualify the participant for lower insurance premiums.

Note: In order to be eligible for reimbursement, members must obtain pre-approval from the Safety Office prior to registering for this course.

For additional information, or to get pre-approval, contact the Nebraska Army National Guard Safety Office at (402) 309-1833 or the Nebraska Air National Guard Safety Office at (402) 309-1118.

Air Guardsmen help special needs students hook big ones in Lincoln

By Senior Airman Brandon Kusek
Staff Writer

Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing joined up with special needs high school students for a day of fun, sun and fishing at Phizer Lake in Lincoln, Neb., May 14.

The students are members of the Functional Community Referenced education program, which is for more significantly impaired students at Lincoln North Star High School.

According to Shawnie Motschenbacher, Special Education teacher at Lincoln North Star and coordinator for the fishing day, there were 29 students plus six peers this year. This year was the 15th overall for the program and the 12th year for the Nebraska Air National Guard participation.

Tech. Sgt. Carlos Del Cid, 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron, said it was a great turn out, one of the biggest he had seen for the event.

Del Cid is in his sixth year of volunteering to helping out the program. He said his favorite part is watching the kids get excited when they catch a fish.

"I like being able to help them out and get the fish off the hooks and seeing their smiling faces," he said.

"I think you guys have fun doing this and I know we do," Motschenbacher said. "The students get to work on their social skills during the fishing day."

Motschenbacher added that in the days leading up to the event the students learn about fishing safety and trying to figure out how much



Photo by Senior Airman Brandon Kusek

We Got One: Staff Sgt. Doug Carlson, 155th Air Refueling Wing finance office, and his friend Liz show off the fish she caught at Phizer Lake, May 14.

pizza they'll need for lunch.

Capt. Nicole Nuss, 155th ARW executive officer, is in her third year coordinating the event. She said it's a great opportunity for the National Guard members to get out in the community and work with children.

"These kids love seeing our members in uniform and there's an instant trust when they see us," she added.

The program wouldn't be possible without the help of donations of food, fishing gear, location and volunteers such as the military members.

"We have to send a big thanks out to everyone who makes this possible," Motschenbacher said. "The kids get so much enjoyment out of this and without the help of volunteers it would be nearly impossible."