

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Scorched Landscape: Smoke and fire rises from wildfires in north-central Nebraska, July 24. The Nebraska National Guard assisted the firefighting efforts from July 21-29.



Nebraska Soldiers help state battle massive wildfire

■ Army Guard aviators, ground crews called up to support state's response to fire in Nebraska's Brown, Keya Paha Counties

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

When it comes to fighting fires, Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers know what it takes to get the job done.

After Nebraska National Guard Soldiers were mobilized in late June to assist in the fight against the High Park wildfire in northern Colorado, it was time for the Nebraska Soldiers to protect their own state after lightning caused three wildfires to erupt in north-central Nebraska, July 20.

Despite heroic attempts by local volunteer firefighters to control the blaze, the fires had grown exponentially in Brown and Keya Paha Counties, causing Gov. Dave Heineman to activate National Guard firefighting resources as part of the state emergency operations plan.

Along with assets from the Nebraska State Patrol, the Nebraska Department of Roads, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and the State Fire Marshal's office, the Nebraska Army National Guard activated three UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters equipped with "Bambi Buckets" and more than 20

Soldiers consisting of flight crews, maintenance teams, refuelers and ground crew. The Soldiers were from 317th Engineer Fire Fighting Team, 2-135th General Aviation Support Battalion and 1-376th Aviation Battalion.

The first Guard Soldiers arrived in Ainsworth, Neb., late in the evening of Friday, July 20. Their mission of wildfire support kicked off bright and early Saturday, July 21.

"On this fire, it's figuring out where they want the water," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Derek Whisler, a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot with 2-135th GSAB. "Conditions have been pretty tough. It's been pretty hot and windy."

Even though the conditions were tough, members of the Nebraska National Guard pushed through the challenges while attempting to fulfill their mission as best as they could.

"Everything is rolling very smoothly," said Sgt. James Nordman, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief with Company C, 2-135th GSAB, on July 24. "They are utilizing us pretty well."

According to the Soldiers involved in the operation, after the first three eight-hour days of

See FIRE RESPONSE on 11.



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Aerial Firefighting: Sgt. Ethan Yarolimek, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief with the Nebraska National Guard's 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, watches as he releases more than 550 gallons of water from a "Bambi Bucket" to help stop wildfires in north-central Nebraska, July 24.



Photo by Sgt. Christopher Bonebrake

Soy Bean Show-And-Tell: Khial Mohammad (left), the agricultural extension agent for the Ahmad Abad District, shows a plot of soy beans grown under his supervision to Sgt. 1st Class John Ruden and Sgt. Rachel Ramsey, both from the Nebraska Agribusiness Development Team 3, the Agricultural Section for the Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team, Aug. 13.

Back to basics

Nebraska Soldiers help provincial reconstruction team bring 19th century America to 21st century Afghanistan

By Sgt. Christopher Bonebrake
Special for the *Prairie Soldier*

PAKTYA PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Nebraska Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class John Ruden cautiously descends the stairs of a cool storage facility as members of his security team provide security, Aug. 13.

In the cool darkness of the underground structure that resembles a basement, he ensures that the temperature is sufficient and the space is clean and

well-kept.

Ruden, is a food security specialist with Nebraska Agribusiness Development Team 3, the Agricultural Section for the Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team. He and Sgt. Rachel Ramsey, a forestry specialist with the Nebraska National Guard's ADT 3, are here to conduct a quality assurance/quality control mission to assess the effectiveness of the cool storage and meet with the agricultural extension agent and

See ADT 3 on 5.

Guard air base preparing for increased traffic

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Traffic arriving at and departing from the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., is about to get a lot heavier as the state's new Joint Force Headquarters prepares to open for business.

Nebraska National Guard air base security officials are working to lessen the heavier traffic's impact as much as possible. Probably the most significant part of their plan is the opening of both the northern and eastern traffic gates during the projected peak of the morning and afternoon rush hours.

"Right now the plan is we will have both

See TRAFFIC on 10.

Inside

Air Guard wing hones operational readiness

See story and photos on 3.



Nebraska National Guardsmen knock out annual training

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NEWS DIGEST

■Crocker: Afghanistan still remains on track for next stage

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Afghanistan is on the right trajectory to move to the next stage in its development, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan C. Crocker said July 30 in an interview with NPR's Renee Montagne.

Nearly a year to the day of his July 25 appointment last year, the career diplomat said he was stepping down at the end of this July due to health reasons.

"What I'll miss the most is the chance to see Afghanistan move to the next stage of its development at every level — economic, governance and security — because I think they're on the right trajectory," Crocker said.

"I felt we had a pretty good last year in setting that up," he added. "I would have liked to have been part of the process of seeing it through. I'm confident they will get there. It would have been nice to be on deck to watch them do it."

Crocker was the sixth ambassador to Afghanistan since 2001. In April 2011, President Barack Obama nominated Crocker to serve as the next U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, and Crocker came out of retirement to accept the position. He was unanimously confirmed by the Senate in June 2011.

As U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, one of Crocker's accomplishments was to help to secure international pledges of aid worth \$16 billion at a donor's conference held in July in Tokyo. "The Tokyo conference and its outcome, I think, is highly significant because it produced a document in which the international community accepts certain obligations to provide funding, and the Afghan government accepts certain obligations to fight corruption, to build institutions," Crocker said.

According to news reports, Afghanistan agreed to new conditions to deal with internal corruption and donors agreed to hold a follow-up conference in 2014 in the United Kingdom. Crocker said he found it "highly encouraging" that Afghan President Hamid Karzai has created a 14-point decree for all ministries to follow as they begin to deliver on their side of the undertaking.

"The way he frames it now is that the international community has done everything that Afghanistan could conceivably ask," Crocker said. "It is now up to the Afghans to put their own house in order."

■DoD, VA release mobile app targeting post-traumatic stress

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The Defense and Veterans Affairs departments have released a free Apple and Android smartphone mobile application for use with post-traumatic stress disorder treatment. The app is called PE Coach; PE stands for "prolonged exposure."

Psychologists at the Defense Department's National Center for Telehealth and Technology, known as T2, and the VA National Center for PTSD developed the mobile app to help patients with their therapy. Both departments use prolonged exposure therapy as

an effective treatment for PTSD.

"PE Coach is a helpful tool that assists our service members and veterans who are between visits and in treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder," said Dr. Jonathan Woodson, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. "We have shared this app with our military health care providers as well, and hope that many individuals who are receiving PE therapy will find it useful."

Brian Sullivan, a veteran who has been using PE Coach in its testing phase during his VA therapy, said in an interview with the Pentagon Channel and American Forces Press Service that he finds the application helpful. "It allows you to keep track of your therapy sessions as they're going on," he said. "It allows you to record the whole session. It allows you to take notes after the session, and... it allows you to do homework... before your next session."

Sullivan said the app also offers breathing exercises to help in managing anxiety. "You have to have a positive attitude going into the therapy using the application.... (The app) will allow you to go back over the session yourself, and listen to it again, and... help jog your memory... in case you forgot something that happened," he said.

"We worked with a broad and diverse group of psychologists in the DOD and VA who are treating PTSD patients with prolonged exposure therapy," said Dr. Greg Reger, clinical psychologist in T2's innovative technology applications division. We wanted to help our patients in the therapy and make it easier for providers to deliver this treatment. PE Coach does both."

Patients install PE Coach on their smartphones and can record therapy sessions for playback between the sessions. The app also provides an explanation of exposure therapy, assignments, explanations of PTSD and its symptoms, and a convenient way to write notes about typically avoided locations, situations and events for later discussions with the therapist.

Reger said writing in a notebook in public places makes many people feel uncomfortable, but tapping out a note on a smartphone makes it easier to capture in-the-moment feelings.

PE Coach is designed to help users stick to prolonged exposure treatment, which could improve the treatment's effectiveness, Reger said. It was not designed to be used as a self-help tool, he added, and should not replace professional counseling.

(Karen Parrish of American Forces Press Service contributed to this report. From a National Center for Telehealth and Technology News Release)

■DoD officials detail defense posture in Asia-Pacific region

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The Defense Department remains focused on building and strengthening defense initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region to reach the goals outlined in the U.S. defense strategic guidance, senior DoD officials said Aug. 1.

Robert Scher, deputy assistant secretary of defense for plans, and David F. Helvey, acting



Soaring: An Aero-stat aerial observation platform flies high above the Black Hills of South Dakota during the Golden Coyote exercise.



Photos courtesy of 2nd Lt. Mathew Field

Husker Pride: (From left) Spc. Kyle Diefenderfer, 2nd Lt. Mathew Field, Sgt. 1st Class Steve Barnes and Sgt. Topacio 'Tito' Ortiz look up as their Coyote exercise. Husker flag soars above Camp Rapid, S.D.

Nebraska Guard medics take Husker support to new heights

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) had the opportunity to raise their red Cornhusker flag above the Black Hills of South Dakota when they placed it on the tether line of an Aero-stat aerial observation platform. According to 2nd Lt. Mathew Field, the unit was supporting the annual Golden Coyote exercise at Camp Rapid, S.D., June 9-23, when Spc. Kyle Diefenderfer talked with member of the Aero-stat crew who told him that units occasionally raise their unit flags below the blimp-like device. "It just kind of took off from there," said Field.

deputy assistant defense secretary for East Asia, testified before the House Armed Services Committee on U.S. force posture in the U.S. Pacific Command area of responsibility.

"The department continues to pursue a defense posture in the Asia-Pacific region that is geographically distributed, operationally resilient and politically sustainable," Scher said.

"More broadly, we are investing in defense activities, presence, posture and capabilities necessary to reassure allies and partners in the region and shape the security environment, while also providing forward capabilities appropriate to deter and defeat aggression," he said.

Scher noted force posture is only one of many priorities within the rebalancing toward the region.

Other initiatives, he said, include diplomatic efforts to strengthen bilateral alliances, deepening working relationships with emerging powers, engaging with multilateral institutions, expanding trade and investment, and advancing principles of democracy and human rights.

"Rebalancing to achieve these ends requires enhanced U.S., allied and partner military capabilities throughout the region," Scher said. "(Also a) U.S. forward presence of forces, and a more resilient military infrastructure to support effective U.S. power projection operations in the face of current and future security threats."

Scher said the department's plans include building up Guam as the strategic hub in the Western Pacific, expanding access to locations in Southeast Asia, Oceania and the Indian Ocean region, and investing in capabilities appropriate for deterring and defeating aggression while reassuring allies and partners.

"(We will) expand our exercises, assistance efforts and other engagements with allied partner states in order to build trust capability and interoperability," he said. "Pursuing

these and other capabilities offers the best prospect for protecting U.S. interests, not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but also elsewhere in the world."

The Asia-Pacific region, Helvey said, provides an "unprecedented" opportunity for trade and investment since it is "home to some of the world's largest and fastest-growing economies, the world's largest populations and the world's largest militaries."

Helvey also said the region contains challenges such as maintaining freedom of navigation of the South China Sea, countering the proliferation efforts of North Korea, as well as seeking transparency in the military activities of key regional players, such as China.

Helvey noted the Department of Defense continues to work closely with Japan to implement the provisions of the April 27, two-plus-two joint statement. He then turned to the U.S.-South Korea alliance.

"The U.S.-Republic of Korea alliance continues to be a cornerstone of U.S. defense partnerships and posture in Northeast Asia," he said. "In accordance with the 2009 joint vision statement, we are realigning our forces on the Korean Peninsula to prepare for transition of wartime operational control to the ROK in December 2015. This transition will allow for the ROK to take the lead role in the combined defense of Korea, supported by an enduring and capable U.S. military force presence on the Korean Peninsula, in the region and beyond."

Other significant posture changes, he said, include the rotational deployments of the Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force units to Australia, as well as a littoral combat ship deployment to Singapore to strengthen U.S. engagement in the region through port calls and engagement of regional navies.

"They will also support the department's effort to counter transnational challenges and build partner capacity for maritime security, among other missions," Helvey said.

Nebraska Army Guard Soldier dies of injuries from traffic accident

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier died July 28 of injuries he suffered July 14 in a off-duty traffic accident while attending training in Kansas.

Staff Sgt. Jeff Budig, 27, was a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 195th Forward Support Company (Airborne) in Omaha. He was also employed full time at the Nebraska Army National Guard's Unit Training and Equipment Site No. 2 at Mead, Neb.

A native of Lincoln, Neb., Budig is survived by his parents and son.

Budig was a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

He was buried with full military honors on Aug. 4 at the Roca Cemetery.

Shinseki notes strides in serving nation's veterans

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The Department of Veterans Affairs has made great strides in meeting the challenges posed by a decade of war, and cooperation with the Defense Department is crucial to continued progress, VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki said Aug. 28.

In a speech at the American Legion convention in Indianapolis, Shinseki said repeated deployments over the last decade have created "issues that don't show up right away."

"More (service members) are surviving catastrophic injuries, but higher survival rates also mean complex casualties," he said. Post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injuries, (and) amputations, blindness, deafness and other injuries can have compounding effects, he explained.

"It takes a superb, disciplined fighting force to handle this kind of strain for this long."

By next summer, Shinseki said, VA will have increased funding for treatment of veterans with spinal cord injuries by 28 percent since 2009. He added that funding for traumatic brain injury treatment will have increased by 38 percent, mental health funding by 39 percent, long-term care funding by 39 percent and prosthetics funding by 58 percent. Funding for female veterans' health issues will have increased by 123 percent, with a potential total increase of 158 percent by 2014.

"This is a dynamic process. When you push 2.9 million claims out the door and 3.5 million come in, ... we have to find ways to dominate those numbers."

Prairie Soldier

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

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

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Keeping Watch: Senior Airman Bradley Self guards the flightline during an Operational Readiness Exercise at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center near Alpena, Mich., Aug 1.

Huskers in Michigan

■ 155th Air Refueling Wing puts readiness to test during operational exercise

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

After months of preparations, approximately 300 Airmen from the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln, Neb., recently proved they can successfully deploy and function in a wartime scenario when they performed an Operational Readiness Exercise July 28 – Aug. 4 in Alpena, Mich.

The exercise was the first of two OREs designed to teach and prepare members of the unit for an Operational Readiness Inspection scheduled for the summer of 2014.

Col. Keith Schell, commander of the 155th ARW, said he was very happy with the wing's performance, especially the hard work leading up to the actual exercise.

"I think a phenomenal effort was put in by people many, many weeks before this happened," said Schell. "I think what led up to this – all the preparation, all the planning, showed in what happened up here. I think the individuals that put this together, the individuals that

deployed up here, the individuals that fought the "war" did a fantastic job."

The exercise took the Airmen through the entire process of deploying, fighting a simulated war while continuing to complete their jobs, before redeploying home. Several different scenarios were thrown at the Airmen during the simulated war forcing them to react appropriately to rapidly changing conditions. This included donning a full chemical suit and gas mask in all levels of Mission Oriented Protective Posture.

Schell said the exercise was designed to show newer Airmen what it's like to deploy and work in a hostile environment, while providing a refresher for those who've done it before.

And by no means were the members of the Exercise Evaluation Team, who designed the scenarios and evaluated the response, easy on the members of the 155th ARW.

"We basically threw everything we could at them to challenge them as much as we could



Photos by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Where There's Smoke: Firefighters from the 155th Air Refueling Wing inspect a simulated burning building during an Operational Readiness Exercise at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center near Alpena, Mich., Aug 1. Members of the Lincoln-based 155th participated in the exercise to prepare for an upcoming Operational Readiness Inspection.

and there was not one instance that I can recall in my memory where something went poorly or badly or even incorrectly," said Lt. Col. Jeffrey Mathemeier, a lead EET member and 155th ARW wing plans officer. "There were a couple hiccups here and there, but they were very minor and so that's what gives me a positive outlook on what our capability is in the future."

"Overall the wing did very well," he added. "Better than I expected in a lot of aspects."

Both Schell and Mathemeier saw firsthand how newer Airmen, despite never having been through similar scenarios, took on the challenge and performed well.

"The people of the organization really stepped up and embraced the training, but I saw people who had no experience ever doing this kind of training excel at it once they understood what to do," said Mathemeier. "And they volunteered to help with the training on a lot of different levels that they had never even seen or experienced before."

Schell said he saw some nervousness from young Airmen, but once they're thrown into the scenarios they realized they can handle whatever came their way.

"I think coming up here, them doing it and knowing the confidence they can do it and do it successfully...if they ever had to deploy anywhere in the world I think they're confident they can do the job," said Schell.

For Airman 1st Class Ryan Lindholm, with the 155th Security Forces Squadron, this was his first time participating in an ORE.

"I learned a lot," said Lindholm. "Some parts were exciting, some parts were boring. I don't care for the MOPP stuff so much...but it wasn't bad, it was fun for security forces."

During the exercise, Lindholm said he was able to not only train on donning his MOPP gear, but was able to train on some weapons he normally doesn't get to work with.

Lindholm said his favorite part of the exercise was when he was stationed in a bunker in the woods watching the



Teamwork: Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing process through a Contamination Control Area during an Operational Readiness Exercise at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center near Alpena, Mich., July 30. Members of the Lincoln-based 155th participated in the exercise to prepare for an upcoming Operational Readiness Inspection.

See ORE on 4.

Nebraska chefs tops at regional cook-off

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

An old saying says, “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.” Food service specialist from the 1167th Brigade Support Company recently proved they can definitely stand the heat when they competed in the regional level of the 2012 Philip A. Connelly cooking competition in the National Guard field kitchen category, held at Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., July 12.

The Connelly competition is a three-tiered competition. The 1167th BSC had already won the state competition making them eligible to compete against six other state winners that make up their region.

Word came in August that the 1167th had actually won their regional competition making them eligible to compete nationally.

Members of the 1167th BSC braved temperatures hovering around triple digits and upped the heat by working in a “Containerized Kitchen,” or CK, to prepare a well-balanced meal for members of their unit participating in annual training, members of the Nebraska National Guard’s command staff, and evaluators judging the competition.

A CK is a self-contained system for food preparation. It includes a full complement of appliances including refrigeration, multiple-burner stoves and convection ovens. On this particular day, the temperature in the CK measured 122 degrees before the thermometer malfunctioned.

During each level of the competition, team members prepare a multi-course menu while operating in a tactical environment using the CK under the ever-watchful eyes of a three-person evaluation team that evaluates cooking techniques, how well recipes are followed, and sanitation.

The competition is designed to mimic conditions encountered in a real-world deployed situation.

“The bottom line is the Soldiers learn at every level and they build a better team,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Teresa Domeier, Nebraska’s food service program manager. “And the more they do it, the better they get at the job... and they can be ready for state missions or federal missions if something happens. They know they can do



Photos by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Nice Digs: Members of the 1167th Brigade Support Company cook out of a Containerized Kitchen, or ‘CK,’ at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., July 12, during the regional-level of the Philip A. Connelly cooking competition. The 1167th BSC won the regional competition making them eligible to compete at a national level.

it, and by practicing on the piece of equipment just builds up their confidence even more.”

The menu included tortellini soup, chicken parmesan, pasta with marinara sauce, green beans, a spring salad and a white cake topped with a strawberry glaze and whipped cream.

The team of evaluators, all of whom have food service backgrounds, were excited to see what the members of the 1167th BSC food service specialists could do.

“This is an opportunity for them to keep up on their skills and I love the program because it recognizes what they do,” said Daryl Moss, an evaluator from St. George, Utah. “They work hard. It’s hot up there on that piece of equipment they’re on and they have to continue to do what they need to do because people are going to show up and want to eat. Without what they do in providing meals, we couldn’t do what we need to do because we wouldn’t have the energy.”

“The goal of all this is to bring back professionalism and enhance the readiness of this unit,” Moss added. “At some point in time they’ll have to be on their own, be it a domestic state mission... or Uncle Sam may call them up and require them to go on a deployment somewhere and so they use their skills wherever they go.”

Domeier said she was also excited to bring attention to the state’s food service specialists.

“They’re the hardest working



Safety First: Staff Sgt. Brent Benes, a food operations sergeant with the 1167th Brigade Support Company, checks the temperature of green beans at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., July 12, during the regional-level of the Philip A. Connelly cooking competition.

MOS and they’re the actual ones that have to do it,” said Domeier. “They’re not simulating any of their training. They actually do what they would do in the wartime zone.”

Moss said he and his fellow evaluators watch for many things, but sanitation is extremely important in the competition.

“Sanitation is probably the biggest obstacle that they face out in the field,” said Moss. “It’s hard to deal with that. We’re not going to make this easy for them. We want them to think about what they’re doing.”

“We want to see if they wash their hands, if they clean their area up, if they sanitize things, if the people in the sanitation tent are washing the pots and pans,” added Moss.



Hot Dish: Pvt. Taylor Nekuda, a food service specialist with the 1167th Brigade Support Company, sautés mushrooms in a Containerized Kitchen at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., July 12, during the regional-level of the 2012 Philip A. Connelly cooking competition.

Despite the heat, time constraints and difficult conditions, Moss said he was pleased with what he saw.

“As young as this group is... they’re well polished, they know their mechanical skills and... they’re exhibiting those to me, so that’s a bonus,” said Moss. “They’re doing things according to the documentation.”

Sgt. Tony Vodicka, a food service specialist who was responsible for making salad and chicken, said participating in the competition was a great honor.

He said the secret ingredient to success is simple: “There’s a whole lot of teamwork,” said Vodicka. “You need 100 percent teamwork because if you’re trying to do it all by yourself, you can’t.”

He added getting to know the strengths and weaknesses of teammates is vitally important. He said it also allows a person to identify his or her own strengths and weaknesses.

For Spc. Marisa Martinez, also a food service specialist, this was her first time competing and working

with her teammates. “We kind of did all this on short notice,” said Martinez. “But I feel like everyone really pulled together.”

“It’s a good learning experience and it’s good to really get back into MOS training because I know a bunch of us had gotten back from deployment,” she added. “I had never cooked with the unit before until we started training for this and I thought it was good you learn to work with your team. It’s mainly just building cohesion – and not just with us, with the whole unit as well.”

With the regional title theirs, members of the 1167th BSC will prepare to compete in the national-level event and try to duplicate the feat pulled off by Nebraska’s 267th Support Maintenance Company, who won the national title a year ago in the same category.

“The biggest thing is the unit learns even more,” said Domeier. “They learn from the state level, they learn from the regional level and when the (Department of the Army) level comes...they learn something everytime.”

ORE continued from page 3.

perimeter when opposition forces (OPFOR) attacked. He said he was able to use that situation to put his security forces training to use.

“When you see OPFOR come up and start shooting and you got a wall of barricades and I got a .240 machine gun, I just mount that up and just start shooting and unloading...blanks, open fire with the brass spraying all over the bunker,” said Lindholm.

“It was loud and it was a lot of fun,” he added. “It was exciting to see that.”

And thanks to all of the different training he received, Lindholm said he feels better if he ever has to face the real thing.

“I feel more confident about when I get deployed because I have an idea of what I’m going to,” he said. “I know it’ll be completely different and it’ll be somewhere else, but it gives me an idea of what I’m going to expect in future deployments.”

Senior Airman Paul Rutten,

a firefighter with the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron, participated in the wing’s ORE in 2008. He had much more responsibility in his job this time around, though.

“I’ve never been in the crew chief spot being at one of these before,” said Rutten. “So I’d say the biggest thing I learned would be how much goes on when you’re the crew chief. Last time I was just backseat on rescue, so I didn’t know how much the crew chief had to think about. You’re always looking around for (unexploded ordnance), you got to keep in mind if it’s split MOPP and what route you’re going to get to a building if it’s on fire.”

Rutten added during his last ORE he simply did what his crew chief told him and didn’t have a lot of responsibility beyond that. Despite the intense scenarios and difficult working conditions, Rutten said he enjoyed himself.

“I love getting calls,” he said. “Dragging dummies out of build-

ings and I think it makes the time go by faster and that’s what we’re here to do.”

“The MOPP gear stuff, we do it, but I want to be in the fire,” he added. “I want to be in there doing what we’re here to train for.”

Overall Schell said he was impressed with wing members and was grateful for the EET’s feedback.

“The EET also said there were areas that we needed to look at improving just a little bit,” said Schell. “The first day we had a debrief and they sat down, they told us like they saw it and the next day those areas improved and that’s what I want from the EET, is to tell us what you see – don’t sugar-coat it; tell us what we need to improve.”

And looking forward to the next ORE, Mathemeier had some simple advice.

“Bring the same amount of energy, bring the same attitude, bring the same open mind and we’ll get better,” he said.



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Still on the Job: Master Sgt. Nathan Schmaderer (right) and Master Sgt. Mark Stocking work in full chemical suits during the 155th Air Refueling Wing’s Operational Readiness Exercise at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center near Alpena, Mich., Aug. 1.

“You did it really well this time so the challenge here in the future is replicating that same performance and that’s going to be a challenge every single time because it’s hard

to do things well time-in and time-out,” he added. “It’s going to be harder to get better, but we have the capability and the talent here to do it.”

Nebraska jet sets speed record for complete overhaul

By Senior Airman Mary Thach
Staff Writer

A KC-135R Stratotanker from the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing recently made history when it became the first KC-135 to be completely overhauled in less than 100 days at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla. Aircraft tail number 63-7988 was overhauled in a record time of 99 flow days, making it the fastest overhaul Tinker AFB has ever performed on a KC-135.

Considering their average overhaul time is roughly 127 days, the feat is a testament to both aircraft maintainers from the 155th ARW and workers at Tinker.

Col. Keith Schell, commander of the 155th ARW, said it's very important to have the aircraft overhauled thoroughly every five years, but also as quickly as possible so they are available for training and flying missions.

"If you think about what we do here, our primary mission is to fly and refuel," said Schell. "We are limited by our number of aircraft here. We have eight planes right now and with one being gone, that limits us to seven."

"The missions we can support are reduced because of the aircraft that we send out," he added. "We have one less training asset, so the training that needs to take place, specifically in maintenance, there's less of a chance for our new people and people who have been here a long time to train."

During a KC-135 overhaul, the 155th Maintenance Squadron will send 'Team Spirit,' a group of approximately five people specifically selected based on their specialized training, to travel to Tinker to perform a miniature inspection one month prior to the completion of



Photo by Margo Wright

History Makers: Hundreds of Tinker mechanics stand by a history-making Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker aircraft May 15 at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla. Tanker depot professionals overhauled the jet in an unprecedented 99 days. "Today we are celebrating another production record shattered by the Mighty KC-135 Depot Maintenance Team," Col. Brad Tannehill, 76th Aircraft Maintenance Group commander, said. "In less than four years, this world-class team has slashed average PDM flow from 226 to 127 days and now completed a jet in less than 100."

the overhaul. Team Spirit inspects their aircraft to ensure all parts are functioning correctly and to catch any issues prior to the completion of the overhaul.

The process to overhaul the aircraft is quite lengthy.

When a KC-135 arrives at Tinker, it is processed through five stages, or gates — pre-dock and wash, inspection dock, speedy structures or extended flow dock, systems check and post-dock where the jet receives a functional check flight. Within

those gates, there are countless people who touch or are affiliated with the aircraft.

Twelve years ago, a KC-135 overhaul averaged 400 days. Four years ago, it took 266 days for the same procedure. It is quite significant for Team Tinker to cut the average time of an overhaul from 127 days to 99 days.

"To reduce an overhaul from 400 days or more to 99 days is a phenomenal job they have done down there," said Schell. "How that

affects us, instead of having a jet gone for a year-and-a-half, it's gone for 90 days and we will have access to that aircraft."

"It's also a testament to our crew chiefs and our maintainers," said Schell. "In between these inspections, we still have minor inspections we do, and of course flying. Our crew chiefs and maintainers do such a phenomenal job on keeping them up and highlighting what's wrong and fixing it here. That makes it easier for them down there."

ADT 3 continued from page 1.

Ahmad Abad District governor.

Cool storage is not a new concept in Afghanistan. Before the Russians and the Taliban came into the picture, Afghan farmers stored their produce in facilities similar to this structure. That was changed, however, by decades of war according to Ruden.

"Prior to the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan was above and beyond what it is now," Ruden said. "All those fathers who died in combat, their knowledge died with them. The Taliban took them back even further by taking away their roads, education and most of their infrastructure."

The knowledge lost is significant because most of the Afghan population is still illiterate. Information is passed down by word of mouth; not much is written down. Most information comes from the Mullah, or village leader. Even though he may not know the correct answer to a question, he may just make up an answer that is wrong, said Ramsey.

"It's a pride thing; they don't want to say, 'I don't know,'" she added.

This particular cool storage facility and others like it were built by agribusiness development teams in the past, using U.S. dollars to keep crops fresh after they were harvested. Construction of this particular structure was completed on March 8.

Today, this structure, and many like it across Afghanistan, is allowing the local population to preserve their food, providing them better nutrition throughout the year. This is critical because historically Afghanistan has the highest infant mortality rate under the age of five and highest maternal mortality rate in the world. Much of this can be attributed to malnutrition.

The need to preserve produce stems from the survival mode mindset that many Afghans adopt, said Ramsey. They have plenty of food, but they have no way to preserve it. Instead of feeding their children, they sell their harvest for next to



U.S. Army photos

Key Leader Engagement: Sgt. 1st Class John Ruden, a food security specialist with Nebraska Agribusiness Development Team 3, the Agricultural Section for the Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team, facilitates a key leader engagement meeting with officials from the Ahmad Abad district, Aug. 13. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the agricultural progress of the district and give the elders humanitarian aid including pamphlets on personal health, blankets, clothing and coloring books for the children.

nothing.

The concept of cool storage is simple. A hole is dug into the ground and walls are constructed of stone masonry. The roof is a combination of plastic sheeting and dirt. There are two chimneys, similar to a stovepipe on a wood stove, that release hot air through the roof. Baffles on top of the chimneys regulate airflow.

The end product is a cross between a root cellar and a cooler that requires no electricity to operate. This idea goes hand-in-hand with the theme of rebuilding Afghanistan to the point where they can take the reins once coalition forces leave. Produce is stored in plastic bins that are then stacked on each other to utilize the space inside.

The list of storable items is comprehensive and includes apples, potatoes, spinach, pears, onions, tomatoes and even apricots.

Ruden had some concerns with the structure when he first came out to this facility.

"We identified some minor issues, like the cleanliness of the space to keep the produce from getting contaminated," said Ruden. "Also the baffles were not regulating the temperature properly."

Despite these problems, ADT 3 considers this cool storage facility a success, due primarily to the fact that only one tribe uses it, Ruden said. Other cool storages have failed in the past because multiple tribes used them simultaneously, leading to conflict and product theft.

"In America, we're all individuals, but here it's reversed. Here society revolves around the tribe," Ruden said.

The success of the cool storage is one of the many signs that the district of Ahmad Abad is doing well, but they still have a long way to go.

"Their leadership goes above and beyond to identify the problems within their community and solve those problems internally," said Ruden.



Inspecting Afghan Cellars: Khial Mohammad, the agricultural extension agent for the Ahmad Abad district, updates members of the Nebraska National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team 3, the Agricultural Section for the Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team, inside one of the district's cool storage facilities, Aug. 13. The cool storage facility was constructed to resemble a basement underground in order to facilitate the preservation of crops after the harvest season.

The reconstruction of Ahmad Abad has been successful because they have an irrigation system and their leadership does its job, he said.

After conducting the QA/QC on the cool storage, Ruden and Ramsey participated in a key leader engagement with the district's officials including the district governor and the police chief. This is what the Afghans call a shura, or a gathering of established leaders within the tribe.

"If your neighbor is grazing his cattle on your crops, you go to the shura and they will hear both sides and make a decision," Ramsey said. "Traditionally, everyone respects that verdict."

The main topic of the KLE was transition. With the pending withdrawal of coalition forces in 2014, ADT 3 wanted to discuss what the leadership is doing to prepare for the continued growth and sustainability of their infrastructure.

This assumption of responsibility

Schell also expressed his gratitude to Tinker for streamlining their process and returning the aircraft in excellent condition.

"I would like to thank Tinker," said Schell. "They are doing a phenomenal job. They are working hard trying to get these planes out faster and better. They have done a lot of great things."

Tech. Sgt. Nic Bethune, a crew chief of the overhauled aircraft, said breaking the 100-day barrier is a reflection of the hard work the aircraft maintainers have poured into this aircraft.

"It means quite a bit," said Bethune. "A lot of it speaks about the maintenance back here. If the inspection goes fast, that means that the home station maintenance and upkeep is actually going better than expected."

"It means quite a lot to have a quality product sent down there and receiving one back says a lot about our team," he added. "We do everything by-the-book like we are supposed to and we are hoping everyone else is, too. Just knowing that everything is done correctly and if you do follow the book and do it the correct way, you know you have a quality product. Then you send it down and you get it back faster and keep it flying."

Tech. Sgt. Ryan Sandell, the second crew chief of the overhauled aircraft, agreed.

"It says a lot about our maintenance culture here, about taking that extra step, making sure things are right," said Sandell. "And going above and beyond what the minimum requirements are. Our crew personally goes even further. We have a lot of pride in the aircraft. Our success is tied to its success."

Editor's note: Portions of this story are taken from Brandice J. O'Brien, Tinker Public Affairs.

ity in the agricultural sector falls on the shoulders of Khial Mohammad, the agricultural extension agent for Ahmad Abad. His primary role is to educate Afghans on farming and supervise them as they implement the techniques.

"We need to start backing off and letting the AEA identify the agricultural needs of his people," said Ruden.

Ihsanul Haq Akbars, the district governor, told the AEA during the meeting that it was the responsibility of the AEA to take control and start supervising his people and making sure they were doing their job.

"That was refreshing to hear the district governor stepping up and taking a leadership role and saying, 'You know what, that's what you should be doing,'" Ramsey said.

With respect to future projects and agricultural developments, the future looks promising.

"The apple orchards outside the compound where the meeting took place looked really good," said Ramsey. "And the garden they planted looks better than the demonstration farm we built to show them how it's done."

"They want their projects done, but with their input on how it's done, which is great," Ruden said.

"I think they legitimately want to do right by their community," Ramsey added.

ADT 3 will be handing off their projects to the next PRT in March 2013, but there is much to be done in the meantime. "I think there is progress, but it's slow progress," said Ruden. "My fear is that when we leave, the terrorist and criminal groups will take back over. These people have to be strong and say, 'These are bad guys and I don't want them here anymore.'"

Even with this ever-present threat, the cool storage facility and the plethora of other projects ADT 3 is supervising will allow the people of Paktya Province to sustain themselves without the help of outside forces.



Photo by Capt. Andrew Nelson

On The Go: Pfc. Tim Misfeldt, Pfc. Kurt Ruh, and Spc. Kodi Classen, scouts from Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, move between stations during the CAV Stakes competition at Fort Riley, Kan., July 16.

■ One year after deployment to Afghanistan, Nebraska Army Guard cavalymen take to field and get...

Back in the Saddle

By Spc. Jason Drager

Staff Writer

With temperatures surpassing 100 degrees and the heat beating down on their backs, members of 1-134th Cavalry Squadron (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) fought through the sweltering summer days of Fort Riley, Kan., to complete their annual training.

Just a year removed from training Afghan police and military in Kabul, Afghanistan, members of the Nebraska Army National Guard cavalry squadron took the opportunity to get back to the basics of reconnaissance and put training into the hands of the junior noncommissioned officers.

"We're letting the units develop their own training instead of having it scripted," said Sgt. Maj. Monte Kerchal, operations sergeant major for the 1-134th Cavalry. "We need to get back to recon-minded skills and tasks."

In previous years, the junior NCOs were not nearly as hands-on with their troops as this year, say squadron leaders. By having the young sergeants lead their teams, the 1-134th Cavalry hoped to help them gain valuable experience in leadership roles.

While trying to combat the heat and dehydration (temperatures at Fort Riley reached toward 105 and beyond at times during training), the squadron refined their cavalry instincts through days of training and simulated combat events.

After arriving at Fort Riley on July 8, the squadron began setting up camp the next day in Fort Riley's remote and secluded areas that once included the U.S. Cavalry School.

For the first week of training the squadron focused on team- and squad-level maneuvers, individual Soldier skills and qualifying with various weapons. All training was in preparation for the "CAV Stakes," which was held July 16-17.

Sgt. Cody Graff, a cavalry scout with Hastings' Troop A, 1-134th



Photo by Capt. Andrew Nelson

Into The Open: A member of B Troop, 1-134th Cavalry, takes part in crossing a linear danger area exercise during the CAV Stakes competition, July 16, at Fort Riley, Kan.

Cavalry, said he approached the training by allowing his unit's specialists and corporals to teach classes and train while he supervised.

"I just trained them up," said Graff. "We've been fighting in an urban environment for the last 10 years, so it's a little hard to get back in that scout mentality again and train the guys who've never done it before."

The consensus among the junior NCOs who were given the chance to train their Soldiers was that the AT went very well.

"I planned a lot of (long range surveillance) missions before, but it's nice to finally see it through from start to finish," said Sgt. Adam Maire, an infantryman with Beatrice's Troop C (Long Range Surveillance), 1-134th Cavalry. "The senior NCOs were helpful, but they also let you run your guys."

This year's annual training also gave junior enlisted Soldiers the chance to step up and take more of a leadership role, according to Sgt. Robert Sherard, an infantryman with Troop C (Long Range Surveillance), 1-134th Cavalry.

"I've definitely seen us working to be more self-sufficient," said Spc. Braxton Kociember, a scout from Hastings' Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry. "Our NCOs are really knowledgeable. I've personally learned a lot."

The CAV Stakes was the culminating event of the AT and encompassed all of the skills learned in the previous week.

The event was a 24-hour, 10-station skills test of individual and crew proficiency. Teams consisted of three to four Soldiers and were separated into scout (A/B Troops) and long-range surveillance (C Troop) teams. The teams were provided a list of 10 grid coordinates spread over eight kilometers that the Soldiers had to perform dismounted land navigation to reach.

Beginning at noon on July 16, each team navigated on foot to their first point. Over the next 24-hours, which included time to sleep at whichever point was reached at 10 p.m., the teams trekked through the wooded and rugged terrain in hopes of being declared the winner of the CAV Stakes.

Some of the stations included calling for fire, reacting to contact, medical tasks and entering/clearing rooms.

Teams were awarded points for each station. The group that accumulated the most points at the end of the mission was the winner of CAV Stakes.



Photo by Capt. Andrew Nelson

Eyes On Target: Sgt. Adam Maire, Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry, looks for signs of the 'enemy' during the target detection station at CAV Stakes, at Fort Riley, Kan., July 16. The 24-hour competition served as a test of squadron Soldiers' individual and crew proficiency in 10 separate skills.



Photo by Capt. Andrew Nelson

Smokey Entrance: Sgt. Adam Maire, Spc. Alex Koehler and Pfc. Joshua Linde, Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry, cross an open area in a building clearing exercise during the CAV Stakes at Fort Riley, Kan., July 16. Teamwork was an essential part of doing well as the Guardsmen had to move almost as one to successfully complete many of the stations during the event.



Photo by Spc. Jason Drager

Helping a Buddy: Members of the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) take fire while evacuating a "casualty" during warrior tasks and battle drills during their annual training at Fort Riley, Kan., July 16. The 1-134th Cavalry used the annual training to "get back to recon-minded skills and tasks" following a recent deployment to Afghanistan.

Winning this year's CAV Stakes were Troop B's Spc. Michael A. Tiedeman, Spc. James D. Walden and Spc. Nickalos M. Winey. Taking runner-up were Troop A's Spc. James N. Cherry, Pvt. Jacob E. Hill, Spc. Zachary A. Long and Spc. Daniel Macias.

Winning the Best Long Range Surveillance competition were Sgt. Andrew P. Cook, Spc. Michael A. Hansen, Sgt. Nathan L. Hucceby and Sgt. Angel R. Rodriguez. Placing second were Sgt. Casey J. Lindsay, Spc. Max T. McShane, Spc. Kaleb L. Puffer and Spc. Nicholas J. Schwanke.

According to Pfc. Chris Damian, an infantryman with Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry, this was the first

opportunity for newer Soldiers who didn't deploy to Afghanistan to perform actual reconnaissance tasks. Last year, those who remained home handed out ammo at ranges for their AT. The year before, those staying back performed as opposition forces for those headed to war.

"This AT has been very extensive," said Damian. "This AT has not been like others."

Having just returned from deployment, a lot of the 1-134th Cavalry's equipment and gear is still not available. In addition, there were quite a few missing from AT this year due to military schools.

"We're working back up slowly," said Kerchal. "Next year we'll be a little bit bigger."

Soldiers learn to cope with heat during long, hot summer

By Capt. Andrew Nelson

Staff Writer

The scouts and infantry Soldiers of the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron are tough men. But at the route reconnaissance/improvised explosive device station at CAV Stakes, contestants weren't moving off to the next event if it appeared the July heat might be getting to them.

"If they look like (a possible) heat casualty, or even look like they might be dehydrated, we make them stay," said Staff Sgt. Nicholas Driggs, a Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, scout and instructor at the station.

Driggs, and medic Spc. Edward Neidig of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, would not release a Soldier for the next station until they were sure he was okay.

"Training is awesome, but you can't train without your Soldiers," said Driggs.

Annual training for the 1-134th took place mid-July at Fort Riley, Kan. The AT came during a sweltering heat wave and the military base in eastern Kansas was its epicenter.

Temperatures of 100 or more were routine. And while during the first day of CAV Stakes temperatures were a little lower – Monday the high was a mere 96 degrees – the leadership, from the team-level on up, kept a close watch on the Soldiers.

"Force hydration. That's what

'Force hydration.

That's what you have to do as a leader. You have to watch your guys.'

— Sgt. Cody Graff
Scout Team Leader,
1-134th Cavalry

you have to do as a leader. You have to watch your guys," said Sgt. Cody Graff, scout team leader Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry.

Graff, leading a small team on the CAV Stakes course, said he told his Soldiers if they were beginning to feel like they might fall out, to say something. They were not weak for doing that.

The cavalymen may have had it the toughest, but they were not alone.

Several other Nebraska Guard units were performing their annual training at the same time at slightly-cooler but still hotter-than-usual places like Camp Ashland and the Greenleaf Training Site in Nebraska.

At Fort Riley, Troop B Soldiers on the course could wear specialized shammy-like Frogg Togg towels around their necks, purchased by 1st Lt. Dustin Young, the unit's commander. The towels are designed to cool the user when wet.

"It kind of works like a radiator; it keeps the sweat on you instead of evaporating," said Pfc. Tim Misfeldt, a scout with Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry. "I can actually feel the difference."

Other, more traditional methods were used to keep from falling out. Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry infantrymen cached electrolyte-rich Gatorade in a cooler at their target-detection station. One of the Troop C men on the course, radio operator Spc. Alex Koehler, said he was also eating the salt tablets from his MRE. "It's supposed to help," he said.

Three hours into the course, Koehler estimated he had already drank five quarts of water. "I refilled my Camelback twice already... I need to fill it up again."

The day before CAV Stakes began, Neidig – the medic – encouraged the participants to prehydrate – drink a lot of water in anticipation of the tough day ahead.

"It's a lot easier to get your body up to where it needs to be than to... replenish fluids after they have been lost," he said.

Despite the trying conditions, there were few complaints.

"They'll never give up," Graff said of his Soldiers. "They understand they are... in the military and this is what they have to do. They do this for their country."



Photo by Capt. Andrew Nelson

Keeping Hydrated: Spc. William Seier and Spc. Martin Gomez of Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry, fill a Camelback with water during CAV Stakes on July 16. Temperatures reached 96 degrees at Fort Riley, Kan., that day, and 104 the next.

Battlefield surveillance brigade uses exercise to get back to business

By Spc. Riley Huskey

Staff Writer

Members of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade headquarters put their July 7-21 annual training at Camp Ashland, Neb., to good use as they transitioned back into business a year after completing a yearlong deployment to Iraq.

As a reset year for the BfSB, the focus of the 2012 AT was on individual-level training, said unit leaders, with the phrase "crawl, walk, run" used at all levels of command. The brigade headquarters returned from deployment to Iraq in 2011. Like other Nebraska units that deployed in 2010, 2012 is a reset or "crawl" year.

For the BfSB, AT began by setting up their Tactical Operations Center – more commonly called a TOC – at Camp Ashland where the headquarters' intelligence, operations and information technologies sections conducted training and practiced their specialties.

"We arrived on July 7 to establish the operations center in preparation for the mobile training team to update and teach intelligence systems," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Heath Bragg, all-source technician.

After initial construction of the Standardized Integrated Command Post System (SICPS) was completed, the information technologies section went to work establishing communications.

"We have worked as a section to bring six servers online to control email, logins, passwords and beyond—we have created the brains of the infrastructure," said Sgt. Allen McIntosh, system

administrator for the 67th BfSB. "This training for us is to rebuild every system from the bottom, up. We build the network and framework from nothing, replacing equipment that no longer functions along the way."

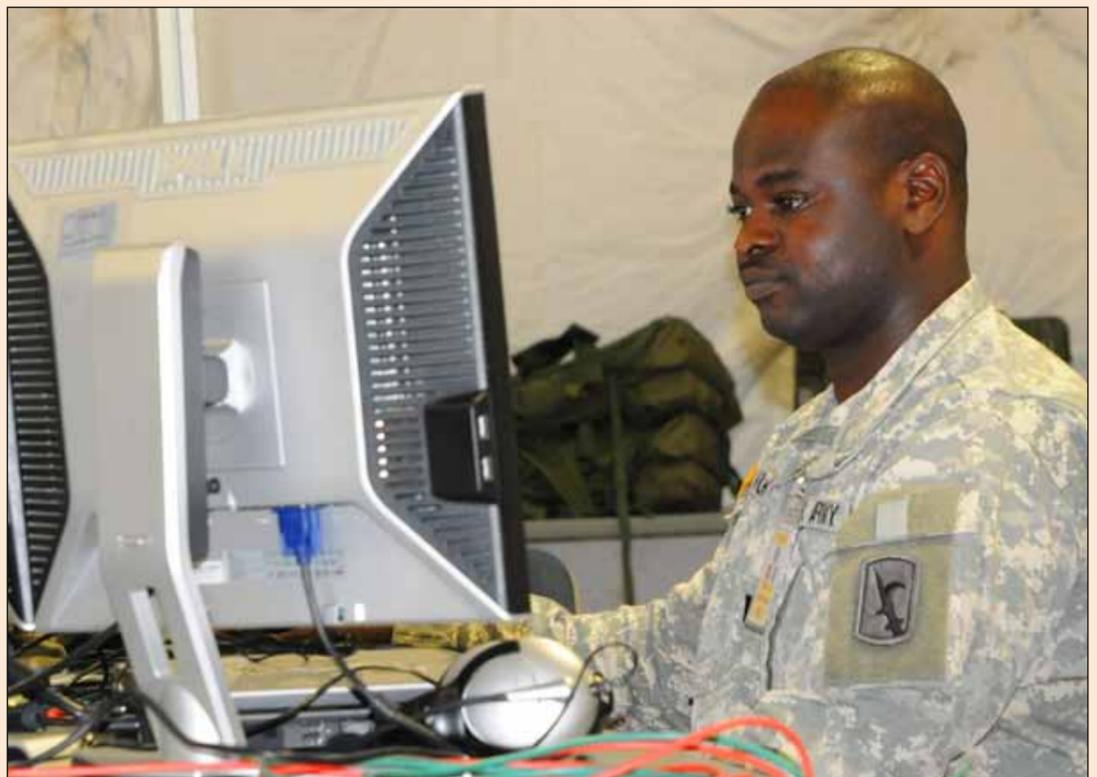
While AT provided the opportunity for weapons qualification, Humvee drivers training and other warrior tasks, Bragg said it also allows members of the 67th BfSB to make sure everything works each year and validate their Standard Operating Procedure.

Once the systems were online, training for the brigade's intelligence section – referred to as the S-2 – began in earnest.

Staff Sgt. NaTosha Siemek, intelligence noncommissioned officer-in-charge and senior intelligence analyst, said she was glad to get the opportunity see everything from start to finish, and the movement that occurs through each process or phase. The cross-training involved added to the experience as well, she said.

"It's nice to see intelligence personnel from other units—the different levels of experience, the different deployments each have had—to bring that all together, work together, and see what everyone has to offer in the creation of products," Siemek said, referring to the additional 10 Soldiers from Joint-Force Headquarters, 402nd Military Police Battalion, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron and 1167th Brigade Support Company who also supported and received training.

Siemek pointed out, however, that in order to become completely proficient at all of the responsibility that operating a TOC requires, the training had to go beyond each Soldier's individual tasks.



Photos by Spc. Riley Huskey

Planning The Update: Cpt. Jeremiah Afuh, 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade battle captain in charge of managing current operations for the brigade's operations sections, creates a storyboard of the current operations for the brigade during the 67th BfSB's July 7-21 annual training at Camp Ashland, Neb.



Setting Up Shop: A Nebraska Army National Guard Humvee sits outside of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's Standardized Integrated Command Post System. Brigade Soldiers set up at a Camp Ashland motorpool during the organization's July 7-21 annual training.

"By training in a TOC, we are learning what you can and can't do in this environment," Siemek said. "The experience that comes with that is one of the best things

Soldiers have taken away from this." Spc. Lucas Brigman, a geospatial imagery intelligence analyst for the 67th BfSB, agreed with Siemek. He said that gaining experience using

the various systems leads to better analysis.

"Annual training serves the purpose of getting new Soldiers up to speed and where they need to be in terms of understanding how the brigade operates," said Brigman. "It also helps us understand what they can bring to the table. Intelligence is constantly evolving and new Soldiers have the most current training available. For Soldiers who have been with the brigade for some time, this keeps us at a higher level of proficiency for our tasks."

With equipment reset and functioning, Bragg said the brigade can begin again with that confirmation. He also said one of the most important steps to an effective annual training rests in the teardown.

"It is all about inventory—package equipment in a way to deploy tomorrow," Bragg said. "Knowing what to bring with you is the key to success."

Wired In

■ Omaha-based Soldiers use annual training learn more about new signal trade

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

One of Nebraska's newest units had the opportunity to break out its newly-received equipment and put its newly-learned skills to the test when the Omaha-based 234th Network Support Company traveled to Camp Ashland, Neb., for its July 7-21 annual training.

According to Capt. Carlos Van Nurden, company commander, the small Nebraska Army National Guard unit had big goals for its inaugural annual training.

"Our goal here is to break out the equipment," said Van Nurden as he drove a Humvee from the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade tactical operations center to an open field where members of the 234th NSC were practicing setting up a 15-meter radio mast. "We just got fielded with our equipment in February. Our guys are really, really new. They've gone to school and they've seen the equipment, but there's nothing like opening up the boxes and getting hands-on experience."

"The end state that we want out of this AT is to provide communications, like our mission states, back to the brigade," he said.

Stood up in 2011, the 234th NSC is responsible for providing a variety of radio, internet and satellite communications for the 67th BfSB. In order to do this, the unit is responsible for setting up and maintaining a wide array of communications equipment that can be set up in remote areas, thus allowing the brigade to maintain its critical links to the outside world and enabling it to conduct its mission.

According to Van Nurden, while the communications unit is an integral part of helping the brigade conduct its federal, war-time mission, it also can provide significant



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Reeling It In: Sgt. Nicholas Anderson and Spc. Rahshaw Sides of the 234th Network Support Company reel in guide wires as members of the Omaha-based signal company practice bringing down a 15-meter High Capacity Line-of-Sight radio mast, July 11, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

support in a domestic emergency, as well.

"We really do bring a capacity to build up a network system in a disaster-type of environment," he said. "It really could prove extremely valuable in the event that we're called upon to respond to an emergency."

As part of the unit's training, Van Nurden said the unit spent the months leading into the annual training conducting three-day weekend drills practicing setting up and dismantling the communications equipment in a variety of settings. He said the goal of annual training was to take that training to the next step.

"This is a test environment where we are setting up in one area and then bringing it down and moving to a new location and setting up again," he said. "The repetition will hopefully create some good

training."

Probably the biggest benefit to this year's annual training at Camp Ashland, however, was simply getting the newly-trained communications Soldiers out into a field environment and giving them the opportunity to practice the skills they learned at the Army's communications schoolhouses, said Staff Sgt. Trevor Dredla, a signal support systems specialist who recently joined the unit after deploying to Iraq with the 67th BfSB.

On a hot July 11 afternoon Dredla was supervising a crew of 234th NSC Soldiers as they worked to safely bring down a 15-meter High Capacity Line-of-Sight radio mast. According to Dredla, the goal was to allow the unit's different communications specialists to learn more about their particular specialties as well as those of their unit mates.

"We're trying to get the whole



Almost There: Pvt. Stephen Bunnel, a 234th Network Support Company signal support specialist, uses a hand crank as he practices bringing down a 15-meter High Capacity Line-of-Sight radio mast during his unit's annual training at Camp Ashland, Neb., July 11.

unit familiarized, not just the specialists," said Dredla, who normally works in construction in Battle Creek, Neb. "Overall, we're trying to get the specialists to become a little more subject matter experts than they already are and anybody else who is not a specialist cross-trained on another skills."

"Basically, we want to get everybody familiarized with the equipment," added Dredla, who said he was enjoying the opportunity to take a more direct role in training new Soldiers after having served in the more rank-heavy brigade headquarters. "It is (fun), especially

coming out of a headquarters that had a lot of brass in it. I love being able to train all these Soldiers on things that I already know, whether it be a piece of equipment or the overall military."

Van Nurden and Dredla both said the Soldiers, who average 21 years old, were extremely motivated to get as much out of the July training as possible.

"I haven't had a problem keeping them motivated or keeping them busy because they are all - and I mean everybody - eager to learn," said Dredla. "That makes my job easier."

Nebraska candidates set bar high during Kansas training

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

The Nebraska Army National Guard's newest class of Officer Candidate School candidates swept the company streamers after an exceptional performance during the two-week Phase 1 portion of OCS at Kansas's OCS Battalion, June 8-23.

The Nebraska OSC candidates earned the company streamers of "Best Academics," "Best Land Navigation," and "Overall Best Company." The Nebraska candidates only let one company steamer, "Best Ruck March Time," go home to another state, Missouri.

During the two weeks the candidates took two written tests, participated in exercises on day and night land navigation, competed in a five-mile ruck march and were graded on leadership positions.

"Any previous leadership experience you have is huge," said Officer Candidate Kevin Rose. "You can definitely tell who has been in and who is brand new. It's nice to have experience."

According to the candidates, prior leadership experience and good instruction from their cadre were the keys to the Nebraskans' success.

"I think one of the reasons we did pretty well as a group was that we had good instruction here (at Camp Ashland) before we went down there (to Kansas)," said Officer Candidate Jessica Pan. "I think that set us up for success."

The Nebraskans competed against candidates from Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

"It was fun meeting candidates from



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Proud Candidates: (Left to right) Officer Candidates Jessica Pan, Joseph Grundman, Jeremiah Houlden and Kevin Rose pose with their awards and company streamers outside their classroom the Camp Ashland, Neb., Aug. 11. The Nebraska OSC candidates earned the company streamers for "Best Academics," "Best Land Navigation," and "Overall Best Company."

other states to see how they run their program and see what kind of candidates they were producing," said Rose. "Nebraska did very good."

Officer Candidate Jeremiah Houlden couldn't agree more.

"It was good to compare our level of OCS candidates compared to other states OCS candidates," said Houlden.

Even with a little friendly rivalry, the



Photo courtesy of Kansas Officer Candidate Alumni Association

Getting The Job Done: Officer Candidates conduct weapons maintenance under the watchful eyes of a Teach, Assess, Counsel (TAC) officer during Phase I of Officer Candidate School.

teams took a lot away from working with candidates from other states.

"It was fun to meet people from other states and get to know them," said Pan. "We learned from them and they learned from us."

The two-week Phase 1 course also provided the candidates an opportunity to challenge themselves as leaders with a tough, demanding schedule.

"It's not real hard leading, but when you have a demanding time hack that's creeping up on you and you have a lot of stuff to get down," said Rose, "it's always a challenge."

"I would have to say the hardest was the amount of things you had to do and the time you had to do it in," added Pan.

After all was said and done, the candidates agreed it was well worth all the hard work and dedication. "We were very fired up after winning," said Rose. "It was a great feeling. We have a lot of pride in being from Nebraska."

Now that they have set the bar high, the candidates know they have to work even harder in the next phases of OCS.

"We set a high standard, so it's going to be hard to maintain that," said Rose. "Our (Train, Assess and Counsel) officers are treating us differently now that we did so well. They let us know that we have to prove that we are that good. So they upped their level of pressure."



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Custom Fit: 1st Lt. Zbynek Partsch, an aircrew combat survival subject matter expert with the Czech Republic Armed Forces, shows Tech. Sgt. Connie Cooper, an aircrew flight equipment instructor with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, how to properly wear the Czech's aircrew flight equipment in Vyskov, Czech Republic July 11.

Airmen say relationship built with Czechs during July trip to Europe will create longlasting dividends

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

VYSKOV, Czech Republic—The Nebraska National Guard continued its international exchange with the Czech Republic when a traveling contact team traveled to there and met with Czech Republic Armed Forces personnel, July 9-13, as part as the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program.

The Nebraska National Guard traveling contact team consisted of three Nebraska Air National Guardsmen and two active duty U.S. Air Force members. While in the Czech Republic, the team met with Czech survival, evasion, resistance and escape (SERE) instructors, the commanding general of the Czech Air Force as well as many other Czech Armed Forces personnel.

In meeting with the commanding general of the Czech Republic Air Force, the U.S. Airmen learned what his present and future plans were and what they could do make future exchanges operate smoothly.

"We are very welcome to have

you here and know this is a great opportunity," said Brig. Gen. Jiri Verner, commander of the Czech Republic Air Force. "I wish you the best time here in Czech and thank you for the opportunity to work with you."

According to the traveling contact team, the trip to the central European nation was an important step in the continued cooperative effort with the Czech Republic.

"The goal in meeting with our counterparts from the Czech Republic was to explore the compatibility of conducting a joint SERE exercise with them in the future," said Master Sgt. Ricky Valenta, an aircrew flight equipment instructor with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 173rd Air Refueling Squadron from Lincoln, Neb.

During the exchange, the Czech Armed Forces personnel talked to their American counterparts about their combat survival of aircrew training and equipment, which included information about the Czech Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape program and their combat search and rescue,

personnel recovery capabilities and equipment.

"We learned everything about their programs," said Tech. Sgt. Nicholas Sutherland, a personnel recovery specialist with the 55th Wing from Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., "including information about how they operate and how we can mutually establish training."

"They have a very in-depth training program," said Sutherland. "They also have a very motivated SERE staff."

The three Nebraska Air Guardsmen also brought along some of their combat survival equipment to show the similarities and differences between the American and Czech equipment. The Airmen also discussed what they can do with the Czechs to improve each other's programs.

Although cultural differences often can cause challenges when working with different countries, the U.S. and Czech personnel said they experienced few problems because of each others' basic understanding of combat aircrew survival procedures.



Show And Tell: Master Sgt. Ricky Valenta, an aircrew flight equipment instructor with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, shows Lt. Viri Svoboda, an aircrew combat survival subject matter expert with the Czech Republic Armed Forces, the contents of the U.S. Air Force's aircrew flight equipment in Vyskov, Czech Republic, July 11.

"Working with our Czech counterparts was a positive experience," said Valenta. "There were some technical terms that did not translate perfectly, but once some of the equipment was exposed and shared, it broke down a lot of the language barriers."

According to the traveling contact team, the relationship built with the Czech Republic was very beneficial in so many ways.

"It was great," said Staff Sgt. Christian Fountain, an air advisor with the 435th Contingency Response Group from Ramstein Air Base, Germany. "I thought it was great to make contacts with the SERE instructors. We plan on working with them a lot in the future on both SERE issues and parachuting issues."

Sutherland couldn't agree more. "We will be making contacts, and with approval, possibly providing them with additional resources and information," said Sutherland. "Then in the near future, we hope to get the ability to watch the program and give them a better evaluation and more information."

The traveling contact team was also able to share their own experiences and lessons they have learned when it comes to combat

survival of aircrew while hearing and learning about their Czech counterparts' experiences.

According to members of the Nebraska National Guard traveling contact team, they felt like they gained valuable information by working with their international counterparts.

"The most valuable thing I took away from the trip is that sometimes we forget that there are many nations that share some of the same international interests as we do and are just as committed," said Valenta. "Sometimes it takes this type of deployment to remind us how important our relationships are with other coalition nations throughout the world."

Valenta added that the experience will aid them as they build upon this summer's exchange.

"Building a relationship was easy since both parties were very much looking forward to the possibility of conducting a joint exercise in the future," said Valenta.

"We all realize that there are many hurdles to overcome at much higher approval levels before it actually takes place, but believe it would be a benefit to both organizations and hope to work with them again."

Texas Army Guard medics join forces with Czech caregivers

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

VYSKOV, Czech Republic—Texas Army National Guard medical specialists traveled to the Czech Republic, July 9-13, to share their knowledge with the host country's military medical personnel while building relationships they believe will enhance global security, understanding and cooperation through the National Guard's state partnership program.

The Texas Army National Guard medical personnel conducted subject matter expert classes and training on advanced trauma care with the Czech Republic Armed Forces medical personnel.

Involved in the training were the Texas National Guard's Capt. Angela Todd, physician assistant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-149th Aviation 36th Combat Aviation Brigade; Sgt. 1st Class Arthur Phillips, special forces medical sergeant with Company C, 5-19th Special Forces Group

(Airborne); Staff Sgt. Robert Harris, health care specialist with Texas Medical Command; and Spc. Conrad Krueger, health care specialist with 627th Heavy Dive Team.

While in the Czech Republic, the four Texas Guardsmen, who have a wide range of medical knowledge, were able to teach and give hands-on-training to approximately a dozen Czech Republic Armed Forces medical personnel. The Czech medical care-givers, who included enlisted, warrant officers and officers, ranged from a combat lifesaver truck driver to family physicians and even a surgeon.

The Czechs mostly wanted to learn about all the advanced life saving innovations we knew and used, said Krueger.

Throughout their time in the Czech Republic, the Texas Guardsmen were able to teach and share advice on such subjects as advanced airway, intubation, needle chest decompression, and hemorrhage. They also shared stories from their experiences in the medical field.

"There were some tips or tricks from (Sgt. 1st Class Arthur) Phillips that helped me improve my knowledge," said Warrant Officer 1st Class Jari Duchon, military vice president of the Czech Association of Combat Medics, "like how to treat a patient with small amount of materials."

The education wasn't one-sided, either.

The Czech medical specialists were also able to pass on medical experience and information to the Texas medics. According to the Texans, this enabled them to return home with a better understanding of the Czech's medical system along with knowledge and tips they could use in their own practices.

"They taught us little techniques that they used to quickly find the second intercostal space for putting in a needle chest decompression," said Krueger, "little techniques that medical personnel pass along to each other after being in different situations in your career."

During one of the classes, the



Medical Training: Capt. Angela Todd, physician assistant with the Texas Army National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-149th Aviation 36th, Combat Aviation Brigade, teaches an advanced trauma class to Czech Republic medical specialists I in Vyskov, Czech Republic, July 12. Todd used her experiences from the military and from working in an emergency room to share stories and lessons she's learned to the Czech medics.

Texas medics not only used mannequins to create lifelike scenarios, but also pork ribs to help the Czech

medical personnel better visualize the techniques the American

See MEDICS on 10.

Cross-Training

Counter-improvised explosive device specialists learn from each other

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

BECHYNE, Czech Republic – When the State Partnership Program between the Nebraska and Texas National Guard and the Czech Republic was formed in 1993, leaders envisioned a program that would open up lines of communications that would be of mutual benefit to both nations.

That's exactly what happened when the National Guard Bureau's SPP brought members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, Texas Army National Guard and the Czech Republic armed forces to Bechyne, Czech Republic, together for a counter-improvised explosive device exchange July 9-13.

While in the Czech Republic, the teams of American and Czech counter-IED specialists

exchanged information about each others' training programs, C-IED lanes, and C-IED operations and tactics. The U.S. participants also had a chance to visit the Czech's new explosive ordnance disposal facility.

"We mostly observed their EOD training, but then we made recommendations on how we train all of our Soldiers on counter-IED, not just our EOD," said Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Panipinto, a C-IED subject matter expert with 92nd Troop Command in Lincoln, Neb. "We went over all the steps from crawl, walk, run, up to how the Soldiers get ready for deployment for counter-IED, to include road side bombs, suicide bombers and car bombs."

According to the National Guardsmen, they gained valuable information while working with their central European counterparts.

"I learned how to incorporate different

training procedures with our Czech counterparts," said 1st Lt. Ben Harper, C-IED subject matter expert with Omaha's 195th Special Operations Forward Support Company (Airborne).

"I learned more on just how other countries' Soldiers are just like us," said Panipinto. "They just want to get better so they can better their Army and better their Soldiers. So when they do a mission, they have everything they could possibly have to bring everyone home alive and complete their mission."

The collaboration of subject matter experts helped both sides learn and understand each other's programs while strengthening the overall relationship between the Czech armed forces and the Nebraska and Texas National Guard.

This should provide an even stronger foundation for future missions, said the Nebraskans.

"I think it went very well," said Panipinto. "We provided information to them. They provided information to us and I think we built a base to continue the relationship for more missions."

Harper couldn't agree more.

"It was great," said Harper, "because 1st Lt. Matthew Rippenkroeger and I knew two of the Czech counter-IED personnel from Afghanistan. Also their attitude and demeanor to training was great."

"The relationship was really formed by camaraderie and rapport, which enabled better training," said Harper. "It was great to have our subject matter experts work with their subject matter experts."

MEDICS continued from page 9.

Guardsmen use to do needle chest decompressions.

"It was great," said Duchon. "It's always a great experience to share knowledge. It doesn't matter what it is, (combat lifesaver) or just training for medics and doctors, it's always something new we can learn and we can share because everyone has some experience."

For the Texans, the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences with another culture was something they will never forget.

"It's a great experience cooperating with a different country," said Krueger. "Medical collation between countries on the battlefield leads to a sense of interchangeable health-care easily recognized at a higher level of care in the field."

The Czech participants agreed.

"I think the cooperation was good," said Duchon. "It was great because we meet each other during military deployments to Afghanistan and we complement each other, especially like medics, they are close to each other."

"We must know how you treat a patient and how we treat a patient," said Duchon about the importance of the training exchange. "The sharing of information improves the treatment because the only goal for medics is to save the lives."

Both groups say they hope it isn't the last time they have the opportunity to exchange information.

"We want to share information in the future," said Duchon, "not only with the Czech medics, but



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Critical Skills: Sgt. 1st Class Arthur Phillips, special forces medical sergeant with the Texas National Guard's Company C, 5-19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), teaches Czech Republic medical specialists how to stop the flow of blood from an open wound, July 12, in Vyskov, Czech Republic. Spc. Conrad Krueger, a health care specialist with 627th Heavy Dive Team of the Texas Army National Guard, is playing the role of a wounded casualty.

also internationally."

The Texas National Guard members also saw this exchange and teaching of medical practices as a way to give back and do their part.

"It's rewarding to know that if our Soldiers were ever treated

on the battlefield by these Czech medical professionals that it would be as if one of my fellow medics or myself were performing the treatment," said Krueger. "I hope that we hear of or even get the chance to be a part of many more missions like this one."



International First Aid: Warrant Officer 1st Class Jari Duchon, military vice president of the Czech Association of Combat Medics, practices providing proper care of a leg wound on Spc. Conrad Krueger, a health care specialist with the Texas Army National Guard's 627th Heavy Dive Team, in Vyskov, Czech Republic, July 12.

TRAFFIC continued from page 1.

gates open during peak hours, Mondays through Fridays," said Chief Master Sgt. Matt Swetland, Nebraska Air National Guard chief of security.

According to Swetland, the plan calls for the 'old,' or North Gate, to be open from 6-8 a.m. Mondays through Fridays for inbound traffic and from 3-5 p.m. on those same days for outbound traffic.

Swetland said the plans are based upon projections made through a systematic examination of peak traffic periods and how those periods will be affected by the additional Joint Force Headquarters traffic.

Right now, Swetland said, base officials are estimating that approximately 325 vehicles will be reporting to the base on weekdays between 7-8 a.m., while approximately 275 vehicles are expected to leave the base on those same days around 4 p.m. That will be a significant change from the current traffic peaks of 210 and 200 during those same periods.

Swetland said that does not factor in the traffic flowing to such civilian companies such as Duncan Aviation, which utilizes the same arterial road flowing from Cornhusker Highway past the base's East Gate.

Swetland said security officials have already begun to add changes

"The patience factor is going to be a big player in it. We've looked at it and even if and when we've had a traffic back-up during the week, if you are stuck in the traffic line more than two minutes, it's rare, although I realize that when you're stuck in traffic, two minutes can seem like a long time."

— **Chief Master Sgt. Matt Swetland**
Nebraska Air National Guard chief of security

to the base to help clear up potential jams before they occur. For example, he said, the base recently installed four-way stop signs at the corners of the main intersection of the roads leading to the Army Guard's Penterman Armory and the base's Main Hangar and other facilities.

Swetland said the base already opens the North Gate on drill weekend mornings and has plans in place to expand this practice based upon drill schedules of Nebraska Air and Army National Guard units.

Other changes are also being contemplated.

"One of the things that we have been kicking around and a recommendation that we're going to make is coming to work in the morning, if you work on the north side of West Furnas Avenue, use the North Gate," said Swetland. "If you work on (the south side), which is basically the cops, civil engineers, POL, vehicle maintenance and all of the Army, then come in the East Gate."

"If you are leaving the base and you're basically heading toward Highway 34, use the East Gate and go around the loop and go around the airport," Swetland added. "And if you're headed toward Cornhusker Highway and the interstate, use the North Gate."

Swetland said that these are preliminary recommendations that may change as base security officials learn more about the traffic patterns as the Joint Force Headquarters fully stands up in the next two months.

"Here are our suggestions, but we are going to adjust fire," he said, adding that people need to have patience as the traffic patterns work themselves out. "The patience factor is going to be a big player in it. We've looked at it and even if and when we've had a traffic back-up during the week, if you are stuck in the traffic line more than two minutes, it's rare, although I realize that when you're stuck in traffic, two minutes can seem like

a long time."

Probably the most important advice? "You've got to build in some lead time," said Swetland, adding that simply leaving for work five to 10 minutes earlier than in the past may make a huge difference as the base adjusts to the population change.

"We will be adjusting our operations as everybody gets settled in out here," he said. "We know it's definitely different coming on to this installation than going downtown."

Swetland also had a number of other suggestions for dealing with the expected changes:

- Because the Joint Force Headquarters will now be located on the Nebraska National Guard air base, Swetland said employees must understand that a 100 percent ID check is mandatory.

- "That is the Air Force standard," said Swetland, adding that people entering the base should have their ID cards out and ready to hand to

the gate security personnel so as to lessen the time it takes to process them onto the base.

"They need to have their ID cards out in their hand with their seatbelts on," he said. "And don't be talking on the cellphone or texting."

- For motorcyclists, the Defense Department requires riders to wear the proper protective equipment. According to Swetland, many of those requirements are "above and beyond" what is required by the State of Nebraska.

- "The DoD says helmet, long sleeves, over the ankle boots, eye protection and gloves" said Swetland. "We do run into some issues with motorcycles. There are also bicycle rider (protection equipment) requirements."

- Additionally, those motorists with improper registrations or expired license plates will not be allowed onto the base.

- All traffic and city traffic laws apply on the base.

- There are limited parking stalls on the base, which Swetland said will be addressed in time. "We're going to be adjusting fire for many months."

- Motorists can expect random vehicle inspections for both inbound and outbound traffic.

For more information about, contact the base security officials at (402) 309-1560.

Guard's Aerial Eyes & Ears

Helicopter crew chiefs play critical roles during Nebraska firefight

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

As Staff Sgt. Tate Petersen soared through the air with his head hanging out of the crew door of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, he saw nothing but thick black smoke and blazing red flames for miles and miles.

"It was a whole lot of smoke and a whole lot of black," said Petersen. "It was burned all the way up to crop circles and that was about the only thing that wasn't black out there."

With wildfires blazing, Nebraska Army Aviation crews hit the air early July 21 after getting called to provide assistance with three north-central Nebraska wildfires caused by lightning on July 20.

Petersen, a Black Hawk crew chief with Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, is one who takes on the responsibilities of maintaining the UH-60 Black Hawk, observing its safety and providing maintenance before, during and after a flight. But as a crew chief he also observes obstructions in a pilot's path, as the pilot cannot see all the way around his aircraft.

With efforts from both ground crews and air crews trying to control the wildfires, communication was key in getting water dropped accurately. Radios and signals were used to communicate where and when the water needed to be dropped from the Guard's "Bambi Buckets."

"It was kind of hard trying to figure out how we were going to



Devastation: Smoke rises from the Fairfield Creek wildfire in north-central Nebraska, July 24. Nebraska National Guard assisted firefighting efforts from July 21-29.



On Target: Sgt. Ethan Yarolimek, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief with the Nebraska National Guard's 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, prepares to release more than 600 gallons of water from a "Bambi Bucket" to help stop wildfires in north-central Nebraska, July 24.



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Going Hot: Spc. Preston Sheets, an avionic mechanic with the Nebraska National Guard's Company D, 1-376th Aviation, watches the ground below to ensure water dropped from a "Bambi Bucket" is placed correctly to help stop the wildfires from burning more land near Norden, Neb., July 24.

stop it," said Petersen. "Before, in Colorado, you could tell it was going to burn down the hill and put itself out down there. There wasn't much to stop it on the flat land of Nebraska."

In addition to guiding and mak-

ing sure the pilots were in the right area to drop the water, Petersen ran the controls to the Bambi Bucket, which released approximately 550 gallons of water at a time. The crew chief's eyes and ears were significant in accomplishing the mission.

"It's about the only time you have a lot of control of what's going on," said Petersen. "Because we see a target and actually start telling the pilot where to actually go, it's pretty much like we are flying the aircraft, just not physically on the

controls."

The Nebraska wildfires also gave the opportunity for new crew chiefs to get flight training and experience. They were able to watch and learn from experienced crew chiefs in action and put all their training to the test to help stop and control the north-central Nebraska wildfires.

Soldiers were released by the incident commander on July 29. According to the aviation crews, it was a very rewarding feeling to help their home state of Nebraska.

"It's always a good time to go out and help. Especially on the days you feel like you made headways," said Petersen.

Sgt. James Nordman, a Black Hawk crew chief with Company C, 2-135th GSAB agreed with Petersen.

"It's different than going to another state and helping them out," said Nordman. "It's even more special being here in Nebraska."

FIRE RESPONSE continued from page 1.

fighting the fires, the Guardsmen knew all the hard work was paying off.

"It feels really good to know that we are actually doing something," said Whisler. "I don't like sitting back watching it burn and not being able to help. We've been able to save quite a few houses, which has been really, really good."

Not only was the Guard helping from the sky, they were helping from the ground as well.

"The Guard does have a few of the ground HEMTT (heavy expanded mobility tactical truck) fire trucks that are out helping on the lines," said Nordman. "They are helping keep the hot spots doused."

Like in Colorado, it was neighbors helping neighbors. This response included some support from the Kansas National Guard, which "loaned" the Nebraska Guard aviators an additional Bambi Bucket.

For some of the crews this has been their second or third fire support mission this year.

"This is my third fire now and training only gets you so far," said Whisler. "Once you get up and see how it's really going, it's eye-opening."

Nordman couldn't agree more. "We do our training with the Bambi Buckets to help us work together as a crew," said Nordman. "It doesn't really ever prepare you for an actual fire because of the heat and the different smells. It's very confusing



Team Effort: Spc. Preston Sheets (right) passes the "Bambi Bucket" electrical controls to Sgt. Ethan Yarolimek during firefighting efforts near Norden, Neb., July 24. The Soldiers made sure the water was released accurately over the targets given to them from ground fire crews.

at first."

Without the training, Guardsmen must constantly work together to keep each other calm and focused on communicating properly, said Nordman, adding that training was key to keeping the mission's risks relatively low.

"It takes us about an hour, maybe two hours, to get comfortable, then we are operating effectively, efficiently and dropping as much water possible," said Nordman.

The Soldiers said local support from the surrounding communities was tremendous.

"It's uncanny how much support we are getting," said Nordman. "We can't even walk into a gas station without people saying thank you and trying to feed us."

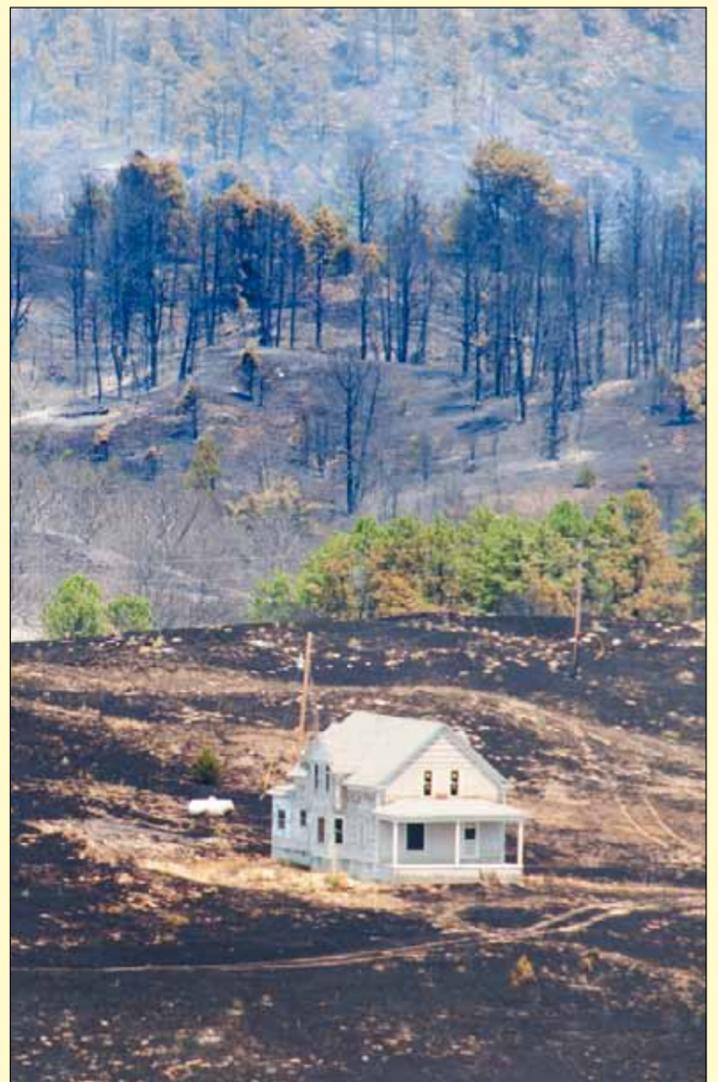
"It's been wonderful the support

we are getting," added Nordman. "They understand we are here to help and they're here to support us in any way they can also. It's kind of a circular effect."

The aircrew and ground support was released by the incident commander on July 29. By then, the Nebraska Army aviation crews had effectively dropped 731 buckets of water on the wildfires, roughly 475,150 gallons.

According to the Soldiers, it is always gratifying to help other states out, but it's even more satisfying to be able to help out Nebraska out whenever possible.

"Here it is self-fulfilling," said Nordman. "It's nice seeing the locals that a lot of us grew up with and helping them out."



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Empty Nest: A home sits empty after the Fairfield Creek fire burned the surrounding area on July 24 near Norden, Neb.



Guard Family NEWS You Can Use



2012 Hiring Our Heroes – Norfolk, NE
National Guard Armory
817 S. 1st Street, Norfolk, NE
October 2, 2012
9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Join us October 2, 2012 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, for a job fair for veteran job seekers, active duty military members, Guard and Reserve members, and military spouses, at the National Guard Armory, 817 S. 1st Street, Norfolk, NE. This event will be a one-of-a-kind FREE hiring fair for both employers and job seekers.

EMPLOYERS

Must register for FREE at HOH.Greatjob.net

JOB SEEKERS

Register for FREE at HOH.Greatjob.net
to guarantee admission. Walk-ins welcome but space not guaranteed.

This hiring event is being conducted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL VETS), the Nebraska Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the American Legion, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, the Nebraska Department of Labor, the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, the Nebraska National Guard, NBC News, and other local partners.

For registration questions, please contact us at hiringourheroes@uschamber.com.
For more information on this event please call 202-463-3110

President pledges support for service members, veterans, families

WASHINGTON (AFPS)—As the United States draws down in Afghanistan it remains committed to its military members, veterans and families by providing the support services they may need and opportunities to transition to meaningful civilian careers, President Barack Obama said Aug. 31 at Fort Bliss, Texas.

"Just as we give you the best equipment and technology on the battlefield, we need to give you the best support and care when you come home," the president told about 5,000 Soldiers gathered in an aircraft hangar. "We may be turning a page on a decade of war, but America's responsibilities to you have only just begun."

Sharing his conversations earlier during a private roundtable with Soldiers and their families, Obama acknowledged that "coming home can be its own struggle, especially for our wounded warriors."

He noted a new executive order he signed that day giving troops, veterans and family members better access to mental health care, as well as resources already being put toward diagnosing and treating those with traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress and other difficulties.

"We're going to add even more counselors and mental-health providers," he said. "We're launching a new awareness campaign, starting tomorrow, and I'm directing a task force to find out what works best so we're doing everything we can to help those in need and save lives."

Seeking help isn't a sign of weakness, rather "it's a sign of strength," the president said.

While marshaling federal efforts, Obama said taking care of service members, veterans and military families is everyone's job.

Retiree breakfast changes location, records management importance continues

Greetings from your Retiree Council.

The Nebraska Military Retiree Council (NMRC) is comprised of retirees from the Nebraska Air and Army National Guard and focuses on retiree issues that affect each of us.

We strive to keep you informed with up to date information on Tricare, SBP, ID cards, etc., and are here to assist when you need help.

For your information, when a retiree passes, his or her spouse automatically becomes an honorary life member and will continue to receive newsletters and invites to events.

We also will assist the surviving spouse in making appointments for ID cards, etc. Just call or email. We're here to help.

Check our web page at www.neguard.org. We post links to important websites for your use and information.

We'll update these websites periodically, so make sure you check on a regular basis. We also have a site to post open vacancies with military-friendly employers in case anyone is interested in employment.

Since the Prairie Soldier is now exclusively online, if you know of anyone who does not have access to the internet, please consider printing a copy off for them to read. Thanks. Let's take care of each other.

Also, in an effort to conserve resources, we are emailing the quarterly newsletter to those who

prefer getting it via electronic means. Those who do not have access to email will continue to receive the newsletter via U.S. mail.

Reminder, it's imperative you keep your information updated to protect you and your loved ones.

Retiree Breakfast Schedule

As always, for those who like to rise early to meet fellow retirees and share stories, here's the breakfast site information for those in the immediate areas. Please note that there has been a significant change for Lincoln's Army National Guard retirees:

Lincoln:

Army National Guard retirees: This is a big change for Army National Guard retirees. The breakfast will be the FIRST Monday of each month at 8 a.m. at Virginia's Café, 3820 Cornhusker Highway.

Air National Guard retirees:

LAST Monday of each month, 8 a.m., The Pantry, Van Dorn village, 2548 S. 48th Street (Van Dorn plaza).

North Platte area retirees:

SECOND Saturday of each month, 8 a.m., Village Inn, North Platte.

Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

From the desk of Sgt. 1st Class Austin Behnk:

I can be contacted at (402) 309-7165 and at my email address: austin.behnk@us.army.mil.

Sgt. Jennifer Short may also assist you with any retirement questions you may have. She can be reached at (402) 309-7319 and her email address: jennifer.l.short@us.army.mil.

I look forward to working with all of you and helping out with all of your retirement needs.

If you have any TRICARE related questions, you may contact the State TRICARE Manager, 2nd Lt. Nick Curto, at (402) 309-1738 or at email address: nicholas.curto@us.army.mil.

NOTE: Our office will be moving to a new location on Sept. 16. We will relocate to the new Joint Force Headquarters building located on the Nebraska National Guard air base. Our phone numbers will be changing as well. I will get our new phone numbers

out as soon as we receive them.

It is important that you have identification cards to access the base. If you do not have an ID card or it is expired, retirees will need to make appointments in advanced so that base security can be notified to put individuals on the base entry access list.

I will put out more precise information after the move is complete. The only office that can process a claim for Survivor Benefits Program (SBP) is Human Resources Command (HRC) at Fort Knox, Ky. All Soldiers and retirees are encouraged to maintain a personal copy of their election, and other related documents. This will assist your surviving dependents with processing claims.

It is extremely important that you keep your SBP file up to date. If you are divorced we need a copy of the divorce decree. If a court requires that a former spouse receive SBP, we need copies of those documents. If your spouse is deceased and you remarry, you have up to one year from the date of the marriage to provide a copy of the marriage license and make a new election.

If you were not married or had no dependents when you received your 20-Year Letter, you are authorized to make an election should you

marry or gain dependents.

You must provide HRC the required documentation within 1 year of the marriage or adoption. Failure to keep your file updated may result in denial of the claim or that the annuity is awarded to someone for whom you had not intended to provide an annuity.

Please contact us immediately if you have any life changing events so that we can ensure your file is up to date and accurate.

Finally, here's a list of helpful list of numbers for your use as needed:

DEERS/ID card stations within Nebraska.

♦G1 – 1234 Military Road Lincoln (402) 309-7325 or (402) 309-7264 or (402) 309-7319;

♦Spirit of 76 Armory 67th BFSB – (402) 309-7058 or (402) 309-7260;

♦92nd Troop Command Penteman Army at Nebraska National Guard air base (402) 309-1749 or (402) 309-1739;

♦Air Guard (Lincoln Air Base) Bldg 600 Room E209 (402) 309-1452;

♦Offutt Air Force Base (402) 294-5019;

♦Kearney Armory 5710 Airport Road Kearney (402) 309-7743 or (402) 309-7758;

♦Norfolk Armory 817 S 1st St Norfolk (402) 309-8908 or (402) 309-8900;

♦The number for DEERS is 1-800-538-9552.

Enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

Street Talk

“What unusual thing about you would you like people to know that they would never expect?”

Question courtesy of Air Force Staff Sgt. Amber Bogle



Senior Airman Courtney Sheldon
155th Medical Group

“I have three poems published and was asked to have them signed over for a song.”



1st Sgt. Jason Grams
1167th Brigade Support Company

“I have a nice side. And I like butterflies.”



Airman 1st Class Kenneth Morrison
155th Security Forces

“I went through basic training and tech. school with my little brother. We are only one year and three days apart.”



Chief Master Sgt. Matthew Swetland
155th Security Forces

“Most people think I’m rough, but in reality I can have a soft touch at times, very emotional...I am empathetic.”



Spc. Clayton Shaw
1167th Brigade Support Company

“I compete in waleye fishing tournaments about four times a year.”



Senior Airman Sandy Owens
155th Medical Group

“I have two English Bulldogs. They are like my kids. They are definitely like little bowling balls.”

Time Has Flown

After 30 years, impending retirement causes reflection on military service’s value, importance

Has it really been over 30 years since I enlisted in the military?

Where has that time gone? How many things have I seen change? How many people have I met? How many places have I seen?

How do I put all those years of experience in to my final article?

As I sat listening to the Republican National Convention several weeks ago, I started thinking about my retirement.

Enlisting in the military was the only thing I ever really knew I wanted to do with my life. My parents were very patriotic, both serving in World War II. Wow, I’m old!

My father instilled in me the desire to serve our country. Even though he was Army, he didn’t care which branch I entered.

I raised my right hand on Feb. 1, 1979, to join the Air Force and have never looked back.

While I have embraced the military way of life, the military has been very good to me. It took me

places I could never have imagined and gave me opportunities I am still grateful for.

I spent 10 years on active duty then joined the Air National Guard. After joining the Guard, my goal was to finish my 20 years, retire, and wait for age 60 to collect my pay. However along the way, doors of greater challenge and responsibility kept opening and fortunately I had prepared myself to walk through them.

In my wildest dreams, I never imagined I’d make Chief let alone be selected to represent the enlisted members of the state of Nebraska. This has been the most humbling experience of all.

One of the most important jobs as a Command Chief is to mentor Airmen. While I have had many

believe in the United States military. We repeatedly put ourselves in harm’s way to protect the freedoms of America.

I also believe in each and every one of you and our units in the Nebraska Air National Guard. You are doing amazing work for our state and nation. You must never doubt the work you are doing or the support and abilities of your leaders.

We are eternally grateful for all that you do and I know all of you will succeed in your military careers. Please continue to be the professionals you are, seek opportunities to excel and serve, but most importantly, believe in yourselves.

It has been an honor to serve with you and I wish all of you great happiness in your lives. I thank you, salute you, and for now say goodbye.

Another Voice

Command Chief Master Sergeant

Barb Gossage



opportunities to mentor, I’ve had just as many times when you’ve taught me something valuable.

As I listened to the convention speakers last week, their collective message was “We believe in America.” It made me think about how much I

Summer months demonstrate numerous capabilities of Guard

As Labor Day passes into the rear view mirror, now is a good time to take a quick note of the past summer and all that the Nebraska National Guard has done.

In a way it almost seems as though 2012, which has had more

than its share of challenges, has unveiled itself as the mirror-opposite of the equally-challenging 2011. For example:

At this point in 2011, the Nebraska National Guard still had hundreds of Soldiers and Airmen deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo.

Today, while the Guard still has people located in Afghanistan, the numbers are far-reduced from what we encountered last year. And, with the drawdown from Iraq, no Nebraska Guardsmen are serving in Iraq.

In 2011, Nebraska was dealing with the final weeks of a historic flood that resulted in the activation of numerous Guardsmen who were assigned to help local county emergency management officials patrol endangered levees along Nebraska’s eastern Missouri River border in extremely, hot and insect-infested conditions.

This year, excess water has been the least of the state’s problems as much of Nebraska has suffered from a months-long historic drought, causing dozens of Nebraska National Guardsmen to be mobilized to state emergency duty to help local first-responders fight multiple wildfires that erupted in western, northwestern, north central and central Nebraska.

Again, the work being done by members of the Nebraska National Guard has been done in extremely difficult conditions. And, just as they did last year, members of the Nebraska National Guard have made a difference.

As Labor Day approached, much of the nation’s attention was focused upon the Gulf Coast as Hurricane Isaac approached landfall near New Orleans on the

seventh anniversary of the Hurricane Katrina tragedy. Fortunately, Isaac proved to have far less power than Katrina, yet it did bring back to mind the work that the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard was called upon to do in 2005.

Like much of the National Guard, Nebraska was fully committed to deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2005.

Still, despite overseas commitments, Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen were able to respond in remarkable ways when it became evident that Hurricane Katrina was far worse than anyone had initially imagined.

This work included such things as the aerial transportation of Meals, Ready to Eat, and fuel into a stricken New Orleans air base by members of the Nebraska Air Guard’s 155th Air Refueling Wing, and the deployment of numerous other Nebraska Guardsmen into Louisiana and Mississippi where they helped provide needed security, transportation and other support.

One of the things that sticks out to me about these three incidents is the fact that when the call came in, members of the Nebraska National Guard were ready and more than willing to put their personal lives on hold to support their neighbors and fellow countrymen. And, they made a difference.

Today, as we transition into a new strategic situation, the Nebraska National Guard continues to face many unique and not-so-unique challenges, not the least of which includes continuing to attract and retain talented Soldiers and Airmen into our ranks.

The upside is, we’ve faced challenges before, especially during

the past 10 years, which has given us the skills we need to face this uncertain future head-on.

From a personal standpoint, the summer of 2012 will definitely be one I’ll never forget. This past July, my wife and I welcomed a new daughter into our family, a first for us.

When Erin was born, I received quite a few jokes about “preparing for the explosion of pink” after having three sons. Boy (no pun intended), were they ever right.

Having a daughter is definitely a new experience for the entire family, not the least for Erin’s three older brothers, who have all taken on a definite sense of protectiveness over their wiggly little sister. It has also created a series of adjustments for all of us as we relearn how to reschedule our already busy lives around a new needy and very vocal young lady.

Probably the biggest change for me, however, has been this sudden realization of what it means to have a daughter. While I’ve always been extremely proud of my three sons’ accomplishments and goals, I have to admit that it feels slightly different for a little girl.

A few years ago, actress Tina Fey wrote a fantastic prayer for her new daughter, through which she framed her goals and hopes for her baby. Shortly after Erin arrived, I re-read this prayer and it definitely struck a chord with me.

In short, the hope of watching a baby develop into a well-adjusted, confident and goal-oriented adult isn’t a new hope by any stretch. Still, when one has a daughter for the first time, it definitely takes on a new importance.

For a dad, the world can really seem like an extremely scary place for one’s sons and daughters. The hope is that you will be equal to the challenges of preparing them to meet this world with the right tools and heads held high.

And for the fourth time in my life, I find myself hoping that I’m also equal to this challenge.

My Turn

Editor, Prairie Soldier

Kevin J. Hynes



PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Colonel
Brett W. Andersen

Major
Joshua D. Phillips

Captain
Ronald R. Jones
Nathaniel C. Kreilek
Dustin W. Young

Chief Warrant Officer 3
Peter G. Steiner

Chief Warrant Officer 2
Jennifer J. Kramer

Master Sergeant
Jesse R. Biltoft
Bruce A. Nakai
Rachel M. Stafford
Daniel A. Taylor

Sergeant First Class
Joseph J. Dunlap
Brian T. Griess
Michael L. Hytrek
Jason A. Jarzynka
Robert L. Johnson
Joshua R. Loos
Eric J. Martin
Daniel J. Murphy
Stephen P. Oppliger II
Rod S. Planer
Joseph L. Strack

Staff Sergeant
Dustin R. Anderson
William R. Bane
Ronald O. Barners
Joshua H. Birkel
Allison M. Bohac
Justin T. Clausen
Terrence M. Dow
Trevor T. Dredla
Ryan D. Georges
Siera M. Greiner
Jason A. Mcatee
Jeremy J. Rinehart
Michael J. Stineman
Jedediah J. Struck
Tuan M. H. Tran
Derek S. Westring
Sonja S. Zerr

Sergeant
Joshua S. Adler
Edward Alvizar
Kyle P. Anderson
Laurette E. Beal
Sean M. Buckels
Aaron D. Bush
Casey J. Carpenter

Mario A. Chavez
Neville F. Cole
Andrew P. Cook
Colton J. Courter
Glenn J. Cox
Bradly P. Cunningham
Andrew C. Dale
Brian M. Elliott
Tyler C. Foote
Depra E. Hansel
Sarah E. Hansen
Joel D. Hying
Jesse M. Jarosz
Edwin M. Jimenez
Ashley N. Johnson
Ashley D. Joint
Todd D. Kermmoad
Bo J. Ketelsen
Zackary L. Klapperich
Ethan J. Koinzan
Kimberly A. Lenczowski
Isvi S. Machuca
Haley M. Markle
Kody J. Marshall
David I. Matson
Brody J. Mayberry
Justin M. Mcbride
Elizabeth I. Nielsen
Cameron L. Oden
Richard S. Parr
Brandon A. Pedersen
Trevor S. Rasmussen
Gregory D. Rentschler
Christopher G. Rewczuk
Arthur L. Robinson
Matthew D. Salomons
Brent R. Searcey
Lemuel R. Sheard III
Preston H. Sheets
Keenan J. Wiese
Ashley W. Woundedarrow
Brandon J. Wright

Specialist
Brittany A. Battaglia
Neil J. Boston
Elisabeth R.H. Eisenmann
David L. Hampton
Joshua C. Knop
Jonathan M. Lance
Donald R. Moore
Tony B. Mueller
Mitchell L. Prai
Levi J. Prusia
William J. Robb
Mindy J. Separdson

Private First Class
Yue Cong
Amanda Diazgonzales
Rachel J. Fowler
Domonick J. Kennelly
Luke D. Potts
Arron M.G. Powell

John D. Rawlinson
Desmond J. Robbins
Deangelo R. Schultz
Herrejon J. C. Villagomez
Eric M. Webb
John W. Wilson
Nicole J. Young

Private Two
Taylor K. Duffy
Jorge A. Estradah
Cecelia M. Guptill
Lucas J. Kinsey
John M. Oconnell
Nicholas R. Swanson
Troy D. Thielke

Ashley L. Walker
Tyler O. Waugh

**Air National Guard
Brigadier General**
Richard J. Evans III

Colonel
Chris Collins

Lieutenant Colonel
Michael Chatterson
John Decker

Major
Gregory C. Goodwater

Karen A. Koenig
Nicole Nuss

Captain
Timothy Russell
Ryan E. Watson

First Lieutenant
Melissa A. Miller

Master Sergeant
Jarrod A. Tisthammer

Technical Sergeant
Tyler Kronhofman
Matthew L. C. Stebbing

Staff Sergeant
Amy Callahan
Ciprianna Dudding
Bradley R. Self

Senior Airman
Devyn E. Jones
Seydou I. Ouattara
Michelle L. Vance

Airman First Class
Devin Alt
Joseph A. Aulner
Cody R. Moslander

AWARDS

Army National Guard Bronze Star Medal

Lt. Col. Craig A. Anderson

Legion of Merit

Lt. Col. Shelly M. Herrod

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Curtis L. Abendroth
Lt. Col. Shane M. Martin
Maj. Daniel J. Benes
Maj. Kevin M. Hurtt
Maj. Steven O. Ward
Capt. Michael B. Ertz
Capt. Hector F. Leguillow
Capt. Joseph W. Neumann
Capt. Raymond P. Phillips
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jeffery J. Caniglia Jr.
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Todd A. Wagner
Command Sgt. Maj. Troy D. Johnson
1st Sgt. Brian P. Stark
Master Sgt. Mark A. Bailey
Master Sgt. Lawrence C. Crowell
Master Sgt. Bruce A. Nakai
Master Sgt. Tomas C. Ortiz
Master Sgt. Marc A. Paolini
Sgt. 1st Class Shawn W. Banzhaf
Sgt. 1st Class Steven R. Gavre
Sgt. 1st Class Eric S. Gettert
Sgt. 1st Class Curtis C. Koehler
Sgt. 1st Class Michelle D. Meyer
Sgt. 1st Class Duane A. Pierce
Sgt. 1st Class Rene Sole
Staff Sgt. Randy J. Baker
Staff Sgt. Ann M. Guy
Staff Sgt. Jeremy J. Rinehart
Staff Sgt. Gregory J. Rowden
Staff Sgt. William L. Terry

Army Commendation Medal

Lt. Col. David J. Dubois
Maj. Steven Collins
Capt. Eric P. Baptiste

Capt. Zachary W. Labrayere
1st Lt. Justin M. Hochstein
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Brent A. Brozovsky
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Mark A. Talbert
Sgt. Maj. Philip G. Perrone
Sgt. 1st Class Travis D. Arner
Sgt. 1st Class Shawn W. Banzhaf
Sgt. 1st Class Michael A. Hagen
Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly A. Lamb
Sgt. 1st Class Eric J. Martin
Sgt. 1st Class Michael W. Victor
Staff Sgt. Timothy A. Cusatis Jr.
Staff Sgt. Kyle D. Demaree
Staff Sgt. Dean P. Martin
Staff Sgt. Cesar A. Rivas
Sgt. Bethany J. Bruce
Sgt. Gabriel C. Conrad
Sgt. Michael B. Eaton
Sgt. Joshua E. King
Sgt. Zackary L. Klapperich
Sgt. Brison G. Kuhn
Sgt. David A. Porto
Sgt. Eric L. Wilford
Spc. Daniel Maciasvillegas
Spc. Matthew J. White

Army Achievement Medal

Maj. James S. Oliver
1st Lt. Blake A. Rippe
2nd Lt. Dustin J. McKenna
Sgt. 1st Class William D. Norris III
Staff Sgt. Adam L. Dack
Staff Sgt. Trevor T. Dredla
Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Niles
Staff Sgt. Jeremy J. Rinehart
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Rouse
Sgt. Bethany J. Bruce
Sgt. Andrew P. Cook
Sgt. Nathan L. Huckebey
Sgt. Christopher R. Jansen
Sgt. Joshua J. Kushen
Sgt. Andrew P. Liss
Sgt. Isvi S. Machuca

Sgt. Harry J. Plendl
Sgt. Angel R. Rodriguez
Sgt. Benjamin S. Skelton
Sgt. Jake A. Winterburn
Spc. Jared D. Archer
Spc. Austin J. Edeal
Spc. Kadron R. Fye
Spc. Michael A. Hansen
Spc. Dakota A. Kingham
Spc. Steven C. Mason
Spc. Joshua D. Peavy
Spc. Pablo Solorio
Spc. Michael A. Tiedeman
Spc. James D. Walden
Spc. Matthew J. White
Spc. Nickalos M. Winey
Pvt. Jonathan R. Emme
Pvt. Kurt F. Ruh

Nebraska National Guard Meritorious Service Medal

Capt. Jocelyn J. Kuta
Master Sgt. Pamela R. Whisenhunt
Sgt. 1st Class Joseph L. Strack
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey S. Swanson

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Cory D. Languis
Sgt. 1st Class Troy S. Lewis
Sgt. 1st Class Eric J. Martin
Staff Sgt. Russell W. Kelley
Staff Sgt. Rachel L. Tobaben

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal

1st Lt. Sean C. Polson
Staff Sgt. Tarissa R. Batenhorst
Staff Sgt. Jason W. Delancey
Staff Sgt. Sean M. Delancey
Staff Sgt. Sara K. Wells
Staff Sgt. Gregory S. Wortman
Sgt. Joshua S. Adler
Staff Sgt. Sara K. Wells
Sgt. Justin M. McKenna
Sgt. Javis A. Olson
Sgt. Heath E. Wragge
Spc. Matthew J. Boelter
Spc. James N. Cherry
Spc. William A. Devine
Spc. Jeremy L. Dinges
Spc. Cyle L. Kling
Spc. Michael J. Kuss
Spc. Zachary A. Long
Spc. Daniel Maciasvillegas
Spc. Max T. McShane
Spc. Edward N. Neidig
Spc. Tyler D. Petty
Spc. Caleb L. Puffer
Spc. Justin M. Romano
Spc. Kyle T. Sawyer
Spc. Gary L. Schellhorn
Spc. Rahshaw A. Sides
Spc. Dustin L. Stoner
Pfc. Nathaniel C. Czapl
Pfc. Benjamin R. Prater
Pvt. Jacob E. Hill

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Col. Douglas C. Ladd
Lt. Col. Shelly M. Herrod
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Timothy L. Mailahn

1st Sgt. Stephen D. Osier
Sgt. 1st Class Michelle D. Meyer
Staff Sgt. Everett L. Watkins II

STARBASE Nebraska celebrates first decade

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

For a brief moment, Brian Plank was a kid again, the visions of what it was like to stare up at aircraft with a mix of excitement and wonder flooding through the John Brown University sophomore's mind as he slowly strolled along a table filled with displays of current and historic airplanes and spacecraft.

"It was a dream come true," said Plank, pausing in front of several model jets as he recalled himself as a Lincoln Christian School fifth grader nine years earlier.

"Ever since I was a kid I loved airplanes and always fancied myself being a pilot one day. Science and math were my thing," said Plank, who hopes to follow a career in robotics. "So, getting to come here... if you look around, these models have been collecting dust since I was here, but they really intrigued kids and sparked imaginations."

Intriguing kids and sparking imaginations. In a way, those two ideas are what have formed the bedrock of a Nebraska National Guard hosted program that celebrated its 10th anniversary, Aug. 8, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln.

Begun in August 2002, STARBASE Nebraska is one of 76 Department of Defense STARBASE academies located across the United States and Puerto Rico. According to Sherry Pawelko, program director for STARBASE Nebraska, DoD STARBASE is a national educational program focusing on developing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills in 5th grade students.

"Our goal is to foster excitement in STEM and to consider these fields as a possible career choice," said Pawelko. "We provide 'at-risk' students exciting learning activities and experiences they might not receive in any other venue."

Pawelko said these experiences include lessons in Physics, Chemistry, Technology and Engineering. Students discuss Newton's Three Laws of Motion and learn about fluid mechanics, aerodynamics, atmospheric pressures



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Reliving Old Memories: Brian Plank, a former graduate of STARBASE Nebraska, looks at a display of model aircraft during the 10th anniversary celebration of the founding of the STARBASE Nebraska program, Aug. 8.

and nanotechnology. Students also learn how to create computer-aided design and print their work via a 3D printer. Within the mathematical fields, students learn more about measurements, geometry and data analysis.

"Our country has a severe shortage of college students in STEM majors and DoD STARBASE programs aim to influence youth to become scientists, engineers and mathematicians we so desperately need," said Pawelko.

In Nebraska, a total of 7,797 students have graduated from the program, which is hosted by the Nebraska National Guard. Addition-

'If you look around, these models have been collecting dust since I was here, but they really intrigued kids and sparked imaginations.'

— **Brian Plank**
former graduate of STARBASE Nebraska

ally the academy offers a summer camp for the children of Nebraska military service members. Over the past decade, 235 military children have attended this camp.

On Aug. 8, some of those graduates gathered with STARBASE instructors, local teachers and Nebraska National Guardsmen currently or formerly involved in the creation of the state program at the Penterman Armory on the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln to celebrate how far the program has come over the past decade.

Among those was retired Brig. Gen. Ed-

ward "Ned" Greene, former assistant adjutant general for the Nebraska Air National Guard who was credited as developing the idea for a STARBASE program in Nebraska.

According to Greene, the idea came during a visit to an Air National Guard base at Alpena, Mich. While there, Greene said he noticed a number of school-aged children touring the base and its aircraft.

"I started asking around and that's how I learned about the STARBASE program," said Greene. By the time he arrived back in Lincoln several days later, Greene had learned enough to bring the program to the attention of then-Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, Nebraska adjutant general, who gave Greene the go-ahead to explore bringing an academy to Nebraska.

Greene said he soon found out it was more difficult than originally imagined. "We found out that in order to get a STARBASE, there was a lot of competition," he said. "A lot of other states wanted one, too."

Greene credited Nebraska National leaders and local Lincoln teachers, particularly those involved in Science instruction, with supporting the idea and helping Nebraska earn a program. "We've made a lot of good friends along the way," said Greene, whose daughter was a member of the first class from Lincoln Christian School and is now studying engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with the goal of going into aerospace engineering.

According to Plank, the program played a major role in helping him choose his professional calling.

"I think the math and science things that they taught here were a lot of things that you hear in the classroom, but the thing that made STARBASE so special was that they were able to teach it and then they went to the hands-on," said Plank, who recently had the opportunity to work as part of a team from his college on a project designing a robot for NASA. The project was part of a nation-wide college competition. "The hands-on wasn't individual projects, but team-learning and team-efforts."

"So, you really saw everything you have to do requires and requires everyone working together to get our goal accomplished," he added.



First Class Service: Employers attending an Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve 'Bosslift' load their luggage onto a Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R prior to departing for Jacksonville Naval Air Station, Fla., July 13. The Bosslift provided an opportunity for Nebraskans who employ Guard members or Reservists an opportunity to tour military installations and learn what their employees do when performing their military duties.



Photos by Senior Airman Mary Thach

Aerial Ballet: A Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R transporting Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve 'Bosslift' participants back to Nebraska from Florida lines up a mid-flight aerial refueling over the state of Nebraska, July 13. The ESGR participants had the opportunity to observe the refueling prior to landing in Lincoln, Neb.

Bosslift

Nebraska employers, leaders learn more about Guard, reserve roles

By Senior Airman Mary Thach
Staff Writer

The Nebraska National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing flew 19 Nebraska employers and civic leaders, nominated by their Guard and Reserve employees, on a KC-135R Stratotanker for a three-day "Bosslift" sponsored by the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve, to tour several military facilities around Jacksonville, Fla., July 11-13.

Accompanying the employers was Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal, Nebraska National Guard assistant adjutant general-Army, along with several ESGR and military support staff.

The Bosslift program started in the late 1980s with the goal of exposing supervisors and business owners to the other side of a military employee's life. Bill Nelson, program support technician for Nebraska's ESGR, said the mission of this program is simple.



First Hand Look: Participants in an Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve 'Bosslift' explore tactical assault vehicles parked at U.S. Marine Corps Blount Island Command, Fla., July 13. The employers were given a first-hand view of machines the U.S. military uses during war.



Drone Central: A drone operator-in-training demonstrates how to maneuver a military drone on a simulator for employers attending a Nebraska National Guard Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve 'Bosslift' at Jacksonville Naval Air Station, Fla., July 11.

"Employers were gathered together and taken to a military location to get a firsthand view of what the reserve components do when they are away from the workplace, when they are actually wearing the uniform and doing the job," said Nelson. "(The employers and civic leaders) get to see some of the latest technology and see firsthand what their Guard person is doing."

ESGR is a Department of Defense organization designed to facilitate relationships between Reservists, Guardsmen, and their civilian employers. The Nebraska ESGR conducts an annual Bosslift, usually to an out-of-state location. The purpose is to educate employers about aspects of military life, both on and off duty, about how employer support may positively affect a military member at work and at home, and steps they can take to help employees and employers work together to prevent conflicts and

form open lines of communication. Another goal of the program is to increase an employer's knowledge of laws surrounding service in the Guard or Reserve.

"The mission of ESGR is to educate employers on the law, the Uniformed Services and Support of Reemployment Rights Act, so they understand what the ramifications are of taking care of their military member when he or she goes on any type of active duty," Nelson said. "At the same time, it teaches the service members what they have to do to make sure their employers are informed about the law and informed about what they are doing for their military service."

Following the flight from Lincoln, Neb., to Naval Air Station Jacksonville, the group of business owners, supervisors and civic leaders were loaded onto a charter bus to tour Navy Reserve aviation squadrons and two Fleet Logistics Support Squadrons. They then toured a C-130 and a C-40 aircraft, speaking with several pilots and the commander about the importance of the military mission and the necessity of civilian employers supporting their Guard and Reserve employees.

The following day, the group traveled to the United States Ma-

rine Corps Blount Island Command for a briefing about the capabilities and functions of the base and how they prepare and ship Marines all over the world with little notice. The employers were given a bus tour of the base and had the opportunity to climb into an amphibious assault vehicle to see firsthand the confined quarters inside these monstrous defense vehicles.

While touring the Marine base, Navrkal spoke of what he hoped the employers would learn from this experience.

"They will certainly come away with a greater appreciation for the United States military as a whole and how professional we are, how capable we are and how we are really the best military in the world," said Navrkal. "I hope they will have the ability to understand the commitments that we have, and commitments required by our military members to be the best (and) an understanding of what it takes to be the best."

The group then toured a Naval Submarine Base in Kings Bay, Ga., and observed several simulated rooms in a submarine. They were welcomed to ask questions as they observed students learning to patch holes in piping and how to drain water from a "flooded" engine room.

On the final day, ESGR took the group to the Florida National Guard Headquarters in St. Augustine, Fla., for a brief glimpse into the fort's history and a tour of the facility.

Devin Ahearn, one of Arby's district managers in western Nebraska, was on the trip after Arby's received both the 'Patriot Award' and the 'Above and Beyond Award' through ESGR. One of Ahearn's Guard employees nominated Arby's for the awards by writing about how the company is flexible with his schedule while he was on Guard duty. Ahearn said her eyes were opened by how much a Guard member actually does while on duty.

"It takes a lot more to be an active person for a weekend," said Ahearn. "They do a lot more for one weekend than sit around and train. I am learning to be more supportive and knowledgeable of what is going on with our country."

Ahearn said civilian employers need to empower their people to seek knowledge in understanding their military employees. She added that companies need to embrace service

members looking for a job and realize they live a dual life of working a civilian job while also serving the American people.

Jeff Williams, owner of Electrical Contractors in Omaha, Neb., was nominated by the general manager of his company, who is a military member, to participate in the Bosslift. Williams was awarded the ESGR 'Freedom Award,' the highest award given to an employer through ESGR. He said his employee was on active duty for more than 300 days and they stayed in contact the entire time he was away via Skype and email. Williams chuckled as he spoke of his employee even joining the company's Christmas party via Skype.

Since winning this award, Williams has added the ESGR logo to all of his company's trucks, and has changed the company logo by adding the American flag inside of the lettering. Williams said he appreciated ESGR and the Bosslift, describing it as an eye opening experience.

"The number one thing that ESGR does is help the troops get back from the war and show appreciation from the employers," said Williams. "Employers better appreciate what the troops are doing, because we aren't doing it, they are. My kids sleep really well at night because of what my employee does. That's why we do what we can do to help and support."

Williams added he was amazed with the amount of knowledge freely given on the tours and was surprised how the whole trip was nearly all open door.

Nelson said it is rare for employers to get an opportunity to learn about the military so freely and be granted access to military facilities.

"For 90 percent of our employers, they have never been inside a military facility, they have never been on a military plane, so they get to see firsthand what our people do," said Nelson. "It's a big deal for a lot of people for a first time experience."

"Everybody that is in uniform is proud of what they are doing and want to show it off, they like to show it off. They are true professionals in every sense of the word," said Nelson. "I think that is the greatest satisfaction. When we loaded up the aircraft, no one knew what to expect. If we gained a huge supporter of the National Guard and Reserve, then we are happy."



2012 TAG Shoot

Photos by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Flying Brass: Sgt. 1st Class Jason McCord, 267th Ordnance Company, Lincoln, Neb., fires an M-16A2 rifle towards his target at the Greenlief Training Site, Hastings, Neb., Aug. 10, during the Adjutant General Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise, more commonly known as the "TAG Shoot." McCord was firing the rifle to get requalified during the TAG Shoot, an annual marksmanship competition between Nebraska National Guard members.

Nebraska Soldiers, Airmen test their marksmanship skills

By Senior Airman Mary Thach
Staff Writer

Two hundred sixteen Soldiers and Airmen from the Nebraska National Guard gathered at Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb., to participate in the Nebraska National Guard Adjutant General Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise, more commonly referred to as the "TAG Shoot," August 10-12.

The TAG Shoot is a state-level marksmanship competition used to help Guardsmen improve their weapon handling skills, and identify individuals with exceptional skills to advance to regional and possibly national competitions.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Todd Wagner, a property book officer with the 734th Transportation Battalion in Kearney, Neb., is the state marksmanship coordinator and the match director for the TAG Shoot. Having participated in the TAG Shoot since 1986, Wagner said the TAG Shoot consists primarily of Soldiers. However, he said the Air Guard has always been present at this event.

Wagner described the process the Guardsmen go through during the weekend competition.

"The Soldiers (and Airmen) begin their time at Greenlief by entering a Small Arms Firing School and familiarize them with the courses of firing they are going to shoot and preliminary marksmanship instruction so they are comfortable with what they are going to do," said Wagner. "Once they are comfortable, they are taken to the range to practice."

"Two courses of fire are approved alternate qualification courses of fire for their annual weapons qualification," Wagner added. "If a Soldier came to this event and has not yet qualified on a weapon, they can take that score card and turn it into their unit to be used as a weapons qualification as well. There are challenging events as well."

The goal of this event, Wagner said, is to train the Soldiers and Airmen to properly operate their weapon and benefit from the experience of competition.

"This entire training is driven



My Target: Sgt. 1st Class Jason McCord, 267th Ordnance Company, writes his name on his target at the Greenlief Training Site, Hastings, Neb., Aug. 10, during the Adjutant General Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise.

2012 Adjutant General Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise Results

Individual Service Pistol Championship: Novice: Sgt. Barry Erb; Open: Sgt. 1st Class Steven Brewer; Top Pro: Sgt. 1st Class Travis Zwickle.

Individual Service Rifle Championship: Novice: Staff Sgt. Scott Krul; Open: Sgt. 1st Class Steven Brewer; Top Pro: Sgt. 1st Class Steven Swisher.

Combat Pistol Team Championship: Team GTS (Sgt. 1st Class Steven Swisher, Sgt. 1st Class Travis Zwickle, Sgt. Tomsam Witt, Staff Sgt. Joseph Haag.)

Service Rifle Team Championship: Squirrels Tail (Sgt. 1st Class Steven Brewer, Sgt. Paul Willman, Sgt. Dennis Sedlacek, 1st Lt. Travis Wahlmeier.)

Gary Anderson Trophy: Sgt. 1st Class Steven Brewer

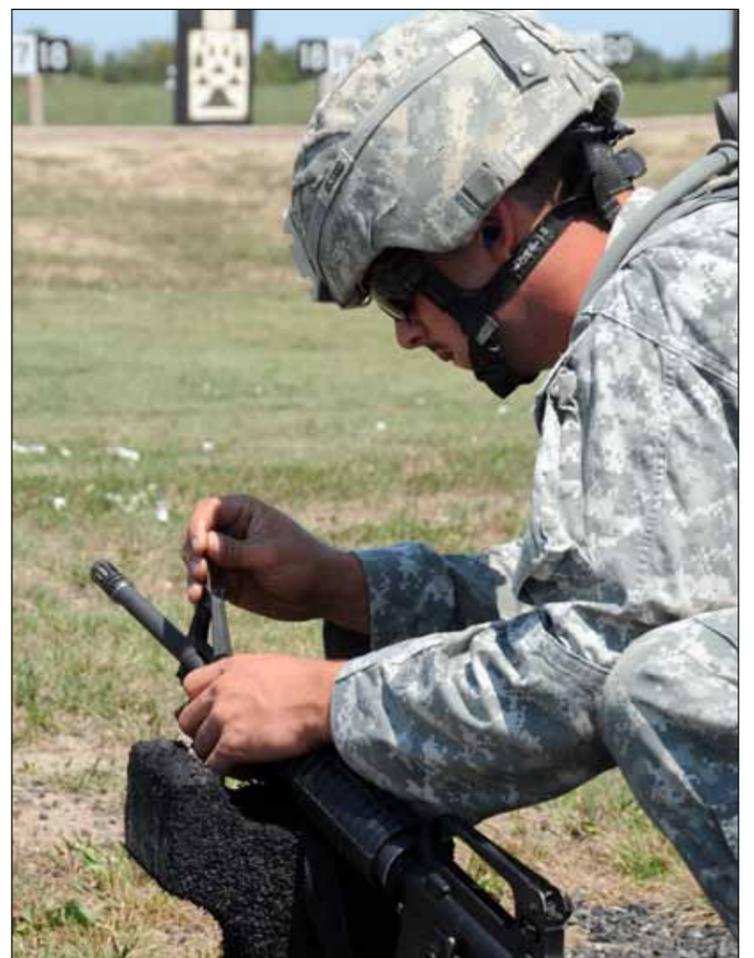
State Command Sergeant Major Match: Sgt. 1st Class Steven Brewer

The Adjutant General's Combat Team Trophy: Squirrels Tail (Sgt. 1st Class Steven Brewer, Sgt. Paul Willman, Sgt. Dennis Sedlacek, 1st Lt. Travis Wahlmeier.)

from a weapons training event," said Wagner. "Our mission here is to train Soldiers to be more proficient with the firearms that they use day-to-day. Be it an Airman or a Soldier, they need to be comfortable with the

weapons they are going to defend themselves with. The more hands-on they have with it, the better off they will be."

The matches held for individuals and teams are entry-level, said Wag-



Getting Dialed In: Spc. Christopher Borreson, 623rd Engineer Company, makes a sight adjustment on his M-16A2 rifle at the Greenlief Training Site, Hastings, Neb., Aug. 10, during the Adjutant General Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise. Borreson adjusted his sight to improve accuracy during the annual marksmanship competition between Nebraska Guard members.

ner. The environment is competitive, but is designed as a training exercise.

"We focus really hard on training Soldiers constantly," said Wagner. "From that, we will pick a select few, both teams and individuals, and try to push them onto further events to try to get them more expertise with marksmanship. Then, they can come back to their units and keep that training."

The competition begins at the TAG Shoot as a state-level championship. The state-level champions will move on to the regional championship, the Marksmanship Advisory

Council, which is held in one of the nine participating Midwestern states. Then, the regional champions qualify to participate in the national championship, the Winston P. Wilson Matches, at Camp Robinson, Ark. There, they compete against the other 49 states and four territories, potentially 54 teams in all.

This year's competition drew the maximum capacity for the Greenlief shooting range, 216 competitors. The competition ranges from Guardsmen who have never participated, to those who have participated for years.

Torch Carriers

■Nebraska National Guard Soldiers, Airmen help carry Cornhusker State Games torch throughout state, ending at opening ceremony

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

As sweat rolled down the faces of Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen standing in formation, a crowd of baseball fans, players and community members came to their feet as Nebraska Army National Guard recruiters presented the Colors during a Saltdogs baseball game at Haymarket Park in Lincoln, Neb., June 29.

This wasn't just any ordinary event for the National Guard to present Colors but time to celebrate the Cornhusker State Games torch's final stop after making its way across the entire state of Nebraska.

The torch made its way around Nebraska thanks to Soldiers, Airmen and civilians alike. Nebraska National Guard members ran the torch in the Kearney, Humboldt and Lincoln areas and finally into Hawks Field at Haymarket Park in Lincoln, Neb.

"It goes all across the state," said Staff Sgt. Joseph Strack, a recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer for the Nebraska Army National Guard who has helped carry the torch the past several years. "It comes down and once it hits the Lincoln area, we have four or five different Guard runners. Then they pass it off to the one who will run it in."

"This is my fourth year," said Strack. "I know they have been doing this for at least five or six."

Spc. Holly Styskal, a member of the 754th Chemical Battalion, carried the torch on the last leg of the torch run as approximately 20 Army National Guard Soldiers and 18 Air National Guard Air-



Torch Bearer: Pvt. Aaron Winberg, Recruit Sustainment Program in Kearney, Neb., runs with the Cornhusker State Games torch between Lexington and Kearney, June 15. Several members of the Nebraska National Guard helped carry the torch throughout Nebraska and into the opening ceremony for the games.

men followed behind as they double-timed to Hawks Field.

Once on the field, the National Guardsmen double-timed around the outfield then set up their formations on the baseline for the National Anthem.

According to members of the National Guard standing in formation, the playing of



Courtesy photos

Torch Guard: Sgt. 1st Class Chris Russell, McCook, Neb., recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer, holds the Cornhusker State Games torch while Staff Sgt. Brian Kennicut, North Platte Recruit Sustainment Program NCO (nearest with rifle), Pfc. Levi White (flag bearer), and Staff Sgt. Ben Schall, North Platte recruiting and retention NCO, provide a color guard at the opening ceremony for the Buffalo Bill Rodeo at Nebraskaland Days in North Platte, Neb., June 13. Members of the Nebraska National Guard helped carry the torch throughout Nebraska and into the opening ceremony for the games.

the National Anthem gave them goose bumps.

"It's nice to do the actual torch run but when we get out there and they actually see us all in formation for the National Anthem, that's when it really sets in," said Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Dean, a recruiter for the Nebraska Air National Guard.

In addition to the Nebraska National Guard helping with the Cornhusker State Games torch run, the Cornhusker State

Games hosted a Military Track and Field event on Saturday, July 21. Guardsmen were able to compete in a friendly match up of Army and Air during the Nebraska National Guard Track and Field competition.

"It feels great to be a part of the community," said Dean. "It gives us a chance to remind the public we are here and to be in the community involvement."

Cornhusker State Games begin military division for track and field



Photos by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Fast Start: Airman 1st Class Taiheem Pleasant, a food services specialist with the 155th Air Refueling Wing's Services Squadron, fires out of the blocks in a 200-meter race during the Cornhusker State Games track and field event at Lincoln High's track in Lincoln, Neb., July 21. This was the first time the Games have featured a military division for the track and field events.

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

According to the Cornhusker State Games' website, the games are a statewide amateur sports festival for all Nebraskans. The purpose of the games is to provide top-quality amateur competition in a wide range of activities.

With the military's focus on fitness, Air Force Staff Sgt. Jarell Roach, a structural specialist with the 155th Air Refueling Wing's Civil Engineer Squadron, had an idea to collaborate with the games and hold a military competition in conjunction with the games.

Roach said his initial idea was to hold the competition at the Nebraska National Guard's air base, but after working with games representatives, the decision was made to create a military division for the games' track and field events held at Lincoln High's track, July 21. So, for the first time since it was founded in 1985, the annual Cornhusker State Games held a military division within their track and field events.

"I just like track," said Roach. "I realized that it's a popular sport in Nebraska, along with baseball and football, and I thought along the lines of...us training for (physical training) and the track and field event would just be complimentary to the overall goal of 'fit-to-fight.'"

Roach wanted to use the opportunity as a way to have Guard members out in the community

competing alongside fellow Nebraskans.

"To me and the competitors it really means coming out here and representing the Guard," said Roach. "It goes back to the things that really work in conjunction with our vision to be fit-to-fight. So that's something that as far as being physically fit, being sound athletes, I think that's something that the military portrays very well."

"It represents us, it represents our vision overall for the body to stay fit and it represents a new level of networking as far as being Guard members and to the community," he added.

And despite temperatures reaching triple digits, two Nebraska Air National Guard runners excelled.

Tech. Sgt. Jamison Nitz, a vehicle mechanic with the 155th's Vehicle Maintenance Squadron, took home gold medals in the military men's division of the 800-, 1,500- and 3,000-meter races.

Nitz said he wanted to compete in the events to support the Guard and said he was happy he performed well.

"It means a lot," said Nitz. "I'm happy to be able to stand out in the front and kind of be a leader in that aspect. Hopefully I get support from other people and hopefully I can get some other people out here and get them motivated to start running."

Airman 1st Class Taiheem Pleasant, a food services specialist with the 155th Services Squadron, won the gold medal in the military men's 200-meter race.



The Hardware: Airman 1st Class Taiheem Pleasant, a food services specialist with the 155th Services Squadron, displays his gold medal for winning the 200-meter race in the military division of the Cornhusker State Games track and field event at Lincoln High's track, July 21.

Pleasant, a junior on the track team at Concordia College in Seward, Neb., said he wanted to compete in the games to gauge his performance level before his upcoming track season.

"On a scale of one to ten I'd say it felt about a six," said Pleasant. "I got a little way to go to be prepared for track season."

Pleasant also wanted to compete to put the Guard in the spotlight.

"It helps put our name out there and tell our story a little more," he said. "We're not just about flying jets...we do more within our community to participate and help out."

Roach admitted the turnout for the military division was less than ideal, but said that now that it has started he hopes it grows into a major event. He also wants to use the event as a friendly Army versus Air Force competition, and called out the competitors.

"Next year I'd love to see that rivalry going and really promote it because it would be something fun," said Roach. "I still think that the Air Guard has the better crop of athletes and I think when it's all said and done I hope to show that off at the track here next year."

The Air Guard runners agreed. "I say step your game up and get out here for next year," said Pleasant.

"I was hoping for a big Army turnout so we could come out and compete against the Army," said Nitz.

"I want to see them out here," he added. "I want to see as many of them out here as we can so we can compete against them for sure."

And although Roach wants to up the competition between the two branches of service, he said the event is ultimately designed to provide fun for the participants.

"It's a great event," said Roach. "It's not only good for Nebraska, it's good for the Guard, it's good for you to get a team of individuals out here...to build some camaraderie, to have some fun and create some memories."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Flight Formation: A line of runners pass a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker during the first leg of the annual Thunder Run held Aug. 4 in Lincoln, Neb.

Twice the Thunder

Reigning Thunder Run winner repeats finish, time on windy Lincoln course

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton

Staff Writer

For a better part of the summer, extreme heat and humidity has plagued most of Nebraska, threatening to turn this year's annual KFOR/National Guard "Thunder Run" into the first annual "Inferno Run."

Dark clouds loomed overhead while high winds and scattered showers welcomed runners and volunteers to the annual KFOR/National Guard 5-kilometer and 1-mile Thunder Run in sharp contrast to the near perfect weather conditions for the event last year.

Climatic conditions were about the extent of the differences between this year and last year's races. As it turned out, the winner of this year's 5-kilometer run was also the winner last year. And not only that, he also crossed the finish line with the exact same time as he did last year.

"I took a look at the weather this morning, but I didn't check the wind," said Logan Watley, a 25-year-old Elkhorn, Neb., runner who placed first in the Aug. 4, 5-kilometer race for the second straight year.

This year 497 participants braved the adverse weather conditions with 312 completing the 5-kilometer run and 185 completing the one-mile fun-run.

Watley, a member of LXU Racing, finished in first-place with a repeat time of 16:01. He and teammate Neil Wolford, who finished in second place six seconds behind Watley, took turns breaking the wind on the back stretch. With the wind at his back, the second mile was significantly faster, he said.

This spring Watley ran the Boston Marathon in 90-degree heat and didn't do as well as he would have liked to. "I would rather take it cool and windy," he said. "It beats the 100-degree weather and the humidity."

"I really wanted to break 16 (minutes)," he said. "I would have liked to have been a



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton

Winning Form: Logan Watley breaks the tape after winning the "Thunder Run" 5-kilometer race with a time of 16:01 — the same time he used to win last year's run. A total of 312 runners competed in the 5-kilometer race.

few seconds faster, but with the wind, I can't complain."

Finishing first in the women's division and 18th overall was 22-year-old Katie Nelson of Lincoln with a time of 18:59. Finishing



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

First Steps: More than 300 runners of all ages begin the opening steps of the annual KFOR/National Guard "Thunder Run" 5-kilometer race, Aug. 4, in Lincoln, Neb. Cloudy conditions and a brisk wind created challenging conditions for runners competing in the annual race that takes place on a taxiway near the Nebraska National Guard air base.

in second place with a time of 20:00 was 15-year-old Jeralyn Poe, who also placed second in last year's event.

"I was not excited about the wind or the rain," Nelson said, "but it all turned out."

Nelson, founder of the She-Ra running team, ran the Thunder Run when she was in high school. This summer she has participated in the Lincoln Mile and completed a triathlon.

Two weeks before the Thunder Run, she finished the 5-kilometer portion of her triathlon in over 20 minutes. "I knew I could

do a lot better today," she said.

"Temperature-wise today was awesome," she said. "I'm used to running in the blistering heat during the day and even with the wind, it was a lot more relaxing today."

Finishing first in the one-mile fun-run with a time of 7:06 was Domani Occansey, 11. Helena Occansey, 8, finished first in the girls category of the one-mile run and fifth-place overall with a time of 7:12.

For more complete results of this year's Thunder Run go to the Lincoln Track Clubs website at www.Lincolnrun.org.

Guardsmen practice motorcycle skills during 'stand-down day' training

By Sgt. Maj. John Parfait

Special for the *Prairie Soldier*

Midway through 2012, fatalities involving motorcyclist are up 63 percent on Nebraska roads compared to the same time last year (Nebraska Department of Roads). This is proving to be one of the deadliest years on record for bikers in Nebraska.

However, with some basic driving skills and adherence to the rules of the road, traffic collisions can be avoided — and even save lives.

On July 21, 22 members of the Nebraska Army National Guard participated in a motorcycle safety stand down day at Camp Ashland, Neb., where 15 riders and seven non-riders attended a course to gain knowledge of motorcycle awareness.

"Due to a steady increase in motorcyclists in the Nebraska Army National Guard and specifically within the 209th Regimental

Training Institute, coupled with the increase of motorcycle accidents and fatalities on Nebraska roads, the idea to foster an environment of motorcycle awareness and safety for our Soldiers (and) riders became increasingly important to me," said Command Sgt. Maj. Wilfred Bindel, 209th RTI commandant and one of the coordinators for the motorcycle safety event.

With command support, Staff Sgt. Walter Shumate, Command Sgt. Maj. Wilfred Bindel and Sgt. Maj. John Parfait coordinated the first motorcycle safety and awareness stand-down day for Nebraska Army National Guard personnel. The eight-hour event consisted of classroom instruction on riding straight, intersection awareness, street smart rider perception, accident statistics, awareness of proper use of personal protective equipment, and safe riding techniques using the Motorcycle Safety Foundation format.

Shumate coordinated with Motorcycle Safety Foundation rider coaches Dave Halen, Kevin Tinnell, Lionel Johnson, Mike Fredrickson and Beth Howie to donate their time and experience to facilitate this event and teach the Nebraska Army National Guard members motorcycle safety awareness and new driving techniques.

Additionally, an outdoor riding course allowed for riders to assess their capabilities to successfully maneuver decreasing turning radius, quick swerves and quick stops.

According to Master Sgt. Daniel Nastase, Truck Driver School branch chief, the course helped give motorcyclists the tools they need to operate their machine safely.

"This was to ensure riders' confidence in their riding abilities and comfort on a motorcycle," said Nastase.

Although this was the first time the Nebraska National Guard hosted a motorcycle safety day,

Shumate, an Advanced Leadership Course instructor, said he hopes "this will not be the last time for an event such as this to be held and is optimistic about a quarterly or semi-annual event being held regularly."

According to Halen, the Nebraska rider-coaches who attended the event were really pleased with the interest and attention that their students showed during the various classroom activities.

"While I was watching and coaching the riders who braved the afternoon heat to ride three exercises from the MSF Advanced Rider Course, I saw some things that just made me smile," he said. "I was thrilled with the willingness with which each rider tried the various new techniques that we asked them to attempt."

"We saw every rider elevate their skill in upper body positioning and foot placement in order to increase ground clearance (and safety mar-

gin) while cornering. The riders also broke some bad habits with maximum effort braking practice and really learned how to safely come to a stop in amazingly short distances," he added. "These two new skills can really help a rider when a situation presents itself on the road and they are faced with an unseen obstacle in the middle of a blind corner, a surprise decreasing radius corner or a completely blocked path of travel where a quick stop is the only way to avoid a crash."

"I look forward to doing this again the next time we are asked to assist the Nebraska Army National Guard."

Future motorcycle safety day announcements and information on how and when to sign up will be made available through intranet channels.

Editor's Note: Sgt. Maj. John D. Parfait is a Nebraska Army National Guard safety specialist.