

# Prairie Soldier

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

## Nebraska Soldier dies while on leave from Afghanistan

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon  
Assistant Editor



Sgt. Robert Schlote

Hundreds packed the Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Norfolk, Neb., May 19, to pay their last respects to a Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier who died May 14 while on leave from a mission in Afghanistan with the Omaha-based 195th Forward Support Company.

Sgt. Robert (Bob) Schlote, 26, died of an unexpected medical episode at Omaha's Methodist Hospital. Schlote was interred at Prospect Hill Cemetery following the funeral.

Schlote, a native of Norfolk, lived in Omaha, Neb., with his wife Tiffany and was on leave to witness the birth of their first child.

Schlote was a nine-year veteran of the Nebraska National Guard. He enlisted in 2002 under the split option and completed his basic combat training between his junior and senior year of high school. After his graduation from Norfolk Senior High School, he completed advanced individual training at Fort Gordon, Ga., as a communications specialist and was assigned to the 189th Transportation Company in Norfolk.

Schlote had completed three

separate overseas deployments in his nine years of service. In 2004 he volunteered to deploy to Kuwait with Company B, 735th Main Support Battalion. In 2005 he deployed to Iraq with the 189th Trans. Co. In 2007 he deployed to Iraq with the 600th Trans. Co.

He was currently serving in the Omaha-based 195th FSB, which was mobilized for duty in Afghanistan this past January.

Schlote's brother, Sgt. William Schlote, is also in the Nebraska Army National Guard and is cur-

See DEATH on 4.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

## Flood 2011

**Steady As She Goes:** Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, prepare to connect sandbags onto a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, June 7, near North Platte, Neb. The Soldiers, who were working to fill a damaged Platte River levee that was threatening to cut off U.S. Highway 30 and the Union Pacific Railroad's main rail line, were among many National Guardsmen called upon to support the state during historic flooding in Nebraska.

Stories begin on 11

## 155th Air Refueling Wing plays role in global operations

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon  
Assistant Editor

Most warfare techniques from WWI have become antiquated or have been replaced thanks to new technology. However, the Nebraska Air National Guard continues to employ a deployment concept first created in 1917 – the Air and Space Expeditionary Force concept.

Better known as AEF, it was a concept born out of necessity and has evolved immensely since WWI. It allows the Air Force to organize, schedule and present its forces to combatant commanders in a structured, predictable manner.

"It's just a predictability of when an Air Force member will, or can be, expected to deploy and it's on a steady-state cycle," said Col. Dennis Hayward, the 155th Air Refueling

Wing's vice commander.

As part of the AEF, different units are tasked to be in an AEF "bucket" for a period of time.

Should the need arise, combatant commanders can call for specific Air Force specialty codes to fill positions, or call upon an entire unit during that particular AEF bucket. Standard AEF cycles last 120 days for aviation assets and maintainers and 180 days for

non-aviation assets.

According to Hayward, the 155th ARW began their most recent AEF cycle in the beginning of May and have deployed multiple aircraft, crews and support personnel since. The length of the deployments varies based on the asset and personnel utilized, but the end of the bucket will be in late August.

The 155th's assets and personnel See AEF on 4.

## Nebraska Airman taking year-long break from farming to teach Afghans

By Maj. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

Bob Huttes admits there have been mornings this past spring when he woke before the rest of his family and paused on the deck of his farmhouse near Sprague, Neb., to take in the view as dawn broke over the valley that borders his farm.

Sitting there, drinking from a steaming cup of coffee, Huttes said he tried to soak in every essence of springtime on his farm: the pinks and violets of new wildflowers; the lime-colored greens of the tree-covered hills that border a low-lying stream that meanders through his family's farm; the fresh, earthy smell of recently turned over fields; the sounds of birds chirping around him.

Huttes has it all stored in his mind now. That's because he knows there might be days in the not-so-distant future when he might need to retrieve those memories while working in a far different land under even more different circumstances.

See FARMER on 8.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Heading To Afghanistan:** Chief Master Sgt. Bob Huttes takes a break from spring farming to pose for a photo. Huttes is heading to Afghanistan as part of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2, which will help Afghan farmers redevelop their agricultural skills.

## Black berets no longer part of Army's combat uniform

By Pfc. Heidi Krueger  
Staff Writer

Looks aren't always key. Functionality, practicality and utility take preference when it comes to U.S. Soldiers' headgear.

After 10 years of wearing the beret with their duty uniform, the United States Army has gone back to the patrol cap as the primary headgear for the duty uniform. The changes, which were part of Army directive 2011-11, became effective on the Army's birthday, June 14.

Over the years, the Army has changed uniforms due to the changing times and environments.

"I think it's going to be a positive change for the United States Army and for the National Guard

See BERETS on 2.

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### INSIDE

- News Briefs ..... 2
- Photo Story ..... 3
- 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade welcomed home ..... 5
- Military Policemen receive warm homecoming ..... 6
- Agribusiness development team heads overseas ..... 9
- Grand Island aviators mobilize for Afghanistan .... 10

# NEWS DIGEST

## ■ Gates says Guard, Reserves roles need examining

AFGHANISTAN (AFPS) — The Defense Department is taking a look at the roles of the National Guard and reserve components, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said on June 6.

Gates, who was retiring as Defense secretary, spoke to the men and women of Guard and reserve units and thanked them for their service during a town hall meeting and took questions. One Soldier asked about the future of the reserve components.

Gates said he has been concerned about the Guard and reserves since he took office in 2006. "One of my concerns when I took the job was my concern that after 9/11, we pulled a kind of bait and switch on the National Guard," he said.

Since World War II, the National Guard always had been a strategic reserve and those signing up for service generally trained one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer. They understood they would be called up for national disasters or great national crises. Instead, they "found themselves ultimately being deployed for 15 months in the field," the secretary said.

Since then, of course, the reality is that everyone who has joined the Guard and reserve has known they were going in to the fight, he said.

But this is an issue for reservists. The department is asking what are the right roles for the Guard and reserve going forward, Gates said.

One suggestion is that the Guard be divided into a strategic reserve and an operational reserve, with each group trained, paid and equipped differently, the secretary said.

Another suggestion calls for moving more of the Army's heavy infantry brigade combat teams into the National Guard.

"These are questions we are looking at, but we need to do some hard thinking," he said, "because we could not have done what we did in Iraq and do what we're doing here in Afghanistan without the operational engagement of the Guard."

Whatever happens, the Guard is going to continue to have an operational role, Gates said. "How much of the Guard that involves and how we situate the Guard and reserve going forward is still a question everybody is looking at," he said.

## ■ Airlines revise policies for troops' checked baggage

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Military members traveling on orders on several major U.S. air carriers can check four, and in some cases five, bags without charge based on new policies the airlines instituted, June 9.

Delta Air Lines, American Airlines, United Airlines and Continental Airlines announced the new policies after Army reservists returning from Afghanistan had to pay more than \$2,800 to cover the costs of their four checked bags on a Delta flight.

Two members of the unit en route to Fort Polk, La., complained of their flight on a YouTube video that went viral.

Delta apologized for the situation and is working with the Soldiers individually "to make this situation right for each of them," a Delta spokeswoman said. "We regret that this experience caused these Soldiers to feel anything but welcome on their return home," she said. "We honor their service and are grateful for the sacrifices of our military service members and their families."

Delta's new policy allows U.S. service members traveling on orders to check up to four bags in economy class and five bags in first and business class at no charge, she said. Each bag can weigh up to 70 pounds and measure up to 80 linear inches.

Due to weight and space constraints, travelers on Delta Connection carriers, regardless of their seating class, can check up to four bags without charge.

"We hope these changes to our policies reflect the true respect we hold for our service men and women and again demonstrate our appreciation as both a company and as individuals who benefit from the freedom our troops defend," the spokeswoman said.

Other airlines are following Delta's lead. American Airlines is in the process of increasing its baggage policy for military members to check five bags without cost, spokesman Tim Smith reported. "Full implementation of that policy, and further details, should be completed in the next few days."

One of the checked bags can weigh up to 100 pounds and measure up to 26 linear inches, but others are subject to the regular 50-pound, 62-linear-inch restrictions.

The previous American policy allowed service members to check three bags without cost. "But given the potential confusion, with different military units carrying different amounts of bags depending on their mission, we have elected to proceed with our five-free-bag limit," Smith said. "We think it just makes good sense and eliminates possible confusion."

The new policy will apply whether the military members are traveling on official orders or on personal travel, Smith said.

United Airlines and Continental Airlines, which merged last fall, also announced that they will now waive the fee for military personnel traveling on orders to check a fourth bag.

Southwest Airlines has no limit on the number of checked bags it will accept at no cost for military members on permanent-change-of-station orders, spokesman Chris Mainz reported. The only condition is that none of the bags exceeds 100 pounds or 80 inches.

However, beyond its two-free-bag policy for all Southwest Airlines passengers, Southwest has no specific policies for other service members traveling on official orders, including for deployments, he said.

Service members traveling for official business, including deployments, are entitled to receive full reimbursement for reasonable, authorized excess baggage fees, defense officials said.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

## Nebraska Guardsman promoted to major general

David Petersen was promoted to the rank of major general during a short ceremony held at the "Spirit of '76" armory in Lincoln, Neb., on May 6. Petersen was "pinned" by his wife, Karen. A long-time Nebraska Army National Guardsman, Petersen served as the assistant adjutant general - Army before becoming the deputy division commander of the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kan. He is now serving on the staff of U.S. Strategic Command near Omaha, Neb.

## ■ Combat veteran says counseling group saved her life

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — A combat veteran who suffers from post-traumatic stress told an audience on June 14 that without the help offered by one nonprofit organization, she wouldn't be alive.

Jennifer Crane, a 28-year-old Army veteran who deployed to Afghanistan in 2003, said Give an Hour, founded by clinical psychologist Barbara Van Dahlen, offered the free counseling she needed to get her life back.

Give an Hour was among several organizations that participated in a press conference and panel discussion focusing on support for veterans.

In describing her challenges, Crane said, she got more than she bargained for after deciding to join the Army at 17.

"My first day of basic training was Sept. 11, 2001," she said. "I was sitting with a platoon of strangers as the towers fell that day, and my drill sergeants said we were all going to war. They were absolutely right."

In Afghanistan, Crane said, she saw combat and developed chronic post-traumatic stress disorder.

"It will be eight years this October since I came home, but the experiences still live inside me like it was yesterday," she said. "It's still difficult for me to talk about."

After she returned from Afghanistan, Crane said she didn't know where to turn, and for a time was part of the "large percentage of the homeless population" who are veterans.

"It took years of agony before I was able to find help," she said, "adding that there probably are thousands of people out there just like me who are suffering and who need the help."

Crane said the needs of veterans include health care, a support system, a home, an education, employment and society's acceptance.

"Our vets are struggling to maintain these

simple necessities," she said. "If we cannot come together and find a solution ... we will be doing our country a great disservice."

It wasn't until she found Give an Hour, Crane said, that she felt hope for her future.

Give an Hour is an association of mental health professionals who offer free counseling for service members, veterans, their families and unmarried partners. With more than 5,600 providers ranged across all 50 states, Puerto Rico and Guam, organization officials estimate members have provided around 40,000 hours of free service.

"The birth of my daughter in 2008 left me in complete shambles," Crane said. "My (post-traumatic stress disorder) was stronger than ever."

Without the counselor she found through Give an Hour, "I don't think I could stand here talking with you today," she said. "I no longer feel broken ... instead, I feel whole."

While every day is still a struggle, Crane said, "the generosity of my therapist, my community, and the love of my family has given me the faith in society that I so desperately needed."

Sometimes all people need is to feel someone cares, Crane said, which is why she shared her story at today's event.

Crane urged nonprofit members in the audience to continue their support, and added: "If you're a veteran, a service member, family of a service member or even friend of a service member, seek the help you need."

For veterans and their families dealing with the after effects of war, she said, "It can only get better from here."

Crane said she is now married to her best friend, and is "a fully capable mother" of her 3-year-old daughter.

"I can now manage my condition, and have hope for a better tomorrow," she said.

Some scars are invisible and everyone has them, Crane said.

"It is what we choose to do with them that makes the difference," she concluded.

## BERETS continued from page 1.

here in Nebraska to have the patrol cap as the headgear for the duty uniform," said Command Sgt. Maj. Eli A. Valenzuela, Nebraska state command sergeant major.

In addition to the change back to the patrol cap, commanders retain authority to mandate the wear of the beret for special events such as parades, changes of command or responsibility.

"When we went to the berets around 10 years ago, the change was made to bring esprit de corps," said Valenzuela. "It did, but I think going back to the patrol cap is going to have the same effect as the berets were intended to have."

The black beret will be retained and worn with the dress uniform. Soldiers who are authorized to wear the green, tan or maroon beret will continue to do so in accordance with A few changes have been made to the ACU along with the changes to the beret.

Soldiers now have the option to sew the "U.S. Army" service indicator tape, name tape, and rank insignia on the ACU at their own expense.

Soldiers may also sew on autho-

*"Like most things in the Army we review things to make sure they were still being worn correctly. If changes need to be made they try to make them for the Army's best interest. The change has been made and it should be a great deal."*

— **Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela**  
Nebraska state command sergeant major

rized skill and identification badges at their own expense.

The identification badges allowed to be sewn on are: the Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; drill sergeant; U.S. Army recruiter; career counselor, and retention

badges. Other badges include basic, senior and master badges.

However, not all Velcro-attached items are authorized to be sewn on. Soldiers will not sew on shoulder sleeve insignia-current organization patch, shoulder sleeve insignia-former wartime service patch, tabs or the U.S. flag.

The Army is constantly conducting evaluations and assessments to provide current information on the wear and appearance of the uniform.

"Like most things in the Army we review things to make sure they were still being worn correctly," said Valenzuela. "If changes need to be made, they try to make them for the Army's best interest."

"The change has been made and it should be a great deal," added Valenzuela.

Initial stocks of the U.S. Army tapes, name tapes, rank insignia and badges are anticipated to be available in eight to 10 weeks from the effective date of June 14.

"Overall I think going back to the patrol cap will boost the morale of the Soldiers in the field," said Valenzuela.

## Prairie Soldier

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Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

**Providing Cover:** Senior Airman Tyson Pierce, a fire team member with the 155th Security Forces Squadron, keeps lookout during a field patrol exercise at Camp Ashland, Neb., June 6. The members of the 155th SFS performed a field training training exercise during their annual training to conduct combat skills training courses and exercise their wartime tasks.

**River Crossing:** Senior Airman Katie Paden, a fire team member, crosses a small creek during a paintball exercise during the 155th Security Forces Squadron's field training exercise at Camp Ashland, Neb., June 8.

## ANNUAL TRAINING

### 155th Security Forces Squadron battles rain, heat, rising water to perform field training exercise

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon  
Assistant Editor

Not rain, record heat nor encroaching flood waters could keep the 155th Security Forces Squadron from performing their annual field training exercise at Camp Ashland, Neb., May 31-June 9. Members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th SFS used the annual training to refresh their skills in a field environment.

The training was made up of two 18-person groups who rotated in and out of a camp site on the east bank of the slowly swelling Platte River. The groups set up their camp sites and were responsible for maintaining its security. They also used their time to conduct combat skills training courses and exercise their wartime tasks.

"We have a litany of combat skills tasks that we have to meet yearly...individual team movements, camouflage and concealment, ambushes - all those things," said Master Sgt. James Restau, unit training manager. "We can knock those out all in one shot."

"We learn this stuff in (technical) school," he added. "This is just a practice to get ready and keep all those skills fresh."

Other training the Airmen performed during the annual training included land navigation, weapons familiarization, radio reports, medevac missions and convoy missions. The training culminated with a mission to locate and eliminate a small group of "terrorists." The Airmen used paintball guns during the final exercise to increase the realism of the exercise.

"We're doing our skill-level training, our wartime tasking training," said Master Sgt. Daniel Emken, who is also in the training section of the SFS. "We try to get out to the field once a year to get this training done so that way they're ready when they deploy."

Along with assisting with training classes, organizers acted as opposing forces and often attacked the Airmen in order to test their response. Organizers wanted to give everyone a refresher, but also looked for leadership, teamwork and communication among the Airmen.

"Leadership is key in our job," said Restau. "The leadership skills are something that you learn over time. Everybody knows the fundamentals, so it's basically just a refresher."

"Teamwork is one of the biggest things," said Emken. "Communication is key, because if they're not communicating properly it just falls apart."

Restau said the training is invaluable to the newer Airmen and newly promoted non-commissioned officers who are beginning to assume leadership roles. But in addition to the leadership during tactical missions, the Airmen need to address other issues that are equally important, like living conditions and camp life.

"NCO leadership to me seems to be key...to see what it takes to run something like this, to take care of their people, to lead them out there," said Restau. "You get a staff sergeant leading a four-person fire team out through this facing four or six master sergeants that have been doing this for 20 years...they're going to learn a lot and they're going to get that experience."

Somewhat new to the leadership role was Tech. Sgt. Joshua Dannelly, a second squad leader with the 155th SFS. He saw the exercise as an opportunity to refresh skills and build some camaraderie with his fellow Airmen.

"Not only do we play an exercise where we have to defend this area...we're also conducting classes as well," said Dannelly. "Remedial training type of stuff that we've gone over before, but it's nice to get a little refresher - kind of kicking the dust off in a way."

"It's also teambuilding," he added. "There's quite a few people that are new to the unit that we don't know each other, so this is kind of a way to gauge each other and figure out what our strong points are."

Other team members also enjoyed the refresher.

"It's really good because there are several people that haven't gotten to do this yet, so it's real good training for the people coming up that haven't had the chance," said Senior Airman Lowell Wellman, a fire team member. "We all forget over time, it's just good to every now and again go back to the basics."

Keeping the SFS Airmen up to speed on their training is important for a very simple reason.

"We deploy," said Emken. "You have to be ready...we feel if we train them as best as we can for any environment and any situation with the resources that we have, that we set



**It's That Way:** Staff Sgt. Larry Hudecek, a fire team leader with the 155th Security Forces Squadron, points out where to go to Tech. Sgt. Joshua Dannelly, a second squad leader, during a paintball exercise in the 155th SFS's field training exercise at Camp Ashland, Neb., June 8.



**Splattered:** Airman 1st Class Taylor Maul, a fire team member, takes a paintball to the face June 8, during a paintball exercise during the 155th Security Forces Squadron's field training exercise at Camp Ashland, Neb.

them up for success."

Both organizers and participants said the training was successful.

"It's gone really well," said Restau. "They still make mistakes - and this is the place to make mistakes - but they did really well. You see that improvement over the course of it."

"It's going good, they're learning," said Emken. "Each group has its own identity through their leadership and so far both groups have stayed motivated."

Despite the heat, the Airmen were happy to get out into the field and do something different than normal.

"It keeps us in the mindset of when we get tasked in the real world," said Dannelly. "The majority of the time we're doing base security - perimeter security."

"It's something we don't get to do a whole lot of that we really should because it's the core of our job," said Wellman. "Being able to fight at a moment's notice."



**Layers Of Defense:** A trip line stays ready to alert members of the 155th Security Forces Squadron of enemy movement during the 155th SFS's field training exercise at Camp Ashland, Neb., June 6. The Airmen used their annual training to conduct combat skills training courses and exercise their wartime tasks.

**Saluting With Silent Flags:** Students from Norfolk's Washington Elementary School hold American flags in a silent salute as the late Sgt. Robert Schlote's coffin is carried from Mount Olive Lutheran Church by the Nebraska Army National Guard's Honor Guard following the Soldier's May 19 funeral.



Photo by David Nore



Photo by David Nore

**Honoring A Fallen Soldier:** Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard Honor Guard carry the late Sgt. Robert Schlote's coffin to its final resting place at Norfolk's Prospect Hill Cemetery, May 19. Schlote, a member of Omaha's 195th Forward Support Company, died May 14 while home on leave from Afghanistan.

## DEATH

continued from page 1.

rently deployed to Afghanistan with the Omaha-based 402nd Military Police Battalion.

Guard officials praised the Schlote family's dedication to service.

"Service is clearly important in the Schlote family and Bob exemplified that service and that spirit," said Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska's adjutant general, during Schlote's funeral. "Bob touched many lives throughout his service and it goes without saying that he was a patriot."

Dozens of military members he had served with turned out to honor their peer.

"Sergeant Schlote was a very humble, yet professional Soldier," said 1st Sgt. Rich Goodenberger, the 195th's first sergeant. "Well liked by everybody in the unit...we counted on him for everything under the sun."

"He was our go-to guy," he added. "He'll be sorely missed."

With his vast deployment experience, Schlote was a valuable asset to the 195th FSC.

"This is a tremendous loss to our unit," said Goodenberger. "He was one of our pillars—he was our quiet pillar. He was one of those guys that was always there, always did his job, he was always working with somebody else to help them get better at what they were doing... just having that solid (noncommissioned officer) with that kind of experience is irreplaceable."

Sgt. William Schlote remembered his brother as he spoke during the funeral.

"Today is kind of ironic," said William. "Bob was never much for publicity or large recognition, but I know he's thrilled to see how many people he touched in a short, but courageous, 26 years of life."

William also remembered the competitiveness between the two brothers.

"It is no secret that Bob and I are extremely competitive," he said. "I'll never forget the (physical training) test that I was beating Bob in the run. Bob caught me with a quarter mile to go and asked if I just wanted to finish in a tie. I was dead tired so I said 'Sure.'



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

**On Behalf Of A Grateful Nation:** Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons (right) presents a folded American flag to Tiffany Schlote, wife of the late Sgt. Robert Schlote, May 19, at Norfolk's Prospect Hill Cemetery.

*'Bob touched many lives throughout his service and it goes without saying that he was a patriot.'*

— Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons

With 50 yards to go, Bob took off in a sprint."

William said his brother epitomized all seven of the Army's core values, but one in particular stood out to him.

"Selfless service," he said. "Bob spent the majority of his adult life fighting for our country in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan."

William had one last gesture for his brother.

"I got this combat action badge when I was in Iraq for being hit by an IED," he said. "Bob's seen more combat than I ever want to see, but he was never close enough to be awarded this combat action badge. Today this will be going on top of his casket because he deserves it."

Lyons assured the Schlote family that their son's service meant a lot to the Nebraska National Guard and he won't be forgotten.

"Sergeant Bob Schlote chose to serve his country and he lived the values that Soldiers share together in our Army," said Lyons. "Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage were more than words to Bob, they represent the way he approached life and his service."

"I know I speak for all of his comrades-in-arms here today and those serving overseas when I say that he will be missed and never forgotten."

**AEF** continued from page 1.

have been utilized in the U.S. Central Command and U.S. Pacific Command showing the wing's ability.

"We're supporting the CENTCOM (area of responsibility) and we're also supporting PACOM," said Hayward. "So we're going east and we're going west."

Two KC-135R Stratotanker refueling jets, three crews, three crew chiefs and a few support staff deployed to the CENTCOM AOR in the Middle East to support operations New Dawn and Enduring Freedom. All told approximately 25 Airmen have deployed to CENTCOM to support refueling missions.

"We're just plugging the pieces into the refueling mechanism that's over there and we're just supplying the pieces to make sure that all the parts are there," said Hayward.

The aircraft are deployed on 30-day rotations with the crews and support staff performing 30- to 60-day rotations.

The 155th also has two aircraft and multiple support staff in Guam, in the PACOM AOR. Hayward said the Guam deployments are unique because the 155th was responsible for the leadership package there for the first 40 days and then turned over that leadership to the 117th ARW from Birmingham, Ala., for the last 20 days of the rotation.

Master Sgt. Mary Baker, the first sergeant for the Mission Support Group, deployed to Guam from late April to late May and served as the first sergeant for both 155th and 117th personnel. According to Baker, approximately 80 Airmen from the 155th rotated in and out of Guam during the cycle.

"We provided air refueling support for the B-52 bombers that are stationed over in that theater," said Baker. "We are the lifeline, not only to them, but to anything that happens over in that theater that PACOM needs support on."

As a first sergeant, Baker was able to see a lot of what 155th personnel accomplished, and said she was pleased with the work she saw.

"I probably see more than the average person does because I am in a lot of different places," said Baker. "I think they did an outstanding job. I think we supported the mission really well."

"I think we accomplished our mission and we supported the B-52s and everything they were doing and as long as we don't have to make them cancel any sortie, we're doing our job," she added. "As long as we can always give them the refueling that they need, when they need it, where they need it, we're doing our mission."

Hayward said he is also happy with the accomplishments of the 155th in both the CENTCOM and PACOM areas. He said it shows the level of training and professionalism the 155th can bring to the table.

"We're maintaining the fact that we're ready to go at all times," said Hayward. "We're relevant to what the needs of the nation are for the Department of Defense and it vindicates all of the training and our Airmen are ready to go and support the nation's missions."

Baker echoed Hayward, saying she is proud of the Airmen that maintain the Nebraska Air National Guard's good name.

"I think it increases our reputation across the Air Force," said Baker. "I think we from Nebraska have a really excellent reputation and our Airmen do a really good job of keeping that reputation good. We're willing to go the extra mile and do whatever we can to get the mission done...and we do it to the best of our ability."

Although the 155th is responsible to fill the positions when they are requested, the Airmen that step up and take on the mission volunteer for it, and that says a lot about them.

"It says that they're here to support the state and nation," said Hayward. "It's an all volunteer force, they volunteered to join the Nebraska Air National Guard, they have maintained their readiness and they're trained in their specific duties."

"I think it says a lot about our Airmen here in Nebraska," added Baker. "We raise our hand and we volunteer and we stick with it and we go when we're called upon and we don't look back. That kind of devotion I think is especially unique sometimes to the Guard."

Even though the AEF concept was created almost 100 years ago during aviation's infancy, it remains a valid and effective way to employ the Air Force's capabilities.

By providing a transparent, predictable deployment table, the Airmen of the Nebraska Air National Guard continue to stay ready to deploy world-wide at a moment's notice and the 155th is showing their relevance daily by answering the nations call and deploying aircraft and Airmen throughout the world whenever they're needed.

# A HAPPY HOMECOMING



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

**Welcome Home Dad:** First Lt. Charles McGreer, a member of the 1167th Brigade Support Company, is welcomed home with a hug from his son, Caiden, as his wife Amanda watches at Seacrest Field in Lincoln, Neb., June 11. McGreer and approximately 300 Soldiers from the 1167th BSC and the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade returned from a nearly year-long mission in Iraq where they provided intelligence to three Army divisions throughout Iraq.

## Nearly 300 Nebraskans welcomed home

By Pfc. Heidi Krueger  
Staff Writer

Family members and friends of Soldiers of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade headquarters and the 1167th Brigade Support Company gathered by the hundreds, June 11, at Seacrest Field in Lincoln, Neb., with welcome home signs, balloons and flags in anticipation of their Soldiers stepping off the buses after returning home from a year-long deployment to Iraq.

The 67th BfSB's headquarters and the 1167th BSC mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom in July 2010.

Among the family members waiting for their Soldier to return home was Wade Hatzenbuehler and his three kids, 9-year old daughter Hannah, 7-year old son Hayden and 3-year old son Hunter, who came to the welcome-home ceremony with homemade signs reading, "Welcome Home Mommy."

Wade Hatzenbuehler admitted, "I'm almost nervous."

"I'm just ready for everyone to be in the same house," said Hatzenbuehler, whose wife, Staff Sgt. Kelly Hatzenbuehler, served as an intelligence analyst while in Iraq. "The kids lived with grandma and grandpa for the last six months because I'm a shift worker. Getting back into the swing of things is going to be hard, but (I'm) more than excited to have our family together again."

Hatzenbuehler said his family counted down holidays and birthdays in order to pass the time until

Staff Sgt. Hatzenbuehler came home.

"I don't like to count days," said Hatzenbuehler. "It makes it feel too long."

The Hatzenbuehler kids looked forward to having their mother home. "I missed watching family movies with my mommy and I just want to do everything with my mommy now that she is going to be home," said Hayden.

Also in the crowd of family and friends was Alicia Marteney, fiancée of Spc. Travis C. Hall, petroleum supply specialist with the 1167th BSC.

Marteney said she was excited to see her fiancé and give him a big hug when he stepped off the bus after such a long time away.

"It's been hard for me," said Marteney. "I was finishing up my last year in college and trying to plan a wedding while my fiancé was overseas, but with the help of Skype and Facebook we were able to communicate and make everything work out."

Finally, the buses carrying the Soldiers turned into the parking lot a few minutes later, bringing the crowd to their toes cheering and whistling.

One of the first Soldiers that rushed off a bus Hall. When he found his family and friends Hall picked up and kissed his fiancée, then hugged and kissed the rest of his family and friends.

Hall said he was surprised by the huge crowd of people that had gathered to welcome him back. He said he was looking forward to his time at home.

"The things I want to do now that I'm home are spend time with

my family and fiancée, breathe fresh air and sleep," said Hall.

When Hatzenbuehler first saw her kids after getting off the bus, she couldn't believe how much they had changed.

"My daughter Hannah is taller and has about the same size feet as me," said Kelly Hatzenbuehler. "My oldest son Hayden's face has changed and he's lost his baby teeth, and my youngest son Hunter can talk more now."

"It's good to see my husband," she added. "We have been through this before when he deployed in 2003. Some parts were harder while others were easier. I think it's harder to be at home than it is the one who is deployed."

When Sgt. Dennis Hatfield looked into the crowd after stepping off the bus, he found his 1-year old son Breckyn and wife Sarah.

"I am looking forward to getting back to normal life," said Hatfield.

The day's celebration was somewhat bittersweet for the Hatfields, however. After celebrating Hatfield's homecoming they attended a going-away party for their cousin who will be deploying overseas soon.

"One home and one goes," said Sarah Hatfield.

It was a long year for Sarah who stayed at home with their son Breckyn. "I'm thrilled that he is home," said Sarah Hatfield. "Being a single parent is a tough job but we do it because we love the military and we love what he does."

And although it was difficult, Sarah was proud of her husband and all the other Soldiers.

"There are absolutely no words to describe how proud of him and all of them I am," said Sarah. "We wouldn't have the freedoms we have now if it wasn't for our troops."

After all the hugs, kisses and tears, the Soldiers sat in the grandstands of Seacrest Field with their family and friends for a welcome-

**Patriotic Welcome:** (Left) Thousands pack the stands of Lincoln's Seacrest Field June 11, to welcome home the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and 1167th Brigade Support Company.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Patriotic Reflection:** Old Glory reflects from Donald Languis' sunglasses as he stands with other Legion Riders, who created a patriotic lane for the arrival of Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers assigned to the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and 1167th Brigade Support Company, June 11. Languis is veteran of the Guard's 67th Forward Support Battalion and Forward Support Company.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Welcome Home:** Michaela Behn, 11, gives her mother a tight hug shortly after Maj. Jan Behn stepped off a bus delivering her home after a year-long deployment to Iraq with the Nebraska Army Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

ka's adjutant general, also thanked the families and friends of the deployed Soldiers for everything they did to help the Soldiers.

Without family and friends support these men and women wouldn't have been able to make the impact they did in Iraq, said Lyons.

Lt. Col. Brett Andersen, acting commander of the 67th BfSB, reflected on the many accomplishments of the Soldiers.

"We were in four different countries, 50 different locations and were involved in multiple different missions," said Andersen. "I had a great group of officers, senior non-commissioned officers and enlisted personnel."

"They all made it really easy for me to get into the swing of things over there," he added.

Andersen expressed his gratitude for the Soldiers who put their lives on hold, missed college, jobs, the birth of their children, and left their normal lives behind.

But most importantly Andersen was happy that every Soldier who he deployed with made it home safely.

"To the last day I worried about bringing all the troops back home safe," said Andersen. "It's a huge relief to have them all home now."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Not Going To Let Go:** Tears fill Sgt. Rebecca Doerr's eyes as her friend, Samantha Buresh, welcomes her home from a long deployment to Iraq. "I felt the first burst of tears in Des Moines... and then we pulled into Lincoln and there were so many people on the sides of the road, it was truly an amazing experience."

home ceremony.

State and local leaders congratulated the Soldiers and their families for what they did to defend and protect America's freedoms and interests around the world.

"To the Soldiers who just returned home, I just wanted to say welcome home and tell you how very very proud of you we are," said Governor Dave Heineman.

Heineman also thanked the Patriot Guard for their service during the ceremony, but was especially grateful to the families of the men and women who served overseas.

Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebras-

# Homecoming extra special for Nebraska City Soldiers

## ■ Military policemen return to Nebraska after completing 'huge' mission in Iraq

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

**B**irthdays are always extra special events when you're young.

Still, it's probably safe to say that Abbey Ramsey won't soon forget her third birthday anytime soon, or the present she received from her father, Kenneth. That's because Abbey's present was her father.

"She's been talking about this for months," said Kayla Ramsey, who wiped tears from her glistening eyes as she watched her husband and tiny, golden-haired daughter embrace in a wild hug, May 7, in Nebraska City, Neb.

The day was made extra special by the fact that Spc. Kenneth Ramsey, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 192nd Military Police Detachment, was returning home after a nearly year-long mobilization for a mission in Iraq.

As the unit's guidon carrier, Ramsey was one of the first Soldiers to step off a chartered bus in Nebraska City, carrying his unit's colors in one hand, a red rose and pink flowered "Happy Birthday" balloon in the other. He had also placed a bright pink birthday present bow on his Army Combat Uniform for the occasion.

"I'm just happy to see my babies," said Ramsey, moments after he scooped up Abbey and baby Hailey into his arms as they sprinted down the street toward him.

"That's the most important thing," Ramsey said, before adding: "It's just a real exciting day."

Kayla agree. "Oh my gosh. I don't think I have words to say (what I'm feeling)," she said. "My heart's just pounding. I'm just so excited."

The Ramsey reunion was just one of dozens that occurred in Nebraska City as approximately 50 192nd MP Det. Soldiers returned from an Operation New Dawn deployment that had taken them to the Victory Base Complex near Baghdad.

According to Lt. Col. Don Buettner, 192nd MP Det. provost marshal, the tiny unit had a huge job while in Iraq.

"They provided professional law enforcement to an area and a popu-



**Ready To Celebrate:** Family and friends of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 192nd Military Police Detachment hold their welcome home signs high as buses holding their Soldiers approach the Nebraska City, Neb., High School, May 7, ending the unit's year-long mobilization for a mission in Iraq.

lation comparable to Grand Island, Neb.," said Buettner, during a short welcome home ceremony held in packed Nebraska City High School gymnasium. "And we did that with 45 Soldiers and they did that for 10 months, day in and day out."

"They truly accomplished fabulous, fabulous (deeds)," Buettner said.

Sgt. 1st Class Dave Fink agreed. "It was a big mission and not a whole lot of us," Fink said as he sat in the gym surrounded by family members who all wore bright yellow shirts designed by his wife, Crystal, that read "SFC Fink is my hero" in large green block letters. "We were spread pretty thin, but everyone pulled through."

Fink said that the mission's size required the lower enlisted Soldiers within his unit to often operate individually and make decisions often reserved to sergeants and above. He added he was proud of the maturity that the Soldiers demonstrated throughout the deployment.

"I'm really proud of how they stepped up and did things that people of their rank normally aren't required to do," he said.

Senior Nebraska leaders echoed that pride as they spoke to the returning Soldiers and their families.

*'I'm just happy to see my babies... It's just a real exciting day.'*

— Spc. Kenneth Ramsey  
192nd Military Police Detachment

"I am very, very proud of your service," said Gov. Dave Heinemann as he held a tiny American flag that had been given to him earlier by one of the unit's family members. "The United States of America is the greatest nation in the world today because of you and men and women like you who are serving in our armed forces and all of the veterans who have served."

"Thank you. God bless you for your service," said U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns. "You executed your mission well and you can be proud of that year and you can be proud of the preparation that led to it."

Heinemann and Johanns also thanked the Soldiers' families for their service and sacrifices while their loved ones were away.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Best Birthday Present Ever:** Spc. Kenneth Ramsey, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 192nd Military Police Detachment, hugs his daughter Abbey, who was celebrating her third birthday, May 7, which was also the same day that her father returned home from a year-long mission to Iraq. Ramsey was one of 45 Soldiers welcomed home to Nebraska City, Neb.

"To the families, I know it's been a difficult year," Heinemann said. "It's so great to see all of you here today. I remember a year ago when they departed and it's great to see that every single one of them is home safely. But they couldn't do it without your support."

"To all the families and friends who are here to say welcome home, I want you to know that we appreciate your sacrifice and your service also," Johanns said. "While these men and women in uniform were off protecting our freedoms and doing the job that we asked them to do, you were at home keeping things together."

According to Maj. Gen. Judd

Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, the Soldiers' and families' missions aren't complete, however. There is still much to do, he added.

"Your mission will be done when you've successfully reintegrated with your families and your employers," said Lyons. "(Put) as much effort in that as you did in getting prepared for your mission and you will be successful."

Lyons joined Heinemann and Johanns in pledging their support to the Soldiers and their families as they reintegrate, adding that there are many services available to help them do just that.

"Just call and we will be there for you," Lyons said.

## Nebraska Guardsman helps Iraq helicopter pilot program take off

CAMP TAJI, Iraq (AFNEWS) — The Iraq Army Aviation Command took another step toward self-sufficiency after Iraqi T-407 helicopter instructor pilots flew their first mission without U.S. advisors, April 28.

The T-407 milestone comes four months after Chief Warrant Officer 3 Daniel Hill and Maj. Kevin Ferner from the 721st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron began training more than 20 pilots from IqAAC's Squadron 21.

"This is a big deal for Squadron 21's organic capability to train its own pilots," explained Ferner, an Army UH-60 Black Hawk instructor pilot with the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and former Marine CH-46 Sea Knight pilot.

"Next week, the first Iraqi (T-407) instructor pilot will start the basic air qualifications course with four students."

Last December, U.S. advisors delivered three Bell T-407 trainer aircraft to Camp Taji in an effort to build up a cadre of experienced pilots who will eventually fly an armed version of the helicopter.

IqAAC purchased two dozen of the armed scout variant of the Bell-407 for nearly \$400 million last year. According to Iraq Security Assistance Mission advisors who facilitate foreign military sales from the United States, delivery of the first shipment of the armed IA-407 is expected by the end of this year.

In the meantime, Hill and Ferner have been working feverishly to train up squadron pilots on basic helicopter maneuvers like hovering, taxiing, taking off and landing, conducting emergency procedures and flight

formations.

In their first month in Iraq, both of the pilots tallied up more than 140 flight hours.

"While the Iraqis can't conduct real world missions without the IA-407, we can still train their pilots so that when (the aircraft) shows up, they'll be well on their way," explained Hill, a Nebraska Army National Guardsman from Grand Island.

Hill, a 15-year veteran OH-58 Kiowa pilot with experience patrolling the southern border of the United States, said the armed IA-407 helicopters could be used to conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions as well as provide security overwatch for Iraqi troops in contact with hostile forces.

In the coming weeks, Hill and Ferner plan



U.S. Air Force photo

**Keeping A Watchful Eye:** (Left) Chief Warrant Officer 3 Daniel Hill, a 721st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron T-407 instructor pilot, conducts pre-flight checks on a T-407 helicopter with an Iraqi Army Aviation Command co-pilot prior to a training mission, April 28. Hill is a Nebraska National Guardsman from Grand Island who is serving a rotation in Iraq as part of the new helicopter training program.

stages of mission training as they prepare for the arrival of the armed aircraft.

On the ground, Air Force Staff Sgt. Jeff Wright, the T-407's only active duty maintenance advisor and first team member to arrive at the 721st AEAS last year, has been training the Iraqi pilots and maintainers aircraft maintenance fundamentals.

to start the next phase of instruction with the senior T-407 pilots as they test their ability to fly using night-vision goggles.

Ferner said the training team's goal is to have the initial cadre of T-407 pilots certified on night-vision goggles by the end of May. After that, the two pilots said they will start the early

He also helps his Iraqi partners integrate with several U.S. contractors who help maintain the fleet of three T-407s.

The 11-year veteran maintainer deployed from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., said teaching Iraqis how to maintain the T-407 is a lot easier than teaching them to maintain the HH-60 Pave Hawks he works on back home.

"The T-407 is a simple aircraft," explained the Franklin, Idaho, native. "They have to study one large maintenance book for the T-407 versus the three large books I had to read maintaining the Pave Hawk and larger helicopters."

Like all three members of the team, Wright said he volunteered for the job here in Iraq.

"After six deployments, I wanted to do something different," he said. "Some of the guys who had deployed here for advisor missions before me said they loved it, so I volunteered."

After serving his six month tour in-country, Wright volunteered to stay for a few more months.

"The interaction we have with the Iraqis and the job satisfaction of trying to help Iraq rebuild their military capabilities has been a great experience," he said.

"There's never a dull moment."

Wright said his experiences here and the camaraderie in his joint team has led him to pursue a career as a warrant officer pilot in the U.S. Army when he returns home.

"I couldn't have asked for a better team here," he said. "I wish I could take these pilots back home with me."

# Nebraska Air Guardsman assists car accident victim

By Pfc. Heidi Krueger  
Staff Writer

Senior Airman Luis A. Zendejas-Garcia was driving home, May 17, after completing Airman Leadership School where he learned management and leadership skills to be successful in his military career. Little did he know he would have to put those skills to work during that drive.

Zendejas-Garcia, a food operations journeyman assigned with the 155th Force Support Squadron, was near the Wyoming-Nebraska border when he saw two cars in the left lane of Interstate 80.

He was traveling about 50 feet behind them in the right lane, and what happened next would test all the training Zendejas-Garcia has received in his military career.

"After one car cut off the other car and got control again, they were both driving normal," said Zendejas-Garcia.

"One car swerved to the left and turned a hard right to get back on the road, but after that, the car went straight across the road, hit a bank and overturned."

As the other car continued, Zendejas-Garcia pulled over to try

to offer help.

"I didn't know what to expect when I opened the door," said Zendejas-Garcia.

Inside the car he found a 78-year-old male. Although the car was upside down he seemed to be okay.

"I made sure he was conscious and helped him situate himself in a more comfortable position," said Zendejas-Garcia. "I didn't want to move him much in case he had any injuries because he talked about some shoulder pain."

Finally the driver of another car pulled over to see what was going on. It turned out to be a Navy Sailor on leave. The Sailor called emergency services, while Zendejas-Garcia provided care to the driver.

"The emergency services told me to stabilize his head, so he wouldn't move it while the ambulance was on its way," said Zendejas-Garcia.

The ambulance arrived minutes later. The paramedics asked Zendejas-Garcia if he could help assist them even further.

All the training he's learned from his time in the Guard and the most recent leadership training from ALS kicked him into high gear to do the right thing, said Zendejas-



Zendejas-Garcia



Courtesy Photo

**Flipped:** The overturned car of a 78-year-old man lies in the ditch of Interstate 80, May 17. Senior Airman Luis Zendejas-Garcia, a food operations journeyman with the 155th Force Support Squadron, witnessed the accident and stopped to offer assistance to the driver of the vehicle.

Garcia.

"Once we got him on the stretcher, everything went back to my self-aid and buddy care training I learned," said Zendejas-Garcia. "The whole keeping someone conscious and making sure you don't move them if something hurts."

Self-aid and buddy care is training Airmen must complete every 24 months to maintain basic life support and limb-saving techniques to help wounded or injured personnel survive in medical emergencies

until medical help is available.

"I'm sure if I didn't have my self-aid and buddy care training that I learned from being in the Guard I wouldn't have known what to do and probably would have tried to get him out of the car," said Zendejas-Garcia.

"I never thought I would have to use different Air Force training in the real world," added Zendejas-Garcia.

Fortunately for the man of the crashed car, the 155th FSS completed self-aid and buddy care

## Guardsmen make final touches to training before deploying to Afghanistan

By Maj. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

For the better part of three weeks, members of the Nebraska National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team No. 2 prepared themselves for the various missions they'll likely face once they get to Afghanistan.

They also prepared for the potential surprises as well.

Like how to explain the value of different colored eggs to a person who may or may not understand exactly what they're asking for.

At least that's the situation that Sgt. Chelsea Kramer found herself in while participating in an exercise at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

Kramer, who will serve as the ADT's poultry expert, was practicing a key leader engagement meeting with women at a local Afghan women's development center to discuss their agricultural needs and goals. It's the same type of meeting Kramer most likely will participate in when her team gets to east central Afghanistan later this summer.

It didn't take Kramer long to realize that curveballs can come from any direction.

"Tell us about how to get colored eggs," one of the women asked Kramer during their exercise meeting.

"Colored eggs?" Kramer asked, stammering with a smile at the turn that her meeting had just taken. "I don't think I understand..."

"Yes. We understand that colored eggs... blue eggs and green eggs... are worth more money and we want to know what you can do to help us get chickens that will lay these types of eggs."

Still unsure, Kramer attempted to pull more information from her counterparts. In the United States, she said, parents often die eggs a variety of colors for their children for a certain springtime holiday.

If they wanted, she said, she'd look for a way to get them some dyes to color their eggs.

Later, Kramer laughed as she recalled the question that was posed to her by a Nebraska Soldier play-

ing the part of an Afghan woman leader.

"Is that a true belief over there? ...I'm not sure," she said. "I don't know if they were just trying to throw me a curveball or catch me off my toes, but it definitely did."

"But it's something you've got to be prepared for," she added. "You have to be ready to think on your feet because they have expectations that we can bring them the world and we can't. So we have to be talk to them and make it a reality that we can do basic stuff."

According to Lt. Col. Lynn Heng, commander of the Nebraska ADT No. 2 – which will mark the first time that the Nebraska National Guard has sent a joint Army and Air National Guard ADT to Afghanistan – learning how to deliver reality in an environment of high expectations was just part of the training that his 60-person team received during their May 7-27 pre-mobilization annual training at the Greenleaf Training Site and Fort Riley, Kan.

Overall, he said, the goal of the training was to get his team ready for the dynamic environment they'll soon be serving in.

"Primarily we're going to be working with an individual and his staff called the director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL)," he said, adding that the Afghan system is similar to the county agricultural extension agent system found in Nebraska. "We've been working very heavily with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and their incredible staff of professors on educating us on some of the things we can use to make their operation better over there... to get their extension educators educated on how they really should be working."

Essentially, Heng added, the goal is to provide education and mentorship to those directors and their staffs, and then ensure that they're taking what they've learned and getting it out to the local farmers rather than remaining back at their offices in the larger Afghan cities.



**Interaction Training:** Members of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2 practice interacting with local Afghans during a practice patrol through an agricultural market, May 25, at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

"Really, the whole focus," he said, "is just getting them to take ownership."

Heng said the team has been working on a variety of initiatives including dealing with improving different crop productions, water quality, conservation, imports and exports.

Heng admits it's a big job, adding that restoring generations of lost knowledge caused by constant warfare will take time.

"(We're really trying) to just get to where they're able to start taking care of things on their own, to get their way of life back to where it was back to the pre-1970s before the Russians invaded," said Heng.

That's what made the three weeks of focused training so important said the deploying Guardsmen.

"It's been awesome," said Senior Airman Kyle Eddie, a member of the Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Security Forces Squadron, who volunteered for the mission while he was deployed in Iraq. He is deploying as a member of the ADT's security team. "It's been very intense, long days, but everything they have been throwing at us has been awesome. There hasn't been a minute where we haven't been doing something for training."

He added that the training gave him a better understanding of how the Army works and how he and his teammates need to work together to



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Learning How To React:** Sgt. Chelsea Kramer, the poultry expert for the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2, practices conducting a meeting with Afghan women during the team's May 7-27 annual training at the Greenleaf Training Site and Fort Riley, Kan.

successfully complete their mission.

"It's different in a good way," he said about training with members of the Nebraska Army Guard. "We got to do new weapons qualifications and the (Army infantry school). Just seeing how the two different branches run things and seeing the camaraderie between the Army and Air has been pretty cool."

For Kramer, the training was especially important because it gave her a chance to see how she could apply the knowledge she gained while growing up on a family farm near Benedict, Neb.

"The major issue I'm going to face more than a lot of Ag people is that I'm a female," said Kramer. "Females don't have as many liberties over there. A lot of the DAIL and higher up government officials are going to be male officials, so that is going to be one of the major issues we have."

Kramer said that means she has to work hard to make sure that officials respect her abilities as both an American Soldier and as an agricultural expert. She added that she also expects to work closely

training just two months prior to the accident. Situations like this go a long way in validating the training, said unit leaders.

"As a commander, it's great to see that the Airmen are learning from the training and are able to apply it whether that it is for the Guard or in their civilian life," said Capt. Pamela J. Geistlinger, commander of 155th FSS.

"Airmen Garcia is a great influence and role model to the squadron," added Geistlinger. "He goes above and beyond whatever he is asked to do."

Zendejas-Garcia wasn't in uniform at the time, but said he still felt a sense of pride being in the military and using what he has been taught. He added he was only doing what anyone else would do.

"I was doing the right thing by stopping and helping someone," he said.

And although Zendejas-Garcia is humble about his actions that day, it could have been much different for the driver of that car if Zendejas-Garcia hadn't stopped to help.

Zendejas-Garcia's military experience was evident to the first responders.

"It was a great honor to help this man out," said Zendejas-Garcia. "The paramedics and emergency service members could all tell I was in the military by the way I handled the situation and that made me feel great."

# Nebraska agricultural team holds town hall meetings

By Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley  
Staff Writer

The Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2 held a town hall meeting at the Pentterman Armory in Lincoln Neb., April 28. Hosted by the team commander, Lt. Col. Lynn Heng, ADT commander, and 1st Sgt. Dennis Krecklow, the team's senior noncommissioned officer, the meeting was open to the general public and was held to address and answer any questions about the team's mission to Afghanistan later this year.

Heng opened the meeting with introductions and photos from the team's pre-deployment site survey, showing where the team is going to be and the conditions in the area.

"Afghanistan is a unique country to say the least," said Heng. "Once you get outside of Kabul, it is biblical times over there. It is very primitive."

## FARMER

continued from page 1.

"Yeah," he said one recent May afternoon as he stood out in a newly planted bean field, looking down at the valley he's known for two decades, "I'm going to miss this place."

"Where we're going, it's mostly brown... so I've really tried to store up my brain with memories like this so that I can retrieve them when I need them," Huttes said.

Huttes is a partner in a small family farm operation, working the land with his father- and brother-in-law for more than two decades. Moving to the farm with his wife after growing up in Illinois where his father worked in the concrete business, Huttes said his new partners took him under their wings and taught him all he now knows about running a farm specializing in the production of corn and soybeans.

Huttes will now be using the things his in-laws taught him to help Afghans grow their own understanding of agriculture after decades of decay brought on by a generation of warfare.

"I always used to make fun of farmers," Huttes said, laughing as he recalled his own youth in Illinois. "I never would have guessed I would be teaching farming someday."

"Doors open and you prepare yourself," he added. "You close your eyes and here you are. (I) never would've dreamed where I would be."

Huttes is the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 12-person agricultural team, part of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghanistan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2, which mobilized for a year-long Operation Enduring Freedom mission on June 6.

While in Afghanistan, the nearly 60-person team will be responsible for helping local Afghan farmers and governmental officials redevelop a long-dormant agricultural system in Afghanistan after decades of warfare.

This will mark the first time that the Nebraska National Guard has deployed a joint Army and Air National Guard ADT into a combat theater of operations.

Prior to volunteering for the mission, Huttes — a Nebraska Air National Guard chief master sergeant — served as the human resources specialist in the Joint Force Headquarters — Nebraska. A 32-year military veteran, the ADT mission will be Huttes' last before retiring from the military next year.

He said he expects it to be the highlight of his career.

"It's like a dream come true," said Huttes. "I'm very fortunate that I'm going to end my career doing this. When I get back, I'll retire. I'm just confident that this will be the mission of my life."

In a way, Huttes and the other members of his agricultural team will be demonstrating the true value of the National Guard. All are trained military members. Each of them also have either grown up on farms in the Midwest, have degrees in agricultural-related fields, or have spent the better parts of their adult lives working in agricultural types of careers.

The same can be said for the rest of the ADT, which along with the agricultural team, consists of Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen assigned to either the security team or the headquarters element, said Lt. Col. Lynn Heng, commander of Nebraska ADT No. 2.

"It's a great mission for Nebraska because the central part of the United States is the primary agriculture producing part of the

The team will be living in the Paktia Province and operating in both the Paktia and the Paktika Provinces. The elevation of the area is around 7,500 feet and Heng said the surrounding areas are similar to Nebraska when you get to the Colorado side.

The team will be working several projects side-by-side with Afghan government agents who specialize in forestry, goats, wheat and camels.

Heng also said the team will be working with the University of Nebraska to assist Paktia University, in the city of Gardez, to try to improve their agricultural curriculum and engineering.

Nebraska ADT No. 2 will be replacing the Oklahoma National Guard's ADT in Gardez, picking up where they left off.

"There are about 50 active projects that the Oklahoma folks have going; anywhere from beekeeping to having poultry education classes," said Heng.

Cold storage facilities are another area



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Information Session:** Lt. Col. Lynn Heng, commander of the Nebraska National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team No. 2, conducts a town hall meeting at the Pentterman Armory in Lincoln, Neb., April 28, to answer any questions about the team's mission in Afghanistan.

the team wants to focus on. In an area where electricity is severely limited, the team will encourage the locals to dig root cellars to prolong their food and supplies, and sell it to earn money for their families.

While the team will be receiving the credit for their work overseas, Heng said it will not be without some help from some organizations here in Nebraska.

"I can't thank these folks enough for what they have meant for our education process for the Ag Team," he said. "The University of Nebraska-Lincoln...the Natural Resource

and Conservation Service, the State Conservations themselves have been bending over backwards to help us out."

Heng said it is a really unique mission.

"It's beneficial to the people of Afghanistan," he said. "We're going to deal directly with the people of Afghanistan, directly with the government, plus it's a very militaristic type of mission too."

"It's the best of both worlds too," he added. "You can operate in a combat type of environment and you also have the humanitarian environment."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Talking Over Chai:** Chief Master Sgt. Bob Huttes, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2's 12-person agricultural team, practices talking with an Afghan agricultural official during a training exercise at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., May 25.



**Last-Minute Work:** Chief Master Sgt. Bob Huttes moves a sprayer through a field that borders his family's farm near Sprague, Neb. Huttes has been a partner in the farm with his in-laws since moving to Nebraska nearly 20 years ago. Huttes is mobilizing with the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2.

country, so where better to find experts in agriculture," said Heng, May 25, as the unit conducted a pre-mobilization annual training at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

"And it's entirely more suited for the National Guard than the active component because in the active component you have people who are just specializing in their combat role or their combat support role," he added.

However, said Heng, in the National Guard people are not only highly trained in their military specialties, they also bring with them skills they've acquired in their civilian lives, in this case agriculture.

"That's what suits the mission more for

*'We're farming at a fairly high level here in America and we are going to have to step it back because (the Afghans) are farming in biblical terms.'*

— Chief Master Sgt. Bob Huttes

the Guard because you've got those people who have been around agriculture for almost their entire lives and they know a lot about it," Heng said. "The biggest challenge for us is going over there and having to turn the calendar back 150 years compared to how we do it here and how they're doing it there."

Huttes agreed.

"We're farming at a fairly high level here in America and we are going to have to step it back because (the Afghans) are farming in biblical terms," he said.

During the past few months, Heng said, the team has worked closely with agricultural experts from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln system, with specialists from the state's natural resource districts, local agricultural extension agents and experts from state and federal forestry organizations to prepare for the work they expect to do in east central Afghanistan.

Huttes said he will also be depending upon the skills that his father-in-law and brother-in-law have taught him over the past 20 years.

"The last 20 years my knowledge has come from these people," said Huttes referring to Daryl and Don Mitchell. "It means a lot that they're supportive."

That support is tangible, too.

While Huttes is away, the family farm will have to operate on approximately two-thirds of the workforce that it takes to get work done in a typical year.

That means the entire family will have to close ranks and do the work that Huttes normally would do.

"It's tough, no doubt about it," he said. "The work that we do — that all of us do — is heartfelt. Our families are giving up a lot."

Still, said Daryl Mitchell, it's a small sacrifice to make.

"I'm not going to have to give anything up," he said. "I'm just going to have to work a little harder."

"I know he's looking forward to (the deployment)" Mitchell added. "I'm behind him all the way."

Huttes said he thinks that the sacrifices that his family and those of the ADT are making will help send an important message to the Afghans he'll soon be working with.

"I think it will mean a lot to the people over there because Afghans are truly family-oriented," Huttes said. "I think they will sense that we are giving up (a lot) to come help them make a difference... to really make their lives better at a fairly fast pace."

That's part of the reason Huttes said that he can't wait to get started.

"I feel it's an opportunity of a lifetime to work at something for a great deal of your life and then go half-way around the world and teach that," he said. "It's like giving a man a fish versus teaching a man to fish."

# Agribusiness Development Team bid farewell

■ First joint Nebraska Army and Air National Guard ADT sets off on year-long deployment to help Afghan farmers

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon  
Assistant Editor

When green and blue are mixed together the resulting color may not necessarily resemble purple, but purple is the color of the most recent group of Nebraska National Guard members to deploy halfway around the world.

Thirty-six Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers, 21 Nebraska Air National Guard Airmen and one U.S. Army Reserve Soldier make up the Nebraska National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team No. 2. The joint team was wished farewell, June 7, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Lied Center prior to the start of a year-long mission to Afghanistan.

The team is made up of Nebraska Army and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from units located across Nebraska. Once in Afghanistan, the Soldiers and Airmen will assist local Afghan farmers and governmental officials in conducting agricultural development planning, assessments and support activities in east-central Afghanistan.

This is the second ADT mission from the Nebraska National Guard, with the first team returning in 2009. This will mark the first time the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard has sent a joint ADT team on an overseas deployment.

The goal of the mission is to expand legal agriculture, agribusiness services, markets and agricultural education in order to reduce rural poverty.

The team also hopes to increase employment opportunities in agricultural service industries and improve agricultural education.

The majority of the Airmen are members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing's Security Forces Squadron and will be responsible for providing security for the entire team. This type of deployment is a departure from the Air Force's normal deployment model.

"It sounds actually pretty fun," said Senior Airman Brandon Lindholm, a member of the 155th



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

**Preparing To Go:** Air Force Master Sgt. Jason Jones, a member of ADT No. 2's security team, holds his son, Caleb, 2, during the ADT's sendoff ceremony at the Lied Center in Lincoln, Neb., June 7.

SFS who will serve on ADT No. 2's security team. "I thought this is one of the very few Air Force missions we actually go outside the wire and that's something the Air Force rarely gets to do, so I figured why not have one of the hardest deployments I could do and have that done and over with so everything else will be cake."

With the mission being a joint effort, several challenges faced the team in preparations for the deployment. Beyond the normal ribbing the different services give each other, there were administrative and training issues that had to be worked out. After months of pre-deployment training the team has now become unified.

"We're all pretty tight," said Lindholm. "We make fun of each other all the time... but we're pretty tight."

Lindholm added he thought it was an honor to deploy with the Army.

"We've done a lot of great training," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Robinette, a member of the 155th SFS who is also on the security team. "It's been great."

"We bonded right away," said Army Staff Sgt. Octavio Baeza, who will serve as the team's communications noncommissioned officer. "At first everybody had their little cliques... now we're just one family. It's going to be a good deployment, I think. Everybody gets along... and



**Hard To Say Goodbye:** Army Maj. Dick Jones, the executive officer for ADT No. 2, hugs his mother, Linda Jones, following the ADT's sendoff ceremony at the Lied Center in Lincoln, Neb., June 7. ADT No. 2 is the Nebraska National Guard's first joint ADT mission.

I'm excited. I'm ready."

During the ceremony the speakers thanked the Soldiers and Airmen for their service and the families for their sacrifices. Many of the speakers also touched on how unique the mission of the ADT is, and how unique it is being the first joint team.

"As Soldiers in the United States armed forces you are both ready to fight and also equipped to build," said U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry. "You are the new front-line Soldier in modern warfare where security and development go hand-in-hand and your mission in Afghanistan is very unique."

"In Nebraska we all know very well the tremendous benefits a strong agricultural economy give us," he added. "You are embarking, some of you once again, on a mission that can have a profound, lasting impact on global security... by stabilizing Afghanistan and improving the lives of those people, you help protect America from those who would do us harm."

"This is a unique team," said Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska's adjutant general. "It's a unique team in our history of deploying units."

"I know you're well prepared and I know you folks will do a great job in Afghanistan," he added.

Lt. Col. Lynn Heng, commander of ADT No. 2, said forming the joint team has been challenging, but he is confident in each member's abilities.

"It was kind of like herding cats in the beginning," said Heng. "We've got a lot of incredibly talented people on our team... we've got a lot of experience on our team."

"They say blue and green becomes purple," he added. "We're a light shade of purple right now, we're getting closer to that dark shade of purple all the time and once we get to our mobilization station after the time we have, there will be one solid purple - there's no doubt about it."

Heng also described the unique nature of their mission.

"It really is a great thing we're going over there to do," he said. "We're not going over there to go find the enemy, that's not our job. Our job is to go out there and mentor the Afghan government, mentor the Afghan people in agriculture and make it a better place for the Afghan people and the government."

And serving in a humanitarian

role versus a combat role is a concept that is not lost on the members of the team.

"I joined the military to help try to make the world a better place," said Lindholm. "Honestly, if we can do that without going to war, it's a good thing in my opinion."

"It's always good to help other people out," said Robinette. "I'm looking forward to the experience and meeting new people, working with new people and just kind of helping out another country and getting them on the right track."

The Soldiers and Airmen were scheduled to train at Camp Atterbury, Ind., before deploying to Afghanistan. The mission is expected to last one year.

Heng said he challenged each member of the team to find something about themselves that they would like to improve on and use the deployment to work on it. He closed his comments saying he had two simple goals for ADT No. 2 to accomplish.

"The number one goal is to bring everybody back in one piece and better than they were before they left," he said. "And the second goal, obviously, is to accomplish all of our missions."



Photo by David Nore

**Surprise:** Staff Sgt. Brian Baack proposes to Staff Sgt. Christina Green before the start of a send-off ceremony for the Agribusiness Development Team No. 2 at the Lied Center in Lincoln, Neb., June 7. Green said yes to the proposal.

## Sendoff ceremony gets romantic

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon  
Assistant Editor

When Christina Green was called up to the stage prior to the Nebraska National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team No. 2's June 7 farewell ceremony at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Lied Center, she had no idea why she was being called up.

Green, a Nebraska Army National Guard staff sergeant with the 209th Regional Training Institute, thought she was only there to support and say good-bye to her boyfriend who was about to embark on the year-long mission that will ultimately take him and 58 others to Afghanistan.

There they will assist local Afghan farmers and governmental officials in conducting agricultural development planning, assessments and support activities in east central Afghanistan.

The team's mission is unique, but the team itself is also very unique because it is the first joint Nebraska Army and Air National Guard ADT mission. Green's boyfriend is

the Nebraska Air National Guard's Staff Sgt. Brian Baack, who will serve on the ADT's security team.

When Green got to the stage Baack was waiting for her. The reason she was called to the stage soon became apparent.

"I was trying to figure out why I was going up there in the first place," said Green. "Nothing came to mind until I got up there and I was looking at him and I just saw this look on his face and he started reaching into his pocket and I knew what was coming next."

What came next was Baack, with seemingly every part of his body shaking, dropped to one knee, pulled out a box containing an engagement ring and proposed to Green, to the cheers of the hundreds in attendance.

Green put her hands to her face in shock as tears filled her eyes. She said yes. Baack placed the ring on her finger, hugged her and they shared their first kiss as an engaged couple.

Gov. Dave Heineman said he checked with Baack to make sure Green would say yes.

"Obviously this ceremony is off to a very special start," said Heineman. "To sergeant Baack and his fiancée, I just want to say congratulations. I told him walking up here, 'You better make sure you get a yes,' and obviously he did."

Baack's nerves were evident prior to his proposal.

"I want to say to Christina, I've never seen a man's hands shake that badly, with one exception - when I asked my own wife to marry me," said U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry.

Baack later admitted to the nerves and said one thing was going through his mind. "Speak," said Baack. "To be able to speak."

Baack and Green have been dating for five months but have known each other for years. Baack said he was going to make sure this moment would never be forgotten.

"I wanted it to be special so that we both could remember it years from now," he said.

"It was definitely not expected at all," added Green.

Green is no stranger to deployments. She returned from a year-long deployment to Iraq with the 313th

Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) last August. The couple said they are well prepared to handle the time apart.

"We've got Skype and everything, so we can talk," said Baack.

"We've already got him hooked up so we're ready to rock and roll," added Green.

Baack said he is looking forward to the deployment and working jointly with the Army.

"It's a different mission," said Baack. "Our security forces are usually stuck on base. This time we get to go outside the wire and work and we get to go interact with the local people."

"The guys we've got, they're a great group. We've meshed pretty well."

Baack volunteered to deploy on the first joint ADT mission months ago, but he will soon enter into the most important mission of his life with Green. And even with their new engagement, their immediate plans for the future haven't changed.

"It's just another trip, he'll be back," said Green. "We'll get through the deployment and we'll worry about everything else when he gets back."

**Final Checks:** Sgt. Josh Moody, Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, completes his pre-flight inspection of his CH-47 Chinook helicopter's engine, May 29, at Grand Island's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2.



## Chinook mission to Afghanistan first for Grand Island aviators

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Saying goodbye is never easy, especially when you're young and the goodbye means not seeing your father for almost a year. As can be imagined, the emotional impact is hard to fully describe.

That was the feeling that dominated Grand Island's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2, May 29, as nearly 70 Soldiers assigned to Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, and other supporting units, departed the Nebraska Army Guard facility for Fort Hood, Texas, the next step of a journey that would ultimately take the unit to Afghanistan.

Those feelings seemed encapsulated by a single moment when Quintin and Nate Vculek walked out onto a dampened tarmac and waved at their father, Sgt. Burt Vculek, as the CH-47 Chinook helicopter he was riding on disappeared into the misty, lead-colored clouds.

"I'm not really excited," said their brother, Damian Vculek, 10, shortly after telling his father, Sgt. Burt Vculek, goodbye on the hangar floor of the AASF No. 2. "I'm kinda more in the middle."

Trish Vculek, agreed, saying that she and the couple's four sons all had conflicting feelings as they watched her husband, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter crew chief with Co. B, 2-135th GSAB, leave for his mission.

"We're excited for him because this is something he's always wanted to do... but it's rough at the same time," she said, emotion breaking through her quivering voice.

"It's been a long weekend," added Kim Cronin, whose son, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brandon Bennett, is a Chinook pilot. "It's hard... hard to say goodbye... (but) he says he's ready. He's been training for this and he's says he's ready. That's what he keeps telling me. I've been training for this and I'm ready, mom."

The departure of the Soldiers aboard their CH-47 Chinook helicopters was actually just a part of several emotional days during the normally festive Memorial Day weekend. Two days earlier, hundreds of families, friends and others gathered at Grand Island's Heartland Events Center for the unit's May 27 farewell ceremony. The deployment for Operation Enduring Freedom is the first for Co. B, 2-135th GSAB, one of Nebraska's newest units.

Among those gathering was Maurice Saunders, who already knows firsthand the feelings brought on by having a son deployed to Af-



**Holding On Tight:** Staff Sgt. Rick Carter hugs his son Charlie before departing Grand Island aboard a Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, CH-47 Chinook helicopter, May 29.

ghanistan. Her son, Sgt. Theodore Saunders, is a CH-47 Chinook helicopter door gunner while a second son, Spc. Zachary Saunders, is currently serving in Afghanistan as a member of the Nebraska Army Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance.)

She said she had mixed feelings saying farewell to another son.

"I've been anticipating the day, but can't believe the day is here already," she said. "I had initial parts of being scared, but today kind of hit home. My kids are absolutely my life and having them both gone at the same time and over-lapping in Afghanistan is just overwhelming... for me it's going to be like a three-year deployment."

Theodore Saunders said he's ready to get the mission going.

"We've spent quite a bit of man-hours training for this mission. I think it's going to be a good one. Fortunately, I've deployed before, so I kind of have that to fall back on," he said, before adding: "I'm definitely ready to get on that plane and go over there and do the mission."

According to the many leaders who spoke during the send-off ceremony at the events



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Last Glimpse:** Quintin and Nate Vculek watch as a Nebraska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter departs Grand Island's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2, May 29, carrying their father, Sgt. Burt Vculek, on a flight to Fort Hood, Texas. The Nebraska Army National Guard flight engineer was one of approximately 70 Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers deploying for Operation Enduring Freedom.

center, the Soldiers are well-trained, prepared and equipped for the mission ahead.

"You are the very best that our state has to offer," said Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy as he addressed the assembled Soldiers and their families. "There is important work to be done in Afghanistan to ensure that the progress being made can endure and that the Afghan leaders, security and police forces can stand up again against outside forces."

Sheehy said the Army Guard aviators are the latest Nebraska Soldiers to take their place in Afghanistan, following in the footsteps of Nebraska Guard nurses, cavalrymen, military police officer, agricultural mentors and many others.

"Your experience will be a great asset... your service is improving the lives of people you will never meet and I assure you that they, too, appreciate your service," said Sheehy, adding that the Soldiers, their families and employers have the entire state's gratitude.

"You are never far from our hearts," he said. "We look forward to seeing you back next year and having a celebration of the services you brought to people around the world."

U.S. Senator Mike Johanns echoed those sentiments.

"I think all of us knew in our hearts that we would face this day... and this day has arrived," said Johanns, who was governor of Nebraska at the time that the decision was made to station the Chinook unit in Grand Island. "I am absolutely confident that everybody is well trained. Everybody is ready to go. And everybody is prepared to execute a very, very successful mission."

Johanns said he will also keep the Soldiers and their families in his thoughts and prayers, adding: "To the families, you serve, too. You will be here keeping the home fires burning. We're here to support you in any way that we can."

According to Capt. Marcus Wilhelm, unit commander, the Soldiers are ready to live up to their "Muleskinners" nickname, taken from a Vietnam-era CH-47 unit whose Soldiers recorded impressive feats during their wartime deployment to Southeastern Asia. Several of those veterans were in the audience to wish their namesakes well during their deployment to Afghanistan.

Wilhelm said the Soldiers have accomplished much since standing up in 2005 while also serving on numerous missions, including deployments in response to wildfires in California and Nebraska, Hurricane Gustav in Louisiana, and training in Wyoming and Canada.

He said they're ready to add to the unit's already lustrous lineage.

"What we do in aviation is inherently dangerous and nothing can change that fact," he said. "But what we can do is ensure that we adhere to the strictest standards, make sure that every action we take has the safety of our aircraft and those we carry with us in the highest regards."

"My 90-year-old grandma last Sunday probably said it best as we were saying our last goodbyes," Wilhelm said. "365 days, 52 weeks, 12 months, one year and a Helluva good story to tell our kids and grandkids when we get back."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

## Star-studded promotion Nebraska Army Guard officer receives star

Scott A. Gronewold receives the one-star rank of a brigadier general, June 4, as his wife, Diane, places the new rank on his Army combat uniform during a promotion ceremony at Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall. Also participating in the promotion ceremony was Gronewold's mother, Charlotte Gronewold, who holds his newly discarded colonel's rank.

Gronewold, former commander of Camp Ashland's 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), is the Nebraska National Guard's new director of the joint staff. He is a veteran of two overseas deployments, having served as commander of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) during its 1999 deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina, and as commander of the 110th Medical Battalion (Evacuation), during its 2003 deployment for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Gronewold and his wife have three children, Jenna, Jonathan and Joel.

# Historic flood prompts Guard call-ups

■Nebraska Army, Air Guardsmen respond to calls to help state during widespread flooding on Platte, Missouri Rivers

By Maj. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

Someday, perhaps years from now, historians will look back on the summer of 2011 with a sense of awe.

After what Nebraska's been forced to deal with since late May as the state responds to a double whammy of flooding in the western portions of the Platte River valley and along the eastern "shoreline" of the state where historic flooding on the Missouri River has transformed much of the border between South Dakota, Iowa and Missouri... and what it may have to in the weeks and months ahead, those feelings will be justified.

"Our flooding challenges are going to be with us for months," said Governor Dave Heineman in his June 24 weekly address. "This is going to be an emergency that continues to unfold and we anticipate the cleanup and recovery will extend much longer than any of us would like."

The cause of the dual flooding actually share a common link. This past winter much of the northern portions of the Rocky Mountain in Colorado, Wyoming and Montana experienced tremendous amounts of snowfall, which continued well into June. On top of that, an unseasonably wet spring in Wyoming, Montana and the Dakotas brought a years worth of rainfall in a matter of a few days.

Taken together, those two factors caused the Platte and Missouri Rivers to swell past flood stage. On the Platte River, flooding affected such communities as Scottsbluff, Gering, Terry Town, North Platte and Ogallala.

On the Missouri River, that flooding reached epic proportions not seen since before the 1950s when the United States constructed a series of major dams ending at Gavins Point, which sits on the state's



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

**Aerial View:** A National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief takes in the bird's eye view of the historic flooding on the Missouri River during a June 24 flight near Omaha's Eppley Airfield. The flooding is being caused by historic releases through U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dams located upstream along the Missouri River valley brought on by record-breaking snow fall and spring rains in Montana, Wyoming and the Dakotas.

northeastern border four miles west of Yankton, S.D. The runoff is so great, say the engineers, that it is the highest recorded since 1898.

According to U.S. Corps of Engineers officials, current and projected flooding required the dams to release unprecedented amounts of water to ensure that the structures didn't overtop or fail all together.

At Gavins Point Dam, water flow was increased to 160,000 cubic feet per second by mid-June, more than double its historic high or more than three times the amount of water that flows over Niagara Falls in a similar amount of time. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials estimate that it will remain near that level – barring any additional rainfall – into August.

The results of this increase was felt up and down Nebraska's eastern border as communities such as

Niobrara, South Sioux City, Blair, Omaha, Nebraska City, Falls City and Rulo dealt with protecting important public infrastructure against the rising flood waters while also taking steps to monitor and enhance existing levees – essentially earthen berms erected to guard against flooding.

That, in turn, led the state of Nebraska to take steps to respond to the flooding emergency through the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, which is part of the Nebraska Military Department.

The Nebraska National Guard's response to the effort kicked off on May 31 when several members of the Joint Force Headquarters, Nebraska, were ordered to report to the state emergency operations center to begin preliminary planning and response coordination to

See FLOOD DUTY on 12.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Mountains Of Water:** A recreational vehicle passes over Gavins Point Dam near northeastern Nebraska, July 1, as a record of more than 160,000 cubic feet of water per second pass through the spillways. That is equivalent to three times the amount of water that passes over Niagara Falls in a similar amount of time.

## Soldiers help Plattsmouth keep water treatment plants above flood

By Maj. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

They call it "The Island." Normally, the waste water treatment facility for Plattsmouth, Neb., stands approximately a half-mile from downtown Plattsmouth on a grassy field dotted by wells and a riverside housing development.

However, ever since the Missouri River began rising to historic levels, the water treatment facility has found itself surrounded by what local residents are now calling "America's Fastest Growing Lake," and in danger of being inundated by the murky, brown water.

Attempting to make sure such a scenario doesn't come to fruition has been the main mission of approximately a dozen Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers since June 24.

It's a challenge, say the Soldiers, that they must win.

"We're making sure that the water doesn't try and take over (this and a nearby water treatment facility) as much as it already has," said Sgt. Seth Thompson, June 24. He is a member of the 1167th Brigade Support Company from Lincoln, Neb., who normally would be working at Best Buy while trying to complete his Criminal Justice degree at Lincoln's Southeastern Community College.

On this day he was one of two noncommissioned officers-in-charge of a group of Soldiers from the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and the 1167th BSC working in Plattsmouth.

There, the Soldiers are in charge of keeping an eye on conditions in the city's water and waste water treatment facilities.

While the Soldiers are just a small part of the Guard's overall response to the historic flooding brought on by record-breaking snowfall and spring rains in Montana and the Dakotas, it's safe to say their mission is possibly the most unique.

For example, just getting to the area's primary work sites is a challenge in itself for the National Guardsmen.

In order to get to the two water treatment facilities, the Guardsmen are transported by boat over streets covered by swirling river water more than eight feet deep in places. And once at the facilities, the Guardsmen work behind walls of sand bags that surround the sites and keep the rising water at bay.

Thompson said he was amazed at the amount of water when he and his Soldiers first arrived in Plattsmouth.

"They said there was flooding, but I couldn't picture it in my mind," said Thompson. "When I got here, it was like, 'Holy Crap.' It's way worse than I could've imagined."

One person who didn't have to imagine the conditions was Spc. Steve Callaway, an automated logistics specialist with the 1167th BSC, who lives and works in Plattsmouth in civilian life.

He said that being called to state active duty and working in his hometown was a special experience.

"I like it," he said. "I wanted to be on a

See PLATTSMOUTH on 12.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Lake-Side Work:** Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard work to fill sandbags at Plattsmouth's waste water treatment facility, June 24. The Soldiers were assigned to assist Cass County emergency management officials guard critical public infrastructure that had been put at risk by rising waters on the Missouri River that had inundated the normally dry, grass field surrounding Plattsmouth's water treatment and waste water treatment facilities.

## As Missouri River threatens, Nebraska Soldiers begin to patrol South Sioux City's levees

By Capt. Andrew Nelson  
Staff Writer

The Missouri River at South Sioux City flows over several holes of a local golf course. The new earthen levee bisecting Covington Links is about 4-feet high and partially covered with plastic tarps held down by green sandbags.

Soldiers of the Nebraska Army National Guard patrol the levee, watchful for leaks, gawkers and burrowing critters.

The Guardsmen are assisting local emergency management officials in 24-hour monitoring of river levees.

On an earthen levee on a rainy day in mid-June, it is dirty work. The Soldiers ride mud-splattered all-terrain vehicles that slip and slide in the muck. It is work they volunteered for. It is work they say they are glad to do.

"It's what the National Guard is for. State emergencies is what I signed up for," said Sgt. Katie Klemme of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 189th Transportation Company from Wayne and Norfolk, Neb.

"I volunteered for it because I just wanted to help out the state, (and) hopefully, help save South Sioux City," said Pfc. Ashley Sukup, also of the 189th Trans. Co.

The levee stretches west from the golf course, past a junkyard and into a residential neighborhood on the west side of the city. The Guard patrols it 24 hours a day.

On June 14, 2011, as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cranked up the output at Gavins Point Dam, roughly 70 miles upstream, to a record level to deal with prodigious rainfalls and snowpack, Spc. Mariana Calderon drove the levee, bouncing and sliding through the slime.

She drove past stacks of green sandbags stacked on pallets on the dry side, ready to be rushed into a leak or a breach should one occur.

"Those are for emergencies; in case something happens ... they are already set and ready in case of an emergency," she said.

She drove on the levee through a block of houses where the street - 3rd Street - was completely covered by the levee, which had been quickly replaced by the Corps

as floodwaters approached, with houses on both sides now deserted.

Among the things she was looking for was wildlife. Critters burrowing into the levee can undermine it.

"Sometimes we see deer out here," she said. "Earlier, we saw a turtle."

She also was keeping an eye out for sightseers on the levee. People who don't work on the levee are asked to stay off and can be ticketed by law enforcement. When the Guardsmen first arrived there were more interlopers, but that subsided as word got out the military was patrolling. And those asked to leave generally cooperate.

"I really didn't have people give me any problems," she said. "People understood because I was in uniform."

Marty Johnson, the owner of Covington Links, provided a base of operations for the Soldiers. He said he was happy to host them.

"They've been really good, really kind, really easy to work with," he said. "They've got their act together."

"There's been nothing but good said (about them)," he said. "Nothing but good."



Photo by Capt. Andrew Nelson

**On Patrol:** Pfc. Ashley Sukup, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 189th Transportation Company, drives an ATV along the South Sioux City, Neb., levee, on the lookout for damages and leaks, June 14. Sukup was one of 12 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assisting local South Sioux City emergency management officials in 24-hour levee monitoring along the Missouri River.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes



(Above) **Protective Measures:** Spc. Brittany Taylor, 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, places tape on her fingers to protect them from blisters caused by handling sandbags.

(Left) **One More Shovel:** Spc. Megan Liekhus, 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, shovels sand into a sandbag, June 24, in Plattsmouth, Neb.

### PLATTSMOUTH continued from page 11.

mission pretty bad, but I didn't know that it was going to be here."

"I think it's pretty neat because I walk down here during the week and look at the river and see how it's going," Callaway said. "I think it's a good thing to help out my home community. That's always a good thing - helping the place where you're from."

According to Thompson, one of the initial missions at the waste water treatment plant involved making sure sand bags were staying in place while also monitoring the facility's diesel-powered pumps to ensure that water was being moved through the site properly. They also kept busy checking the levees around the facility for seepage caused by the water's constant pressure.

When not doing that, the Soldiers worked to fill sand bags to help reinforce the man-made protective walls that surround the facility.

According to Thompson, the site was nicknamed "Alcatraz Island" by Cass County jail inmates who were the first to begin filling the thousands of sand bags.

"What's funny was that when we got here there were prisoners already working out here and actually filling up sand bags," Thompson said. "We actually worked pretty well together."

Working on an island surrounded by

water is definitely a different experience, say the Nebraska Soldiers.

"I actually kind of laughed," said Pfc. Brittany Taylor, a combat medic with the 67th BfSB who works for the pharmacy section Nebraska Department of Corrections in civilian life. "It was crazy. Not in my wildest dreams would I have imagined it to look like this. It literally looks like you're in a huge lake... and you're not."

During one break, Taylor said she took a few photos and then posted them to her Facebook page. She soon received a response from her 4-year-old daughter Charlee.

"She knows that I'm not a very good swimmer and she commented, 'Mom, you should probably learn how to swim,'" Taylor said, laughing.

The Soldiers agreed that their mission in Plattsmouth is definitely an important one, adding that they're proud to be able to serve their state in a time of need.

"I personally think that doing stuff for our state is more fulfilling sometimes because it's your neighbors," said Taylor.

"I actually joined wanting to do missions like this - to just help out during state emergencies, tornados and floods," added Thompson. "So, this is great. It's just a great opportunity to help out my state and protect this town from any further damage."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Grassy Patrol:** Staff Sgt. Thomas Friesell, 754th Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company from Omaha, walks along a cornfield while checking on several sand boils in Sarpy County, June 24.

### FLOOD DUTY continued from page 11.

the flooding situation. The Guard's response has grown steadily since.

This response has included:

- The mobilization of two Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and crews, and riggers from Seward's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, beginning on June 5 who were sent to North Platte to conduct aerial sand bagging operations on a damaged Platte River levee that threatened to cut U.S. Highway 30 and the Union Pacific Railroad's main line into town.

- During the course of the nearly one-week operation, the Nebraska Guardsmen - who were assisted by a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew from the Colorado Army National Guard - airlifted more than 2,200 1-ton sand bags into the broken levee.

- This was the first time that the Guard has performed such a mission in Nebraska, although it did a similar operation last year on the Gulf Coast as part of the BP oil spill.

- The partial activation of the Guard's joint operation center, which was initially staffed by members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 41st Rear Operations Center. The JOC serves as the Guard's primary coordination center during a domestic emergency.

- The deployment of 12 members of the Nebraska Army National Guard to assist South Sioux City area officials in conducting 24-hour monitoring of Missouri River levees.

- The deployment of 28 Nebraska Air Guardsmen to help Omaha and Douglas County officials conduct 24-hour monitoring of 13-miles of levees extending from Eppley Airfield in the north to Omaha's waste water treatment facility in the south.

- Assisting in the pre-staging of 1-ton sand bags at South Sioux City, Omaha, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska City and Lincoln. Additionally, UH-60 Black Hawk crews, support staff and riggers were placed on stand-by both at Eppley Airfield and Lincoln in the event that the Guard was ordered to conduct an aerial sand bagging operation

similar to the work done at North Platte.

Also assisting in this effort were UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crews from the Illinois and Colorado Army National Guard, who were deployed to Nebraska through an emergency management assistance compact request.

- The deployment of 18 members of the Nebraska Army National Guard to assist Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District officials in conducting 24-hour monitoring of levees near Bellevue and Offutt Air Force Base.

- The deployment of 12 members of the Nebraska Army National Guard to support Cass County officials in logistical support, levee monitoring and protection of critical public infrastructure near Plattsmouth.

- The deployment of 12 members of the Nebraska Army National Guard to assist Nemaha County officials in conducting 24-hour monitoring of levees in Nemaha County.

- The mobilization of four Nebraska National Guardsmen who formed part of an eight-person critical infrastructure assessment team with members of NEMA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency along the Platte River valley from North Platte to the state's western border.

By early July, Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, said he was proud of the effort members of the Nebraska National Guard have put in since the start of the summer emergency.

"The work that our Soldiers and Airmen are doing out there is absolutely phenomenal," Lyons told his staff during a July 5 update briefing in Lincoln after having visited the Guard's effort at several sites including South Sioux City, Bellevue, Omaha, Plattsmouth and Peru. "It also really great to see some outstanding (noncommissioned officers) who aren't too far into their careers who are doing their missions while taking care of their people."

"It's really impressive to see."

# Guardsmen fill breach in North Platte levee

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Most years Sgt. Jeremy Borrell would've spent June 7 preparing for an upcoming annual training at Fort Bragg, N.C.

However, as recent and projected flooding have shown, 2011 is not most years.

Because of the flooding, Borrell, an aerial delivery sergeant with the Seward-based Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, was working with approximately a dozen of his unit mates attaching three large white sandbags beneath a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter as the Guard assisted state officials in repairing a damaged Platte River levee near North Platte's airport.

"I love being able to do something here in the state," said Borrell during a break in the action, the lower part of his face covered with bits of dark dirt and sand picked up by the helicopter's rotor wash.

"I've been in the Guard for quite a few years and I have never had the chance to do something in the state, so it's good to be doing something for other Nebraskans."

Borrell and approximately 16 other Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers arrived in North Platte on June 5 after being ordered to stem the flooding that was threatening to cut U.S. Highway 30 and a critical juncture of the main Union Pacific railway line by dropping large 2,000-pound sandbags into the void in the levee.

This marked the first time that the Nebraska Army National Guard had attempted to conduct such an operation in Nebraska, although Nebraska aviators had conducted similar operations along the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Gustav and last year following the BP oil spill.

The Soldiers consisted of Nebraska Army National Guard rigger specialists and a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew and support staff. They were joined two days later by an additional six Nebraska riggers, another Nebraska Guard Black Hawk helicopter crew and a third Black Hawk crew from the Colorado Army National Guard.

Also assisting in the operation was a civilian UH-1 helicopter and crew hired by Union Pacific.

According to the Soldiers involved in the operation, they had to learn quickly and lean on those Soldiers who had experience working with slingloads.

"This is something that (many of us have) never done before, so we had to work as a team to figure out how we were going to do it," said Sgt. Justin Saner, an aerial deployment inspector with the 165th QM Co.

After spending much of the first day developing and testing their



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**All Set:** Sgt. Jeremy Borrell and Sgt. Justin Saner from the Seward-based Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, give the thumbs-up sign to the crew of Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter after they connected three sandbags onto it, June 7, as part of an emergency levee project near North Platte, Neb.



**Hooked Up:** Sgt. Jeremy Borrell and Sgt. Justin Saner from the Seward-based Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, connect three sandbags onto a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, June 7, near North Platte, Neb. Two Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60s and 26 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assisted the effort with assistance from a Colorado Army National Guard UH-60 and a crew of three. The mission was completed on June 10.

plans, the riggers and aircrew soon began working together seamlessly. By June 7 the crews were working so well together that it



**Working Together:** Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from the Seward-based Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, prepare sandbags to be slingloaded June 7, near North Platte, Neb.

took just three to five minutes to complete a single sandbag rotation.

"We've got a lot of bags that we're moving in a short period of time," said Borrell as he stood in front of a line of hundreds of sandbags that were waiting to be moved into position by a forklift. "But we've got a long way to go."

"We're moving them out of here pretty quickly, though," he added.

Maj. Grant Siedenburger, one of the helicopter pilots agreed, saying that it was impressive how quickly the two groups of Soldiers were able to come together to get the job done.

"We'd never worked with them

before, so the first day we sat down and had quite a few mission briefings and basically walked the ground where we were going to be flying," he said. "We also talked about how to set up the slings. Everybody basically had the same game plan and we were able to execute the mission."

"So far, it's worked pretty flawlessly," Siedenburger added.

So flawlessly, in fact, that the operation came to an end earlier than initial expected, June 10. By that time, the Soldiers had worked to fill the half-mile breach with nearly 2,200 sandbags.

## Guard Soldiers answer duty's call — literally

By Pfc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

Sandbags piling up. Roads and parks closing. People moving. Crops getting washed out and flooding everywhere.

Those were the issues confronting Nebraskans in early June, prompting a ton of questions — like what's next?

Three Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers — who were soon joined by three more Soldiers — were given the responsibility of answering many of those questions in regards to flooding on the Platte and Missouri Rivers. The Nebraska National Guardsmen were among the first volunteers tasked to respond to the emergency when they were called to state active duty to man the state flood hotlines at the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

The first three Soldiers were put on state active duty orders on May 31, 2011, to answer phone calls, give feedback to questions, log messages into a data base and help the people affected by the rising waters.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Leonard D. Bergantzel and Staff Sgt. Jason T. Meyer, both of the Lincoln-based 267th Support Maintenance Company, and Pfc. Chris A. Damian of Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron, answering phone calls was a big part of the state's initial response to the flood emergency.

"It's a part of my mission," said Meyer. "This is part of my job being a Guard Soldier — to help wherever I can and that's what I enjoy doing."

Initially the Soldiers manned the phones from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week. That soon increased until 8 p.m.

"A majority of the calls are about when the flood is going to happen and how much are they going to experience," said Bergantzel. "A lot of them are wondering if they live in the area that's going to be flooded and I don't have all that information in front of me, so we have been giving them the website to see what the 100-year flood plain looks like."

Within two days alone, the three Soldiers answered more than 230 calls from people around the state. The Soldiers were given updated information every couple hours from NEMA in order to answer the questions as best as they could and guide the people in the right way.

# Guardsmen use military skills to assist civilian officials in battle with rivers

By Capt. Andrew Nelson

Staff Writer

Sgt. Matthew Hagen considers himself a field Soldier.

With a fondness for physical activity and the outdoors, Hagen never envisioned himself working in an office. So, to be assigned to Nebraska's Emergency Operations Center where he's coordinating logistics as part of the state's response to flooding, is a new experience.

Nonetheless, it is a role he has excelled at.

"I'm still very much a field Soldier," Hagen said. "It helps me be a better point of contact with the riggers, the transportation guys, the guys actually out there doing operations."

The television cameras are drawn to Soldiers patrolling levees. Pictures of helicopters hoisting giant sandbags are sure to be published in the newspapers. But no less important is something much less to draw a cameraman's lens:

The behind-the-scenes orchestration that makes it all possible.

The State of Nebraska's response to the 2011 floods is coordinated out of Lincoln. And much of that coordination is done by the men and women of the Nebraska National Guard.

Soldiers helped coordinate relief supplies, advised their civilian counterparts and answered the state's flood hotline, among other duties.

Hagen was assigned to the EOC, located underneath a parking lot adjacent to the Nebraska Guard's state headquarters, in early June. His job there was simply to answer phones at first. But he kept taking on different assignments — and excelling — said his boss there, Earl Imler of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

"Everything in the world I dump on Matt. I kind of abuse him, if you want to know the truth," Imler said. "It just kept escalating... It got to the point, every time I turn around it's 'Matt, I need this' and he has done

an exceptional job at it."

Hagen, a carpentry and masonry specialist with the Nebraska Army National Guard's Omaha-based 195th Special Operations Forward Support Company with years of service as a cavalry scout and a field artilleryman, does much of the logistical coordinating for the state's response.

He makes sure items like slings and sandbags are ordered from private companies and that they get to where they need to go. He also makes sure troops in the field have what they need in order to accomplish their missions.

Like other Guardsmen working the flood response, Hagen brings a sense of mission focus to the job, Imler said. But he also is very personable and does not spew military jargon at civilians, but does call them "sir" and "ma'am," he added.

"He endears himself to people and everybody likes him here. He's a very likable guy," added Imler.

Down the hall, Pvt. Amanda

Berry of the Guard's 402nd Military Police Battalion from Omaha answered phones for the Nebraska flood hotline. Berry said she and her comrades were fielding about 10 calls per hour.

"We're where everybody is getting their information. They get information from the news... and they call us if they have questions about it and we put it in simpler terms for them."

Like many other Guard members, Berry said the most rewarding thing of flood duty was helping Nebraskans in need.

"There's a lot of people that are having a lot of trouble right now," she said. "We just try to help them as much as we can by giving them shelter information, or stuff like that."

On the other side of Military Road at the Sprit of 1776 Armory, the 41st Rear Operations Center served as the Joint Operations Center's initial staff. The roughly 20 Soldiers there were under Lt. Col. Todd Stevens,

the ROC's commander.

The JOC is responsible for helping coordinate current and future National Guard support missions and provides information to state decision makers, including Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska's adjutant general.

"The Joint Operations Center is actually staffed to kind of be the eyes and ears for, not only for General Lyons, but also for the Governor with respect to what the National Guard's capabilities are (and) what assets we have available," Stevens said.

Back in the EOC, Hagen works on emergency management courses during what little free time he has. Before he went on duty June 2, the former corrections officer wanted to get an AGR job.

But with people like Imler so pleased with his work, the Soldier with the maroon beret of an airborne troop folded on his desk thinks a career in emergency management may be in his future.

# River Patrols

## Airmen tackle many challenges while keeping wary eyes open in Omaha

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

As a good portion of the sporting world's eyes were focused on the college baseball action at Omaha's sparkling new \$128 million TD Ameritrade Park, members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's eyes were focused squarely on the action taking place just north and south of this year's College World Series.

Beginning on June 17, just a day before the start of this year's college baseball championship tournament, 18 Nebraska Air Guardsmen were called to state active duty to assist Omaha and Douglas County emergency management officials keep an eye on 13 miles of Missouri River levees as historic flooding threatened to cause massive problems for Nebraska's largest city.

According to Master Sgt. Carl Oestmann, senior noncommissioned officer for the Omaha mission, the Guardsmen were assigned to help keep a constant eye on the levees for any signs of deterioration as weeks of flooding began to put unprecedented pressure on the river embankments.

"We really are what I would consider the early warning system," said Oestmann as he and Capt. Greg Goodwater, officer-in-charge, maneuvered their pick-up through the College World Series traffic around TD Ameritrade during a visit to their Guardsmen operating north of downtown. "We are recording observations that we see from one pass to the next and then reporting

that to the appropriate personnel so that they have the time they need to address a specific situation."

According to Goodwater, his Guardsmen were broken down into three shifts of two teams. Equipped with four-wheel-drive all terrain vehicles, one team conducts a foot and vehicle patrol of the earthen levee south of downtown Omaha while the second conducts a similar patrol of the earthen levee north of downtown.

The northern section was later broken into halves to enable even closer observations of the levees located there.

All together, Goodwater said, his teams were responsible for keeping their eyes focused on 13 miles of levee beginning north of Omaha around the critical area of Eppley Airfield and ending near the also critical Omaha waste water treatment plant.

"It doesn't sound like that much, but when you're patrolling 13 miles of levee at five miles per hour, getting off, walking, checking areas, noticing changes, inspecting that change for seepage or a blister or a burrow, staying in contact with authorities and staying put until they work it... it takes times."

Changing weather and river conditions also are constant challenges, as is dealing with man-made ones as well, such as pipes moving water over the levees and back into the river.

It's a huge mission, he added, as well as one the Guardsmen are happy to take on.



Photo by Sgt. Koan Nissen

**Watchful Eye:** Airmen 1st Class Cody Williamson, a ground mechanic with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing from Lincoln, Neb., walks across sandbags while inspecting an area effected by flooding near downtown Omaha, Neb., June 21. The Air Guardsman was assisting Omaha and Douglas County emergency management officials in 24-hour monitoring of Missouri River levees.

"Right now morale is high," he said. "They're having a lot of fun. It's something completely different than any of them have ever done."

"They understand how important our role is, which is to monitor the levee and detect any type of deterioration so that they can get people out to fix it."

Take Master Sgt. Roscoe Moore, for example. A meteorologist from the Offutt Air Force Base's 170th Operations Support Squadron, Moore had spent much of his active duty and recent Guard career keeping his eyes on the weather. On June 21 he was getting an opportunity to see the after effects of Mother Nature as a member of the Omaha levee monitoring contingent.

He said he was having the time of his life.

"I saw this as a really good opportunity to support the state and do National Guard-type of work," said Moore as he drove his four-person ATV along the levee near Omaha's Freedom Park, which was now rapidly filling with water and causing the park's two historic U.S. Navy vessels to appear to float again.

According to Moore, the mission

is really quite simple.

Twice a day during his eight-hour shift, he and Airmen 1st Class Kyle Bachman of the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing headquarters, drive down the levee looking for any signs of leakage or sloughing of the levees.

They also routinely step out onto the "dry" side of the levee to look for the presence of sand boils – newly erupting, volcano-like structures caused by the underground seepage dragging sediment from the levees with it – as well as signs of burrowing by animals displaced by the rising flood waters.

"It would seem monotonous every day just driving back and forth, but you're constantly looking for something new," Moore said. "Especially on the north side... things change every day."

In order to maintain safety, both Moore and other levee monitors wear life vests when working on the levee. They're also constantly in contact with the Air Guard's shift supervisor as well as Omaha Police Department personnel.

Moore said that he was pretty confident that he was prepared in

the event that something would happen on the levees.

"I really don't feel nervous being out here," he said, "especially with all of the safety gear that they've given us."

Most importantly, Moore said he feels proud to be involved in a mission that's so important.

"We need to protect (Omaha citizens) and protect the resources and protect commerce," said Moore.

Others echoed his thoughts. "I think it's important to help out the community," said Bachmann. "On the levee, it's definitely a learning experience because I didn't know much about levees when I went into this. It's attention to detail. You look for small little details."

Bachmann said he's particularly happy to be helping out during a time of intense need.

"I just got back from (technical) school and to have this opportunity right off the bat... I wouldn't miss it for the world."

"Someday I'll deploy and I think this is just a great start to a career," he added. "And meeting all these different people from the unit, it's really a good experience."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Historic Flooding:** Master Sgt. Roscoe Moore, a meteorologist with the Offutt Air Force Base's 170th Operations Support Squadron, patrols the Missouri River levees, June 22. Moore was supporting Omaha and Douglas County emergency management officials in 24-hour monitoring the levees along the Missouri River.

## Riggers do part to keep Omaha airfield ready for worst-case scenario

By Capt. Andrew Nelson

Staff Writer

As airliners came in for landing only 1,500 feet away, the men and women of Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, did their part to prevent catastrophe.

Members of the unit were rigging 2,000-pound sandbags at Eppley Airfield, June 23. Bags that, should the levee that protects Omaha's major airport fail, would be dropped by helicopter at the breach point. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers inundation maps indicate Eppley could be under several feet of water if the levee protecting it from the Missouri River were to fail.

The mission was part of the Nebraska National Guard's on-going efforts to help local emergency management officials deal with the historic Missouri River flooding taking place along Nebraska's eastern border.

"The water is just right over the berm there and if it were to break, this airport would be inoperational," said Staff Sgt. Keith Cox, who was directing efforts that day.

This would be a particularly difficult problem, considering that on that day, June 17, baseball fans were converging on Omaha for the beginning of the College World Series, which lasted most of the rest of the month.

But all that seemed remote that afternoon on Cargo Ramp B at Eppley's far northwest side. As the sun shone down and



Photos by Capt. Andrew Nelson

**Warm Weather Teamwork:** Spc. Joshua Peavy and Pvt. Robin Bruscato prepare massive sandbags containing 2,000 to 2,500 pounds of sand on June 17, at Eppley Airfield in Omaha, Neb. Both Soldiers are with the Nebraska Army National Guard's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company.

caused the temperature to soar toward 88, the riggers attached cables and nylon slings while commercial and airliners landed and took off a relatively short distance away.

"We'd like it if it were about 70 degrees and breeze, but it is what it is. It's Nebraska,"



**Just In Case:** Soldiers of Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, prepare large sandbags at Eppley Airfield in Omaha, Neb., on June 17. Roughly 400 2,000-pound sandbags were lined up so that they could be lifted by helicopter and dropped at a nearby levee in an emergency.

said Spc. Joshua Peavy as he worked to install the slings to a row of white sandbags.

Cargo Ramp B offered no shade, so some of the Nebraska Army Guard riggers wore flight suits rolled down to the waist, like Pvt. Robin Bruscato.

"It's actually pretty easy once we get everything figured out," she said. "It gets me doing kind of what I signed up for the Army for... to help others."

A Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter was staged on the

east side of the airport nearly a mile-and-a-half away. In the event of a breach, the Black Hawk would take off, rumble over the runways to Cargo Ramp B, hover above as the riggers attach the sandbags, then fly back across the airport, giant sandbags dangling, drop them in the appropriate spot and repeat. Roughly 400 sandbags were being readied.

"The great thing about being in the Guard is it's for a good cause. You get to help Nebraskans," Peavy said. "It's what we signed up for."

# Soldiers say patrolling levees both simple, difficult

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

When it comes to monitoring a levee, one has to be part sleuth, part naturalist, part hydrologist and part outdoorsman.

At least that's what a group of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers have found out since taking on a mission supporting Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District officials in 24-hour monitoring of the levees near Bellevue and Offutt Air Force Base.

"It's a fairly simple mission, but it takes quite a bit to get it accomplished," said Staff Sgt. Thomas Friesell of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Omaha-based 754th Chemical Reconnaissance and Decontamination Company, June 24, as he prepared to begin his second patrol of the day on the roughly 10 miles of levees his team of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers monitors.

Friesell said that after receiving training from the Papio-Missouri River NRD officials on June 23, his team was given three missions to accomplish each three-person patrol: look for sand boils, read depth markers, and look for water in new areas.

Like Friesell said, it's a fairly simple mission.

Accomplishing it, though, is somewhat more difficult, especially considering that a good portion of the patrols requires the Soldiers to walk through waist-high grass in the water-logged and mosquito-infested newly created wetlands.

"Typically, one person drives the (all terrain vehicle) on the top of the levee while the other two Soldiers walk through the grass, looking for new sand boils, checking on older ones and simply looking for any changes to the levee," said Friesell.

In order to maximize the amount of time on the levee, Friesell said his team split the levee in half, with one group patrolling roughly five miles of the southern section, while the second patrols roughly the same amount on the northern portion.

"It typically takes between two-and-a-half to three hours to complete one patrol," Friesell said, adding that his teams routinely take additional water and "lots of bug spray" during each mission. "Basically we're just



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Afternoon Drive:** Pfc. Jill Lenz, a personnel specialist with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 126th Chemical Battalion from Omaha, Neb., drives an all terrain vehicle on the Papio-Missouri Natural Resource District levees in Sarpy County during a June 24 levee patrol. Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers were helping Papio-Missouri River NRD officials conduct 24-hour monitoring of Missouri River levees due to recent flooding.

looking for weak spots and those changes."

Friesell said it's a good mission for a person who enjoys working in the outdoors and encountering different types of wildlife including turtles, foxes, birds and deer.

"This is totally new for me – it's new for a lot of guys," he said. "It's just nice to work with a civilian population from your home area."

Spc. Jill Lenz, a personnel specialist from the 126th Chemical Battalion headquarters in Omaha, echoed that sentiment.

"I never thought there would be flooding, especially in my hometown of Omaha, Neb.," said Lenz, adding that she knows the work

she and her team are doing is extremely important.

"I think it's really important because we've got people still out there and if these things break, we're going to be the first to know about it and we're going to need to respond and keep everybody safe," she said.

That's exactly what being a member of the National Guard is all about, said Pfc. Jon Jerry, a member of the Nebraska City-based 192nd Military Police Detachment who has just returned a year-long deployment to Iraq earlier this year.

"For me it's actually fulfilling because

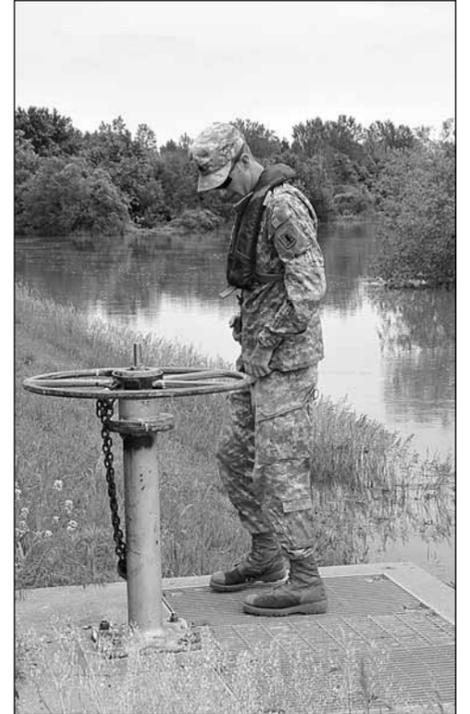


Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**Constant Supervision:** Staff Sgt. Thomas Friesell, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 754th Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company from Omaha, ensures that closed gates continue to function correctly during an afternoon patrol on the Papio-Missouri River NRD levees in Sarpy County, June 24.

I joined the National Guard in order to do things on the homefront," said Jerry. "I've got one deployment under my belt, so to be able to do something that's local in the community... it's very rewarding."

Jerry added that he and his teammates realize they're on the front lines of Nebraska's battle with the river.

"You look across the river and you see water up to someone's roof... that gives you the motivation to make sure you're doing the stuff that you're supposed to do," said Jerry.

"The levee is protecting a lot of things. I think it's a lot bigger and on a larger scale than most people realize."

## Soldiers face tough conditions in Nemaha County while maintaining focus on threatened levees

By Capt. Andrew Nelson

Staff Writer

A sand boil is like a living thing, a creature pulsating under water beneath a thin layer of sand, sending bubbles surging toward the surface.

It's not, of course. It's floodwater and sand seeping under a levee. But the reality is far more foreboding, for water seeping under a levee could cause it to fail.

In this case the sand boils are sandbagged, creating pools on the dry side of the levee that are checked several times a day by members of the Nebraska Army National Guard as part of a patrol of a levee in Nemaha County near Peru, Neb..

The Soldiers have been patrolling the levee since June 23. The patrol is based out of Peru State College and covers a roughly 7-mile stretch north of this southeastern Nebraska town.

Before that, members of the local levee board were patrolling the levees. Many are local farmers who needed to get back to their farms for at least a little while.

"We're taking a lot of the stress off of them," said Staff Sgt. Erik Becker of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 754th Chemical Company from Omaha, June 28. "This kind of helps them do what they need to survive in their everyday life."

The Soldiers normally run the levee in three-person patrols. One drives in an all-terrain vehicle – often a John Deere Gator – on the roughly 8-foot-high levee, giving the Soldier an overhead view while the other two can see potential problems close up.

"The key for us is to find trouble spots before the levee breaks," said Pfc. Joel Jones of the 623rd Engineer Company from Wahoo, Neb. If a trouble spot is seen, the troops plant



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

**Trusty Steed:** Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Wahoo-based 623rd Engineer Company patrol a Missouri River levee in Nemaha County near the town of Peru, Neb., June 26. The Soldiers have been assisting local and county emergency management officials in keeping eye on the threatened levees by conducting multiple patrols to detect any possible signs of trouble.

a small red flag and call local county emergency management officials.

"Any time we see something we give them a call," said Becker, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge for levee patrols here. "Any time we call, they check it out."

The levee protects a water treatment facility and some houses in Peru that are downhill from the bluff that most of the town sits on.

The morning of Saturday, June 25, two days into the mission, the Guardsmen could not even patrol atop of the levee. A thunderstorm had blown through that morning turning its surface to mush, and an ATV would only damage it.

That did not keep the Guard

Soldiers from checking the dry side of the levee, though, and on several already-sandbagged sand boils, which dotted the strip of land between the levee and a cornfield.

Each boil is flagged and eventually blocked with sandbags, making most look like a small swimming pool with a little volcano gurgling under the water. Some had largely dried up and were nothing more than damp piles of sand.

Most of the boils were about 50 feet from the levee, which is much better than having them closer.

"It doesn't undermine it as bad," Becker said as he slapped a mosquito.

With acres of standing water on

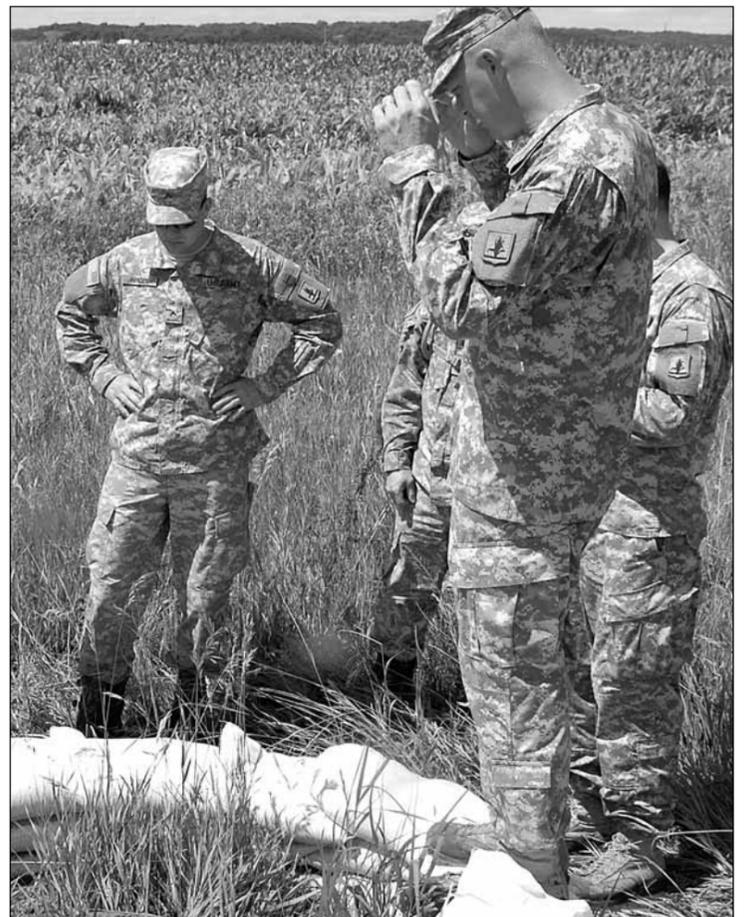


Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

**Sand Boils:** Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Wahoo-based 623rd Engineer Company check on a sand boil near a Missouri River levee near Peru, Neb. Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard are assisting local and county emergency management officials by conducting multiple checks on the sand boils during numerous patrols on the Missouri River levees near Peru.

the river side of the levee, the mosquitoes are thick here. The Soldiers are constantly slapping. And while riding an ATV, they make sure to keep their mouths shut. Wearing sunglasses while in a vehicle does not just protect you from sunlight.

"There's a few of them that could carry us off," said Jones.

Unlike many other places where levee patrols are being conducted,

this mission is in a rural area, about two miles from Peru.

"The wildlife is amazing," said Pvt. Elisabeth Eisenmann of the 623rd Engineer Company. "You see tons of beavers, turtles, skunks, raccoons, possums at night, or as the sun goes down you see deer. I guess I've never been so close to so many frogs, the bullfrogs and toads that are just out here chirping away."

## Soldiers help state keep eyes on Platte River valley

By Capt. Andrew Nelson

Staff Writer

On Thursday, June 16, the attention of seemingly everybody in the Midwest was focused on the Missouri River, where water cascaded out of Gavins Point Dam and poured through a levee near Hamburg, Iowa.

But hundreds of miles away in western Nebraska, four members of the Nebraska Army National Guard were on flood duty as well, checking levees, documenting areas of concern and meeting with local officials.

The Soldiers were part of a Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency and Nebraska National Guard team which was checking on the North Platte and far-western Platte River for flood-related issues.

"More than anything, it's an extra set of eyes," said Dave Reisen, who ran the western-Nebraska mission for NEMA. "It allows us to expand our footprint."

The North Platte River is at risk for flooding for some of the same reasons the Missouri River is leaving its banks: Heavy rainfall and lingering snowpack upstream.

The flooding had threatened U.S. Highway 30 and a Union Pacific rail line – both major economic and transportation arteries for the region – but has not been on the scale of the Missouri River.

On June 16, Staff Sgt. Jarrod Schmoker and Sgt. Derek Harris of the 1195th Transportation Company left North Platte in an up-armored Humvee for the village of Lewellen. Sitting in a valley next to the North Platte on the west side of Lake McConaughy, the town is particularly vulnerable to flooding.

There, they met with Bob Radke, a Garden County commissioner, who showed them a bridge over the river south of town where the water was high enough to be just under the roadway.



**Taking A Critical Look:** Sgt. Jarrod Schmoker and Sgt. Derek Harris of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1195th Transportation Company meet with Nathan Nielsen, the foreman of Kingsley Dam, to discuss flooding issues, June 16. The Guardsmen were on flood duty in the western part of the state, meeting with local officials and observing flooding along the North Platte River. Kingsley Dam, in Keith County, Neb., is the second-largest hydraulic fill dam in the world, according to the local chamber of commerce.

From Lewellen, Harris and Schmoker traveled up and down the Sand Hills on the north side of the lake to Kingsley Dam, the massive Depression-era structure that makes the existence of the 35,700-acre lake possible. There, they met with Nathan Nielsen, the dam's foreman.

Nielsen showed the pair the dam's flood control and water release system – the outlet tower and the Morning Glory spillway. The Morning Glory is named for the way it is shaped and used when water levels are too high. That day, water hurtled through it.

Nielsen said the dam could still step up releases and explained to the Guardsmen how that would work.

"They add a lot of professionalism," Nielsen said about the Guard. "When you get the military here, things happen."

Harris said it was important to get out and meet people and see the territory. It is much more effective than a telephone conversation.

"If you've never been there, you don't know what they are talking about," he said.

And it's more fulfilling. "I've been in Nebraska my whole life and



Photos by Capt. Andrew Nelson

**Shoreline Meeting:** Garden County (Neb.) commissioner Bob Radke and Nebraska Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Jarrod Schmoker discuss potential flood problems alongside the swollen North Platte River in western Nebraska, June 16. Schmoker, of the 1195th Transportation Company, was on flood duty, meeting with local officials and observing the river.

I've seen areas that I've never seen before," Harris said.

The Soldiers said their interactions with locals – officials and regular people – had been positive and rewarding. They are often thanked for their service; they in turn thank the locals for taking time out of their days to help them out.

"Pretty much everywhere we've been out there, people have been really kind," said Schmoker, who, like Harris, began flood duty June 5 and was expecting to end it July 3.

Reisen said the Soldiers made a big impact for another reason: They wear uniforms. He described the ACUs as an "unspoken communication" with the citizens.

"It definitely helps with the public relations," he said. "The uniform is very recognizable; they recognize the state of Nebraska is here to help."

## Aviation unit puts annual training on hold as flooding prompts call from Nebraska

By Pfc. Justin Zdan

Staff Writer

Aviation training regimens may sustain readiness, but it is still subject to change at any moment.

Members of Company A, 1-376th Aviation, recently learned this lesson in vivid detail when their scheduled annual training at Camp Rapid, S.D., was cut short when the unit was activated for state duty as part of the Guard's flood response, June 16.

"I was driving two hours away from Custer State Airfield. When I finally had cell phone service, I received the order to come back," said Sgt. 1st Class Gus R. Swanson, unit flight operations technician noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

He and other members of the company loaded their gear in a truck at 3:30 p.m. and had to report to Lincoln, Neb., at 6 a.m. the next morning.

"I got home at 1:30 a.m., packed my gear, got to work, worked from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. then did the same the very next day," said Swanson. "I was concerned what to tell my family mainly because I didn't know what to tell them."

Swanson soon discovered their top target was Eppley Airfield where more than 400 1-ton sandbags were already rigged and ready. Co. A's mission was to maintain a constant aerial eye on the levees that were being threatened by the rising tide of the Missouri River through the use of the unit's OH-58 Kiowa helicopters.

Maintaining coordination and monitoring are keys to success during missions like this, said Swanson.

"We transmit imagery to the Joint Operation Center (JOC). We also work to maintain Army Aviation Support Facilities (AASF)



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

**Equipment Check:** Staff Sgt. Edward W. Pickinpaugh, a quality assurance technician with Company A, 1-376th Aviation, tests the imagery system on board an OH-58 helicopter.

and we coordinate with Nebraska Emergency Management Agency," said Swanson.

When other Alpha Company troops heard about the change of orders they were more than willing to help.

"I was wondering why we were on AT while the flood efforts were going on," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jeff A. Husa, a standardization instructor pilot. "I know right now we have a war-time mission, but this is why we're here: to know that if our neighbor is in trouble we have the National Guard as an asset to step in and help."

"I'm a traditional Soldier, but this is part of what you get in for," said Husa.

"I was ready to go," said Warrant Officer Boe J. Searight, an OH-58 surveillance pilot. "We were excited to be useful for the operation."

"It's good to have a mission like this for us. This is what we train for and now we can put our training to use."

## Flood impact personal for Airman's family

By Pfc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

When Airman 1st Class Kris Bousquet returned from a month-long deployment to Guam with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing, he barely recognized the farm that had been in his family for 60 years, where he'd been raised his entire life.

Bousquet, a crew chief with the 155th Maintenance Squadron, came home to massive amounts of water from the Missouri River flooding the Bousquet's farm near South Sioux City, Neb. The farm's 400 acres of pasture and farmland were under eight feet of water along with their equipment. Feed and animals also had to be moved to higher ground.

"When I got back it was crazy," said Bousquet. "There wasn't really much left on the farm and there were about 30 people helping sand bag."

Neighbors, family friends, volunteers and Guardsmen from the

South Sioux area were there helping to build levees around the farm.

"We had tons of support," said Bousquet. "Family even came from Colorado and Texas to assist us."

Even with all the extra help, Bousquet's contributions were missed while he was deployed.

"It's always nice to have an extra hand around the farm," said Rick Bousquet, Kris's father. "While Kris was gone we made do, but we missed him being there to help."

"He is an all-around handy guy," added Rick. "He can fix pretty much anything and when he's helping we don't have to tell him what to do and that makes it a lot easier on me."

All of the water on the farm has made the family business a lot more challenging.

"We moved all of our stock cattle to South Dakota to be put in pasture," said Bousquet. "Usually we run them near the river at our pasture, but that's all underwater."

In addition to their stock cattle, the family has a dairy of about 150 Holsteins and Brown Swiss cattle and farmland with corn, soybeans

and hay.

It's overwhelming to see everything change, said Bousquet.

The family is taking it one day as they try to keep their farm intact, he added.

"My uncle's house that is located on the farm has already had the basement flood," said Bousquet.

As of June 22, the water was about a quarter of a mile from the farmstead and had increased a few more feet closer as of the beginning of July.

"We are not going to move the dairy cows until its mandatory or a last resort type of thing," said Bousquet.

Other farmers and neighbors have offered the Bousquets land and milking facilities if the flooding gets any worse.

With the farm's future at the mercy of the flood water, the Bousquets' resolve is strong.

"The farm has been in the family for 60 years," said Rick. "This flood is not changing our minds about having our farm near the river."

## National Guard aviators work together to stop geyser

By Pfc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

An eight-foot high geyser rose out of an underground pipeline ejecting water and flooding the surrounding area near Offutt Air Force Base in minutes after pressure from the Missouri River flood waters caused the bolts of a manhole cover to fail the night of June 26.

The culvert, which discharges treated sewage from the Omaha water treatment plant into the Missouri River, could no longer handle the intense pressure.

With much of Nebraska's aviation team deployed to Iraq with most of the states UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, several Guard aviation teams from different states were called in to help with the recent flood response.

National Guardsmen from Nebraska, Colorado and Illinois came together to try to stop the water drainage pipe at an Omaha

water treatment plant near Offutt.

"The initial plan was to have two helicopters drop off sand bags, but we ended up calling in a third for more help," said Sgt. 1st Class Gus R. Swanson, a flight operations specialist with Company A, 1-376th of the Nebraska National Guard.

The aviation teams used their Black Hawks to transport 2,000-pound sand bags to stop the water from flooding the entire water treatment plant, backing up the drainage and cutting off water for Offutt.

"We were bringing sand bags to try to plug the hole," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Scott P. Wiley, an instructor pilot with the Illinois National Guard's Company A, 1-106th Aviation Regiment. "It was meant to minimize damage until they could figure out a permanent solution."

"It was a challenge to get the sand bags exactly on the hole where they needed to be," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mike Antinora, a pilot

with the Colorado National Guard's Company A, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion.

Although placing the sand bags exactly on the hole proved challenging, the different aviation teams communicated and worked together to cover the hole. "It was easy to coordinate between the three crews and the observation helicopter on how we were going to get this mission accomplished," said Wiley.

"What we were doing was working well," he added. "Eventually we put enough sand bags on to stop most of the water."

The Omaha water treatment plant devised an alternate plan to place a permanent concrete cap in place of the sand bags to prevent the water from backing up until they could fix the hole in the pipe.

Wiley was glad to lend a helping hand to his fellow Guardsmen. "We all volunteered to be here," said Wiley. "It's what Guardsmen do. They help out others."

■ Two Omaha World-Herald newspaper reporters spend two months in war zone covering local military service members in action

# Assignment: Afghanistan

By Maj. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

When it comes to the war in Afghanistan, many Nebraskans have grown accustomed to learning about the conflict through the eyes of Nebraska National Guardsmen serving there.

Recently, for eight weeks beginning this past March, Nebraskans had an opportunity to view the war through a far different lens... the eyes of two trained Omaha-based journalists.

The journalists are part of the Omaha World-Herald staff who were sent by the newspaper to report first-hand on the work that thousands of Midlanders – primarily those from the Nebraska and Iowa National Guard – are doing daily nearly half-way around the world. Their work appeared nearly daily in Nebraska's largest newspaper under the title: "At War – At Home."

According to senior Omaha World-Herald officials, the goal was to give Nebraskans and Iowans a greater opportunity to learn about the burdens being borne by local service members.

"We see it as vital to our mission that we inform our community about U.S. wars and the people who fight them, especially our friends and neighbors from Nebraska and Iowa," wrote Mike Reilly, Omaha World-Herald executive editor, in a column that appeared on Feb. 27, the start of the newspaper's Afghanistan coverage as Joseph Morton, journalist, and Alyssa Schukar, photographer, were beginning their journey to the war-torn nation.

Reilly wrote that decision to send the two journalists to Afghanistan wasn't easy.

"Your newspaper could rely on the national news services that provide the bulk of reporting on the war for newspapers and broadcasters across the country. We could just interview the military personnel who return from Afghanistan and talk to their friends and family while they are there," he wrote. "But that seems inadequate, given that thousands of Nebraska and Iowa National Guard troops are deployed in Afghanistan. These are our people. Our volunteers. Our servicemen. Our servicewomen."

"No other news source in Nebraska has the resources, willpower or expertise to spend an extended period in a war zone," he added. "It's part of our tradition. Part of our duty. A good newspaper shines public light on the lives and sacrifices of those who labor in the cause of freedom."

For the two journalists involved in the project, the opportunity to travel to a war zone and cover local troops in action was simply something neither could pass up.

"For me, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are things that have basically gone the span of my adult life," said Schukar, 27, from Lincoln, Neb. "I was in high school during 9/11. It is something that affected my life, something that has affected the lives of those around me and it was something I think I didn't quite understand because it feels very far away. It feels very foreign and removed from everyday life here."

"So, as a journalist I'm very

curious to experience that kind of thing... to understand it better through documenting it," she added. "And so when the opportunity (arose), it was kind of a no-brainer for me."

Morton, 35, who works for the newspaper's Washington Bureau, agreed. A native of Memphis, Tenn., Morton said his understanding of Afghanistan mostly came from his work in covering the debates on the war in Washington. By travelling to Afghanistan, he said he hoped to gain a better knowledge of the actual situation being faced there by American service members.

"The war in Afghanistan is such a big debate in Washington over the money that we're spending there and how things are going," said Morton. "But covering it in D.C. feels very far removed, oftentimes."

"And it's hard to kind of sort through... What is the situation on the ground? What is going on? What are the guys seeing?" he said. "So, I think I was very interested in getting that first-hand experience and seeing it in the field to sort of inform my reporting in Washington on the debate there."

"Beyond that, I just saw it as a great professional challenge to go to Afghanistan, thousands of miles away, and visit a war zone and share those stories from the front lines with the people back home," Morton added.

Prior to leaving for Afghanistan, Morton and Schukar both spent weeks preparing themselves mentally and physically for the challenge of their careers. Both began reading extensively about Afghanistan, the people who live there, and the history of the conflict. They also attended an Afghan immersion class at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and travelled to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., to get used to covering National Guardsmen by working with members of Nebraska's 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance.)

They also began working out with body armor and helmets loaned to them by the Nebraska National Guard.

"Physically, I wanted to get myself to the point where I knew that I wouldn't be holding anybody back... that I could keep up with them... that I could hold my own," said Schukar. She said she began working out even before she was selected for the project. "I basically wanted to be invisible, more or less."

Morton said along with getting physically ready for the trip, he also had to make numerous preparations to put his life on hold for eight weeks.

"The preparations were pretty time-consuming," he said, adding that one of the biggest challenges he and Schukar both faced was making sure that their taxes were completed and filed before they left. "It was a challenge trying to juggle all that."

The pair finally departed for Afghanistan on Feb. 27. They said that as they flew into Kabul's international airport, they were both struck by the beauty of the rugged, snow-packed peaks and green-colored valleys below them.

"I was amazed at how beautiful it was," said Schukar, who added that a civilian contractor who was travelling back to Afghanistan from the United States warned her not



Photo courtesy of the Omaha World-Herald newspaper

**Combat Assignment:** Joseph Morton and Alyssa Schukar pose for a photograph during their assignment in Afghanistan covering stories about the work that Nebraska and Iowa service members are involved in there. The two journalists spent nearly two months in Afghanistan covering a variety of stories, many of which exposed them to the same challenges and dangers faced by service members on a daily basis.

to underestimate the country. "He kept saying, 'Yeah, it's beautiful, but wait until you get a little bit closer. It's kind of a brutal country.'"

The two journalists said that their initial impressions of Afghanistan were formed as they waited in line to enter the country. Glancing at the signs that lined the warehouse-like airport, Morton said he was struck by the advertisements he saw.

"One of them was for a bank that read, 'Fully Sharia Law Compliant,'" Morton remembered. "That just drove home to me how removed it was from the western world. 'Bank with us. We're compliant with Sharia law.'"

After arriving in Kabul, the two journalists soon moved to the camp where the majority of the Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from the 1-134th Cavalry were stationed. Morton said they received a warm reception from the Nebraska Guardsmen.

"The guys were fairly happy to have us there," he said, adding that many expressed their appreciation of the fact that they were there to share their stories with their families and friends back in Nebraska. "A lot of it was somebody from home is visiting them. They were just happy to have somebody from Nebraska or Iowa who knew their hometowns a little bit along for the ride."

Schukar agreed, saying that the Soldiers were extremely willing to have their photos taken and share their stories with the reporters, especially after they learned that they were from Omaha.

"The Soldiers often assumed we were from someplace else," she said, adding that once they learned that they were from Omaha, the troops were surprisingly open with them.

Many of those meetings were captured in a "Portrait" series the duo created for the World-Herald's website. "I think they were excited at the prospect of having their wives and husbands and kids be able to see them online and read the quick Q and A's. You know, they were really quite open to it... to see somebody paying attention."

During the course of their stay in Afghanistan, Morton and Schukar covered a wide array of stories including the work that Nebraska cavalrymen were doing to train Afghan police officers.

They also covered members of the Iowa Army National Guard as they made preparations to conduct combat operations against the Taliban, Nebraska Army and Air National Guard nurses as they worked to train their Afghan

nursing students, and Nebraska engineers as they helped build up infrastructure on Afghan bases, Nebraska airborne support specialists and how they were supporting far-flung special forces' bases. They also covered a Nebraska National Guard military police battalion's work at a detention facility.

According to Morton, the work often meant rising up early in the morning so that they could catch up with Guard units as they prepared to depart their bases for work "out side of the wire," and staying with them until they returned, typically at the end of a day.

Probably the most memorable experience for the reporters came when they were caught in an ambush while traveling with members of an Iowa Army Guard infantry unit in April.

"When you're around combat, that immediately ups the ante," said Morton. "That day was probably, I think, one of the standout days."

Still, there were other memorable days as well.

"Especially the humanitarian aid drops," said Schukar. "Those were always really powerful, especially because you could see how much need there is among the Afghans. It's pretty endless. It's also – generally they're austere conditions – but it's beautiful in their own way."

"And some of the interactions we had with the Afghans," she said, adding that one day during a clean-up project at the town center in Zormat was particularly poignant. "I thought that was a pretty interesting day just because it was so basic and they were working so closely. It was eye-opening because we were wandering around that district center and seeing the conditions that people live in."

"I remember that some of the kids sort of wandered during their trash pick-up into a pile of used needles and drug bottles... they just didn't know that that is something you shouldn't do," Schukar said, adding that the Soldiers quickly stopped the kids and conducted a quick lesson in safety.

Morton estimated that he filed between 30 and 40 separate stories while he was overseas while Schukar recorded nearly 33,000 images with her two Canon cameras. Many of these stories and photos appeared on the front page.

They said they also probably met and talked with hundreds of Midlands service members during their travels to bases across a wide swath of Afghanistan.

The feedback, they added, has extremely positive.

"I think families are deliriously

happy to get a glimpse into their lives over there... to see their photos and read their stories," said Morton. "The Soldiers are excited to see their stories shared... Overwhelmingly it's been very positive."

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry are among those who appreciated the work that the duo did while in Afghanistan.

"Having Joe and Alyssa embedded with the squadron in March and April was a boost to morale on two fronts," said Lt. Col. Tom Rynders, squadron commander. "First, it let the troopers of the squadron know that what they are doing here in Afghanistan is so important that Nebraska's largest newspaper sent a team to cover their stories first-hand."

"Second, the families and supporters of the squadron's troopers were able to read personal accounts of their efforts almost daily for almost a month. I can't recall an instance in previous deployments of a Nebraska National Guard unit where so much was invested by a media source to tell a very personal side of a deployment, especially at such a significant risk to its reporter and photographer," Rynders said.

Before long it was time to return to the United States. Morton and Schukar said they both returned with a greater respect for the service members they met, the work that they're doing and the challenges they're facing on a daily basis.

"I think I gained a fuller understanding of specifically in Afghanistan the challenges they're facing, how tough a job it really is there," said Morton. "But also just generally the way it feels to be on a deployment, at least a little bit."

"We were only there for two months versus a year or whatever, but the idea that you want to be there in a lot of ways, but you also are obviously missing out on a lot of stuff back home," he added.

Schukar agreed.

"I certainly gained an appreciation for what Soldiers do," she said, adding that she learned that many of the Soldiers she met are extremely intelligent and have huge hearts. "It's hard to understand that from a distance sometimes."

Schukar added that her appreciation extends to the Afghans she met, as well.

"It was cool to see how no matter where you are, people are still people. There is still a lot of love everywhere and I don't think a lot of people have a very good idea of what Afghans are like," Schukar said. "There are some great people, some really amazing people."

## “There is no mission without the logistician.”



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

**A Winning Team:** Nebraska National Guard logisticians pose with state leaders and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, Army National Guard command sergeant major, after receiving awards for their performance in the 2011 Chief of Staff of the Army's Combined Logistics Excellence Awards. The Nebraska National Guard had three national winners and one runner-up in the nationwide logistics competition, which were honored during a ceremony held at the Richmond Convention Center in Richmond, Va., May 12.

## Nebraskans clean up at Combined Logistics Excellence Awards

■With three national title winners and one national runner-up, Nebraska proven to be mission ready

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon  
Assistant Editor

There is an old saying that goes something like this: “There is no mission without the logistician.”

Assuming that saying is true, Nebraska Army National Guard logisticians have ensured the Nebraska National Guard is well prepared to support any mission, domestic or overseas.

Logisticians from four Nebraska National Guard units distinguished themselves nationally when they were honored in front of their National Guard, active Army and Army Reserve peers during the 2011 Chief of Staff of the Army's Combined Logistics Excellence Awards, or CLEAs, ceremony held at the Richmond Convention Center in Richmond, Va., May 12.

The CLEAs recognize organizations for logistics excellence in the areas of maintenance, deployment and supply. Nebraska Army National Guard units took top national honors in one maintenance category and two supply categories. Another Nebraska unit garnered runner-up honors in their supply category.

According to Sgt. Maj. Boyd Navratil, supply and logistics senior noncommissioned officer for Nebraska, the logistics excellence program is a three-tiered competition – state, regional and national. Every unit represented at the CLEAs had already won their state and regional-level competition. Regional winners then competed at the national level where national winners and runners-up were chosen.

Nebraska units recognized were the Lincoln-based 267th Support Maintenance Company, which took top honors in the Modified Table of Organization and Equipment, medium category; the Seward-based Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, which won the Unit Supply, MTOE category; and the Lincoln-based 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, which took top honors in the Parent Organization, MTOE category. The Camp Ashland-based 209th Regional Training Institute was the runner up in the Unit Supply, Table of Distribution and Allowances category.

The Nebraska National Guard was so well represented during the ceremony that the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff, Supply and Logistics, singled out Nebraska during his opening remarks to the assembled crowd.

“You see these logistics awards...for what they are – a chance to challenge yourself



Chief Warrant Officer 2 KC Sohl from the 267th Support Maintenance Company accepts the winner's plaque from Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III.



Sgt. 1st Class Pamela Whisenhunt from the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion accepts the winner's plaque from Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III.

to excel,” said Lt. Gen. Mitchell Stevenson. “Organizations like the Nebraska National Guard...who won in three categories this year, which is no small feat... in fact one of their Guard units has won the awards here six times.”

“They are so enthused in Nebraska that when the evaluators came to town they even had the mayor of Seward, Neb., at the facility showing the whole town's support for their sustainers,” added Stevenson. “Now that's teamwork.”

Stevenson added some perspective to the scope of the work put in by the often-underestimated logisticians.

“For nine long years our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan to destruct terrorist networks like Al Qaeda have made our country a safe place,” said Stevenson. “But none of this could have happened without the diligent work of the logistician.”

“In nine years of war we've deployed almost seven-and-a-half million Soldiers and civilians in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and it has been a herculean effort to sustain them all,” he added. “The American Soldier's creed says that we never quit and you didn't quit.”

Nebraska Guard officials were pleased with the results and proud of the Soldiers that put in the hard work.

“I think (our) Nebraskans did awesome,” said Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal, assistant



Staff Sgt. Lillie Chambers from Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company accepts the winner's plaque from Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III.



Staff Sgt. Jeremy Rinehart from the 209th Regional Training Institute accepts the runner-up plaque from Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III.

adjutant general – Army. “We always strive for excellence as Nebraskans, I believe, and this is just one example of how we can be recognized across our service for excellence. So I think Nebraska represented itself extremely well here today.”

“I admire what these Soldiers do,” said Col. Mark Stockstell, Nebraska's director of logistics. “They have the competitive spirit, they take their jobs very seriously, they're professional and when they do compete...they don't let us down and I think that's the key statement – they're not going to let us down.”

“These are the best that Nebraska has to offer,” said Navratil. “These are the future senior logisticians and maintainers of the state. These are the people that I believe can go out and encourage others to compete, lead by example and be leaders in their jobs.”

A few Soldiers from each honored unit attended the ceremony to take home the hardware that comes with winning the national award. And although only a few could attend the ceremony, winning the awards takes teamwork, including buy-in from command, said the Soldiers.

“What's exciting is we have the command support,” said Stockstell. “We have the command support from the chief of staff and the adjutant general and he also has encouraged our supply and our maintenance people to compete at the highest levels.”

The Soldiers selected to receive the hardware were honored to represent their units' hard work and dedication.

“It's a great honor,” said Staff Sgt. Rob Trospier, supply sergeant with the 267th SMC. “I'm very proud to be here, proud I got the opportunity to represent the unit.”

“I think it'll mean a lot to the unit,” he added. “The 267th has a pretty long tradition of competing and winning various competitions and leading the state in a lot of areas, so this is probably one of the biggest ones that a maintenance company can be recognized for.”

“It feels awesome,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 KC Sohl, an automotive warrant officer with the 267th SMC. “It feels like everything we've been doing and working toward has finally paid off...I think the 267th deserves it. I think the Soldiers of the 267th deserve to be number one because that's what they show every weekend, every day, every drill. They show how to be the best and we're always doing what's right.”

“I'm excited about it,” said Sgt. 1st Class Pamela Whisenhunt, a logistician with the 110th MMB who added she felt a little guilty attending the ceremony and accepting the national award on behalf of her unit because so many other people worked hard for it. “It feels good to be able to accomplish something like that.”

Thanks to the three winners and runner-up finish, the Nebraska National Guard firmly cemented itself as a state with a logistics program to be emulated, said the Nebraska Soldiers.

“I think it shows the rest of the country just what Nebraska is made of,” said Trospier. “It really says a lot about what we're doing as a state and National Guard.”

“Nebraska is about excellence and we have a lot of excellent people and excellent units in our state,” said Navratil.

“It's a very good reflection upon the Nebraska National Guard, not only in work ethic, but command support to logistics,” said Stockstell.

Now with the awards in the rear-view mirror, organizers say the goal is to continue to strive for excellence and foster the competitive spirit in more units around the state, but the biggest goal remains simple.

“It's all about taking care of Soldiers,” said Navratil. “That's what our job is as Soldiers – take care of each other...and the logisticians and the maintenance people, if we don't do our part, we aren't successful on the battlefield.”

“It's just a great program and this is the future of the Nebraska Army National Guard,” he added. “This is the youth of logistics, the youth of maintenance and these are the people we need to have go out and sell the program and encourage their peers to get involved.”

“It isn't easy. If it was easy, everybody would do it.”



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

**Trophy Catch:** Rachel, (left) a senior at Lincoln Northstar High School, and her fishing buddy, Master Sgt. Aaron Aulner, 155th Air Refueling Wing, show off a fish they caught, May 20, during the annual "Gators Gone Fishin'." This is the second year Rachel and Aulner were paired together to catch fish and enjoy the event.

# Gone Fishin'

## Air Guardsmen help teach teenagers angling's finer arts

By Airman 1st Class Mary Thach  
Staff Writer

**P**ositive community relations can be established by giving one's time to people in the surrounding communities.

Members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing volunteered, May 20, to teach students enrolled in the Functional Community Reference program at Lincoln North Star High School how to fish.

For the past seven years, the FCR program at LNS has offered a unique opportunity for students to participate in Gators Gone Fishin', an annual event where students interact with Guard members and other volunteers while fishing.

Shawnie Motschenbacher, a teacher in the FCR program at LNS, said she participates annually in the fishing event for special needs students. Every year, she watches parents, Air National Guard members, LNS staff, and Veterans of Foreign Wars from Lincoln volunteer their time and assistance to students who want to learn a new skill and have fun.

Motschenbacher said it was a good opportunity for current and retired service members and students to work together teaching teenagers to fish.

Sally Moon, parent of a senior enrolled in the FCR program at LNS, volunteered to work at this year's event. This is the fourth year Sally and her daughter ventured out to fish with other students enrolled in the program.

"It is neat to see all the kids having a good time along with their teachers, parents, and the Guard," said Moon.

Moon said her daughter has been in special education programs since she was an infant, and Gators Gone Fishin' is the highlight of her year.

Moon's daughter learned about fishing by participating in the event for the past four years. She also learned the types of fish living in Nebraska during school in preparation for the big day.

Although the event was designed to show students how to fish, the volunteers learned from the teenagers as well.

This is the second year Staff Sgt. Douglas Carlson, 155th ARW staff accountant, volunteered for the event. He said the students and volunteers learned how to be in the moment and simply enjoy the afternoon.

"We learn just as much from them as they do from us," said Carlson.

The 155th ARW has volunteered to help special needs children for nearly a decade and plans to continue in future years.

Earl Motschenbacher, a former Air Force service member and member of VFW Post 3606 in Lincoln, volunteered along with several other veterans. He said it was exciting to see young service members get involved in the community and see the kids having fun.

The entire day revolved around learning for all who were present.

Motschenbacher said, "people have done a lot for the veterans lately. I think it is a way of giving something back to the kids here."

## Retiree council executive retires

**A**fter a long and dedicated career on the Nebraska Military Retiree Council (NMRC) Executive Committee, Jerry Chenoweth has decided to hang up his hat and step down as Secretary.

Jerry has been a member of the committee since its inception and has served faithfully as Secretary since 1995. We wish him well in his well-deserved retirement (again).

In the interim, retired Senior Master Sgt Peggy Brown has stepped up to fill Jerry's spot and complete his term of office. Welcome, Peggy, I know you'll enjoy your role on the council.

Our NMRC meetings are held the second Wednesday of every month at 1 p.m. at the "Spirit of 1776" Armory. Anyone is welcome to attend.

### ■ From the desk of Sgt. 1st Class Mary Moss:

Life changes can affect retirement benefits for survivors.

Many times I encounter retirees who have either divorced or remarried when the time comes to apply for retired pay. It's important to remember that anytime you have a life change (marriage, divorce and/or death of a spouse) you may need to update your survivor benefit annuitant and the beneficiary for your final pay, in addition to updating your DEERS (ID card) record.

### Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

Final pay is a one-time payment that can be made to anyone. It is the final pay check for however many days the retiree lived during their final month of life.

Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuitant is separate from the beneficiary for final pay. Changing the SBP annuitant and the final pay beneficiary take two separate forms. Changes to SBP *must* be made within *one year* of the life change.

If you have any of these life changes, be sure to contact either Sgt. 1st Class Mary Moss at (402)309-7323 or Sgt. Jennifer Short at (402) 309-7319 so that we may review the specifics of your situation and complete the appropriate paperwork.

### ■ National Guard retiree breakfast schedules:

Every month, retirees meet for breakfast to hear presenters, share stories and learn more about retirement. Locations are:

• **Lincoln: Army National Guard retirees:** First Monday of each month, 8 a.m., T&R Garden, 48th Street and Cornhusker Highway.  
• **Air National Guard retirees:** Last Monday of each month, 8 a.m., The Pantry, 3939 N. 48th Street.

• **North Platte area retirees:** Second Saturday of each month, 8 a.m., Village Inn, North Platte, Neb.

If other groups meet, please contact Bill Nelson at (402) 309-7105 or william.nelson1@us.army.mil to publish the information.

### ■ Reminder:

When you reach 59, and retired from the Nebraska National Guard and have 20 or more years of service, you need to make application for retired benefits.

The Nebraska Army National Guard point of contact is Sgt. 1st Class Mary Moss at (402) 309-7323.

The Nebraska Air National Guard point of contact is Senior Master Sgt Michele Carlson at (402) 309-1448.

### ■ Links to important retiree information:

• **Retired Pay:** To check on your retired pay, go to <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>. Here, you can also print your 1099 for tax purposes each year.

• **Pensions:** There's been some questions arising concerning government pension for technicians and Social Security offsets. For more information, go to <http://www.ssa.gov/gpo-wep>. Contact your local Social Security office for more information or questions.

• **Retiree Dental:** Using the Retiree Dental program or want more information? Go to <http://www.trdp.org> for updates and information.



## Beginners Motorcycle Rider courses available

If you are a current member of the Nebraska National Guard, you are eligible for reimbursement if you attend The Motorcycle Safety Foundation approved Basic Rider's Course. Completion of the Basic Rider's Course is required to operate a motorcycle on military installations.

The two- to three-day course (depending upon provider) includes classroom instruction and practical riding experience in a controlled setting. It is designed for beginners and re-entry riders above the age of 19. Once completed, the training allows riders to waive the Nebraska State motorcycle test for an operator's license and may also qualify the participant for lower insurance premiums.

**Note:** In order to be eligible for reimbursement, members must obtain pre-approval from the Safety Office prior to registering for this course.

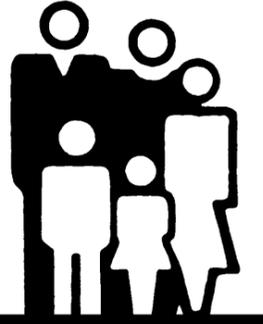
For additional information, or to get pre-approval, contact the Nebraska Army National Guard Safety Office at (402) 309-1833 or the Nebraska Air National Guard Safety Office at (402) 309-1118.



**Coming Soon!**  
**Guardians of Freedom**  
**Airshow 2011**  
September 10 & 11



## Guard Family NEWS You Can Use



### 2011 Operation Military Kids Youth Camps

Type of Camp	Grade/Age	Date(s)	Camp Location/Address.
<b>Leadership Canoe Trip</b>	High School/ 14-18 years old	July 29-31	Covenant Cedars Camp PO Box 68, 2909 No W Rd, Hordville, Neb.
<b>Military Youth with Disabilities</b>	K-12 grade or 6-11 years old	Aug. 1-4	Eastern Nebraska 4-H Center 21520 West Highway 31, Gretna, Neb.
<b>Teen Leadership and Survival Camp</b>	Middle and High School	Aug. 1-5	Eastern Nebraska 4-H Center 21520 West Highway 31, Gretna, Neb.

Information (informational flier, registration form, parent informational sheets and contact info) concerning the OMK camps being offered this summer can be found at: <http://www.nebraskaomk.org/>

## Defense Department officials seek input to update MWR services

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Defense Department officials intend to use input gained from customer satisfaction surveys to bolster Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy said, June 20.

Also intended to meet the up-to-date needs of service members and their families, officials are electronically sending 600,000 surveys to military installations worldwide, Robert L. Gordon III said.

The survey, which is comprised of 135 questions that address a range of offerings from fitness centers to libraries, and automotive services to leisure activities, is the first of its kind to collect input from all components of the U.S. military, including National Guardsmen and Reservists, he said.

Officials hope to have survey data returned in about three weeks. "If (service members) can turn it around quickly, we can soon understand how we're doing and see how we can get better," Gordon said.

Sent randomly, the survey takes about 20 minutes to complete and the answers are kept confidential and anonymous, he said.

"We want to get a sense of exactly what our service members and their families are using (at MWR) so we can tailor it to our multigenerational force," Gordon said.

Recognizing the differences in multigenerational needs is essential to members of the armed forces, he said.

"The younger service members might use different types of equipment in our fitness centers [than older troops], and library services is another area where our millennial generation — ages 18 to 29 — is more likely to use online service, while others use books," Gordon said.

The MWR survey does not include data from family members since valid contact information was not available for them.

Because of this, Gordon emphasized that service members should keep their families in mind when filling out the survey.

"Don't just think about yourself," he said, "Think about your families. It's important because we want to make sure your families have access to the very best services that we can provide them."

## VA officials create women veterans call center

WASHINGTON (NGNEWS) — The Department of Veterans Affairs is reaching out to women veterans in order to solicit their input on ways to enhance the health care services VA provides to women veterans.

"We are taking a proactive approach to enhancing VA health care for women veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are seeking the input of women veterans so that VA can continue to provide high-quality health care to the growing numbers of women veterans."

Representatives at VA's Health Resource Center are placing calls to women veterans nationwide, asking them to share their VA experiences and suggest potential enhancements that will further VA's mission to provide the best

care.

Women veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the veteran population. Of the 22.7 million living veterans, more than 1.8 million are women, or nearly 8 percent of the total veteran population and 6 percent of all veterans who use VA health care services.

VA officials estimate that by 2020, women veterans will constitute 10 percent of the veteran population and 9.5 percent of VA patients.

HRC representatives started placing calls June 1, and are contacting women veterans who have enrolled, but have not used VA services.

"Through this contact center, we are placing friendly, conversational calls to women veterans," said Patricia Hayes, the chief consultant of VA's Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group.

"We want these veterans and their caregivers to talk candidly about why they are not using VA, whether they are aware of the gender-specific services we offer, and what additional services they would like to see VA offer."

HRC representatives are also informing women veterans about the services VA offers and quickly connecting them with appropriate departments if they are interested in trying VA health care, officials said. Veterans who have complaints about VA are connected to a patient advocate who helps resolve issues.

VA has trained professionals in all aspects of women's health, officials said, including: general primary care, osteoporosis management, heart disease, mental health care, menopause services and obesity-related issues, such as diabetes.

## Quilt honoring America's fallen service members makes stop in Nebraska

By Pfc. Heidi Krueger  
Staff Writer

A moment of silence followed Staff Sgt. Jarell S. Roach's singing of Amazing Grace brought tears to the eyes of family members, friends, service members and guests honoring Nebraska's fallen service members.

A ceremony was held at the International Quilt Study Center and Museum in Lincoln, June 29, to present the Lost Hero's Art Quilt and The Iraq/Afghanistan Memorial Quilt Four to honor fallen service members.

"Today's the day we support and recognize those families that sacrificed so much because we know the price of freedom is not free," said Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy.

The Lost Hero's Art Quilt is a traveling quilt that honors every lost hero. Individuals have been chosen symbolically to represent the fallen in each of the 50 states.

In addition to the 50 service men and women memorialized on the quilt, there are 32 more service members at the top of the quilt to represent the diversity of all the members who have lost lives serving America.

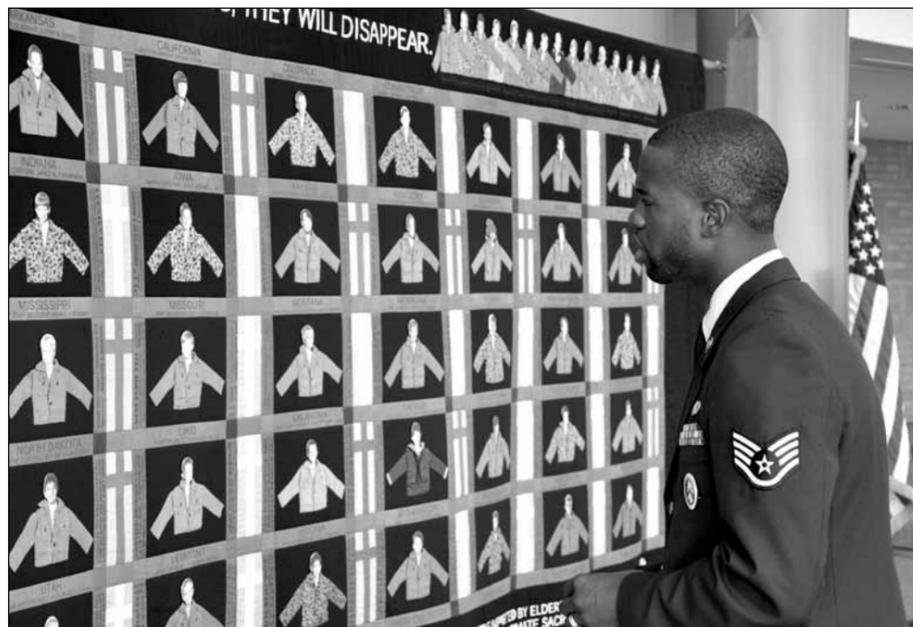
"The service members are true patriots," said Sheehy. "They are willing to give up their lives for us."

Each hero is represented by a childhood photo showing the potential of his or her life. The photos are in black and white to represent the life that is lost. They are also dressed in vintage a GI Joe jacket, which brings them back to their childhood when many of them dreamed of serving their country.

"Showing the viewers the service members as children provides a bigger impact on the feelings behind it," said Julie Feingold, the artist of the quilt.

The service members are not statistics, they are real people and they need to be remembered that way, she added.

"The mission of this quilt is to honor the men and women, educate people, remember their sacrifices, open hearts and minds,



Photos by Pfc. Heidi Krueger

**Hero's Quilt:** Staff Sgt. Jarell S. Roach reads the different blocks on the Lost Hero's Art Quilt during a ceremony honoring Nebraska's fallen service members held in Lincoln on June 29. The quilt honors all the fallen United States service members since 2003 and is travelling across every state before it makes its final stop in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 11, 2011.

exhibit across America and support the families," said Lt. Col. Donald Kneif, deputy personnel officer and key-note speaker of the ceremony.

"When you line up these phrases down a page, the first letter of each line spells heroes," added Kneif. "I think it's a great way for the mission to be put out."

Two heroes represent Nebraska on the quilt. Army Sgt. Wayne R. Cornell represented the Nebraska block and Marine Corps Cpl. Drew Weaver is remembered on the top of the quilt.

Surrounding the 50 blocks on the quilt are words that describe each of the service

members. Nebraska's block for Cornell reads kind hearted, black belt, wonderful son, brother, husband and father. That is followed by his family members' names, tae kwondo, family man, free spirited, emergency medical technician and firefighter.

The words are a simple way to keep the spirit of those lost close.

"Just remember one thing off the quilt so our heroes will not be forgotten," said Feingold.

The Lost Hero's Art Quilt was in Lincoln June 28 - July 3 and July 4 in Seward. It will end its travel on Sept. 11 in Washington, D.C., on the 10th Anniversary of the terrorist



**Fallen Nebraska Hero:** Representing one of Nebraska's blocks on the Lost Hero's Art Quilt is fallen Army Sgt. Wayne R. Cornell. Surrounding the childhood photo of Cornell are words to memorialize and describe him by family and friends.

attacks of 9/11.

"The Lost Hero's Art Quilt was created to honor the memory of the American men and women who have lost their lives since Sept. 11, 2001 in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Feingold.

The Iraq/Afghanistan Memorial Quilt is a project that seeks to create a block for the 6,000+ men and women who perished in the recent years from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

But Nebraska also has its own quilt dedicated to the Nebraska military members who have lost their lives.

The Iraq/Afghanistan Memorial Quilt Four was created to honor the 68 Nebraska military men and women who have perished in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars since March 30, 2003. Each block on the quilt is dedicated to each of the individuals. The blocks are engraved with the service member's name, service and a brief biography.

The Nebraska quilt is the fourth quilt in the series. There is expected to be around 80 quilts all together.

# Street Talk

“What do you think about being part of the Nebraska National Guard’s response to the historic flooding?”

## Military Department rises to meet historic flood’s unique challenge

The flood of 2011 will long be remembered.

Some will remember it for the sheer intensity and duration of the event itself. Terms such as 100-year and 500-year flood have been used to describe it.

Unlike other disasters, such as tornadoes that strike quickly and leave, the 2011 flood has been a constant since late May. The duration is unknown, but water releases are expected to continue and it will be some time before water levels recede.

We will also remember it for the damage caused. While we are still gathering assessments as I type this, it is safe to say that the impact is significant.

I also believe that we will look back on the 2011 flood and remember how our Military Department (the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, our other state employees, and our Soldiers and Airmen) continue to meet the crisis head-on with professionalism, competence and tenacity.

The relationships built over the years between NEMA and other state agencies, county and local emergency managers have been key to meeting the challenges faced so far and those yet to come. NEMA may be small in size, but they pack a mighty punch when it comes to planning, preparing, response and recovery.

Our Military Department Human Resources staff and our Sup-

port Services Division, as well as our Joint Force Headquarters staff and Major Subordinate Commands have been exemplary in ensuring our Soldiers and Airmen have the support they need to execute their missions. What a great effort by all.

Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, Chief Master Sgt. Bard Gossage and I have met with our Soldiers and Airmen on duty and one word comes to mind: Pride. They are working in our State Emergency Operations Center, the Joint Operations Center, rigging and delivering ton-and-a-half sandbags, conducting significant aviation operations, protecting critical infrastructure and patrolling levees.

As we have watched them perform their missions, we are extremely proud of them. Theirs was a very short notice response and when we needed them, they were and continue to be there for our citizens.

It is equally true that, to the individual, they are proud of what they are doing. Some have mentioned their previous service in operations such as “Bush Hog” following winter ice storms, Hurricane Katrina and Gustav, tornado and wildfire response missions and last

year’s winter storms and spring floods. For others this is their first experience in serving our communities.

I know that as you read the articles in this issue and see the pictures depicting our Soldiers and Airmen at

work, you will agree that they are proud of their service.

I want to commend our noncommissioned officers for their leadership and caring of our men and women on the front lines of our flood support. This is extremely demanding duty in very hot, humid, bug-infested conditions, particularly for those on levee patrol. The days are long and can be monotonous.

Despite this, these Soldiers and Airmen march on because they know our communities and first responders count on them. It is gratifying to see the support of everyday citizens for our men and women, often providing encouraging words, a cool drink and many other tokens of appreciation.

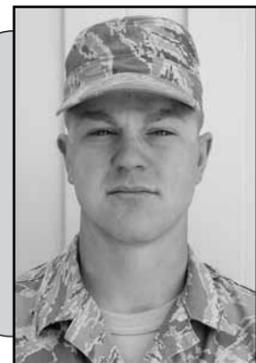
State missions such as those we are engaged in currently are what make the National Guard unique amongst all of the other services. While we will continue to answer the call when our nation needs us, we will also be the first military responders when crisis strikes here at home. This is what defines us as Citizen-Soldiers. Our mission in support of the flood fight of 2011 is not over.

Thank you for being Always Ready and Always There.

### The Adjutant General

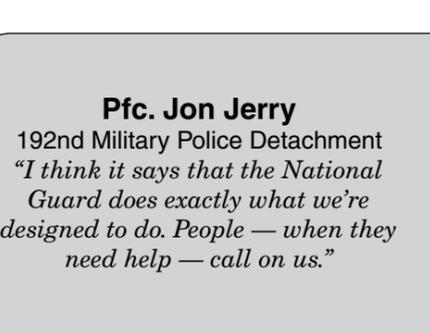
Major General

Judd Lyons



**Airman 1st Class  
Cody Williamson**

155th Logistics Readiness Squadron  
*“I love it. Being new to the Air Force, the more chances I get to help other people out, the better I feel.”*



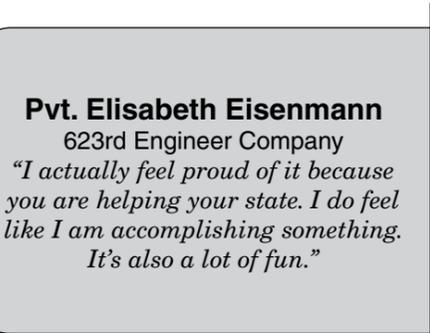
**Pfc. Jon Jerry**

192nd Military Police Detachment  
*“I think it says that the National Guard does exactly what we’re designed to do. People — when they need help — call on us.”*



**Spc. Megan Liekhus**

67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade  
*“I feel good coming out here. All the civilians who are out here volunteering their time, I felt bad that they had to do it themselves. So, it’s kind of refreshing helping them... but it’s hard work.”*



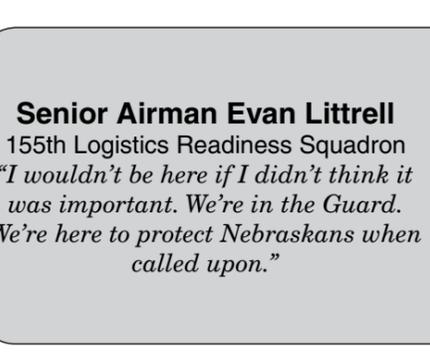
**Pvt. Elisabeth Eisenmann**

623rd Engineer Company  
*“I actually feel proud of it because you are helping your state. I do feel like I am accomplishing something. It’s also a lot of fun.”*



**Pfc. Joel Jones**

623rd Engineer Company  
*“If there’s problems in the community, we can help. I’m excited to be part of the solution.”*



**Senior Airman Evan Littrell**

155th Logistics Readiness Squadron  
*“I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t think it was important. We’re in the Guard. We’re here to protect Nebraskans when called upon.”*



## Dedicated Nebraska National Guard Soldiers, Airmen making us all proud

Anyone wanting to know about what it’s like to be a Nebraska National Guardsman — or questioning the value of the Guard — this past May, June and July would be pretty good examples.

Not only did we wish two Army Guard units farewell

as they began important year-long missions that will ultimately take them to Afghanistan, we also welcomed two other Army Guard units home from lengthy deployments to Iraq.

At the same time, the Nebraska Air National Guard conducted a major deployment in support of it aerospace expeditionary force commitments to multiple locations around the globe while also supporting the on-going NATO effort in Libya.

On top of that, members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, in concert with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and other local, state and federal agencies, worked hard to respond to possibly the largest flood-related emergency that Nebraska has faced in many years. A flood emergency that prompted Guardsmen around the state to raise their hands to volunteer for whatever duty the Guard needed to perform.

We also said goodbye to Sgt. Robert Schlote, an extremely well-respected member of the 195th Forward Support Company, who died while home in Omaha on leave while serving on his fourth overseas

deployment since 2004.

You know, there are lots of reasons to be proud of being a member of the Nebraska National Guard, and there have been many times over the past years that I’ve definitely felt that pride. Still, considering all that we’ve faced here recently and how we’ve responded to these and many other challenges, that pride is a little deeper today.

I think retired Maj. Gen. Robert Bailey put it best recently when he spoke about the pride he felt at having served decades in uniform as a member of the Nebraska Air National Guard and how the National Guard is truly one of America’s national treasures.

That’s certainly as true today as it ever was.

To me, what makes the National Guard special are the men and women who volunteer to fill its ranks. These people come from every part of our state, each with his or her own reasons for wanting to serve this state and nation in uniform. And yet, while each of these talented people have his or her own reasons for joining, they are all united by a commonly held desire and dedication to use their talents in

### My Turn

Editor, Prairie Soldier

Kevin J. Hynes



the service of their fellow citizens.

They’re people like Sergeant Schlote, who joined the National Guard during an era of our history when deployments weren’t just a possibility,

they were a near certainty. And like this fallen Soldier, they’re people who time and time again have raised their hand to volunteer for the tough assignments that have taken them away from their friends and family for extended periods of time. People who have said, “I’ll do that.”

What also makes the National Guard truly unique are our state and federal missions and the fact that we’ve proven that we can complete both missions simultaneously, just as we are today, just as we have in the past and just as we will in the future.

This nation and this state have faced tough times before and undoubtedly will again in the future.

But, if these past three months are any indication, I have no doubt that the Nebraska National Guard will be more than equal to any challenge placed in its path.

A few years ago the National Guard unveiled a motto: “National Guard — Always Ready, Always There.” Nebraska National Guardsmen truly exemplified that motto during the recent challenges.

And each and every one of us should take pride in that.

## Worth Repeating

*“The backbone of our military force should be the trained citizen who is first and foremost a civilian, and who becomes a Soldier or a Sailor only in time of danger — and only when Congress considers it necessary.”*

— Harry S. Truman  
U.S. president

*“Not a day passes over the earth, but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words and suffer noble sorrows.”*

— Charles Read  
English novelist

*“Honor lies in honest toil.”*

— Grover Cleveland  
U.S. president

## PROMOTIONS

### Army National Guard

**Major General**  
David C. Petersen

**Brigadier General**  
Michael D. Navrkal

**Captain**  
Jared S. Fox  
Carol L. Mills  
Kevin R. Reiners  
Robert J. Schepers  
Michael P. Sullivan

**First Lieutenant**  
Willie E. Garrett III

**Master Sergeant**  
Andrew J. Arellano  
Randall L. McHugh  
Gail L. Peterson  
Clint J. Thompson

**Sergeant First Class**  
Matthew T. Broman  
Heath F. Hamilton  
Mark L. Kniffen  
Landon C. Koopman  
Jason D. McCord  
Jeremy M. Rupprecht  
Richard D. Schneider  
Michael V. Schroder  
Marty L. Timberlake  
Penny F. Winterburn

**Staff Sergeant**  
Brent A. Anderson  
Octavio Baeza  
Mathew M. Brown  
Timothy A. Cusatis Jr.  
Scottie L. Davis  
Jason B. Douglas  
Lindsay S. Goodrich  
Justin R. Harmon  
Shellie N. Harrington  
Shawn M. Humphrey  
Nicholas A. Kemp  
Gary G. Klapperich  
Leslie R. Lautenschlager  
Donne E. McKimmey  
Nicholas J. Mosel  
Brian L. Mueller  
Jennifer M. Nelson  
Brian M. Nystrom  
Tyler D. Powell  
Alan L. Rosenthal  
Nathanael J. Rutter  
Shawn M. Sullivan  
James J. Sykes  
Herschel B. Talley  
Andrea N. Timperley  
Brandon J. Vanderslice  
Jeffrey J. Wagner  
Elisabeth N. Weyers

### Sergeant

Robert L. Anderson  
Cameron J. Araujo  
Aaron M. Arp  
Brody L. Bartlett  
Travis M. Benda  
Mitchell R. Boesch  
Joshua L. S. Bollman  
John E. Brandt  
Raquel L. Carlin  
Cole M. Classen  
Cassandra M. Daynothorn  
Jacob L. Deines  
James M. Engel  
Amber J. Gralheer  
Joy L. Hansen  
Caylub A. Hayes  
Benjamin Hodge  
Zachary L. Homes  
Christopher M. Inskew  
Andy J. Kallhoff  
Trevor J. Kurtzhals  
Kelsey R. Lamb  
Kevin J. Larson  
Devin R. Lindly  
Cody B. Lubeck  
Michael D. Marx  
Jacob A. McCormack  
Rodney D. McDonald  
William F. F. Montoya  
James S. Morphey  
David L. Munoz  
Percy J. Newton Sr.  
Riley J. Ohde  
Ryan S. Olsen  
Mitchell K. Osantowski  
Chad M. Oswald  
Justin M. Otoski  
Sarah J. Pieper  
Benjamin P. Promes  
Christopher L. Reichert  
Leonard P. Robinson Jr.  
Aaron M. Rockford  
Angel R. Rodriguez  
Michael S. Ronk  
Julio A. Salgado  
Jason E. Sautter  
Scott C. Spofford  
Bret S. Stubbs  
Benjamin J. Sudtelgte  
David J. Supanckick  
Kimberly M. Sykes  
Jason W. Trumble  
Jessica A. Villwok  
Tony V. Vodicka  
Bradley J. Wardyn  
Daniel J. Wardyn  
Nathan R. E. Wetzel Sr.  
Adam R. White  
Paul D. Willman  
Matthew S. Wonder  
Timothy J. Wheelock  
Chad A. Woods

### Specialist

Kodi J. Classen  
Justin L. Cox  
Richard A. Dawson  
Ethan D. Dodd  
Stephen B. Donica  
Wayne M. Durham Jr.  
Levi L. Focken  
Brandon C. Girard  
Martin Gomez Jr.  
Corey A. Harrison  
William D. Henske  
Travis R. Hofmann  
Luke J. Kelley  
Jacob A. Kraatz  
Jill A. Lenz  
Reed M. Lukow  
Nicholas A. Madden  
Marissa S. S. Martinez  
Jared R. Morehead  
Chad L. Nowak  
Jesse W. Roberts  
Shane L. Ruh  
William J. Seier  
Michael N. Springer  
Chase B. Sund  
Anthony W. Svoboda  
Alex M. Topil  
Jazmin R. Utterback  
Avery L. Walker  
Justin D. Weaver

### Private First Class

Brittney M. Backstrom  
Jeffery J. Daniels  
Jason P. Demaray  
Benjamin A. Gillming  
Jarell J. Grant  
Jonathan J. Harre  
Andrew M. Holton  
Codi A. Jarosz  
Kody A. Johnson  
Jeremiah R. Ludwig  
Christine A. Martinez  
Brian J. McKay  
Kalor A. Moore  
Michael J. Ogarro  
Trenton E. Sutton  
Mary R. Vu  
Johnathan E. Weinmaster

### Private Two

Johnathon A. Albaugh  
Kristina C. Epsteinsutton  
Dion W. Hixson  
Kathy H. Reyes  
Jonathan L. Rhodes  
William J. Robb  
Michael J. Wesson  
Jeptha R. Willoughby

### Air National Guard

**Lieutenant Colonel**  
John VonOsterheldt

### Captain

Cody Hollist

### First Lieutenant

David Strom

### Technical Sergeant

Lucas Brown  
James P. Foster  
Guillermo J. Rosas  
Mindy S. Satchwell

Tandon Vanscyoc

### Staff Sergeant

Matthew J. Dieckhoff  
Derek D. Myers

### Senior Airman

Neal F. Chloupek  
John D. Craig  
Nathan Jakub  
Lane D. Kelly

Eric D. Miksch

Jon N. Schon  
Travis L. Tonkinson  
Bryce D. Whalen  
Cody N. D. Williamson

### Airman First Class

Jonathan A. Bliss  
Matthew Spieker

## AWARDS

### Army National Guard Combat Action Badge

Sgt. 1st Class Ryan K. Faulkner  
Sgt. 1st Class David R. Fink  
Sgt. 1st Class Timothy S. James  
Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer A. Luhr  
Staff Sgt. Jeremy J. Kozak  
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey L. Meyers  
Staff Sgt. Philip J. Wemhoff  
Sgt. Joshua A. Armon  
Sgt. John M. Ferguson  
Sgt. Lucas L. Geyer  
Sgt. Whitney M. Ritter  
Spc. David J. Barrett  
Spc. Robert J. Bell  
Spc. Mario A. Chavez  
Spc. Michael C. Jarvis  
Spc. Jonathan L. Jerry  
Spc. James R. Koch  
Spc. Katie T. Lopez  
Spc. Colton C. Magill  
Spc. Jacob A. Martinez  
Spc. Troy E. Parra  
Spc. Zachary W. Spurgeon  
Spc. Brandon L. Waltemath  
Spc. Matthew D. Wetjen  
Pfc. Sarah K. Byrne  
Pfc. Robert A. Rasmussen

### Army Commendation Medal

1st Lt. Daniel S. Claessens  
1st Lt. Andrew B. Iler  
Sgt. 1st Class Christopher J. Alt  
Sgt. 1st Class Christopher H. Kidd  
Sgt. 1st Class Jacob W. Robinson  
Sgt. 1st Class Patrick S. Sitter

Sgt. 1st Class James C. Uhing  
Staff Sgt. Jason C. Brooks  
Staff Sgt. Joseph C. Brooks  
Staff Sgt. Andrew J. Filips  
Staff Sgt. Corey A. Hackbart  
Staff Sgt. Christopher J. Marcello  
Staff Sgt. Nicholas C. Reis  
Staff Sgt. Casey N. Sorensen  
Sgt. Joshua A. Armon  
Sgt. Randall W. Barnason  
Sgt. Cody L. Barry  
Sgt. Cody S. Carlson  
Sgt. Stephen P. Dorcey  
Sgt. Justin J. Eickmeier  
Sgt. John M. Ferguson  
Sgt. Lucas L. Geyer  
Sgt. Michael J. Gillott  
Sgt. Cody A. Graff  
Sgt. Joshua C. Johnson  
Sgt. Justin L. Modrell  
Sgt. Christopher E. Moulton  
Sgt. Whitney M. Ritter  
Sgt. Jason E. Sautter  
Sgt. Drew P. Scott  
Sgt. Jay M. Steadman  
Sgt. Michal C. Swanson  
Sgt. Ray C. Underwood  
Sgt. Timothy J. Vanlaningham  
Spc. Taylor R. Ashcraft  
Spc. Melissa N. Becci  
Spc. Ethan C. Case  
Spc. Christopher M. Casey  
Spc. Mario A. Chavez  
Spc. Manuel S. Molina  
Spc. Travis M. Morrison  
Spc. Brandon W. Rudloff

Spc. Zachary D. Saunders  
Pfc. Jonathon M. Asbach  
Pfc. Sarah K. Byrne  
Pfc. William J. Seier

### Army Achievement Medal

Sgt. Stephen P. Dorcey  
Sgt. Lucas L. Geyer  
Spc. David J. Barrett  
Spc. Mario A. Chavez  
Spc. Mark A. Marta  
Spc. Jacob A. Martinez  
Spc. Caleb T. J. McLeod  
Spc. Matthew J. Pawley  
Spc. Joseph E. Prichard  
Spc. Narciso SanJuan  
Pfc. Zachary Z. Spurgeon  
Pfc. Jonathan L. Jerry  
Pfc. Robert A. Rasmussen

### Air National Guard

#### Meritorious Service Medal

Maj. John F. Oneill  
Senior Master Sgt. Ronald J. Polivka

#### Air Medal

Maj. Christopher M. Shannon

#### Air Force Commendation Medal

Capt. Nicole L. Murnane

#### Air Force Achievement Medal

Staff Sgt. Jeffery K. Martin  
Senior Airman Shaun G. D. Israel

#### Army Commendation Medal

Lt. Col. Raymond Shaddy

## RETIREMENTS

### Army National Guard

Maj. Jason R. Vogt  
Master Sgt. Beth A. Ray  
Sgt. 1st Class John G. Lemon  
Sgt. 1st Class Sarah K. Kemper

Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly D. Moore  
Staff Sgt. Tracy A. Polage  
Staff Sgt. Bernard Sadowski  
Staff Sgt. Rodney W. Verhagen

### Air National Guard

Capt. Camara J. Minks  
Master Sgt. Michael E. Thompson

## Shorttakes

# Camp Ashland's 209th RTI welcomes new commander

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Camp Ashland's 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) welcomed a new commander to the organization, June 4, during a change of command ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard's primary education installation.

During a ceremony before a formation of Soldiers representing the 209th RTI's three educational battalions, Col. Mark Stockstell succeeded Col. Scott Gronewold at the helm of the organization. Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general, officiated over the ceremony.



Gronewold

"It's pretty busy times for the Nebraska National Guard and both of these officers have been absolutely vital in our ability to meet those demands of both the overseas fight and responding here at home," said Lyons, adding that both Gronewold and Stockstell epitomize the skills and dedication he looks for in senior leaders.

"I think most importantly about these two officers is that throughout their careers they've always sought difficult, demanding jobs," he said, "and stepped up and said 'What's the hardest possible job I could possibly have... put me in.'"

According to Gronewold, leaving the 209th RTI, which consists of noncommissioned officer, warrant officer and officer leadership courses as well as a renowned truck driver school, is bittersweet. He also added his assignment at the 209th RTI definitely "put him out of my comfort zone."

"I was totally unaware by what all outside appearance seems to be a sleepy, quaint outpost with a scenic view with the largest National Guard's NCO (Educational System



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

**New Command:** Col. Mark Stockstell (left) receives the colors of the 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) from Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, June 4, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

academy in the National Guard, turning out over 6,000 NCO leaders a year" Gronewold said. "That says a lot about how the Army feels about the quality of instruction Soldiers receive here."

Gronewold spoke highly of the work being done within the Officer Candidate School and Warrant Officer Candidate School programs as well as the organization's 88M (truck driver) training course. He added that the Soldiers of the 209th RTI can be extremely proud of their accomplishments and their role in ensuring that the National Guard and the U.S. Army are staffed with trained, competent and professional Soldiers.

Gronewold's military career began in December 1984 when he enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard as a member of Company C, 1-134th Infantry, in Beatrice, Neb.

He received his commission in June 1986 when he graduated from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Officer Candidate School at Camp Ashland. His first assignments as an officer was as the aero scout platoon leader and then commander for Troop C, 1-167th Cavalry. He later served as a platoon leader and commander of the 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance); as the assistant operations and training officer for 92nd Troop command; as executive officer and commander of the 110th Medical Battalion (Evacuation); as commander of Medical Command; the state domestic operations officer and then state director of Aviation.

Gronewold is a veteran of two overseas deployment, having served in Kosovo as the commander of the 24th Med. Co. (AA) in 1999, and Kuwait and Iraq as commander of the

110th Med. Bn. (Evac.)

Gronewold and his wife, Diane, have three children, Jenna, Jonathan, and Joel.

According to the organization's newest commander, the opportunity to serve at Camp Ashland will undoubtedly be a milestone in his career.

"Wow, this is truly a great opportunity for me," Stockstell said. "Thank you, General Lyons for giving me the opportunity to command such a solid group of Soldiers."

Stockstell also lauded the Soldiers of the 209th RTI and said that he's excited to begin working to build on the accomplishments Gronewold at the RTI staff have made thus far.

Stockstell enlisted in the U.S. Army in May 1979, serving as a signals intelligence analyst for the 372nd Army Security Agency at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. He joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in June 1983 as a member of the Nebraska City-based Company A, 2-134th Infantry.

Stockstell received his commission in July 1985 after graduating from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Officer Candidate School at Camp Ashland, Neb.

His first assignment was as a rifle platoon leader for Co. A, 2-134th Infantry. Since then he has served in a variety of leadership assignments including company executive officer and company commander; as a battalion operations-air officer and battalion operations officer; as an assistant director of facilities engineer for Nebraska State Area Command; and as commander of the 126th Chemical Battalion.

He deployed to Afghanistan in 2009 as a member of the Embedded Training Team where he served as the regional police advisory commander.

In 2009 he was selected to be the senior logistics officer for the Nebraska Army National Guard. He currently serves as the deputy chief of staff for Logistics.

Stockstell and his wife Tara reside in Hamburg, Iowa. They have four children, Allison, Abby, Amanda and Daniel.

# Hittin' the streets



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

**And They're Off:** Nearly 10,000 runners hit the streets of Lincoln, Neb., May 1, for the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon. The field of approximately 200 National Guard runners representing 42 states and one territory scored well in the recently expanded race. The top Guard male finished in fifth place overall while the top Guard female finished in second place overall.

## First time marathoners set pace for all National Guard runners

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon  
Assistant Editor

According to the saying, it's the third time that's the charm. For two National Guard runners the first time turned out to be their charm.

Nearly 200 National Guard runners representing 42 states and one territory descended upon Lincoln, Neb., May 1, to join nearly 10,000 runners for the largest edition of the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon in its 34-year history. And two National Guard runners wasted little time putting their stamp on the race.

Army Capt. Robert Killian Jr., of the 5-19th Special Forces Group in Watkins, Colo., took advantage of the oxygen-rich Lincoln air to take top honors for National Guard males and fifth place overall. It was the first marathon he's competed in, clocking a time of 2 hours, 36 minutes, 37 seconds.

Although it was his first true marathon, Killian is no stranger to endurance competitions. He has competed in several bi- and triathlons, and just last October, won the military category of the Ironman competition held in Hawaii.

"I've never done a marathon before so I thought it would be good training for the Ironman," said

Killian. "It was tough. I had a goal time that I wanted to run today and I didn't know that I'd actually be able to do it. I've only been training for four weeks."

Killian said he actually performed better than he'd expected. "I was shocked," he said. "I gave it 110 percent. I think I did great."

His time spent training at a higher altitude in Colorado proved to be an advantage for Killian, who

er, who plays the oboe in the 553rd Band of the Mid-Atlantic in the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, said she ran cross country and track in high school and college, but had never attempted a marathon until Guard marathon team members showed some interest in her.

"I was encouraged by National Guard members that are on the team and they talked me into it," said Shertzer. "I had done the Air Force half (marathon) and I did the Army 10-miler and they encouraged me to try the full marathon."

"They told me I had a good chance to be the first Guard female," she added. "I didn't know how I'd place overall with open runners."

Considering she notched the top spot for National Guard women and second place among overall female runners with a time of 2:54:20, she was pleased with her performance.

"My first goal was just to finish. A second goal was to break three hours," she said. "I'm happy."

The Wisconsin National Guard team earned top team honors with an average time for their top three runners of 2:55:21. First-year team captain Air Force Maj. Michael Western, an air battle manager with the 128th Air Control Squadron,

See MARATHON on 24.

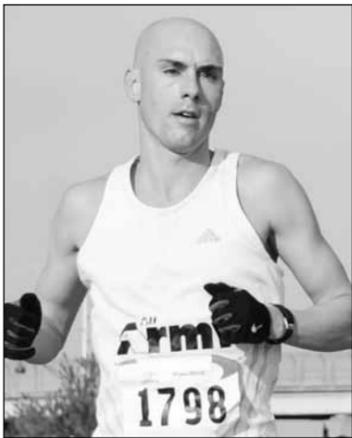


Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

**Top Form:** Capt. Robert Killian Jr., of the 5-19 Special Forces Group, Colorado National Guard, shows his form in the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Neb., May 1. Killian took the top spot for National Guard males and fifth place overall among male runners.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

**Champion:** Airman 1st Class Emily Shertzer, a member of the 553rd Band of the Mid-Atlantic, Pennsylvania Air National Guard, competes in the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon May 1. Shertzer took the top spot for National Guard females and second place among overall female runners.

arrived in Lincoln the day before the race.

"I could definitely feel that difference," he said. "It only lasts a few days until you acclimate, but it definitely helps. You can breathe better, you don't feel as tired."

The female competitors in the National Guard also saw a first-time marathoner take home the gold.

Airman 1st Class Emily Shertzer-



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

**Team Nebraska:** Brig. Gen. Daryl Bohac keeps the peace as he competes in the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon held in Lincoln, Neb., May 1.

## Team Nebraska performs well in home state race

By Pfc. Heidi Krueger  
Staff Writer

The Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team stood tall and proud as the sun revealed itself over the top of the University of Nebraska's Memorial Stadium.

Army and Air Guardsmen made up the 2011 Nebraska National Guard Marathon team at the 34th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon and half-marathon.

"I've ran many marathons but I just enjoy being part of the Nebraska's National Guard team," said Capt. Robb Campbell of Detachment 2, A Company, 35th Infantry Division.

Campbell has run the Lincoln Marathon on and off since 1999.

He has completed a total of eight marathons on the Nebraska National Guard team. The only reason he has missed a couple of years was due to Officer Candidate School and a deployment.

"Every time I'm around home, I make an attempt to run it each year," said Campbell.

Another member of the team, Command Chief Master Sgt. Barb Gossage, also has a lot of experience with being a part of the team. She has run the marathon for 18 years and participated in the half-marathon this year.

"There's not a lot of awareness that this program is available," said Gossage. "There are a lot of Guardsmen that don't even know about Nebraska's team and they're marathon runners themselves."

In addition to the experienced team members, there was also a rookie this year. 1st Lt. James Cole of 1969th Contingency Contracting Team has a desire for running marathons, but this

See NEBRASKA on 24.

## MARATHON continued from page 23.

said it was special to breakthrough and win the team title.

"It's pretty cool, absolutely," said Western. "We've always been somewhere in the top five and this is our first year winning, so it's neat to represent Wisconsin."

Making the win extra special was the fact that Western was replacing a staple of the Wisconsin team and National Guard Marathon team as captain.

Tech. Sgt. Michael Zeigle, of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, will retire at the end of August after a 29-year career, also ending his stretch of competing in the marathon since it began in Lincoln, in 1984.

Zeigle was awarded the Wisconsin Air Force Commendation Medal during a ceremony held the night before the marathon for his years of service and extensive running accomplishments.

"I think everybody running today... kind of the extra thing that kept us rolling is giving a good race for Mike," said Western. "It was pretty inspiring to know this is his last race and to win it for his last year here."

"This team has always been kind of competitive," added Western. "We've always thought it was something we'd be able to do and to actually do it this year is neat, especially on Mike's last year."

According to organizers, the race was a success.

"I think it went very well," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hagen, the National Guard's marathon coordinator. "The times were faster, both male and female, and there seemed to be more aggressive running out there to earn a spot on the team."

"It was a great weather day for the race, there were some stretches where they battled the wind, but then towards the end it started to die down," added Hagen. "The temperatures were cool and really what the city of Lincoln brings back to the race with hospitality and sportsmanship and support really drives the athletic nature. And also with the National Guard being part of the actual name of the event, I think our runners take a sense of pride."

The top 40 male and 15 female runners make the All Guard Marathon Team which represents the en-

tire National Guard in marathons across the country. Both first-time winners said they look forward to taking on that role at future races.

"I'm excited," said Shertzer. "They told me a little about the program and some of the races they do and the recruiting opportunities that go with it, so I'm hoping that I'll have a chance to get to some of the big events and represent the Guard."

"I think running as part of a team is the most fun," she added. "I hope that we get a chance to talk to people, if it's other runners, specta-

tors, whoever, and just let them know that there are these opportunities within the National Guard and we're all out here supporting each other."

"It's amazing these programs we have for guys that want to go out there and do more than the average person," said Killian. "I definitely try to come out and set a good time...not only for the Guard, but so people

recognize there's good athletes in the Guard. I think they get a perception some times that we don't work as hard or work out. It's a tough schedule; you have to work, plus train, plus deployments. So just to go out there and be able to compete with them means a lot to me."

"It's a good program," he added. "I'm just glad I can go out and spread the word as well."

Hagen said the National Guard Marathon Team has many benefits for the National Guard as a whole.

"It's not only just the traveling," said Hagen. "You bring camaraderie with so many individuals and they go back to their states and share that as well through fitness or just mentorship or pushing through the pain or anything a marathon brings. And as a national perspective, when we go places we're running beside others in different communities. We're working at expo booths gaining exposure to the public, recruiting leads and showing people that are already in the Guard, that didn't know about the program, that we exist."

"This is the National Guard marathon put on right here in Lincoln, so I think the runners coming in take a lot of pride in that and I think it shows on the course."

## Longtime marathoner recognized for service, running

By Sgt. Koan Nissen  
Staff Writer

A long-time marathon runner and Wisconsin Guardsman was honored April 30 at the Embassy Suites hotel in Lincoln, Neb.

Tech. Sgt. Michael Zeigle, a 59-year-old Wisconsin Air National Guardsman, was awarded the Wisconsin Air Force Commendation Medal in recognition of, among other things, his many dedicated years of service and stellar running accomplishments.

The award, presented in front of Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, the deputy director of the Army National Guard, and several high-ranking guests, was given to Zeigle by Col. Troy Frost, Montana Air National Guardsman and fellow marathon competitor.

"I am very confident you will never see another runner in the National Guard who will do what he's done," said Frost.

The list is impressive to say the least. Here's just a few examples: a personal-best 2-mile run for Zeigle is 09:31:00. A three-mile run in 14:28:30. And a 100-mile run in less than 24 hours.

Zeigle has been on the All Guard team since late President Ronald Reagan defeated Walter Mondale in the 1984 U.S. presidential election.

Over the years Zeigle has competed in more than 70 full and ultra marathons while representing the National Guard Running Team. This year's 34th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon will



Photo by Pfc. Heidi Krueger

**Pinned:** Tech. Sgt. Michael Zeigle of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, is presented with an award from Brig. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska's assistant adjutant general - Air, April 30, in recognition of his many dedicated years of service and stellar running accomplishments.

probably be his last.

Zeigle said the running-team aspect of the National Guard is what ultimately kept him going in the beginning of his career, which was actually as an Army Guardsman.

He also believes these types of events greatly support the Guard's mission for recruiting and retention.

"It's just a great program," said Zeigle. "It keeps a lot of people here that would maybe otherwise get out."

But the program itself is not the only factor in the success story of Michael Zeigle. He's got plenty of friends and family to thank for it as well.

"I would absolutely like to thank my wife," he said. "She's been there a lot for me."

This race would be no exception. Michael Zeigle's wife, Jean, and his son, Patrick, were in attendance

and ready to support him.

Jean said Patrick has been following his dad's race career since he was six weeks old. She also said she and the rest of the family were very proud him and his accomplishments.

Zeigle's 29-year career with the National Guard will come to an end this August when he retires at age 60.

In perhaps Zeigle's last acceptance speech, he thanked the nearly 200 Guardsmen in the crowd by saying, "You all are the wind under my wings."

Zeigle finished the 34th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon with a time of 3 hours, 7 minutes, 29 seconds — helping Team Wisconsin win first-place overall in the team category.

That time also qualified Zeigle for the National Guard's 2011 All Guard team.

## Nebraska continued from page 23.

year he wanted to be a part of Nebraska's team.

Cole said he has been busy preparing for his upcoming deployment, this marathon and his pre-mobilization training before leaving Nebraska.

"I would have got a lot more training in if I wasn't doing all the pre-deployment training, but it doesn't affect how I feel about the mobilization," said Cole.

The Nebraska National Guard Marathon team just wanted to do their best. The team placed 15th out of 32 teams.

"There's a little more sense

of pressure to do well in the marathon because Nebraska is hosting this and we are welcoming all the states here," said Gossage. "But we are proud to have everyone coming into Nebraska for the marathon."

Community participation is what made this marathon come together. "It's nice how the community and the Guard show calibration in supporting the marathon," said Gossage.

The tremendous support is not the only factor bringing runners back.

"What motivates me to come back each year is the opportunity to make the All Guard Marathon

Team," said Campbell.

The top 40 men, top 15 women and top two in the master's category of 50 year olds and older make up the All Guard Marathon Team. This year, unfortunately, no Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team members made it on the All Guard Marathon Team.

"I think if you haven't been to the marathon before, you might not understand it all so well, but you will your second time back," said Gossage. "There is honor in representing your state and the National Guard."

"It just shows the goodness of our Soldiers and Airmen in what they do for the community and the country."

## North Dakota brings two teams to Lincoln/National Guard Marathon

By Pfc. Justin Zdan  
Staff Writer

Racing and gender played a role this year in the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon.

An all female North Dakota National Guard team took to the Cornhusker streets along with 10,000 other participants. The race included 8,000 half-marathon runners, and 2,000 running the full-marathon this year.

North Dakota had two teams this year, one all female and another all male.

"We have the fantastic four, and the fabulous four," said Lt. Col. David A. Skalicky, the team's competitive sport coordinator from Joint Force Headquarters, North Dakota.

There were three Soldiers and one Airman running for the female team ranging from ages 23-42.

Those who ran were among the top runners in the North Dakota Guard.

"A list was compiled for all the marathon runners in the Air and Army National Guard, and the top four were picked," said Staff Sgt. Amy M. Wieser-Willson, deputy public information officer (PIO) from Company B,



Photo by Dave Nore

**Together, But Different:** Members of the male and female North Dakota teams pose for a team photo. North Dakota had two teams participate in the 2011 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Neb., May 1.

231st Support in Valley City, ND.

The list began with the top 15 marathon times for male and female, and then it was narrowed to four from each.

"I thought we were chosen because of our interest not our marathon times," said Capt. Jackie Pekarek, an Air Guard officer from the

max, and have never sent any females until last year," said Skalicky.

The notion of an all female team was inspired by a story written Wieser-Willson wrote during her tour in Kosovo in 2010.

"Last year we ran a shadow marathon run in Kosovo and sent the first place male

and female competitors to run in Lincoln," said Skalicky. "The passion to run became apparent amongst the Soldiers and Airmen after the story ran."

This is the first year that teams were established to participate in the marathon from the North Dakota National Guard.

"We've been part of the Lincoln Marathon over the past eight years and have only sent two-to-four at a time

As for the Soldier who wrote the story that conceptualized her very presence in the race, Wieser-Willson placed second in her age group and qualified for the all-Guard team after finishing in the top 15 in the female category.

"I'm very excited to represent the North Dakota Guard in the All Guard team," said Wieser-Willson.

This was the fourth marathon for Wieser-Willson, and her first was less than a year ago. "I'm glad to be doing something that I like to do," said Wieser-Willson.

According to marathon coordinators, 42 states and one territory were represented. The all female team finished 22nd.

"We had a chance to show we're good runners, too, and that females also like to compete," said Staff Sgt. Brekka Carlson a bridge crewmember with the Multi-role Bridge Company in Bismark.

The North Dakota female Guardsmen demonstrated in Lincoln that where there's a race there's more than one gender.