

# Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

## Two Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers die in Iraq

By Capt. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

Two Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 1-167th Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition) in Iraq died recently in two separate incidents.

Spc. Germaine L. Debro, 33, died shortly after midnight, Iraq time, on Sept. 4 when an improvised explosive device struck the Hum-Vee he was driving while on a patrol near Balad, Iraq. At the time of his death, Debro was assigned to Troop B, 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA).

In an earlier incident, Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Hansen, 31, died at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany on Aug. 27, after he was injured when the Hum-Vee he was riding in went off a berm near Camp Anaconda, Iraq, and was



Spc. Germaine L. Debro



Staff Sgt. Jeffrey J. Hansen

submerged in a canal on Aug. 21. Hansen's family was with him at the time of his death.

At the time of his death, Hansen was a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-167th Cavalry.

In announcing the two separate deaths, Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, expressed the condolences of the entire Nebraska National Guard to the families of the two fallen Soldiers.

"Our deepest condolences go out to the family of Specialist Debro in their time of mourning," said Lempke in a Sept. 6 media release. "He was a deeply committed Soldier who believed in what he was doing. He died a hero helping others fight for their freedom."

"The entire Nebraska National Guard is grieving over the news of the loss of another  
See DEATHS on 4.

## Lincoln skies canvas for aerial performers



Photo by Nic Moore

## Thunder, smoke fill Lincoln skies during September air show

(Above) **Thunder On The Flight Line:** A B-24 Liberator bomber flies low over a massive, billowing cloud of flames during a recreation of the Ploesti bombing raid of World War II during the Sept. 24 edition of the "Guardians of Freedom" air show. (Right) **Patriotic Entrance:** A member of the U.S. Army Golden Knights floats to earth with the U.S. flag waving behind him during the opening ceremony of the "Guardians of Freedom" air show on Sept. 24.

Stories and photos begin on page 11.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

## Nebraska Army Guard recruiting efforts hit milestone

By Capt. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

The results are in and the Nebraska Army National Guard blew the doors off of the organization's recent recruiting records.

According to Lt. Col. James Murphy, commander of the Nebraska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command, Nebraska enlisted a total of 508 new Sol-

diers into the Nebraska Army Guard during fiscal year 2006, which ended in September. That was the largest effort in more than 10 years and greatly outdistanced last year's effort when state recruiters enlisted 416 new Guardsmen.

"We're super-charged," said Murphy, who took over the command of the organization several months ago. "Our recruits are really excited."

Murphy said that the past

year's success - which he said were a direct result of his predecessors' work - were the result of a number of recent factors.

"Lt. Col. Daniel Kenkel and Lt. Col. Steve Hurst deserve a lot of credit for the success we had last year," said Murphy. "They're the ones that put into motion a lot of the things that helped create the success we had."

According to Murphy, these

factors included vastly increased benefits and bonuses, increased Federal help in the form of money and traveling National Guard recruiting teams, a much larger state recruiting force, and increased command focus throughout the state.

"The money we're putting into our bonuses and benefits are the best we've ever seen," said Murphy. "Plus, (the recruit-

See RECRUITING on 20.

## Guard, Reserve bosses learn more about military during trip to Virginia

By David Nore  
Acting Deputy State PAO

National Guard and Reserve employers from landlocked Nebraska got a taste of Navy life after they flew an Nebraska Air Guard KC 135-R refueling flight to Norfolk, Va., this past July as part of a Civilian Employer Orientation, better known as "Boss Lift."

"This is a great opportunity to showcase our military service members and what they bring to the workforce in the way of military leadership and skills from all seven Reserve services," said Arlo Bower, chairman of the Nebraska  
See BOSS LIFT on 16.



Photo by David Nore

**Taking The Controls:** Gary Byrne, ESGR Boss Lift participant, tries out the rear seat of an AH-64 Apache helicopter at Fort Eustis, Va. This year's Boss Lift visited U.S. Navy, Army and Air Guard facilities during the annual trip.

## Senior Air Guard leaders say mission to Afghanistan unique experience

By Staff Sgt. Matthew Boring  
Staff Writer

Everyone has responsibilities. For most Americans, these responsibilities may include work, school or maintaining a household. Taking on all of those at once is usually enough to completely fill an average person's schedule.

However, after spending five months in a foreign country where they helped move 64,000 passengers, 60 million pounds of cargo, and more than 800 aircraft, the rigors of every day life seem like a walk in the park for two members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing.

Col. George Skuodas, commander of the Lincoln-based 155th Mission Support Group,  
See DEPLOYMENT on 10.

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# NEWS DIGEST

## ■ Bush: Iraq victory crucial to defeating global terrorism

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Achieving victory over terrorists in Iraq is crucial to the U.S. campaign to defeat global terrorism and that conflict isn't making America less secure, President George Bush told the nation Sept. 30.

Selected findings of a classified National Intelligence Estimate that were leaked to the press recently have created an unnecessary furor in Washington, Bush said during his national radio address from the White House.

"Some in Washington have selectively quoted from this document to make the case that by fighting the terrorists in Iraq, we are making our people less secure here at home," Bush said. "This argument buys into the enemy's propaganda that the terrorists attack us because we are provoking them (in Iraq)."

The U.S. military presence in Iraq isn't increasing the terrorists' hatred for America, Bush said. "We do not create terrorism by fighting terrorism."

Terrorist enmity against America predates the Iraq war and the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Bush said.

"Iraq is not the reason the terrorists are at war with us," the president said. "Our troops were not in Iraq when terrorists first attacked the World Trade Center in 1993, or when terrorists blew up our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, or when they bombed the USS Cole, or when they killed nearly 3,000 people" on 9/11, he said.

"The terrorists are at war against us because they hate everything America stands for," Bush said, "and, because they know we stand in the way of their ambitions to take over the Middle East."

It's therefore paramount to keep the terrorists on the run, so they can't plot future attacks against America at their leisure, the president said.

"So, we will remain on the offense until the terrorists are defeated and this fight is won," Bush said, noting a U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq before victory is achieved "would embolden the terrorists."

## ■ President Bush signs bill funding Global War on Terror

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — President George Bush signed into law H.R. 5631, the "Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2007," which appropriates the funds needed to fight the war on terror, advance other U.S. interests abroad, and support the armed forces, Sept. 29.

The bill includes an additional \$70 billion in emergency funds to pay for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through early next year, including nearly \$24 billion for the Army and Marine Corps to repair and replace worn-out equipment. The new funding brings to \$507 billion the total amount authorized by Congress for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other anti-terrorism efforts.

The bill provides \$378 billion for core Pentagon programs, about a 5 percent increase, though slightly less than Bush sought.

Before signing the bill into law, Bush said, "I applaud Congress for passing legislation that will provide our men and women in uniform with the necessary resources to protect our country and win the War on Terror. As our troops risk their lives to fight terrorism, this bill will ensure they are prepared to defeat today's enemies and address tomorrow's threats."

## ■ Montenegro wants to join War on Terror; U.S. ready to help

PODGORICA, Montenegro, (AFPS) — The newly independent nation of Montenegro wants to participate in the Global War on Terror, and the United States stands ready to help after the first meeting between senior officials from both nations took place, Sept. 26.

After an overnight flight from Washington, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld met with Prime Minister-designate Milo Djukanovic and President Filip Vujanovic.

Djukanovic said he briefed Rumsfeld on the country's economic, political and defense situations, as well as the country's plans.

"We are now in the initial stage of organizing our defense function," he said, "and we want it to be in accordance with our Euro-Atlantic aspirations."

Djukanovic said his discussions with Rumsfeld did not involve the question of whether Montenegro would send forces to Afghanistan or Iraq.

"We are prepared to accept all the responsibilities of a nation that aspires to European and Euro-Atlantic integration," Djukanovic said. "Danger from terrorism we see in Montenegro as a global threat to world peace and security, and that's why we are prepared to participate in the U.S.-led coalition in fighting terrorism and threats to global peace."

## ■ Cartoonist writes second book for wounded troops

WASHINGTON, (AFPS) — The award-winning creator of the Doonesbury cartoon strip visited the Pentagon in late

## Nebraska Air Guard general selected for European post

By David Nore

Acting Deputy State PAO

Brigadier General Robert Bailey has been selected as the Air National Guard assistant to the commander of United States Air Forces, Europe.

In his new assignment Bailey will serve as the liaison between the commander of USAFE and National Guard units tapped for potential air operations in a theater that spans three continents from Great Britain to Turkey.



Bailey

In his new assignment, Bailey will serve in a "dual-hatted" role, meaning that along with his duties in Europe he will continue to be the assistant Adjutant General for Air and the deputy commander for Joint Forces Headquarters, Nebraska National Guard.

In Nebraska, Bailey is responsible for working with the Army and Air National Guard to form an integrated force team capable of conducting routine operations as well as being prepared to respond to short-notice state and national emergencies and homeland defense missions.

According to Bailey, a native of Lincoln, he is excited with his new assignment and opportunity to serve in a dynamic, international mission.

"U.S. Air Force Europe is involved in a wide range of missions across Europe and Africa. Every day Airmen further democracy through state partnership programs, providing tons of materials to Iraq and Afghanistan, and participate in NATO operations," Bailey said.

"The command remains highly engaged in contingency operations, humanitarian efforts and the war on terror."

This will not be Bailey's first experience with USAFE. As the former commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Bailey ensured the wing contributed to the Air Force Global Reach mission by supporting U.S. and allied military forces worldwide with aerial refueling and transportation of passengers and cargo. This included stints in Europe during operations supporting the no-fly zones over Bosnia and Kosovo and Operation Allied Force, the 1999 bombing campaign of Kosovo and Serbia.

Bailey is a command pilot with more than 4,800 flying hours in a variety of aircraft including the T-37, T-38, F-4, RF-4C and the KC-135R.

Bailey and his wife Marjorie reside in Lincoln.

September to meet with wounded service members and sign copies of his second book in a series chronicling the recovery of a wounded Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran.

Garry Trudeau wrote the book, "The War Within: One More Step at a Time," as a follow-up to his book, "The Long Road Home: One Step at a Time," which tells the story of comic strip character "B.D.," a National Guardsman who lost his leg during the battle of Fallujah in Iraq and suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. The second book follows B.D.'s return to civilian and family life after leaving the hospital and his process of dealing with his post-traumatic stress disorder.

Trudeau said he's putting together these books, which are really a compilation of his comic strips, as a way to bring the war home to Americans, many of whom may not know any service members or understand the sacrifices they're making.

"America in general has not been asked to sacrifice much for this particu-

lar war," Trudeau said. "Their world has nothing to do with the military world. I think it's important, if you're given a platform that I've been given, to try to bring those two worlds together and say, 'Look, these guys are making some pretty heavy sacrifices and contributions in our name, and we should know a little bit more about them.'"

Trudeau was encouraged to publish the books by the Fisher House Foundation, to which he is donating all the proceeds from the books.

The foundation operates 34 Fisher Houses in the U.S. and Germany on the grounds of military and veterans hospitals. The houses give family members a place to live and be close to loved ones while they are hospitalized for an injury, illness or disease.

Trudeau has met many service members over the years and has recently spent a lot of time talking with military doctors, therapists, and veterans counselors to make his depiction of the recovery process as accurate as possible.

## Nebraska helicopter conducts emergency landing after striking wire in Arizona

### Public Affairs Office

Arizona National Guard

A Nebraska Army National Guard OH-58 observation helicopter supporting Customs and Border Protection (CBP) as part of Operation Jump Start performed a successful emergency landing in southern Arizona after coming into contact with power lines in late September.

The incident occurred in the vicinity of State Route 80 near mile post 374 in Cochise County at approximately 2:30 p.m. Sept. 21.

The helicopter had one Nebraska National Guard pilot and a CBP Agent on board.

Both the pilot and CBP Agent exited the aircraft and were taken to a local hospital for precautionary measures and observation.

Upon landing, the helicopter caught fire and was destroyed.



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer Bill Hager

**On The Border:** A Nebraska Army National Guard OH-58 helicopter lifts off during annual training at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings. A similar helicopter was damaged while on duty in Arizona.

Emergency crews responded to the scene and controlled the fire.

The helicopter and pilot are assigned to the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Security and Support Battalion from Grand Island, Neb.

The cause of the accident is presently under investigation by National Guard officials. Additional information on the incident will be released upon completion of the investigation.

Brigadier General Ulay Littleton, Joint Task Force Commander for Operation Jump Start in Arizona stated "we are very fortunate that neither the pilot nor Border

Patrol Agent were seriously injured.

The OH-58 was operating as part of Operation Jump Start which has provided observational aviation support to the Border Patrol in southern Arizona."

## Prairie Soldier

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Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

**Keep Your Knees Up:** A pair of National Guard kids push themselves through an obstacle course designed to help the kids better understand the types of training their parents receive in the military.



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Marching 101:** Maj. Drey Ihm (far left) gives a class on military formations and marching to a row of National Guard kids during the first-ever "Kids Mobility Day" activities held Aug. 5 at the National Guard base in Lincoln. The event was designed to give the children of Army and Air National Guardsmen an idea of what it's like to prepare for a deployment and the other types of training their parents conduct in the military.

# Kids Mobility Day

■ Guard children learn more about parents' military duty during day-long camp

By Tech. Sgt. David Brumley

Staff Writer

**S**o this is what Mom and Dad have to do. That's what approximately 60 kids learned Aug. 5 when they braved stifling summer heat to participate in a mock deployment at the National Guard air base in Lincoln.

According to event organizers, the one-day camp was designed to give the kids, whose parents are members of either the Nebraska Army or Air National Guard, an opportunity learn more about the training their parent receives before a mobilization. This included such things as marching, climbing a rock wall, push-ups and medical check-ups.

The overall goal of the afternoon event was for the kids to have a better understanding of what happens during a deployment and how they can support their deploying family member, said Maj. Drey Ihm, Nebraska National Guard Family Program director.

"I think it was good for the kids to realize what their parents do," said Ihm. "I think the more the family gets involved and the more they know about what the Guard offers, the more of a family unit the Guard will be and the better retention will be."

"We just wanted them to understand

what their parents go through when they are deployed," said Ihm, who credited Sara Cease, state youth coordinator, as being the driving force behind the camp.

The three-hour event proved to be as challenging as it was educational according to the camp participants.

"It's not as easy as it looks to be in the Army," said Mady Buettner, daughter of Army Staff Sgt. William Buettner.

"We had to do the push-ups and sit-ups. I didn't think we would have to do them," said a surprised Buettner.

"The hardest part was the rock climbing," said Alex Effle, daughter of Nicole Effle, 155th Air Refueling Wing family readiness coordinator.

It wasn't all hard work, though. There was a craft tent that let the kids make cards and artwork for service members who are deployed.

"The crafts we made for the veterans was my favorite part," said Buettner.

Through it all the kids came through it with flying colors. "The mission was a complete success with a 100 percent go rate," said Ihm.

The day wasn't just about the kids, either. While the children learned more about National Guard life, their parents spent the afternoon in a nearby classroom learning more about the various benefits available to families during a deployment.

"(The camp was) also for the parents to be familiar with the different programs that are available to them," said Cease. "It lets them know they aren't alone during a deployment."

The event closed with the kids simulating redeploying back home.

A full ceremony was conducted with parents holding up welcome home signs, while Guard officials made thank you speeches and gave out awards.



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

**Tough Climbing:** A pair of National Guard kids tackle the Nebraska National Guard Counter Drug rock wall, one of several physical activities that kids had to conquer during the first-ever "Kids Mobility Day" held Aug. 5 at the National Guard air base in Lincoln.



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Welcome Back and Congratulations on a Job Well Done:** National Guard kids are welcomed back from their "deployment" by sign-wielding parents at the conclusion of the "Kids Mobility Day" activity.



## En Memorium

### Staff Sgt. Jeffrey J. Hansen

*"He put the Soldier first at all times. He constantly taught the younger Soldiers what he knew so they could move up through the ranks."  
— Staff Sgt. Chad Rowe*

# Hundreds gather to honor 'Soldier's Soldier'

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The life of a "Soldier's Soldier" was honored, Sept. 5, when hundreds of mourners gathered in a small Minden, Neb., church for the funeral of Staff Sgt. Jeffrey J. Hansen.

"Jeff was one of America's finest," said Sandra Davis, a family friend during the funeral services held at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Minden, Neb.

"There are so many words that come to mind to describe Jeff," said Davis. "He was passionate, strong-willed, honorable yet patriotic. Jeff became a friend the moment that you met him. He was just an all around good guy."

Hansen, 31, died on Aug. 27 at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany, from injuries he received when the Hum-Vee he was riding in rolled off of a berm and into a canal, Aug. 21, during a patrol near Camp Anaconda, Iraq.

At the time of his death, Hansen was a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-167th Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition).

Hansen's wife, Jennifer, father, Robert, and several other family members were with him at the time of his death.

According to Davis, who also read a poem entitled, "It is the Soldier..." Hansen was both a devoted husband to his wife Jennifer and committed Soldier.

"When Jeff and Jenny were together, you could see the love that they had for each other," said Davis. "Jeff did everything wholeheartedly. He was a great family man and a friend to everyone."

"Jeff enlisted into the National Guard to defend our country and our freedom," she added. "Because of Jeff and our Soldiers, we are able to live the way



Photo by David Nore

**Final Salute:** Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke and other police officers and Nebraska Army Guard Cavalrymen salute as the casket of the late Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Hansen is carried to his final resting place by members of the Nebraska National Guard Funeral Honors Team.

that we do."

"When Jeff was called to duty in Iraq, he was grateful to serve his country once again," said Davis. "He went overseas to fight for what he believed in."

According to church officials, an estimated crowd of more than 500 people gathered inside and outside of the church to pay their respects to Hansen. Among those gathered were more than 100 motorcycle riders – members of the Patriot Guard – and uniformed police officers from across the state who came to honor Hansen who, prior to his mobilization for Operation Iraqi Freedom, served as a federal police officer at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Grand Island.

Several hundred military members – many wearing the Cavalry Stetsons that they'd worn with Hansen during the 1-167th Cavalry's 2003-04 de-



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**A Widow's Tears:** Jennifer Hansen, the wife of the late Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Hansen, wipes tears from her face after being presented with the American flag that draped her husband's coffin during the funeral for the fallen Nebraska Army Guardsman. Sitting next to Hansen is Robert Hansen, father of the late Soldier.

ployment to Bosnia – also traveled to Minden for the funeral services.

"He was a great Soldier," said 1st Sgt. Kevin Petersen, Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, who got to know Hansen while the two Army Guard Soldiers served together in Bosnia with Troop A. "He was one of those guys you could go to for advice on anything. He was very knowledgeable. He was just a great guy."

"He was a new (sergeant), but you could tell that he was going to go places," said Petersen. "He was a good leader. And what makes a good leader is a good friend...and Jeff was definitely a good friend."

Petersen said that when his deployment to Iraq with Troop A

**See HANSEN on 5.**



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**A Warrior's Escort:** Carrying flags on the motorcycles, members of the Patriot Guard escort the late Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Hansen down the lane of a Minden, Neb., cemetery.

## DEATHS continued from page 1.

Soldier," Lempke said in an Aug. 28 media release announcing Hansen's death. "Our hearts go out to the family of Staff Sergeant Hansen. He was a dedicated Soldier and a good leader, and we will miss him."

Along with the two deaths, several other Soldiers were injured during the two incidents.

In the Aug. 21 accident, three other Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA) were injured to various degrees.

One Soldier, Pfc. Cory Walcott, was evacuated to Germany and finally Walter Reed Medical Center for continued treatment.

The other two Soldiers were treated and released back to duty.

In the Sept. 4 IED attack, two other 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA) Soldiers were wounded.

Their wounds, however, were considered minor, allowing the two Soldiers to be released to duty after treatment.

Hansen, a native of Cairo, Neb., is survived by his wife, Jennifer, and his father Robert Hansen of Bertrand, Neb. He was preceded in death by his mother Deborah Hansen.

Hansen was born on July 25, 1975, in Minden, Neb., and was a 1993 graduate of Bertrand Community High School. He later earned his bachelor's degree in Athletic Training from the University of Nebraska-Kearney in 1997.

Hansen joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in January 2000 as a member of Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry in Hastings, Neb.

He attended basic training at Fort Knox, Ky., before returning to his unit as a cavalry scout.

During the years that Hansen served in the Nebraska Army Guard, he steadily rose through the ranks, serving as an assistant squad leader, fire team leader and squad leader before his current assignment as a fire support sergeant.

He was also a veteran of peacekeeping service, serving in Bosnia with the 1-167th Cavalry for six months from late 2002 until mid-2003.

Prior to his latest deployment, Hansen worked as a police officer with the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Grand Island, Neb.

Hansen was buried with full military honors in Minden, Neb., on Sept. 5.

Debro is survived by his parents, Alvin and Priscilla Debro of Omaha, and his brothers, Alvin Debro Jr. and Maurice F. Debro, also of Omaha.

Debro was born on Feb. 9,

1973, at the U.S. Air Force Hospital, Reese Air Force Base, in Lubbock, Texas.

The son of a career U.S. Air Force sergeant, Debro and his family moved frequently around the country during his youth, including spending some time in Omaha.

Debro graduated from North Pulaski High School in Little Rock, Ark., in 1991, before moving to Omaha, where he started working at Burger King and became a general manager until 1994 when he enlisted into the U.S. Army as an M-1 Abrams tank crewman.

His last assignment in the U.S. Army was as a member of the Fort Hood, Texas, based Troop C, 1-7th Cavalry Squadron.

Debro joined the Nebraska Army National Guard on Oct. 12, 1997, as a tank crewman with Detachment 1, Troop B, 1-

167th Cavalry, based in Wahoo, Neb.

He remained in Wahoo until being reassigned to the Fremont-based Troop B, 1-167th Cavalry, in January 2001.

While serving with the 1-167th Cavalry, Debro was a veteran of several overseas deployments where he saw service in Kuwait in 2001 and Bosnia-Herzegovina from 2002-03.

Like Hansen, Debro was mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005 and conducted training with his unit at Camp Shelby, Miss., until March when the 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA) deployed to Iraq.

At the time of his death, Debro was a member of Troop B, 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA).

He was posthumously promoted to the rank of sergeant and buried with full military honors in Omaha on Sept. 18.

*"He was kind of like a dad to all of us. Just being next to Debro...you always felt like you were in a safe haven. It was just the vibe he gave off."*

— Sgt. Josh Graf

## En Memorium Sgt. Germaine L. Debro



# Fallen Soldier remembered as kind, gentle warrior

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

More than 1,000 mourners filled an Omaha church, Sept. 18, to wish farewell to a brother, son, friend, fellow Soldier and hero.

During the funeral of Sgt. Germaine L. Debro, a Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier who was killed by an improvised explosive device, Sept. 4, while on patrol near Balad, Iraq, the Nebraska cavalryman was celebrated as a fun-loving person who willingly volunteered to deploy to Iraq so someone else wouldn't have to.

According to a family spokesperson, Debro's family is extremely proud of their son and the life he lived.

"Germaine's family is proud of their son," said Maj. Shawn Edwards, Debro's cousin who spoke on behalf of the fallen Soldiers' parents while reading a prepared statement. "He was a man of his own making and they had to respect his decision to go and fight in the Iraq war."

"If they had their way, they would not have allowed him to go," said Edwards continuing from the statement, a picture pin of Debro emblazoned with the words "GI JOE MAINE" tacked to her blouse. "They do not believe in this war, but know that our troops will have to fight this battle to the end and we cannot pull out until it is over."

Among the huge crowd of people who filled the Morning Star Baptist Church near downtown Omaha were Sen. Ben Nelson, U.S. Representatives Lee Terry and Jeff Fortenbury and dozens of other state and local dignitaries, hundreds of uniformed Soldiers and hundreds more people ranging from friends and family members to common people who'd come out to say thank you to the fallen Guardsman and offer their support to his family.

According to Rev. Leroy E. Adams, the huge congregation was a fitting memorial to the life that Debro lived and died for.

"I look out across this sanctuary and I see America," said Adams. "I see different colors... brown, white. Male, female. Professionals as well as those who are common people. One Nation, under God... in a church."

"And Germaine brought us all here," added Adams.

During the funeral services, several letters of condolences were read.

Debro was remembered as a



**Farewell To A Son, Comrade:** The family of Sgt. Germaine Debro (lower right) hold each other as members of the Nebraska Army National Guard Funeral Honors Team carry the flag-draped coffin of the fallen Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier to his final resting place at Omaha's Forest Lawn Cemetery where Debro was buried with full military honors on a hillside surrounded by the gravesites of dozens of other military veterans.



Courtesy photo

**GI Joe Maine:** Family members and friends of the late Sgt. Germaine L. Debro, all wore a photo of the fallen Soldier with the words "G.I. Joe Maine" pinned to their clothes during Debro's funeral, held Sept. 18 in Omaha. According to family members, the nickname — a play on Germaine's name — was given to Debro when he was a young boy and stuck with him throughout his life. Family members of the fallen Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier remembered Debro for his warm heart, sense of humor, character and commitment to military service.

fun-loving, kind and loving person who was deeply committed to being a Soldier.

"If you don't take a risk, then you'll never know what happened," said Debro's brother Maurice, while reading from a letter Germaine wrote before his death. "Sometimes it's good... sometimes it's bad, like now."

Still, read Maurice, life is about taking chances. That's why Germaine, in his letter, encouraged people to take the chance to introduce themselves to him so that both could learn a little more about each other.

"That was my brother," said Maurice. "He was a loving, caring person."

According to long-time friend Paul Abney, Debro was the type of person who was easy to like.

"We used to play (video) games until the birds came up," said Abney. "Germaine and I had a bond. Words can't express it."

"I used to introduce him to everyone I met as my brother from another mother," Abney said. "Germaine will be missed."

In speaking to the congregation, Adams asked everyone who had been touched by Debro in some way or had had their

lives changed for the better by him to applaud.

After a thunderous and continued round of applause, the reverend continued: "Today we have gathered in honor of that brave Soldier, Germaine L. Debro," said Adams. "Hero. A Brother. A son. A Soldier. A Nebraskan. And a believer in Jesus Christ."

"And we appreciate this opportunity to have known him."

Adams said that much can be learned from Debro's life.

"I've discovered that it's not how long you've lived, but how well you've lived in the measure of time that has been given to you," said Adams. "The bottom

line is, while you are yet alive, give what you can give; touch whatever you can touch because everyone matter. Love what you can love."

"Make a difference in others and your life," he added. "Germaine was that person. That's why we should always



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Honoring The Fallen:** A member of the Patriot Guard stands in formation with his flag during the Sept. 18 funeral of Sgt. Germaine L. Debro, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-167th Cavalry. The motorcycle group, made up by veterans and other riders, is in frequent attendance at the funerals of service men and women killed overseas.

remember Germaine. Gone but not forgotten. Out of sight, but not out of our lives."

Following the funeral, Debro's casket was escorted to Forest Lawn Cemetery by more than 100 flag-decked motorcyclists belonging to the Patriot Guard.

There, Debro was buried on a hilly, windswept plot surrounded by veterans of many different wars.

According to Edwards, Debro will never be forgotten.

"He was a special, special guy," she said. "He's going to be missed."

## HANSEN continued from page 4.

A was coming to an end earlier this year, he had the opportunity to travel from Ramadi, Iraq, to Camp Anaconda to visit the newly arrived Soldiers from the rest of the 1-167th Cavalry. One of the people Petersen said he made a point of seeing during the visit was Hansen.

"We had a nice conversation,"

said Petersen. "It was hot and miserable when we were visiting and he was working...but we had a good conversation. He was a very professional Soldier."

According to Rev. Donald Becker, who officiated over the funeral, Jennifer Hansen said her husband was a strong person with tremendously strong val-

ues.

"Not just a strong Soldier, but a Soldier's Soldier," said Becker. "A Soldier whose heart and mind and strengths and sense of loyalty and commitment were strong."

"A husband whose love for her, for his own family, for all the men in his unit who were

like family to him... (was) indeed strong."

Becker said that Hansen truly earned a hero's welcome.

"He was heroic...worthy of a hero's welcome, a hero's salute, a hero's parade, a hero's remembrance," said Becker.

"It has been said, 'You don't raise heroes, you raise sons. And

if you treat them like sons, they turn out to be heroes."

That was exactly the case for Hansen, Becker added.

Adams agreed.

"We are truly blessed to have known Staff Sergeant Jeffrey Hansen," Adams said. "He touched our lives in so many different ways."

# Friends say fallen troopers will never be forgotten



Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz

**Comrades In Arms:** Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Hansen (center) stands surrounded by other members of the organization learned that Staff Sgt. Jeffrey J. Hansen had succumbed, Aug. 27, to injuries he sustained when his Hum-Vee rolled off a berm into a canal, Aug. 21, during a patrol near Camp Anaconda, Iraq.

## Jeffrey Hansen remembered as consummate professional

By 1st Lt. Cole Kilpatrick  
Staff Writer

A shock wave was felt throughout the 1-167th Cavalry when members of the organization learned that Staff Sgt. Jeffrey J. Hansen had succumbed, Aug. 27, to injuries he sustained when his Hum-Vee rolled off a berm into a canal, Aug. 21, during a patrol near Camp Anaconda, Iraq.

According to the unit members, the loss has been a difficult blow as the unit approaches the half way point of its year-long deployment. Staff Sgt. Hansen, they said, was a positive noncommissioned officer who impacted Soldiers who worked with him as well as those who had only met him briefly.

"He put the Soldier first at all times. He constantly taught the younger Soldiers what he knew so they could move up through the ranks," said Staff Sgt. Chad Rowe, adding that Hansen dedicated himself to helping others in the unit.

"He was the first one who would sit down and talk to you if someone was down," said Rowe, who first met Hansen in 2000 when Hansen joined Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, in Hastings. The two would later deploy together to Bosnia in 2002 where Rowe saw first-hand how dedicated Hansen was to his Soldiers.

"He was just always there for his troops."

The unit held its official memorial service at Freedom Chapel on Camp Anaconda, Iraq, on Sept. 2. Many were in attendance to honor Hansen, according to unit reports. Additionally, just about every Soldier from Troop B attended, along with several other Soldiers from the Squadron.

Many commanders and their command sergeants major left their respect by placing their coins next to Jeff's picture following the ceremony. Several spoke about their experiences with Hansen.

"Staff Sgt Hansen was always willing to help anyone who needed it or just wanted to talk," said Sgt 1st Class Joseph P. Barrientos Jr, "He touched a lot of people's lives throughout his life time and will be sorely missed. My heart goes out to his wife and family back home. It was an honor to have known him."

"This tragedy has taken one of our own from us, from his wife, and from his family. I ask that we remember the kind words spoken here today and pray for his family as they struggle to find solace. May God bless us for the opportunity to have shared in Staff Sgt Hansen's life," said 1st Lt. Kevin L. Janousek at the end of the unit ceremony.

According to unit members, Hansen

always maintained a professional appearance and demeanor. He also enjoyed teaching other Soldiers how to become better, often spending several extra hours researching material and using his law enforcement background to further educate those around him.

Even before drill weekends, his fellow Soldiers say, Hansen would spend numerous hours preparing for training events.

Hansen was also known for his spirit for entertainment. His quiet, calm personality, however, could be shadowed when Hansen decided to let his hair down, Soldiers say.

Many of these same Soldiers say that Hansen had a flair for music and the art of karaoke. He was also known for his ability to rap with the best, said members of the unit.

"Wow, where do I start," said Staff Sgt. Chris Trsohynski via e-mail, "Jeff was a fine Soldier, an outstanding leader and mentor, and a good friend. That sums it up for me. America lost a good Soldier. I lost a friend."

Hansen also maintained a healthy lifestyle and was very particular about his diet and exercise. According to friends, Hansen utilized his degree and knowledge of strength training to assist other Soldiers in living the same lifestyle.

He was an avid weight lifter and competed with himself to become better. He was, say the Soldiers, strong as an ox and a consummate professional.

"He did things the right way," said Sgt. 1st Class Troy Andersen, who deployed with Hansen to Bosnia.

"Staff Sgt Hansen was one of the most dedicated Soldiers and NCOs that I've had an opportunity to work with." Andersen is in constant communication with the 1-167th Cavalry and has been able to listen to what Soldiers have had to say about Hansen.

"Comments are always positive; comments are always what a neat guy he was or how he was a close friend; the number of Soldiers that have said he was a close friend of mine is overwhelming."

"It said a lot of his character to volunteer for this mission in Iraq," said Andersen, "It is a great loss as is the loss of any Soldier. He was definitely an NCO that had a lot of potential."



Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz

**Christmas At Camp Shelby:** Sgt. Germaine L. Debro (center) and other members of his unit pose for a photo shortly before Christmas while training at Camp Shelby, Miss., in late 2005.

## Fellow Guard Soldiers say Germaine Debro like brother

By 1st Lt. Cole Kilpatrick  
Staff Writer

Just a week after members of the 1-167th Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance, Target Acquisition) mourned the loss of a unit mate, members of the Nebraska Army Guard organization once again felt their hearts stop when they learned that another Nebraska Cavalryman had died in action.

According to members of the 1-167th Cavalry, Sgt. Germaine L. Debro, who died Sept. 4 when an improvised explosive device exploded near his Hum-Vee while on patrol near Balad, Iraq, was a unique, well-thought of Soldier.

"He was kind of like a dad to all of us," said Sgt. Josh Graf, a member of the 1-167th Cavalry who served with Debro during deployments to Kuwait in 2001 and Bosnia in 2002-2003. "Just being next to Debro...you always felt like you were in a safe haven. It was just the vibe he gave off."

"DB was one of the first people I met back in July of 2002 when I first got into the unit," said Graf in an e-mail interview. "He came up to me and asked all sorts of questions like where was I from, how old I was, what (military occupational specialty) I had; he just seemed

real interested in what I had to say, then asked me for a dollar for a soda...that was just DB."

Graf described Debro as a person one could always count on. "He was like a big teddy bear."

Graf also mentioned how selfless Debro was.

"He always put himself ahead of the married guys. He would volunteer first before the married guys so they could spend time with their families."

The 1-167th Cavalry held its official memorial service at Freedom Chapel on Camp Anaconda, Iraq, on Sept. 8. According to unit reports, generals, sergeants major, nearly every Soldier from Troop B, 1-167th, and Soldiers from the rest of the squadron and others from around Camp Anaconda attended the service to honor Debro.

Many unit commanders placed their coins out of respect on Debro's memorial stand. A few Troop B, 1-167th Cavalry, Soldiers ripped off their combat patches

and left them under Debro's awards, next to his picture.

Germaine served with 1-167th Cavalry during every overseas deployment the organization has ever conducted: Kuwait in 2001, Bosnia in 2003, and lastly Operation Iraqi Freedom, at Camp Anaconda. Soldiers who knew the fallen Guardsman described Debro by how his smile would light up a room. Others said he had the ability to lighten any situation.

After a moment of silence during the ceremony, Troop B called the final roll call. When Debro did not answer to his name, three volleys of seven rounds hailed out to honor the cavalryman followed by the sounds of "Taps" as a bugler concluded the memorial service.

"He was an excellent Soldier; he would do anything and everything you asked him to do," said Staff Sgt. Charles Penner, who deployed with Debro to Kuwait and was with him during the unit's train-up for Iraq. "He would not complain or make any comments if it was stupid just like a Soldier should do."

"If you asked him to do a class, he would try to gain more knowledge of what he knew of it and above it, and would teach the other guys below him that didn't know anything and would sit down with the guys that would struggle," Penner said.

"That guy had so much dedication to whatever he did, in the Army or working for Burger King," said Spc. Shawn O'Neil, who served in Kuwait and Bosnia with Debro, "There would be nights when we would have plans to go hang out and work would call him with a problem. Instead of handling it over the phone, we would sit in the dining room at B.K. for two hours while he made sure everything was okay for him to go."

O'Neil said Debro was like a brother to his fellow Soldiers.

"He meant a lot to all of us in this unit and everyone who served with him in Kuwait and Bosnia as well," said O'Neil. "I knew Debro on the civilian side very well. We would make sure to get together at least once a weekend if our schedules permitted it."

"Iraq is not the same without him around here anymore, and neither will be weekend drills at Fremont," he added. "Debro fought and died for a cause he believed was greater than himself, and if that is not an example every Soldier should follow, I don't know what is. He lived by the seven Army values whenever he put the uniform on."

"I just really miss my friend"



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz

**Honoring The Fallen:** Members of the 1-167th Cavalry prepare to fire a 21-gun salute in honor of Sgt. Germaine L. Debro, who died Sept. 4 in Iraq. He was the second Nebraska cavalryman to die within a week.

# Co-workers say late Air Guard sergeant had tremendous heart

By Chief Master Sgt. Vicky Cerino  
Staff Writer

The people who knew Master Sgt. Walter "Wally" Zaptin, praised him as a friend, co-worker, family man and someone who had a big heart. It showed in the outpouring of support to family and friends when Zaptin, 57, died in early October from injuries resulting in a motor vehicle accident.

The Brooklyn, New York, native, made an impact on many people, say the people who knew him. Master Sgt. Kim Davila, crew chief, worked on the same crew as Zaptin.

"He was a very personable, likeable guy. He was outgoing and easy to work with as well as a sense of humor," he said. "He was quick as far as knowing the job. He was a great person overall."

Chief Master Sgt. Dwight Morehead, boom operator, met Zaptin during the 25 years Morehead spent in maintenance. Morehead said aircrew and maintenance specialists form special relationships.

"You develop a bond because you eat, sleep and fly together. They're just like another crew member," Morehead said.

"He was always happy...he always had a smile on his face. He was never down in the dumps. He and his wife, Peggy, came down to the farm to fish. He liked to fish," Morehead said.

Chief Master Sgt. Doug Richard, maintenance operation flight supervisor referred to Zaptin as 'a good guy...a really good guy.'

Lt. Col. Bobby Buls, commander of the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, said Zaptin was always smiling and had a consistent positive attitude. "That's why it was so easy to be his friend."

Buls and others recall many poignant stories over the years. Buls said when Zaptin's dog had puppies, he invited her son out to see the new arrivals. She learned even more about him in the last month.

"I've heard story after story," she said. "I know he helped the Davilas with roofing their house and never expected anything in return. That's how generous he was with people."

She said Zaptin's family asked her to pass on to his Guard family that the support and friendship they received from the base was "phenomenal." "I know how grateful they were," Buls said.

Senior Master Sgt. Susan Turner worked with Zaptin for about 20 years. She and her husband were best friends with Zaptin and the families both lived in Crete. When Turner was in the hospital following the birth of her third son, Zaptin was at the hospital when her husband had to go home to be with the other children.

"Wally would sneak me in malt shakes," she said. "He was probably one of my closest friends out there." Her middle son, Patrick, is Zaptin's God son.

Zaptin even hosted an all-male baby shower for Turner. "All the guys threw a baby shower. They decorated and they all chipped in for a bassinet. That's what Wally was all about. That's how special he was to me."

Zaptin was proud of his military service. "It was always duty and country first. He was very patriotic. After 9/11, he was the first one to volunteer for deployment," Turner said. She said one of her friends summed up Zaptin's character well. "He was everybody's best friend. Those are probably the best words I can use to describe him."

Zaptin worked for Chief Master Sgt. Dale McIntosh, 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron superintendent, on and off for 25 years.

"Wally was a unique person to say the least. I always admired him in the respect he wasn't afraid to tackle anything. He learned quickly and had done a variety of things already. He was always a go getter. I had to tie an anchor on him to get him to stay in one spot very long."

As is usually the case, deployments formed even stronger friendships among Guard members. "Wally and I ran hard together and had quite the adventures on deployments such as Gulfport, Miss. Lot's of funny stories...looking back on it we were lucky we survived some of those adventures."

McIntosh said he had a lot of trust and faith in Zaptin. "On one deployment probably in the early 80s, we were at Nellis Air Force Base, for a Red Flag exercise, and were having maintenance problems with an RF-4 and it needed to have an engine run. I stuck Wally in the front seat of the F-4, had the electrician in the back seat to help hold the brakes.

"I stood on the cockpit ladder on the left side of the fuselage and had Wally run the checklist and showed him how to start and run the right engine. I would not have done that with any other individual but Wally," McIntosh said.

Zaptin began his service in the military as a missile maintenance specialist in the Air Force, from 1966 to 1973. After separating from the Air Force, he and his wife, Peggy, and their children lived in New York then ultimately moved to Nebraska where Peggy grew up.

After a 10-year break in service, he joined the Nebraska Air National Guard as a RF-4C Phantom II crew chief, the aircraft of the unit at the time. In 1987, he was hired as a full-time technician. He ultimately served as a crew chief on the unit's current KC-135R Stratotanker aircraft.

Over the years he made significant contributions in maintenance, say colleagues. Several years ago he was Nebraska Air National Guard Outstanding NCO of the Year. He was active in community service, professional and religious organizations. Zaptin was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal posthumously.



Senior Master Sgt. Walter Zaptin



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz

Real Brotherhood Of War: (From left) Sgt. Timothy Brewer, Pfc. Robert Brewer and Sgt. Steven Brewer pose on an armored Hum-Vee at Camp Anaconda, Iraq.

## Brothers no strangers to combat

By Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz  
1-167th Cavalry (RSTA) PAO

CAMP ANACONDA, Iraq — Three brothers who grew up in Pine Ridge, S.D., were reunited at Camp Anaconda, Iraq, recently.

Steven Brewer, a sniper, is the oldest at 24 and is serving with the 134th LRS from Crete, Neb., along with his youngest brother Robert, 21, who is a .50 caliber machine gunner on a Hum-Vee.

Their brother Timothy Brewer, 22, is currently stationed at Taji, Iraq, as a designated marksman with the 172nd Stryker Brigade. The 172nd has been extended to assist the 4th Infantry Division in securing Baghdad. Previously, Timothy and 172nd were stationed in Mosul, Iraq.

Combat and service is no stranger to the Brewer Family. This is Steven's second tour in Iraq. He was here for Operation Iraqi Freedom I with the 101st Airborne Division.

Military service isn't a male-only calling in the Brewer family, either. The brothers' sister, Jackie, served in the Marine Corps as an electrician servicing and maintaining generators.

Although the brothers' time together at Anaconda was only a short few days, the Brewers were thankful their chain of command gave them a brief reunion. Robert who flew via helicopter from Baghdad said: "I talked with my chain of command and sergeant major... they were all helpful."

Steven agreed, saying: "My chain of com-

mand is pretty cool by allowing us to get some time together and work some different shifts."

According to the Brewers, they planned on spending their three or four days together sharing stories of their crazy childhood. They also planned to call home, during which they said they would pass the phone around to let their mom and dad know they were together and doing well.

Tim Brewer also took time to share stories and pictures with other members of the 134th LRSD about his time in combat in Mosul and Baghdad.

Bob, the youngest, said: "It is a pretty big deal being the youngest and being together."

Military service is no stranger to the family. Steven Brewer said that many family members serve the United States. Dad was a police officer for over 25 years and mom was paramedic and emergency medical technician. Now she teaches EMT to others.

They also had two uncles, Tom and Mike, who served in the military and their grandfather served in the Korean War with the 82nd Airborne Division.

"Our family has been in every war this country has fought," said Steven Brewer. "It's tradition."

It has been two-and-a-half since Robert saw Timothy and many years since the whole family has been together. The Brewer brothers said they are looking forward to a family reunion in Gordon, Neb., this upcoming fall which will undoubtedly include many infantry stories from the Global War on Terrorism.

## Quartermasters handling big mission in Iraq

By Capt. Kirk Ludlow  
168th Corps Support Battalion

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — The Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 867th Quartermaster Battalion, reached Camp Taji, Iraq in early September.

They arrived at their new home via a C-130 cargo plane and Chinook flights. This Nebraska National Guard unit is from Omaha. Lt. Col. Michael Navrkal commands the Soldiers of the 867th Quartermaster Battalion.

The unit functions as a corps support battalion, which differs slightly from the mission of a quartermaster battalion.

Prior to deployment, the 867th QM mission emphasized the management and movement of petroleum products, such as fuel. Now the battalion manages the movement of all classes of supply. For example, if units in the field need food, fuel or equipment, the Soldiers of the 867th likely guided it there.

According to the unit Soldiers, they're proud to be helping out in such an important mission. For one Soldier in particular,

the deployment was something he envisioned when he enlisted into the National Guard a short time ago. According to Spc. Darrin Fulford, Lincoln, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, were the impetus to enlist into the Guard.

"My wife and I made a joint decision (for me) to join the Army," he said. "Because I was older, I had to wait until they raised the limit to age 39. I signed up one week before my 40th birthday."

"I'm here in Iraq," Fulford continued, "and somebody else gets to go home."

Fulford said he knew that being mobilized was inevitable.

"Neither my wife or I thought it would be this quick, but we understood that I would probably go," he said, adding that he sometimes feels like an old man around his peers.

The 867th QM's — which is now referred to as the 867th Corps Support Battalion — higher headquarters is the 15th Sustainment Brigade, which is commanded by Col. Aundre Piggee. This active duty brigade normally calls Fort Hood, Texas, home.

While HHD, 867th CSB is made up mostly of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers, there are soldiers from other states that augment the unit, such as Master Sgt. James Grime of Michigan. These Soldiers manage the battalion headquarters and tactical operations center.

More than a dozen Soldiers hale from the Scottsbluff area, all members of the 168th Quartermaster Battalion. Some of these soldiers volunteered specifically for this mission. Staff Sergeant Jay Weitzel holds the important job of supply sergeant for the unit. He orders pens, uniforms, cleaning supplies, equipment, and ammunition.

"I take my job very seriously. If I don't do my job, soldiers aren't happy and that affects their morale," said Weitzel.

The 867th CSB is also responsible for coordinating the movement of convoys in the greater Baghdad area. Soldiers in the subordinate companies operate the trucks that transport the materiel to the units in the field. Other companies that work for the 867th provide security and information that the truck drivers need to keep safe.

## Remembering 9/11

## President calls upon nation to rededicate itself

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — President Bush marked the fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States by calling on the nation to remember those lost that day and to unite in moving forward to win the War on Terror.

Bush, speaking in the Oval Office after earlier visiting all three sites scarred by the Sept. 11 attacks, recounted the painful events of that day as well as the extraordinary courage he said ordinary citizens displayed.

"On this day, we remember the innocent who lost their lives," he said following solemn ceremonies at New York's World Trade Center, in Shanksville, Pa., and at the Pentagon.

"And we pay tribute to those

who gave their lives so that others might live."

The United States resolves to honor all those lost and seeks a lasting memorial to them in a "safer, more hopeful world," he said.

The United States has learned much about the enemy that attacked on Sept. 11 and recognizes it as a global network of extremists driven by a totalitarian ideology that hates all that America stands for, Bush said.

And while actions taken in the United States since that day have prevented another similar attack on the homeland, Bush insisted that the terrorists "have not been idle" and haven't given up their goals.

"We face an enemy determined to bring death and suffering into our homes," he said.

"America did not ask for this war and every American wishes

it was over. So do I. But the war is not over and it will not be over until either we or the extremists emerge victorious."

The United States has made headway in confronting terrorists and those who harbor or support them, Bush said. "We helped drive the Taliban from power in Afghanistan. We put al Qaeda on the run and killed or captured most of those who planned the Sept. 11 attacks, including the man believed to be the mastermind, Khalid Sheik Mohammed."

While Osama bin Laden and other terrorists remain in hiding, Bush said, the United States' message to them is clear: "No matter how long it takes, America will find you, and we will bring you to justice."

The president said the United States must maintain its resolve to follow through with what he acknowledged is

not an easy fight.

"If we do not defeat these enemies now, we will leave our children to face a Middle East overrun by terrorist states and radical dictators armed with nuclear weapons," he said.

The stakes could not be higher, Bush said, calling the struggle way more than a clash of civilizations as some have suggested, but rather, "a struggle for civilization."

"We are fighting to maintain the way of life enjoyed by free nations," he said.

"And we are fighting for the possibility that good and decent people across the Middle East can raise up societies based on freedom and tolerance and personal dignity."

By working to support democratic leaders and reformers in parts of the world ruled by tyranny, the United States is helping to offer a path away from

radicalism and extremism, the president said.

When the people of the Middle East see a future of hope and opportunity for their children, the appeal of radicalism will decline "and we will leave our children with a better and safer world," he said.

Bush called on Americans to observe the fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks by rededicating themselves to this cause.

"Our nation has endured trials and we face a difficult road ahead," he said.

"Winning this war will require the determined efforts of a unified country. So we must put aside our differences and work together to meet the test that history has given us. We will defeat our enemies; we will protect our people; and we will lead the 21st century into a shining age of human liberty."

## Worth Repeating

*"An act of war has been committed on this country, and the dedication of our Guardsmen and Reservists will serve not only as a strong symbol to all that we're prepared to take the necessary actions, but will be a part of helping define the spirit and courage of America."*

— President George Bush, Sept. 17, 2001

*Our nation — this generation — will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.*

— President George Bush, Sept. 20, 2001

*"We are in a war that will set the course for this new century — and determine the destiny of millions across the world."*

— President George Bush, Sept. 11, 2006

## Five years after terrorist attacks, recruiting/retention remain high, services report

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Five years after military recruiting hit the ceiling following the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, recruiting remains solid, with every service meeting its active-duty recruiting goal for the 15th consecutive month.

Recruiting and retention statistics for August, just released by the Defense Department, show the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force all meeting or exceeding both their monthly as well as year-to-date recruiting goals for the year.

At the same time, retention remains solid across the board, with all services expected to meet their retention goals for the fiscal year, officials said.

During August, the Army recruited almost 10,500 Soldiers, 104 percent of its goal, and the Marine Corps signed on more than 4,300 Marines, 107 percent of its goal. The Navy and Air Force both met their August goals, recruiting almost 4,100 sailors and almost 3,200 Airmen, respectively.

Recruiting numbers in the reserve components were also up in August, with all components but the Army Reserve and Air Force Reserve meeting

or exceeding their goals, defense officials said.

The Army National Guard recruited more than 6,500 Soldiers, 100 percent of its goal. The Navy Reserve signed on almost 1,100 sailors, 106 percent of its goal; and the Marine Corps Reserve, with more than 800 recruits, exceeded its monthly goal by 1 percent. The Air National Guard recruited more than 1,000 Airmen, 128 percent of its August goal.

The Air Force Reserve fell 1 Airman short of its 849 goal, officials said. The Army Reserve, with more than 2,400 accessions, met 62 percent of its August goal but is faring better in year-to-date recruiting, which stands at 94 percent of the 33,100-plus goal, officials said.

Marine Corps Maj. Stewart Upton, a Pentagon spokesman, called the latest recruiting and retention successes a positive sign that the services are attracting the manpower they need to maintain a quality force for the future.

"The numbers also indicate that people out there understand that we are involved in a global war on terror and are making the decision to serve this country at this important time," Upton said.

## Soldiers help lodge mark anniversary

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard helped a local Omaha civic organization mark the fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

During early afternoon flag raising ceremony conducted in front of the new North Omaha Readiness Center, members of the Nebraska National Guard gathered with representatives of Woodmen of the World Alpha Lodge to remember the victims of the terrorist attacks as well as the people who have answered the call to service since that fateful day.

"We look back five years ago with disbelief on the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001," said Marita Schroeder, Alpha Lodge president during the ceremony's invocation. "But we look back with honor on the courage of ordinary people who sacrificed themselves to prevent further deaths and destruction."

"Our grief turned to determination," she said. "We're resolved to do what is good, right and just."

The flag ceremony was one of more than 300 "In Honor and Remembrance" ceremonies conducted by Woodmen of the World lodges across the nation on Sept. 11. This was the fifth year that Woodmen of the World has sponsored the "In Honor and Remembrance" program and more than 2,400 ceremonies have been held to date.

The program honors those who lost their lives on 9/11 and salutes the police officers, fire fighters and members of the Armed Services who protect the nation every day.

The ceremony included the raising of an American flag and then the dipping of it to half-staff. Later, that same flag was donated to the Nebraska National Guard facility on behalf of the Woodmen of the World lodge.

Major General Roger Lempke, who represented the Nebraska National Guard during the ceremony, said the Guard is thankful for the support it has received from organizations like Woodmen of the



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Remembering The Victims Of 9/11: Staff Sgt. Daniel Malizzi, 600th Transportation Company, and Kyle Jorgensen, Alpha Lodge trustee, prepare to raise a flag in front of the North Omaha Readiness Center, Sept. 11, in a ceremony marking the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

*"We pay our service men and women who are stationed around the globe to fight evil, promote democracy and protect the lives and futures of all Americans and the oppressed people of other lands."*

— Retired Brig. Gen. James Murphy

World. It's also determined to see the war through to its successful conclusion.

"There were about 3,000 direct casualties from 9-11," said Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska. "Since then in Nebraska there have been over 3,000 National Guard families that have been very directly affected by what happened on 9/11 because in one way or another, we mobilized that number of Soldiers and Airmen overseas to fight terrorism."

Lempke said that ceremonies such as this one, help the men and women who make up the nation's military effort against terrorism know that they

haven't been forgotten.

"It's something like this... this program and the energy put into it by the Woodmen of the World — that again reminds us of that oath of duty to protect freedom that we have," said Lempke. "This flag represents sacrifice and that the fight isn't over."

According to retired Brig. Gen. James Murphy, who also spoke during the Omaha ceremony, the event is a truly special tribute to all the men and women who have vowed to serve the United States in the military as well as in other service organizations.

He added that on a day such as Sept. 11, the thoughts of people throughout the United States were focused on the victims of the attacks as well as on American service men and women serving around the world.

"We pay our service men and women who are stationed around the globe to fight evil, promote democracy and protect the lives and futures of all Americans and the oppressed people of other lands," said Murphy. "May they be protected and held in God's hands."

# Nebraska National Guard Since 9/11

## The Costs:

Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, seven Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers have given their lives to their Nation while deployed overseas.

Additionally, as of Sept. 30, 25 Nebraska Army National Guardsmen have received the purple heart medal for wounds they received in combat.



**Spc. Blake Kelly**  
July 29, 2003  
Bosnia



**Master Sgt. Linda Tarango-Griess**  
July 11, 2004  
Iraq



**Staff Sgt. Jeremy Fischer**  
July 11, 2004  
Iraq



**Sgt. 1st Class Tricia Jameson**  
July 14, 2005  
Iraq



**Sgt. Joshua Ford**  
July 31, 2006  
Iraq



**Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Hansen**  
Aug. 27, 2006  
Iraq



**Sgt. Germaine Debro**  
Sept. 4, 2006  
Iraq

## Mobilizations:

Since the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, nearly 95 percent of the total Nebraska Army National Guard force has mobilized overseas or around the continental United States for a variety of combat, peacekeeping and Homeland Defense missions.

At the same time, approximately 95 percent of the entire Nebraska Air National Guard has been deployed around the world or the United States for a wide array of missions including aerial refueling support, security, air base management, civil engineering, supply management and others.

## The Heroes:

As of Sept. 30, 20 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers had been awarded awards for heroism in battle.

Thirty Nebraska Soldiers have been awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge, more than 100 have received the Combat Action Badge and four have received the Combat Medical Badge since Sept. 11, 2001.

# Ashland Museum display shows attacks' cost



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Field of Flags:** Patrick Hynes, 9, reads the name of one of the 3,000 victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks at a memorial set up in a field in front of the Strategic Air Command Museum near Ashland, Neb. on Sept. 11. The memorial was placed by September 11 Connections, a Nebraska-based organization, and was designed to preserve the memory of the people who died on Sept. 11, 2001. The memorial is also designed to provide a support system for those who were affected by the tragic attacks. Each of the flags was personalized with the name, age and occupation of each person who died that day.

# Fallen Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers honored in new Bellevue 9/11 memorial

By Capt. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

The names of six Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers joined ranks with 40 other U.S. service members with Nebraska and Western Iowa ties, Sept. 11, when a memorial honoring those servicemen and women who have died in action since Sept. 11, 2001, was unveiled at Haworth Park in Bellevue, Neb.

The rededication of a monument honoring "the Heartland's fallen" was part of Bellevue's annual 9/11 memorial ceremony, held at twilight of the fifth anniversary of the notorious terrorist attacks on Washington, D.C., and New York City.

According to Bill O'Donnell of the Bellevue Kiwanis club that organized the ceremony held near Offutt Air Force Base, the monument is designed to be a testament to America's determination to defend America and the world against future terrorist attacks. He said the inclusion of the names of Nebraska and Western Iowa's fallen service members into the pentagon-shaped monument that was first dedicated on Sept. 11, 2002, is a fitting testimonial to the region's military forces.

"Today we rededicate this memorial to the warriors of Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of operation," said O'Donnell, before quoting Sir Winston Churchill. "We shall not fail or falter. We shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle nor the long drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down."

"That's true for our emergency responders that protect us every day and our military," he said.

Serving as the keynote speaker for the ceremony was Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska. Lempke said the memorial is truly a testament to the determination that



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Honoring Heartland's Fallen:** Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke (second from left) and other dignitaries salute a new memorial honoring the victims of Sept. 11, 2001, as well as 46 Nebraska and western Iowa service members who have given their lives during the Global War on Terrorism. Among the names engraved in stars on the memorial are six members of the Nebraska Army National Guard.



**Engraved In Stars:** The name of Sgt. 1st Class Tricia Jameson, Omaha native and member of the Nebraska Army Guard's 313th Medical Company, is among the 46 names that have been engraved in stars on a new memorial in Bellevue, Neb.

America's military feel in seeing the Global War on Terrorism through to a successful conclusion.

"On 9/11 over 3,000 people were killed during the period of one-and-a-half hours when four airliners were captured by terrorists who converted them into weapons of mass destruction," said Lempke. "Since then, many thousands of lives have been lost or disrupted

fighting terrorism."

"In Nebraska alone, over 3,000 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have left their homes for extended periods up to 18 months to fight terrorism in lands far away," said Lempke, adding that not only are members of the military affected by such deployment, so are the lives of family members. "The impact of 9/11 continues to reverberate through many thousands of homes in Nebraska and throughout the nation."

That impact has especially been felt in 46 homes where beloved service members have fallen in the war, said Lempke, before quoting former President Ronald Reagan: "Freedom is a fragile thing and it is not ever more than just one generation away from extinction," Lempke said. "It's not ours by inheritance. It must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people."

"Those who have known freedom and then lost it, have never known it again," Lempke said, before concluding with a quote from current President George Bush. "The battle is now joined on many fronts. We will not waver. We will not tire. We will not falter. We will not fail." "Peace and freedom will prevail."

# Army Guard officer uses military training to save life

By Spc. Tegan Kucera  
Staff Writer

While baseball and hotdogs go hand and hand, baseball and cardiopulmonary resuscitation don't.

Recently, one Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier dealt with both at a baseball game during his drill weekend.

A Soldier from 92nd Troop Command was honored Aug. 6 for what he did the night before. Just one week after taking a CPR class at the armory during his annual training, Capt. Robert Mendez, assistant logistics officer for the 92nd Troop Command, helped save a life.



Mendez

"I just did what I was there to do. It was a circumstance that presented itself and I'm just hoping I did the right thing. As for being recognized for it I don't know if I'm deserving of it, but I'm thankful," Mendez said after he received a coin from his commander.

Mendez was attending the American Legion State Baseball Championship in Wakefield, Neb., where he was rooting for the Shelton-Gibbon baseball team, a team his six-year-old son was the batboy for. Suddenly, he noticed an elderly lady who he said was visibly upset. He saw the man next to her and went over to help.

"I went over there and tried to help her by waking him up and he wasn't responding, so then myself and another gentleman from my hometown checked his pulse to see if he was breathing. He wasn't re-

sponding and he had a very, very faint pulse, so we started CPR. A registered nurse that was from the area walked us through it because she had just taken the same class as I had," said Mendez.

Mendez said he believes he performed the lifesaving procedure for about 15 minutes until an emergency medical team arrived and took the man to a hospital.

Mendez said the man had suffered a heart attack during the seventh inning while the game was tied. Mendez later learned that while he conducted CPR on the victim, his team won.

Mendez said the rest of the audience had no idea what was going on because it was 9:30 p.m. and he and the victim were high up in the stands under a tree.

Mendez' wife said that God places him in funny situations for him to be able to help people;

he said he replied with an affirmative.

Mendez took a four hour long CPR class that the National Guard was offering the last week of July. This was the fifth class Mendez has taken and the second time he helped to save a life. Last year he helped to save the life of his own father who had a heart attack and is alive today because of what his son did.

"Between (the gentleman) and my father, I'd say the fear is there no matter who the individual is. The way their body is reacting during the situation is identical," Mendez said, adding that the steps he took were the same. "I think the emotions are the same because that gentleman is somebody's father too."

Mendez said he knew the skills he learned in the class would be useful.

"The class gives you the resources and tools for the indi-

vidual as long as they are willing to take on that responsibility and put themselves in that position to help somebody in need," Mendez said.

According to Mendez' military boss, the officer was definitely deserving of praise.

"I think it's great to recognize a Citizen Soldier going out and taking their training that they receive in the military and being able to incorporate it into the civilian world," said Maj. Russell Virus.

Virus is the logistics officer for 92nd Troop Command and is Mendez's supervisor. He is also the one who allowed Mendez to take the class that he himself was going to attend.

"It's amazing to me that someone had to do CPR twice within a year's timeframe. Most of the time you get the training and never have to incorporate it, but it's nice to be able to when you have to," Virus said.

## DEPLOYMENT continued from page 1.

and Chief Master Sgt. Leo Kreifels, the information systems branch chief of the 155th Communication Flight, are glad to back on American soil after deploying to Bagram Air Field in northeastern Afghanistan.

Skuodas and Kreifels, both 34-year veterans of the Air National Guard, left for the region Jan. 2 and were assigned to the 455th Mission Support Group. Skuodas as the group commander and Kreifels as the Expeditionary MSG chief.

The trip didn't begin on the most positive note. Kreifels said the flight he was scheduled to take out of Lincoln, through Chicago to Baltimore was canceled when a wicked January snowstorm blew in, leaving him with precious little time to grab his gear and get to Omaha to catch a different flight.

The fun didn't stop there, either. Kreifels said it took three days to get to Afghanistan. Skuodas, who was transported by military aircraft, met Kreifels at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, and the two traveled from there to Afghanistan together.

During an overnight stay at Manis Air Base, located in the rugged alpine region of Bishkek, Krygyzistan, Kreifels said he and everyone else staying there had to endure bone-chilling temperatures.

"The day we left Manis, it was 22 below," said Kreifels.

All enlisted personnel, with the exception of those in the grade of E-9, and all junior officers were housed in tents at Manis, said Kreifels.

Kreifels said that when they finally arrived in Bagram, (elevation 4,900 feet.) the thermometer read minus 5 degrees.

"The weather patterns there are pretty similar to here. I was told by contractors in the area that this winter...was pretty mild compared to most winters," said Kreifels.

Once in Afghanistan, Kreifels and Skuodas settled into their roles.

Skuodas commanded all Air Force personnel and oversaw all operations at the base, while Kreifels took on the responsibilities of the senior enlisted personnel advisor.

A typical day started at 4 a.m. and was filled with meetings, visiting troops, conducting business through e-mails, and plan-



Photos courtesy of Col. George Skuodas

**Afghanistan Service:** Col. George Skuodas (second from left) and Chief Master Sgt. Leo Kreifels (right) pose for a photo in front of the Camp Cunningham sign with Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, during a visit by Lempke to Afghanistan earlier this year.

ning projects and functions for the base, said Skuodas. In addition to the day-to-day operations, Skuodas said he kept busy planning for the future.

One of the biggest challenges Skuodas faced was converting the old Russian-built air base, complete with the obligatory surrounding mine fields, to a facility that could accommodate both U.S. and coalition forces.

"Everyone wanted to park their aircraft, but we didn't have enough concrete," said Skuodas.

Skuodas said he began to plan for more ramp space while also overseeing the construction of a new runway.

"During the construction of the runway, contractors found a 500-pound bomb buried," said Skuodas. "(Explosive Ordinance Detachment personnel) had to come out and detonate it so that construction could continue."

The deployment was eventful for both Skuodas and Kreifels. Skuodas soon embraced the ideology that, "every day is a new adventure."

One event in particular will live indefinitely in Skuodas' mind. He said he received a call



**Boom:** Explosive ordinance disposal specialists detonate a massive 500 pound bomb that was discovered buried near a runway at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

at 11 p.m. one evening to inform him that a C-17 cargo plane had gone off the runway and that he was the on-site commander.

In a concerted effort, the plane was downloaded and pulled back onto the runway reporting only minor damages. Skuodas said he then asked the security police to issue a ticket to the air crew for illegal parking.

One of the major issues that Skuodas was faced with had to do with the mines surrounding the base. The area surrounding Bagram has the highest concentration of land mines in Afghanistan, said Skuodas.

Another major challenge that Skuodas and Kreifels faced was keeping the morale of the troops high. Because of their mission, location and brevity of their deployment (typically four or five months), Airmen weren't granted any passes, said Skuodas.

Movies, bingo and other unit-sponsored events were held regularly to keep the troops busy.

In an environment like Afghanistan, Skuodas said, communication between troops and their families is vital.

"I talked with my family regularly through e-mails and phone," said Skuodas.

Skuodas said he relayed to his troops the importance of communication back home and encouraged them to do so regularly.

Communicating within Bagram was also established as a priority. Kreifels said the most enjoyable part of the deployment for him was interacting with so many new people and making

good friends.

Bagram Air Field housed military and civilian contractors representing many different countries including the United States, France, Canada, Norway, Lithuania, Italy, Korea, Spain, Pakistan and Czechoslovakia.

Kreifels said the efficiency of the coalition forces impressed him.

"When replacement forces would come in, the transition was smooth. I was really impressed with the active duty lower enlisted," said Kreifels.

Efficient forces and a motivated command made for a productive deployment. Skuodas said the part of the deployment he enjoyed the most was commanding without worrying about money or unions.

"If I needed manpower, or money - I was in a war-time environment - I got it," Skuodas said.

Both Skuodas and Kreifels readily admitted that it wasn't all easy.

"The hardest part (of being deployed) was being separated from my family," said Skuodas.

Kreifels said he felt the environment was the most challenging part of the deployment. He said that the living conditions at Bagram were sub-standard even to those in Iraq. Troops lived in hastily erected plywood buildings that they all called "B-Huts," said Kreifels.

Kreifels said new, more substantial, buildings, similar to those in Iraq, are being phased into Bagram now.

Good, bad, or indifferent, both Skuodas, and Kreifels said they walk away from this deployment with memories that will last with them for a long time. While both have deployed before — Skuodas to Turkey in 1984 and Kreifels to France shortly after the Twin Towers fell — this was their first deployment to a combat zone.

Skuodas said it was a unique and fantastic experience.

"This was a great opportunity to lead a combat force performing vital missions for national defense," he said.

"What we are doing there is very important to the stability for our own country and to ensure our freedom. If we don't pursue the terrorists, the same thing will happen (again) that did on 9/11," said Kreifels.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes



# Wow!

## What A Show!

Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

**Spellbinding Performances:** (Above) Members of the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels flight demonstration team fly in close formation during their Sept. 24 performance at the "Guardians of Freedom" air show. (Top) The Sept. 23-24 air show featured aerial demonstrations detailing the history of aviation to crowds that were estimated at more than 200,000 for the event.

**By Staff Sgt. Matthew Boring**  
Staff Writer

**L**iving in Nebraska can require a myriad of personal characteristics, among which are ruggedness, resilience and extreme dedication.

If in doubt, look at Memorial Stadium during a rainy Husker football home game.

On Sept. 23, between 75,000 to 100,000 people proved that Cornhusker football isn't only thing in Lincoln that can draw a massive crowd.

On that day, thousands of people crowded onto a chilly, windswept concrete tarmac in Lincoln Air Park to watch with mouths agape awe-inspiring, extreme, aeronautics performed by some of the world's best pilots and parachutists as well as static displays of aircraft and ground vehicles from the Army, Air Force, and Navy.

It was just the opening salvo of what would become, by all accounts, an extremely successful weekend-long "Guardians of Freedom" air show.

The Nebraska National Guard, combined with the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, played host to the air show Sept. 23-24 at the Lincoln Air Park.

Both groups were extremely excited to see the culmination of 18 months of preparation said Wendy Birdsall, interim president of the Chamber of Commerce.

Even with the threat of bad weather, participants and spectators were anx-

ious for the demonstrations to begin.

"Rain or shine, it'll be a good show," said Birdsall optimistically moments before the flying began.

"A better show if it rains," she added, "the planes will have to fly lower."

Kicking off the show under thick cloud cover, the Army's Golden Knights Parachute Demonstration Team gracefully glided to the ground, surrounded by tight streamers of red smoke provided by the Red Baron Pizza Squadron demonstration planes.

The show, which was replayed nearly identically on Sept. 24 beneath beautiful Autumn skies, included performances by not only the Golden Knights, Blue Angels and Red Baron Pizza Squadron

but also by the F-16 Viper Team, an F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter, Tora! Tora! Tora!, the Shockwave Jet Truck, and multiple aerobatic pilots flying small single propeller planes.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

**Under Attack:** Thousands of spectators watch as smoke and aircraft fill the Lincoln skies during a recreation of the Pearl Harbor attack performed by 'Tora, Tora, Tora.'

closer to eye level.

Elizabeth Chavez, an 11-year-old from Grand Island who looked forward to the air show for a year, liked the Nebraska Army Guard's CH-47 Chinook helicopter the best.

"It's cool," she said. "I've never been in one and now I have. The windows were really shiny."

## 'Guardians of Freedom' air show attracts more than 200,000 to September event

For Lincoln resident Jennifer Martinez, 27, the Oracle aerobatic plane was the tops.

"I can't comprehend how someone can make an airplane flip end-over-end, and hover like a helicopter," she said.

"This is my first air show and I had no idea what to expect. The quality of the performers and the displays really blew me away," Martinez said.

"The Blue Angels were my favorite," said Joey Wilkens, an 11-year-old from Omaha. "I like the loud noise and how they kept running while they were upside down."

Despite years of military service, many members of the Nebraska National Guard, both Air and Army, who were in attendance either as spectators or participants were awed by what they saw as well.

"The B-2 bomber really impressed me," said Sgt. Ben Wilson, a CH-47 flight engineer. "I've never seen one in person, and it was quite a sight. If you didn't know it was coming, you would never see it. It was so quiet."

As much as the people enjoyed the performances, the performers enjoyed their time in Lincoln as well. Cpl. Joshua Coleman, a Golden Knight, went to his first Husker game and was impressed.

"The people here are very friendly," said Coleman. "I have a few friends that live in the area and they took good care of me."

See AIR SHOW on 12.



**On The Wings Of Angels:** A formation of U.S. Navy Blue Angels flies over a hilly section of Midwestern landscape during a Sept. 24 flight before the start of the second day of the "Guardians of Freedom" air show. During the Sept. 24 flight, members of a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker crew escorted the precision demonstration team on a mission that took the aircraft over Mount Rushmore, S.D.

Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube



**Leaving A Trail Of Smoke, Flame:** T demonstrated many of its unique abilities.



**Sharp Eyes:** Lt. Cmdr. Shaun Swartz Blue Angels performance while standing.

## AIR SHOW continued from page 11.

Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Tom Griffith, an aircraft electrician with the Blue Angels for the last two years, also enjoyed his time in Lincoln.

"(Lincoln) is a really nice city," he said.

Griffith also went to the Husker game, his first college football game, and was extremely impressed with the people of Nebraska. "The game set a pretty high standard," he said.

Many people got a chance to say thanks to the performers,

and let them know how much they enjoyed the event.

That admiration was reciprocated by performers in the show.

"This is the best show I've been to all year," said Bob 'No Neck' West, a pyrotechnics engineer with Tora! Tora! Tora!. "I've been to 24 shows this year and this is the best one...from the acts to how we were treated."

"It's a 9 out of 10!" Kent Shockley, operator of the Shockwave Jet Truck echoed West's opinions.

"Everyone treated us really well and I appreciate it," he said. "It's a shame they don't have this show every year. God bless your troops here in Nebraska. We appreciate performing for you."

One visitor to the show is more familiar with some of the aircraft than the average guest. John Adams, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, 37-year Lincoln resident and former Tuskegee Airman, knew the familiar hum of the

P-51. Adams flew the aircraft in World War II from 1942 to 1945.

"I can tell a P-51 is coming just from the sound," said Adams.

After returning from the war and continuing his career as a military officer, Adams, a Greenville, S.C. native, wound up in Lincoln serving as the deputy commander of the, then active, Lincoln Air Base. Adams said he looks forward to every air show that comes to the area.

"I come to all of them," he said.

Adams also attends all of the air shows at Offutt Air Force Base, saying that he marks his calendar as soon as he hears about them.

Many Nebraska natives, who have left the state for one reason or another, also returned to

Lincoln to participate in the Guardians of Freedom Air Show.

One of those natives was Master Sgt. Tim Hayes, a crew member with the Air Force's F-117 Nighthawk demonstration team. Originally from Pierce, Neb., Hayes said he was very grateful that he was able to come back to his home state and give something back to the people who have supported him.

"It's great to come here and give back to the people all of the support that they have given (the military)," said Hayes adding, "it also gives us a chance to show the public what their money is going toward."



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

**Airborne Salute:** A member of the U.S. Army Golden Knights parachute demonstration team salutes his teammates as he steps out into thin air during a demonstration drop to start the Sept. 24 "Guardians of Freedom" show.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

**Aerial Canvas:** A Red Baron biplane puts the finishing touches on a aerial valentine that it and a second Red Baron aircraft created in the sky above the "Guardians of Freedom" air show. Dark blue Autumn skies and warm temperatures helped give the show's aerial performers a near-perfect aerial canvas to work with.



**Crowded Flightline:** Thousands of aviation fan begin to fill "Guardians of Freedom" air show. Officials estimated that between 75,000 and 100,000 spectators gathered for the Sept. 23 show, despite chilly and drizzly weather. The next day off to more than 150,000 spectators.



The driver of the Shockley "Shockwave" jet truck roars down the tarmac during a Sept. 23 performance. The truck races during the Sept. 23-24 "Guardians of Freedom" air show, including its ability to beat a flying aircraft in a race.

Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Ready To Soar:** Cdr. Steve Foley, commander of the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels, salutes the Lincoln crowd prior to the start of the team's Sept. 24 performance.



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Underwater Performance:** Petty Officer 2nd Class Ed Hart shows off his underwater abilities to kids gathered around his dive tank. Hart is an underwater explosive disposal technician.



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Aerial Ballet:** A pair of Red Barons chase each other through the picture-perfect Autumn skies.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

(front) and Lt. Kevin Davis (back) monitor the air boss show trailer.



Photo courtesy of Nebraska State Patrol

in the tarmac during the Sept. 23 "Guardians of Freedom" air show. Officials estimated that the air show crowds grew to over 100,000 spectators.

## Nose art unveiling surreal experience for Hastings artist

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

After nearly a year in the making, the city of Hastings finally has its nose and Kayla Howsden can't be prouder.

"Wow," said Howsden, a local Hastings-area artist as she looked up at the nose of a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker where the artwork she designed had just moments before had been unveiled during the Sept. 23 Guardians of Freedom air show. "I can't believe it's really there. I can't believe that's mine."

In unveiling the artwork, Howsden and Hastings became just the second Nebraska community to earn a coveted spot on the front of a Nebraska Air Guard plane, part of a continuing community outreach program. The program is designed to spotlight a single Nebraska community and the Guardsmen who hale from that city through a school contest to design community-themed nose art.

Howsden, a recent graduate of Hastings' St. Cecilia's High School, won this year's contest earlier this year with her submission that featured a Nebraska sunset, a windmill and the words 'Hastings.' That artwork was finally unveiled during the first day of the Sept. 23-24 Guardians of Freedom air show by Howsden, who was accompanied to the air show by her family, her teacher Vickie Buss and Hastings Mayor Matt Rossen.

The artwork will stay on the aircraft for at least a year, said Lt. Col. Ken Husted, committee leader for the community nose art program and commander of the Air Guard's 155th Maintenance Squadron.

Howsden said she's still amazed to know that her artwork will be seen by a world-wide audience as the aircraft performs missions around the globe.

"It's just amazing," said Howsden. "I never thought I'd win when I created the artwork and I still can't believe



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

**Proud of 'Their' Airplane:** Kayla Howsden and Hastings Mayor Matt Rossen pose in front of the "City of Hastings" Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker.

that it's up there and that people are going to see it whenever this plane goes somewhere."

"It's really cool."

# Record crowd celebrates Air Guard's 60th birthday

By Senior Master Sgt. Vicky Cerino

Staff Writer

The party was part reunion, part chance to meet the U.S. Navy Blue Angels and other air show act guests, and part chance to get a close up view of modern and vintage aircraft.

During the pre-air show party, the Nebraska Air National Guard celebrated its 60th anniversary. Parked prominently on the ramp one of its KC-135 Stratotankers with its 60th anniversary nose art – reflected proudly the unit's history as the second oldest Air Guard unit in the country.

There were other attractions too, including two F-117 Stealth fighters, a World War II era B-17 Flying Fortress, and a U.S. Navy Blue Angel F/A-18 Hornet aircraft. There was one attraction in particular that drew lines of people from the beginning to the end of the event: Larry the Cable Guy.

Maj. Jeff Mathemeier, who spearheaded the Friday evening event, said the party had a record attendance of about 2,500.

"I've never planned anything this big, not even close. I could have never pulled this off all by myself. I had the help volunteers. It literally took 100 people to pull this off. This has been unbelievable."

He also credited the sponsors. "Our sponsors came up huge. That's why we're able to do this for free."

The "Heartland of America Night Wing" band was the featured performers.

Mathemeier said the announcement five to six weeks before the party that Larry the Cable Guy would be there attracted more people. "I think he made a 500-person increase. My phone has been ringing off the hook."

Like guests at a wedding lined up to congratulate the bride and groom, attendees kept the Pawnee City, Neb.,



Photos by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

**Smooth Sounds:** Members of Offutt Air Force Base's "Heatland of America Night Wing Band" perform during the pre-air show party held Sept. 22 at the National Guard air base in Lincoln. Approximately 2,500 people attended the party, believed to be the largest ever.

native famous for his quip, "Git-R-Done," busy signing autographs. Following a Nebraska Admirals presentation by Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, the comedian took on a serious tone.

"It was an honor to be asked to come out here to say something to y'all," said Larry the Cable Guy, also known as Dan Whitney. "We can't thank everyone enough for what you all do for us. I wouldn't be able to stand up here and do this if it weren't for what you're doing."

Following more presentations by 155th Air Refueling Wing commander, Col. Steve Adams and The Blue Angels, the comedian in his familiar voice said, "Tomorrow at the air show we're going to Git-R-Done."

Tech. Sgt. Dale McDaniel and his wife and children, stood in line for autographs. Dale has been a fan since 10 years ago when he said he listened to the comedian on a Lincoln radio station.

"I just think he's hilarious and down-



**Say Cheese:** Dan Whitney (aka "Larry the Cable Guy") poses for a photo with a member of the U.S. Army's Golden Knights parachute team during the pre-air show party held Sept. 22 at the National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

to-earth and he's a Husker fan – that helps."

His wife, Lynn, also is a fan.

"I didn't even know he was from Nebraska. We watch Blue Collar TV on Comedy Central... and make sure the kids aren't awake," she said.

Among guests at the party was Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy. "I got to touch the stealth," said Sheehy, standing inside the hangar with the fighter in the background.

"The Air Guard is one of our best kept secrets. Not only does it provide an employment base, it also plays a role in national security. The advantage of the air show is it shows the importance in aircraft and maneuvers that I think will amaze the public."

Retired members of the Air Guard family saw the evening as a chance to get reacquainted with old friends. Maj. Jerry Litjen, a pilot who retired almost a decade ago, was among a number of them.

"It's wonderful to see all these people... crew chiefs, administrative people, pilots, guys that moved to other units... guys I haven't seen for 15 years," said Litjen. "This has drawn so many people back. It took me three hours to get from the gate (where they checking names) to the hangar, because of all the people I know. It's family. It's like a huge family reunion."

"I look back at my Air Guard experience and it was a family. It was a very good feeling," Litjen said.

## Flight aboard vintage B-24 helps former Liberator pilot recall service

By 2nd Lt. Camara Minks

Staff Writer

Ever dream of going back in time and reliving a significant, historic or memorable moment?

Several World War II veterans did just that, recently when they got the opportunity of a lifetime to relive a piece of history experienced during their service as B-24 Liberator crew members.

For many, the experience brought back memories long stored away.

"It chokes me up," said former B-24 pilot Chris Steinbach

During his flight, Steinbach was among several who flew gazing down at the city of Lincoln through windows that had seen service 60 years ago as a company transport aircraft for Britain. If the windows of the B-24 could've spoken, they would've undoubtedly told stories of a varied career, just as the veterans tell their stories of 60 years ago.

"I was down in Liberal, Kan., doing training and learning how to fly the thing," said Steinbach. "I only flew about five or six months and then the war was over."

The B-24 was first put into production in the early 1940s as an improvement of the B-17. It was an answer to Britain's need for improved long range bombers to protect their coastlines.

The B-24s were fit with newer engines to fly greater distances with an increased bomb



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Smoky Show:** The B-24 "Diamond Lil" flies over a smoky cloud during a recreation of the Ploesti Raid of World War II during the plane's Sept. 24 performance in Lincoln, Neb.

payload capability. It also had two tail fins instead of one.

Flying in "Diamond Lil" let Steinbach recall his training from long ago.

"The most exciting thing was being in the cockpit when it landed," said Steinbach. "(I liked) listening to the procedures, going through the checklists and (realizing) how much I'd forgotten in 60 years."

Consolidated Aircraft built over 18,000 B-24s for the United States and allied forces during World War II, but less than a handful are still flying today. Currently, Diamond Lil survives as the oldest B-24 in existence according to the Commemorative Air Force

which owns and operates the aircraft. It tours the country performing in air shows, giving rides to veterans and selling rides for donations to maintain the plane in flying condition.

"It's unlike any flying in the world," said Capt. Robert Palmer of the CAF. "Airline flying is fun, but this is even more fun."

Palmer is one of two pilots who flew in Lincoln before and during the Guardian's of Freedom air show in September. During the air show the B-24 flew along with other vintage aircraft as part of the recreation of bombing raids during World War II.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

**Recalling A Different Era:** Capt. Marc Bradle stands on top of the B-24 "Diamond Lil," which he is learning to fly when not flying a B-1 Lancer bomber out of Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

"I can't believe I get to do this," said Palmer who has flown with the CAF for several years.

Following his flight, Steinbach vowed to share his

relived experience with other veterans. "I have a guy we flew with in training and we talk a lot. I'm going to tell him he missed something," said Steinbach.

## Battle of Bismark: One Year Later

# Soldiers say they proved much during ambush

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

**Editor's Note:** The following is the final installment of the *Battle of Bismark* series.

On a snowy afternoon on March 19, 2006, a small group of off duty Nebraska Army National Guardsmen gathered at a tavern in Columbus, Neb., to reminisce and talk about the days gone by.

For the other patrons, the day probably didn't seem all that important. It was simply another late winter Sunday afternoon in Nebraska.

For this group of Guardsmen, however, the day was anything but insignificant. For those Soldiers, the day marked the one year anniversary of the start of one of the most difficult convoy missions any of them had ever endured. A mission, it seemed, when every conceivable odd appeared stacked against them. A mission that included a day - March 20, 2005 to be exact - when as a collective group, they'd faced down one of the most brutal ambushes any American Soldier had encountered in Iraq and emerged bloodied, but victorious.

"It was a good party," recalled Staff Sgt. Jeff Uhl, who had served as the commander of Convoy 678N - a motley collection of military and civilian-driven trucks and their armored escorts - when it was ambushed near Salmon Pak, Iraq. "We talked about a lot of things. It was just a chance to get back together again to talk about old times and to reflect on all that we did and accomplished that day."

To say the members of Convoy 678N accomplished a lot during what became known as the Battle of Bismark - so named because the ambush occurred on an alternate supply route known as "Bismark" - is an understatement.

During that intense hour-long battle, the Soldiers - the majority of whom were members of the Columbus and York based 1075th Transportation Company - faced an insurgent force numbering approximately 50. And, despite losing a vehicle to enemy fire and having four of its Soldiers wounded, the Nebraska Guardsmen - combined with elements of two armored escort companies and small force of Kentucky Army Guard military police - persevered to inflict one of the largest defeats upon the insurgents since the Battle of Fallujah several months earlier.

Unfortunately, at the time the Nebraskans had no idea how significant the battle had been. Being truck drivers, they still had a mission to do.

So, with the smoke of the battle still lingering in the air, Uhl evacuated his wounded, consolidated the remainder of his convoy and then ordered Convoy 678N back on to the road toward their final destination: Camp Anaconda north of Baghdad.

Once the convoy reached Camp Anaconda later that evening, the truck drivers quickly dropped their loads, grabbed something to eat and then began making final preparation for their return back to their base camp in Kuwait. Uhl said nearly a week passed from the time of the battle until the Guard Soldiers returned to Kuwait.

Much had happened during that time. Once in Kuwait, the Nebraska Soldiers

### Epilogue to a three-part Special Report

began to see several stories airing on Fox News and CNN detailing how a small band of Kentucky Army Guard MPs had "singlehandedly" defeating an overwhelming force of insurgents.

It didn't take long for the Nebraskans to put two-and-two together. That was their ambush that the reporters were talking about.

Uhl said that the reaction of the Nebraskans to the stories was pretty much universal.

"We were pretty angry," he said. "I was angry."

"We kept thinking, 'How can they be taking credit for the entire fight? What about us?'"

The only mention of the Nebraskans, however, was a small snippet about how the MPs had been shadowing an unnamed convoy (actually there were two) that was suddenly caught in an ambush. Seeing that the convoy was in trouble, the reports said, the MPs simply waded into the battle, essentially saving the truck drivers from being overrun.

Uhl said the MPs undoubtedly played a major role in the success of the battle. But, he added months later, they weren't alone. They had simply been part of a multi-unit effort.

"They did their part," said Uhl. "But so did a lot of others."

So, how did this happen? How did the Nebraskans' efforts become forgotten during the initial days following the battle?

Probably the single most important factor was the fact that following the battle, the Nebraska convoy continued north to complete its mission. It wasn't around when the MPs were joined by additional follow-on forces that arrived shortly after the battle's conclusion.

Also, the Nebraskans were a transitory unit in the area while Kentucky MPs were operating in their home region. So, when the Nebraskans headed out of the area after the battle, the MPs simply returned to their base camp at the end of the day where they conducted post-action debriefings and wrote follow up reports.

One of those reports, which surfaced shortly afterward on the internet, undoubtedly contributed to the misunderstanding. That e-mail, which detailed the battle from the MPs' point of view, included many factual aspects of the fight. Several parts, however, had been "editorialized" by the e-mail's author.

When the national media caught wind of the story...well, say members of Convoy 678N, the rest was history.

Uhl said he understands now how the story became what it was. Still, he said nearly a year later, he wished someone would've figured out that there was more to the story than most knew.

"You know, we understood why it happened," he said about the subsequent national attention placed on the battle.

"(But) it bothers me that there's absolutely no mention of us even being there in their accounts of it. And I can understand it to a certain point, be-



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Bronze Star:** Spc. Richard DeLancey, receives his Bronze Star with Valor device from Brig. Gen. Robert Bailey, during the 1075th Transportation Company's post-deployment awards ceremony in January 2006.

cause they didn't stop and ask people what unit are you from when it was going on," he said. "But, I guess I would've thought that somebody would've pieced together to say that there were other units involved."

Following the battle, many of the Nebraska members of Convoy 678N were nominated for battlefield awards. Two of the Soldiers, Spc. Jennifer Beck and Spc. Richard DeLancey, were nominated for Silver Stars.

According to Beck, as the weeks moved slowly toward the end of the 1075th Trans. Co.'s deployment to Iraq, many of her fellow Soldiers kidded her that she was about to become Nebraska's first National Guard woman to receive the Silver Star. She said the jokes made her feel awkward. Those feelings were magnified during the unit's rehearsal for the awards presentations, she said.

"It kind of surprised me because everyone was saying, 'You're going to get the Silver Star. You're getting the Silver Star.' And I had told a couple people... not too many people because I wasn't sure how it was going to sound...but I wasn't pleased," Beck said. "I honestly don't believe that I deserved a Silver Star."

"I don't know. It made me feel like crap because in way I kind of felt like I was getting it because I'm a female. Because Birkel, Sharples...they did a lot (too)," she said.

In the end, DeLancey's and Beck's awards were downgraded. They, like Spc. Joshua Birkel and Spc. Michael Sharples, received Bronze Stars with Valor Devices for their actions that day on Route Bismark. Several other Soldiers, including Uhl, would also receive Bronze Stars and Army Commendation Medals.

It was at the time, the single largest awarding of Bronze Stars for combat actions to a single group of Nebraska National Guard Soldiers since World War II.

The 1075th Trans. Co. returned home from Iraq last year. Since then, a lot has changed for members of Convoy 678N.

Some, like Spc. John Harris, who was the worst injured of the convoy Soldiers, have decided to stay in the Guard. Others, like Uhl, have retired after spending the better part of their adult lives serving in the Guard.

Still others, like DeLancey, have gone on to work full-time for the Nebraska National Guard.

Many have returned to school to continue educational pursuits that were interrupted by the deployment.

Many have grown much closer together, held together by bonds that others who have never known combat can never truly understand.

All learned lessons through the trial. All were changed.

"We were scared," said Sharples, who was recently promoted to sergeant. "We were just scared."

"Nobody else was doing anything. So I said, 'I'm not going to sit here and wait for someone to tell me what to do, I'm going to do it,'" said Sharples, who along with Birkel, ran through a hail of gunfire to get the rest of the convoy moving and along the way found Ricketts wounded on the side of the road and helped evacuate him from the kill zone. "And it worked. Thank God it worked."

Uhl agreed, saying every member of Convoy 678N shares equal credit for the battle's outcome.

"They were all good Soldiers," said Uhl, shortly after returning home to Nebraska last year. "I don't know how to put it...no one panicked. No one lost their composure. They all did what they were trained to do as best they could."

Months later, Uhl said he couldn't have asked for a better group of Soldiers to work with in such a dangerous situation. He said the things the Soldiers accomplished was a direct result of the hardwork they underwent during their mobilization training and the ability to "think on their feet" that had been instilled in them from the very first moment they joined the Guard.

"They did absolutely what needed to be done," Uhl said.

## Veterans Affairs announces 'Veterans Pride' initiative

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Leaders of major veterans organizations joined Veterans Affairs Secretary R. James Nicholson, Oct. 18, in launching an effort to "kindle a new spark of patriotism" by asking men and women who have served in the military to wear their medals on Veterans Day.

"We are announcing a 'Veterans Pride Initiative' to remind Americans of the pride and honor in the hearts of those who have served,"

Nicholson said at a news conference at VA headquarters. "We expect Americans will see our decorated heroes unite in spirit at ceremonies, in parades and elsewhere as a compelling symbol of courage and sacrifice on Veterans Day, the day we set aside to thank those who served and safeguarded our national security."

The campaign is modeled after a tradition in Australia and New Zealand, countries who honor the Australian and New

Zealand Army Corps on April 25 each year, VA officials said.

Nicholson said he hopes a U.S. tradition will ensue to emulate this pride in being a veteran and in honoring the nation's veterans.

VA is offering information about the campaign on a Web page, [www.va.gov/veteranspride](http://www.va.gov/veteranspride), where veterans also can obtain information about how to replace mislaid medals and learn how to confirm the decorations to which they are entitled.

## Lincoln Exchange store to close on Saturdays

The Lincoln Exchange will close on Saturdays effective Oct. 21, 2006, with the exception of the following dates:

Nov. 4, Saturday - Army Guard Drill

Nov. 18-19 - Air Guard Drill Weekend

Dec. 2 - Army Guard Drill

Dec. 9-10 - Air Guard Drill Weekend

# Omaha Guard Soldiers wished farewell during June ceremony

By David Nore

Acting Deputy State PAO

Sixty-five Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Headquarters, 867th Quartermaster Petroleum Supply Battalion were wished farewell June 21 at the North Omaha Readiness Center by approximately 600 family and friends.

A small unit, some would say, but this headquarters has the gigantic task of directing and supervising at least 10 subordinate logistical units with up to 1,500 active duty, Guard and Reserve Soldiers in transporting large convoys through their area of operations.

Families, friends and even a little league baseball team in uniform, sat patiently and listened – some with tears in their eyes, others with nervous laughs – all wishing the best for their loved ones.

"We are here for Master Sergeant Bindle" said members of the little league baseball team from Lincoln in unison. In fact they were the Lincoln Cyclones, a team made up of 13-year-olds that Master Sgt. Will Bindle had coached for years there that night to support their coach.

"We are all wearing an American flag to show support for our coach" they said, displaying the flag on their hats.

According to Gov. Dave Heineman, who spoke during the June ceremony, the state – like the baseball team – stands firmly behind the unit.

"We are here to say thanks on behalf of our country and our state. We are extraordinarily proud of our Soldiers that serve in the Nebraska Army National Guard," Heineman said. "We are very proud of what you do."

"I can tell you that the Soldiers that stand to the left and right of your loved ones are warriors, they are Soldiers, and they will not accept defeat...they will not quit on your loved ones, said Lt. Col. Michael Navrkal, battalion commander., who also spoke during the ceremony. "I have trained with them and I know what they can do."

"Life is like a journey and a journey is like a book," added Navrkal. "Well, we are going



Photos by David Nore

**Thanks For The Support:** Master Sgt. Will Bindle passes out rubber wrist bands to members of the Lincoln Cyclones, a 13-year-old Little League baseball team Bindle has coached for years. Bindle left the team to deploy with the 867th Quartermaster Battalion to Iraq.



**Supporting Their Coach:** Members of the Lincoln Cyclones wear flags on their baseball hats in support of their coach, Master Sgt. Will Bindle.

to be making a chapter in that book. It's a chapter that we cannot look ahead like a book and see what is going to happen. We can however, control how we react to the things that happen to us. This is going to be an awesome chapter."

After many heartfelt embraces and tearful good byes the Soldiers boarded buses that took them to Camp Ashland for an over night stay prior to leaving for Camp Shelby Miss. that evening in June where they would undergo several weeks of training.

Jumping ahead to the end of October at the now designated 867th Corps Support Battalion, Al Taji, Iraq, northwest of Baghdad, the Soldiers of the 867th stand in formation as they receive their combat patch – a milestone that is reached

upon serving in a combat zone for 30 days. The unit patch of Nebraska is worn on the left shoulder sleeve; the higher command combat patch is that of the 15th Sustainment Brigade.

"It reflects who we work for and gives me a sense of belonging," said Spc. Michael Brown, Alvo, Neb. He added the sleeves of his uniform looked vacant without the patch that tells other Soldiers "I've been there."

According to 867th records many Soldiers had previously deployed and already wore a combat patch. 1st Lt. Eric McCoy, Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Traub, and Staff Sgt. Ronald Winterstein deployed with the 1075th Transportation Company, Columbus, Neb., with other units are Sgt. Ray Underwood, Sgt. 1st Class David Anthony, Master Sgt. Steve Stanislav, Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Closson, Sgt. 1st Class Lyle Schluterbusch, and 1st Lt. Scott Ehler all wore previous combat patches.

The mission of the unit at Al Taji has turned out to be pretty much as expected said Maj. Kevin Garner, battalion executive officer.

"Our primary mission is to provide multi-functional logistical support to the multi-national Baghdad area," Garner said.

# Governor loses employee when Guard unit mobilizes

By David Nore

Acting Deputy State PAO

The Commander in Chief of the Nebraska National Guard lost a key employee when Headquarters 867th Quartermaster Petroleum Supply Battalion mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom last June at the north Omaha Readiness Center.

"Tonight is even more significant because I am saying good bye to a very good friend. In his day job Command Sergeant Major Eli Valenzuela is a member of my protection detail with the Nebraska State Patrol. I put my safety and that of my family each and every day in his hands."

"So I speak with some authority and confidence that he is well equipped for the mission at hand."

Security, safety and welfare has been a common responsibility for Valenzuela prior to being assigned to the 867th.

"I've been assigned to the Executive Protection Division (most people call it the Governor's security detail) about one-and-a-half years this time, but I've been part of the division for six-and-a-half years total.

In fact, Valenzuela has been part of a team that has protected three governors: Govs. Kay Orr, Ben Nelson, and Dave Heineman. He has accumulated 23 years in the Nebraska State Patrol and 26 years in the Guard.

"I am proud to be leading (noncommissioned officers) in this unit," Valenzuela said as he explained the similarities of his State Patrol career and military duties. "(The two missions) are both fluid and we need to make sure that we do what needs to get done to finish the mission. Nothing is set in stone," he said.

Valenzuela went outside the country two times with Heineman, both times to Cuba. "Cuba, like Iraq, has a somewhat depressed economy, but we still hooked up to the internet and we could see what was going on in Nebraska."

When asked about his other mobilization experiences he says "I've been to Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary and now we will be in Iraq"



Photo by David Nore

**Saying Goodbye:** Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela listens to his former boss Governor Dave Heineman's farewell speech. Valenzuela is flanked by Nebraska's first lady Sally Ganem, and his wife, Faye.

"When I got my orders that I would be reassigned to the 867th, I told my immediate supervisors. I didn't tell the governor. but apparently they did. So the next time I saw the governor he come up and said 'Hey, I hear that they are taking you.'"

"I responded 'Yes sir, it's my turn to go.' And then he said, 'The first lady is worried about you.' And my response was that, 'Well sir, she could write me a note.'"

"We both chuckled because we both knew that wasn't going to help," Valenzuela added.

Jumping ahead in time from that evening in June to the end of October, the *Prairie Soldier* contacted Valenzuela via e-mail in Iraq and found him to be just as focused on NCO business and the unit missions as before.

"As far as the mission goes here, it was just as we believed it would be," said Valenzuela via e-mail. "We are responsible for the transport of all commodities throughout our AOR (area of responsibility.) Great Soldiers doing a great and dangerous job."

Being a quartermaster supply battalion, the headquarters is responsible for approximately 1,500 Soldiers from eight companies who have been attached to them for command and control. This means as battalion command sergeant major, Valenzuela's responsibilities have grown proportionately.

"I walked into a battalion that was 70 percent active duty and 30 percent Reserve. When my whole formation finally arrives, it will be 70 percent Guard/Reserve and 30 percent active duty."

## BOSS LIFT continued from page 1.

chapter of the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve.

"There are currently 73 volunteers and one full-time employee working statewide for ESGR" Bower said, who is serving his last three-year term as chairman of the Nebraska ESGR. "Having volunteers to support the ESGR committee is critical in our main goal to gain and maintain the support of employers."

"My job is to more or less coordinate activities for the whole committee and make sure people are aware of what the ESGR does" he said, "We think it's critical to introduce the employers to what the members of the Guard and Reserve really do, the training and expertise they have."

The Uniformed Services

Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994 ensures employment for service members upon returning from active duty, but occasionally employers balk at losing employees to the military.

For the 28 employers, six ESGR representatives and three media members involved, the three-day trip offered a chance to see first-hand the jobs that their employees do during drill weekends or extended deployments as members of the National Guard or U.S. Reserve.

For example, while flying to Virginia from the National Guard air base in Lincoln, the employers watched spellbound as a Nebraska Air Guard refueling specialist – better known as a "boomer" – maneuvered the aircraft's rear-pointing

boom into a nearby RC-135 aircraft and then delivered 15,000 pounds of fuel, all while flying thousands of feet above the passing landscape.

Naval Station Norfolk, located on the harbor where the Civil War battle between the ironclads Monitor and Merrimack occurred, was the group's first destination once they reached Virginia. Here they toured USS Laboon, a U.S. Navy destroyer, with ship's guide Ensign Chad Stewart at the lead. The group also received information about the ship's combat information center and all working details of the ship bow to stern.

The Laboon is the only ship in the Navy to be named after a clergyman, Catholic priest, Capt. John Laboon, a navy

chaplain who earned the Silver Star for bravery after diving from a moving submarine to rescue a downed pilot.

On the second day, the ESGR group toured the USS Wasp, a new class of multipurpose amphibious assault ships run by a crew of 1,075 that supports up to a 1,600 Marine landing force with state-of-the-art medical facilities that can provide medical assistance to 600 casualties, either combat casualties or those brought on board for humanitarian missions.

The afternoon of the second day, the group went to Fort Eustis, Va., a U.S. Army Transportation Center where many Guard members and Reservists were receiving transportation training for upcoming deployments.

Among those Guardsmen training were Pvt. James Zak, Lincoln, and Pvt. Zack Swift, Arlington, Neb. Both Soldiers were students at the base and talked to the employers about the training they were receiving in Blackhawk helicopter repair at Felker Army Air Field on Fort Eustis. The Nebraskans said the training they were receiving was valuable to both them and their unit, Detachment 1, Company D, 2-135th Aviation, which is currently deployed to Iraq.

The last day of the trip, the group visited a Navy amphibious base in Little Creek, Va., where they rode out into Norfolk harbor on Sea ARK boats, which are used for patrolling harbors both for homeland defense and security duty over seas.

# York pulls out stops to wish local Soldiers belated welcome home

By Spc. Katie Loseke

Associate Editor

More than 2,000 military supporters braved pouring rain to officially welcome home members of the 1075th Transportation Company during the Yorkfest Parade held in September.

The 40 Soldiers who participated in the day's activities returned home in late September 2005 after a year-long deployment to Iraq. Since the Soldiers missed that year's Yorkfest Parade, the organizing committee decided that this year's parade, entitled "Celebrating the Red, White, and Blue" would be a tribute to the 1075th and other service members from York.

"Every year the parade has a theme and this year we thought it was only fitting to honor the 1075th after all the sacrifices they make to keep all of us here

in York and in the country safe," said Ann Wagner, a member of the York Area Military Support Group.

Wagner said the entire community was affected by the unit's deployment. "Everyone knows at least one person in this unit. It is made up of our sons, daughters, grandchildren and friends," said Wagner.

"The military always has our respect and admiration, but now they have our thanks for bringing our hometown heroes safely home."

Now that the unit has returned home, members of the community are continuing to rally around the Soldiers like they did when they were overseas.

Wagner, with the help of the committee members, sent over 400 boxes of goodies to the unit while they were in Iraq.

She is still making cookies for the unit and even provided them with donuts for the day of the parade.

*"This is just such a great community of people. They have always supported us which makes us even prouder to be able to support them."*

— Sgt. Chad Schroetlin



Photo by Spc. Katie Loseke

**Welcome Home...One Year Late:** Hundreds of spectators brave the elements to line the streets in York, Neb., to welcome members of Detachment 1, 1075th Transportation Company, home a year after the unit returned to Nebraska following a year-long deployment to Iraq.

"This is just such a great community of people," said Sgt. Chad Schroetlin, recruiting and retention sergeant for the 1075th Trans. Co. "They have always supported us, which makes us even prouder to be able to support them."

Schroetlin said the York Guardsmen kicked into gear when they found out that the parade was going to honor them. The Soldiers decided to bring out all their equipment in an attempt to make this the best Yorkfest Parade to date.

"We've been out in the world

protecting these people and we thought this was a great opportunity to meet them and show them who we are. They spent lots of time making banners, ribbons and cookies for us, so we wanted to show them some of the things we can do for them," said Schroetlin.

Schroetlin said the 1075th brought 10 vehicles for the parade as well as a rock climbing wall, basketball and pushup challenge, and a couple vehicles for static display.

"Most of all, we just wanted to be available to talk to people

and tell them how much their support meant to us," said Schroetlin.

Sgt. Brian Mueller, a truck driver who recently transferred from Columbus's 1075th Trans. Co., to York's Detachment 1, 1075th, said he is amazed at how supportive the community is.

"It is awesome to see this kind of support for a National Guard unit," said Mueller. "Everyone has been so nice and I can't believe they are standing here in the pouring rain just to shake our hands and tell us thanks."

# Texas deployment ceremony signals beginning for Lincoln helicopter unit

By Master Sgt. Lek Mateo

36th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office

FORT HOOD, Texas — The long slow months of combat training in the sweltering Texas summer heat came to an end for the Soldiers of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade as they prepared to embark on the final leg of their odyssey to Iraq for the next twelve-months.

The Texas Army National Guard's 36th CAB, 36th Infantry Division (T-Patchers), consisting of approximately 2,700 Soldiers from 44 states, is the first Army National Guard aviation brigade called to duty for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The unit completed half a year of intense flight and theater immersion training at Fort Hood, Texas, and at the Army Aviation Center located at Fort Rucker, Ala., in preparation for its multi-spectrum mission in support of the Multi-National Corps Iraq.

Lt. Gen Russel L. Honore, First U.S. Army commander, deemed the 36th CAB combat ready during an official send-off ceremony held July 30 at the Leo Buckley High School Stadium in Killeen, Texas, where more than 1,000 family members and friends came together to bid farewell to their loved ones. Among those Soldiers and families were members of Nebraska's Lincoln-based Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion.

Company C, 2-135th GSAB was formerly designated the 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance). The unit is commanded by Maj. Richard Gray of Lincoln and is part of the 2-135th GSAB, headquartered in Aurora, Colo. The unit will be responsible for providing medical evacuation of U.S. and coalition forces.

This marks the fifth mobilization for the unit since 1990. The 24th Medical Company served in Operation Desert Storm in 1991, Bosnia in 1999, Egypt in 2002, Kosovo in 2003 and supported the Hurricane Katrina relief efforts in 2005.



Photo by Master Sgt. Lek Mateo

**Aerial Salute:** A formation of helicopters fly in salute over the heads of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade during a farewell ceremony held July 30 at Fort Hood, Texas. Among those deploying are members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Lincoln-based Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion.

Honore started the ceremony by motivating the men and woman standing on the bright green football field by yelling the unit's motto, "Mustang!" and the Soldiers roaring back with a thunderous "Fit to fight!"

"It's great to be here toady with the most well trained combat ready aviation brigade in the United States Army," Honore said.

The general told the Soldiers in formation before him that, although they come from various states throughout America, they all have trained hard together as one team in preparation for combat and that they were tenacious, tough and aggressive, which is everything that a commander would want in a combat formation.

"America is proud of you, your states are proud of you, and you carry their pride on your shoulder," Honore said.

Maj. Gen. Charles G. Rodriguez, adjutant general of Texas, spoke on behalf

of the adjutant generals of Alabama, Colorado, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska and Utah, whose Soldiers were standing shoulder to shoulder in formation with his Texans.

He told the Soldiers that the hearts, minds and prayers of all of the people in the stand and those they represent back in their home state are with them during their challenging and dangerous deployment.

"We awaken every morning thinking of you and the freedom you provide and your selfless courage and determination to keep America free," Rodriguez said.

Col. Vernon A. Sevier Jr., 36th CAB commander, acknowledged the sadness that they all feel in having to leave their loved ones and friends to go and serve their country for the next year.

He recognized the tremendous sacrifices of their families, friends and employers and the overwhelming support

they give that allows them to perform their mission.

Sevier went on to praise his Soldiers for their accomplishments during their long training and of the pride that he had for each and every one of them.

"I am honored to stand here with you today and am proud of each of you and your families for your sacrifice and dedication," Sevier said. "As we deploy forward, be confident in your training, equipment and most importantly have confidence in you and your fellow Soldiers... we will not let each other down."

Sgt. Teddy J. Cole, of San Antonio Texas and a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter crew chief of Company C, 1/108 Aviation Battalion, based in Austin, Texas, said that he has been an aviator for 18 years and that this is his first combat deployment.

Cole acknowledged that the year in Iraq will be long and dangerous but said the training they received was excellent and will help them execute their mission and bring them all back home safely.

Cole said he is confident that his wife will take care of matters on the home front while he is away and that he hopes his family will be proud of him for serving.

"I hope my wife and children will be proud of all the Soldiers that are going to Iraq with me to perform this very important mission," Cole said.

His wife, Ginger Cole, said the most difficult part for her is not knowing what is going to happen to her husband over in Iraq because she knows that she will not be able to talk to him every day.

Cole said the one thing that gives her and her children comfort is knowing that he is going to Iraq for a purpose and that he is doing the job that he loves and has a passion for which eases their minds and makes them even prouder of him.

"My husband and the rest of the Soldiers that are going to Iraq with him are truly heroes because they are ensuring our freedom and are going to help the Iraqi people secure their freedom and have a better life for their children."

# Heading Out

■Western Nebraska Truck Company mobilizes again; this time Soldiers headed overseas

By Capt. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

Tears and pride were apparent in abundance, July 17, as hundreds of family members, friends, neighbors and well-wishers crammed into the Mid Plains Community College auditorium at North Platte to once again wish members of the 1074th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) farewell.

The Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers – members of a unit split between North Platte, Broken Bow, Sidney and Ogallala – were heading for war.

According to the unit's commander at the time, 1st Lt. Kyle Matoush, the unit was ready for whatever might come.

"When I look out at these Soldiers, I see a lot of pride... I see a lot of courage," said Matoush, during the send-off ceremony. "And I see a lot of selflessness."

"All the Soldiers here today made the decision to join the military for one reason or another... but it's selflessness that is taking them to war," he said.

For many of the Soldiers assembled at the auditorium that evening, this marked the second time in a little over three years that they'd faced the stress of a mobilization.

In February 2003 approximately 100 members of the unit were mobilized for Operation Enduring Freedom. However, instead of deploying overseas to Iraq or Afghanistan as many of their fellow Nebraska Guardsmen have done over the past five years, the 1074th

Trans. Co. Soldiers were sent to Fort McCoy, Wisc., for 10 months where they supported the installation in mobilizing other National Guard and Reserve units for overseas missions.

This time, however, the Soldiers weren't expecting to spend their deployment in the Continental United States. They expected to head overseas to the Central Command Theater Operations after spending the next few months training at Camp Shelby, Miss.

In order to prepare for their combat mission, members of the unit spent the past few months retraining to operate the massive Palletized Load System vehicle, a vehicle that has a 16.5 ton self-loading and unload trailer that can maneuver over almost any type of terrain imaginable.

Once at Camp Shelby, however, they learned that they would be operating a convoy security unit instead.

Matoush, in speaking to the assembled crowd that included such state dignitaries such as Gov. Dave Heinemen and Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, the unit is ready to tackle any mission handed it. It also was proud to be able to do its part in the Global War on Terrorism "in knowing we're doing our part to defend this great nation."

According to several Soldiers, members of the unit are ready and even excited about the mission.

"I'm actually more excited than I am worried," said Pfc. Brandon Lee Pracht, a truck driver with Broken Bow's Detachment 1, 1074th Trans. Co., who is leaving his job with Palmer Monuments, a headstone setting company, to deploy with his unit.

"I'm going over with a wonderful group of guys and I know that when I get over there, they're always going to be there for me."

Spc. Monte Krueger, a fel-



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes  
**On The March Again:** Members of 1074th Transportation Company march toward their send-off ceremony, July 17, at the Mid Plains Community College auditorium in North Platte, Neb. The ceremony marked the second time since February 2003 that members of the unit have been mobilized.



**Good Luck:** Families line the street to wave and take photos of their Soldiers as members of the 1074th Transportation Company march toward a send-off ceremony, July 17, at the Mid Plains Community College in North Platte. The Soldiers were mobilizing for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

low Broken Bow Soldier who is stepping away from his self-owned trucking business and eight-month-old daughter to deploy as a maintenance truck

driver, he too is excited.

"I guess I'm pretty gung-ho," he said.

Still, leaving his daughter was not without some concerns.

"It's pretty tough... pretty darn tough," Krueger said. "Even though you know you're going over to give her a better life, it's still pretty tough to leave."

Krueger said fortunately his family stepped up to help care for his daughter and business while he's away.

"That's the good thing about family," he said.

"My family pretty much took over what I was doing and they're taking the truck business in their hands while I'm gone. I've got drivers, so everything is being taken care of."

Matoush said that during the months of preparation, members of the unit have stepped up numerous times to get the company prepared for its new mission.

"You're a terrific group and it's our time to shine," he told his unit at the conclusion of his remarks. "So let's go and show them what we're made of."

## Nebraska Guard's new inspector general explains what IGs do

By Lt. Col. Owen McCauley  
State Inspector General

Many new Soldiers, Airmen and civilians often ask the question; what is an IG and what do they do?

Many old timers will say: "Stay away from the IG; they bring nothing but trouble."

Commanders' neck hair rises up when the IG comes into his/her office and says, "I'm here to help you."

So what does an IG do?

Let's start with the history of the IG system. It was conceived in war and has been maintained in peace.

On Oct. 29, 1777, General George Washington met with 14 general officers and decided among other things that there was a need for an inspector general.

The inspector general would superintend the training of the entire Army in order to ensure troop proficiency and common

### Inspector General Mission:

Provide the Adjutant General a continuing assessment of matters relating to the state of economy, efficiency, morale, esprit de corps, and readiness of units and activities assigned to the Nebraska National Guard

tactics. He would be the commander's agent to ensure tactical efficiency of the troops, that of tactical competence.

The duties envisioned were those of a "drill master general" or a "muster-master general."

At the same time, the Continental Congress recognized the need for an inspector general to provide it with information concerning a significant public investment. Therefore, the Congress understandably wanted an agent in the Army to help in accountability for the military investments. It also wanted assurances the military would remain subordinate to its authority.

This parallel IG requirement created tension between the military and the civilian authorities.

General Washington's preference for an IG answerable only to the Army chain of command prevailed, and subsequently inspectors general were ordered to report to the Commander in Chief. However, the tension created by

a dual requirement for information continues even today.

On Dec. 13, 1777, Congress created the Inspector General of the Army. The Congressional resolution directed that the Inspector General would:

- review the troops;
- see that officers and Soldiers are instructed in exercise maneuvers established by the Board of War;
- ensure that discipline be strictly observed;
- ensure that officers command properly and treat Soldiers with justice.

For more than 200 years, Army IGs have inspected, audited, investigated, trained and performed those duties necessary to support the Army's mission. During that time, the purpose and organization of the Army IG system have changed considerably.

The modern IG system mission is to serve as an extension of the eyes, ears, voice and con-

science of the adjutant general, providing a continuing assessment on the state of the economy, efficiency, discipline, training, morale, esprit de corps and readiness throughout the Nebraska National Guard.

The IG accomplishes its mission by providing teaching/training, assistance, investigations and inspections.

### Assistance

The IG office conducts individual assistance requests. These requests cover areas concerning pay matters, medical treatment, promotions, transfers, discharges, resignations, legal services (In concert with the Judge Advocate), etc.

### Investigations

The IG Office conducts investigations into allegations of misconduct by members of the command and either substantiates or disproves those allegations. If substantiated, the IG advises the commander of the appropriate course of action, but cannot initiate any administrative, punitive or personnel actions.

### Inspections

In addition to the assistance and investigative workload, the IG conducts unit and organization inspections to determine

training, administrative, operational and logistical readiness for mobilization.

The IG does not formulate policy (except inspection policy) and has no inherent command authority. The IG urges Soldiers and civilians to use their chain of command first. If the problem can not be fixed at that level then contact the IG for assistance. Confidentiality is of utmost concern but cannot be guaranteed.

Anyone can call the IG for assistance (military members, retirees and civilians.) If you need IG assistance, please contact the IG staff:

*Army National Guard*  
♦Lt. Col. Owen McCauley (IG) (402)-309-7308/7304 (DSN) 279-7308/7304, or owen.mccauley@ne.ngh.army.mil

♦Maj. Gerald Meyer (Army Guard assistant IG), Sgt. 1st Class Teresa Flynn (Army Guard, Assistant IG)

*Air National Guard*  
Maj. Joe Dalton (402) 309-1147

To complain without fear of reprisal is the right of any Soldier, civilian, or family member seeking IG help. After all, problem solving is one of the IG's primary missions.



McCauley



# Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use

## Education Notebook

■ Online training available for all Army personnel at no cost to individuals or units

### Many programs available to help families

By Maj. Drey Ihm

Family Program Office

State Family Program Services is a comprehensive blend of quality of life programs in support of National Guard activities.

Customer-focused and business-based, the programs offered are intended to provide support services, education and information to assist Guardsmen and their family members. All our programs are offered through the state's regional Family Assistant Centers (Omaha, Wayne, O'Neill, Lincoln, Kearney, North Platte and Scottsbluff).

Each FAC operates as a joint service population in keeping with "the Total Force" concept.

Our mission is to assist Guard personnel and all other military personnel and their families in every way possible, either by direct assistance or by referral into the proper channels. This is accomplished through several of our programs such as the Youth Program, Community Outreach, National Volunteer Program and train-

ing. The State Family Program and Family Assistance Centers focus on providing programs that encourage continued well-being and an increased quality of life.

These programs include: State Advocacy Program, Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), Emergency Placement Care, Family Member Employee Assistance Program, Relocation Assistance Program, Emergency Financial Assistance, Food Locker, Family Referral and Outreach, and Consumer Affairs and Financial Assistance.

The National Guard realizes that today's Guard youth face a unique set of challenges and problems. The Youth Program is available to help provide resources they need to help deal with separation from a parent, child care issues, difficulties with school, or any other problems. Numerous age appropriate programs are available.

Community Outreach focuses on connecting Guard families with local organizations. This is accomplished through National and local partnerships.

National Volunteer Recruiting and

Retention Program assists individuals who are interested in volunteering for the National Guard Family Program find a local Family Assistance Center Office that can assist with placement. Volunteer Education and Training can help volunteers obtain the necessary training and skills required for different positions in the Volunteer Program.

Finally, the National Volunteer Program provides a vehicle through awards and recognition to recognize the dedication and commitment given by the volunteer force.

Much of what we do is through the kindness of all people across the state. The Nebraska National Guard Family Program Office provides a variety of programs outside those listed above that rely on non-solicited donations from the community or from volunteers in order to provide the means that is required to operate these special programs.

For more information about these programs, please contact the Nebraska Army National Guard Family Program Office, 1776 N. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508, 1-402-309-7331 or 1-800-432-6778, or drey.ihm@ne.ngb.army.mil.

By Chief Warrant Officer Robyn Huskey  
State Education Officer

Effective Oct. 1, the educational assistance allowance for the Montgomery G.I. Bill Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606), the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP, Chapter 1607), the MGIB-Active Duty (MGIB-AD, Chapter 30).

For more information, click on www.gibill.va.gov, select education benefits and navigate to payment rates to view the increases in their entirety.

Here is a sample of the new educational benefits:

**Montgomery GI Bill - Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR/Chapter 1606)**

Institutional Training	
Training Time	Monthly rate
Full time	\$309
3/4 time	\$231
1/2 time	\$153
Less than 1/2 time	\$77.25

**Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP/Chapter 1607)**

Consecutive service of 90 days but less than one year	
Full time	\$430
3/4 time	\$322.50
1/2 time	\$215
Less than 1/2 time	
More than 1/4 time	\$215**
1/4 time or less	\$107.50**

Consecutive service of 1 year +	
Full time	\$645
3/4 time	\$483.75
1/2 time	\$322.50
Less than 1/2 time	
More than 1/4 time	\$322.50**
1/4 time or less	\$161.25**

Consecutive service of 2 years +	
Full time	\$860
3/4 time	\$645
1/2 time	\$430
Less than 1/2 time	
More than 1/4 time	\$430**
1/4 time or less	\$215**

**Montgomery GI Bill - Active Duty (MGIB-AD/Chapter 30)**

Full time	\$1,075
3/4 time	\$806.25
1/2 time	\$537.50
Less than 1/2 time	
More than 1/4 time	\$537.50**
1/4 time or less	\$268.75**

If you have questions about this program or any other education question contact Chief Warrant Officer Robyn Huskey at (402) 309-7313 or email robyn.huskey@us.army.mil.

### Guard Soldier dedicates new statue to older brother

By David Nore

Acting Deputy State PAO

A wounded Soldier being carried out of harm's way by his battle buddy — both dressed in full battle gear as they move across cracked, sun-baked earth — is the subject of a new statue recently placed on display in the adjutant general's headquarters.

The title is "Brother" and the statue displays a wounded Soldier receiving the ultimate service from another fellow Soldier.

This could be Iraq. This could be anywhere, any time, any place. It seems to ask the viewer simple, yet poignant questions: If we were there, could we do what needs to be done? Could we do the right thing? Who are these Soldiers in the bronze statue? What inspired this scene of human caring and self sacrifice in protecting a fellow Soldier?

That's exactly the type of vision the artist hoped to create when he designed the sculpture as part of a college art project.

"Brothers" was designed by 1st Lt. Everett Deger, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard. According to Deger, the inspiration for the sculpture was his older brother, Lt. Col. Michael Deger, who also serves in the Nebraska Army Guard.

"I have always got the encouragement I've needed from my brother," the artist said. "This inspired me to complete the project. My brother has helped me out during some trying times".

The younger Deger was a student at Wayne State College when he first tried to cast the statue, but the mold



Photo by David Nore

**Brothers:** (from right) 1st Lt. Everett Deger and his brother, Lt. Col. Michael Deger, pose with a sculpture Everett created while a student at Wayne State College entitled, "Brothers." Everett dedicated the sculpture to his older brother.

broke, leaving the statue half completed and the beginning artist contemplating the possibilities of spending many more tedious hours creating another mold.

"My brother has always tried to show the way, for me to do the right thing, not necessarily the easy thing," the younger Deger said. "I knew the hard work that would be needed to complete a new piece."

Everett said he decided to dedicate the sculpture to his older brother.

"My big brother is carrying me out... helping me over the rough times," he said.

Everett is the marksmanship coordinator for the Nebraska National Guard. He joined the Guard, went to basic training and completed Officer Candidate School, and now is in charge of several

Soldiers from the deployed 755th Security Force, formerly the 755th Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company, which is completing training at Camp Shelby, Miss. and will leave for Iraq within the next few weeks to perform convoy security missions.

Deger's goal is to complete his tour in Iraq and come home to continue his passion for art with a studio of his own. In the meantime Michael will put the sculpture in his office as a reminder of his younger brother in arms.

The elder Deger said he's extremely impressed with how well the sculpture turned out.

"I just think that it shows the commitment and compassion that Soldiers have for the care and safety of their fellow Soldiers, battle buddies if you will," Deger said.

### Bowling Tourney set for February in Hastings

LINCOLN, Neb. — The 26th Annual Nebraska National Guard Bowling Tournament has been scheduled for Feb. 17-18 at the Pastime Lanes in Hastings, Neb.

According to Stanley Krause, tournament coordinator, the annual bowling tournament has been scheduled for President's Day weekend. The entry fee will be \$13 per person for the team event; \$13 per person for the doubles event; \$13 per person for the singles event and \$1 for all events.

For more information, contact Krause at stanley.krause@nelinc.ang.af.mil or leave a message at (402) 476-2868.

## AWARDS

### Army National Guard

**Bronze Star**  
Col. Ronald M. Schrock  
Lt. Col. Kevin D. Lyons  
Lt. Col. David L. Seybold  
Lt. Col. Timothy M. Zegers  
Capt. Jeffrey C. Searcey  
1st Lt. Daniel S. Claessens  
1st Lt. Jacques S. Smith III  
1st Lt. Matthew C. Misfledt  
1st Lt. Matthew S. York  
2nd Lt. Jeremy K. Smith  
Command Sgt. Maj. David K. Hauschel  
1st Sgt. Kevin D. Petersen  
1st Sgt. Joseph J. Wren  
Master Sgt. Lawrence C. Crowell  
Sgt. 1st Class Douglas V. Manly  
Sgt. 1st Class Mark A. Talbert  
Staff Sgt. Dale T. Alexander Jr  
Staff Sgt. Brendan B. Dorcey  
Staff Sgt. James L. Gross  
Staff Sgt. Vincent Guzman  
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey J. Hansen (posthumous)  
Staff Sgt. Scott A. Jorgensen  
Staff Sgt. Brian T. Loberg  
Staff Sgt. Rod S. Planer  
Staff Sgt. Chad M. Pokorney  
Staff Sgt. Matthew D. Schaub  
Sgt. John R. Brown III  
Sgt. Germaine L. Debro (posthumous)  
Sgt. Joshua A. Ford (posthumous)  
Sgt. Bradley A. Jessen  
Sgt. Gerald R. Klinetobe  
Sgt. Jessie A. London  
Sgt. Jason T. VonHoff  
Spc. Benjamin A. Marksmeier (with Valor)  
Spc. Jay N. Schrad  
Pfc. Joseph P. Cornett

### Purple Heart

Sgt. Germaine L. Debro (posthumous)  
Sgt. Joshua A. Ford (posthumous)

### Combat Action Badge

Sgt. Germaine L. Debro (posthumous)  
Sgt. Joshua A. Ford (posthumous)

### Legion of Merit

Chief Warrant Officer Larry H. Glasgow

### Meritorious Service Medal

Col. Ronald M. Schrock  
Lt. Col. Thomas R. Brewer  
Maj. Bret A. Allgood  
Maj. Brennan J. Heelan  
Maj. Shelly M. Herrod  
Maj. Jeffrey M. Kilgore  
Maj. Georgia K. Kroese  
Maj. Martin J. Riley  
Capt. Robert W. Ford Jr  
Capt. Scott S. Geary  
Capt. Theodore E. Hanger  
Capt. Cory Hinrichs  
Capt. Clint R. Kinman  
Command Sgt. Maj. Richard J. Burch  
Command Sgt. Maj. Robin D. Lahm  
1st Sgt. Stephen D. Osier  
Master Sgt. Richard D. Cruickshank  
Master Sgt. Gordon K. Harrod  
Master Sgt. Robert F. Morgan  
Master Sgt. Boyd L. Navratil  
Sgt. 1st Class Michael G. Burton  
Sgt. 1st Class Chad A. Couillard  
Sgt. 1st Class Donald F. Davids  
Sgt. 1st Class James L. Effle  
Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey J. Hergott  
Sgt. 1st Class Dale C. Hix  
Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth J. Mathine  
Sgt. 1st Class Sonda K. McClellan  
Sgt. 1st Class Jimmie L. Meers  
Sgt. 1st Class Randall L. Peterson  
Sgt. 1st Class Eddie L. Trumble Jr

Staff Sgt. Michael S. Edmundson  
Staff Sgt. Richard T. Halvorsen  
Staff Sgt. Curtis C. Koehler  
Staff Sgt. Chad M. Rowe  
Staff Sgt. Christopher L. Sterns

### Army Commendation Medal

Maj. Kenneth J. Boatman  
Maj. Steven Collins  
Capt. Joseph L. Lunsford  
Capt. Brett E. Petit  
1st Lt. Daniel S. Claessens  
1st Lt. Zachary V. Labrayere  
1st Lt. Shane P. Varejcka  
1st Lt. Bradley D. Wangler  
2nd Lt. Michael G. Wieneke  
Warrant Officer James C. Hurlay  
Master Sgt. Richard R. Aldag  
Master Sgt. Wilfred J. Uhing  
Sgt. 1st Class Christopher R. Apley  
Sgt. 1st Class Thomas E. Davis  
Sgt. 1st Class James L. Effle  
Sgt. 1st Class Harley F. Fass  
Sgt. 1st Class David G. Furnas  
Sgt. 1st Class Monte Kerchal  
Sgt. 1st Class Gary J. Lukens  
Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey L. Rowell  
Sgt. 1st Class Paul N. Swenson  
Sgt. 1st Class Susan J. Traub  
Staff Sgt. Leslie M. Araujo  
Staff Sgt. John A. Breazile  
Staff Sgt. Charles W. Collins  
Staff Sgt. George B. Goodon  
Staff Sgt. Jason R. Guretzky  
Staff Sgt. Jonathan L. Hagemann  
Staff Sgt. Robert L. Halmes  
Staff Sgt. Troy D. Harrington  
Staff Sgt. Joel J. Hestermann  
Staff Sgt. Scott A. Jorgensen  
Staff Sgt. Lauren J. McConnell  
Staff Sgt. Eric E. Pearson  
Staff Sgt. Waylon J. Petsche  
Staff Sgt. Tyler D. Powell  
Staff Sgt. Ricky R. Ruth  
Staff Sgt. Matthew D. Schaub  
Staff Sgt. Richard C. Snodgrass  
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Thoene  
Staff Sgt. Daniel R. VanKerrebrouk  
Staff Sgt. Frank Wagener  
Staff Sgt. Jon J. Wren  
Sgt. Brian W. Anderson  
Sgt. Dustin R. Anderson  
Sgt. Randall W. Barnason  
Sgt. Pamela K. Bechtolt  
Sgt. Gregory A. Brown  
Sgt. Brian J. Campbell  
Sgt. Jody L. Campbell  
Sgt. Richard A. Cole  
Sgt. Adam H. Donner  
Sgt. Joseph J. Dunlap  
Sgt. Donn Eddy  
Sgt. David M. Edwards  
Sgt. James T. Estes  
Sgt. Brian L. Fernau  
Sgt. Richard D. Frank  
Sgt. Judson L. Golka  
Sgt. Christopher J. Hart  
Sgt. Terrence J. Janicek  
Sgt. Adam C. Junck  
Sgt. Lynn P. Junck  
Sgt. Nathan J. Ledden  
Sgt. Christopher J. Marcello  
Sgt. Chadwick J. Marksmeier  
Sgt. Donnie E. McKimmey  
Sgt. Jason Morrison  
Sgt. David T. Murphy  
Sgt. Tyler D. Nixon  
Sgt. David J. Olson  
Sgt. Michael D. Petersen  
Sgt. Joshua G. Pieper  
Sgt. Daniel L. Roeber  
Sgt. Christopher J. Rohde

Sgt. Eric L. Schnell  
Sgt. Brett R. Seifert  
Sgt. Bradley D. Smith  
Sgt. Ramsey K. Smith  
Sgt. Lucas J. Smith  
Sgt. Lindsey M. Snowdon  
Sgt. John J. Walker  
Sgt. Jeffery T. Wattier  
Sgt. Michael E. Woosley  
Sgt. Martin A. Zulkoski  
Cpl. Justin R. Olson  
Spc. Matthew J. Adams  
Spc. Lori R. Barber  
Spc. Derek J. Batenhorst  
Spc. Riley P. Beaman  
Spc. Gary R. Bellmyer  
Spc. Lyle J. Berryman  
Spc. Jeremy S. Borrell  
Spc. Amanda L. Brown  
Spc. Aaron D. Bush  
Spc. Brock D. Chase  
Spc. Anthony L. Clark  
Spc. Justin T. Clausen  
Spc. Brenton J.T. Czaplak  
Spc. Adam L. Dack  
Spc. Adam J. Exstrum  
Spc. Angel F. Garcia  
Spc. David L. Gaylor  
Spc. Joseph D. Glade  
Spc. Dennis D. Gordon  
Spc. Nathan A. Highby  
Spc. Dustin C. Humphrey  
Spc. Jacob D. Hyde  
Spc. Ryan R. Jensen  
Spc. Samuel J. Kinnett  
Spc. Katie E. Klemme  
Spc. Matthew L. Kratochvil  
Spc. Brian A. Koenig  
Spc. Tyler M. Kudera  
Spc. Christopher J. Lammers  
Spc. Derek R. LaPointe  
Spc. Benjamin H. Lauck  
Spc. Andrew T. Lutt  
Spc. Benjamin A. Marksmeier  
Spc. Wayne L. Martin  
Spc. Lucas M. McCorkindale  
Spc. Lucas W. Munter  
Spc. Katie L. Nixon  
Spc. Benjamin P. Promes  
Spc. Leonard P. Robinson  
Spc. Justin L. Saner  
Spc. Drew P. Scott  
Spc. Todd A. Shapland  
Spc. Robert C. Schlote  
Spc. Dustin A. Siedler  
Spc. Louis L. Svoboda  
Spc. Benjamin D. Taake  
Spc. Christopher Talavat  
Spc. Andrea N. Timperley  
Spc. Matthew S. Turvey  
Spc. Timothy D. Verbeek  
Spc. Ryan Zulkoski  
Pfc. Brady V. Anderson  
Pfc. Christopher M. McIlheran  
Pfc. Brandon M. Reichert  
Pvt. Leigh G. Rexus

### Army Achievement Medal

Capt. Dale L. Burrage  
1st Lt. Zachary V. Labrayere  
1st Sgt. Sidney W. Vose  
Sgt. 1st Class Dean A. Reicks  
Staff Sgt. Dustin M. Bauer  
Staff Sgt. Nicholas R. Brand  
Staff Sgt. Scyler W. Foos  
Staff Sgt. Dennis J. Hartman  
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey A. Holbrook  
Staff Sgt. Johnathon L. Kmiecik  
Staff Sgt. Josh A. Kohout  
Staff Sgt. Daniel R. Malizzi  
Staff Sgt. Courtney L. Miller

Staff Sgt. Cesar A. Rivas  
Sgt. Jonathan V. Bethard  
Sgt. Robert S. Hutt  
Sgt. Robert W. Lundholm  
Sgt. Damion P. Meyer  
Sgt. Carrie L. Pittman  
Spc. Michael P. Chavez  
Spc. Megan G. Dannelly  
Spc. Andrea J. Ernesti  
Spc. Anthony King  
Spc. Tyler T. Schik  
Spc. Benjamin D. Taake  
Spc. Erica L. Velasquez

### Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

Master Sgt. Richard D. Cruickshank  
Master Sgt. Robert F. Morgan  
Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey J. Hergott  
Sgt. Gregory F. Smith  
Sgt. John F. Rosenau

### Nebraska National Guard Legion of Merit

Col. Ronald M. Schrock

### Nebraska National Guard Meritorious Service Medal

Staff Sgt. Jeffrey J. Hansen (posthumous)  
Sgt. Germaine L. Debro (posthumous)  
Sgt. Joshua A. Ford (posthumous)  
Sgt. Gregory F. Smith  
Sgt. Carlos A. VanNurden

### Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal

Sgt. Dustin M. Bauer  
Sgt. Susannah E. Holland

### Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal

Lt. Col. Richard H. Dahlman  
Maj. Gerald D. Meyer  
2nd Lt. Carlos A. VanNurden  
Chief Warrant Officer Douglas A. Benes  
Chief Warrant Officer Kelli R. Brewer  
Master Sgt. Steven W. Thomlinson  
Sgt. 1st Class Dennis L. Cullison  
Staff Sgt. Kelli J. Hatzenbueler  
Staff Sgt. Daniel R. Malizzi  
Staff Sgt. Daniel C. Nichols  
Staff Sgt. Colin B. O'Toole  
Sgt. Clinton F. Brady  
Sgt. Aaron R. Krajicek  
Sgt. Nathan T. Stryker  
Sgt. Todd B. Walton  
Cadet Adam J. Stahlecker  
Spc. Michael B. Eaton  
Spc. Jonathan S. Eckert  
Spc. Jacob C. Ford  
Spc. Riley J. Gruntorad  
Spc. Shawn M. Sims  
Spc. Amanda M. Stika  
Pfc. Brian A. Schwarz  
Pvt. Paul C. Craig

### Air National Guard Meritorious Service Medal

Senior Master Sgt. Travis J. Haberman  
Senior Master Sgt. James L. Kowalewski  
Master Sgt. Michael G. Reimers  
Master Sgt. Michael H. Stueck

### Air Medal

Maj. Nicholas E. Costanzo  
Maj. Stephen A. McCarthy  
1st Lt. Evan A. Gibson  
Master Sgt. Russell J. Sladky

### Air Force Commendation Medal

Capt. Susan F. Link  
Master Sgt. Paul H. Dion

Master Sgt. Randy D. Sellers  
Tech. Sgt. Penny E. Gerking  
Staff Sgt. Megan L. Eklund  
Staff Sgt. Mandy R. Joens

### Air Force Achievement Medal

Senior Master Sgt. Michele J. Carlson  
Master Sgt. Angel K. Freeman  
Master Sgt. Lyle E. Newburn

Master Sgt. Patricia J. Petersen  
Staff Sgt. Gary A. Banner  
Staff Sgt. David S. Gerdes  
Staff Sgt. Virginia L. Witulski  
Senior Airman Christopher A. Bauer  
Senior Airman Ryan W. Garbers  
Senior Airman Derek B.F. Hollrah  
Senior Airman Cory C. O'Connor

## PROMOTIONS

### Army National Guard Lieutenant Colonel

Matthew E. Kelly

### Major

Jaime K. Dodge  
Brett E. Petit  
Brenda A. Rührer

### Captain

Mark W. Bales  
Bradley R. Bohnert  
Danial C. Edmonston  
Scott R. Henrickson  
Dustin A. Wilkie  
Kevin M. Ziebell

### First Lieutenant

Eric P. Baptiste  
Daniel D. Shiley

### Chief Warrant Officer Four

Robert E. Hansel

### Chief Warrant Officer Three

David W. Wiese

### Chief Warrant Officer Two

Andrew J. Eiler

### Warrant Officer One

Brandon L. Bennett  
Blake S. Bivona  
Zachary S. Hartmann  
Craig W. Niemeier  
Eric Schriener  
Jeffrey P. Switzer

### Master Sergeant

Robert W. Harpst  
Bernard F. Pallas  
John R. Rasmussen

### Staff Sergeant

Heath C. Blackwell  
Michael D. Goodwater  
Joseph G. Plasek  
Gregory F. Smith

### Staff Sergeant

Jeremy L. Klein  
John B. McCrory

### Sergeant

Nicholas M. Broshears  
John E. Ebert Jr.  
Amanda J. Engen  
Benjamin A. Marksmeier  
Joseph A. Miller Jr.  
Jeremiah J. Zwiener

### Specialist

Nicholas C. Christy  
Timothy A. Cusatis Jr.  
Derek L. Meyers  
Nicholas J. Mosel  
James W. Reed  
Theodore A. Saunders

### Private First Class

Evan E. Carter  
Haidar H. Hamoud  
Adreann L. Janeczek  
Daniel T. Kinman  
Larry Montalvo Jr.  
Matthew B. Smith  
Joshua A. Wilken  
Megan L. Wolff

### Private Two

Tyler R. Sanderson  
Justin C. Walters  
Keenan S. Webster  
Raymond W. Webster

### Air National Guard Chief Master Sergeant

Heidi R. Vontz

### Senior Master Sergeant

Scott A. Boden

### Master Sergeant

Scott G. Farber  
Lisa M. Odell

## RETIREMENTS

### Army National Guard

Col. Ronald M. Schrock  
Maj. Jeffrey L. Strong  
Sgt. 1st Class Dale C. Hik  
Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth J. Mathine  
Sgt. Pamela K. Bechtolt  
Pvt. David D. Blumenthal

### Air National Guard

Lt. Col. Richard W. Jost  
Master Sgt. Maybree L. Johns Jr.  
Master Sgt. Michael G. Reimers  
Tech. Sgt. Todd R. Hart

## TAPS

Sgt. 1st Class Edward Svoboda  
Master Sgt. Walter Zapin  
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Hansen

Sgt. Jermaine Debro  
Sgt. Joshua Ford

## RECRUITING continued from page 1.

ers) know that the command is emphasizing recruiting like never before, and that's having a major influence on our efforts."

Murphy said that the current state recruiting force consists of 37 full-time, permanent recruiters and 13 full-time temporary recruiters.

That force, said Murphy, is now completely trained, meaning that he expects the state's recruiters to continue to do well.

"I really believe that our recruiting efforts are starting to become self-sustaining in that we now have this completely trained recruiting force that's learned how to recruit in the current environment," he said. "I really believe the success we saw during the past fiscal year is going to carry on into this one."

Murphy said one of the reasons he is feeling increased confidence is the fact that the number one reason new Soldiers listed for joining the Nebraska Army National Guard is no

longer money- or benefit-related.

"More Soldiers are joining the Guard for patriotic reasons than ever before," said Murphy. "There is just such a high level of patriotism throughout Nebraska right now. And I personally believe that is in part from the amount of deployments we've had in the state."

"Almost everyone in this state is related to or knows someone who has deployed recently overseas as a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard," he said.

"That has caused such an increased level of awareness of the Nebraska National Guard... I honestly don't believe that people have thought this highly of the Guard in a long, long time."

Nationally, Nebraska was part of a huge resurgence of National Guard recruiting. In statistics released on Oct. 10, Army Guard officials said that a total of 69,042 Soldiers joined the Army Guard during Fiscal Year 2006, falling just 1.4 percent short of its stated goal of

*"I honestly don't believe that people have thought this highly of the Guard in a long, long time."*

— Lt. Col. James Murphy

enlisting 70,000 Soldiers.

That effort, along with the fact that the Guard retained 41,038 Soldiers – 118 percent of its annual goal – say Guard officials, brought the Army National Guard within 98.9 percent of its Congressionally authorized end strength of 350,000.

Murphy said that overall, the Nebraska Army National Guard ended the year with an end strength of 3,459 – an increase of 150 Soldiers from the end of Fiscal Year 2005.

While all recruiting and retention indicators seemed to be good, Murphy said that one area where retention officials

struggled was in reenlisting "careerists," which Murphy defined as those Soldiers who had served in the Guard for 20 years.

"In the past, when a Soldier reached the 20-year mark they typically stayed in the Guard for another five or ten years," said Murphy. "This year, we've seen more Soldiers than in the recent past who have reached 20 years and decided it was time to retire."

"That's one area of our force that we're going to try to focus on harder this year," he said, adding that the return of Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Carroll, state retention noncommissioned officer-in-charge, from a year-long deployment to Iraq with the 67th Area Support Group, will help shape that focus.

"Our goal is to get these careerists more information about the benefits they're leaving at the table if they decide to get out at 20 years instead of waiting until they've served for 25 or 30 years," said Murphy. "Having (Carroll) back to help us do that is going to help tremendously."

## By The Numbers

As shown below, the Nebraska Army National Guard's recent recruiting efforts were the best in over 10 years. All numbers listed below consist of the total amount of enlistments per federal fiscal year.

Fiscal Year 1997	503
Fiscal Year 1998	398
Fiscal Year 1999	384
Fiscal Year 2000	459
Fiscal Year 2001	409
Fiscal Year 2002	445
Fiscal Year 2003	483
Fiscal Year 2004	432
Fiscal Year 2005	416
<b>Fiscal Year 2006</b>	<b>508</b>

# A Very Big Deal

## Air show flight gives opportunity to learn more about father's skills

By Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke  
Adjutant General

Shirlee asked why this was such a big deal. Others also asked the same question.

It was a big deal, but I didn't have an answer. Maybe more accurately, I could not articulate it at the time.

"This" was going out on a crisp, clear air show Sunday morning and flying a C-47, the workhouse of World War II and the airplane my dad flew in Europe.

He had told me many stories about this period of his life. The stories weren't like "son, sit down and let me tell how I helped win the big war." They were descriptions of personal experiences that suddenly sprang from otherwise ordinary conversations.

Some I listened to and remember to this day. Some I don't recall because, like most young men, my mind was often somewhere else (like thinking about my next date with Shirlee).

I try to interject myself into my mind's image of the ordeals Dad faced. I imagined myself in the cockpit beside him flying dangerous missions over France and Germany.

Why the interest, why the fascination with what he did? What's the big deal?

Why do we like museums? Why do we like demonstrations of how things used to be done? Why do old objects from previous generations conjure up memories?

I believe it's partly because we want to personally experience, if only for a moment, what it was like to be in a time so foreign, yet somewhat familiar because of stories like those my dad would tell me.

One particular story I recall was about a mission he flew in the outermost position of a formation of C-47s over France. Each aircraft is continually making small corrections to stay in position on the next aircraft which is slightly ahead. Larger corrections

### LEMPKE ON LEADERSHIP

*'I respect my dad for many things; and after that short flight in the C-47 I respect him even more for his flying skills.'*

are required by the outermost plane because it must accommodate the corrections of each plane ahead of it. It's the most difficult position to fly.

Now, when the lead aircraft turns into the formation, the situation is further complicated because the outermost aircraft must fly significantly slower to maintain its position in formation.

I loved "four-ship" formation flying in the T-38 jet trainer. The challenge of flying the most difficult formation position at near supersonic speeds pro-

duces a natural high.

Light finger and thumb grip on the stick with wrist and finger action on the throttles initiating tiny control movements is the key to maintaining a tight formation.

This is how I imagined Dad flew the C-47. But in less than one hour on that Sunday I discovered his experience to be so much different.

C-47 controls did not have mechanical assist (i.e., power steering). Flying it took muscle, concentration, and anticipation.

It was all I could do to hold this old war bird at level flight in a forty-five degree banked turn. The controls were sluggish and demanded large movements for the aircraft to respond.

The image of Dad flying in formation changed from that of a pilot making smooth, light control movements to a slightly built young man having to muscle the controls with all his strength and concentration

while anticipating the movements of the next aircraft in formation.

His stories of six hour missions over enemy territory suddenly became more vivid and real to me.

I respect my dad for many things; and after that short flight in the C-47 I respect him even more for his flying skills.

During the air show there were undoubtedly recent veterans of service in Iraq walking around with their young children. Some will tell their children of their experiences fighting terrorist insurgents. Some may be stories of driving up-armored Hum-Vees while encased with full protective gear in heat greater than anything we will ever experience in Nebraska and avoiding interim explosive devices and enemy snipers.

I imagine that 40 or so years later some of those children will seek rides in antique Hum-Vees so they too can better appreciate their parents' experiences.

That's why this ride was such a big deal for me.

## Guard command chief swears in state's newest warrant officer

Recently more than 50 Nebraska Army National warrant officers attended a workshop at Camp Ashland.

I personally want to thank each and every one for your efforts in making the first ever Warrant Officer Workshop a success. I am particularly grateful to Chief Warrant Officer Poyas Haynes, command chief warrant officer for the Army National Guard, for taking time from his busy schedule at National Guard Bureau to honor us with his presence and words of wisdom.

During the workshop, Haynes spoke about the personal values and the total commitment required of a professional warrant officer in today's National Guard.

Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, also shared his command guidance and his priorities for Training Year 2007. Lempke also honored Haynes by appointing him as an admiral in the "Great Navy" of the State of Nebraska. Brig. Gen. Bill Kuehn, Col. Tom Schuurmans and Command Sgt. Maj. Tom Shunk also shared their thoughts and provided professional guidance also allowing time to answer questions.

Thanks to the Command Division for taking time out from the Commanders Call to address the warrant officers.

A special thanks to Chief Warrant Officer Randy Hirsch (formerly of the U.S. Property and Fiscal Office - Nebraska Data Processing Information and the Professional Education Center at Little Rock, Ark.) He attended the workshop in his new capacity as the National Guard liaison to the U.S. Army Signal School at Fort Gordon, Ga. We look forward to working with Randy and we know he will support all Soldiers and especially Nebraska's warrant officers with professionalism.

One of the highlights of the day was when Nebraska's newest warrant officer, Eric Shriner, was given the oath of commissioning by Haynes and pinned by Maj. Thad Fineran (state aviation officer). Shriner's mother and father also honored us with their presence.

Immediately following the ceremony Shriner left for flight school at Fort

### Chief's Business

By Chief Warrant Officer Steve Weber  
Command Chief Warrant Officer



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer Carrie Hancock  
**New Warrant:** Chief Warrant Officer Poyas Haynes, command chief warrant officer for National Guard Bureau, administers the oath of commissioning to Eric Shriner, Nebraska's newest warrant officer.

Rucker, Ala. Shriner is the 22nd warrant officer to join the Nebraska Warrant Officer Corps this fiscal year.

After a recruiting speech by Chief Warrant Officer John Ayers and a Officer Efficiency Report Professional Development class by Chief Warrant Officer Steven Loftis, three breakout groups spent time brainstorming ideas for improving recruiting and retention efforts in Nebraska.

At the end of the day we were treated to burgers and brats cooked by Chief Warrant Officer Larry Glasgow, who will be retiring this month after 32 years of service as a helicopter pilot and aviation safety officer in the Nebraska Army National Guard. Chief Glasgow, we salute you. You will be missed.

To those 50 Nebraska warrant officers that couldn't be at the workshop because you are serving your country in Iraq, protecting the Southwest border, attending a military school, or supporting your family, I would ask you to be safe and I hope to see you at the workshop next year.

## Force protection system designed to defend against perceived threats

The words are printed on signs posted at building doors and on marquees at entrances to military installations, but many people may not fully understand what the words mean.

The Force Protection Condition (FPCON) system replaced the Threat Condition system used in the past.

The FPCON system describes the progressive level of protective measures implemented by Department of Defense installations or units in response to terrorist threats. These threats may take the form of an actual incident, credible threat intelligence, or even a perceived threat. FPCONs can be declared by higher headquarters or by local commanders based on events or intelligence in their area of operation.

There are five different FPCONs. Each FPCON has separate supporting measures that incrementally raise preparedness and protection capabilities.

The five FPCONs are meant to ensure the safety and security of all personnel and are specifically tailored to each installation. However, here is a brief description of each FPCON, in order from the lowest to highest states of readiness, and a brief synopsis of what personnel can expect when each FPCON is implemented.

**FPCON Normal:** *A global threat of possible terrorist activity exists.*

During this FPCON, military personnel will go about their normal day-to-day duties. However, certain terrorism countermeasures will be in effect even in this FPCON.

**FPCON Alpha:** *An increased general threat of possible terrorist activity against personnel and facilities exists; the nature and extent of which are unpredictable.*

FPCON Alpha can be maintained indefinitely, and security personnel will be conducting increased checks of critical locations as well as random patrols of installations.

**FPCON Bravo:** *An increased or more predictable threat or terrorist activity exists.*

During FPCON Bravo, physical security at installation entrances will be increased by the use of barricades and other devices. Personnel will also not be allowed to park near their buildings as standoff distances will be increased to guard against the possibility of explosive attacks.

In addition, personnel will be alerted

### Protecting Yourself

By Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder  
Air Guard Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection Office

to increase their vigilance for suspicious activity.

**FPCON Charlie:** *An incident has occurred or intelligence indicates terrorist action or targeting against personnel is likely.*

During this FPCON, only mission-essential personnel will be allowed onto installations so as to reduce the risk to non-essential personnel. Civilian contractors as well as delivery services will be suspended. A majority of security personnel will be on duty and will take up defensive positions around installations.

**FPCON Delta:** *A terrorist attack has occurred, or intelligence indicates terrorist action against a specific location or person is imminent.*

FPCON Delta will see base defenders focusing on repelling any type of attack against an installation or other military target. FPCON Delta is meant to be in effect only long enough to counter the threat and is only implemented in the area where an attack has occurred or credible intelligence indicates an attack will occur.

Effectively, military installations are "locked-down" for a matter of hours, days or possibly weeks depending on the situation.

The Homeland Security Alert System (HSAS) is similar to the FPCON system, but is a separate system run by the US Department of Homeland Security for alerting communities across the United States to threat level changes. Although HSAS and FPCONs may change at the same time due to an incident or intelligence, there is no direct correlation or relationship between the two systems. They are not tied to one another.

Military personnel who have questions about their organization's FPCON measures or procedures are encouraged to contact their designated antiterrorism officer.

Please contact the following for more information:

Maj. Guy Moon, Nebraska Army National Guard (402) 309-7406 or Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder, Nebraska Air National Guard antiterrorism noncommissioned officer (402) 309-1565.

# Street Talk

“What is your favorite part of the ‘Guardians of Freedom’ air show?”



**Teresa Powell**

Malcolm, Neb.

*“It’s just exciting and something you don’t get to see everyday. It’s thrilling to watch.”*



**Jared Teichmeier**

Lincoln, Neb.

*“I love the excitement. I certainly want to see the Angels if the weather will permit. I get enjoyment out of watching the stealth fighter.”*



**Hunter Maslonka**

Fremont, Neb.

*“The jet truck thing.. ‘cause I liked it when it made smoke and fire.”*



**Jerry Krause**

Denton, Neb.

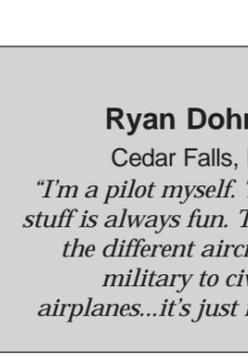
*“We just really enjoy watching them (the Blue Angels). We like all of it.”*



**Heidi Bartsch**

Lincoln, Neb.

*“I like to watch the planes and stuff. I like the noise and the Blue Angels.”*



**Ryan Dohmen**

Cedar Falls, Iowa

*“I’m a pilot myself. This kind of stuff is always fun. The variety of the different aircraft, from military to civilian airplanes...it’s just neat to see.”*

# Important teams help grieving families through tough times

The early fall was a rough one for the Nebraska National Guard.

Despite a great, great air show and meeting our annual end strength goals, spirits were dampened by the loss of two more Soldiers in Iraq and one Airman to an accident.

An accident took the life of Staff Sgt. Jeff Hansen and Sgt. Germaine Debro was killed by an improvised explosive device. Each is remembered by military buddies, friends and family as inspirational leaders who sought the opportunity to defend freedom.

Master Sergeant Wally Zaptin was a hard working KC-135 maintenance technician who had served on many remote tours working on the best maintained tankers in the Air Force fleet.

Thankfully, two other Soldiers seriously injured in Iraq are recovering.

When a comrade in arms falls we all suffer. A lingering sense of guilt sets in that perhaps something could have been done to prevent the loss. But it’s a fruitless thought because turning back the hands of time is impossible.

We must instead focus on what can be done to help the families and communities.

During these worst of times the Nebraska National Guard is at its finest in pulling together to ease the pain. In particular, three teams or individuals are called upon to help families get through the difficulty of losing a loved one.

The casualty notification team consisting of at least a chaplain

## The Adjutant General Major General

**Roger P. Lempke**



and emotional investment is so significant.

• Blake Kelly (Bosnia, 2003) – Maj. Shelley Herrod

• Linda Tarango-Griess

(Iraq, 2004) – Maj. Dan Kuhn

• Jeremy Fischer (Iraq, 2004) – Chief Warrant Officer John Reagan

• Tricia Jameson (Iraq, 2005) – Maj. Rick Gray

• Joshua Ford (Iraq, 2006) – Sgt. 1st Class Susan Traub (and others)

• Jeff Hansen (Iraq, 2006) – Sgt. 1st Class Dan Nastase

• Germaine Debro (Iraq, 2006) – Sgt. 1st Class Tim Elder

The Funeral Honors Program run by Cliff Lant deserves special recognition for quality and quantity. This group provides military honors to veterans and service members on an average of four per day; in federal fiscal year 2006 they supported over 800 funerals.

The poignant notes I receive from families thanking our funeral teams for final tributes to loved ones who served our nation bravely and honorably are truly heart warming.

Dedicated effort provides families with a positive lasting memory of the service and sacrifice by their loved ones.

Personally, I suffer greatly with each loss; but, professionally, my buttons pop with pride from the special attention and care grieving families receive.

We train together, we fight together, we grieve together and we move on together.

and NCO or officer who outranks the lost service member is the first into action. Their mission is to personally contact the family after being directed by the Army and before the news reaches the family from another source.

They may be called any time of the day or night and must quickly organize and get on the road. They must suffer the agonizing anticipation of knocking on the door of an unsuspecting family to deliver the terrible news. They must search for words of consolation during the most traumatic and perplexing moments a family might ever face.

I am proud to report that our teams have yet to fail. Each notification has been prompt and professional.

An appointed casualty assistance officer steps in next. This Soldier helps the family deal with a myriad of issues ranging from recovery of the remains to funeral arrangements and entitlements.

And their job doesn’t usually end after the final note of Taps. They continue to provide emotional and administrative support to the family long after.

The Joint Force Headquarters staff provides support in depth, and all deserve accolades for assisting families during difficult periods. But I want to recognize each CAO because their personal

# Army’s new ‘Army Strong’ slogan seems like step back in right direction

In early October, the U.S. Army unveiled its newest slogan “Army Strong,” effectively severing its relationship to the “Army of One” slogan that the Army adopted earlier this decade.

As a former member of the U.S. Army and Nebraska Army National Guard, I can’t be happier.

First a little background. I enlisted into the U.S. Army delayed entry program in May 1985. As such, I was a product of the Army’s then-slogan, “Be All You Can Be,” believed by many marketing specialists as not only one of the most effective military slogans of all time, but one of the most influential slogans ever created.

In my mind that ad spoke directory to a generation about the responsibility they had to America. For me, “Be All You Can Be” was a challenge and a promise of what the military would offer me if I so chose to join.

In January 2001, the Army decided to change that slogan – my slogan – to its current “Army of One.” For some reason that I’m sure marketing experts will argue over for decades to come, that motto never really seemed to resonate with today’s audience.

## My Turn

Editor, Prairie Soldier

**Kevin J. Hynes**



The troops who fought on the bloody killing fields of Shiloh, Antietam, Gettysburgh... they were Army Strong.

The doughboys who lived and fought in the mud and muck of the World War I trenches...they were Army Strong.

The GIs who fought in the withering deserts of North Africa, the mud of New Guinea, the mountains of Italy, the beaches of Normandy...they were Army Strong.

The Grunts who slogged through the festering jungles of Vietnam...they were Army Strong.

Today’s Citizen Soldiers who have weathered the searing heat of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan...they too are Army Strong.

I think what also speaks to me most about this new motto is that it is not only just a tribute to the Soldiers who persevered through enormous mental and physical challenges, it also serves as promise to tomorrow’s future warriors as well.

Join us, it says to me, and you will not only be able to serve in one of the most noblest professions America has to offer, you too will learn, through challenges both big and small, to be all that you can be...to be “Army Strong.”

“An Army of One,” simply didn’t seem to send that same dual sense of challenge and promise that those earlier ones did.

What exactly was an Army of one supposed to be? I don’t know that the Army truly effectively communicated the answer to that question.

So, now the Army will have a new motto. I think it’s a step back in the right direction.

Consider the Army – and to a greater sense the military – today. Today, we are faced with one of the largest challenges this Army has ever faced in its history. We have been challenged to fight one of the most unique wars in our history with a military force that is much leaner than it ever has been before.

But challenges aren’t unique to the Army. In fact, facing and overcoming challenges – both big and small – are as much a part of military service as anything else.

“Army Strong” to me speaks as a tribute to America’s long line of distinguished Soldiers.

The Soldiers who walked barefoot in the snow of Valley Forge...they were Army Strong.

# President's 100

■ Camp Ashland Soldier joins prestigious ranks following Camp Perry competition

By Spc. Katie Loseke

Associate Editor

**A** Nebraska Army National Guardsmen recently joined the rank of the nation's elite shooters when he competed in the "President's 100 Rifle Competition" in late July.

Sgt. 1st Class William Carey, a personnel sergeant with the 209th Regional Training Institute, traveled to Camp Perry, Ohio, where he competed against the top 1,300 rifle-shooters in the country.

"Everyone who is there shooting is capable of shooting in the top 100 – it's just who has the best day," said Carey.

Carey, who is modest about his abilities, was one of those top 100 who had a good day. He ranked 68th out of the 1,300 competitors, which qualified him to wear the prestigious "President's 100" tabs on his uniform shoulder. In earning the award, Carey is believed to have become only the fourth Nebraska Army Guardsman to ever win a "President's 100" tab.

"It was something that I've been trying for and I was excited to finally make it," said Carey. "It's a very coveted title – once you receive it, you'll always have it."

"It is such an honor to be grouped with these people," said Carey, referring to the other Nebraskans who have earned

the award.

Carey said the competition was 70 percent civilian and 30 percent military, but that this year's "Presidents 100" list was at least 60 percent military.

"This shows the level of talent the military has in its service members. Not only talent, but the degree of seriousness that we give our training so we can effectively defend this country," said Carey.

Carey said that for him, rifle competitions are not only a hobby, but also an important way of becoming a better Soldier.

"They always say practice makes perfect. Great athletes always train for their competitions just like us service members train before we go overseas. It just makes sense," said Carey.

Carey has participated in shooting competitions for five years, and has competed in the "President's 100 Rifle Competition" three years running.

"Each year I practice more, train harder and do a little better," said Carey.

Carey said the "President's 100" competition involves 30 rounds. Ten rounds are shot at a distance of 200 yards while standing. Ten rounds are shot at 300 yards in the prone position and the last ten rounds are shot at 600 yards while in the prone position.

"It is a tough competition



Photo by Sgt. Katie Loseke

**In A League Of His Own:** Sgt. 1st Class William Carey, 209th Regional Training Institute, takes aim at a distant target during the 2006 Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Matches at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb. Carey recently earned the coveted "President's 100" badge during shooting matches held at Camp Perry, Ohio, in late July.

against the best of the best," said Carey. "I am proud to have made the cut. It is something I've been trying for since I started shooting the service rifle."

Carey said these rifle shooting competitions are important in developing marksmanship skills that are needed in the current deployment environments that service members are working in.

"I want to take the skills I've

learned in the last few years and teach them to Soldiers who participate in the (Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship) Shoot and other competitions so they have the resources to become better Soldiers," said Carey.

Carey added that military members who participate in these kinds of events are taking their training one step farther.

"We have an important job to do – and we need to do every-

thing in our power to get better at that job. Now that I am a President's 100 rifle shooter it doesn't mean that I have nothing left to do," said Carey. "It is a matter of continual training – the bad guys overseas don't care if you are shooting the rifle for the first time or have the experience I do – all they care about is whether you can hit them from a distance."

"Competitions are just one way to get better at it."

# Air Guard boomers honor All American father during football game

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

**F**or the first two Nebraska Air National Guardsmen selected to serve as "gate sentinels" for the University of Nebraska Cornhusker "Tunnel Walk," the experience of opening the gates for the Huskers wasn't just an opportunity to represent the Air National Guard before 85,000 red clad fans, it was also an opportunity to honor their All American father.

According to Senior Master Sgt. Steve Minnick and his brother Master Sgt. Mike Minnick – two KC-135R Stratotanker boom operators who grew up in Ashland, Neb. – the chance to open the gates for the Cornhusker football team before the Sept. 9 Nichols State game in the same stadium where their father, Jerry Minnick, earned All American honors as an offensive tackle in 1952, was unforgettable.

Jerry, who loved to come to football games long after his playing days were over, died in 1996.

"It's an honor to do this," said Mike Minnick, a 1976 graduate of Ashland High School. "It's an honor to serve the country...that's really what I'm doing. To get a chance to do this for the Huskers where my dad was an All American... that's an even bigger honor."

"It's really a double honor for me and my brother," he added.

The role of "gate sentinels" is a brand new honor this year as the recent additions to Nebraska's venerable Memorial Stadium has force the movement of the team's lockers from the south portion of the stadium to its new home underneath the northern stands.

Now, instead of running onto the football field through an entrance in the southwestern corner of the stadium, the team now enters from the northwestern



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Here Comes The Huskers:** Senior Master Sgt. Mike Minnick (far left) and Master Sgt. Mike Minnick (far right) hold open the gates for the Nebraska Cornhusker football team as Coach Bill Callahan leads the team onto the field during the Tunnel Walk ceremony moments before the start of the Sept. 9 Nichols State football game.

corner of the facility through a set of bronze gates that have been adorned with life-sized renditions of several famed Cornhusker football players from the University's past.

After toying with several different ideas, Steve Pedersen, NU athletic director decided to ask the National Guard to open the gates before each game as a way of honoring the stadium's historic status as a memorial to the state's war veterans.

Now, before each home game, a pair of military members will be selected to "guard" the gates. Selections, which are made by Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, are based upon several different criteria including each game's general theme.

As the Sept. 9 game was the "Hall of Fame" game, the two Minnicks – both of whom have deployed repeatedly around the world in support of the Global War on Terrorism – were selected as a way of honoring the Nebraska Air Guard's role in the continuing war as well as for their family ties to the Cornhusker program.

According to Steve Minnick, a 1978 graduate of Ashland High School, he couldn't help but feel enormous pride as he prepared to take his place in front of the gates, which included the likeness of former Husker great Ron Brown who played with his father in the 1950s.

"It's a family pride thing for me," he said, before adding with a nervous chuckle, "I'm nervous to the extreme."



**Pre-Game Meeting:** (From left) Master Sgt. Mike Minnick and Senior Master Sgt. Steve Minnick meet with Nebraska Athletic Director Steve Pederson prior to the start of the Sept. 9 Nichols State-Nebraska football game. Both Minnicks are aerial refueling specialists with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard, and sons of former Nebraska Cornhusker All-American Jerry Minnick, who earned his honors as an offensive tackle in 1952.

Along with serving as gate sentinels and getting to watch as Nebraska defeated Nichols State 56-7, the two Minnicks were each presented with a special game ball that had their names and date of the game printed on it.

Later, both brothers said they were awed at the experience.

"I think this is bigger than reality," said Steve Minnick. "The view you see from here and all of the people and how important the job was...it's huge."

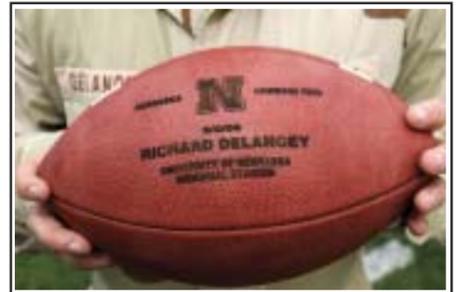
"I think standing at attention in front of the doors waiting to open them, then seeing myself on the big screen...that's something I'll never forget," he added.

"It was awesome," added Mike Minnick. "I tell you, the adrenaline was pumping so much. My heart was beating. My knees were shaking."

"I was really proud to do it for the Guard, the University and my dad."



**Opening Up A New Tradition:** (From left) Sgt. Michael Sharples and Spc. Richard DeLancey, 1075th Transportation Company, stand in front of the new gates before the start of the Sept. 2 Nebraska-Louisiana Tech football game at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb. The two Nebraska Guardsmen were the first to ever serve as "gate sentinels" during a Nebraska football game.



**Memento:** Spc. Richard DeLancey holds a special football presented to him by the captains of the Nebraska football team in recognition of his selection to serve as one of the first two "gate sentinels."

## Guard Soldiers usher in new Husker tradition

By Capt. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

Two Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers ushered in a new era at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln recently.

Standing in front of more than 85,000 scarlet-garbed fans, Sgt. Michael Sharples and Spc. Richard DeLancey of the Columbus-based 1075th Transportation Company, served as the first-ever "gate sentinels" at the recently refurbished Memorial Stadium before the Nebraska Cornhusker football team's season-opening game against Louisiana Tech. Bulldogs.

"I'm pretty pumped up," said DeLancey as he prepared to take his place in front of a pair of new, bronze Tunnel Walk gates that have been cast with full-length, raised artistic renderings of six historic Nebraska football players.

"I'm just ready for it to start," according to University of Nebraska Athletic Department officials, the new Tunnel Walk entrance was the result of a major construction effort at Memorial Stadium, which included the creation of a new locker room located in the north part of the stadium.

Now, instead of entering onto the field from the southwestern corner of the stadium as the team has since 1973, the team enters through the northwestern corner.

In a news release that appeared on the official Nebraska athletic department Website following the Louisiana Tech game, Nebraska officials underscored the historic nature of the change.

"The Tunnel Walk returned to the North Stadium today where it originated for both of Coach Bob Devaney's national

championships and remained until 1973. The Huskers exited their locker room, touched the horseshoe for luck at the outer doors of the Osborne Athletic Complex, as teams have for more than a half century, and made their way to the Tunnel entrance," states the release.

"The 2006 Husker football team members made their way to the field on a carpet of red, specially-made FieldTurf, donated by FieldTurf, set to make history before the largest crowd to ever see a game in Memorial Stadium."

The gates, however, were only part of the story. According to Steve Pederson, Nebraska athletic director, he and other officials kicked around several ideas for the ceremonial opening of the gates before finally settling on an idea.

"This is Memorial Stadium, which was dedicated to the members of the military who have fought in our nation's wars," said Pederson in a meeting leading up to the opening game. "It really needed to be members of the military opening those gates."

Pederson contacted Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke about the idea, who then settled upon selecting two National Guardsmen to serve as the ceremonial gate guards for each home game.

Inaugurating the project were DeLancey and Sharples, two Soldiers from Columbus' 1075th Transportation Company who each earned Bronze Stars for Valor during a March 20, 2005, ambush on their convoy near Baghdad, Iraq.

The two Soldiers said they were awed to be selected as the first people to ever open the gates at Memorial Stadium for the Nebraska Cornhuskers.

"I'm pretty excited. There's a



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes



**Let The Season Begin:** Nebraska runningback Marlon Lucky drags a pair of Louisiana Tech defenders with him as he runs for a long gain during the third quarter of the Cornhuskers' season opening 49-10 victory over the visiting Bulldogs from Ruston, La.

lot of people," said Sharples several minutes before the official "Tunnel Walk" ceremony as he looked into the stadium filled with more than 85,000 red clad fans. "I just feel really privileged to be the first."

Along with serving as gate guards, the two Soldiers were also invited to the Cornhuskers Friday practice, after which they were introduced to Coach Bill Callahan and the team.

They were also presented

with special Nebraska footballs, monogrammed with their names and the date of their game, by the football team's three captains.

The Soldiers were also given a tour of the team's new facilities, which includes a new locker room, weight room and huge indoor practice facility.

However, the real show was the game.

As the seconds ticked down to the "Tunnel Walk," the Guardsmen took their places in front of the massive gates under the equally massive word "Nebraska."

A few moments later, the two Soldiers appeared on the new huge "Huskervision" screen as the stadium announcer called their names out to the crowd, which grew noticeably louder as the Soldiers' exploits were detailed.

Later, after the Soldiers had successfully opened the gates to let the team run onto the field, the Guardsmen reflected on the experience as they watched from the north endzone as the home-

town Huskers rolled to a 49-10 win.

"I just didn't want to mess up," said DeLancey, a Johnson, Neb., native. "I was really excited."

According to DeLancey, who - like Sharples - was sworn to secrecy before the game about his role in the Tunnel Walk - his phone started ringing shortly after he appeared on the huge stadium screen and briefly on television sets during the game day broadcast.

"I got a couple of calls from guys saying, 'You were on T.V.,'" said DeLancey. "I was just like, 'Yeah, I know.'"

"It's really awesome that I'm the first one to get to do this," he added. "I just don't know how to describe it."

Sharples agreed. "I was pretty excited...pretty pumped up," he said. "I was pretty nervous."

Sharples said that the entire experience left him with memories he would keep forever.

"(A lot of fans) have come up and said thank you for what you're doing," he said, adding that like DeLancey, he too received several phone calls from surprised friends and family members.

"They were like, 'Why didn't you tell us?'" Sharples said.

"It feels pretty great to be the first person to ever get to do this," he added. "It's a big privilege for them to ask me to do this."