

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

National Champs!



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Just Right: Pvt. Erin McNeil, a 267th Support Maintenance Company cook, checks to see if the garlic roasted potatoes are done during the Philip A. Connelly competition, Oct. 21, at Mead Training Site.

Army Guard cooks win state's first-ever title

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

Want to know what's better than winning a national championship? Having the governor of Nebraska make the announcement during his weekly media conference definitely has to rank pretty close. At least that's what a team of Nebraska Army National Guard food service specialists found out when

they appeared with Gov. Dave Heineman, Jan. 9 at the "Spirit of '76 Armory" in Lincoln, Neb., as he announced that the 267th Support Maintenance Company had just won the Army's 2012 Phillip A. Connelly Award in the National Guard field category. It was the first time in history that a Nebraska Army National Guard unit had won what many call the "Superbowl of military dining" **See NATIONAL CHAMPS on 10.**



Careful Measurements: Pfc. Tiffany Brown, 267th Support Maintenance Company, measures vanilla for a brownie mix, Oct. 21.

Lexington, Ogallala readiness centers to close by year's end

■Transportation units' reorganization prompts 'difficult, necessary' decisions to be made

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, announced Feb. 10 that Nebraska Army National Guard's readiness centers in Lexington and Ogallala will be closing by the end of the current federal fiscal year.

According to Lyons, the decision is based upon Department of the Army plans to reorganize Army National Guard transportation companies.

Lexington and Ogallala both serve as homes to detachments of Nebraska Army National Guard transportation companies. Detachment 1, 1195th Transportation Company, with an assigned strength of 36 Soldiers, is located in Lexington, while Detachment 2, 1074th Transportation Company, with an assigned strength of 18 Soldiers, is located in Ogallala.

"This is a difficult decision to make," said Lyons. "Both of these communities have hosted Nebraska

Army National Guard units for many years and we appreciate the community support."

"However, it's also a necessary decision," Lyons said, adding that several factors were considered. These factors included:

- Maintaining a relevant and viable force structure across the state capable of responding to federal and state emergencies and contingency operations;
- Unit and Soldier demographics;
- More efficient command and control.

"Based upon these factors, we determined that by closing the Lexington and Ogallala readiness centers and reassigning those Soldiers to readiness centers in Kearney, McCook, Sidney and North Platte, we could still provide ample coverage to support any homeland defense or state emergency missions," said Lyons. "Based upon the proximity of these Soldiers to the other detachments of the 1195th and 1074th Transportation Companies, this reassignment will not place an undue burden upon them."

"Finally, this decision will allow us to maintain our critical footprint across Nebraska in an efficient and effective manner," Lyons said.

No Soldier will lose their position within the Nebraska Army National Guard due to these changes. "We're **See CLOSURES on 2.**

Air Guard crew makes history over holidays

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Eight members of a 155th Air Refueling Wing airplane crew made history over the holidays when they flew the last KC-135R Stratotanker aeromedical evacuation flight into and out of Afghanistan.

Part of a nearly half-decade long effort, Stratotankers will no longer be involved in the Afghanistan aeromedical evacuation mission. Those missions will now be flown al-

most entirely by other U.S. aircraft. According to Lt. Col. Jeff Briere, a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker pilot, the 155th ARW's final mission in the effort won't be forgotten soon.

Briere said the tanker crew completed four missions to Afghanistan during the Dec. 23-Jan. 6 deployment. They transported 51 patients from Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, while logging 70 flight hours that covered 33,000 miles and crossed over 50 time zones.

"Although the days were long, they were anything but typical," Briere wrote shortly after arriving back in Lincoln after the deployment.

The crew and aircraft fell under the operational control of the Tanker Airlift Control Center (TACC) branch of Air Mobility Command during the mission. After departing for Germany from Andrews Air Force Base shortly before midnight on Christmas Eve, the crew was given Christmas evening off before starting the first of the missions to

Afghanistan.

After a seven-hour flight to Afghanistan, the crew would typically spend between two and four hours on the ground where the aircraft was refueled and patients were loaded aboard. They would then complete a second seven-hour flight back to Germany where the patients were unloaded, the aircraft was serviced again and the crew accomplished post flight duties.

Overall, Briere said, a typical duty day lasted between 22 to 24 **See LAST FLIGHT on 8.**

Nebraska Guard agricultural team teaches Afghan women poultry skills

Courtesy of Sgt. Herschel Talley
Nebraska ADT No. 2

Members of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2's agriculture section have been busy as ever.

Since arriving in Afghanistan last year, members of the ADT section have taken over and prepared many different projects which they, with the help of the local directors of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAILs), feel will benefit the people of Afghanistan the most.

One of the most popular requests is for training involving raising poultry. Poultry is a staple for the people of Afghanistan. Poultry can provide extra food as well as provide an additional source of income. Some poultry farmers will use the eggs and meat from the

See CHICKENS on 9.



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Nagasawa

Congratulations: Sgt. Chelsea Kramer, a poultry specialist with the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2, presents a certificate to a local Afghan girl who graduated from poultry training Kramer conducted at a school in Sayed Karam, Paktya Province.

Southeastern Nebraska family takes motto to whole new level

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

"The Guard is Family.' With their youngest son going to basic and advanced individual training soon, one southeastern Nebraska family will soon be a living representation of that motto.

Every one of Sgt. Brenda Dutcher's four children currently wear United States Army uniforms.

Each of the Dutcher kids have also served in the Nebraska Army National Guard, including oldest daughter, Cassandra, who enlisted in the Nebraska National Guard in 2006 before transferring to the Kansas National Guard while serving in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at Kansas State University. She received her **See GUARD FAMILY on 6.**

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NEWS DIGEST

■Panetta: U.S. Military will be smaller, more agile, deployable

ABOARD A U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT (AFPS) – To accomplish the new mission sets for the 21st century, the United States needs a smaller, quicker, more agile military, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said, Jan. 12.

That is the basis behind the recently released strategy review that will set the stage for the fiscal 2013 Defense Department budget request.

“Our budget is, basically, designed to reinforce the new missions we are talking about and that agile, deployable and ready force that has to move quickly,” Panetta said during an interview on his way to Fort Bliss, Texas.

Force structure will come down in the years to come, the secretary said, but the military will continue to be able to engage in the full range of conflicts even with spending \$487 billion less over the next 10 years. The Army will get smaller, but the reduction will be slow and balanced as recommended by Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, Panetta said.

The way the force will be used will change under the strategy, the secretary said. While there will remain forces in Asia and the Middle East – two areas of particular focus for the United States – other areas will not be uncovered.

Rotational forces – the way Army Special Forces currently deploy – will expand to conventional forces. The rotational deployments mean the military “will be in a position to cover not only the area that will be a primary focus ... but we will be able to cover the world,” he said.

The secretary is adamant that the budget will not be reduced on the backs of service members. He specified there will be no changes to military retirement for those serving today.

“We are going to design the requirements for any commission that looks at retirement,” he said. “One of the requirements is that those already serving are fully grandfathered.”

■Air Force announces changes to Air National Guard units

WASHINGTON (NGNEWS) – The Air Force announced force structure plans to retire, not acquire or transfer 191 Air National Guard aircraft and add 65 aircraft to the Air National Guard fleet. The changes announced will impact Air Guard units in 27 states and territories over the next few years, according to Pentagon officials, Feb. 3.

The affected states are Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

The manpower realignment plan built by the Reserve Component will significantly affect additional units in all 54 states and territories.

Through the Air Force’s proposed force structure realignment plan, the Air Force plans to retire 286 aircraft as part of the President’s new defense strategy and the Budget Control Act’s requirements to cut \$487 billion from the defense budget over the next 10 years. The Air Force’s share is about \$50 billion.

“Gen. (Norton) Schwartz has said that the Air Force is going to get smaller, and all of the components, Active, Guard and Reserve, are going to get smaller. It’s now becoming a reality,” said Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, Air National Guard director.

“The Air National Guard has been here before,” Wyatt added. “We need to continue to work with our active duty and reserve counterparts to ensure we have the best Air Force possible. America’s security depends upon us getting this force mix correct.”

“We participated in the Air Force corporate process along with the Air Force Reserves to find efficiencies and mitigate effects of reductions,” Wyatt said. “The experience and capabilities of our personnel are at its highest levels due to being an operational reserve fighting alongside active duty since Desert Storm. We need to maintain this capability in order to meet any future contingencies.”

The Air Force is scheduled to announce manpower changes caused by these structure changes in the next few weeks.

In order for the planned reductions to take effect, they must be approved by Congress and signed into law by the President.

“Although the associated manpower changes are not available, the Air National Guard is putting together programs to retain as many Airmen as possible,” Wyatt added. “We need to continue to adapt to meet today’s mission, while looking ahead at tomorrow’s challenges.”

To view the Force Structure overview for all of the Air Force’s planned changes, go to: www.af.mil.

■President, first lady to honor Iraq veterans, families

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama will honor Iraq War veterans and their families at the White House later this month, White House officials announced in a statement Feb. 6.

The president and first lady will host a dinner Feb. 29 to honor troops who served in operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn and their families.

“This dinner — an expression of the nation’s gratitude for the achievements and enormous sacrifices of the brave Americans who served in the Iraq War and of the families who supported them — will include men and women in uniform from all ranks, services, states and backgrounds, representative of the many thousands of Americans who served in Iraq,” the statement said.

Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter, and Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, welcomed the final group of U.S. troops home from Iraq on Dec. 20.

Dempsey praised troops and their families

Budget proposal requests smaller modernized force

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The military will reduce its end strength by 5.5 percent over five years, while preserving military pay and benefits for current members and investing in technology and systems to counter future threats, according to Pentagon budget documents released Feb. 13.

The fiscal 2013 proposal calls for a \$525.4 billion base budget, down \$5.2 billion from the current year, and \$88.5 billion for overseas contingency operations, down \$26.6 billion.

The proposal follows the military strategy guidance President Barack Obama released last month that provides a transition from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to a more agile and flexible military that responds to broad challenges and maintains global superiority while also helping to reduce the national deficit, officials said.

The administration has been working toward a \$487 billion reduction in projected defense spending over the next decade, and the fiscal 2013 budget proposal calls for \$259 billion in savings in the next five years. Officials said those savings would come from continued efforts at becoming more efficient, reducing overhead and duplication, and slowing the growth of personnel costs.

Defense officials said they followed a three-prong strategy for the budget request: to make disciplined use of resources, to follow strategic military guidance on decisions about force structure and investments, and to ensure the quality of the all-volunteer force while also slowing the growth of pay and benefits. The proposal calls for \$61 billion in spending cuts through fiscal 2017 — a continuation of \$150 billion in proposed budget “efficiencies” in the current budget year — through reduced overhead and support, as well as improved business practices.

The plan would increase investments in unmanned aircraft and tactical vehicles, maintain the joint strike fighter, and terminate the C-27 airlift aircraft and new weather satellites.

Also as part of the budget proposal:

- The Army would eliminate at least eight brigade combat teams;

- The Navy would eliminate seven cruisers and two dock landing ships;

- The Marine Corps would eliminate one infantry regiment headquarters, five infantry battalions, one artillery battalion, four tactical air squadrons and one combat logistics battalion;

- The Air Force eliminates six combat coded fighter squadrons and one noncombat coded fighter squadron, and 303 aircraft, including 123 combat aircraft, 150 mobility and tanker aircraft and 30 intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft.

End-strength reductions would rise incrementally from a 1.4 percent reduction in fiscal 2013 to a 5.5 percent reduction in 2017. The breakdown by service would be:

- For the Army, a 0.9 percent reduction next year to 1,115,300, going to a 6.8 percent reduction in 2017;

- For the Navy, a 1.7 percent reduction next year to 385,000, going to a 3.9 percent reduction in 2017.

- For the Marine Corps, a 2 percent reduction next year to 236,900, going to an 8.3 percent reduction in 2017; and

- For the Air Force, a 1.9 percent reduction next year, going to a 2.3 percent reduction in 2017.

The budget request includes a 1.7 percent military pay raise, a 4.2 percent average increase in the basic housing allowance, and a 3.4 percent rise in the basic allowance for subsistence.

As part of the plan, the Military Health System would receive \$48.7 billion, down from \$52.8 billion this year. Though there would be some fee increases in TRICARE and pharmacy co-pays for retirees younger than 65, officials said, fees will not increase for active-duty service members, survivors of military members who died on active duty or medically retired service members.

The budget request matches TRICARE military health plan fee increases to retirement pay. Retirees receiving \$22,589 or less would pay \$600 in enrollment fees in 2013, rising to \$893 in 2017. Those receiving retirement pay of \$45,179 or more would pay \$820 in 2013 and \$2,048 in 2017.

The budget request does not change the military retirement system in 2013, but includes a Defense Department request that Congress establish a military retirement commission to determine whether cost-effective changes should be made to the current system.

Defense leaders are fully committed to assisting service members and their families, officials said. The budget request includes \$8.5 billion for family support programs.

Under the proposal, the DOD civilian work force will decrease by 1 percent in 2013, and will receive a 0.5-percent pay raise, following a two-year pay freeze.

The request includes an overall \$88.5 billion for Afghanistan and Iraq, down from \$115.1 billion this year. Funding requirements have dropped in balance with decreased troop levels, officials said.

The request would invest \$1.4 billion in funding divided among the NATO alliance ground surveillance system, the combatant command exercise and engagement program, the National Guard State Partnership Program and the Security Force Assistance Program.

for their service and sacrifice while serving in two operations during the Iraq War.

“We will be honored to be a part of ‘A Nation’s Gratitude’ hosted by President and Mrs. Obama to recognize the significant contributions of the U.S. military and military families

to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn,” the chairman said.

“These heroes and those they represent have sacrificed to defend our nation and provide the Iraqi people an opportunity for a peaceful and secure future,” he continued.

CLOSURES

continued from page 1.

going to take care of our Soldiers,” Lyons said. “Their membership in the Nebraska Army National Guard will not be compromised by these changes as the reorganization will not impact the overall strength of these two units.”

“Additionally men and women from the Lexington and Ogallala area will have the opportunity to serve in the Nebraska National Guard in Kearney, North Platte and Sidney, all of which are within 75 miles,” said Lyons.

According to Lyons, state and local officials have already been informed of the pending changes, as have Soldiers assigned to the local units.

“We are sad to see the armory closing. It has been an important part of our community for decades,” said Ogallala Mayor Buck Bassett. “But they are very nice buildings that will be available and I hope they can be used for new activities that can be of a benefit to the community.”

Lyons said the transfer of the two readiness centers to the state is expected to be complete by the end of the current federal fiscal year. The state is expected to begin the divestiture process shortly after that.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Correction

The above photograph was misidentified in the December 2011 Prairie Soldier. The caption should have read: Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Ayers, 105th Personnel Detachment, comforts his daughter Mollie shortly before his unit deployed in February 2003. We apologize for the mistake.

Prairie Soldier

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

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Civil support team practices critical response during exercise at Camp Ashland's historic arena



Mission Brief: Capt. Sean Thurmer, 72nd Civil Support Team Survey Section leader, conducts a pre-mission briefing inside of Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall, Feb. 8.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Spot Checking: Staff Sgt. Donovan Garcia uses a multirae to check Sgt. Travis Benda's protective clothing for any potential chemical contamination after the two members of the Lincoln-based 72nd Civil Support Team conducted a reconnaissance mission exercise at Camp Ashland's historic boxing arena, Feb. 8.

Civil support team puts historic arena to use

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The boxing arena at Camp Ashland, Neb., hasn't hosted a sporting event for decades.

That all changed, Feb. 8, when members of the 72nd Civil Support Team used the historic venue as the site of a simulated poison gas attack on a major sporting event.

According to Maj. Eric Kremers, unit science officer who served as the exercise observer controller, the training event was designed to test unit members' ability to rapidly react to a potentially deadly man-made incident.

"My overall goal is to train on our mechanics, our logistics, of going from a standby mission to a full operational response," said Kremers.

Kremers said the exercise revolved around an attack during a major sporting event in which a person releases poisonous gas in a bathroom that causes several dozen civilian casualties. Members of the 72nd CST were then required to go from a standby role of assisting local law enforcement officials in sweeping the stadium of hazardous materials to a full response in which several members of the unit actually had to enter a "hot zone" and investigate the incident, identify the hazardous material and gather evidence for law enforcement officials.

According to Staff Sgt. Donavon Garcia, one of two 72nd CST survey team members who entered and inspected a simulated contaminated bathroom during the exercise, the operation gave the unit a good opportunity to fully exercise its response.

"I thought it was a really good training environment," said Garcia, shortly after he

and fellow survey team member Sgt. Travis Benda completed a mission into the dark, dank interior of the arena. There, the two Guardsmen investigated the incident and carefully collected evidence while the rhythmic sounds of water dripping from the melting snow in the stands above their heads mixed with the beeps and squawks of the Guardsmen's protective and sensor equipment.

"The biggest challenge was transition to the response phase of the scenario," Garcia said, adding that maintaining accountability and then establishing contact with local authorities were keys to success.

Benda agreed. "It went really well," said Benda, adding that practicing response skills is critical.

"It's extremely important because it's really difficult to maintain accountability," he added. "So this way we go through all of the phases of performing a standby mission, to not knowing where everybody is, to making sure we have areas of refuge and then training on getting all of the equipment ready that we will need downrange."

"This makes sure that we connect all of the dots together," Benda added a few moments later. "Sometimes we do the steps separately. This really gives us that connection between the standby and the actual response mission."

According to Maj. Mary Mangels, 72nd CST commander, that's exactly what she hoped to accomplish during the bone-chilling February exercise.

"I wanted them to respond appropriately and do some thinking on their feet," she said. "A lot of times there are a lot of assumptions of what will do. The way that we ensure that is to make sure that we train to that standard at all times and we do all of the what ifs."

"I think this exercise today really helped us do exactly that."



Taking A Look: Staff Sgt. Donovan Garcia inspects a bottle suspected of containing hazardous chemicals during a Feb. 8 simulation.



Snowy Trail: Sgt. Travis Benda and Staff Sgt. Donavon Garcia move their equipment through a snow-covered Camp Ashland boxing arena after completing a reconnaissance exercise deep into the historic stadium, Feb. 8.



Mission Complete: Sgt. 1st Class Landon Koopman, 72nd Civil Support Team reconnaissance sergeant, helps Staff Sgt. Donavon Garcia remove his protective equipment following a Feb. 8 training exercise at Camp Ashland. The exercise was designed to test the team's ability to shift into a response following a simulated attack on a major sporting event.



Talking It Out: Chaplain (Maj.) Scott Ehler conducts a class on the importance of communication during the Jan. 22 Yellow Ribbon Program event held in Omaha, Neb.

Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Getting Answers

■ Soldiers, Airmen learn more about benefits, services during Omaha Yellow Ribbon event

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

Reintegrating back into life after a deployment is never as easy nor as smooth as some would like.

That's why the Department of Defense created the Yellow Ribbon Program for Guard Soldiers, Airmen and their families.

According to Guard officials, the program is designed to provide important up-to-date information to military families about various support and benefits available to them before, during and after deployments as well as throughout their military careers.

The services range from individual readjustment counseling, group readjustment counseling, benefit assistance, marital and family counseling, substance abuse information and referrals, community education, job assistance, family assistance, vocational rehabilitation and employment, stress management and more.

Recently, members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 402nd Military Police Battalion Headquarters; 623rd Engineer Company; 1-376th Aviation Battalion Headquarters; and Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion and assorted detachments; as well

as members of the Nebraska Air National Guard had the opportunity learn more about these and other services during a massive Yellow Ribbon Program event held Jan. 21-22 at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Omaha.

According to YRP officials, a total of 298 Guardsmen and family members attended the Jan. 21 event while 304 attended on Jan. 22. They added that the goal for the January event was simple.

"It's really just to bring all the resources that are available to service members in one place," said 1st Lt. Sarah Wales, a YRP event planner.

Still, coordinating this many units into a weekend YRP event took quite a bit of work.

"It's mandatory for service members to complete a 30 and a 60 day event, but it's up to the service members if they want to bring family members," said Wales. "We try to encourage as much family participation as we can. It's hard to plan sometimes when you don't know who is going to be there."

"We try to provide an overall wealth of information," added Wales. "We try to get the service members aware of the information without them feeling like they are overwhelmed with it."

Booths from different supporters, organizations and associations lined the halls outside the Hilton conference rooms. Subject-matter experts located in the booths were able to explain their services and how they can help.

The booths also provided informational pamphlets, flyers, programs, free give a-ways and candy to promote their services.

Roger C. Byer, a team leader from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, was one of the people staffing a booth in Omaha.

According to Byer, his program helps veterans reconnect with the civilian community while also giving Guardsmen and their families the opportunity to learn about

the support that's available to them through a variety of one-on-one and hands-on events.

Still, Byer said, he feels a particular personal need to make sure that Guardsmen and their families understand what his program offers.

"I'm very passionate about serving the veterans because I'm a veteran myself," added Byer.

According to those attending the January event, the information veterans and their families gain is extremely valuable.

"For the ones that are coming back first and a second time from a deployment it's a good deal for them," said Sgt. 1st Class Marty Timberlake, the finance section noncommissioned officer with the 402nd MP Bn. "They need to see what they have available to them."

"I think the joint teamwork of this Yellow Ribbon is good because everyone sees each other, that we are all deploying not just the Army," added Staff Sgt. Christian Knapp, a crew chief with the 155th Air Refueling Wing.

In addition to the booths, organizations and associations gave presentations to help the Guardsmen and their families understand the services that are available.

"The reason I attend is so people know about some of the programs we support," said Alan Radke, a representative from the National Military Family Association. "One of the things that Nebraska people

Guardsmen help stitch Old Glory back together during Omaha event

By Sgt. Koan Nissen

Staff Writer

The "New York Says Thank You Foundation" treated Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to a patriotic display during their Jan. 21 Yellow Ribbon Program event by bringing the National 9/11 Flag to Omaha.

The flag, which was hand-carried to Nebraska by New York City Firefighter Jimmy Sands, was displayed during the event held at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Omaha. Its presence was designed to give recently deployed Nebraska Guardsmen and their families the opportunity to sew a stitch in what has become a national symbol of American resilience and contemplate on the work they just completed and are currently involved in.

"It's not about 9/11," said Sands. "It's about 9/12."

According to Sands, the flag is a symbol of American resilience.

The main body of the National 9/11 Flag has humble roots. Affixed to scaffolding on 90 West Street (adjacent the World Trade Center) on Sept. 11, 2001, the flag was flying across from what is now known as Ground Zero. After the attacks, the flag – like so many U.S. flags that have seen combat – was still there, albeit bruised and banged up.

In October 2001, Charlie Vitchers, a construction superintendent for the clean-up efforts at Ground Zero, directed workers to take down the flag. It was placed in storage for seven years until, during the 2008 anniversary of 9/11, Vitchers, who also volunteers as construction coordinator with the "New York Says Thank You Foundation," took the flag to Greensburg, Kan., a town that had been devastated by a massive tornado.

There, members of the foundation, along with survivors of the disaster, began stitching the flag back together using remnants of other flags of historical significance.

The goal, said Sands, was to rebuild the flag by the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

"Our goal was to complete this flag's restoration with patches that were sewn on in places from flags that were destroyed, burned, shredded and torn," he said.

According to Sands, the 9/11 flag is now a collection of retired flags that have been involved in some kind of natural disaster or monumental occasion, such as a piece of the flag that President Abraham Lincoln was laid on after being shot in Ford's Theater on April, 14 1865.

The flag, which is 20 feet tall and 30-and-a-half-feet wide, has been stitched together by U.S. military personnel, veterans, first-responders, school children and members of Congress. Recently, WWII veterans met on the deck of the *USS Missouri* (BB-63), the Iowa-class battleship that hosted the "Instrument of Surrender" for Japan to the Allies in 1945, to stitch their legacy into the flag.

Because of its delicate and important nature, Sands said, the flag is never packed or checked



Photos by Sgt. Koan Nissen

Stitch In Time: Capt. Brad Boyer, chaplain for the 402nd Military Police Battalion, puts a stitch into the National 9/11 Flag on Jan. 21 during the 402nd MP Bn.'s Yellow Ribbon Program in Omaha, Neb. The National 9/11 flag is a traveling display made out of patches of flags that were destroyed, burned, shredded and torn and then sewn back together by people across the country.



One Nation, Indivisible: Nebraska Guardsman and their families were given the opportunity to sew a stitch in the National 9/11 flag, which has become a symbol of national resilience, Jan. 21.

in luggage when it travels to an event; it is always hand-carried by a volunteer.

One of the flag's stops was at the Little Sioux Boy Scout Camp in Iowa that was decimated by a tornado on June 11, 2008, resulting in the deaths of four scouts.

According to Staff Sgt. Christopher Deters, 402nd Military Police Battalion, his father was in charge of the Boy Scout camp at the time of disaster. Deter, who recently deployed to Afghanistan as a property sergeant, said his father was so moved by the foundation's efforts that he and Deter's mother soon began volunteering their time to support the "New York Says Thank You" Foundations efforts.

Their effort grew substantially when Deters deployed to Afghanistan last year.

"Last year they hit 42 states with the flag," said Deters, adding that he frequently received emails about his parents' travels and the people they met along the way. Deters said his father soon began asking him

if his unit would be interested in having the flag displayed during their welcome home ceremony.

"From talking with my Dad, I kind of got the idea that the foundation had kind of adopted my unit," said Deters.

Unfortunately, Deters said, he didn't have the time to get the flag to Omaha in time for the unit's return. They instead decided to bring the flag to the January Yellow Ribbon event.

Deters said he met with Sands and his parents shortly after the New York firefighter arrived with the flag the evening before the event.

After spending some time with Sands, Deters met him again the next morning as he was arriving at the Hilton Hotel. This time Deters was asked if he would like the honor of placing the first stitch of the day into the flag.

Deters said the experience of sewing the flag left him with deep impressions. "I thought to myself, 'We're rebuilding something that was a symbol of our country. This is why I do what I do... for my country,'" he said.

Deters added that other Guardsmen and their families were also deeply moved by the flag's presence.

"The folks who came up to me and talked to me about it... they really seemed impressed," he said. "Everyone I talked to about this thing looked up and said it seemed awe-inspiring."

It's not hard to understand why, either, said Deters.

"The reason for the War on Terror in the first place is because of what happened on 9/11," said Deters, a veteran of both Operation Desert Shield and Enduring Freedom. "That was one of the reasons why (we) deployed."

know a lot about is 'Operation Purple Camps.' They are camps for children of people in the military. It focuses on the types of things military kids need during particular military events in their lives."

Another benefit of the January event was that it allowed members of both the Army and Air National Guard to come together and learn more about the work that each organization is currently doing.

"It shows that it doesn't matter what service you are in, people go through the same things," said Wales. "There is help anywhere; if you don't feel comfortable getting help on the Army side, there's help on the Air Guard side. The services are open to both."

"It's kind of humbling being with the Army because I don't sacrifice quite the amount as they do as far as time away from the family," said

Tech. Sgt. Thomas Sears, a crew chief with the 155th ARW. "But being gone for a month or two like we do makes me appreciate the sacrifices they do even more. Because I know time away from home and family is very important."

"I think the joint teamwork of this Yellow Ribbon is good because everyone sees each other, that we are all deploying not just the Army," added Knapp.



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Full Crowd: Family, friends and distinguished guests of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1-376th Aviation, fill Grand Island's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2 for the unit's welcome home ceremony, Dec. 14.

Home in time for the Holidays

■ Grand Island aviation headquarters returns home from mission to Kosovo

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

When Jami Scheidemann talks about giving her two children a kiss each night, it isn't a typical sign of affection.

Instead, it was a way for the wife of a deployed Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier to help her children mark the passage of time until their father returned home from Kosovo.

"We came up with jars of Hershey's Kisses for the kids to mark time with," said Scheidemann, whose husband, Sgt. Corey Scheidemann, is a wheeled vehicle mechanic with the Grand Island-based Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1-376th Aviation. "They ate a kiss every night. They knew when the kisses were gone that he was coming home."

"It worked very well," she added.

On Dec. 13, Skyler Scheidemann, 5, and Rylee Scheidemann, 3, ate the last Hershey's Kisses in the jar. The next day they gathered with other families and friends of the deployed Nebraska Army National Guardsmen at Grand Island's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2 to welcome their Soldiers home from their Operation Enduring Freedom mission.

According to Jami, the timing of the homecoming was perfect.

"We are really excited because our daughter's Christmas program for school is tomorrow night, so she's pretty psyched that Daddy gets to



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Cheek To Cheek: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Lewis Messier, a pilot with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1-376th Aviation, holds his 5-year-old son Dylan during the welcome home ceremony at Grand Island's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2 on Dec. 14.

be there to watch her," said Jami.

Another wife of an aviation Soldier who was more than ready to have her husband back home in time for the holidays was Anita Wragge, whose husband is Spc. Heath Wragge.

"I'm so excited," said Wragge as she waited for the buses carrying the Nebraska Soldiers home from Camp Atterbury, Ind., to arrive at the AASF No. 2. "When he was gone it was hard part of the time, but I had good friends and family to help pick up the slack a little bit and we



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Sharing Some Love: Sgt. Jacob McCormack, a member of the Grand Island-based Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1-376th Aviation, hugs and kisses his wife, Hannah, while she holds their daughter, Evelyn Anna Maire, shortly after he returned home from a mission to Kosovo, Dec. 14.

had a good group of wives that we could call each other whenever we needed something."

After an anxious wait for family and friends, the buses finally pulled up next to the Guard flight facility. Within moments the Soldiers quickly reunited with the families and friends amidst a flurry of hugs, kisses, smiles and happy tears. They then filled the building for the official welcome home ceremony.

Leaders and distinguished guests thanked the Soldiers and expressed their gratitude for their service.

According to Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, it was great to have the Soldiers back home in Nebraska with the Christmas season and holiday season rapidly approaching.

"As I travel around the state of Nebraska, I want you to know truly how proud Nebraskans are of their Nebraska Army National Guard," said Sheehy.

While in Kosovo, the 1-376th Aviation Battalion served as the command and control headquarters for an Aviation Task Force that consisted of approximately 160 Soldiers from Arkansas, West Virginia and



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Don't Cry, I'm Home: Spc. Wyatt Carson, an intelligence analyst with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1-376th Aviation, hugs his wife, Ranie, after he stepped off a bus at Grand Island's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2 on Dec. 14 after a nearly yearlong mission to Kosovo.

Pennsylvania units.

Unit Soldiers recorded 252.6 flight hours during the train up at Camp Atterbury, Ind., and 3,261.7 hours in Kosovo. They also carried over 800,000 pounds of cargo and transported 32 patients.

"The deployment was good and I got a lot of experience," said Spc. David Matson, a human resources specialist with the 1-376th Aviation Battalion. "I gained a lot of knowledge on what my job is. I missed my family, but we kept in touch."

Omaha policemen receive belated welcome home from Afghanistan

By Sgt. Koan Nissen
Staff Writer

Soldiers with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 402nd Military Police Battalion headquarters were officially welcomed home after a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan during a ceremony in Omaha, Jan. 21.

The Soldiers, approximately 145 of them, actually returned to Nebraska the evening hours of Nov. 23. However, due to the unit's late arrival time and the fact that it was the evening before Thanksgiving, Nebraska National Guard officials postponed the welcome home ceremony.

Those same senior military officials, along with Nebraska government officials, were on hand to share greetings and thanks during the ceremony, which was held in conjunction with the unit's Yellow Ribbon Program event.

"We're enormously proud of you," said Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman. "As much

as we wanted to say thank you that night, it was more important for you to be with your families."

While in Afghanistan, the unit was charged with operating a theater interment facility. The mission required long hours and hard work under even the most pleasant conditions.

"You've made a difference in our country and a difference in our world," said U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson. "You helped establish justice and order in the chaos of war."

Nelson also made mention of Nebraska Soldiers who have come and gone. "You're a part of the proud tradition of Nebraskans who've served our country," he said. "A tradition of service that goes back long before Nebraska was a state."

For many of the Soldiers, being a part of that tradition came with the cost of leaving family and loved ones behind.

"It feels wonderful to be back," said Maj. Christopher Running, battalion operations

officer. "The one thing I was looking forward to was hugging my family; it was really a big deal to just grab my daughters in my arms and my wife and just give them a big hug."

Those sentiments were echoed by Running's wife, Shannon. She said the magnitude of the ceremony is indescribable and feels it is another facet to a wonderful support system in place for the families of the Soldiers who were deployed.

As for the job the Soldiers did while deployed, U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns said, "Our expectation for the 402nd was very, very high and I'm very proud to say you have exceeded those expectations."

"You successfully managed enforcing operational procedures, while showing compassion and friendship, while putting the best foot forward for Nebraskan's and American's," said Johanns.

And success is what the 402nd was all about, said the officials.

"You didn't just do the job, you did it



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Thanks For Your Hard Work: Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, presents his coin to Command Sgt. Maj. Will Bindel during the 402nd Military Police Battalion's Jan. 21 welcome home ceremony.

well," said U.S. Rep. Lee Terry. "You assisted, protected and you defended."

Patriotic Setting: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 43rd Army Band play before the start of a ceremony honoring the National Guard 375th birthday, Dec. 18.



National Guard marks 375 years of service in December

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

When a delegation of state governmental and military leaders gathered at Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall on Dec. 18, they weren't gathering for just any old meeting or ceremony. They had come to honor a continuing 375-year legacy of service to communities, states and nation.

They were celebrating the National Guard's 375th Birthday.

According to Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale, one of three speakers at the ceremony, the National Guard's history of service, which stretches back to the establishment of the first permanent militia regiments by the Massachusetts Bay Colony on Dec. 13, 1636, is just as much alive today as it was then.

"The purpose of those first militias is exactly the same as your role in the National Guard today: to protect and defend your communities," Gale told the assembled crowd

of Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen.

"You're there. You're part of your communities and the purpose is exactly the same," he added.

The role of National Guard is so important, Gale said, that it was an integral part of winning the nation's initial independence from Great Britain and then sewing 13 separate colonies into one nation following that war.

"Because of your service, you helped create the United States of America," said Gale, both after the Revolutionary War and again following the American Civil War. It's a legacy of service to the nation that continued on during World War I, World War II and on into the nation's current conflicts in such places as Afghanistan and the recently concluded conflict in Iraq, he added.

"I've heard it said that our military has become very disconnected from our public," said Gale.

"That's not true when you think about the National Guard, though," said Gale, who added that because



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Slicing Through: (From left) Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale, Nebraska State Senator Bill Avery and Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons (far right) watch as retired Maj. Gen. Edward Binder and Pvt. Lucas Kinsey cut the ceremonial 375th birthday cake during a National Guard celebration held Dec. 18 at Camp Ashland, Neb.

of its community-based nature, the National Guard is well known by families and communities that support and bind the organization to their neighbors. "You are a part of us — you, the Citizen Soldiers — and we appreciate what you stand for."

State Sen. Bill Avery echoed those comments.

"You are part of our country's oldest and most distinguished institution," Avery told the National Guard audience. "You should be very proud of that... it's something that all of us take pride in."

"Your history is deeply interwoven with the highest standards of American life, with our values, with our history," added Avery.

That's particularly evident, said Avery, in the National Guard's dual federal and state missions. For ex-

ample, he said, the National Guard has not only supported the nation's wars and military operations, it has also played important roles in supporting states and communities following natural and man-made disasters.

"You always come through," he said. "You have much to be proud of. The nation has depended on you when we've faced our gravest threats and most difficult tasks. You've always served well. You've always served with distinction and honor."

Also speaking during the birthday celebration was Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general. According to Lyons, ceremonies such as the Guard's birthday celebration offer an opportunity for the organization to pause and reflect

upon the ideals that have made the organization what it is today while also giving it the chance to look at its future.

"I don't think that it should be lost upon us that around 200 Soldiers and Airmen continue to serve their nation in places like Kosovo and Afghanistan and other locations around the globe as part of our continuing support of our federal mission," said Lyons. "Today, as we celebrate the National Guard's 375th Birthday, all of us recognize the fact that we are all walking in the footprints of those heroes that came before us... we should take equal confidence in the fact that we also stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the heroes who occupy our ranks today who are sitting here with us today."

GUARD FAMILY continued from page 1.

commission as a second lieutenant in December 2011.

According to the senior Dutcher, military service is simply a part of the family's persona.

"That's what they want to do," said Andy Dutcher, who was a year too old to enlist when his wife made her decision to join the Nebraska Army National Guard. "They want to serve."

"It was something I always wanted to do," added Brenda. "I always thought it would be neat to serve our country. I don't think there are enough people that really do that."

What makes the Dutcher family even more unique is the fact that each of the Soldiers are motor transport operators, although they serve in different units throughout the state.

Daughter, Spc. Kristen Burgett-Dutcher was the second to enlist. She joined the Nebraska Guard in March 2009 and serves with the 1075th Truck Company. Brenda enlisted at the age of 41 in August 2009 as a member of the 1074th Truck Company. Pfc. Austin Dutcher, the eldest of Brenda and Andy's two sons, enlisted in April 2010 and is with the 195th Special Operations Forward Support Company.

Youngest son, Pvt. Justin Dutcher, enlisted on his 18th birthday on Aug. 31, 2011. He was scheduled to ship to basic training in early February. After completion of basic training and advanced individual training he will serve with the 1057th Truck Company.

Driving trucks isn't just a military occupation, either. Father, Andy drove truck for over 10 years of his life.

"As far as openings, (the truck specialty) was really the ones open at the time," said Brenda. "I never thought I would end up driving a truck."

"Honestly, my husband drove



Photo courtesy of Sgt. Brenda Dutcher

All In The Family: The five members of the Dutcher family who currently serve in the military pose for a photograph at their family in rural southeastern Nebraska. Pictured are: (From left) Officer Cadet (now 2nd Lt.) Cassandra Dutcher, Sgt. Brenda Dutcher (mother), Spc. Kristen Burgett-Dutcher, Pvt. (now Pfc.) Austin Dutcher, and Pvt. Justin Dutcher, who recently enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard on his 18th birthday.

a truck and he always wanted me to drive a truck and I was like, 'No,' she added. "Now look what happened."

Each of the Dutchers joined for different reasons. For some, education and insurance benefits were the primary draw. Others wanted to start a career. The common link, however, was a desire to serve their country.

Even without the military, the Dutcher family is kept busy running the family farm. They currently own 200 head of livestock, milk over 80 dairy cows, and maintain and harvest 500 acres of cropland. They also keep busy tending to the

everyday needs of a farm.

One potential downfall of having a family of Citizen-Soldiers serving is that all of them could be deployed or away at training at the same time.

Brenda said it's a problem that they've thought quite a bit about.

"That's a challenge when everyone is gone. We have to figure out how we are going to handle the farm," she said.

Fortunately, most of the time the family doesn't drill at the same time. When they do, however, it makes for a pretty busy weekend for Andy.

"If someone has drill, someone

else covers their responsibilities at the farm," said Andy.

Having his wife and children away from home and the farm for periods of time is a sacrifice Andy will have to get used to with daughter Cassandra deploying soon and son Justin leaving for training.

The family members say they will stick together no matter if someone is away or not. In fact, they said, the military has actually brought them closer together.

"It really hasn't made a big change on our family," said Brenda, "because everyone knows we have a military responsibility and a family responsibility."

Nebraska-born comedian tells Pentagon staff to 'Git 'er done'

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — In his signature baseball cap and wearing a shirt with the sleeves cut off, the comedian known as Larry the Cable Guy gave a shout-out to the troops, Oct. 21, while working at the Pentagon to shoot an upcoming segment of his History Channel show, "Only in America."

"This is Larry the Cable Guy, and you're gittin' 'er done watchin' the Pentagon Channel," the Nebraska pig farmer-turned-standup-comedian said. "And if you're not, you're a dag-gum communist!"

Larry, whose real name is Daniel Lawrence Whitney, brought his brand of rural, blue-collar humor to official Washington. Combing the Pentagon hallways in his "We Proudly Support the 2nd Amendment" sweatshirt and camouflage cap, he intertwined serious respect for the military and its members with the zany antics of his brand.

"I love ya!" he told service members in the Pentagon Channel taping. "Stay safe out there. We're behind ya 110 percent, and always do this: Git 'er done!"

The History Channel shoot was important to show viewers the inside workings of U.S. military headquarters, the comedian said.

"It shows you how your tax dollars are being spent, and it makes you real proud," he added. "A lot of people don't know what they do here, and 24,000 people work here, and they're all regular Americans just like you and me."



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Back On Display: The recently unveiled 209th Regional Training Institute's Military Academy Hall of Fame located at Camp Ashland now stretches the length of a Memorial Hall wall and includes displays of past Officer Candidate Class guidons and those people who made significant contributions as Officer Candidate School graduates or to the school's missions.

Hall of Fame, historic guidons return to Memorial Hall

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A significant part of Camp Ashland's history returned to Memorial Hall, recently. After spending several years in a closet after Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall underwent a major facelift in 2004, the 209th Regional Training Institute's Hall of Fame and portions of Nebraska National Guard Military Academy's Officer Candidate School's class guidon collection were recently returned to public viewing as part of a newly created display located in the entrance of the historic building.

The display was the brainchild of Lt. Col. Gary Ropers, commander of the 209th RTI's second battalion. He said the display, which spans an entire interior wall of Memorial Hall, was designed to recognize Camp Ashland's continuing legacy of training the state's Army National Guard leaders.

According to Ropers, prior to the facility's facelift, past OCS guidons were displayed on the walls of Memorial Hall's drill floor.

A similar display of members of the NGMA Hall of Fame, select individuals who are either past

graduates of the state OCS program or who made significant contributions to the development of the 209th RTI, was exhibited in several trophy cases at the building's entrance area.

Those displays, however, were taken down when Memorial Hall underwent its major facelift, which was designed to return the nearly century-old building back to its historic appearance, said Ropers. The displays had remained in storage since then, he added.

Ropers said he always felt the displays needed to be returned to a prominent location at Camp Ashland.

"Camp Ashland has been in the business of teaching officer and enlisted leaders for more than 50 years," said Ropers.

"Being able to show Soldiers who come through the RTI how long we've been in this business is extremely important. It was also important to bring (the displays)



Historic Faces: Members of the Nebraska National Guard Military Academy's Hall of Fame recently returned to Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall after spending the past few years in storage. The original display was taken down when Memorial Hall went through a major facelift beginning in 2004.

back to Memorial Hall... to bring back the reason why this hall is here in the first place," Ropers added.

That was particularly the case with the Hall of Fame.

"We have this tremendous program to recognize people who are inducted into the Hall of Fame.

For them to be inducted and then forgotten for the most part because their plaques weren't displayed at (Memorial Hall), just seemed wrong," he said. "We'd been questioned, 'Where were they?'"

Ropers said he started thinking about ways to bring the displays back to public life several years ago.

He settled on a large blank wall behind the main fireplace in the atrium of Memorial Hall that had previously served as a canvas for a mural depicting Camp Ashland's different missions.

The space, he realized, seemed perfect for what he had in mind.

"I started to do some drawings along with the (Construction and Facilities Management Office) to figure out how we could lay it all out to display the guidons and the permanent Hall of Fame," said Ropers.

The final design incorporated the plaques of each Hall of Fame

inductees and two posters that were created for 50th Anniversary of the OCS program at Camp Ashland, which includes the names of each graduating member of OCS under a photo of their class guidon. Also included in the planned display were the actual guidons from the last seven classes to graduate from Camp Ashland.

"I'd wanted to display 10 guidons originally, but by the time we took a look at the different sizes of guidons that were out there, we were only able to include seven. So, it will be a rotating exhibit that will include the seven newest classes, which will change with the graduation of each new class" said Ropers.

He added that some of the funding for the project was provided by the Nebraska National Guard Officers Association while Kelli Tenhulzen, Mary Schmidt Rodriguez and Amy Amgwert also contributed significant help with the construction of the final display.

Overall, Ropers said, the display has received quite a few positive comments.

"I've had great compliments on it," he said. "From my standpoint it turned out great. It's definitely better than a blank wall."

Airmen work with NATO in Germany

By Senior Airman Mary Thach
Staff Writer

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing recently demonstrated its global impact when 26 members of the Lincoln-based unit deployed to NATO Air Base Geilenkirchen, Germany, Nov. 30 - Dec. 2.

There, the Nebraska Air Guard members took to the sky training NATO aircrew on aerial refueling procedures for AE-3/A aircraft as well as Royal Air Force aircrew from Waddington, U.K., who fly E-3D aircraft.

Two Nebraska KC-135R Stratotankers along with aircrew, maintenance and support personnel, and equipment deployed to Geilenkirchen to provide aerial refueling support for NATO Airborne Early Warning Force Command's E-3A Component.

"They (NATO aircraft) would spend a lot of time just doing nothing but making contacts," said Senior Master Sgt. Edward Schmohr, a fabrications element supervisor in the 155th ARW. "The plane would back off, the pilot would come back in and make another contact."

The NATO mission in Geilenkirchen, or the GK mission as it is referred to by members of the 155th ARW, is "one of those trips you really look forward to," said

Senior Master Sgt. Russell Sladky, a 28-year veteran of the Nebraska Air National Guard and seasoned boom operator in the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron.

According to Sladky, the GK mission is a great training experience that affords aircrew and support personnel the unique opportunity to work and train with multinational forces on a foreign military base in an environment different from a U.S. military facility.

The 155th ARW is participating more in missions with multinational forces, so the GK mission provides support personnel a rare chance to work with a variety of foreign nations. It is good preparation for future deployments to non-U.S. bases added Stratotanker pilot, Capt. Patrick Matol of the 173rd ARS.

The NATO E-3A aircraft are flown by integrated multinational crews from 11 nations - Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey and the United States. Geilenkirchen is the E-3A component's main operating base in addition to being NATO's only multinational operational flying unit.

NATO contracts the Air National Guard tanker units to provide tankers for refueling practice for its aircrew. The GK mission is strictly an Air National Guard mission and the 155th ARW has played a pivotal

role in this training since becoming an air refueling wing in 1995.

The training aircrews receive at Geilenkirchen is used around the world to refuel aircraft patrolling no-fly zones and other planes playing pivotal roles in the nation's security, added Matol.

For traditional Guardsman like Matol, the GK mission is a great chance to get away while logging some invaluable training hours with multinational NATO forces. Matol added that the brevity of the GK mission makes it compatible with the civilian work schedules of traditional Guard members.

Matol said that when one adds all those factors up, the GK mission "is the perfect trip."

The most recent GK mission was a trip of firsts for crew chief Staff Sgt. Bradley Frohner. The nine-year member of the Nebraska Air National Guard was one of 12 crew chiefs sent on the GK mission from the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. The trip was Frohner's first to Germany and his first working with NATO forces on a foreign military base.

The base is different and is without the typical features of an American base, but, he said, "it was good different. It was a great experience for us to support missions outside of our U.S. military."

(Editor's Note: Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton assisted with this article.)

Guard Bureau leader joins Joint Chiefs of Staff

WASHINGTON (AFPS) - The chief of the National Guard Bureau now is a statutory member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Air Force Gen. Craig R. McKinley became a member of the Joint Chiefs on Dec. 31 when President Barack Obama signed the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act.

"We are grateful for the efforts the executive and legislative bodies have gone to in placing the chief of the National Guard Bureau on the Joint Chiefs of Staff," McKinley said. "We look forward to working alongside the other Joint Chiefs to provide

our nation's senior leaders with a fuller picture of the nonfederalized National Guard as it serves in support of homeland defense and civil support missions."

The 2012 National Defense Authorization Act provides \$670 billion in spending for Defense Department programs and Energy Department nuclear weapons programs.

Other provisions that affect the National Guard include reestablishing the position of vice chief of the National Guard Bureau at the three-star level while rescinding the two-star position of director of the bureau's joint staff.

New law eases airport screening for troops, families

WASHINGTON (AFPS) - President Barack Obama signed a bill into law, Jan. 4, to streamline airport screening procedures for service members and their families traveling on official orders.

The Risk-based Security Screening for Members of the Armed Forces Act gives the Transportation Security Administration six months

to develop and implement a plan to expedite screening services for service members on orders and in uniform and, "to the extent possible, any accompanying family member."

The act, in part, calls for the agency to establish standard guidelines for the screening of military uniform items, such as combat boots.



Photos courtesy of Lt. Col. Jeff Briere

Thanks For Your Sacrifice: Lt. Col. Jeff Briere, a 155th Air Refueling Wing pilot, thanks a wounded service member for his sacrifices during an aeromedical evacuation flight back to Germany from Afghanistan. The identity of the service member has been purposefully obscured to protect his privacy.



Holiday Greetings: Members of a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker crew were treated to Christmas greetings when they arrived at the U.S. Customs office at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.



Transferring Patients: U.S. medical crews at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, prepare to move wounded U.S. service members into an awaiting Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker for an aeromedical evacuation flight back to Germany.



Historic Mission: Members of the Nebraska Air National Guard aircrew that supported the last KC-135R Stratotanker aeromedical flights to Afghanistan pose for a photograph during a stop in Kabul. Picture are: (front row from left) Tech. Sgt. Michael Kucera, Airman 1st Class Christopher Castle and Staff Sgt. Dustin Sabatha. (Second row, from left) Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster, Lt. Col. Jeff Briere, Lt. Col. Jeff MatHEMEIER and Capt. Paul Erickson.

LAST FLIGHT continued from page 1.

hours.

During this particular deployment, the missions were anything but typical, say the crew members.

Soon after departing Afghanistan on their second roundtrip flight, the Nebraska Air Guard aircraft developed a mechanical malfunction, which prevented the plane's engines from heating the aircraft.

According to the Guardsmen, after consulting with the medical team in the back of the aircraft, the decision was made to continue the flight back to Germany rather than return to Afghanistan.

Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster, an in-flight refueling specialist, said the determining factor was the medical requirements of the two critically injured patients on-board.

The crew contacted Boeing engineers and specialists in Seattle, Wash., who attempted to troubleshoot the problem during the flight so that heat could be returned to the aircraft.

"Unfortunately, due to the mechanical failure... none of the crew actions were able to restore heat," Briere said. "There was a lot of cocoa and coffee being consumed as the crew tried to ward off the onset of hypothermia. Everyone onboard endured more than seven hours of freezing temperatures before the aircraft landed safely in Germany."

Forster said it was particularly hard on the medical crews that had to withstand the near-freezing temperature while keeping their patients as warm as possible.

According to Senior Airman Chris Castle, one of the aircraft's maintenance specialists, the con-

ditions during the flight are hard to accurately describe.

"It was like driving from Lincoln to Colorado in the winter with your windows down and the air conditioning on," he said. "It was pretty miserable."

Forster said that after landing in Germany, most of the flight crew was able to head back to their room to warm up and rest. The maintenance crew, however, continued working to get the aircraft repaired and ready for the next day's mission schedule.

According to unit members, Lt. Col. Jeff MatHEMEIER, Tech. Sgt. Mike Kucera, Staff Sgt. Dusty Sabatka and Castle, spent hours on the phone sorting out the necessary repairs and details that needed to be accomplished in order to keep the aircraft on schedule.

They soon arranged for spare parts to be flown in from a Central Command area base and the Maintenance Recovery Team to be transported from a European base, which then allowed the maintenance crew to repair the heating system.

Forster called the maintenance specialists' efforts "heroic."

"Reporting to the aircraft at 0900 local, they continued to work to repair the heating system until shortly before crew show," said Forster.

"Returning to their rooms more than 36 hours later, another successful mission under their belt, the crew chiefs had definitely earned their New Year's Eve celebration."

Briere added that Sabatka, on his lead crew chief check out, "got quite an education in international maintenance operations as Ramstein AB is not a tanker base



Withstanding The Cold: Lt. Col. Jeff MatHEMEIER uses a blanket to ward off the gathering cold during a chilly flight back to Germany from Afghanistan.

and only minimal host base support was provided."

Because of the maintenance issue, the crew was delayed in departing back to Afghanistan on their third mission.

The view flying into Bagram, however, was something few of the crew will ever forget.

"I think I'd rather fly at night and not see how close we are coming to those peaks," said Kucera, who added that he was awestruck by the height of the mountains that surround Bagram Air Base.

The Nebraska unit's last mission into Afghanistan occurred on New Year's Day. On the way back to Germany, Briere said they were treated to news that they were going to be released to fly back home a day earlier than expected. That didn't mean the challenges of the

deployment were over, though.

Far from it, in fact.

Shortly after taking off from Ramstein, the aircraft's heating system failed again. By the time the crew had determined the problem's cause, they were almost directly over RAF Mildenhall, an English air base where an active duty U.S. Air Force tanker unit is currently stationed.

Weather problems, however, made diverting into RAF Mildenhall impossible.

"100 mile-per-hour winds (were ravaging) the English countryside and eliminated any possibility of landing there and getting the heating system fixed again," said Briere, adding that the crew was forced to turn back to Ramstein AB, even though weather there was also worsening.

"Capt. (Paul) Erickson took the frigid aircraft around on final approach into Ramstein AB as wind-shear warnings filled the cockpit during his landing attempt," said Briere. "On the second attempt Captain Erickson was able to compensate for the unstable winds and safely land the aircraft as all commercial air travel came to a standstill."

Shortly landing at Ramstein, the crew was informed that weather conditions made it impossible for the Maintenance Recovery Team to leave England. Instead, the Nebraska crew would have to wait in Germany until the weather improved enough for them to safely fly their aircraft back to RAF Mildenhall for repairs.

After finally arriving in England, the crew spent hours troubleshooting and ordering parts, which were again flown in from the distant Central Command base. A few days later the aircraft was repaired, allowing the crew to finally depart for Nebraska.

The crew members who participated in the historic mission, said they were both grateful to have been involved, but also sad to see the unique tanker effort that helped transport hundreds of wounded service members back to treatment facilities in Germany come to an end.

"It definitely leaves an impression on you to see all of these young Soldiers with life-changing injuries," said Forster.

(Editor's note: Lt. Col. Jeff Briere and Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster both contributed significantly to this article through written documents they submitted to the Public Affairs Office.)

Water Works

Nebraskans work with local Afghans to restore crucial watersheds

By Lt. Col. Ross Finley
Nebraska ADT No. 2

Natural resources are vital to sustaining and improving the economy of Afghanistan.

The devastation caused by years of conflict has reduced the availability of stored water for the people of Afghanistan, especially in the rural areas. Water was channeled into areas called watersheds, which provided for irrigation and drinking. Those watersheds are now endangered.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Timothy Gragert of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2 has been dealing with the condition of the watersheds in the Paktiya Province since arriving in Afghanistan last year.

"All the watersheds in Paktiya Province are in dire need of rehabilitation," said Gragert. "There is a great amount of soil erosion due to deforestation and over-grazing."

According to Gragert, the objective of the watershed project is to improve the system's condition to make them healthier and more productive. This can only be accomplished through the work of dedicated people who have a vision for the future, he said.

Gragert said one of those people is Khwaja Gul, a person he has worked quite a bit with since arriving in Afghanistan last year.

Khwaja Gul is the head of the National Resource Department on the Director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock's staff. According to Gragert, Khwaja Gul is an individual who cares deeply for the future of Afghanistan and more specifically Paktiya Province.

During their first meeting, Khwaja Gul told Gragert about his concern about the condition of the National Forest in Paktiya Province. This forest in Paktiya Province was once 750,000 hectares. Today, only 25 percent remains.

That soon brought about a partnership designed to create a change. "We have teamed up in an effort of reforestation of those forestland hectares," said Gragert.

The Nebraska Agribusiness Development Team has started a program that will provide new trees to the forest. This program will consist of starting new tree seedlings in a number of nurseries located throughout the province.



Bringing Water Back: Chief Warrant Officer 4 Timothy Gragert (left), interpreter Emal (center) and two village elders (right) from Milan discuss improving water flow to a retaining pond outside of the village. Gragert, a member of the Nebraska National Guard Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2, is working to help restore critical watersheds in Afghanistan.

The seedlings will then be transplanted to higher elevations in the watershed, specifically the National Forest lands.

Khwaja Gul and his forestry staff will be responsible for the management of the program from seed planting to tree transport.

"This program will be in good hands," said Gragert.

ADT continued with a Paktiya Province watershed study that was already in place when they arrived in Afghanistan.

This project deals with three separate watersheds in Paktiya Province and addresses a number of resource concerns within each watershed. These concerns include water quality and quantity, the lack of trees and grasses, and major concerns of soil erosion.

The information obtained from the study has proven valuable in assessing and proposing the conservation measures needed to improve the condition of the watersheds, said Gragert. It will also enable a more systematic approach to improving the watersheds.

Proposed improvements will concentrate on installing conserva-



Forestry 101: Chief Warrant Officer 4 Timothy Gragert and interpreter Emal conduct a meeting with workers at Terra Gardens, Gardez District, where they discussed the forestry practices they hope will restore lost forests.

tion practices such as rangeland seeding and tree plantings to lessen and control soil erosion.

As in any watershed planning, work will start from the top-down and will consist of installing further conservation practices such as check dams, terraces and finally installing the required structures to improve the lower reaches of the watershed for farming accessibility.

This again will take the work of many dedicated Afghan people willing to carry on for many years after team's departure from Afghanistan, said Gragert.

"I have all the confidence in the world of Khwaja Gul and his staff to carry on a program that will rehabilitate the watersheds of Paktiya Provinces one watershed at a time," said Gragert.

Guardman helps teach women first aid skills in Afghanistan

PAKTIYA PROVINCE, Afghanistan (AFNS)—Thirteen Afghan women received life-saving first aid training at a provincial women's development center meeting, Nov. 1, in the Paktiya province.

U.S. service members assigned to the Paktiya Provincial Reconstruction Team and the Nebraska Agribusiness Development Team, both located on Forward Operating Base Goode, taught the women how to treat burns, lacerations and abrasions. In the past, the Paktiya director of women's affairs has organized town meetings, or "shuras," health workshops and media engagements for women in Paktiya.

The DOWA is an Afghan ministry-appointed position with the authority and obligation to raise awareness of concerns and advocate for Afghan women.

Medics Tech Sgt. Rebecca Rose, with the ADT, and Staff Sgt. April DeLuna, with the PRT, conducted an interactive training program for the women. During the one-hour course, the medics emphasized proper hygiene techniques such as hand washing and the use of gloves while treating wounds.

"The women learned the 'cold, clean' method," DeLuna said. "They'd never heard to clean with cold, clean water and were using alternative methods to treat wounds."

The women shared stories about their previous home-medical treatments during the meeting.

"I've used cold potatoes on my children's wounds to stop the burning," one student said. "Potatoes and egg yolk both help to prevent the burn from spreading."

Along with training, the group also received first-aid medical kits, stocked with bandages, a gauze compress, gloves, antibiotic ointment and other supplies.

The meeting was coordinated through Khalema Khazan, the Paktiya DOWA and the Team Paktiya Women's Advocacy Group.

CHICKENS continued from page 1.

chickens to feed their family. Others will take the eggs and chickens to local markets to sell.

When Sgt. Chelsea Kramer, the Nebraska National Guard's ADT No. 2's poultry specialist, arrived on Forward Operating Base Gardez, she took over projects from the previous team. By the end of the year, she had completed four of those projects and is finishing up the remaining five.

While Kramer has been busy with those projects she has also been creating new efforts as well.

"I've been working on a project for Ahmad Abad to train 100 widows and I've been working on five more for Paktia Province and five for Paktika Province," said Kramer. "The projects are focused on women and youth training. Two weeks of basic poultry training, two weeks of advanced (training) and two weeks of coop building."

The original aim of these projects was to train 60 Afghan women and youth between the ages of 8 and 18. At the end of a four week training session graduates would receive a chicken coop, a 35 kilogram bag of feed, a watering container, eight hens and two roosters.

The aim of the new contract

that Kramer has set up is to train students between the ages of 12 to 25 for six weeks, covering basic and advanced poultry care, coop building and free-range grazing.

In the prior contract, students received a preassembled poultry coop. Under the new program students will have to make their own coop during the training, which will allow the students to better maintain their coops and brood, said Kramer.

Kramer has also introduced the concept of free-range grazing chickens.

Students will now receive 10 chickens, a 35 kilogram bag of feed and a one kilogram bag of clover seed, which will also support the local bee population.

Kramer said the team has also received a request to develop a similar project for widows only. Kramer said she feels this project is almost ready to go up for review.

"In this area, widows are segregated, so the aim of this project is to train them in sustainment, which in turn will allow them to feed their families and allow them to make money by selling extra eggs and birds for meat," said Kramer.

Along with projects out in the districts, Kramer has held some



Learning About Chicken Coops: Sgt. Chelsea Kramer and local poultry students discuss the importance of building and maintaining poultry coops during a training class in Afghanistan.

poultry training on the forward operating base after the ADT No. 2 was approached by several local civilians, who work on the base, with a request for some training.

According to Kramer, the work-

ers wanted their wives and sisters to learn about poultry.

Training for the local civilians was set up by Kramer, with the help of Spc. Ashley Koehler and Maj. Catherine Williams, and then

conducted in a barnyard where the basics of vaccinations, wing clipping, feeding schedules, flock maintenance, coop maintenance and mud coop building were all covered within a few hours.

"Poultry training has been a big project with the ADT. I get the honor of being Sergeant Kramer's assistant chicken catcher," said Koehler.

"It was a good experience, not only for the local nationals, but for the agriculture team. The agriculture team actually got to take part in the education rather than going out and doing (quality assurance, quality control) on someone else's (training)," said Kramer.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Larrew, the team's beekeeping specialist, said the training has proven extremely beneficial to the local civilian population.

"The poultry training is one to the best projects being utilized with our team. Small agriculture has been the life force of this country for decades," said Larrew. "For us to assist the regrowth of the small farmers and to help women of this country to be able to feed their families is why we are here and will do more in the long term than most other kinds of projects."



Finding The Answers: Sgt. James Wieting, a noncommissioned officer with the 267th Support Maintenance Company, helps two Soldiers find an answer to a question given to them by Chief Warrant Officer 4 William Lyles, National Guard Bureau evaluator, during the on-site inspection, Jan. 19, in Lincoln, Neb.

Guard unit takes aim at consecutive national maintenance championships

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

The 267th Support Maintenance Company is at it once again. A year after winning the Army's Award for Maintenance Excellence in the National Guard's medium-sized unit category, members of the Lincoln-based unit are poised to claim gold for the second year in a row.

The 267th SMC has already been named one of four finalists for this year's national award. On Jan. 19, they competed for top honors when two National Guard Bureau evaluators visited the Penterman Armory in Lincoln to conduct an on-site inspection.

According to Capt. Scott Hendrickson, unit commander, the company is excited to be in the hunt for back-to-back titles.

"We're here and excited to get going," said Hendrickson before the start of the Jan. 19 inspection.

The second on-site inspection phase of the competition consisted of two evaluators conducting an indepth evaluation of the unit in the areas of readiness, maintenance management, maintenance training, leadership and innovative execution, and unit book verification, according to unit officials.

267th SMC officials say they know what it takes to win the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence,

but this year they are trying harder because the competition also knows what it takes to win the coveted title.

They also know that a lot of eyes are watching them, especially considering that the unit has also just won the state's first Connelly Competition Award for the best National Guard field kitchen team in the United States, said Hendrickson.

"We are very proud of this unit," Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska's adjutant general, told the two NGB evaluators prior to the inspection. "They give it their all, all the time... when it comes to the maintenance community, I am just convinced that this unit knocks it out of the ball park."

"Last year they were extremely fortunate in their category, so this is hopefully a repeat performance here," added Lyons. "They care about maintenance. They care about logistics."

This approach contributed directly to the unit's other recent award, Lyons said.

"They were the recent award winners of the Connelly competition," said Lyons. "And I would offer that if you want to apply a maintenance aspect to that, no small part (of their success in) the Connelly competition was their ability to keep their mobile kitchen trailer, the burner units, the field and service sanitation site and equipment up to a readiness level that facilitated their food service

section executing their mission that resulted in them winning the award."

"The weave of maintenance and maintenance excellence in all aspects of their operations, that's what I think makes them stand out," added Lyons.

According to one of the NGB evaluators, the 267th SMC has earned quite a national reputation. Still, they said they knew the inspection was not going to be a cakewalk.

"It's hard to do it the first time. After you do it the first time, you get everybody's attention in your category and everybody steps their game up," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 William Lyles, Army National Guard senior warrant officer advisor for United States Army Ordnance Corps and School and National Guard Bureau evaluator.

"I have seen people win it one year and not even make the top six the next year," he added.

Lyles said that the amount of people who showed up for the initial inspection meeting definitely showed that the unit was playing for keeps, though.

"I know by the sheer turn out that we have in this state, especially from the senior leadership, ... that you all are something else," said Lyles. "We don't see that everywhere and you are very fortunate to have that here."

The 267th SMC will receive their final results later this year.



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Award-Winning Team: Col. Richard J. Evans III (far right), commander 155th Air Refueling Wing, and Col. James Stevenson (center), commander of the 170th Group, pose with the Dick Schram Award alongside Derek Feyerherm and Jamie Henning (far left) of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, and John Wood (center right), Lincoln Airport Authority.

2011 airshow earns Nebraska Air Guard international honors

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing was recently honored with an international community relations award for successfully hosting the "Guardians of Freedom" airshow, Sept. 10-11.

The International Council of Air Shows, Inc. awarded the 155th ARW with the Dick Schram Memorial Community Relations Award.

According to ICAS, the Dick Schram Memorial Community Relations Award is presented each year to the military base that sets a new standard of excellence in the planning and implementation of its air show or air event. It is awarded to those who best exhibit traditional community relations while also considering the needs of its civilian neighbors by including its community in the planning, execution and rewards of the event.

Military base flying events, open houses and air shows are eligible for consideration for the award. It is chosen by a panel co-chaired by United States and Canadian military representatives.

The 155th ARW partnered with the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and Lincoln Airport Authority to put on last year's event that coincided with the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and featured the Navy's Blue Angels.

The event drew hundreds of

thousands of visitors to Lincoln to view aerial demonstrations and static displays.

"The air show had a significant positive impact on our state and local economy with an estimated impact of over \$4 million dollars and offered businesses opportunities to reach record crowds," stated Wendy Birdsall, President of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. "We were proud to partner with the 155th Air Refueling Wing on this important community event."

The 155th ARW is only the fifth Air National Guard unit to be recognized in the award's 23-year history.

According to Col. Richard Evans III, commander of the 155th ARW, the Nebraska Air Guard strives to partner with local community organizations in order to better serve the community. He said the unit was pleased to be selected for the award.

"We are certainly honored by the award and believe it's representative of the great relationships we have with the Lincoln community," said Evans.

"We are especially appreciative of the close partnerships we had with our primary air show partners, the Lincoln Airport Authority and Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. We also could not have produced such a successful air show without our sponsors and participants," Evans said.

NATIONAL CHAMPS continued from page 1.

competitions."

"I'm really proud and really excited about it," said Pvt. Erin McNeil, a chef with the Lincoln-based 267th SMC, who competed in the three-tiered competition last year. "It was so much hard work and it actually paid off."

The team had been patiently waiting for the results since competing in the national level of the 44th annual competition on Oct. 21 after winning both the state and regional levels of the competition earlier that year.

During each of the three competitions, the 267th SMC team was required to prepare a multi-course meal while operating in a tactical field environment using a mobile field kitchen. The contest required the unit to prepare seven entrees and feed 70 Soldiers under the same circumstances they would face in a real deployed environment.

The menu included French onion soup, Salisbury steak, garlic roasted potatoes, brown gravy, glazed carrots, cucumber and onion salad and brownies.

According to Heineman, the Soldiers involved in the competition overcame a number of unique challenges to win the award.

"What makes this competition particularly interesting is the fact that unlike normal cooking competitions in which the food is prepared indoors in perfect conditions using the latest state-of-the-art equipment," said Heineman during the January announcement, "these Soldiers had to compete not just in one, but three separate competitions that required them to prepare a multi-course meal while operating in a tactical, field environment using this mobile field kitchen you see



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Sharing A Laugh: Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman shares a joke with the members of the 267th Support Maintenance Company's championship team following a Jan. 9 news conference to announce the unit's selection as the 2012 Philip A. Connelly Award winners.

behind me today."

Heineman added that the award honors a group of Soldiers who often spend long hours out of the limelight as they support other Soldiers conducting important missions.

"As a former Army officer, I know firsthand how important food is to our Soldiers," said Heidman. "We can't live without it."

In winning this national championship award the 267th SMC's food service team defeated similar National Guard cooking teams from six other states, including a Virginia Army National Guard team which finished in second place.

According to Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general who also spoke during

the news conference, the entire state is proud of its national championship Soldiers.

"This is the big day to honor of our first-ever Connelly Award national championship team from the Nebraska Army National Guard," said Lyons.

The 267th SMC food service team consisted of cooks Pvt. Erin McNeil and Pfc. Tiffany Brown, first cook Sgt. James Wieting and food operations sergeant Sgt. 1st Class Michael Brickner.

The field sanitation team consisted of field sanitation noncommissioned officer-in-charge Sgt. Darrell Lewis and field sanitation team members Sgt. Michael Folkerts, Spc. Stephen Donica, Pfc. Kevin Crable and Pfc. Nathan Hampshire. They were lead by commander Capt. Scott Hendrickson, 1st Sgt. Larry Martin, 267th SMC executive officer 1st Lt. Ronald Jones and food service officer Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tollie Yoder.

"As a commander there is nothing more gratifying than witnessing success through unit dedication and self-empowerment that is evident in our Connelly team," said Capt. Scott Hendrickson, commander of the 267th SMC. "Our Connelly team consisted of food service, field sanitation and security sections."

"This award is a tribute to our hard work and dedication we have achieved in the past several months," added Hendrickson. "This is truly a team award and wouldn't be possible without the perseverance and desire to compete."

The 267th SMC will receive their national award at a formal ceremony in San Diego, Calif., at the end of March.

Army Guard medical unit welcomes new leader

By **Spc. Heidi Krueger**
Staff Writer

The Nebraska Medical Detachment welcomed a new commander, Feb. 5, at the Penterman Armory in Lincoln, Neb.

Lt. Col. Timothy Garner assumed command of the unit from Col. James Rose in front of the Nebraska Medical Detachment formation, distinguished guests, friends and family.

"I look forward to this opportunity to be this medical detachment's commander," said Garner. "It's a job I look forward to. At first I was a little nervous when I looked at the professionals around that building, but I'm very confident in their ability to get the job done."

"As you have heard, Nebraska leads, we don't follow," added Garner. "That's an example I intend to follow myself."

Garner joined the United States Navy in 1980 and served for six years as a hospital corpsman at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego and Marine Corp Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. After an honorable discharge from the Navy, Garner joined the



Rose

Naval Reserves in Lincoln, Neb.

He pursued his undergraduate degree at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and entered the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Dentistry in 1988.

During his junior year of dental school he was activated for Desert Storm and deployed with the Combat Zone Fleet Hospital 22 Detachment H to Bahrain. Upon his return from deployment Garner took a direct commission as a second lieutenant in the Army Reserves under the Health Professions Scholarship program.

After graduating in 1992, Garner served a three-year active duty tour with the Army. He also served as a general dental officer in the Army Reserves. He entered the Nebraska National Guard and has practiced dentistry with the Guard in Honduras and Italy, served as the state dental officer and deployed with the 28th Infantry Division to Iraq in April 2009.

"Lieutenant Colonel Garner, you are the right officer to take this unit forward," said Col. Richard Dahlman, commander of 92nd Troop Command. "You come with a unique skill set and know that you can count on the Soldiers in front of you."

Rose enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1972. After serving four years, he enlisted the Army National Guard.

Rose was the valedictorian of his physician assistant class and graduated with a bachelor's degree



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Taking Command: Col. Richard Dahlman, commander of the 92nd Troop command, passes the colors of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Medical Detachment to Lt. Col. Timothy Garner during a change of command ceremony held Feb. 5 in Lincoln, Neb.

from the United States Air Force and University of Oklahoma Physician Assistant program in 1981. Rose received his direct appointment as a warrant officer in April 1981 and later received his commission in February 1992.

Rose has served as a physician

assistant for the 3-116th Armored Cavalry Regiment; Company C (Medical), 67th Infantry Brigade; 1-167th Cavalry; and the Nebraska Medical Command. He deployed with the 41st Rear Area Operations Center to Macedonia in 2001 and with the 1-167th Cavalry to Bosnia

in 2003.

He is currently the deputy commander of the State Medical Detachment.

"I want to say to you folks from the detachment that I had the honor to work with some true patriots," said Rose.

155th Air Refueling Wing welcomes new command chief master sergeant

By **Senior Airman Mary Thach**
Staff Writer

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing bade farewell to its senior enlisted leader while welcoming her successor during a change of responsibility ceremony held Feb. 5 at the Civil Engineering Squadron in Lincoln, Neb.

Family, friends and distinguished guests attended the ceremony to support Chief Master Sgt. Teresa R. Clark, former wing command chief master sergeant, as she passed the wing's colors and responsibility to the 155th ARW's new command chief, Chief Master Sgt. Nancy J. Vondrasek.



Clark

According to Col. Richard J. Evans III, 155th ARW commander, change is a natural part of any military unit. Evans said a change of responsibility ceremony is a unique opportunity to say farewell to one member while also welcoming new leadership.

"In short, we have Chief Clark, who has left a legacy... a legacy of excellence and service of 31-plus years," said Evans. "And we have Chief Vondrasek coming in with big shoes to fill, but with all the credentials and all the things that it takes to be successful."

Clark has served as the enlisted advocate and advisor to the wing commander since October 2008. She began her military career in April 1980 when she joined the 155th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

"It is an unbelievable opportunity to have served with you all," said Clark, who formally retired from the Air National Guard during a second ceremony held shortly after the formal change of authority.

"I am absolutely blessed to have worked with some unbelievable people from the officer to the

enlisted side."

Clark challenged the audience to push and challenge themselves toward success and touched on the importance of pursuing education.

"Our job is to continually improve ourselves so we are better armed to do our mission. You never know what you are going to leave behind when you step away," said Clark. "You have to push yourself and leave your legacy for your people."

In assuming responsibility as 155th ARW's new command chief, Vondrasek, a Nebraska native who has served as the superintendent at the 155th Medical Group since 2006, said she is amazed to have been given the opportunity to serve as the senior enlisted member.

She added that when she first enlisted in the active duty Air Force, she simply wanted to serve long enough to earn her college degree. Her plans soon changed, though, she added.

"After four years of active duty, my plan had not materialized with the college degree yet, so I decided that wasn't working so well. That is when I joined the Nebraska Air National Guard," said Vondrasek.

Vondrasek, who has served in the organization for 28 years, said her family has supported her 150 percent to help her get to her current position.

Vondrasek said her goal now is to do whatever she can to help the wing achieve the goals set for it by Evans while also encouraging unit members to continue to improve themselves. She added how important it was to pursue an education and support new Airmen.

"Our Airmen are the ones that are going to be the future. It's not about me anymore; it's about the Airmen with only a couple stripes on their arms," said Vondrasek. "You are going to be the change that we see down the road."

Year's top outstanding Airmen named

By **Maj. Kevin Hynes**
Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard named its four Outstanding Airmen of the Year, recently. The Airmen, who will now represent the Nebraska Air National Guard in national competitions, were selected by a board of senior enlisted Nebraska Air National Guard leaders in January. They were nominated for the prestigious annual award by their respective units.

According to Chief Master Sgt. Barb Gossage, state command chief master sergeant, competition was keen for this year's awards.

"As always, the competition was tough as the Nebraska Air National Guard has many outstanding members doing great work for our state and nation," said Gossage, Jan. 27. "I couldn't be more proud of our Airmen."

Selected as this year's Outstanding Airmen were:

• **Airman Category:** Senior Airman Bryan Bach, 155th Civil Engineering Squadron;

• **Noncommissioned Officer Category:** Tech. Sgt. Andrew Mungar, 170th Operations Support Squadron;

• **Senior Noncommissioned Officer Category:** Master Sgt. Mathew Ellison, 173rd Air Refueling Squadron;

• **First Sergeant Category:** Master Sgt. Paul Sabatka, 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Airman Category

Senior Airman Bryan Bach is an explosive ordnance disposal journeyman with the Lincoln-based 155th Civil Engineering Squadron. While serving in this capacity, Bach was recently selected by U.S. Air Forces Europe to fill an EOD shortfall. He was credited with having made numerous contributions to his unit in the areas of equipment diagnosis and accountability, training programs, and advancements to the unit's overall efficiency.

Bach also recently completed several courses including the Evasion and Conduct after Capture, the High Altitude Warfare and Tactics, and the High Altitude and Advanced Tactics Rapelling courses that have increased his ability to support a wider array



Bach



Mungar



Ellison

Airmen.

Ellison is a veteran of numerous overseas deployments in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi

of missions.

A student at the University of Nebraska, Kearney, Bach is also heavily involved in his community, having participated in two collegiate-level triathlons, two wing-level foot races, volunteered to lead two robot demonstrations at local schools, participated in a number of community outreach programs in Germany and at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. He is also an active member of the 155th Engineering Squadron's Enlisted Council.

Noncommissioned Officer Category

Tech. Sgt. Andrew Mungar is a signals intelligence analyst with the 170th Operations Support Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb. Mungar supports both the active duty's 55th Wing and the Nebraska Air Guard's 170th OSS.

Mungar recently volunteered to serve on a 179-day-plus deployment to Iraq. While there, he tracked important events and activities, analyzed information and then nominated targets based on trends and fused intelligence from multiple sources. His analysis was used to highlight relationships and connections between insurgents and insurgent cells based on information garnered through captured documents and equipment.

Mungar is also involved in his community, regularly contributing to the Nebraska Community Blood Bank, the American Cancer Society, and volunteering at Husker Divers Adaptive Scuba to benefit a program for disabled veterans.

Senior Noncommissioned Officer Category

Master Sgt. Mathew Ellison is an in-flight refueling operator and the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of C Flight, which is part of the Lincoln-based 173rd Air Refueling Squadron. While serving there, Ellison was credited with having improved the squadron's awards program and enlisted promotion program, both of which have enabled his unit to recognize deserving

Freedom and New Dawn. While serving in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Ellison logged 160 combat hours. He is also credited with offloading 1 million pounds of fuel to 196 war fighting aircraft while also assisting in the transportation of nine critically wounded Soldiers out of Afghanistan.

Ellison has also supported the 155th Air Refueling Wing during operations in Guam, the state's Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve, and Star Base operations, and served as the Blue Angels ground coordinator during last year's airshow.

Ellison is also heavily involved in his community, having volunteered in the kitchen of the Sheridan Lutheran Church, at the Child Advocacy Center and as a member of the Southeast Community College's Faculty and Curriculum Advisory Board.

First Sergeant Category

Master Sgt. Paul Sabatka is the first sergeant for the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron in Lincoln, Neb.

Sabatka recently served as the deployed first sergeant during the 155th Air Refueling Wing's deployment to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

He initiated a number of new programs to increase coaching of junior enlisted and officers within his unit. He also helps members of his unit having trouble with the new mandatory fitness program increase their overall scores with his Fitness with the First Sergeant program.

Sabatka is also an active member of the Patriot Guard Riders, a founder and organizer of multiple Poker Run motorcycle events supporting Kearney Cares, the American Red Cross and Hero Flights. He is also a member of the Holdrege Volunteer Fire Department and a local Boy Scout Den leader, T-ball coach and 4-H BB gun class instructor.

Eye Of The Blizzard: Pvt. John Cardone and Spc. David Cushing, riggers from Seward's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, battle a helicopter-powered blizzard as they prepare to hook a 3,600-pound sandbag to a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, Feb. 8, at Camp Ashland, Neb.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Soldiers brave elements to protect camp from future flood waters

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard had the opportunity to experience the reality of winter wind chills while supporting a training and real-world flood protection effort in February at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Crouching beneath a hovering helicopter while the aircraft's rotor wash caused the snow to swirl around him in a blinding mini-blizzard, Pvt. John Cardone said he was amazed how cold operating around helicopters can be in the winter.

"It's cold... amazingly cold," said Cardone, a member of the Seward-based Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, shortly after he and several other members of his rigger unit helped attach massive, 3,600-pound sandbags beneath a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, Feb. 8. "You just can't believe how much wind there is under one of those birds."

According to Larry Vrtiska, Nebraska National Guard environmental program manager, the

goal of the two-day sandbagging operation at Camp Ashland was actually multifaceted.

"The purpose behind placing these sand bags is for flood protection from the Platte River and Salt Creek," said Vrtiska.

Vrtiska said the February operation was designed to place sandbags within a triangular-shaped notch in a newly-built levee located on the southern edge of the Camp Ashland training area in order to protect the installation and nearby civilian neighbors during the upcoming ice jam season along the Platte River.

The notch, said Vrtiska, actually serves two roles. During the ice jam season, which essentially stretches between December and late March, the notch will be filled with sandbags and sand in order to keep water from the nearby river from spilling into Camp Ashland and other civilian areas.

"The second purpose of that notch is after the 1st of April, we generally have flash flooding and storm water events that come from Salt Creek," said Vrtiska. "The notch, which will be cleared of the sand and sandbags that we are placing today, allows that water to have a pathway to get around that levee



Dressed For Success: Spc. David Cushing, Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, waits for the return of a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during sandbagging operations at Camp Ashland, Neb.

and flow out into the Platte River."

Vrtiska said that they decided to make the effort a training opportunity by involving members of Nebraska Army National Guard aviation and rigging units so that they could practice the aerial sandbagging procedures they used during last year's months-long flooding events along the Platte and Missouri Rivers.

One of those gaining valuable experience was Sgt. Zack Marshall, a crew chief with Company A, 1-376th Aviation, who was one of two Soldiers responsible for running the UH-60 helicopter's cargo hook controls and placing the roughly three-foot by three-foot bags exactly where Vrtiska wanted them.

Marshall, who was also involved in last year's sandbagging effort, said the experience he and the helicopter crew were receiving during the operation was invaluable.

"With this, we're getting training on the full spectrum of operations



Almost There: Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Johnson, Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, uses hand signals to tell a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew where to place a sandbag in the Camp Ashland levee notch.

that we could be called out to do," said Marshall after the first day's operation was complete. "This type of training ties in to not only our sandbagging, but also if we have to go and do water bucket operations (or) if we're called out during a blizzard and have to haul hay out to farmers who are stuck and can't get to their cattle."

"This kind of incorporates everything that we can do in the aircraft and wraps it up to where we're not just always doing the training when it's nice out," he added. "We're doing training when conditions are less than admirable. It's a pretty good opportunity."

Marshall said a recent snowfall and cold conditions definitely complicated matters and provided a number of challenges that the crew had to overcome to successfully complete the mission.

"You've got the blowing snow when come close to the ground," Marshall said. "The dust would be the same thing in the summer."

"Obviously it's cold outside, so we have to wear more clothing and work around without being as comfortable. Sticking your head out of an aircraft door with it being very cold will take your breath away," he added, "so, you have to try to adapt to that."

For Cardone and the rigging crew, those challenges were definitely present in their operations

as well.

"Since everything is frozen, we have to inspect everything again to make sure everything isn't starting to stiffen and knife-action on something," said Cardone. "Visibility is pretty much shot when the bird is first pulling up... there is no visibility at all until you are fully underneath the bird."

"Plus there are the ice pellets that are just flying around in the wind," he added. "It definitely takes some getting used to."

For Cardone, who was responsible for physically hooking each of the six sandbags handled on Feb. 8 up to the hovering aircraft, the mission was especially memorable.

"This is my first time getting to work under a helicopter," said Cardone, a wide grin on his face. "I'm getting over my nervousness of being around an aircraft."

"It's just been great," he added. "Confidence underneath a helicopter, for a rigger, that's really important."

According to Vrtiska, the Guardsmen handled a total of 18 sandbags during the two-day operation. He said he couldn't have been more pleased with how well things went.

"These guys were outstanding," Vrtiska said. "The pilots are incredibly talented individuals and the riggers really know their jobs."

"I couldn't have been happier how things went off."



Checking On The Progress: Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Johnson and Larry Vrtiska discuss where the next 3,600-pound sandbag needs to be placed during a unique sandbagging operation conducted Feb. 8 at an important Camp Ashland levee notch.



Photos by Master Sgt. Vern Moore



Snowstorm causes work to pile up over Air Guard drill

(Above) **Clearing The Flight Line:** Nebraska Air National Guard's maintenance staff remove snow from the 155th Air Refueling Wing's flight line, Feb. 8., in Lincoln, Neb.

(Left) **Attacking The Snow:** Master Sgt. Jeff Dreith, 155th Air Refueling Wing, clears the sidewalk with a snow blower outside of the Nebraska Air National Guard's main hanger a day after 11.1 inches of snow fell on Feb. 4. The heavy, wet snow made it the fourth-biggest single-day snow since 1948 according to published reports.



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



Automobile maintenance critical during winter months

The following is a continuation of a column written by the Nebraska National Guard's Logistics Maintenance Office staff:

In our last article, we suggested checks and services for the home and auto. Now we would like to go into a little more detail on how to tell if it is time to replace items on your automobile and where to get assistance in installing these items.

Ask your Family Readiness Group if they have anyone that can assist you. If there is no one available and you have internet access, complete a search on Google for automobile care guide. They also make suggestions on how to proceed.

Another source is "Angie's List," which rates businesses based on feedback from consumers. This is available for a nominal fee.

Windshield Wipers

Inspect the windshield wiper blades whenever you clean your windshield. They should be replaced at least annually.

Windshields will streak or smear when wipers are worn. Do not wait until the rubber is worn or brittle to replace them, the windshield could be damaged by what is left of the wiper. Available at automotive repair parts stores and dealers, most will assist in the installation. You may purchase a complete wiper blade or just the refill.

Windshield Washer Fluid

This is a must during the winter

months. Stock up on windshield washer fluid. Check your windshield washer fluid often. It should not freeze. Do not add water.

Windshield washer fluid is usually blue in color. You will be surprised on how much you use.

The reservoir is located in the engine compartment. Don't mistake the antifreeze reservoir for the windshield wiper reservoir. They both are usually white plastic. Check your owner's manual for the correct location.

Tires

Keep the tires inflated to the recommended pressure (it helps to have your own pressure gauge). Under-inflation will cause the outer end of tires to wear. Over-inflation will cause a tire's center to wear faster.

When uneven wear on either the inside or outside edge of the tire is noted, an alignment or balance may be needed. If the tires are cupping, a shock absorber or strut may be worn.

Check for cuts, bulges or foreign objects. If you have to keep adding air to your tires, you may have a foreign object in your tire and it will need to be repaired. Car dealers, tire dealers, Co-Ops and few gas stations can assist you with most tire problems.

Not all places have free air, so you may have to pay to use their air compressor.

Safety Reminder

Do not use your cruise control when there is a possibility of slick roads, even if the temperature is above freezing and raining. You never know when bridges will be slick.

Saluting Nebraska's military families



Dramatic Entry: Spc. Mohammad Shakir and Spc. Dan Bulling, 1167th Support Company post the colors during Patriotic Salute Night, Jan. 27, at Pershing Auditorium in Lincoln, Neb. Staff Sgt. Jeff Wagner, a military police investigator who recently returned from deployment to Afghanistan with the 402nd Military Police Battalion, represented the Soldiers of the Nebraska Army National Guard who have deployed in recent years.



Under The Spotlight: Sgt. Alisha Wagner, signal specialist with the 110th Medical Battalion headquarters, sings the National Anthem for the patriotic opening of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association rodeo held at Pershing Auditorium Jan. 27-28. The PRCA donated a portion of sales to the Lincoln Community foundation's Military Support Fund which benefits local military families.

Photos by David Nore

Save the Dates

April 24: The United States Chamber of Commerce and the Nebraska Department of Labor will host a Hiring Our Heroes Career Fair at the Lancaster County Event Center in Lincoln, Neb. The fair is scheduled for 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

For more information go to www.dol.nebraska.gov/ and click the "Veteran Services" link.

April 17: (one week prior to the Career Fair), the Nebraska Department of Labor will conduct a Hiring Our Heroes Career Workshop at the Nebraska Army National Guard "Spirit of '76" Armory at 1776 North 10th Street, Lincoln, Neb. The fair is scheduled for 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. and will include sessions on "Resume Writing, How to Dress, and How to Interview During a Career Fair" among other topics.

Both events are open to veterans and spouses, to include those who wear or have worn a military uniform. They are co-sponsored by the United States and Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska Department of Labor, Nebraska Department of Veteran Affairs, Nebraska National Guard, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), and the Lincoln Community Foundation.

Watch www.neguard.com and www.neguard.org for updates.

Attention Career Seekers:

The Nebraska Department of Corrections has immediate career opportunities. Go to <http://statejobs.nebraska.gov/> and click the "Search for Jobs" link.

Additional resources and links to career websites can be found at www.turbotap.org and www.h2h.jobs. Other regional opportunities can be found on the Employer Support for the Guard website at www.employerpartnership.org.

Nebraska Military Retiree Council planning to host spring socials at Lincoln, Kearney in April

Hello and greetings from the Nebraska Military Retiree Council and the state retirement sergeant.

We're here to help you navigate your way through the red tape of retirement issues and ensure you find everything you need. To that end, we provide you this basic information and contact information so that you can receive additional personalized assistance.

We're still working on updating the retiree checklist for the survivors and hope to have it out soon. We will post it on the website link at www.neguard.org as a form you can download at your convenience.

As we move into the spring months, mark your calendars for two important events.

First, April 14, the Nebraska-area council will hold a Spring Social at the Knolls Restaurant in Lincoln. Social will begin at 6 p.m. followed by dinner and a guest speaker. Topics in the past have included Tricare, the state of the Guard, and other important topics. Watch your email and newsletter for more info.

Second, April 18, the Kearney-area council members, headed by Garth Scism, will hold an information meeting at the Kearney Legion Club beginning at 7 p.m. Issues to be discussed include Tricare, DEERS, Space A travel, as well as other topics that may arise.

Plan on attending to learn more about the benefits you are entitled to.

If you are not currently a member of the NMRC, dues are only \$5 a year which covers postage and mailings to all members. Contact me at (402) 309-7105 if you are interested in becoming a member and receiving monthly updates of retirement specific issues.

Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

As always, for those who like to rise early to eat and share stories, here's the breakfast site information for those in the immediate areas:

Lincoln:

•**Army National Guard retirees:** First Monday of each month, 8 a.m., T&R Garden, 5250 Cornhusker Highway.

•**Air National Guard retirees:** Last Monday of each month, 8 a.m., The Pantry, Van Dorn village, 2548 South 48th Street (Van Dorn plaza)

North Platte:

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

Lastly, I would like to thank Sgt. 1st Class Mary Moss for her dedicated service to the retirees of the Nebraska National Guard. Sergeant Moss has moved on to a new position in SIDPERS and will taking charge of that section.

Mary, you've been a great asset to us and we will miss you.

Taking her place is Sgt. 1st Class Austin Behnk, who will provide the update this month. Welcome Austin, glad to have you supporting us.

From the desk of Sgt. 1st Class Behnk

My name is Sgt. 1st Class Austin Behnk. I have recently replaced Sgt. 1st Class Mary Moss as the state retirement services sergeant. I can be contacted at (402) 309-7165 and at my email address: austin.behnk@us.army.mil. Sgt. Jennifer Short may also assist you with

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

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

If you are in need of a 1099-R for tax purposes, you will need to contact DFAS at 1-800-321-1080 or through MyPay if you have an account. MyPay is an internet based program used to retrieve your retiree account statements and make changes or updates to your retired pay account.

Listed again are phone numbers for DEERS/ID card stations within Nebraska:

- G1 - 1234 Military Road, Lincoln, Neb., (402) 309-7325, (402) 309-7264 or (402) 309-7319;

- Spirit of 76 Armory 67th BFSB, Lincoln, Neb., - (402) 309-7058 or (402) 309-7260;
- 92nd Troop Command Pentamer Armory at Nebraska National Guard air base (402) 309-1749 or (402) 309-1739;

- Air Guard (Lincoln Air Base) Building 600, Room E209 (402) 309-1452;

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

- Kearney Armory 5710 Airport Road, Kearney, Neb., (402) 309-7743 or (402) 309-7758;

- Norfolk Armory 817 South 1st Street, Norfolk, Neb., (402) 309-8908 or (402) 309-8900.

The number for DEERS is 1-800-538-9552. If you need to find a DEERS/ID card office outside of Nebraska, you can call DEERS.

The other piece that is important to remember the Survivor Benefit Plan if you ever divorce. (Note: Updating your divorce in DEERS does not update your SBP.)

Enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Colonel
Byron L. Diamond

Major
Daniel L. Behn
Kevin M. Hurr
Christopher M. Perrone
Shane P. Varejcka

First Lieutenant
Brian R. Riekenberg
David E. Stott

Chief Warrant Officer 3
Jeffrey R. Thomas

Chief Warrant Officer 2
Dale L. Dishman
Ryan N. Gonderinger
James D. Lane
Nicholas S. Richardson

Sergeant Major
Dennis D. Carroll

Master Sergeant
Judson L. Golka
Dennis J. Holm
James H. McKeehan
Ryan E. Sullivan
Gus R. Swanson

Sergeant First Class
Brian M. Flavin
Douglas D. Stephens

Staff Sergeant
Amanda L. Hillgren
Jason A. Kilcoin
Tyler M. Miles
Lindsay M. Prieksat
Daniel L. Roeber
Jason L. Tyson
Joseph A. Yates

Sergeant
James A. Adelman

Aaron C. Calder
David K. Gangwish
Bradley J. Godtel
Nicholas D. Lonowski
Rene M. Olivaries
Jonathan N. Price
Daniel I. Sandman
Joshua E. C. Sladky
Josiah A. Smith
Matthew R. Smith
Jeremy L. Trotter
Samual D. Walker
Patrick E. Wyrick
Laura N. Zietz

Specialist
Adam L. Beck
Zachary M. Cronin
Jared M. Cyr
Jason P. Demaray
William J. Dittmer
Mariano Dorado
Thayer W. P. Dungan
Austin G. Fricke
Bryce P. Higgins
Samuel E. Higgins
Andrew M. Holton
Anthony J. Huston
Codi A. Jarosz
Keith B. Jorgensen
Zachary L. Kick
Kagan K. Kirk
Amber L. Kloss
Austin T. Kucera
Brady J. Masters
Robert A. McCall Jr.
Derek A. Meyer
Kalor A. Moore
Westley P. Negley
Brady O. Plunkett
Lyle b. Powell
Nancy L. Rayaparra
Kendall R. Sage
Tyler L. Salmon
Bobby Sanchez
Danny L. Schellhorn
Lucas P. Slieter
Justin L. Taylor

Alexandre Tschampdiesing
Jason B. Wilcox
Jacob R. Woodworth

Private First Class
Connor H. Alberts
Deon J. Allen
James G. Berger
Christopher M. Dankert
Bobby P. McCann
Peter A. Messbarger
Keith M. J. Mills
Alexander N. Petersen
Alyssa M. Prai
Tyler D. Roberts

Patrick C. Travis

Private Two
Jacqueline P. Alvarez
Logan M. Anderson
Yue Cong
Leslie V. Roman
Crystal A. Roy
Zachery C. Swahn

Air National Guard Major
Matthew A. Clough
Pamela J. Geistlinger

Senior Master Sergeant
James Boeselager
Steven Guyton

Master Sergeant
Jeffrey J. Howard
Matthew Young

Technical Sergeant
John P. Garza
Kevin K. Krausnick
Crystal M. Puhalla
Scott E. Shaw
Lindsey J. Yardley
Mark C. Zordel

Staff Sergeant
Robert M. Blankley II
Chad E. McBreen
Katie J. Paden

Senior Airman
Erica J. Daugherty
Eric J. Koranda
Joseph C. Newlon
Brian L. Obermeier
Mary Thach
Nicholas L. Wollenburg
Jonathan A. Wright

Airman
Devin Alt

AWARDS

Army National Guard Defense Meritorious Service Medal
Lt. Col. William J. Prusia

Meritorious Service Medal
Lt. Col. Shirleen F. Smith
Maj. David P. Benak
Maj. Matthew S. York
Capt. Dennis R. Rieke Jr.
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Corey L. Baker
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kevin E. Monismith
Sgt. Maj. Leon D. Haith
1st Sgt. Michael J. Erickson
Master Sgt. Melissa A. Oehm
Master Sgt. John R. Willis

Army Commendation Medal
Lt. Col. Darin J. Mongeon
Maj. Spencer W. Giles
Maj. Daniel S. Williams
Capt. Zachary V. Labrayere
Capt. Matthew C. Misfeldt
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ronald M. Helton
Command Sgt. Maj. Troy D. Johnson
1st Sgt. Barry L. Read

Master Sgt. Alan E. Holka
Master Sgt. Dennis J. Holm
Sgt. 1st Class Brian D. Blankenship
Sgt. 1st Class Gerald D. Bouska
Sgt. 1st Class Eric S. Clyne
Sgt. 1st Class Jamie R. Frey
Sgt. 1st Class Vincent E. Luhn
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel P. Mitchell
Sgt. 1st Class Eric E. Pearson
Sgt. 1st Class Steven M. Swisher
Sgt. 1st Class Michael B. Warrick
Staff Sgt. Jeremy W. Hartwell
Staff Sgt. Curtis E. Iliff
Staff Sgt. John J. Walker
Sgt. Jared B. Collins
Sgt. Jennifer L. Good
Sgt. Wesley D. Newton
Sgt. Corey J. Scheidemann
Sp. Jacob W. Anderson
Sp. Wyatt D. Carson
Sp. Jacob R. Determan
Sp. Ashley L. Larrington
Sp. David I. Matson
Sp. Kyle D. Mstrom
Sp. Benjamin L. Snyder

Sp. Lucreita L. Wilcox

Army Achievement Medal
Chief Warrant Officer 4 William G. Jepsen
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Fredrick G. Focken
Sp. Louis L. Svoboda
Pfc. Cyle L. Kling

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal
Staff Sgt. Bryan J. Campbell

Sp. Kyle G. Yeramyshev

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal
Lt. Col. Shelly M. Herrod
Maj. Daniel L. Behn
Maj. Christopher M. Perrone
Chief Warrant Officer 5 Derek H. Simonds
Sgt. Maj. Boyd L. Navratil
Staff Sgt. Elisabeth N. Pflanz
Sp. Stephen B. Donica

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard
Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence A. Hall
Sgt. 1st Class Eldon R. Kuntzelman
Staff Sgt. Clint N. Walther
Staff Sgt. Philip J. Wemhoff

TAPS

Pfc. Trey L. Neumann

Shorttakes

Changing of the Guard

Perrone assumes role as 92nd Troop Command's senior enlisted Soldier

By Spc. Jason Drager
Staff Writer

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 92nd Troop Command welcomed a new senior leader to their ranks when Command Sgt. Maj. Philip G. Perrone assumed the position of 92nd Troop Command command sergeant major from Command Sgt. Maj. Randall H. Schulz during a Nov. 19 change of responsibility ceremony Penteman Armory in Lincoln, Neb.

Schulz has been a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard since August 1975. Initially serving with Company D, 67th Support Battalion, Schulz was selected to be the 35th Infantry Division supply sergeant major in November 1995. He held the position until 1998 when he was selected to become command sergeant major for Camp Ashland's 209th Regional Training Institute.

He deployed with the 734th Transportation Battalion as the command sergeant major in August 2006. In September 2008, Schulz became the senior enlisted member of the 92nd Troop Command.

Perrone has served in the Nebraska Army National Guard for 32 years. He graduated from the Sergeants Major Academy in 2000. He previously served as the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade command sergeant major in Tallil, Iraq, from August 2010 to June 2011.

He then became the state operations sergeant major before being assigned as the full-time operations sergeant major for the 92nd Troop Command.



Perrone



Schulz

Organizations honor Nebraska National Guard



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Thanks For The Assistance: The Nebraska National Guard received an official thank you from the community of South Sioux City, Neb., for the work the Guard did during last year's flooding along the Missouri River. The award was presented to Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal, assistant adjutant general, Army, by Tony Gomez of the South Sioux City Chamber of Commerce (center, left) and Mayor William McLarty (center, right) during the Northeastern Nebraska Governor's Day in Lincoln, Neb., Feb. 6. Also pictured are Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, state command sergeant major, and Staff Sgt. Riley Beaman, Detachment 2, 189th Transportation Company.



Photos by David Nore

2011 Combined Federal Campaign Milestones Reached: The Nebraska National Guard was honored for its increased rate of pledges during the 2011 Lincoln and Lancaster County Area Combined Federal Campaign ceremony. Lt. Col. Al Simpson and Col. John Anderson (left photo) received the Top Highest Percentile Increase (109.01 percent) Award on behalf of the Air National Guard for 2011. Chief Warrant Officer 3 Gena Hegemann received the third place Highest Percentile Increase (36.24 percent) Award for the Army National Guard with Brig. Gen. Scott Gronewald (right photo). The Nebraska National Guard was also honored for the Air and Army National Guard's combined effort of raising over \$38,000. Simpson and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Greg Reicks (not pictured) were the key workers for the Air and Army Guard, while Hegemann was the overall coordinator for the National Guard.

Street Talk

“What did you gain the most personally from your recent deployment?”

Changing era creates challenging times for National Guardsmen

In this issue of the *Prairie Soldier*, there are many articles that reflect the value the Nebraska National Guard offers to our state and nation.

As important as it is for us all to recognize that value, it is paramount that we know that value. In other words, know that facts that support our value, not just believe in our value.

The pressures on our nation’s budget and, more specifically, the Department of Defense budget are being debated following the President’s Budget Request to the Congress, which he submitted on Feb. 13.

We feel those pressures most succinctly in the Air National Guard given the proposed personnel and aircraft reductions by the United States Air Force. Budget pressures and proposed solutions can elicit feelings of unease and uncertainty depending on how close to home they hit.

Part of the way of dealing with challenging times like this is to know the facts about what we offer.

For example, the Air National Guard provides 35 percent of Air Force capabilities for 6 percent of the Air Force budget. The Army National Guard provides 32 percent of the Army’s total personnel and 40 percent of its operating force for 11

Another Voice Brigadier General Daryl Bohac



“While we need to embrace fiscal realities, we must know who we are and what we’ve done and have the facts at hand to support our value. We bring much to the table, have much to offer and must continue to build our relevance in the 21st century security environment.”

percent of the Army budget.

We are an accessible, agile force that is responsive to the needs of our state and nation.

Air National Guard tankers, including a Nebraska tanker, supported 50 percent of airborne refueling efforts over Libya within 48 hours of the ratification of the non-fly resolution. After 10 years of war, more than half the Nebraska Army National Guard are combat-

tested veterans.

We are structured to present force packages that are scalable, providing tiered response at local, state, regional or national levels as required by the events themselves.

This was never more readily apparent than our magnificent response to the 2011 floods along the Platte and Missouri rivers.

We are always ready, always there!

While we need to embrace fiscal realities, we must know who we are and what we’ve done and have the facts at hand to support our value. We bring much to the table, have much to offer and must continue to build our relevance in the 21st century security environment. Having confidence in who we are and what we’ve done and being able to tell our story will do much to alleviate the stress and uneasiness.

Have trust and faith in your leadership to do the same and we will weather this budget issue together. I am confident that our value to the state and nation will be recognized and affirmed when it matters most – when the Nebraska National Guard is called to serve.

We will be ready and we will be there.

Preserving our recent collective history responsibility of all Nebraska Guardsmen

As we kick off what promises to be a busy and interesting year, I’d like to go back and speak more about what we on the staff of the *Prairie Soldier* did last year.

In December, we published a multi-paged project detailing the Nebraska National Guard’s role during the war in Iraq. As part of this project, we contacted a number of Soldiers and Airmen that we’d worked with in the past and asked them to write about whatever came to mind when we mentioned the words “end of the war in Iraq.”

Beyond that, we didn’t give our prospective authors much more to go on.

The goal was to let these Soldiers and Airmen take the subject wherever they liked, either through a reflective lens on their past experience or more of a windshield view of how their experiences in Iraq were affecting their vision of the future.

As the editor of the *Prairie Soldier*, I was extremely pleased with the outcome as the personal essays really did cover a wide swath of feelings and memories that I feel are shared by many within the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard.

The second part of the project dealt with creating a timeline that placed events from the Nebraska National Guard’s recent role in Iraq in perspective with national

and international events that were taking place at the same time.

The goal was to try and remember a time and place in our not-so-distant history and try to put it all together in a way that showed how things that happened here did not occur in a vacuum, but rather were caused by a number of situations taking place across the United States and half-a-world today.

After taking on this project in November, I’ll have to admit there were more than a few times when I wondered if I’d bitten off more than I could chew. It simply was one of the biggest projects that I’ve attempted in 20-some years as a military journalist.

While I was by and large satisfied with the final project, one of the most frustrating parts of it had to do with the fact that I knew that the timeline was somewhat incomplete and that there were so many amazing stories that I simply didn’t know and couldn’t include in the final timeline.

That brings me to the basic subject of this column.

As members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard – both current and former members

experience for future generations to learn from and understand what we overcame and achieved while supporting Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn.

In building this recent timeline, I realized that there were just so many gaps that existed. Unfortunately, without the help of our individual Soldiers and Airmen, those gaps will most likely remain for the foreseeable future.

Unless, that is, something is done about it.

Based upon the responses I’ve received from the December *Prairie Soldier*, I would like to extend an invitation to the members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard to continue this project by sending me your individual memories of your service in Iraq along with your individual photos.

My goal is to continue publishing these memorial essays within the space constraints that we have while also archiving these stories within our historical documents.

If you are interested, please contact me at kevin.hynes@us.army.mil.

Remember, it’s our history. It’s up to all of us to preserve it.

My Turn Editor, *Prairie Soldier* Kevin J. Hynes



— we all have significant ownership in the history that we wrote over the past decade, both in Iraq and back here in Nebraska. It’s our history, and as a result, it’s our responsibility to do what we can to preserve this collective

Worth Repeating

“It’s amazing what ordinary people can accomplish if they set out without preconceived notions.”

— Charles Kettering
U.S. industrialist

“In war, opportunity waits for no man.”
— Pericles
Greek general

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”

— President John F. Kennedy
U.S. president

“Don’t argue about difficulties, they will argue for themselves.”

— Winston Churchill
British statesman



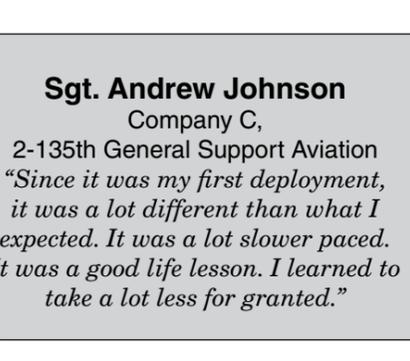
Spc. Javier Soldana
402nd Military Police Battalion
“I gained a lot of cultural awareness during my deployment. I also learned how to be flexible because I was shuffled around a lot.”



Staff Sgt. Christian Knapp
155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
“I feel a better sense of doing my part. The experience has been humbling.”



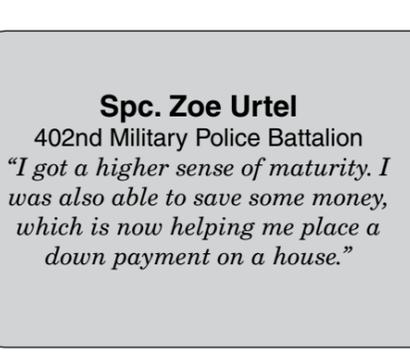
Sgt. Bo Fisher
Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry
“We were the last ones to be in Kabul training with the police, so it was a good sense of satisfaction knowing that we got them to the level that they are at today.”



Sgt. Andrew Johnson
Company C,
2-135th General Support Aviation
“Since it was my first deployment, it was a lot different than what I expected. It was a lot slower paced. It was a good life lesson. I learned to take a lot less for granted.”



Staff Sgt. Jacob Bramhall
623rd Engineer Company
“Patience... lots and lots of patience. There were multiple people and multiple units there and different types of people.”



Spc. Zoe Urtel
402nd Military Police Battalion
“I got a higher sense of maturity. I was also able to save some money, which is now helping me place a down payment on a house.”



Getting Rec'd

State recruiters challenge university students learn more about Army Guard

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

The Nebraska Army National Guard's Lincoln recruiting team joined forces with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln when the UNL Campus Recreation Center hosted one of the largest college lifestyle festivals in the Midwest.

The free 6th Annual "Get Rec'd" event was open to college students and campus supporters from across Nebraska and the United States, Jan. 19-20. It was designed to let participants try out the latest products and technology, and experience sights and sounds from local and national companies.

According to organizers, there were booths from more than 75 different vendors. Participants also had the opportunity to get a closer look at National Guard life when Nebraska Army National Guard recruiters set up their "Boot Camp Challenge" inflatable obstacle course. The Nebraska Army National Guard recruiters also hosted a push-up competition throughout the two-day event.

According to Guard recruiters, the effort was designed to raise awareness about the Guard among the UNL students.

"It's a way to get our name out there," said Staff Sgt. Joseph Strack, a recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer, adding that the inflatable obstacle course is designed to give students the chance to experience a small slice of basic training.

"It's an idea of what (basic training) is going to be like in blow-up form," said Strack. "It also shows how important physical fitness is to the military."

Just negotiating the obstacle course was an experience. Students



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Did I Do Alright? A University of Nebraska-Lincoln college student smiles at a recruiter as she slides to the end of the Boot Camp Challenge during the Get Rec'd event on Jan. 20 at UNL Campus Recreation Center.

and community members got to challenge their opponent to the Boot Camp Challenge and then had to decide what tactics to use as they maneuvered through the balloon-like course.

Along with the obstacle course, the Soldiers also gave students the opportunity to see how many correct "Army" push-ups they could do. According to the participants, the Guard booth was an eye-opening experience.

"I like how interactive the National Guard is making this," said



A Tangled Mess: Two University of Nebraska-Lincoln college students and best friends race through the obstacle course during the Get Rec'd event on Jan. 20 at UNL Campus Recreation Center.

Tara Herbek, a junior education major at UNL. "They are letting

us get an idea what it is like and challenging ourselves. It lets me see how key physical fitness is to the Guard."

The competition got pretty intense at times when friends challenged friends, or when participants were brave enough to challenge the Soldiers who were helping with the event.

According to a few UNL students, they didn't think physical fitness was that important to the Guard life style. After doing the Boot Camp Challenge, pumping

out a few push-ups and talking to the recruiters, they said they now know differently.

"At the college I went to before I transferred to UNL, they didn't have anything like this," said Herbek. "It's nice to learn about how you can be in the Guard and go to school along with the educational benefits."

"After talking to the Soldiers, it motivates me more to stay fit and challenge myself," added Herbek.

After the two-day event, the recruiters felt like they left a positive and lasting impact on the students and community members that visited their booth and took the push-up and Boot Camp Challenge.



Beginners Motorcycle Rider courses available

If you are a current member of the Nebraska National Guard, you are eligible for reimbursement if you attend The Motorcycle Safety Foundation approved Basic Rider's Course. Completion of the Basic Rider's Course is required to operate a motorcycle on military installations.

The two- to three-day course (depending upon provider) includes classroom instruction and practical riding experience in a controlled setting. It is designed for beginners and re-entry riders above the age of 19. Once completed, the training allows riders to waive the Nebraska State motorcycle test for an operator's license and may also qualify the participant for lower insurance premiums.

Note: In order to be eligible for reimbursement, members must obtain pre-approval from the Safety Office prior to registering for this course.

For additional information, or to get pre-approval, contact the Nebraska Army National Guard Safety Office at (402) 309-1833 or the Nebraska Air National Guard Safety Office at (402) 309-1118.

Seven steps to getting started on New Year's fitness resolution

By Master Sgt. Michael Roth
Special for the *Prairie Soldier*

The new year has arrived and I bet everyone made a resolution to get in shape or lose weight, right? I would like to be the first to commend you. Way to go!

Now, let's get you started with your program. Here are some easy ways to get you started down the fitness road and keep your New Year's resolution.

1. Consult your health care provider or family doctor. Start with a routine physical and inform them of your goals. Let your health care professional review and approve any diet/exercise program before starting it.

2. Setup a fitness plan based on your health care professional approval. Set up the plan in your daily planner or electronic calendar so you are reminded of your plans. Plan your time just like a business meeting and create a new healthy habit.

3. Start light with fitness programs, gradually increasing your frequency and duration. Add to your program as your fitness abilities increase and look for new programs that challenge you.

4. Avoid drinking empty calories – cans of soda and sugary drinks. Any drink that has 100 calories or more per 12-ounce serving should be avoided if trying to lose weight. Empty calories are the biggest reason for weight gain. Instead, drink water, water and more water. Diet drinks that you mix with water can provide a good substitute for those with a sweet tooth.

5. Set up goals and review them weekly. This will help you to stay the course or make adjustments based on your capabilities and responsiveness to the program. Always be prepared to adjust down in case your body needs longer to get back into shape.

6. Don't be afraid to schedule hard time in your planning. Fitness time should be treated just like a business meeting. If you are running behind, move your scheduled back to adjust for the delays, but always plan and stick to your schedule.

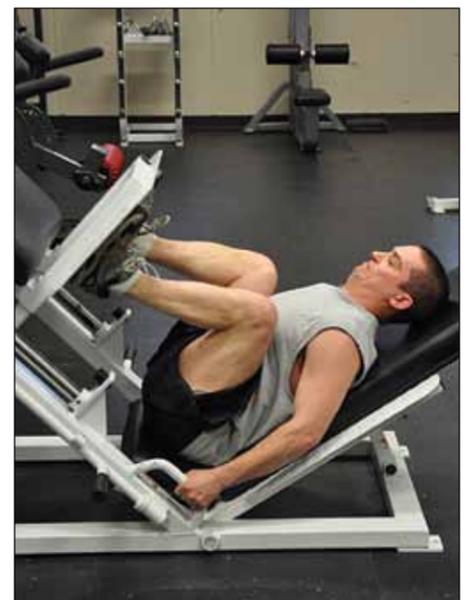


Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Winter Workout: Sgt. James Engel, a non-commissioned officer with the 92nd Troop Command, works out at the National Guard gym to keep up with his physical fitness. He works out on a weekly schedule to maintain his fitness.

7. Be prepared for bumps in the road. There will be setbacks, but this doesn't mean you're failing, it means you're human. Mentally prepare for them and have a support system. Find co-workers who can help you adjust or reset so you are encouraged to get after it. A workout buddy will keep you motivated.

These are seven steps that can help you get started with your fitness New Year's resolution.

(Editor's Note: Master Sgt. Michael Roth is a member of the Nebraska Air National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters staff. Among his duties, he serves as his unit's fitness manager.)