

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



Photo courtesy of Sgt. Ashley Johnson

A Cut Above: Sgt. Ashley Johnson, a maintenance control sergeant with the Lincoln-based 267th Support Maintenance Company, uses a torch to cut metal during her annual training in El Tamarindo, El Salvador, in May. Johnson and fellow members of the 267th SMC participated in 'Beyond the Horizons,' a joint foreign military humanitarian exercise that provides construction and medical assistance to partner nations throughout Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

Going 'Beyond the Horizons'

■Nebraska Guard Soldiers support international humanitarian effort during mission to El Salvador

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

The Nebraska National Guard can often be seen assisting communities within Nebraska and other states in the U.S. when help is needed.

Members of the Lincoln-based 267th Support Maintenance Company recently proved those same Guardsmen are willing to assist communities far from home when they participated in an annual

training that took them to Central America.

Approximately 60 members of the 267th SMC participated in "Beyond the Horizons," a U.S. Southern Command-sponsored Army South-led joint foreign military humanitarian and civic assistance exercise in Sonsonate, El Salvador. The overall exercise provides construction and medical assistance to partner nations throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean.

The exercise generally takes place in rural, underprivileged areas and is a major component of the U.S. military's regional engagement efforts. It affords a unique opportunity to train U.S. service members alongside partner nation personnel, while providing needed services to communities throughout the region.

The Nebraska Soldiers performed three, two-week rotations from late March through mid-May, each consisting of roughly 20 Soldiers.

According to Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tollie Yoder, 267th SMC allied trades warrant officer

See EL SALVADOR on 7.

Lyons heading to national post

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Nebraska's current adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Judd H. Lyons, is headed to Washington, D.C., to replace Nebraska's last adjutant general as the deputy director of the U.S. Army National Guard.

"This is great news for General Lyons and speaks very highly of the quality of leadership at Nebraska National Guard," said Gov. Dave Heineman, May 28. "I want to congratulate General Lyons on this promotion. He has been an outstanding adjutant general."

"The fact that this is the second consecutive Nebraska Adjutant General to become the number two person leading the Army National Guard is a high honor for this state,"



Lyons

added Heineman. Heineman, who in his role as

See LYONS on 4.

Obama tells military sexual assault victims: 'I've got your backs'

By Karen Parrish
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama, commander in chief of the U.S. armed forces, said sexual assault is an outrage and anyone within the military who commits the crime "is betraying the uniform that they're wearing."

The president, speaking during a May 7 White House press conference, said the problem of sexual assault in the military is neither new nor easy to solve, but leaders "have to do everything we can to root this out."

Obama noted he worked with former Defense Secretary Leon E.

Panetta on the issue, and spoke about it earlier with current Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel. He said the Defense Department is working to gather accurate reporting of assaults and is building "a system of accountability and transparency" up and down the chain of command.

The president added he told Hagel that, "We're gonna have to, you know, not just step up our game, we have to exponentially step up our game to go at this thing hard."

Obama offered a personal message to those in uniform who have experienced sexual assault.

"I want them to hear directly from their commander in chief that

See SEXUAL ASSAULT on 6.

North to Alaska

Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers go where they've never gone before

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Staff Writer

Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from Company C, 2-135th General Supply Aviation Battalion received a standing invitation to return to Alaska from its adjutant general for their role in the 19th annual Arctic Care mission, April 9-29.

Nineteen Soldiers from the Lincoln, Neb., -based aviation unit augmented the Alaska Army Guard's Company B, 1-207th Aviation Battalion, using two Nebraska UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to transport medical



Photo courtesy of Capt. Daniel Smith

Snowy Operation: A Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew kicks up a cloud of snow while landing on Alaska's Mount Susitna.

personnel and supplies for more than 200 service members from the Alaska Army National Guard,

See ALASKA on 5.

Guardsmen practice disaster response

By Sgt. Heidi Krueger
Staff Photojournalist

Imagine an F5 tornado passing through Omaha, Neb., and collapsing the IMAX Theater at the Henry Doorly Zoo, leaving dozens of people trapped beneath the rubble. Then, add to the chaos by that same tornado passing through the zoo and hitting a nearby chemical plant, causing a plume of potentially dangerous contaminants into the environment.

In scenarios like that, initial responders can be overwhelmed, causing them to ask for help from the Nebraska National Guard's chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosive (CBRNE) enhanced response force package (CERF-P).

A frightening scenario, to say the least. But that's exactly the nightmare mission Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the Nebraska National Guard's CERF-P practiced during a disaster exercise designed to test their readiness and capabilities, May 13-19, at Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb.

The long, hot week was filled with training and preparation for the final day's external exercise evaluation.

"It's important to ensure our people are comfortable



Photo by Sgt. Heidi Krueger

Helping Hands: A team of Nebraska Army and Air National Guard medics prepare to assist a "victim" during a disaster exercise held at the Mead Training Site, May 18.

wearing their protective equipment to ensure they feel comfortable going into a chemical environment," said Maj. Tim Pegg, officer-in-charge for the Des Moines-based Iowa Air National Guard fatality search and

See CERF-P on 11.

Inside

Nebraska Air National Guardsmen test ability to survive and operate

See story and photos on 3.



Runners hit streets for annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon

See stories and photos on 18-21.



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NEWS DIGEST

■ Pacific commander: U.S., China can build on common ground

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — The United States and China, by increasing dialogue and engagement, can build a foundation of trust while fostering regional security and prosperity, the top regional U.S. commander said May 21.

“While competition between the United States and China is inevitable, conflict is not,” Navy Adm. Samuel J. Locklear III, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, told members of the National Committee for U.S. China Relations in New York.

“This means identifying strategic areas where our two countries can cooperate, while recognizing frankly and openly the areas where we will continue to differ, and to manage those,” he said. “Our approach is to manage the friction and disruptive competition and increase areas of congruence and cooperation between our two nations.”

Locklear encouraged the China experts to envision a future in which “the U.S. and China collaborate to build upon an existing Indo-Asia-Pacific community of peace and prosperity.”

Reaching that goal, he said, requires recognizing, understanding and managing areas of divergence that could disrupt the security environment. These range from China’s concerns that the U.S. strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific region is designed to contain China’s rise to differences in how the two countries view the maritime global commons and the lack of common ground on behavior in cyberspace.

Locklear emphasized that the rebalance is a whole-of-government strategy, recognizing that “the United States’ success in the 21st century will, to a large extent, depend on what happens in this critically important region of the world.”

Based on a strategy of collaboration and cooperation, the rebalance acknowledges the reality that the United States’ future is “inextricably linked” to Asia’s, he said. And one of the fundamental goals in implementing it is to build a “stable, productive and constructive relationship with China.”

■ Army chief says readiness issues pose risk to U.S. security

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — A smaller Army still needs to be ready, and sequester issues on top of previous budget cuts are impacting readiness accounts, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray T. Odierno said May 7.

The general told reporters at the Defense Writers Group that the Army “has to be ready to do many missions, at many speeds, in many different environments.”

The Army is scheduled to cut a total of 80,000 Soldiers from its ranks, he said, and this smaller force still needs to be ready. “We have to be able to build (-up) quicker, in scalable packages, for unknown contingencies,” Odierno said.

Readiness problems are growing, he said, with fiscal year 2013 shortfalls causing problems in the Army.

“We were short funding Afghanistan and we had sequester on top of that,” the general said.

This left the Army with a \$13 billion shortfall and that affects readiness, he said. Through the rest of fiscal 2013, about 80 percent of the Army will train at very low levels at home stations — squad or platoon levels.

“We’ve cancelled six National Training Center rotations for the rest of the year, we’ve reduced flying hours, we’ve had to degrade services at installations — right now, we’re going to furlough civilians for (11) days,” Odierno said. “That’s how we’re going to pay the bills in (fiscal year) ’13.”

This means the Army will begin fiscal 2014 in a readiness hole, the general said.

Without a solution, “I see us having a three- or four-year issue with readiness,” he said. “Our ability to respond will be degraded and I worry about the unknown contingency.”

The Army, he said, will continue to train forces for known contingencies like Afghanistan.

“But for unknown contingencies our risk goes way up,” Odierno said. “The environment we are going to have to operate in will be a mix of high-end, combined-arms maneuvers, but also some aspect of counterinsurgency and some aspect of stability operations.”

The general said Army units also must be ready to counter asymmetric operations. “We have to be able to operate in a very complicated environment,” he said.

And, the Army needs to train to provide the combined arms capability that is the Army’s specialty in the joint force, Odierno said.

Army officials also are concerned that the readiness shortfall could translate into retention problems in the future, he said.

“We are not seeing any degradation in retention or in our ability to recruit,” the general said. “Last year, for the first time, not everybody who wanted to was able to reenlist. Our attrition rates are at historic lows.”

Yet, Odierno said, the retention environment can change quickly. Readiness plays a part in this also, he said. “If we don’t have the money to train and do what we need to do, it will have an impact (on retention),” he said.

■ Obama, British prime minister reaffirm commitment

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — President Barack Obama met with British Prime Minister David Cameron, May 13, to discuss shared peace in the Middle East, future roles in Afghanistan and other global security developments.

Speaking during a news conference at the White House, the president shared some of the global security issues the two leaders discussed.

“With regard to global security, we reviewed progress in Afghanistan, where our troops continue to serve with extraordinary courage alongside each other,” Obama said. “I want to commend David for his efforts to encourage greater dialogue between

we got to a point where I could not responsibly go any deeper into cutting or jeopardizing our formations, our readiness and training,” he said.

In a memo to senior department leaders, Hagel said he had “very reluctantly” concluded that major budgetary shortfalls triggered by a \$37 billion cut in defense spending for fiscal year 2013 forced a decision he said he deeply regrets, and one that he acknowledged will disrupt lives and impact DoD operations.

However, he credited congressional passage of a defense appropriation bill in March in part for helping to reduce from the number of days civilians would be temporarily laid off by half. It may be possible later in the year to “knock that back” to an even lower number, the secretary said, but he emphasized that he could not promise such an outcome.

“I won’t promise that,” Hagel said. “You deserve fair, honest, direct conversation about this and I’m not going to be cute with you at all. This is where we are. We’ll continue to look at it, (and) we’ll continue to do everything we can.”

Hagel said the furloughs will affect every military department and

almost every agency, with limited exceptions. “We will (exempt) civilians deployed to combat zones and civilians necessary to protect life and property,” he wrote in his memo, adding others will be (exempted) if forcing them to stay off the job would not free up money for other needs.

Employees set to be furloughed will begin receiving written notification June 5.

In March, defense officials had told civilian employees to expect as many as 22 furlough days during the current fiscal year, part of department-wide efforts to slash spending in response to across-the-board budget cuts known as sequestration.

In the time since, Hagel has been working to avoid or reduce the temporary layoffs, saying he had sought advice from department leaders and agencies, both civilian and military, but found no other way to help in closing the budget gap.

In his memo, Hagel said if the budget situation eases, he would strongly prefer to end the furloughs early.

“That is a decision I will make later in the year,” he added.

Annual Training 2013



Photo courtesy of the 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne)

Nebraska Army, Air Guardsmen kick-off annual training season

Pfc. Nicholas Bernasek, carries his unit’s guidon during a road march to the marksmanship ranges during the Omaha-based 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) annual training at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., June 2. The 195th FSC was one of many Nebraska Army and Air National Guard units that kicked off their annual training in June at a variety of locations.

Look for expanded coverage of the training in this and the August editions of the Prairie Soldier newspaper.

Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is critical to a regional security.”

Obama noted that U.S., British and coalition forces will move into a planned support role in Afghanistan this spring, as Afghan forces take the lead for security across the country soon.

“Our troops will continue to come home, and the war will end by the end of next year, even as we work with our Afghan partners to make sure that Afghanistan is never again a haven for terrorists who would attack our nations,” he said.

The president said due to the two nation’s “shared commitment” to Middle East peace, he updated the prime minister on Secretary of State John F. Kerry’s efforts with the Israelis and Palestinians, and the importance of moving toward negotiations.

“We reaffirmed our support for democratic transitions in the Middle East and North Africa, including the economic reforms that have to go along with political reforms,” Obama said.

“Of course we discussed Syria and the appalling violence being inflicted on the Syrian people (as well),” he added.

The president said he and the prime minister also discussed Iran, where they agreed to keep up the pressure on Tehran for its continued failure to abide by its nuclear obligations.

The burden is on Iran to engage constructively with the permanent five members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany,

Obama said, to resolve the world’s concerns about its nuclear program.

■ Troops, families can visit museums for free this summer

WASHINGTON (AFPS)—More than 2,000 museums across the nation will open their doors, free of charge, to service members and their families as a break from the summer challenges, a Defense Department official said May 21. From Memorial Day, May 27, through Labor Day, Sept. 2, all active duty service members, National Guardsmen and reservists and their families can take advantage of this cultural and educational opportunity in all 50 states.

“It’s an exciting, inspiring, educational and economical activity for our families to enjoy this summer,” said Navy Cmdr. Leslie Hull-Ryde, a Pentagon spokeswoman.

Launching its fourth year in a news conference today at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the 2013 Blue Star Museums Program is a collaboration among the Defense Department, Blue Star Families, the National Endowment for the Arts and the museums to give service members and their families a way to spend time together in their local museums.

A record number of museums are participating this year. The program began in 2010 with free access to about 600 museums, while this year’s 2,000 is a figure that’s still growing, Blue Star Families and NEA officials said.

Hagel announces fewer furlough days

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — After weeks of review, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel has concluded budget cuts will require most of the department’s civilian employees to be furloughed beginning in July, but that because of other efforts to deal with the shortfall, only half of the 22 days originally envisioned as temporary layoffs will now be necessary.

During a May 14 town hall meeting at the Mark Center in Alexandria, Va., Hagel told Defense Department employees that most will be required to take 11 furlough days beginning July 8, one per pay period, through the end of the fiscal year, Sept. 30.

Hagel noted that when he took the oath of office less than three months earlier, post-sequester plans called for 22 furlough days. Congress allowed the department to shift or reprogram some funds in March that cut that number to 14. Now, he said, as maintenance, training, flying hours and ship deployments are increasingly affected, he had no choice but to authorize the furloughs.

“We kept going back. And finally,

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2433 NW 24th St, Lincoln, Nebraska 68524-1801
DSN 279-8390, phone (402) 309-8390

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

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

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Commander-in-Chief
Adjutant General
State Public Affairs Officer/Editor
Assistant Editor
Staff Photojournalist

Gov. Dave Heineman
Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons
Maj. Kevin Hynes
2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Sgt. Heidi Krueger

STAFF WRITERS

Nebraska Army National Guard
1st Lt. Peggy Davis
Spc. Riley Huskey

Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen
Sgt. Jason Drager

Nebraska Air National Guard

Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Senior Airman Mary Thach

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

Nebraska Air National Guard
Master Sgt. Shannon Nielsen
Master Sgt. Vern Moore
Staff Sgt. James Lieth

ATSO 2013



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Safety First: Airman Sean Pozehl, a member of the 155th Security Forces Squadron, stands guard outside a bunker during an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise at the Nebraska National Guard air base, June 11.



Photo by Senior Airman Mary Thach

Buddy Checks: Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing perform self aid and buddy care to an "injured" Airman in full chemical suits during an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise, June 11. The ATSO simulated a deployment to Southwest Asia that gave the Nebraska Air Guardsmen the opportunity to practice their war skills and ability to remain fully functional during confusing and disorienting scenarios.

Ability to Survive and Operate

155th Air Refueling Wing practices response to attack, chemical warfare

By Senior Airman Mary Thach
Staff Writer

Thunder showers, lightening warnings and thick humidity did not stop members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing from proving they had the ability to survive and operate in a hostile environment during an ATSO exercise held June 10-12 at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

More than 300 Airmen from the 155th ARW simulated a deployment to Southwest Asia to practice their war skills and ability to remain fully functional during confusing and disorienting scenarios. An additional 40 to 50 155th ARW senior personnel participated as an exercise evaluation team (EET) to observe and assist the "deployed" members.

Col. Keith Schell, 155th ARW commander and leader of the simulated '155th Air Expeditionary Wing' at the air base, said the exercise was designed to test the unit's ability to conduct chemical defense and defend against ground attacks.

"One of the biggest things we are going to do is practice our ATSO skills, which is our ability to survive and operate," said Schell. "Based on the simulated attacks, you'll see us dressing out in multiple levels of (chemical gear)."

The scenarios simulated chemical attacks – requiring full mission oriented protective posture gear to include the M-50 gas mask – and ground attacks from snipers, hostile individuals and groups. The goal of the exercise was to practice reacting to unpredictable enemy actions.

Schell said he had four goals he wanted to accomplish during the exercise.

He said his number one goal was safety because the Nebraska Air Guard does not wear MOPP gear on a regular basis and with high humidity and heat, heat illness was a concern. The second goal was to learn.

"I know we have a lot of experts on EET. We have a lot of new people, too. So, I want them to come in with an open mind and think," said



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Weapons 101: Staff Sgt. Matthew Kilgore, 155th Security Forces Squadron, instructs fellow 155th Air Refueling Wing members on the proper use and handling of the M-16A2 rifle during an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., June 10.

Schell. "Bring all of that stuff you remember from past experiences, even though this is home station, because it is different than a deployed exercise. A lot of things we are doing here, we've done before. Now we have to think how we do it locally."

Schell emphasized how important it was for those who have gone through these exercises before to take inexperienced Airmen under their wing.

"I want people to go into it as mentors," said Schell. "There are a lot of new people, so the people that have been through this, they need to be mentors to everybody else... If people aren't doing things right, we need to point that out."

Schell said his final goal was using the buddy system and communication.

"We have to rely on each other to make sure we do it correct," said Schell. "Our buddies have to be there. The first person we should be talking to is our buddy. You check your buddy and he checks you as well."

Schell offered advice to all ATSO players, new and experienced.

"Be open to advice," said Schell. "This is a training opportunity. If you have individuals who have not been through this, they can monitor or watch part of it. Be mentors



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate: 2nd Lt. Corrina Bartels, an intelligence officer with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, drinks from her canteen while in full chemical gear during an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise at the Nebraska National Guard air base, June 11. Hydration was stressed for members of the 155th ARW participating in the exercise in hot, humid conditions.

to them."

During the exercise, heat and lightening warnings were minor setbacks, but the 155th ARW was prepared.

"We knew it was going to be hot. We used the work-rest cycles," Schell said. "You have to be more keenly aware of your partner, because with heat, it can sneak up on you. Heat exhaustion, heat stroke, those are a couple big points."

In line with the heat index, Airmen worked outside for 20 minutes and then came inside to cool off. Schell cautioned his Airmen to be aware of how work-rest cycles affect job performance and getting the mission accomplished.

He added, as individuals, Airmen need to be aware of potential heat illnesses and to seek help right away if feeling ill.

"The reason we are doing this is if we ever have to go to war, we want to make sure that we can do it," said Schell. "So, that's why we are here and why the inspection members are here."

Whether simulated or real-world situations, attitude plays a major factor in successful results.

Airman 1st Class Danielle Boger, a bioenvironmental engineer and simulated door guard and post attack reconnaissance team member during the exercise, said a



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Can You Hear Me Now? Col. Chris Collins (left), commander of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Operations Group, and Maj. Bryan Scholtes, a wing plans officer, communicate in full chemical suits during an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., June 11.

good attitude along with teamwork were the most important parts of succeeding in this exercise.

"I think a positive attitude is really important. If people are negative, then they are not going to want to help their buddies or do their job very well," said Boger. "But, if everyone has a positive attitude toward the exercise and real world stuff, I think the end product

is going to be a lot better."

Master Sgt. Benjamin Venteicher, the 155th Services Flight dining facility manager and simulated mortuary noncommissioned officer-in-charge, touched on the importance of mentorship and the power of positivity.

Venteicher said exercises like the ATSO give the services flight a chance to perform tasks they don't do on a regular basis. During normal drills, he said the routine is to serve a hot meal and make sure everyone is satisfied. However, during a deployment there are a wide variety of things the services flight is tasked to perform.

"I have been really impressed by the scenario and the fact that it's pushed us. The scenario really does cater to the mortuary process for this particular exercise," said Venteicher. "I was very impressed with our Airmen. They really did a good job and really got their stuff together and got to get out and do their thing. It was good and I'm proud of them."

"There is a lot to forget. There is always a checklist. There is always a process that you are not involved in regularly," added Venteicher. "So, to be able to do this in an exercise environment, you are going to be able to get a lot more out of that and be able to practice that when you are under duress and stress."

The scenarios during the exercise were designed to be stressful and hectic, which creates a legitimate training environment for Airmen who are new to the Air Force or new to their specific job.

"The biggest lesson really is training those Airmen underneath you (making) sure they know their stuff," said Venteicher. "I feel like it's something I knew, but seeing it in action has been really good. We have a lot of new folks who have been getting good training from this exercise, so it is good to see."

Venteicher also stressed the importance of having a positive attitude.

"Attitude is number one, especially when you are wearing the chem. gear and you are sitting in the sun, baking," said Venteicher. "Having that smile on your face and your thumbs up, you're doing well and your folks are doing well. So, attitude has a lot to do with it, because it's a mental game."

Hagel addresses Middle East issues during UNO speech

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The Middle East holds some of the most serious U.S. security threats, but America can prevail in maintaining global stability if it uses its resources wisely and pursues coalition solutions, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said June 19.

During a speech in Omaha, Neb., at his alma mater, the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Hagel said the Middle East is “probably as complicated as any part of the world.” He added, “Our ability to shape that part of the world has severe limitations. We can’t do it alone.”

Hagel said Iran and Syria represent, in part, the three-way war raging in the region: civil war, sectarian war and proxy war. U.S. response in Syria must be carefully calibrated to avoid making a bad situation worse, he added.

“The conflict there is complex, unpredictable and very combustible,” he said. Fighting in Syria, where rebel forces are pitted against Bashar Assad’s regime, has now killed some 90,000 people.

“It is developed along dangerous sectarian lines, exposing deep historical, religious, and ethnic differences and complications,” Hagel said. “In this fluid and dynamic situation there are consequences for U.S. policy decisions, both for action and inaction.”

Hagel said Iran, which last week voted in Hassan Rowhani as president-elect, is another complex foreign policy challenge.

“The United States has made clear that if Iran’s new president is interested in mending Iran’s relations with the rest of the world, as he indicated in his campaign, there is an opportunity to do that,” Hagel said. But, he added, to do so, Iran must meet its international obligations.

“The United States remains committed to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and all options remain on the table to achieve this outcome,” he said.

Hagel said another key global security factor is economic volatility, as European economies battle

deficits and rising powers elsewhere struggle with new responsibilities. Add technology to the mix, he noted, and, “never before have we seen anything like this.”

The current security shifts are interconnected, the secretary said.

“We live in a world where our homeland is vulnerable to cyber attackers who can strike from anywhere in the world, where states like North Korea seek to develop missiles capable of hitting American soil, and where extremist groups like Hezbollah possess a more deadly arsenal of weapons than many nations,” he said.

The U.S. approach to 21st-century security is to strengthen alliances, build new partnerships, and forge coalitions of common interests that help resolve problems and prevent conflict, Hagel said. The Middle East, while complicated, lends itself to that approach, he added.

“What we must do, I think, with every instrument of power we have and alliance we have ... is to try to get some process working that at



Defense Department photo

Proud Mavericks: Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel sits with B.J. Reed, senior vice chancellor of the University of Nebraska-Omaha, during a post-speech question-and-answer session with students in Omaha, Neb., June 19.

least stops the violence and the bloodshed and the war, and then start working our way through that to managing it to some higher ground,” Hagel said.

From Israel and Egypt to Iran and Syria, the Middle East is home to turmoil that “isn’t going to get fixed in a year, or under one president, or any American policy,” Hagel

said. “This is going to get eventually resolved through a number of channels, working with allies, working with interests.”

Meanwhile, the secretary added, the United States must keep working at it. “It’s frustrating. It’s difficult, and I know that. ... We’ve got to balance this in a way that’s realistic and doable,” he said.

LYONS

continued from page 1.

commander in chief of the Nebraska National Guard, said he plans to name a successor in the coming weeks. The process will be similar to the one used in selecting Lyons as adjutant general in 2009.

Lyons, 51, is Nebraska’s 32nd adjutant general. He assumed command of the Nebraska National Guard Aug. 23, 2009, when Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, then-adjutant general, was promoted to the deputy director position.

As the deputy director, Lyons will be responsible for assisting the director of the Army National Guard, Lt. Gen. William E. Ingram Jr., in formulating and coordinating all programs, policies and plans affecting the Army National Guard and its more than 350,000 citizen-soldiers.

In an email message to the National Guard Bureau, Ingram welcomed Lyons and his family to their new roles.

“On behalf of the National Guard Bureau and the Army National Guard, I’d like to extend a hearty congratulations to Maj. Gen. Judd H. Lyons, adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard, on having been named the next deputy director of the U.S. Army National Guard. We’re really looking forward to having him on board,” said Ingram.

“Judd will bring a wealth of experience and a family rich in the tradition of the Army National Guard – his wife Amy is a lieutenant colonel in the Nebraska Army National Guard, their son Alex Baldwin is a second lieutenant in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, their son Ben is an ROTC cadet at Creighton University and a drilling member of the Nebraska Army National Guard, and their son Sam is a member of the Army Junior ROTC in Omaha.”

As adjutant general, Lyons is the senior uniformed National Guard officer responsible for leading the nearly 4,700 Army and Air National Guard personnel in Nebraska. He is also a member of the Governor’s Cabinet and directs the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

According to Lyons, who will be assigned to the National Guard headquarters in Arlington, Va., leaving Nebraska after a long career with the Nebraska Army National Guard is bittersweet.

“It has been my honor to serve here in the Nebraska National Guard for over 33 years,” he said. “I’d like to thank Governor Heineman for giving me the opportunity to serve as the adjutant general. It has been especially rewarding to have served since 2009 as adjutant general.”

“I am extremely proud of the accomplishments of our Nebraska Military Department’s men and women. Over the last four years



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

Stars In Alignment: (From right) Then-Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons stands next to Gov. Dave Heineman and Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, during the adjutant general change of command ceremony held Aug. 23, 2009, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln. Lyons, now a major general, announced in June that he has been selected to replace Kadavy as the deputy director of the Army National Guard.

we have deployed our Air and Army National Guard members overseas in record numbers. These same men and women have responded magnificently to historic flooding and wildfires here at home,” Lyons said.

During the past four years, Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen have deployed in historic numbers for overseas missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and other locations across the globe. They were also involved in a number of recent humanitarian missions in Central America and northern Alaska.

Domestically, the men and women of the Nebraska National Guard responded to the winter blizzard of 2009, the historic flooding on the Platte and Missouri Rivers in 2011, and last year’s considerable wildfires in western and central Nebraska.

Other highlights of Lyons’ tenure include continuing strong efforts in recruiting and retention; the completion of the Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln and readiness centers in McCook, Beatrice and Columbus; on-going readiness center construction at the Mead Training Site, Lincoln and Grand Island; the fielding of the UH-72 Lakota helicopter; the strengthening of the Nebraska National Guard’s ties to the Czech Republic through the State Partnership Program; and national-level awards in the areas of food service, logistics, maintenance, engineering, aviation, journalism,

community relations and medical preparedness.

“It has been a privilege to lead and serve with a team comprised of uniformed members, state employees, and emergency management professionals,” Lyons said.

“While it’s a tough decision to leave, this is an opportunity to serve at the national level assisting the director of the Army National Guard to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead in our role as an Operational Force in the Reserve Component,” he added.

Prior to his current assignment, Lyons served as the Nebraska National Guard’s chief of the Joint Staff in Lincoln. He deployed to Afghanistan from November 2006 until June 2007, where he served as the commander of the 209th Regional Security Assistance Command, which was part of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix V.

Lyons received his Bachelor of Professional Studies in Management of Human Resources from Bellevue University in 1994 and his Master of Science in Strategic Studies from the United States Army War college in 2005.

He is also a graduate of the Joint Forces Staff College, the CAPSTONE Course of the National Defense University, the George C. Marshall Senior Executive Seminar and the National and International Security Course of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government.

Lyons: Decision to leave Nebraska National Guard post was difficult to make

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

After having served as Nebraska 32nd adjutant general for nearly four years, Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons said the decision to leave Nebraska for a national post as the Army National Guard’s deputy director was anything but easy.

“It’s never an easy decision to leave an organization that you literally grew up in – I was 17 when I joined,” Lyons said during a meeting with his primary staff on May 28.

However, the opportunity to serve on the national level and offer his voice and efforts as American defense leaders plot future directions for the National Guard was simply something he couldn’t pass up.

Lyons said that as he made that decision, he was struck by how his career has progressed over the more than three decades he spent

in the Nebraska National Guard.

“As I referenced back to being a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard for the past 33 years, I realized that you’re never sure where you’re going to go,” Lyons told the assembled staff members shortly before Gov. Dave Heineman announced his selection to the U.S. Army National Guard post.

According to Lyons, the work the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard has done and the accomplishments they’ve made during his tenure will always be points of pride for him. Especially, he said, considering the high operational tempo that the members of the organization have faced while supporting historically high levels of deployments for overseas contingency missions while also supporting such domestic emergencies as the Platte and Missouri River flooding of 2011 and the wildfire outbreaks in 2012.

“I couldn’t be more proud of this team and what you bring to the job each and every day,” Lyons told the staff.

Governor names adjutant general screening panel

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Interested in how the 33rd Nebraska Adjutant General will be selected?

While obviously a very important position, the selection process for the Nebraska National Guard’s top general is actually fairly simple.

According to Col. Doug Wilken, state judge advocate general, the selection process used to select the next adjutant general will be essentially the same process that he helped develop from the state statutes that govern the position more than a decade ago when the late-Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley Heng retired from the post.

That same process, with some refinements, has been used to select the past three adjutant generals.

Gov. Dave Heineman, who, as commander in chief of the Nebraska National Guard, will select the next adjutant general, laid out the process in a May 31 news release.

To be considered, applicants must have spent at least five years as an active or retired officer of the Nebraska National Guard and attained the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Candidates must be less than

the mandatory military retirement age of 64 and must be eligible to attend the military schools necessary for promotion to general officer.

If a retired officer is to be appointed adjutant general, that person cannot have been retired for more than two years at the date of the appointment.

Those interested in the position had until June 14 to submit their applications, which were then checked against established criteria for the adjutant general position. Qualified applicants will then be reviewed by a screening panel.

According to the news release, Governor Heineman has asked a panel to interview applicants and forward a list for his review and selection.

Chairing this screening panel will be retired Maj. Gen. Walt Zink, a former member of the Nebraska Army National Guard. Other members include: Kathleen Allen of Lincoln, retired Brig. Gen. Paul Cohen of the Nebraska Air National Guard, retired chief Master Sgt. Glenn Freeman of the U.S. Air Force, retired Brig. Gen. Richard Bertrand of the Nebraska Air National Guard, and retired Brig. Gen. James Murphy of the Nebraska Army National Guard.



Where No Nebraska Army Guardsman Has Gone Before: A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flown by members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, soars above snowy hills roughly 180 miles north of the Arctic Circle while transporting passengers and equipment to Point Hope, Alaska. Co. C, 2-135th GSAB, officials believe it is the furthest north members of the Nebraska Army National Guard have ever conducted a training mission.



Transport To Alaska: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, ride aboard a Mississippi Air National Guard C-17 transport aircraft next to the two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters they brought with them to Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska.

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U.S. Marine Corps, Air Force, Army and Navy Reserves who were providing medical services to villagers in the northwest reaches of the Alaskan Arctic.

"It was a great (Mission Essential Task List) test for the unit and opportunity to train with some of our new equipment," said Maj. Daniel L. Smith, commander of Co. C, 2-135th GSAB, adding that the helicopter crew members gained environmental flight experience that cannot be duplicated in Nebraska training areas.

Arctic Care is a multi-service humanitarian and training program focused on enhancing the interoperability and capacity of U.S. forces in peacetime support operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. It is designed to allow for the unique integration of the armed services, which do not often operate outside of a single unit, in an arctic environment.

"Every leg of the trip to Alaska was an important training experience for our aircrew," Smith said.

In fact, he said, just prepping the Black Hawks for air transport is a training experience in itself. "Folding the rotors back and putting our birds on a transport aircraft is something we don't get to practice very often, so we make the most out of these opportunities when they come along."

He added there was only one foot of clearance between the top of each Black Hawk and the Air Force C-17 Globemaster III that transported the team to Anchorage.

Once in Alaska, the Nebraska aircrew trained with members of the Alaska National Guard, flying mixed crews with them and using their aircraft to conduct training in mountainous environments. They also used Alaska's unique ski-clad aircraft to practice takeoff and landings in snow before heading north to Kotzebue, Alaska, to participate in the Arctic Care mission.

"I have always wanted to visit Alaska," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Brent Brozovsky, a Co. C, 2-135th GSAB, UH-60 standardization instructor pilot. "Being able to fly in Alaska was a nice added bonus. Arctic flying was something that most of us had not experienced before. Landing with a forward speed on skis in a UH-60 is like snowmobiling and completely different than a normal roll-on landing."

Brozovsky recalled a particularly cold experience after landing on top of a snow-covered mountain south of Anchorage to switch out

pilots. "The skis allowed the aircraft to sit on top of the snow, but when I stepped out of the aircraft I found myself in about 4 feet of snow," he said.

"It was the first time some pilots had experienced mountain flying and all the individuals that went on the trip gained invaluable knowledge and experience in arctic flying conditions," said Brozovsky.

Many of the flying conditions the teams encountered involving snow in Alaska were similar to those in Iraq where dust is a frequent problem, Brozovsky said. The loss of visibility caused by blowing snow—either naturally or by the rotors—is similar to blowing dust and can lead to a complete loss of visual clues, which can be disastrous if pilots are not prepared for the immediate loss of visibility, he said.

"The only difference between flying in Alaska and flying in Iraq is there are a lot more mountains and it's a lot colder," said Brozovsky. "We definitely had to wear a lot of layers because pre-flying the aircraft in the morning was extremely cold." Crewmembers could only handle being outside for about 10 minutes at a time before needing to go inside and warm up, he added.

"We got to fly in crazy weather conditions and see a very different environment than we are used to," said Sgt. Savannah Allen, a new flight medic with Co. C, 2-135th GSAB.

The trip north was the first time she had traveled with the unit.

"It was a valuable learning experience and a unique mission for us to participate in," said Allen, who added approximately 40 hours of flying on this trip to her previous 50 hours.

"Arctic Care provided an unique environment that service members would not usually encounter in their normal work environments," said Smith. "Every time we go somewhere, things are run differently. The Marines ran the show this time and had it locked tight. It was neat to see them at work with all the other services."

Smith added that joint operations involve the complex task of deploying personnel and equipment from many different locations to a central point and then deploying them again to outlying areas, something not uncommon in overseas missions, he said.

Missions conducted by the joint Nebraska and Alaska air transport teams consisted of transporting uniformed medical personnel and equipment to 12 rural villages in



View From Above: Capt. Aaron Fisk, Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, flies a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter over the Denali National Wilderness Area during a flight between Elmendorf Air Force Base and Kotzebue, Alaska.

the Alaskan northwest so they could administer medical, dental and veterinary aid. The aircrews would spend about three to five flight hours delivering and resupplying two to three villages per day.

Allen said the Nebraska and Alaska teams would typically fly for about 20 to 30 minutes into a mission seeing nothing but a vast sea of white and an occasional muskox, lone wolf, moose or herd of caribou. Then out of nowhere, a group of houses would appear next to a dirt landing strip.

"After we would land, a group of villagers would come out on four-wheelers, pulling behind sleds to pick up the personnel and equipment we had brought to them," said Allen.

After exchanging a few brief hellos and goodbyes, the teams would depart and the village would disappear into the arctic snow as fast as it had appeared. The teams would then fly back to Kotzebue to refuel and load supplies for the next mission to another isolated village in the arctic, she said.

The expedition north also afforded Allen the opportunity to do some live tissue training alongside some of the deployed military veterinarians who were performing surgeries on family pets in Kotzebue. She also got the chance to interact with the local school children, taking part in question-and-answer sessions about her job and the military.

After nearly two weeks of continuous flying, the Nebraska Army Guard crew got to venture out on an overnight trip to Nome, Alaska. There, they got to see the Discovery Channel's Bering Sea Gold People and try out the local caribou burgers. Several of the crew also got to brush up on their skiing skills in

Anchorage as well.

"For members of the Nebraska National Guard, this was a once-in-a-lifetime training opportunity," Smith said.

The aircrew flew missions to Point Hope, the most northwestern point of the North American continent—a place more than 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle where tall cliffs rise more than a thousand feet out of the Chukchi Sea.

From there, one really can actually see Russia out of his or her window, Smith added with a slight smile. "I don't think the Nebraska Army Guard has been that far north before."

"Being able to assist the people of Alaska in this capacity is an honor for the Nebraska National Guard," said Brozovsky. "Those areas of Alaska are so remote that the only way in and out is by snow machine or aircraft. This mission could not be accomplished without our aviation assets."

"In my book, the mission was a complete success," said Capt. Brendon Holbrook, commander of Company B, 1-207th Aviation, from Fort Richardson, Alaska. "Everyone on the Nebraska team got some mission essential task list training and the opportunity to train in an austere environment in extreme conditions and the opportunity to self-deploy and execute missions 'away from the flag pole.' It was a pleasure to work with such fine pilots and crew chiefs from Nebraska and we look forward to doing it again in the future."

The Nebraska aviators flew 405.6 total man-hours and 79.2 aircraft flight hours in direct support of Arctic Care 2013. In less than two weeks the Nebraska



Photos courtesy of Maj. Daniel Smith

Ready For The Challenge: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matt Svoboda, a pilot with the Lincoln-based Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, prepares to attempt the 'Kodiak Arrest Food Challenge.' Svoboda completed the meal of crab legs in 26 minutes and 23 seconds, the third fastest recorded time.

aircrew orchestrated the transport of more than 40,000 pounds of medical supplies and 383 medical personnel. The medical personnel, in turn, delivered an estimated \$1.3 million worth of healthcare services to 3,500 residents of the northwest arctic.

According to Holbrook, during the 10 days of the Arctic Care program, military crews completed up to six times what regular civilian healthcare services can provide in two years. Another benefit is the service it provides to non-shareholders living in the region, especially for those who pay for healthcare out of pocket, he added.

"This mission is very good for Nebraska in the eyes of the National Guard Bureau," said Smith. "Being able to support something this big helps the state out a lot. I can see the unit getting on a rotation for Arctic Care."

At the mission's end, the 19 Nebraska Soldiers returned home knowing they played a pivotal role in keeping alive a traditional way of life that goes back more than 2,500 years to a time when scientists believe the first people crossed over to the American continent on the Siberian Land Bridge. After nearly two weeks of humanitarian assistance—their mission complete—the Nebraskans left knowing they played an important part in the preservation of a place rich with culture and community.

Adjutant General: Sexual assault, harassment constitute incomprehensible violation of Nebraska Guard's beliefs

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Sexual assault and sexual harassment have no place in the Nebraska National Guard.

That was the message Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska's adjutant general, sent out to the force via email May 21. That message echoes similar statements Lyons has made repeatedly to staff members, commanders, senior noncommissioned officers, Guardsmen and women throughout the organization during meetings, training sessions and outreach activities.

"Teamwork, trust and mutual support are core beliefs of the Nebraska National Guard," Lyons said in the message sent to the Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard. "Sexual assault and sexual harassment are behaviors that constitute an incomprehensible violation of our beliefs and completely undermine a ready and relevant force."

"Commanders must ensure that every allegation of sexual assault and sexual harassment is immediately, thoroughly and professionally investigated, and that appropriate action is taken," he said. "Our standard is that no Soldier or Airman is victimized by sexual assault or sexual harassment, however, should

this occur, we must do everything possible to protect and care for the survivor."

According to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Gena Hegemann, state sexual assault response coordinator who also serves as the state sexual harassment/assault response and prevention program specialist, the Nebraska National Guard has a number of mechanisms to address the problems of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the military. Hegemann said that while the Army and Air Force have different specific programs and requirements, the programs are designed to mutually address the problems.

"Both programs have trained and certified victim advocates, (and) annual training requirements which focus on prevention, intervention and response (to) sexual assault incidents," said Hegemann. "There is (also) an annual requirement to train every service member in the organization in the (Sexual Assault Prevention and Response) training during each fiscal year."

Other Nebraska National Guard tools designed to eliminate sexual assault and sexual harassment include:

- The Nebraska Air National Guard currently has a sexual assault response coordinator assigned to the 155th Air Refueling

SEXUAL ASSAULT

continued from page 1.

"I've got their backs," Obama said. "I will support them, and we're not gonna tolerate this stuff. And there will be accountability. If people have engaged in this behavior, they should be prosecuted."

Everyone in the military should understand "this is not who we are, this is not what the U.S. military is about and it dishonors the vast majority of men and women in uniform who carry out their responsibilities and obligations with honor and dignity and incredible courage every single day," Obama said.

The president said he has no tolerance for sexual assault and he expects consequences for those who commit the crime.

"I don't want just more speeches or, you know, awareness programs or training — but ultimately folks look the other way," he said.

"(When) we find out somebody's engaging in this stuff, they've got to be held accountable; prosecuted, stripped out of their positions, court-martialed, fired, dishonorably discharged. Period. It's not acceptable."

Wing with an additional six victim advocates appointed throughout the Nebraska Air National Guard;

- There are 32 victim advocates assigned throughout the Nebraska Army National Guard, with at least two assigned per battalion-sized organization;

- Each victim advocate is required to be nationally certified as a Department of Defense victim advocate. This initial qualification consists of 80 hours of training.

Each victim advocate must then complete 32 hours of continuing education every two years;

- The Nebraska National Guard maintains a dedicated cellphone that is available as a helpline for victims or interested parties to receive information regarding sexual assault prevention, education, response and sexual assault and domestic violence resources available across the state. That number is (402) 525-0078.

According to Lyons, the organization can and must dedicate itself to eliminating sexual assault and sexual harassment from its ranks.

"I am convinced that through our combined efforts, we can rid our force of these malignancies. To quote Gen. (Raymond) Odierno, 'We are entrusted with ensuring the health and welfare of America's sons and daughters. There are no bystanders in this effort. Our Soldiers, their families and the American people are counting on us to lead the way in solving this problem within our ranks.'"

"We must know what constitutes sexual assault and sexual harassment," he added. "Don't tolerate offenders, recognize the indicators and communicate to your chain of command, victim advocate, or equal opportunity advisor. We must recommit ourselves to our core values and advocate for professionalism and discipline."

"Most importantly, if you are aware of sexual assault or sexual harassment in your unit, act immediately. Your actions will help protect and care for our most valuable asset, the Soldiers and Airmen of our Nebraska National Guard," Lyons said.

For more information, contact Hegemann at (402) 309-8176 or the Sexual Assault Response Helpline at (402) 525-0078.

Military leaders vow to work with Congress to combat sexual assaults

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Military leaders look forward to working with Congress to get the tools needed to combat the scourge of sexual assault in the ranks, Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey told the Senate Armed Services Committee June 4.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said sexual assault is a crime "that demands accountability and consequences. It betrays the very trust on which our profession is founded."

Military officials are working diligently to change the climate in the services that allows this crime, the chairman said.

Lasting change means changing behaviors, Dempsey said.

"We're taking a comprehensive approach that focuses on prevention, victim advocacy, investigation accountability and assessment, all as part of our solemn obligation to safeguard the health of the force," he added.

The military must do more to

safeguard victims while preserving the rights of those accused, the chairman acknowledged. "We remain open to every idea and option to accelerate meaningful institutional change," he said.

Congress has proposed legislation to address the problem. Dempsey said the military looks forward to working with Congress on the issue.

"I've been attentive to every piece of legislation," he said. "There are many reasonable recommendations on the table."

In a letter to the committee, Dempsey said he sees merit in initiatives to prohibit those convicted of sexual assault from joining the military and to oblige administrative discharge for those convicted of sexual assault. He also said he sees merit in the proposal to require commanders to report sexual offenses promptly to the next higher commander, and to increase transparency and accountability of commanders'

actions and decisions.

A congressionally mandated nine-member panel is taking up these and other initiatives. The panel can look at the problem, assess the second- and third-order effects of any changes and make its recommendations.

"We need the panel to deliberate and to deliver on a more accelerated timeline," Dempsey said. Meanwhile, he added, the military will continue moving full speed ahead on the issue.

"We will be actively implementing my strategic direction on prevention [of] sexual assault and the department's new sexual assault prevention and response plan," he said.

In a force stand-down throughout the Defense Department, which must be completed by July 1, Dempsey said, the services will conduct command climate surveys and conduct refresher training for response coordinators and victim advocates.

Defense secretary stresses importance of accountability to Army's newest officers

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Noting the new demands of a "shifting and complicated world," Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel emphasized the need for accountability and integrity in the responsibilities awaiting the Army's newest officers in his May 25 commencement address at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y.

"You've made a courageous decision to offer yourself for a very purposeful life," Chuck Hagel said to the more than 1,000 members of the academy's 215th graduating class. "You've learned the meaning of duty, honor and country, and you will now be asked to lead our nation's Soldiers an awesome responsibility."

Hagel said his time in the Army forever shaped him, and that while tactics, techniques and training have changed over the decades since served as an enlisted soldier in Vietnam, some things are enduring.

"The basic principles of soldiering and leadership remain the same," he said. "Character and courage are still the indispensable requisites of

both life and leadership."

The most important part of leadership is taking responsibility for one's actions and decisions, and holding all around oneself accountable, the secretary told the graduating class, noting that the career of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower "provides one of the greatest examples of this kind of accountability."

"On the eve of the Normandy invasion, which he would command, Eisenhower scribbled a message on a piece of paper in the event that D-Day was a failure," Hagel said. "Eisenhower's framed words hung in my Senate office for 12 years. They read: 'Our landings have failed, and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine alone.' 'That is accountability,' he continued.

In addition to budget constraints that are forcing the Army and all services to cancel training and curtail exercises, Hagel noted other significant menaces to the health and quality of the all-volunteer force, such as alcohol, drug abuse, suicide, mental illness, sexual harassment and sexual assault.

"You'll need to not just deal with these debilitating, insidious and destructive forces, but rather, you must be the generation of leaders that stop it," Hagel said. "This will require your complete commitment to building a culture of respect and dignity for every member of the military in society."

Hagel described sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military as profound betrayals of sacred oaths and trusts.

"This scourge must be stamped out," the secretary said. "We're all accountable and responsible for ensuring that this happens. We cannot fail the Army or America. We cannot fail each other, and we cannot fail the men and women that we lead."

Defense Department adds peer support chat session for sexual assault victims

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — In response to a need for peer support services identified by users of the Defense Department's Safe Helpline for sexual assault victims, Pentagon officials have launched the Safe HelpRoom, a new service that allows victims to participate in group chat sessions to connect with and support one another in a moderated and secure online environment.

The Safe HelpRoom is available at <http://SafeHelpline.org>, officials said, noting that the moderator can provide referrals as necessary and will ensure that chat postings adhere to all ground rules.

"Survivors of sexual assault have told us that being able to discuss their concerns with peers can provide a level of support not available through other means," said Jessica L. Wright, acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

"Safe HelpRoom is a groundbreaking development in the department's commitment to support military victims of sexual assault."

Safe HelpRoom sessions will begin immediately and are available twice weekly in two-hour sessions. The session schedule can be found at <http://SafeHelpline.org>, along with polls to determine session topics to address specific concerns.

The Safe HelpRoom and Safe Helpline are administered by the Defense Department and operated by the nonprofit organization

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, the nation's largest anti-sexual-violence organization, through a contract with DoD's sexual assault prevention and response office, known as SAPRO.

"Safe HelpRoom was designed with unique safeguards to ensure a safe and welcoming place for survivors to connect," said Army Maj. Gen. Gary S. Patton, SAPRO director. "Safe HelpRoom is the first of its kind to require participants to commit to a series of 'ground rules' of acceptable behavior before entering a session."

Additionally, each participant comment is reviewed to ensure it complies with the ground rules

"Survivors of sexual assault have told us that being able to discuss their concerns with peers can provide a level of support not available through other means."

— Jessica L. Wright
Acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness

prior to posting for the group to see. Safe HelpRoom provides a secure and private environment for positive and supportive discussions."

When users visit Safe Helpline, the staff provides one-on-one tailored assistance and offers a variety of up-to-date

service referrals for resources on and off military bases and installations, officials said in a statement announcing Safe HelpRoom's launch. Service referrals include information for sexual assault response coordinators, along with legal, medical, mental health, and spiritual military resources.

The referral database also houses information for local civilian and Veterans Affairs Department resources for helpline users seeking information and crisis support away from the military response system, they added.



Family Ties: Pfc. Jeovani BermudezGarcia, a heavy vehicle operator with the 1167th Support Company who was attached to the 267th Support Maintenance Company, holds his sister, whom he met for the first time when he was reunited with family members who live in El Sonsanate, El Salvador, while performing annual training with the 267th SMC in May. BermudezGarcia was born in El Salvador and moved to the U.S. with his parents a year later.

EL SALVADOR continued from page 1.

and officer-in-charge of the annual training, the 267th SMC supported engineers from Guard units around the U.S., El Salvador, Columbia and Chile on four construction sites. The combined group of Soldiers and engineers became part of Joint Task Force Jaguar.

"This particular one in El Salvador, they were building four different construction sites and those sites were building schools," said Yoder. He said the buildings consisted of concrete poured walls and metal roof trusses with corrugated metal for roofs."

During the mission, members of the 267th SMC ensured all vehicles, construction equipment and base equipment was operating properly, whether at the construction site or at their El Salvadorian military forward operating base, called DM6.

With unusually cold spring weather back in Nebraska, the Guardsmen received quite a shock when they arrived in the small country a few degrees north of the equator.

"When we left here, I don't remember what the temperature was, but it was cold," said Yoder. "We went down there and we got off the plane and it was 93 to 94 degrees and humid – it was hot. It took probably three to four days just to slowly acclimate."

"It was an eye-opener, especially when you leave March in Nebraska and go to a tropical environment," added Yoder.

Prior to their arrival at DM6, the Nebraska Soldiers prepared to live in field conditions, but were greeted with much better accommodations.

"We were fortunate. We fell into an open-bay barracks," said Yoder. "We still slept on cots and there was no air conditioning – we had fans. We slept under mosquito netting on the cots because of the bugs that are down there."

Yoder added they even had an actual shower facility – although the water was ice cold.

"It was a nice little bonus," said Yoder. "I think that kind of helped out with morale."

Despite the tropical climate, there was work to be done. A typical day for the Soldiers began at 5 a.m. and often didn't end until late evening, depending on if a Soldier was assigned to a construction site or to the FOB.

"You would wake up about five to do (physical training) and the work day started about eight if you're on the FOB and you go to about six or seven at night," said Spc. Brandon Kapke, a construction equipment repairer with the 267th SMC who was a part of the first and third rotations. "And if you're going out to the construction site, you're on the road about six and then you get back about six or seven. So you're busy all day, every day."



A Perfect Fit: Sgt. Ashley Johnson, a maintenance control sergeant with the 267th Support Maintenance Company, uses a plasma cutter to cut metal door framing during the Lincoln-based 267th SMC's annual training in El Tamarindo, El Salvador, in May. Johnson and fellow 267th SMC members were participating in "Beyond the Horizons," a humanitarian exercise with partner nations throughout Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

The Soldiers assigned to construction sites would convoy to each work site in a contact truck, which is basically a Humvee outfitted with almost any tool imaginable that might be needed to perform support maintenance. Along with the contact truck, the convoy consisted of two buses, an ambulance and a gun truck manned by El Salvadorian soldiers specifically tasked to provide security for the team.

Along with providing support maintenance, the 267th SMC provided one food service specialist for the entire six weeks and added another with each two-week rotation. With food service personnel on site, the Soldiers were treated to two hot meals a day with Meals, Ready to Eat each day for lunch. Yoder said the food service personnel were definitely put to work.

"On average they served about 400 meals a day that they actually cooked and they issued 200 to 225 MREs daily," said Yoder.

For Sgt. Ashley Johnson, a maintenance control sergeant with the 267th SMC, her time during the group's third rotation gave her an opportunity to get away from her normal, mostly administrative duties and work jobs in the other Military Occupational Specialties within the 267th SMC.

"Normally, in my position we sit in an office all day long, we don't get to go out and get the experience that all the other Soldiers do – this was more hands-on," said Johnson. "I got to play mechanic. I went and learned how to use the torch, the plasma cutter, pretty much everything."

"I helped work on a forklift, changed tires...I've never done any of that stuff before," she added.

Although each of the three rotations was considered an annual training, those involved saw it differently.

"Some people would call it an AT, I would call it probably a miniature

mobilization," said Yoder.

"For us to move out of Pentterman Armory to El Salvador, a lot has to happen," he added. "Not only are we moving equipment and personnel...we took it as an opportunity to test mobilization and make sure we would be proficient."

Johnson agreed it was much more than a normal AT.

"I liked it a lot more than other ATs," she said. "It makes you feel like an actual Soldier...not just going around pushing paper all day. It makes you feel like you actually served a purpose while you were there, especially when we got to go off to the different job sites. It was nice to actually see what you were doing, see that the schools were being built, to communicate with the kids, talk to them and see what they thought about us being there."

"I think it helps you become a more well-rounded Soldier," said Johnson. "From my aspect, I'm ordering these parts for the mechanics, but I don't actually know what the part is or what it does... it was nice to actually get to sit in the mechanic's position and know what they needed and what it looks like. I think that helped a lot of the lower ranking Soldiers who got to put on classes where they were teaching us things."

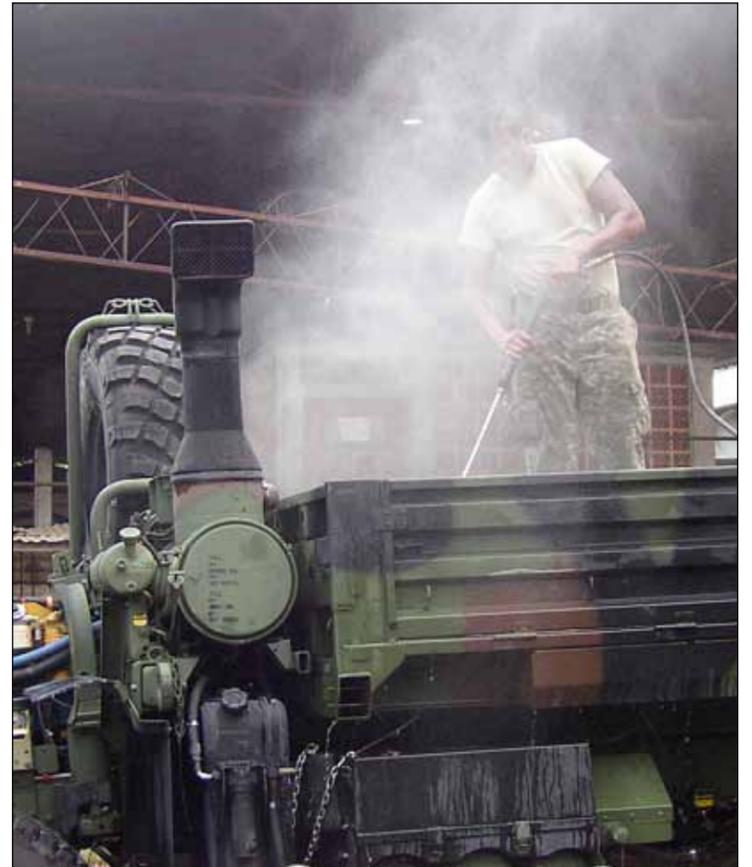
But, like a normal AT, the Soldiers accomplished several standard training tasks while not assigned to a construction site. According to Yoder the Soldiers completed combat lifesaver training, battle drills and approximately 20 Army warrior tasks.

As one of the few Soldiers who stayed in El Salvador for the entire six-week mission, Yoder said he wanted to ensure his unit members got something important out of their time there.

"Confidence," said Yoder. "Confidence in their leadership, confidence in their own ability, confidence to be able to get out on the next mission



Nice Form: "Nu-form" concrete walls stand ready at a construction sites in El Salvador during the 267th Support Maintenance Company's annual training in May. Four construction sites eventually became schools for local El Salvador communities.



Photos courtesy of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tollie Yoder

Spotless: Spc. Darius Stanley, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 267th Support Maintenance Company, prepares a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle for redeployment to the U.S., May 2, following annual training in El Salvador in May. Members of the 267th SMC assisted engineers in the construction of several schools and latrines for local communities.

and perform whatever their role would be."

Confidence is exactly what Johnson got, especially in her ability to take on anything a real deployment might throw at her.

"I feel like it was an honor to go just because I've never deployed," said Johnson. "I felt it gave me somewhat of that experience of what a real deployment would be like and I think it was great especially for our lower enlisted, too, to get that kind of grasp on what it would be like if we would deploy."

"It helps you become a better Soldier to be able to be shoved into a position and know that you can be confident doing another job without help," she added.

According to the Soldiers who took part in the mission, they will surely remember the work they did in helping improve El Salvador's future with vastly upgraded facilities from which its children will learn.

According to Kapke, a few of the construction sites were right next to old school facilities, which were literally falling apart. He said the school children would often watch the construction, talk to and play with the Soldiers. It was a very fulfilling experience for Kapke.

"You're always waiting for the time to go and actually help out and have little kids and people smile at you and thank you for what you're doing..." said Kapke. "It just warms your heart."

"It's exciting because you can tell what school they had compared to the school they're going to have – it's almost night and day," he added. "It's going to be a big difference."

Johnson said her favorite part of the mission, other than seeing different career fields within her unit, was interacting with workers from other cultures and seeing the smiling faces of the children for which the schools are intended.

"I just like to help people and let them have a good feel for what, not just the National Guard, but the Army does," said Johnson.

"I like people to think positive things instead of negative things,

so I hope the impact we made in El Salvador was enough for the El Salvadorian Soldiers, the Chileans and even just the locals to think how great we were when we were there."

And this experience can only further strengthen the bond the National Guard has to the community, even if that community is half a continent away.

"We've done the different state things that need to be done," said Johnson. "We've done (Hurricane) Gustav and we've done the Chadron fires. It's more or less the same concept, but it's a whole different world."

"I think it just makes the 267th a better unit than we already are," added Johnson.

And despite the heat and long days, unit members are proud of what they accomplished.

"It was a blast," said Kapke. "I'd do it over again."

"The experience...you just couldn't replace it," he added. "You couldn't get that back here and it was actually meaningful – that's the big part."

"It's good to know that I was part of something like that," said Johnson. "I'm hoping the unit contacts them as it's progressing just to see where they end up."

Yoder said he hopes his unit grew as much as a group as each individual Soldier grew on his or her own.

"It was a huge training event," said Yoder. "It was an excellent opportunity. I think as a unit we definitely grew tighter, much closer and became more proficient in our (military occupational skills) and our Soldier skills as well. A lot of these Soldiers have never been outside the U.S. and have never had to sleep on a cot...so some of these experiences are very unique to El Salvador and they may not see it again for some time."

"After completing it, I don't think there's anybody who walks away without their head held high," he added. "Supporting a mission like that, knowing that they made a difference in El Salvador with the local community."

Air Guard student flight program helps recruits get started on right foot

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Staff Writer

Overcast skies and gusty winds provided trainees from the 155th Student Flight welcome relief from unseasonably high humidity as they helped the 155th Air Refueling Wing prepare for its Ability to Survive and Operate exercise under watchful supervision of Tech. Sgt. Mandy Denhardt, a Nebraska Air Guard production recruiter from the 155th Force Support Squadron, June 8.

"This is the last of it. Once you finish this, you're done," Denhardt shouted amid sound of scraping shovels and hubbub of casual chat. This seemed to motivate the trainees and they picked up the pace while filling sand bags at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

It's hardly Basic Military Training, but the Nebraska Air Guard's Student Flight Program gives non-prior-service enlistees a head start on their initial military training, making the transition from civilians into Airmen easier.

From the time of enlistment until the time they leave for BMT at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, students wear designated red t-shirts identifying them as enlisted members on base and drill as trainees—their title throughout BMT—during the regular Unit Training Assemblies of the 155th ARW. They are paid at the grade in which they enlisted—airman to airman first class.

Denhardt is the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the training course consisting of classes covering money management, education, military training and job satisfaction. The Airman also receive familiarization training in areas such as reporting procedures, drill and ceremony, physical training, the Air Force core values, customs

and courtesy, and the military rank structure.

After completion of the mandatory four-block course, trainees are only required to attend the Student Flight program for fitness training. They spend the rest of each drill familiarizing themselves with their respective work areas and getting to know their supervisors and co-workers until they leave for BMT.

"Activities like preparing for the ORE help keep new trainees motivated about the military while they wait to secure BMT and technical school dates," Denhardt said. New enlistees generally have a waiting period of 90 to 120 days before they leave for BMT.

The new enlistees are a very diverse group, ranging from 18-40 years old, said Denhardt. Many are right out of high school or in college, while some are married or have kids. Some already have civilian careers.

Denhardt added that each new recruit has his/her reasons for joining the Guard and each has varying degrees of knowledge about the military before joining.

Nick Goodwin, a 20-year-old Omaha native and sophomore at the University of Nebraska-Omaha who is studying Business Administration, is scheduled to start BMT in September. Goodwin said he knew a lot about military life prior to joining the Guard because his family has a long history of military service including his grandfather, who was an Army pilot who flew Army One for President John F. Kennedy.

Goodwin is slated to join the 155th Maintenance Squadron as an aerospace propulsion specialist following graduation from BMT and his technical school.

He joined the Guard for the education benefits and hopes to eventually become a tanker pilot.

"(Student Flight Program) has given me a realistic look into life at BMT and a lot of good tools for what to do and what not to do," he said.

Conversely, 23-year-old Zachary



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton

Working Together: Members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing Student Flight prepare sand bags for the 155th ARW's Ability to Survive and Operate exercise, June 8. Members of the 155th Student Flight attend Guard drills to better prepare themselves for basic military training.



Building Teamwork: New recruits, Joshua Mayer and Billy Deardoff, fill sandbags for an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise, June 8. Both are members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing's Student Flight and are waiting to go to Basic Military Training.

Allen, also an Omaha native, said he did not know anything about military life prior to joining the Guard. He is freshman at UNO

studying Aviation Science and said he joined the Guard for the education benefits and to do something selfless and bigger than himself.

Allen is slated to join the 155th Civil Engineering Squadron as water and fuels systems specialist after graduation from BMT and technical school.

"The Student Flight Program has taught me what to expect at BMT and how I should correctly prepare myself," said Allen. "I've learned that you do everything as a team and you have to listen to orders very carefully."

Denhardt said about one-in-three Airmen come back from BMT and thank the instructors for teaching the course, attributing their success in BMT and technical school to the fundamentals they learned in the Student Flight Program. She added she is always looking for volunteers to help out with the program, especially new Airman returning home from BMT and technical school to help with drill, basic training tricks and fitness.

"The success rate of our members going through BMT and getting through tech. school without getting into trouble has improved significantly," said Denhardt. "I attribute most of that to the Student Flight Program."

Guard Soldiers help Omaha cadets gain confidence, learn new skills



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Helping Hands: Capt. Chris Hansen, Nebraska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, offers some encouragement to an Omaha High School Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps cadet as he prepares to rappel off of the Camp Ashland tower, June 3.

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Fifty feet never seemed so high. At least that's the thought that was probably passing through the minds of more than 150 uniformed Army Junior ROTC cadets from Omaha Public Schools, June 3, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

The cadets, who represented the seven Omaha Public Schools that participate in Army JROTC, were at Camp Ashland participating in their annual four-day summer training session. According to Lt. Col. Jeff Flagg, the director of Army instruction for Omaha Public Schools, the rappelling tower is always one of the key events of the summer camp.

"The kids look forward to this event every year," said Flagg. "And I know that this station is always going to be run professionally and safely."

Flagg said this year's camp included stops at Camp Ashland, Offutt Air Force Base, the Strategic Air and Space Museum and a tour of Nebraska National Guard facilities in Lincoln. While at Camp Ashland, the student cadets participated in the rappelling tower station, a medical first aid station and a Guard-related challenge course.

Helping the JROTC officials conduct the camp were members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion and several other Army Guard Soldiers, who ran the rappelling tower and provided assistance during the other events.

Flagg said the Guard's assistance



Confidence Builder: Capt. Chris Hansen gives an Omaha Junior ROTC cadet some pointers.

is irreplaceable.

"There is tremendous value with this relationship," he said. "JROTC is not about enlisting new Soldiers, but rather about building better citizens. The Guard helps us do that by helping us judge our Color Guard and Honor Guard competitions, staffing several of the boards we conduct annually and here during this summer camp."

The rappelling tower was definitely the highlight of that experience, too. Various cadets rotated to the tower where they received safety and training briefings by Army Guard and JROTC staff members. Then, equipped with helmets and harnesses, the cadets climbed the ladders up to the top floor of the tower, which moved slightly in the wind.

With each step taken, eyes began to grow wider, smiles more nervous. At the top floor, the cadets came

face-to-face with instructors like Capt. Chris Hansen, a full-time member of the state Recruiting and Retention Battalion who also serves as commander of the Guard's Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance).

"A lot of them are pretty nervous when they get up here," said Hansen in between cadets. "For a lot of them, this is the first time they've ever attempted to do anything like this... so our job is to try to give them the confidence they need while also making sure they're doing it safely."

For cadets like Katie Glessman, an Omaha Benson High School junior, the experience of rappelling down the tower was exhilarating, if not a little bit scary.

"I loved it," said Glessman just minutes after putting her feet back onto solid ground after successfully overcoming her fears of rappelling down the tower. "It was great... except for having to back off."

Cadet Maddy Gack agreed. An Omaha Burke High School student, Gack said: "It's fun. Rappelling is a good work out, too... I was nervous, but once you get started down, it's easy."

Flagg said those reactions are typical.

"A lot of times the ones who have the most trouble doing it are the ones who get down and then immediately want to try it again," he said. "It's a wonder what it does to a young person's sense of self-confidence and their belief that they can overcome the odds."

"Those are pretty good lessons."

Marketing playing big role in retention battle

By Sgt. Heidi Krueger
Staff Photojournalist

The Nebraska Army National Guard has had its fair share of struggles over the past couple years with a high operation tempo. But as that tempo slows down, retention is still high on the list of priorities.

Nebraska's Recruiting and Retention Battalion knew they had to make a difference in this all-important battle, so they decided to step up marketing to aid with the retention numbers.

"During this year, we have increased our retention marketing efforts in several new ways," said Sgt. 1st Class Maren Stewart, marketing non-commissioned officer-in-charge for Recruiting and Retention. "Some are still in the development stage, but have involved programs including direct mail retention campaigns, retention banners, a new battalion extension certificate, retention movie nights, a retention T-shirt specific to the Nebraska Army National Guard, and primarily increasing communication between the Recruiting and Retention Battalion and the individual units across the state," added Stewart.

According to Stewart, retention continues to be a high priority.

"Retention has always been important to the state," said Stewart. "However, this year I believe we have increased awareness and brought it to the forefront more than in the years before."

Staff Sgt. Anita Hays and Sgt. Patrick Wyrick, both retention NCOs temporary working full time to reach Soldiers across the state, have teamed up with the Recruiting and Retention Battalion to tell them what the Soldiers across the state are really looking for when deciding whether to stay in or get out.

"It's really a daily conversation with Soldiers out in the field," said Wyrick. "We have a lot of units at annual training, so we will probably see some spikes in the Army Physical Fitness Test being conducted and Soldiers passing the APFT. I know that's a lot of focus out there with the commanders."

Retaining Nebraska's Fighting Force
Third of a Multi-part Series

Stewart couldn't agree more.

"Both of our state retention non-commissioned officers have worked closely with myself and all of our recruiting and retention team to provide us information directly from the field," said Stewart, "and from Soldiers to really understand what the pulse is coming from those individuals who are coming upon their estimated termination of service."

"They have done an excellent job communicating with the units



Photo by Sgt. Heidi Krueger

Creative Solutions To Nebraska's Retention Battle: Sgt. 1st Class Maren Stewart, marketing non-commissioned officer-in-charge for the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion, works on the design for a retention project, June 28.

themselves and providing us with feedback," added Stewart.

That in turn has helped spur several new marketing concepts designed to help get information out to the field.

"We have banners out in all the armories now, versus just having someone tell them this is what's going on," said Wyrick. "We have banners — pretty big banners — and they are hard to miss."

"The banners (give us) another way to get our information out there," added Wyrick. "Having our contact information out there versus me calling every single Soldier — which I have done before — this way someone will read it and if they have a question, they will call us."

Adding new marketing concepts have proven useful as noticed by the number of questions and calls from Soldiers across the state, officials say. "In marketing we develop products and marketing pieces that are meaningful and deliver our retention message, while falling into all regulatory guidance," Stewart said.

Nebraska's Recruiting and Retention Battalion also came up with a t-shirt that will be given

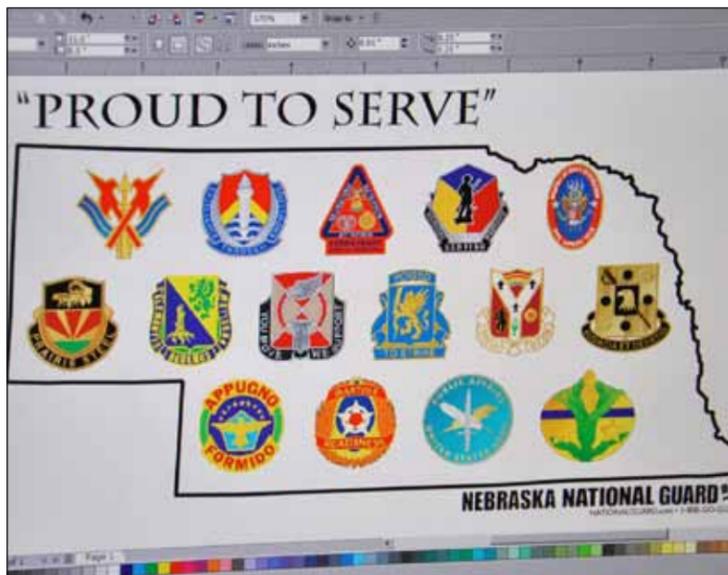


Photo by Sgt. Heidi Krueger

Coming Soon: The 'Proud to Serve' design, which is still in progress, will appear on the back of new retention t-shirts. The t-shirts will be given out to Soldiers who reenlist in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

to Soldiers who re-enlisted with all of the state's units on the back versus giving those Guardsmen a recruiting shirt.

"Marketing-wise, the t-shirt will kind of be a big deal," said Wyrick.

"Some Soldiers like free stuff, but it's not a draw for everyone," added Wyrick.

Officials said Soldiers also need to know there are still bonuses available right now that may not be there next fiscal year.

According to Wyrick, he knows how important it is to go out and talk to the Soldiers during their drill weekend.

"The most valuable aspect is just

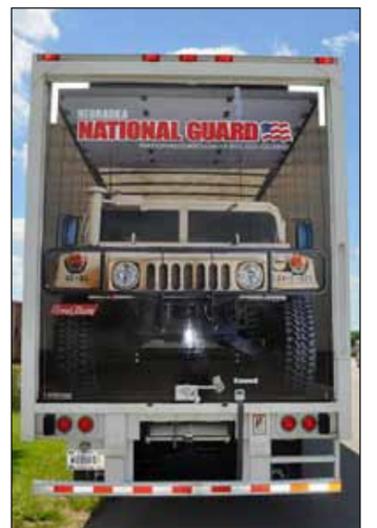


Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Maren Stewart

Looks Real?: The back of a Nebraska National Guard supply semi-trailer features a realistic looking Humvee. It was designed by the Nebraska National Guard marketing team to help boost awareness of the Nebraska Army National Guard.

communication," said Wyrick. "We have Soldiers that come to drill once a month and that might really be the only opportunity to get them the information, so it's important that (information) reaches every Soldier."

RE-ENLISTMENT BONUSES

You may be eligible for:

- 6 YEAR EXTENSION = \$10,000
- 3 YEAR EXTENSION = \$5,000

- Both bonuses are lump sum payments, and contracts must be signed between 365 - 91 days to ETS.

- CONUS or OCONUS
- Must be E-7 or below
- Under 13 years service
- Can only have one incentive at a time (Bonus, Kicker, SLRP)
- AGR and Technicians are not eligible to receive this incentive policy

- Cannot be excess
- Must be DMOSQ (Some policy exceptions)
- Meet other requirements in policy

For more information contact your Unit Readiness NCO or Unit Career Counselor.

NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD

GOLD RUSH WEEKEND

You are invited to attend the Nebraska Army National Guard's

GOLD RUSH WEEKEND

(Army National Guard Commissioning Programs)

SEPTEMBER 15, 2013

Report time is 0845 Sunday
Memorial Hall (Building 50), Camp Ashland, Nebraska

Lodging is available at the Camp Ashland Inn

Uniform: ACU

To find out more about the weekend and to request orders, contact your unit Readiness NCO or contact the Officer Strength Manager in your area.

CW2 Jennifer Fotinos: 402.309.7373 or jennifer.d.fotinos.mil@mail.mil
2LT Ryan Thompson: 402-309-7067 or ryan.e.thompson22.mil@mail.mil

Getting Down To Business: Members of the 72nd Civil Support Team conduct emergency decontamination on a CST member who became "incapacitated" while in a contaminated area.



"If we can identify (the hazards) quicker, they can be treated quicker and their lives can be saved... That's where the true pressure comes from."

— 1st Lt. Sean Thurmer
72nd Civil Support Team science officer

12 for 12

Nebraska's 72nd Civil Support Team passes important May evaluation with flying colors

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

For most people, scoring a 100 percent on a major examination is cause for a celebration.

That wasn't the case for the 22 Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard's 72nd Civil Support Team, however, after they went 12-for-12 during their recent Training Proficiency Evaluation conducted May 16 in Lincoln, Neb.

They expected to do that well.

"We expected to get all go's," said 1st Lt. Sean Thurmer, 72nd CST science officer, after the Nebraska National Guard rapid response team passed its all-important 18-month training evaluation with flying colors. "So, I don't think anyone was really excited... I think everyone was just satisfied."

According to Capt. Jocelyn Kuta, 72nd CST Survey Section leader, the TPE is essentially an intense evaluation each National Guard CST must successfully pass every 18 months to maintain its operational readiness status. That's pretty important considering that a CST is responsible for providing civilian first responders and incident commanders with capabilities designed to help identify and deal with hazardous materials involving chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear contaminants.

"Basically, our mission is to help assess, identify and provide advice for the mitigation of (weapons of mass destruction) or CBRN," said Kuta.

In order to do that in a timely fashion, the CST – which is made up of full-time Army and Air National Guardsmen – are required to maintain a high level of readiness. Within 90 minutes of notification – day or night, seven-days-a-week, 365-days-a-year – the CST must be able to deploy its advanced party to begin the assessment phase of a response operation, with the remainder of the team being ready to follow the advance party within 180 minutes.

"What's going to happen in a typical response is that the first responders are going to try and figure out what's going on. If they are unable to do so with their instruments or their expertise, then they call us up and we help out," said Kuta.

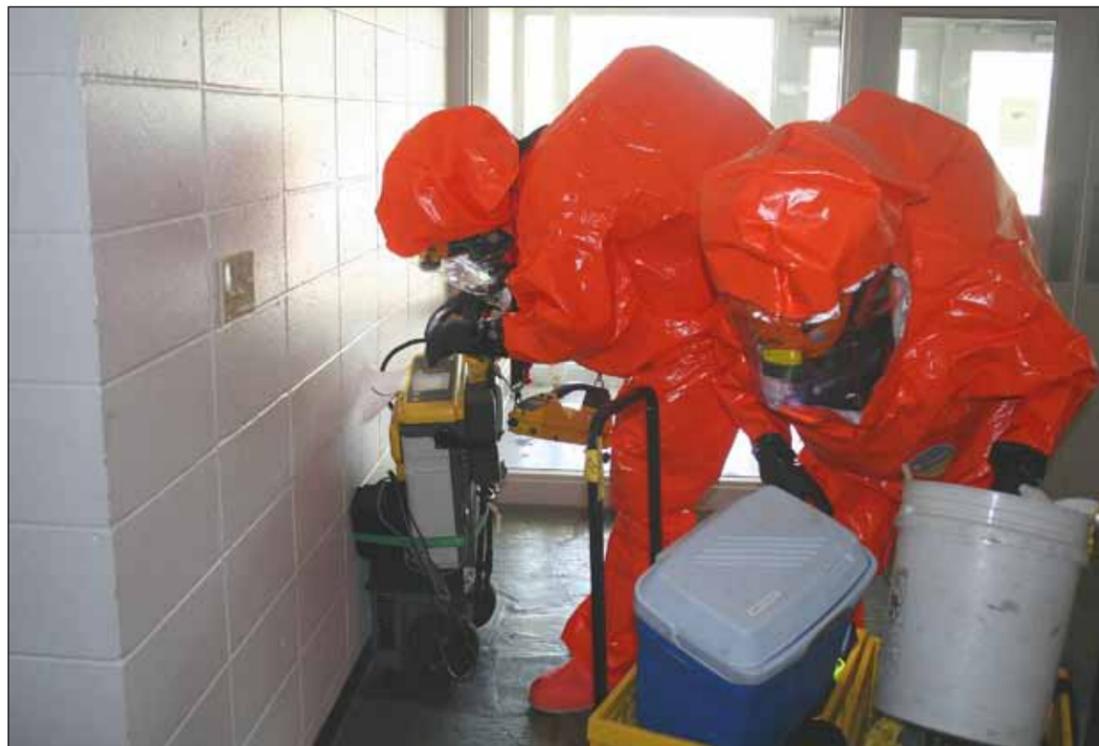
In the event a CST is called out, it will bring significant capabilities with it to the scene. Kuta said the team consists of a three-person command cell, a three-person operations cell, a two-person analytical cell equipped with a trailer-based analysis laboratory, a two-person medical section, a two-person communications cell, a two-person decontamination section and a survey cell consisting of eight people.

Kuta said the purpose behind the May evaluation, conducted by a team of National Guard evaluators from U.S. Army North, was to ensure the CST can quickly and effectively accomplish its mission.

"Essentially, it makes sure that we're meeting all of the standards that (National Guard Bureau) has put out for us as mandatory," she said. "If we don't meet those standards, then we go into what they call 'black' and would have to wait until the next evaluation to be able to be called out again."

Kuta said the unit didn't train specifically for the TPE, which consisted of 579 individual tasks grouped into 12 overarching areas.

"Because we are a full-time



Photos courtesy of Capt. Jocelyn Kuta

First Tests: Sgt. Travis Benda and Sgt. Ty Tucker enter a contaminated area and begin conducting tests with their equipment to determine what types of contaminant are present during a Training Proficiency Evaluation conducted May 16 in Lincoln, Neb.

force, we do training pretty much 365 days a year. We train for real world events," she said. "...So we really don't train for a TPE. Those proficiencies and those standards are just what we do."

What was challenging about this particular evaluation, however, was that nearly 60 percent of the CST had turned over since the last TPE. For the majority of the CST members, that meant this was their first experience with a TPE.

Sgt. Ty Tucker, a member of the survey team has only been a member of the CST for approximately a year, joined the team after serving as a chemical specialist with the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion and a temporary position with the 209th Regional Training Institute. He said the opportunity to work with the CST seemed like an intriguing opportunity.

"Typically, we're the guys who go in first and perform perimeter monitoring of the initial hazardous area that we're in to make sure that nothing is off-gassing and going downwind," he said about the survey section mission. "Then we are the actual team members who go (into the suspected hazardous site)."

Survey team members are also responsible for locating and collecting, if possible, any samples of the suspected hazardous material for further analysis by the CST's analytical section, he added.

According to Tucker, remaining calm and maintaining trust in a potential dangerous environment are key components to performing well.

"The biggest key is not being claustrophobic," said Tucker about the protective gear that he and the other survey section members must wear while conducting their



Getting Ready For The Mission: (From left) Sgt. 1st Class Robert Combs, Sgt. Ty Tucker, Tech. Sgt. Donovan Garcia, Sgt. Travis Benda (front) and Sgt. 1st Class Landen Koopman, all members of the 72nd Civil Support Team's Survey and Decontamination sections, listen as Capt. Jocelyn Kuta gives a briefing on the objectives of an upcoming mission into a "hot zone," May 16.

mission. "You have to mentally block out what your body is going through to get through that hour to an hour-and-a-half that you're doing the entry."

"And then you have to rely on the training," he added. "You have to have trust in your equipment and the people you're with that, should something go wrong, they're ready and trained to help get you out of that environment."

Tucker said the training he received prior to the TPE definitely helped prepare him to be under the microscope during the evaluation.

"I tried as much as I could to just tune them out," he said. "There were obviously some factors that they introduced that you probably wouldn't get in a real world environment and obviously you can see them in the background, but I just tried to tune them out and concentrate on my training and my equipment."

Another member of the CST experiencing a TPE for the first time was Sgt. Alisha Welch. Along with serving as the team's human

resources sergeant, she also serves as part of the two-person decontamination cell.

According to Welch, who joined the CST about a year ago as a member of the survey team before taking her current job in March, she felt some stress as the TPE approached.

"I had just started in decon... so there was a lot of training that I had to get up on," Welch said, adding she also needed to get used to working with Sgt. 1st Class Robert Combs, CST logistics sergeant who forms the other half of the decontamination team. "We had to get each other's battle rhythms down and get used to working with each

other."

Welch said they accomplished this by going over the standards of guidance that govern the CST's decontamination operations. They also met up one day a week to work together with the team's decontamination equipment.

Still, Welch said she had considerable jitters once the evaluation started.

"When we got to the site, I just took a deep breath and tried to calm down because nerves don't always help you out," she said. "I just focused on what I need to do."

"We got everything laid out and made sure that everything was hooked up. We ran through the decon line to make sure that we had everything labeled for the survey guys coming back," said Welch, adding that the team's first sergeant also pitched in, double-checking their equipment and planned procedures.

Welch, like Tucker, said she also tried to simply block out the evaluators, whom she termed as being really good. "I tried to pretend

they weren't even there because, honestly, it just stresses you out knowing that people are looking at every single move that you make."

Probably the biggest key to the CST's overall success, said Thurmer, was the fact that even though much of the team was new, they'd all had significant training in their individual and collective tasks.

"It's really a small unit, so it's really easy to have effective communication," said Thurmer who is one of the more experienced officers on the CST. "Everyone knows each other and we work well with each other. There's a real sense of professionalism between the sections."

That played itself out during the TPE, Thurmer said.

"I think it went well," he said. "As a team, we've definitely come together, especially over the past couple months."

"It seemed to me that the evaluators were a lot more strict than the last TPE," said Thurmer. "There were a lot more challenges as far as the scenarios. They were very methodical in how they were graded."

"So, everyone was highly scrutinized," he added.

Thurmer said that type of scrutiny is good for a unit required to consistently maintain its readiness at a high level.

"It was good for the team to go through this evaluation, to be viewed under a microscope," he said. "But we did it well."

According to Thurmer, his counterpart within the lab, Sgt. 1st Class Chad Sample, received recognition from the evaluators for the work he did in cutting the time it takes to analyze a sample.

Thurmer said that by carefully listening to the readings being recorded by the survey team, Sample was able to prepare the lab's toxin analyzer to the point that once the lab received the sample, all he had to do was push "go" on the equipment.

"Normally, teams wait until they receive the sample before setting up the equipment and beginning the analysis, which can sometimes take up to four hours," said Thurmer. "Because he did such a good job prepping the lab and the toxin analyzer, we were able to get an answer within 30 minutes."

"There were a lot of things that set him up for success, but he really wowed the evaluators," Thurmer said, adding that they said they'd never seen that technique before.

According to Kuta, the entire team was satisfied that it received go's on each of the 12 areas.

"Relief," said Kuta about the initial response from the team. "We were really glad to be done. It was a long day and a long week. We were happy that we met the standard."

Tucker agreed.

"I wasn't shocked by the results because I had full faith in the team to do every single thing that was expected of it," he said, adding he, like the rest of the CST, also gained additional confidence by going through the TPE.

"Every event is good because it allows you to pick up things that you can do better."

That's especially important considering the life-saving nature of the 72nd CST's mission.

"It's most intense when there are casualties or the possibilities of casualties," said Thurmer. "If we can identify (the hazards) quicker, they can be treated quicker and their lives can be saved."

"That's where the true pressure comes from."

Geared Up: Sgt. Patrick Wyrick (right) and a Nebraska Air National Guardsman help prepare a member of the chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosive enhanced response force package (CERF-P) decontamination team for his tour-of-duty in the decontamination tent during a May 16 exercise conducted at the Nebraska National Guard's Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb.



Photo by Sgt. Heidi Krueger



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton

Helping Hands: Members of the Nebraska National Guard's chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosive enhanced response force package (CERF-P) search and extraction team tend to an "injured" person in a rubble pile during a May 16 training exercise.

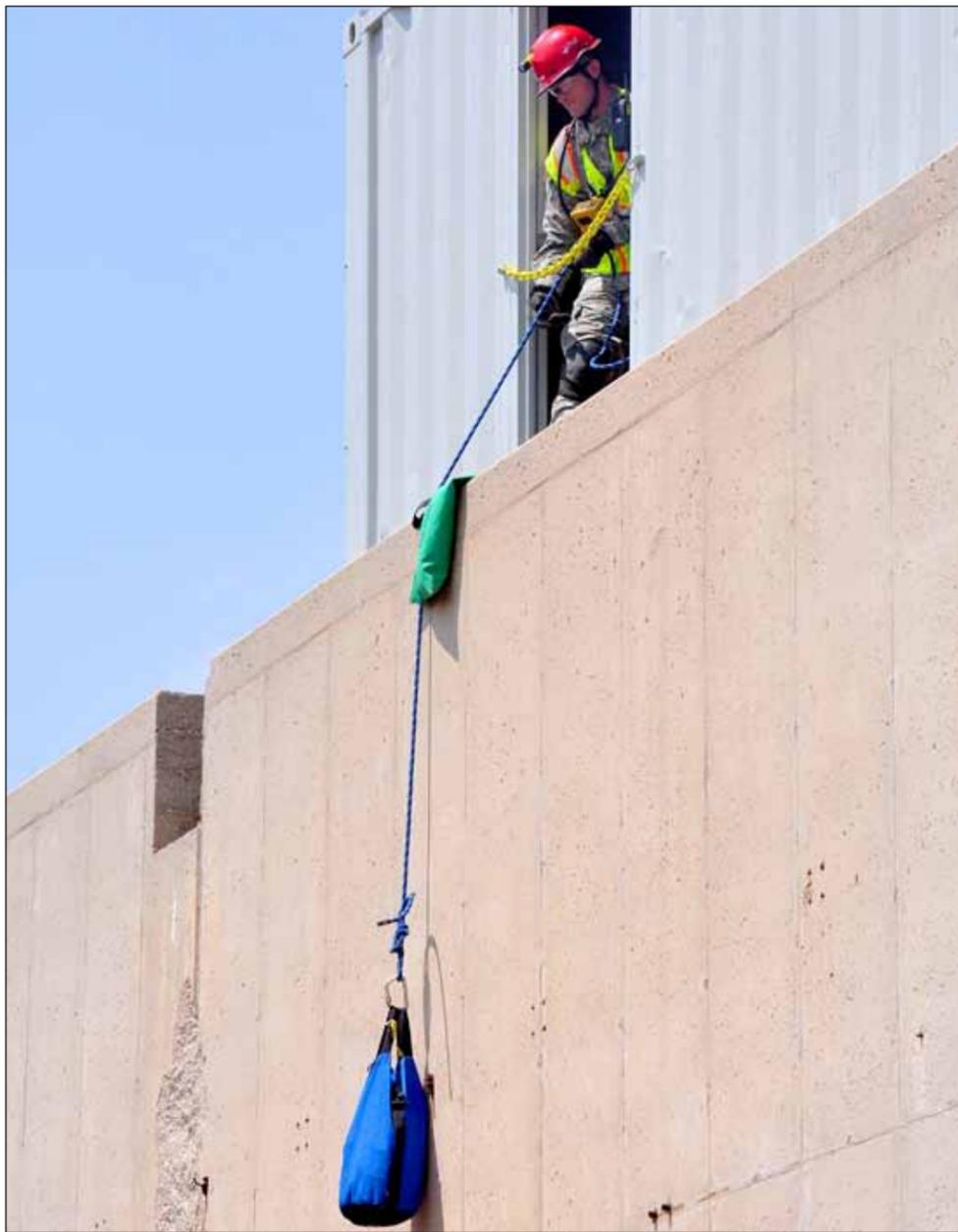


Photo by Sgt. Heidi Krueger

Tools Of The Trade: A Nebraska National Guard engineer hoists a bag of tools to help members of the CERF-P search and extraction team remove a "casualty" trapped inside a building during a training exercise conducted May 16 at the Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb.

CERF-P continued from page 1.

recovery team that participated in the exercise with the CERF-P's search and extraction, decontamination, and medical triage sections.

According to Guard officials, CERF-Ps are designed to respond to a CBRNE or other catastrophic events and assist local, state and federal agencies in conducting consequence management by providing capabilities to conduct personnel decontamination, emergency medical services and casualty search and extraction.

Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the effort say it's a good mission to be part of.

"I like the joint environment just because of the fact that when I was active duty I didn't get to work with the Army like we do in this mission," said Tech. Sgt. Matt Jordan, a medic with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Medical Group. "Just seeing the joint forces get the mission done is really nice to see."

The members of the Lincoln-based 155th Medical Group provided medical treatment and triage, which consisted of providing pre-hospital emergency treatment to injured civilians after they are processed through a nearby mass casualty decontamination facility operated by other members of the Nebraska Guard. Members of the Nebraska Army Guard's 754th Chemical Company were part of decontamination team that decontaminated around 40 ambulatory and 20 non-ambulatory individuals through the facility each hour.

"These service members are dual-mission capable," said Sgt. 1st Class Eric Gettert, Nebraska's CERF-P operations noncommissioned officer. "What that means kind of is that each one of these Soldiers and Airmen has different jobs... this is not their primary job."

"It is kind of like an extra duty, but a huge extra duty because they have to split their time up in different training; half being their normal duties plus CERF-P," he said.

According to said Pfc. Meka Nicksich a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialist with the Omaha-based 754th Chemical Company, she wouldn't enjoy her job as much if it wasn't for the CERF-P.

"CERF-P is definitely my favorite part of my military occupational specialty," said Nicksich. "It's very realistic training. If something does ever happen, it's nice that we are prepared for it."

Jordan agreed. "If reality hits in a 9/11 kind of event that, Nebraska, of all places, has the capabilities to help," said Jordan.

The search and extraction team is made up of the Wahoo and Hastings-based 623rd Engineer Company and members of two fire-fighting detachments from Norfolk. They have been trained to be able to get into confined spaces and collapsed structures to rescue victims trapped beneath the rubble.

"I think it's a feather in our cap to be able to bring these types of capabilities to people who might not have the resources or manpower," said Pegg. "I think it really shines and shows the mission of the Guard."

"We are here to support our civilian counterparts," added Pegg. "But without the Guard personnel being motivated, trained and qualified, it just can't be done."

That is especially important considering that the CERF-P must be ready to provide near-immediate response if given orders from the Governor. The May training and evaluation proved that the team would be able to help with a real world event if it was called upon, said Pegg.

"It's actually been an outstanding exercise," said Pegg. "The Army and the Air have been working really well together. They have been taking into consideration different standard operating procedures and have integrated it in to very effect team."



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Cold Shower: Members of the Nebraska National Guard's chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosive enhanced response force package (CERF-P) decontamination team decontaminate an "injured patient" during a training exercise, May 16, at the Nebraska National Guard's Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb. The exercise was designed to test the CERF-P's ability to assist first responders following a nightmarish scenario involving a simulated massive tornado that damages a town and causes potential chemical contamination.



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Teamwork: A team of Nebraska National Guard engineers shore up the side of a "building" before other members of the Nebraska National Guard's chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosive enhanced response force package (CERF-P) search and extraction team enter it to search for people trapped inside during a training exercise conducted May 16 at the Mead Training Site.

Cultivating Hopes

■ Nebraska Guard's fourth Afghan Agribusiness Development team picks up where similar teams left off

By Sgt. Heidi Krueger
Staff Photojournalist

Although they come from many different walks of life, they share a goal of helping others, serving their country and a love of agriculture.

Combine those three descriptions together and one would find a pretty close definition of a group of 11 Nebraska National Guardsmen and one U.S. Army reservist who volunteered to deploy thousands of miles from home to Helmand Province, Afghanistan, where they are currently working with Afghan counterparts in diverse areas of agriculture.

The Nebraska National Guard Agribusiness Development Team No. 4's mission is to mentor and advise the provincial Director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock and his staff on how to build agricultural capacity in Helmand Province. Not only has the Nebraska ADT already begun accomplishing its mission in the few short months its been in the country, the team members are also teaming with the local Afghan DAIL staff to ensure that the fruits of their labor continue on long after they're gone.

Several members of ADT No. 4 recently took time to respond to a series of questions given to them via email about their experiences working with and helping Afghan agricultural leaders and farmers.

Improving Irrigation

Capt. Brandon Burton is a logistics officer with the 734th Transportation Battalion by trade. For the past few months, though, he has worked to help improve irrigation infrastructure and practices in the Helmand River basin.

"I'm introducing new ideas and urging my Afghan counterpart to try new ideas and move forward in his thinking," said Burton, adding he is primarily serving as a mentor more than anything else. Along the way, though, he said he is also learning how to deal with the obvious and not-so-obvious cultural differences that come up.

"The hardest part is working

through the vastly different cultural norms in how Afghans plan, operate and think in a government and managerial capacity," said Burton. "The norms of phone calls, emails, meetings and daily communication and organization are simply unknown here."

Burton said working with people from other countries is one of the most rewarding parts of his assignment, so far.

"It's all about the people around you," said Burton. "We've met and worked with some great folks from the British Army and our Afghan linguists, as well as other military units who work in our area."

Overall, Burton said he knows that all his hard work improving their irrigation infrastructures and practices will pay off in the long run. "I personally hope to just make any one new idea stick and stay in use here," said Burton. "Even if in my entire year of meetings I can just get one farmer to understand the better use of water and well, then I will count that as a success."

Boosting Finance, Budget and Human Resources

Maj. Kevin Hurtt is the deputy state surgeon for the Nebraska National Guard. He is currently mentoring, advising and assisting both the Human Resource department as well as the Finance and Budget department for the Helmand provincial DAIL.

"Within the Human Resources department I am working on filling open job positions in the northern districts," said Hurtt. "Due to the area's unstable nature and the lack of access to higher education, this has become quite a challenge."

He said dealing with budget issues often offer unique challenges that are due, in part, to local Afghan culture and acceptance of "corruption as a way of life."

An additional challenge, Hurtt said, is simply setting up face-to-face meetings.

"The hardest part is being able to see my two Afghan counterparts on a regular basis, said Hurtt. "We have no organic security force with us and it's hard to move about freely and safely."



Photos courtesy of Nebraska National Guard Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 4

Far From Home: Members of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 4 pose for a photo after conducting combat skills refresher training. The training gave the team the opportunity to strengthen different combat skills.



Honey Anyone? A research farm in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, is being used by members of Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 4 to improve honey production.

"Even the Afghans find it hard to meet with us on a regular basis due to safety concerns," he added.

Still, even though the mission is far from easy, Hurtt said he knows the first few months that ADT No. 4 has been on the ground have helped and that ultimately the team will make a lasting difference.

"I hope to leave a lasting impression by imparting a little knowledge and a different way of thinking with our Afghan counterparts," said Hurtt.

Enhancing Animal Health

Sgt. Riley Ohde is a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialist with the 754th Chemical Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company. She is currently serving as the ADT No. 4's livestock and animal health specialist. Ohde agreed with Hurtt that meeting up with their counterparts was far harder than originally thought.

"I believe the hardest part for myself has been adjusting to the Afghanistan sense of time," said Ohde. "The cancelled meetings and no-shows (have) been frustrating, but it is something we are adapting to and overcoming as a team."

Ohde said she knows that, as a team, the Nebraska ADT will be able to overcome some of the hardships and will continue focusing on helping their Afghan counterparts in any way possible. She added that success may also involve simple, small, incremental advances.

"Overall, I would like to see even the smallest improvement or knowledge gained by the Livestock and Animal Health Department to show that some progress was made and our year here did help the agricultural field in some way," said Ohde.

Educating on Plant Protection

Staff Sgt. Jennifer Feldt has helped enlist many Soldiers in the Nebraska National Guard as a recruiter. She wanted to do more.

Feldt is now doing that as she helps teach her Afghan counterparts skills based upon both her military and civilian skills.

"I am currently working on training and educational materials for distribution regarding plant protection, methods of distribution of information and development of training materials," said Feldt, adding that her focus is primarily on teaching the Afghans skills they then can keep.

She said she has also realized the challenges facing the team are steep. "Challenges are getting over the hurdle of transition of how we do business with the staff, giving information, knowledge, ideas, mentoring vs. money and equipment."

Overall, Feldt said she knows that taking a "one step at a time" approach will be key to making long-term impacts.

Team Support

Staff Sgt. Katherine Smith serves as ADT No. 4's administrative NCO. Prior to the deployment, she worked as a dental hygienist with the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion.

According to Smith, her job is all about making sure the ADT's administrative needs are taken care of.

"I am responsible for managing the evaluation program along with all awards submission," said Smith. "I manage all personnel accountability and personnel administrative management for 11 Soldiers and one Airman of the Nebraska ADT No. 4 agriculture development

mission."

"As the (personnel sergeant), I manage all aspects of personnel for pre-mobilization, mobilization and demobilization. I also schedule flights in and out of all the ADT locations in Afghanistan," added Smith.

According to Smith, she has a lot of different tasks, but her main priority is making sure the team has everything it needs. "The most rewarding thing I've done has been supporting my team," said Smith. "I hope to accomplish my job successfully."

Agricultural Guru

Warrant Officer Steve Stienike is an agriculture specialist with the Nebraska ADT, who came from the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade where he serves as an intelligence officer.

He now works in a much more public field.

"I am working on an International Security Assistance Force radio program that is teaching the Afghan farmers how to farm better and giving them an alternative to poppy," said Stienike. "I write and produce a 10-minute skit on a farming topic that is relevant to the local farmers."

"The program consists of two gentlemen," added Stienike, "a village elder and a young man who recently became head of his household. The young man comes to the old man and learns a better way to do things."

Stienike has worked on programs that have covered such areas of agriculture as grape production, irrigation techniques, crop rotations, wheat, pruning and germination.

His work has already attracted the attention of more than just the local farmers. "I have been interviewed by the British Broadcasting Corporation and the program has gone viral," said Stienike. "The show has a wide following and appeals to multiple age groups through the characters."

Stienike said he's proud of the work he's already accomplished.

"The show is very rewarding because I am able to reach over 100,000 of Afghans twice a week and impart knowledge on them that will last and be here long after myself and the (International Security Assistance Force) forces are gone. It feels good to know that I left something lasting in the short amount of time I was here."

What's next?

Look for additional interviews with the other six members of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 4 in the August edition of the *Prairie Soldier*.



Patching Ceremony: Maj. Kevin Hurtt, an agricultural specialist with the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 4, is presented the U.S. Forces Afghanistan patch by Lt. Col. Donald Kneiff, Nebraska National Guard ADT No. 4 commander.

Show and Tell

Nebraska Army National Guard hosts Girls' State delegates during visit to National Guard air base

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

When the opportunity to talk to around 400 young women about what the Nebraska Army National Guard does in support of the state and nation presented itself, Guard recruiters and full-time staff members pulled out all of the stops.

The opportunity arrived as part of the annual Girls' State event that is hosted in Lincoln and designed to help high school students from across the state learn more about how state government functions. While in Lincoln, the Nebraska Army National Guard hosted the delegates at the National Guard air base on the evening of June 6.

While on the base, the female delegates toured aircraft at the Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 1, met and talked with Guard aviation crews, toured the Guard's new Joint Operations Center at the Joint Force Headquarters building, learned more about Army Guard vehicles and participated in a number of team-building challenges.

According to Spc. Gabriel Meister, a member of the Guard's 623rd Engineer Company who was helping Guard recruiters at the inflatable "Boot Camp Challenge" inflatable obstacle course, the evening "show-and-tell" event was a lot of fun to support.

"It's a blast," said Meister as he joked with various delegates before they took their turn in the basketball court-length obstacle course. "You get to joke with them and have fun, while also showing them all the good things that we do have out here."



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Checking Out The Controls: (From left) Annabelle Abisset and Anna Berry smile while sitting in the cockpit of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, June 6.

Meister said that's particularly important considering that many of the delegates will soon be making decisions about where to go to college or what types of careers they want to pursue.

"(This gives them) a first-hand experience about all the opportunities that are out here and how we can help them get a better job if they decide to join," he said.

Among those helping show the young Girls' State delegates about the opportunities open to women was 1st Lt. Aloma Moncrief, a Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier who flies the Guard's UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter. "We have a lot of really great opportunities open to people interested in joining the



Here's What We Use: Sgt. Seth Osterloh talks to a group of Cornhusker Girls' State delegates about the various pieces of aviation life support equipment that Nebraska Army National Guard helicopter flight crew members carry with them when conducting a mission during a June 6 tour of the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.



Friendly Competition: Spc. Gabriel Meister jokes with Cornhusker Girls' State delegates while helping out with the Nebraska Army National Guard's "Boot Camp Challenge" inflatable obstacle course during a June 6 tour of the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

Nebraska Army National Guard," Moncrief told the delegates during one particular presentation. "And these positions are open to women." That message seemed to bear

fruit with a lot of the delegates. "I think it's awesome," said Anna Berry of Arcadia shortly after checking out the controls of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter as Moncrief took



Tah Dah: Diedre Stevens, daughter of Lt. Col. Chad Stevens, poses for a photo near the Joint Force Headquarters where her father works.

her and fellow delegate Annabelle Abisset's photo. "I love learning stuff about the National Guard... it's so cool."

Pool-Side Chat: Staff Sgt. Roberto Vega, a recruiter for the Nebraska Army National Guard, shows Cornhusker Boys' State delegates different vehicles in the motor pool during the Cornhusker Boys' State tour of the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., June 4.



Boys' State delegates learn about Guard missions, jobs

By Sgt. Heidi Krueger

Staff Photojournalist

Bus loads of Cornhusker Boys' State delegates dressed in their color-coordinated t-shirts joined Nebraska Army National Guard recruiters for the opportunity to tour the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., June 4.

While at the air base the 400 Boys' State delegates toured the Nebraska National Guard Army Aviation Support Facility No. 1, the Joint Operations Center in the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters building, looked at different vehicles in the motor pool, put their skills to the test on the blow up Boot Camp Challenge obstacle course and much more.

According to the delegates, it's not an everyday opportunity to get to see a military base, especially the vehicles and helicopters.

"It was awesome," said Alan Sousek, a senior from East Butler High School. "You don't get to see things like this a lot."

The delegates also had the opportunity to learn what the Nebraska National Guard has to offer them and talk first hand to subject matter experts. "I learned the logistics on how much the Guard can do," said Ethan



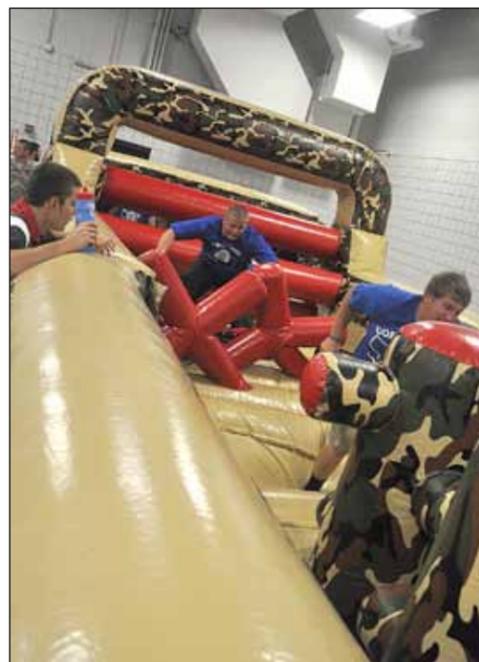
Checking Out The Joint Operations Center: Maj. Dale Burrage, Nebraska National Guard Joint Operations Center officer-in-charge, talks to a group of Cornhusker Boys' State delegates about the missions that are carried out by the Nebraska National Guard's new JOC, located in the Joint Force Headquarters building.

Care, a senior from Twin River High School. Staff Sgt. Roberto Vega, a recruiter with the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion, said the event is designed to inform high school seniors from across the state about the Nebraska National Guard and show them all what the Nebraska National Guard can do.



Photos by Sgt. Heidi Krueger

(Above) Showing Off The Guard's New Helicopter: Sgt. Preston Sheets, an avionics mechanic with the Nebraska National Guard's Company D, 1-376th Aviation, tells Cornhusker Boys' State delegates about the UH-72A Lakota helicopter and its missions during the Cornhusker Boys' State tour of the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., June 4.



(Left) Charging Through: Cornhusker Boys' State delegates put their skills to the test on the "Boot Camp Challenge" inflatable obstacle course during the Cornhusker Boys' State tour of the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., June 4.

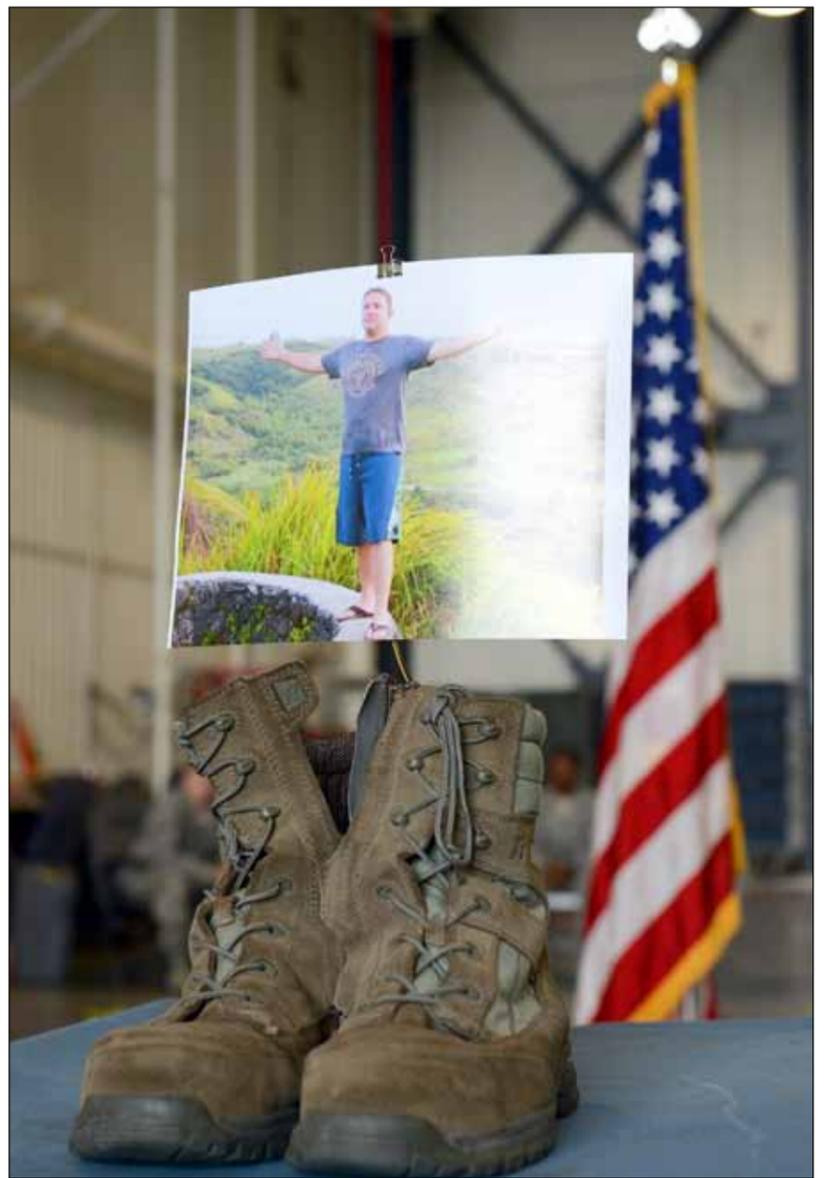


Photos by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Air Guard unit honors fallen comrade in June

Above: Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard, participate in a memorial service for Senior Airman Dale Butler at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Lincoln, Neb., June 8. Butler was killed in a civilian aircraft accident, April 27.

Right: Tech Sgt. Danelle Collins, a fuel system technician for the 155th Air Refueling Wing, wipes a tear away as she recites her poem, "Tribute to Dale and the 155th Fuel Shop," during a memorial service for Senior Airman Dale Butler at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Lincoln, Neb., June 8. Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing participated in the memorial ceremony for Butler who was killed in a civilian aircraft accident, April 27.



Last Respects: The boots of the late Senior Airman Dale Butler are displayed along with his picture during a memorial service at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Lincoln, Neb., June 8. Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing used the service to pay tribute to Butler who was killed in a civilian aircraft accident, April 27.



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) 309-1854 or the Nebraska Air National Guard Safety Office at (402) 309-1118.

Small aviation unit makes big impact

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Air Force Maj. Gen. Samuel Cox, director of Operations and Plans for U.S. Transportation Command, recently announced the Nebraska Army National Guard's 43rd Operational Support Airlift Detachment was named the 2012 Joint Operational Support Airlift Center (JOSAC) of the Year in the Army West Small Aircraft Category.

The small, Lincoln-based unit flies the C-12 aircraft, a fixed-wing propeller-powered airplane used to transport personnel and light cargo for the entire Defense Department structure.

"Detachment 43's dedication and professionalism set the mark for all other C-12 units in the Department of Defense," said Cox in a letter announcing the award. "We sincerely appreciate the superior effort of your crews and support personnel while performing the OSA mission."

OSA units are recognized for demonstrating excellence in aircraft availability, reliability, and cooperative practices in all OSA mission activities.

According to Chief Warrant Officer 5 Eugene Coppersmith, commander of the 43rd OSA Det., the Nebraska unit is historically in the top five percent in the nation for number of hours flown.

And although the numbers speak well of the unit, that's only one aspect USTRANSCOM looks at when choosing an award recipient.

"We flew a lot of hours, hauled a lot of folks," said Coppersmith. "Anybody with an aircraft and a will can do that, but one thing they tell me when the unit is chosen by USTRANSCOM, not only do they look at the numbers, they look at what units do they like to work with. What units are friendly, receptive, helpful, team players, willing to come in early, willing to stay late, willing to go a little



Courtesy Photo

Winning: Members of the Nebraska Army Guard's 43rd Operational Support Airlift Detachment stand by their C-12 aircraft with their contract maintenance personnel. The 43rd OSA Det. was named the 2012 Joint Operational Support Airlift Center of the Year in the Army West Small Aircraft Category.

above and beyond, willing to work on a weekend...willing to do what's necessary to make the mission go."

Coppersmith said being able to fly the number of hours and number of missions they do, the maintenance personnel have to be outstanding and flights crews can't be afraid of long hours.

"When your support personnel are good at planning missions and your maintenance folks are good at keeping the aircraft running and you have people who are willing and able to come in and fly — often times seven days a week — then I guess that's the results," said Coppersmith.

Making the award that much more impressive was the fact that six of the unit's aviators spent nine months in Afghanistan, from June of 2012 to March of 2013, flying intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions for the 306th Aerial Exploitation Battalion.

"In the nine months we were there with the 306th Aerial Exploitation Battalion, the personnel logged 18,000 hours," said Coppersmith during their March 14 homecoming ceremony. "And of that 18,000, the six members of the 43rd OSA Det. of the Nebraska

Army Guard were responsible for 3,600 hours."

"Now to help you put that into prospective," he added, "an annual flying program back in Nebraska would ask one of these Soldiers to fly 110 hours in a year. Their average was over 600 hours during the nine month deployment."

The 43rd OSA Det. also won the award, which covers all states west of the Mississippi River, in 2000 and 2010.

"2012 was a very busy year for the 43rd OSA Det. considering they mobilized to Afghanistan in June 2012....," said Lt. Col. Richard Gray, Nebraska state Army aviation officer.

"It is my belief that the 43rd OSA (Det.) has never been better and we will continue this history of excellence," Gray added.

With all of the members of the 43rd OSA Det. home, they will continue their missions and provide the Defense Department any services they need, Coppersmith said.

"I think the evidence speaks for itself," said Coppersmith. "It's good folks that take the job seriously and fly professionally. We enjoy it, we like working with each other, like the mission....we're happy to do it."



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



Driving while distracted deadly

By Lori Yerdon
U.S. Army Combat Readiness/ Safety Center

FORT RUCKER, Ala. – Motor vehicle accidents involving a distracted driver kill thousands of people each year on America's roadways.

Anytime drivers text, use a cell phone or navigation system, change a radio station, eat or drink, or do anything that diverts their attention from the road, the opportunity for an accident increases exponentially.

For some accident victims, they were merely in the wrong place at the wrong time and a distracted driver slammed into their vehicle. No matter the circumstances, organizations across the nation agree that distracted driving has become an epidemic on U.S. highways.

Joining the nationwide effort to raise awareness of the risks associated with this unsafe practice, the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/ Safety Center hosted its first-ever distracted driving event, "So you think you can drive distracted?" June 4.

"We are all guilty of driving distracted and putting ourselves and others at risk when we're on the road," said Brig. Gen. Timothy J. Edens, director of Army Safety and commanding general, U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center.

Thirty-three Soldiers and Department of the Army civilians, between the ages of 21 and 45, negotiated a one-mile driving course that simulated urban driving while observer/controllers, known as OCs, attempted

to "distract" them as they drove.

Throughout the course, drivers encountered hazards designed to replicate distractions drivers face daily. They dealt with objects suddenly jutting across the road, "passengers" attempting to get their attention, blaring music, continually ringing cell phones and a barrage of text messages.

"The training was very realistic and helped point out your weaknesses and strengths," said Spc. Hilary Phillips, U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory. "I think it (the training) will definitely teach people to be safer drivers."

Once the drivers completed the course, the OCs critiqued their performance. Then the drivers listened to a testimonial from a Crestview, Fla., man familiar with the consequences of distracted driving.

In 2011, Rusty Fine's 18-year-old niece, Megan Warman, was texting and driving on her way to school. She veered off the road slightly, over corrected and her car flipped at least six times. She died 10 days later from her injuries.

Fine was also Megan's legal guardian and he said the impact of her death was devastating.

"Never in a thousand years did we think this would happen to Megan," Fine said. "But it did and it can happen to any family. It's important that the word gets out about how dangerous it is to drive distracted."

The National Safety Council reports that thousands die needlessly each year because people continue to use their cell phones while driving, handheld or hands-free.

Here are some facts from the NSC and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that are indicative of how rampant and

Educational Update

Enhanced protections key to new Tuition Assistance Quality Assurance Program

WASHINGTON (AFPS) - To increase stewardship and optimize service members' educational experiences, Defense Department officials have developed a multifaceted quality assurance program to improve tuition assistance, the assistant secretary of defense for readiness and force management said on Capitol Hill, June 12.

In testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee's defense subcommittee, Frederick E. Vollrath said new policies will mandate that all participating institutions sign a memorandum of understanding requiring them to adhere to specific principles of excellence.

"This will help end fraudulent recruitment on our military installations...address other predatory practices by bad academic actors and provide students with personalized, standardized forms outlining costs, financial aid and outcome measures," Vollrath said.

The memorandum also requires that military students have access to a streamlined tool to compare educational institutions using key measures of affordability and value through the Veterans Affairs Department's E-benefits portal.

Vollrath told the panel that 3,100 institutions and more than 1,050 subcampuses have signed the memorandum of understanding. He also reported DoD is part of an inter-agency team that is finalizing the development and implementation of a centralized complaint system to resolve concerns raised by students receiving tuition assistance.

The departments of Veterans Affairs, Education, Justice and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau will have access to all complaints as they work to resolve issues, he added.

With that in mind, colleges and Vollrath also said more than 76 percent of the courses taken last year were delivered through distance learning. Still, he stressed, the rigors of military service will

not relax strict requirements in place for participating service members.

"Prior to enrolling in courses using tuition assistance, service members must establish an educational goal and a degree plan," he said.

An educational counselor must review tuition assistance requests outlined in the approved degree plan. Service members who either fail or do not complete the course must reimburse the Defense Department for tuition assistance received for that course.

"Service members failing to maintain a 2.0 undergraduate grade-point average or a 3.0 graduate GPA must pay for all courses until they raise their GPA sufficiently," Vollrath explained.

"Our voluntary education program is a key component of the recruitment, readiness and retention of the total force, an all-volunteer force."

dangerous distracted driving is:

- Drivers who use handheld devices are four times more likely to be involved in crashes serious enough to cause injury.
- Sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds; the equivalent, at 55 mph, of driving the length of an entire football field, blind.
- Eleven percent of all drivers under the age of 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted.

• In 2011, vehicle accidents involving a distracted driver accounted for 387,000 personal injuries.

• About nine percent of all drivers are talking on cell phones at any given daylight moment.

• Text messaging creates a crash risk 23 times worse than driving while not distracted.

With the number of people dying in crashes involving a distracted driver on the rise - 3,331 in 2011 compared to 3,267 in 2010 - safety officials are determined to educate individuals on the dangers of distracted driving.

Distracted driving is an emerging

trend that needs to stop, said Walt Beckman, program manager and deputy director, Driving Directorate, USACR/Safety Center.

"Many times Soldiers think they can multi-task while driving and that's not the case," said Beckman. "Drivers need to focus on driving and not worry about the text message or phone call that can wait. Taking your eyes off the road or your mind off the task of safely operating a motor vehicle, even for just a few seconds, can cause a devastating accident and a life-changing event. It's just not worth it."

Nebraska Military Retiree Council ready to help during difficult times

In the past few months, we've lost a number of our fellow retirees and/or widows. If you know of anyone passing, please notify this office so we can provide that information to other retirees.

The Nebraska Military Retiree Council (NMRC) was formed to provide a resource to retirees and their surviving spouses and to offer assistance when needed in finding the way through the often confusing tangle of red tape for benefits and/or assistance.

Don't hesitate to call or email if you have any questions or comments. We are truly here to help you during these difficult times.

Fortunately, we here in Nebraska also have an awesome Retirement Services Branch in the Army Guard, which provide expert assistance, as well as a Survivor Outreach Services coordinator.

Randy Amundson, (402) 309-7939, provides follow-on support for surviving spouses as well. Contact him if you have any questions concerning benefits following a loved one's passing.

If you have any questions or comments, email me at william.h.nelson48.ctr@mail.mil, or call (402) 309-7105. Thank you for your dedicated service to the National Guard and this great country.

■ **From Sgt. 1st Class Austin Behnk:** My phone number is (402) 309-8151 and email address is austin.j.behnk@mail.mil.

Staff Sgt. Mandy Hatcher's phone number is (402) 309-8164 and email address is

Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

DEERS/ID Card Stations within Nebraska

Here's a list of helpful list of numbers for your use as needed:

- G1 - 2433 N.W. 24th Street, Lincoln, NE 68524: (402) 309-8167;
- Spirit of 76 Armory 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade: (402) 309-7058 or (402) 309-7260;
- 92nd Troop Command Penterman Armory at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln (402) 309-1749 or (402) 309-1739;
- Air Guard (Lincoln Air Base) Bldg 600 Room E209: (402) 309-1452;
- Offutt Air Force Base: (402) 294-5019;
- Kearney Armory 5710 Airport Road Kearney: (402) 309-7743 or (402) 309-7758
- Norfolk Armory 817 S 1st St Norfolk: (402) 309-8908 or (402) 309-8900.
- The number for DEERS is 1-800-538-9552.

mandy.r.hatcher@mail.mil.

We are located in the Joint Forces Headquarters Building at the Air National Guard base, 2433 NW 24th St, Lincoln, NE 68524.

• **New Requirement for Survivor Benefit Plan Annuity Recipients**

Retirees' Survivor Benefit Plan beneficia-

ries are now required to provide a photocopy of their Social Security cards when applying for benefits.

If your spouse or dependent child is not a U.S. citizen or cannot get a Social Security Number, he or she will need a valid Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) and card issued by the Internal

Revenue Service.

Information about the ITIN is available on the IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov/>.

If you have a change of address, please contact us to update our records to make sure you receive any information we mail out.

• **If in receipt of or entitled to retired pay:**

Defense Finance and Accounting Service
U.S. Military Retired Pay
PO Box 7130
London, KY 40742-7130
Phone: (800) 321-1080 or
(216) 522-5955; FAX: (800) 469-6559
(Note: Please put your SSN on all pages)

• **If in receipt of or entitled to SBP/RS-FPP annuity:**

Defense Finance and Accounting Service
U.S. Military Annuity Pay
PO Box 7131
London, KY 40742-7131
Phone: (800) 321-1080 or
(216) 522-5955; FAX: (800) 982-8459
(Again, please put your SSN on all pages)

• **If a Retired Reservist not yet age 60:**

U.S. Army Human Resources Command
Attn: AHRC-PDP-TR
1600 Spearhead Division Avenue
Dept. 482
Ft. Knox, KY 40122-5402
(800) 318-5298 or (502) 613-8950

Enjoy your well-deserved retirement!

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Captain

Franklin C. Annis
Aaron J. Fisk
April D. Searcey

First Lieutenant

Sean M. Thurmer
Veronica L. Wolf

Chief Warrant Officer 3

Mark A. Talbert

Chief Warrant Officer 2

Kathryn L. Jeurissen

Master Sergeant

Curtis C. Koehler
Edward G. Whitehill

Sergeant First Class

Anthony J. Bloebaum
Gregory A. Brown
Keith P. McDermott

Staff Sergeant

Brett J. Badura
Robert T. Brewer
Luke E. Katz
Evan R. Kirpatrick
Justin M. McKenna
Jason B. Palmer
Blake A. Sohl
Lathan R. Woolen
Amanda D. Zwiener

Sergeant

Joshua C. Annen
Melissa N. Becci
Nathaniel A. Betts

Lacey J. Bromley
Roderico B. Caceres
Amanda M. Deeds
Joshua J. Hatheway
Seth A. Jacobs
Patrick J. Kelly
Gary L. Lindeen
Edward N. Neidig
Michael V. Rice
William C. Strollberg
Evan C. Winey

Specialist

Matthew S. Allen
Daniel J. Balkovic
Josue F. Cleveland
Yue Cong
Justin T. Dutcher
Steven M. Finnell
Austin R. Fischer
Brian H. Hamilton
Christopher J. Hansen
Nicole M. Havlovic
Matthew B. Heller
Cody R. Keck
Andrew M. Kinsey
Jordan M. Ley
Jordan A. Miller
Taylor D. Nekuda
Monica R. Pettz
Deangelo R. Schultz
Christian A. Scott
Brian L. Smith
Daniel W. Starke
James A. Struss Jr.
Zachery C. Swahn
Denver E. Trojan
Cade J. Vackiner
Eddie A. Zepeda

Private First Class

Robert W. Bradshaw
William T. Bushhousen
Robert A. Hoy
Jacob I. Kendrick
Justin F. Kotas
Amanda J. Lange
Joseph B. Quail
Hunter L. Smith
Darron D. Taylor
Private Two
Jesse D. S. McMorris
Bomichael B. Musgrave
Tory L. Sukut

Air National Guard

Colonel

Robert E. Hargens
Lieutenant Colonel
Sheryl R. Wohleb

Major

John E. Loken

Captain

Ryan N. McGrail
David W. Strom

First Lieutenant

Bryan E. Allebone

Kathryn M. Score
Amanda L. Whitney
Technical Sergeant
Dustin J. Frey
Chad E. Peterson

Staff Sergeant

Brittany A. Bedor
Robert K. Simon

Senior Airman

Matthew D. Cook
Luis M. Contreras Lopez
Hillary A. Dolan
Melinda A. Hoelsing

Anthony M. Lehl
Tyler J. Lemke
Kenneth M. Morrison
Michael J. Morrison
Joseph A. Naumann
Benjamin J. Wright

Airman First Class

Leilani M. Beal
Timothy S. Davis
William J. Deardoff
Justin M. Percival
Allen J. Seburg
James D. Witter III

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal

Col. Anita K.W. Curington
Lt. Col. Thomas A. Hanson
Lt. Col. David L. Seybold
Maj. Daniel L. Kuhn
Maj. Glenn E. Wattier
Master Sgt. Kyle D. Diefenbaugh
Sgt. 1st Class Richard A. Hagedorn
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel C. Nichols
Sgt. 1st Class Kelvin M. Posvar
Staff Sgt. Gale A. Maberry

Army Commendation Medal

Maj. Gordon F. Bjorman
Capt. Andrew J. Nelson
Sgt. 1st Class William M. McClure
Staff Sgt. Chad A. Couillard
Staff Sgt. Tyler B. Hayes

Army Achievement Medal

Staff Sgt. Megan G. Dannelly
Staff Sgt. Thomas L. Friesell
Staff Sgt. Jason A. Kilcoinc
Sgt. Vance G. Coltrane
Sgt. Benjamin G. Helmink
Sgt. Alexander F. King
Sgt. Carley L. Sherard
Spc. Lyndon W. Griner
Spc. Caleb M. Larsen
Pfc. Calvin J. Russell
Pvt. Chantel J. Beazer

Nebraska National Guard Individual

Achievement Medal
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Hunt
Sgt. Clarisa S. Hazen
Sgt. Ryan M. Mueller
Spc. Kaytlyn N. Johnson

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Capt. Klint H. Benson
Master Sgt. Euren D. Rains
Sgt. 1st Class Mathew G. Baker
Sgt. 1st Class Mark L. Kniffen
Sgt. 1st Class Mitchell J. Patzel
Staff Sgt. John M. Erny
Staff Sgt. Kevin L. Lugenbeel
Staff Sgt. Joe M. Rodriguez Jr.
Staff Sgt. Jason M. Winchester
Sgt. Bobbi J. Schroeder
Spc. Michael J. Mohr
Pfc. Matthew W. Rogers

Air National Guard

Chief Master Sgt. William J. Kerns
Senior Master Sgt. Gary A. Hastings
Master Sgt. Jeffrey B. Hart

TAPS

Senior Airman Dale Butler
Col. (Ret.) Clifford W. Lant
Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Donald Lintz
Col. (Ret.) Rodney L. Moore

Shorttakes

Army National Guard units recognized for supply excellence

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

Col. Byron Diamond, the Nebraska Army National Guard director of logistics, has announced the Calendar Year 2013/14 Colonel Don Hatten Supply Excellence Award winners.

The awards are given to the state's top supply operations in memory of Col. Don Hatten. The awards have been presented to units throughout Nebraska since 1991 and one is the first step in the process to choose the state's nominees for the Chief of Staff Army Supply Excellence Award.

This year's award winners are as follows:

Level I (A) Modification Table of Organization and Equipment:

313th Medical Company. Runner-up: 192nd Military Police Detachment (Law and Order).

Level I (B) Table of Distribution and Allowances: Headquarters, 209th Training Regiment.

Level III (B) Table of Distribution and Allowances: Headquarters, 92nd Troop Command.

Level IV (B) Table of Distribution and Allowances: United States Property and Fiscal Office-Nebraska, Supply Support Activity.

According to Staff Sgt. Lillie Chambers, 313th Med. Co. supply sergeant, the unit has worked to implement standard operating procedures to address the logistical aspect of dealing with class 8 material.

"As the 313th's supply sergeant I am trying to streamline the request

and receiving process, so that way it is easier for the medics, which ends up being easier for me," said Chambers.

According to Master Sgt. James McKeehan, supply sergeant for HQ, 209th Training Regiment, the 209th R/TI logistics team strives for excellence in all service and support operations. "Our history of supply excellence stems from an emphatic desire for competition," said McKeehan. "We believe that competition, on any scale, strengthens our skills and broadens our future. We compete to challenge ourselves as individuals and as a team."

Maj. Brett Petit, HQ, 92nd Troop Command's logistics officer, said he relies on the supply staff's years of experience at all levels for logistical excellence. "The staff's exposure

ranges from logistics in combat arms, medical, transportation, and chemical organizations," said Petit. "The tools learned working logistics in these organizations allows the staff to understand what is going on in our units and battalions."

According to Sgt. 1st Class Allan Kerl, foreman for USP&FO-NE, Supply Support Activity, throughout the year, the USP&FO-NE, Supply Support Activity coordinated with the Defense Logistics Agency-Defense Reutilization Marketing Office and Government Liquidation Sales on the receipt-in-place load out of more than 250 excess vehicles and trailers. They also located companies to recycle and pay for unserviceable batteries and toner cartridges reducing the unit's environmental footprint and supporting the state's

recycling program.

The USP&FO-NE, Supply Support Activity certified a hazardous material shipment to Honduras in support of a Nebraska Army National Guard mission and coordinated with the state's recruiting office on trailer wraps for two 48-foot trailers used for supply runs throughout Nebraska, creating cost-effective advertisement.

Finally, they coordinated with the Nebraska Guard's Supply and Logistics office and DLA-DRMO on the turn in and reutilization of more than \$200,000 worth of excess furniture following a move into a new Joint Force Headquarters building.

The winners will now move on to compete in a regional competition. If chosen as a regional winner, the unit will compete at a national level.

Former state command sergeant major dies

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

A former Nebraska Army National Guard command sergeant major died recently.

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Donald D. Lintz, who served as the state command sergeant major for the Nebraska Army National Guard from July 1992 until mid-1994, died at his home in Beatrice, Neb., on May 21. He was 74.

A veteran of 38 years of military service, Lintz joined the Nebraska Army National Guard on Oct. 10, 1956, and remained with the organization until his retirement on Oct. 10, 1995. During the course of his career, Lintz served in a number of positions with Fairbury's Company D, 2-134th Infantry, Beatrice's Co. C, 2nd Battle Group and Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 2-134th Infantry, and Nebraska City's Co. A, 2-134th Infantry. He also served in a variety of positions within the 2-134th Infantry and the 67th (Separate) Infantry Brigade, culminating in an assignment as the brigade command sergeant major in March 1990.

A graduate of many military schools including the Army's Sergeants Major Academy, Lintz always considered himself an advocate for the Guard's enlisted Soldiers.

"Whenever anyone would ask who I worked for, I would always answer, 'I work for Maj. Gen. Stanley M. Heng and the enlisted Soldiers of the



Command Sgt. Maj. Donald D. Lintz

Nebraska Army National Guard," Lintz told his co-workers during a retirement ceremony held at the Nebraska Guard headquarters in Lincoln in January 1994. "That has always been the motto I've used while working here as the command sergeant major."

Lintz was born on Dec. 3, 1938, in Daykin, Neb. He graduated from Daykin High School in 1956 and earned a business degree from Fairbury Junior College in 1958. He later earned a bachelor's degree in Business from Columbia College in Columbia, Mo.

Lintz was buried with full military honors on May 24 in Beatrice. Lintz is survived by his wife Odetta, four sons and daughters-in-law, 12 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Son receives Gold Star recognition 68 years after father's death during World War II

Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, Nebraska Army National Guard state command sergeant major, pins the Gold Star Lapel Button onto the shirt of David Peterson, April 19, in recognition of Peterson's father, Pfc. Marold Peterson, who died during World War II in April 1945. According to Peterson, who was one-and-half at the time of his father's death, Pfc. Peterson was captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. After escaping during a forced march, Peterson said his father was recaptured a short time later and died while in captivity. He was later buried at the Lorraine American Cemetery in France.

The Gold Star Lapel Button is provided to the family of service members who lost their lives under hostile conditions. It was established by an act of Congress in order to provide an appropriate identification for widows, widowers, parents, children and next of kin of members of the armed forces who lost their lives during war or any subsequent period of armed hostilities in which the United States was engaged. For some reason Peterson's family never received their button until one of David's relatives informed the Department of the Army of the oversight.

Street Talk

“How has being a member of the Nebraska National Guard been a benefit to your civilian life?”

Question thanks to Nebraska National Guard Facebook friend David Adams



Spc. Amanda Martinez
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade

“It looks good on a resume and it makes you feel good knowing that you’re serving your community and your country.”

Airman 1st Class Matthew Riley
155th Logistics Readiness Squadron
“It’s helped me to be more disciplined and it’s helped me to work on teamwork with my bosses and other people I work with.”



Pfc. Chris Weibert
Detachment 1, 1074th Transportation Company
“It has helped me learn training for my civilian job as a truck driver.”

Airman 1st Class Saleasha McClurge
155th Communications Flight
“Being in the military makes me more prepared for my civilian life...it definitely gives me more responsibility now that I am actually able to do more for myself like the car, school and bills...I’m growing up.”



2nd Lt. Brian Obermeier
155th Medical Group
“I noticed a change in how my friends and family view me and I think they have a better understanding of the military’s role in this country and they have a better support for the military because of me.”

Spc. Yonni Izaguirre
1074th Transportation Company
“It helps build confidence and leadership skills.”



Final Words:

I am honored to have served as your Adjutant General

On Aug. 23, 2009 I had the privilege to assume the position of Adjutant General. In a few days, I will pass the colors to Gov. Dave Heineman who in turn will present them to my successor.

The Adjutant General

Major General

Judd Lyons



and nation can continue to count on us to be ready to respond when needed.

When we place our men and women into harm’s way, either overseas or here at home, we want them to be mentally and physically resilient and ready.

As it was when I assumed command, this event will occur on a parade field with our great Soldiers and Airmen present along with many family, friends and employees of the Nebraska Military Department.

I want to thank all of those involved for making the change of command ceremony the success it will be in commemorating this change of leadership.

As I reflect back on the last four years I realize there is not enough space in this column to recount all of the accomplishments you have achieved. I would like to mention a few however.

I wrote in my first *Prairie Soldier* article in October 2009 that I anticipated we would mobilize and deploy the largest number of Soldiers for overseas contingency operations since 2001. This turned out to be largely true as our surge in 2010-11 was eclipsed only by 2006.

Our deployed numbers are small right now, however these Soldiers and Airmen are engaged in vital missions and we look forward to their safe return.

Here at home our fantastic Emergency Management Agency personnel and Guardsmen and women responded magnificently to historic flooding, wildfires and other disasters. They were a sight to see. I could not be more proud of our people, their families and our employers for their support and understanding.

The Nebraska Army and Air National Guard leadership teams at all levels have focused extensively

“I know for a fact that I owe my deepest thanks to my family and the men and women who serve in our Guard and our Military Department.”

“As I depart for the position of Deputy Director for the Army National Guard, I do so with the firm knowledge that you will continue to excel.”

on our readiness with great results. Our personnel readiness has never been higher. This means our state

This takes personal, individual commitment by our members and leadership that provides the tools to succeed. This means an inclusive organizational environment for our military and civilian members where their talents are valued, their leaders are focused on them and their mission, their service environment is secure and each can serve to their full potential.

I believe we have made good progress in this, but cannot take our eyes off the ball. Our people are our greatest asset and they deserve nothing less.

When I walked into the Mercy Road armory in Omaha in March 1980 as a 17-year-old high school senior and enlisted, I had no idea that one day I would have the honor and privilege of serving as Adjutant General. I’m quite sure that I wasn’t even aware of what an Adjutant General was until my commissioning ceremony at Camp Ashland in May 1983.

You never know where life will take you, but I was fortunate to have had great civilian, NCO and officer mentors along the way. I know for a fact that I owe my deepest thanks to my family and the men and women who serve in our Guard and our Military Department.

As I depart for the position of Deputy Director for the Army National Guard, I do so with the firm knowledge that you will continue to excel.

I am honored to have served as your Adjutant General.

Nebraska Guard working hard to assist families in remaining ready, resilient

At the birth of our nation Thomas Paine wrote, “THESE are the times that try men’s souls. The summer Soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.”

Nearly 250 years later, our nation’s Soldiers certainly have not shrunk from service during these modern, trying times, and our nation and our Army are grateful.

However, ...gratitude is best shown through deeds, not words.

For the Soldiers, civilian employees and family members who have endured this decade of conflict, there is no better way to show our nation’s gratitude than by providing the tools and resources they need to remain ready and resilient – at home – at work – at school – at play – and when training or while executing combat operations.

What is ready?

Ready is the ability to accomplish assigned tasks or missions through resilience, individual and collective team training, and leadership.

In a nutshell, it is self explanatory. Ready means being prepared to accomplish all the day-to-day tasks of life at home, at work, at school or wherever a Soldier, civil-

Another Voice

Brigadier General

Michael Navrkal



the Ready and Resilient Campaign to their own unique requirements.

Within the Nebraska National Guard we face the challenge of caring for Soldiers from across almost every county in the State of Nebraska, which is a unique challenge to our Reserve Component.

However, the Nebraska Army National Guard isn’t unique. Across the National Guard, commanders, noncommissioned officers, family readiness groups and family members are all engaged in adapting the Ready and Resilient principles to their own Army families.

That teamwork is part of what makes the Nebraska National Guard great and is the bedrock for making our Army and Army National Guard so strong.

I encourage everyone to find out how the Army is working as a team to care for them, their teammates, and their family members. Check out <http://www.army.mil/readyandresilient/> to learn what the Army is doing, and talk to your unit representatives to find out how it applies to you.

We often say “one team, one fight” and in this case, it’s “one team, one fight and one Army family.”

These are our trying times... and those on our left and right are our family members. Let’s help them and keep ourselves ready and resilient.

ian or family member may be.

What is resilient?

Resilience is the mental, physical, emotional and behavioral ability to face and cope with adversity, adapt to change, recover, learn and grow from setbacks. Resilient people tend to bounce back when knocked down by the challenges of life.

The Army’s Ready and Resilient Campaign integrates and synchronizes multiple programs to improve the readiness and resilience of the Army family. In many ways, the challenge is not in developing new programs and procedures, it is about effectively implementing the Army family on the programs that are available and in getting their feedback on what is working and what needs work.

In an Army with so many unique jobs, units and missions, communication and education can be a challenge.

Here, in the Nebraska Army National Guard commands are all working to adapt the principles of



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Mad Dash: The first wave of nearly 10,000 runners begin the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon held May 5 in Lincoln, Neb. More than 200 National Guard runners representing nearly every U.S. state and territory used the annual race to attempt to qualify for the 40 male and 15 female spots on the All Guard Marathon Team.

2013 Lincoln National Guard Marathon

Pennsylvania Pacers

Keystone staters sweep Guard individual titles during chilly, overcast race

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Staff Writer

Gray skies, light winds and unseasonably cold temperatures greeted nearly 10,000 marathoners as they descended upon Lincoln, Neb., for the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5.

Among the thousands of athletes participating in this year's race were more than 200 Army and Air National Guard members representing 44 states and two U.S. territories. The Guard runners were competing for positions on the All Guard Marathon Team.

"This is Nebraska in the springtime," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hagen, the National Guard Bureau marathon coordinator from the Nebraska Army National Guard. "Weather predictions are tough to do in Nebraska and runners need to come prepared for all weather conditions."

Leading the way for all National Guard runners was Staff Sgt. Troy Harrison of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard with an unofficial time of 2:31:50.

Harrison outpaced second-place finisher, 2nd Lt. Kenneth Rayner from the Virginia Army National Guard, who finished with a time of 2:35:11.

"It was little windy, but I'm not complaining because we've had other years where it's been really bad," said Harrison. "I think it might be the fastest (marathon) I've ran here in Lincoln. I'm really pleased with my time because I didn't do any of the training that I normally do. I've been coaching track and used that as an excuse for not training as hard as I normally do."

Finishing first in the Guard's women's division was Senior Airman Emily Shertzer from the Pennsylvania Air National Guard with an unofficial time of 3:01:06.

Coming in a few minutes behind Shertzer was Capt. Varinka Barbini Ensminger of the Kentucky Army National Guard with her time of 3:09:44.

The brisk weather didn't seem to bother Shertzer.

"I thought it was great," said Shertzer. "The temperature was good and the wind wasn't too bad."

"I enjoy coming to Lincoln to see all of the other Guard runners," she added. "It's a fun marathon route, but it is a little tough because



Top Male Finisher: Staff Sgt. Troy Harrison from the Pennsylvania Army National Guard runs along a Lincoln, Neb., street during the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Neb., May 5. Harrison led all National Guard runners with his time of 2:31:50.



Top Female Finisher: Senior Airman Emily Shertzer from the Pennsylvania Air National Guard paces herself along a Lincoln, Neb., street during the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5. Shertzer led all female National Guard runners with her time of 3:01:06.

the second half is out and back."

Harrison and Shertzer have a few things in common. Harrison drills in Fort Indian Gap, Penn., while Shertzer works there as a civilian. They also share a love for running and ice cream.

"Troy and I are on the same wavelength," said Shertzer. "We will be sharing some ice cream after we get some food and a massage."

Despite less-than-favorable conditions, Harrison, Shertzer and all the other finishers braved the chilly May morning for a tough, but rewarding 26.2 miles, showing the grit and determination that races like this often bring out in their participants. Hagen said

Guard marathoners seemed to have a greater sense of pride and resilience in light of the recent Boston Marathon bombings.

He added that he was extremely happy with how the marathon turned out and is looking forward to an even larger event next year.

"Last year, the marathon sold out in two weeks. This year it sold out in 18 hours," said Hagen. "I'm biased, of course, but this truly is a great program."

"It's important to the Guard because it instills many different values in Guard members including focus on training, leadership and teamwork."

California Guard warrant officer goes 30-for-30 at Lincoln race

By Sgt. Heidi Krueger
Staff Photojournalist

Retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 Brian Peterson sat in the Embassy Suites convention room in Lincoln, Neb., May 4, reminiscing on the past 29 years of the National Guard Marathon trials, remembering how far the program has come since its beginning in 1984 and how many great friendships he's started because of the Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

Those memories also seemed tinged with just a slight sense of sadness, too, as May 5 marked the 30th year of the National Guard Marathon trials and the first time in more than 20 years Peterson was not the California National Guard marathon team coordinator.

Peterson, previously state command chief warrant officer and senior legal administrator for the California National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters, has competed in and completed every National Guard Marathon trial.

The start of something great...

Peterson, just days shy of 63 years old, started his marathon journey in 1983 when California's adjutant general at the time, Maj. Gen. Willard Shank, took him under his wing to learn the tricks of the trade of marathon running.

"He was a runner," said Peterson. "But I ran my very first marathon with him. I didn't train as well and wasn't sure what to expect."

Peterson said he managed to finish the race in around 3 hours and 34 minutes. From there, Peterson said, "I kind of caught the bug."

See Peterson on 20.

Rucking for a Reason

Top enlisted Soldier marches half marathon to honor Nebraska's fallen heroes

By Sgt. Jason Drager
Staff Writer

Nearly 10,000 people participated in the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard marathon. Most of them donned a good pair of running shoes, comfortable shorts and a t-shirt. But not Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, Nebraska's state command sergeant major. He was easy to spot among the sea of runners as he marched in his Army Combat Uniform with a 35-pound rucksack on his back.

Valenzuela wasn't marching the half marathon to prepare for Army training or to simply get into better shape.

"Historically, the (adjutant general) and I give out medals at the end of the marathon and half marathon," said Valenzuela. "We decided to participate this year and I wanted to go beyond that and do it for a reason. My reason is to re-

member our fallen Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard."

Since 9/11, 14 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers have died while mobilized for active duty. Valenzuela marched in remembrance of those fallen Soldiers during the May 5 race.

In preparation for the marathon, Valenzuela trained diligently for months. He began with a short ruck march and incrementally increased distances. With unseasonably cold spring conditions, Valenzuela was

often forced to train on a treadmill. However, when weather permitted, he could be found hard at work on the state highways.

"I think we need to recognize our Soldiers whenever an opportunity comes," said Valenzuela. "This was my chance to do something tangible that people could see."

The show of recognition by Valenzuela was even more appropriate given the Memorial Day holiday, the day in which we remember the men and women who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces.

There is less than one percent who elect to wear the uniform of

the Armed Services, so the sacrifice is great for that .08 percent who actually do, said Valenzuela. Most Americans know that there are individuals that wear the uniform, but they don't know what degree of dedication that takes. The ruck march brings to bear the memory of the 14 individuals who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

"I want to make sure we don't forget our fallen Soldiers, not just in May, but throughout the year," said Valenzuela. "This is my way of making sure people remember there is a sacrifice paid by those in uniform."

During the march, many spectators and fellow participants approached Valenzuela to show their support with a simple pat on the back and a "good job."

"There were a couple of individuals that stopped and told me their loved one is in Afghanistan and they appreciated me being out there,"



Final Push: Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, Nebraska National Guard state command sergeant major, honors Nebraska's fallen heroes as he makes the final push to the finish line of the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5.

fallen Soldiers, not just in May, but throughout the year," said Valenzuela. "This is my way of making sure people remember there is a sacrifice paid by those in uniform."

During the march, many spectators and fellow participants approached Valenzuela to show their support with a simple pat on the back and a "good job."

"There were a couple of individuals that stopped and told me their loved one is in Afghanistan and they appreciated me being out there,"

Nebraska National Guard Soldiers who've died while mobilized to active duty since 9/11.

- Spc. Blake Kelly
- Master Sgt. Linda Tarango-Griess
- Staff Sgt. Jeremy Fischer
- Sgt. 1st Class Tricia Jameson
- Sgt. Joshua Ford
- Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Hansen
- Sgt. Germaine Debro
- Sgt. Randy Matheny
- Spc. William Bailey III
- Sgt. Jacob Schmuecker
- Spc. Raymond Heuck
- Sgt. Robert Schlote
- Sgt. Omar Jones
- Staff Sgt. Patrick Hamburger

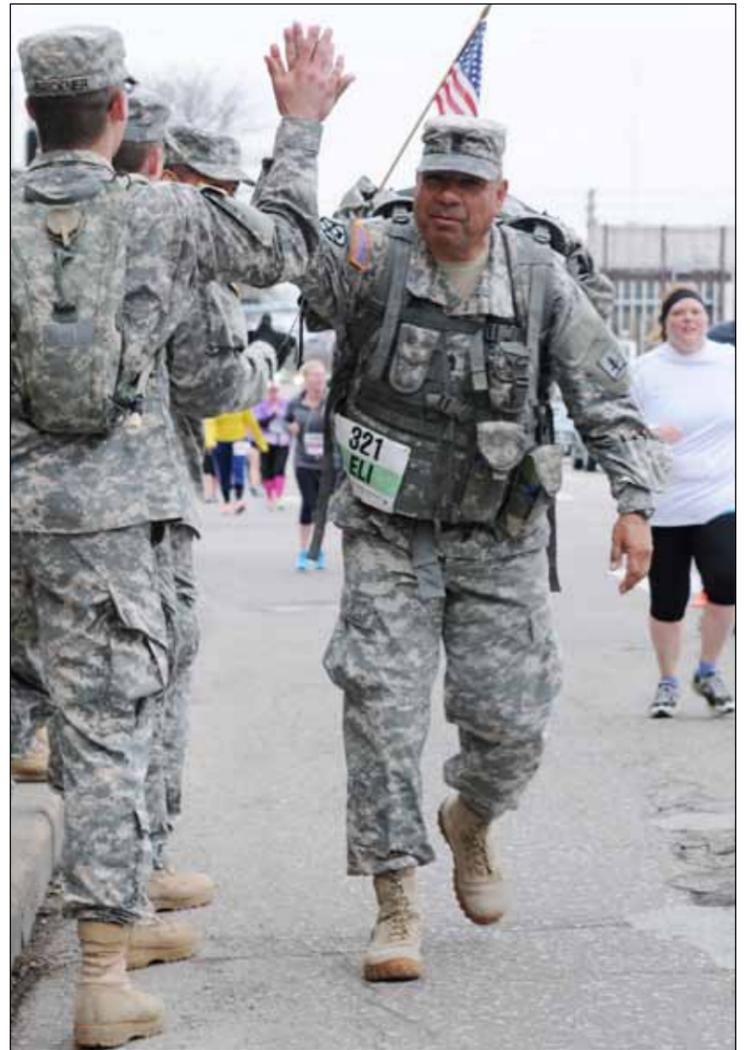
said Valenzuela.

Valenzuela said one of his more gratifying moments was when a 7-year-old boy approached him and simply said, "Hey there Soldier." Valenzuela couldn't help but smile and gave the boy the flag patch off his shoulder.

Laurel Curington, a fellow half marathon runner and friend of Valenzuela, caught up to him 11 miles into the race eventually finishing by his side.

"It's an incredible thing for him to do, to go out and honor all of those who would love to be here, but can't be with us," said Curington. "I think it's amazing he'd step up and do that for everyone we've lost."

Curington said she understood the message Valenzuela was trying to send. Participating in the marathon wasn't meant to bring attention to Valenzuela and his dedication, but rather to Nebraska's



Photos by Sgt. Jason Drager

Fan Support: Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, Nebraska National Guard state command sergeant major, exchanges high-fives with fellow Soldiers along a busy Lincoln, Neb., street during the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, held May 5. Valenzuela marched the entire half marathon carrying a heavy rucksack on which he had placed the names of the 14 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who have fallen while mobilized for overseas duty since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

14 fallen heroes. Those who paid the ultimate sacrifice need to be remembered throughout the entire year.

"They made the ultimate sacrifice for us and we need to honor them," said Curington.

Nebraska Guard places three runners on prestigious All-Guard marathon team

By Senior Airman Mary Thach
Staff Writer

Overcast skies and a chilly breeze greeted nearly 10,000 runners ready to tear up the pavement at the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, held May 5 in Lincoln, Neb.

More than 200 Guard runners representing 44 states and two territories joined the thousands of other runners while hundreds more Nebraska Guardsmen helped provide additional security and aid to runners.

Of those Guard runners, eight Soldiers and Airmen from the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard combined to form the 2013 Nebraska National Guard Marathon team. The top three Nebraska runners finished with an average time of 3 hours, 10 minutes and 21 seconds, good enough for 12th place. Of the eight team members, two men and one woman earned slots on the All Guard Marathon team. One more Nebraska Guard male was named an alternate.

Nebraska's National Guard marathon team coordinator, Sgt. 1st Class Bill Norris, said there was plenty of friendly competition between the different states during the marathon, but everyone showed good sportsmanship.

"It's a cool event to have all these teams come in here and they all wear their state's jerseys. There is a lot of pride going on," said Norris. "We are lucky to have this program."

Norris said he's run numerous half-marathons, but the 2013 Lincoln Marathon was only his second



Keep It Up: Maj. Karl Duerk, a chief pilot from the Offutt-based 238th Combat Training Squadron, runs in the Lincoln National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Neb., May 5.

full marathon. He said he decided to run the full marathon since he is the program coordinator and the Nebraska National Guard team captain.

Norris said he was impressed with the Nebraska National Guard team's performance.

"I am proud of them," said Norris. "It's not easy doing this. Only one percent of the population runs marathons. I know their times have improved and I appreciate them being on the team."

Despite the chilly conditions for spectators, Norris said the weather



Good Pace: Capt. Robb Campbell, of Detachment 2, Company A, 35th Infantry Division, runs in the Lincoln National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Neb., May 5.

was perfect for running and he felt the support of the fans and Guard personnel lining the race route.

Nebraska's Sgt. 1st Class Tarissa Batenhorst, a personnel noncommissioned officer from the Kearney-based 734th Transportation Battalion, was the only Nebraska Guard female to qualify for the All Guard team this year with a time of 3:41:33.

She said what inspired her to push forward during the race was her goal to make the team.

"It means a lot, I have been wanting this," said Batenhorst. "That was



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Top Form: Sgt. 1st Class Tarissa Batenhorst, a personnel noncommissioned officer from the Kearney-based 734th Transportation Battalion, keeps pace during the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Neb., May 5. Batenhorst was the only Nebraska Guard female to qualify for the All Guard team this year with a time of 3:41:33.

what I was thinking about to keep me going: 'I really want to make this team. You want to make this team. You're going to make this team. Come on, you can do it.'"

"You have worked so hard for it and when you make it, then it just keeps pushing you to still be competitive," she added.

Batenhorst has made the All Guard team twice before in 2006 and 2007. She said she is proud to be a part of the team again.

"It's more than just about running, it's about representing the importance of why people stay fit to be in the military," said Batenhorst. "We are the small percentage that say 'I will, I do,' that join the Guard. We've got to be above, we've got to represent the rest of the world in every category that we can and this is just one aspect - fitness."

Maj. Karl Duerk, a chief pilot

from the Nebraska Air National Guard's Offutt-based 238th Combat Training Squadron, said he is a fairly new marathon runner, having only run in two other marathons. Duerk began training for the Lincoln Marathon in January by simply running the pace he planned to run during the race. His time of 3:05:14 qualified him for a place on the All Guard team.

"The second half of the race, seeing the National Guard presence from all the guys - from all of the different states competing to make the National Guard team - really pulled me along and that's really motivating," said Duerk. "It was a really good feeling coming in to the Memorial Stadium knowing that I had a pretty good shot."

Duerk said it was difficult to adjust to a slower pace at the begin-

See NEBRASKA on 20.

Guard marathon continues annual traditions

By Spc. Riley Huskey
Staff Writer

Among the 10,000 runners racing to the finish line of the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon on May 5, were more than 200 Air and Army National Guard representing nearly every state and territory in the nation.

An annual qualifying event for the All-Guard Marathon Team, the Lincoln marathon hosted Guard teams from 44 states and two territories this year competing for a total of 57 team spots—the top 40 male finishers, the top 15 female finishers, and two ‘super master’ male runners over age 50 that did not fall into the top 40 category.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Mike Hagen, National Guard Bureau marathon coordinator, watching the athletes was easily the best part of the weekend’s activities.

“At the finish line, seeing every single one of these people come in is by far the best feeling,” said Hagen. “The stress, the sleepless nights, trying to figure people out, putting the schedules together—the finish makes it all worthwhile.”

Taking the top spot for the National Guard in this year’s marathon was Staff Sgt. Troy Harrison, of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, with a time of 2 hours, 31 minutes, 50 seconds, while the first Guard woman across the line was

Senior Airmen Emily Shertzer, Pennsylvania Air National Guard, with a finish of 3:01:06.

Those two helped pace the Pennsylvania team to the top spot in the annual team championship division.

At age 52, Sgt. 1st Class James Bresette, of the Arkansas Army National Guard, was the top ‘master’ Guard runner with a 2:48:26 finish.

“The motivation for me is what running a marathon, or marathons, does for a person—it keeps you fit, it keeps you focused and it makes you feel good about life in general,” Bresette said. “For me, this carries into all aspects of life—and I like that. It keeps me focused on what is important in life.”

Completing his fifth marathon this calendar year, and his 36th marathon overall, Bresette said he is ready to run with the team this year and looks forward to the future races. “Out on the course today I was actually thinking about camaraderie,” Bresette said. “I was thinking about the races coming up and how we’re really just one big family. It’s not just the race you’re running—you’re supporting one another, giving strength to one another—and that’s cool.”

While the March 1 sequestration stalled and canceled future marathon events for the All-Guard Marathon Team, Hagen said they are now a ‘go’ through the end of fiscal year 2013, and a budget has

been requested for fiscal year 2014. Future events this fiscal year for the team include marathons in Vancouver, Wash., and Bismark, N.D., and the infamous Talladega Half-Marathon in Alabama.

As soon as the Lincoln National Guard Marathon draws to a close, planning begins for the next year’s race.

Hagen said making contacts with hotels, reserving meeting spaces, planning with the Lincoln Track Club, and setting up the next expo all begin again in the weeks following the event.

From setup and teardown of the start and finish lines, to water and aid stations throughout the course, to security forces and placing medals around marathon finishers’ necks, nearly 200 Nebraska National Guard members came out to support the marathon this year.

“I am very appreciative of the work the Guard does for this Marathon and our city,” said Nancy Sutton, Lincoln Track Club race director for the Lincoln National Guard Marathon. “Every general that has held the top spot is very supportive with the marathon and willing to help the Lincoln Track Club with everything that needs to be done.”

Hagen said he wanted to highlight Master Sgt. Terry Johnson, whom he said operates as “his right-hand man, for his efforts and



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Jumbo-Tron: Runners cross the finish line of the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Neb., which concluded at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Memorial Stadium, May 5. More than 200 National Guard runners representing nearly every state and territory joined nearly 10,000 more runners for the annual race.

support.

“Without him, we’d be lost,” Hagen said of Johnson. “He knows it, he’s got it—I don’t have to say much each day leading up to marathon day.”

Hagen said the majority of runners on the team really appreciate the ‘extra mile’ given by the support staff. Some comments still surprise

him though, he said.

“I received an e-mail yesterday and this is what it said: ‘None of us are Olympians, but you guys make us feel pretty darn close,’” Hagen said. “Comments like those...I think they’re pretty cool, and certainly make my job all-the-more rewarding.”



Teammates: Members of the Nebraska National Guard marathon team were (from left): 1st Lt. James Cole, Senior Master Sgt. Guy Boden, Master Sgt. Jennifer Eloge, Tech. Sgt. Jamison Nitz, Capt. Robb Campbell, Maj. Karl Duerk, Sgt. 1st Class Tarissa Batenhorst and Sgt. 1st Class Bill Norris.

NEBRASKA continued from page 19.

ning of the race because his body wanted to go faster. However, he was able to push through the second half of the marathon, thanks to the friendly competition from his fellow Guard members.

“I was really excited just to wear the Nebraska state team shirt out there in the race on the course,” said Duerk. “To hear all the people out there saying ‘Go Guard’ and seeing all the Guardsmen out there representing something bigger than yourself, it was really cool to represent good people you are proud of and proud to wear that shirt. It was a really cool day just to represent the Nebraska Guard.”

Capt. Robb Campbell, the Lincoln-based Detachment 2, Company A, 35th Infantry Division assistant operations officer, was the other male from the Nebraska Guard to earn a spot on the All Guard team finishing in 3:03:11. Campbell has run in the Lincoln Marathon for 10 years and bested his personal record set 13 years ago by five minutes.

“It’s quite an honor. I am really beside myself,” said Campbell. “I can’t describe how awesome it is to make the All Guard team and set a personal best by almost five minutes. I was on cloud nine, especially after crossing that finish line.”

“I was so overjoyed, I just could not believe that I ran that well that day,” Campbell said. “It was almost like a dream come true. It was one of the best experiences I have ever had.”

The Nebraska National Guard Marathon team had both experienced marathon runners and a few members who were fairly new to competitive running. But, the three who qualified for the All Guard team shared the same mentality.

Team Results

1. Pennsylvania
2. Wisconsin
3. Georgia
4. Indiana
5. Ohio
6. Washington
7. Massachusetts/Maryland
8. Kentucky
9. Arkansas
10. Texas
11. New Mexico
12. Nebraska
13. Utah
14. Montana/Maine/New York
15. North Dakota
16. Oregon
17. South Dakota
18. Idaho
19. West Virginia
20. South Carolina
21. Virginia
22. Hawaii
23. North Carolina
24. Louisiana
25. Alaska
26. California
27. Puerto Rico
28. Iowa
29. New Jersey
30. Colorado
31. Minnesota
32. Kansas
33. Illinois
34. Tennessee
35. Guam
36. Rhode Island

“You have to make the decision for yourself,” said Batenhorst. “Do you want to do this or not? You can do it if you put your mind to it.”

PETERSON continued from page 18.

“In 1983, the California National Guard was supporting the California International Marathon and a group of us got together as a team and I began to train for that one,” said Peterson. “I did fairly well and then it was the following winter they announced that they were going to have a National Guard Marathon trials in Lincoln, Nebraska in May of 1984.”

After running the first marathon trial for the National Guard he knew this was a good fit for him and his lifestyle, Peterson said. Peterson continued to run in the National Guard marathon for many years. Around 20 years ago, he became the coordinator for California’s team.

“It’s a great experience,” said Peterson. “Over the years we have had a lot of different team members. Everyone brings their own abilities and personalities to the team.”

Peterson added, “It’s also great coming back to see the great support the city of Lincoln provides when they come out on some of the worst days in history. They will stand along the streets cheering people along no matter the weather.”

These are only a few of the reasons Peterson always loved the Lincoln Marathon. In addition, Peterson said, “each year my draw to come back is seeing the race director, all of the National Guard people and seeing the great job the city of Lincoln does along with the Lincoln Track Club.”

“It’s become a great partnership over the last few years,” added Peterson. After 43 years, five months and 27 days in the military, Peterson’s military time came to an end. As the years and months before his retirement passed, Peterson knew he needed to make sure someone could carry on his duty as California National Guard marathon team coordinator.

According to Peterson, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Artavia Edwards, who took over as state command chief warrant officer for California and is a judge advocate warrant officer like Peterson, was a great fit to take over the state program.

“She was the natural person to take on the role as coordinator for the state,” said Peterson. “She and I have done a lot of running together and she has always been a great member of the team.”

Edwards said she knew she had some big shoes to fill. But then again, she added, it seems like she’s always been following in his shoes.

“He has been my mentor since I came into the Guard from the United States Army Reserve in 1996,” said Edwards. “I shadowed him the last two years over all the marathon duties and he (recommended) me as his replacement to the adjutant general.”

Peterson said he couldn’t be happier with Edwards being the new marathon team coordinator. “She’s managed to get some new folks on the team this year,” said Peterson, “which is good.”

“(There have) been times where it has only been she and I on the team,” added Peterson.

According to Edwards, she was very fortunate to follow in Peterson’s path.

“It’s awesome,” said Edwards. “Warrant officers generally are mentors and it’s inherent in what we do.”

After completing all 30 National Guard Marathon trials Peterson said he knows he’s no longer quite



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Longtime Marathoner: Retired California National Guardsman Chief Warrant Officer 5 Brian Peterson runs in the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5. This year’s marathon marked the first time Peterson didn’t compete in the annual race as an active member of the California National Guard.

the runner he used to be. “I’m not nearly as competitive as I used to be because of my age and the times it takes me to recover,” said Peterson. “It’s that balance of being healthy and still getting enough mileage in. But I still do okay.”

“And now I run more to finish and to do my best,” he added.

But according to Peterson, this program really encourages physical fitness in the National Guard and raises the level of camaraderie among the states, which is why he has done it all along.

“There are a lot of new faces over the years, which is good for the National Guard as a whole because it shows that a lot of younger folks are becoming more aware of this program,” said Peterson. “And it all benefits the National Guard.”

Peterson finished the 2013 Lincoln National Guard Marathon with a time of 3 hours, 54 minutes and 52 seconds. According to Peterson he felt ok and did fine running. “Anytime I can survive a marathon, I’m pretty happy,” said Peterson. “I don’t know if I will race next year. Chances are I will, but I’m going to wait and see.”

Through the Viewfinder

Images tell marathon's many stories

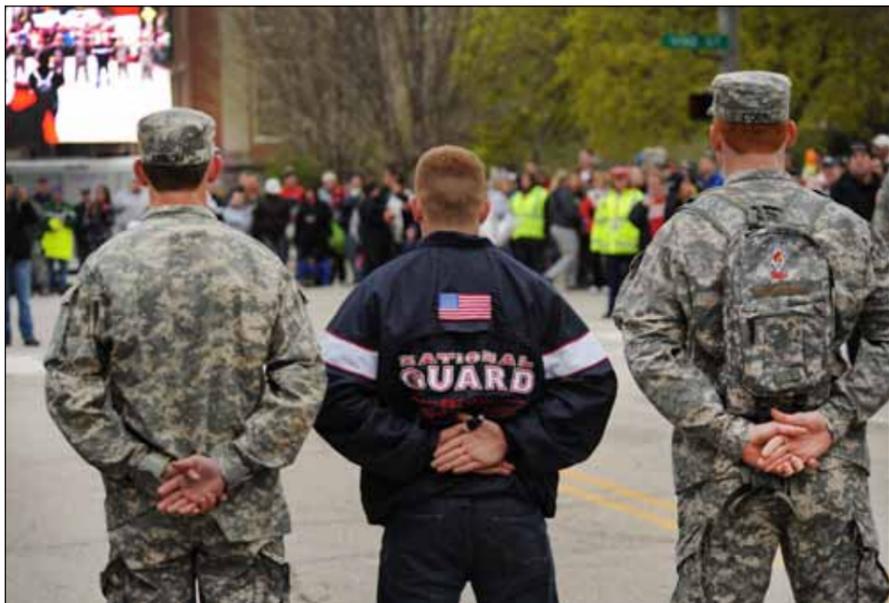


Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

On Guard: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruit Sustainment Program, composed of Soldiers who have recently enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard and are waiting to attend either basic or advanced individual training, keep the area in front of the starting line clear before the start of the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5, in Lincoln, Neb.



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Triumph! Senior Master Sgt. Michael White from the Washington Air National Guard triumphantly crosses the finish line of the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Neb., which concluded at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Memorial Stadium, May 5. White was one of more than 200 National Guard runners from 44 states and two territories who joined nearly 10,000 runners for the annual race.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Fast Paced: A Nebraska National Guard Soldier holds a pace sign before the start of the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon held in Lincoln, Neb., May 5.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

AnyTakers? Col. Scott McPherson, Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters, offers packets of nourishment for runners as they prepare to enter Holmes Lake Park in Lincoln, Neb., during the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, held May 5.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton

Ruck March: Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, Nebraska National Guard state command sergeant major, marches along a busy street during the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, held May 5, in Lincoln, Neb. Valenzuela marched the entire half marathon carrying a heavy rucksack on which he had placed the names of the 14 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who have fallen while mobilized for overseas duty since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.



Photo by Capt. Carlos Van Nurden

Leading The Way: (Above) Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons (left), Nebraska National Guard adjutant general, and Chief Warrant Officer 5 John Regan, Nebraska National Guard command chief warrant officer, run during the half marathon portion of the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, held May 5, in Lincoln, Neb.



Congratulations: (Left) Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal, Nebraska Army National Guard assistant adjutant general-Army, places a medal around the neck of Senior Airman Emily Shertzer, Pennsylvania Air National Guard, at the finish line of the 36th Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5. Shertzer took top honors for all female National Guard runners with a time of 3:01:06.

Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

■Nebraska Air National Guard 'All Guard' marathoner returns to hometown as assistant high school track coach to help new crop of athletes learn how to keep...

Going the Distance

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The famed poet Robert Frost once wrote, "Two roads diverged in woods and I, I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all of the difference."

Those words could easily symbolize Master Sgt. Sarah Bredthauer's journey. Bredthauer, manager for the Lincoln-based 155th Civil Engineer Squadron Prime Base Engineering Emergency Force, never planned on being a track coach. But heck, she never really planned on joining the Nebraska Air National Guard, either.

However, for the past five years, the full-time Nebraska Air Guard master sergeant has been balancing the full-time responsibilities of a Guard leader with the part-time duties of an assistant track coach at Sterling High School in southeastern Nebraska.

And along the way, the Sterling, Neb., native said she's found that the two jobs not only complement each other, she's actually developed a passion for both.

"They directly tie," said Bredthauer recently about the two jobs, "especially in long-distance running. It's very disciplined. Track can and should be very disciplined and it's directly involved with pushing yourself, just like life in the military. You've got to push yourself hard. You've got to be disciplined. You've got to be willing to listen to others."

"And you've got to be willing to lead," she added.

In many ways, those are the attributes that have brought Bredthauer to this point in her life. So, in a way, Bredthauer's story is really about a partially-completed journey, the endpoint not yet in view, that have prepared her to be able to make significant contributions to the lives of the Airmen and the student athletes she leads.

High School Athlete

Growing up in a small town in southeastern Nebraska, Sarah Bredthauer caught the competitive bug at a very early age. Like many small schools, Sterling Junior High School didn't have the budget to run separate track programs for boys and girls, so all of the students were lumped together for practices. Girls practiced throwing or jumping with boys. Boys sprinted alongside their female counterparts. Girls and boys distance runners logged countless miles together, pushing each other to record the fastest times.

And somewhere along a well-run strip of asphalt that the athletes used while running through the streets of Sterling, Bredthauer said she found she had a well-developed sense of personal competitiveness.

"I didn't want anyone to beat me, guy or girl," said Bredthauer. "So, I would push myself."

"I figured out that I was able to run faster than I realized, especially for a girl," she added. "So, in part, I think I owe that to the fact that I did come from a small school. We practiced with boys and I think that pushed me. And I learned to become a better runner because I constantly had that faster competition to run against."

By the time Bredthauer entered high school that training had definitely paid off. During her freshman

year in track, she qualified for the first of four-straight Nebraska State Track and Field meets. According to Bredthauer, her focus was all long distance, competing in the two-mile, one-mile and 800-meter individual races while also contributing to the four-person one-mile and two-mile relay teams.

Bredthauer said a big credit to her early success is due to her track coach, Jack Weyers.

"He was just an amazing runner," Bredthauer said. "He ran for Sterling and for Peru State and broke a lot of records."

One of those records was a gold medal for Sterling High School at the State Track Meet, which Weyers earned in the 1960s. It stood for decades as the sole gold medal in track for Sterling High School.

Following his collegiate career, Bredthauer said Weyers returned to Sterling where he became a well-respected track coach. "He was just an amazing instructor," she said.

Yet, even though Weyers had done well with the Sterling team, he had never had a track athlete earn a gold medal at state. That all changed when, as a sophomore, Bredthauer took home the Class D title in the two-mile race.

"It felt good to be the first athlete in decades to win a gold medal," said Bredthauer, "especially since he was my track coach."

Joining the Guard

Soon, however, Bredthauer's high school track career was approaching its end. As it did, she said she started considering what she wanted to do as a career.

The military, said Bredthauer, who graduated from Sterling High School in 2000, was the top option.

"I have a pretty big family history of military," said Bredthauer, pointing to the several framed photographs of family members who have served in the military that sit atop her desk in the Civil Engineer Squadron building at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln.

"Both grandpas were in the Army and my dad and brother were in the Marines."

"I was dead-set on going into the Marine Corps," she said. "I think my dad had other plans."

According to Bredthauer, her father seemed concerned about seeing his daughter join the Marines, so he started asking her if she'd considered alternative forms of military service. One of those alternatives, she said, was the Nebraska Air National Guard.

"He asked me, 'Have you ever heard of the Air Guard?'" Bredthauer recalled. Answering no, Bredthauer said her father soon arranged for a visit to the Lincoln air base. "We did a base tour and talked to recruiting. It was just something that I wasn't aware of, but he opened my eyes," said Bredthauer, adding that prior to the visit, all she had ever thought about the military was active duty.

"I was just blind to the fact that there was a Guard base right here and I could do that and still stay in the state."

Bredthauer soon enlisted into the Air Guard's 155th CES as a traditional Guardsman, serving for three years in the Heavy Equipment Shop before taking a full-time job in the CES 10 years ago.

All Guard Runner

Bredthauer also continued running part-time, often logging miles



Photo by Master Sgt. Shannon Nielsen

Balancing Two Pursuits: Master Sgt. Sarah Bredthauer, 155th Civil Engineering Squadron, stands on the outskirts of Sterling, Neb., the town where she starred as a high school track athlete and now serves as a volunteer coach.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Encouraging Her Runners: Master Sgt. Sarah Bredthauer calls out some encouraging advice to one her runners during the boys' 3,200 meter race at the 2013 Freeman Invitational Track Meet in Crete, Neb.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

All Guard Performance: Master Sgt. Sarah Bredthauer competes in the 2011 Lincoln National Guard Marathon where she made the All Guard team.

around her hometown while also competing in various civilian races around the area. It was during one of these races that she met a fellow Nebraska Guardsman – Maj. Russell Virus of the Nebraska Army Guard – who also served as the Nebraska National Guard's Marathon Team coordinator. Bredthauer said she'd never heard of the Guard running program before that chance encounter.

"He had his Army Guard running shirt on, so I struck up a conversation with him," said Bredthauer. After telling Virus that she was in the Air Guard, Virus encouraged the young athlete to consider trying out for the Guard's marathon team.

Bredthauer said the idea intrigued her.

"I had run a half-marathon before and always had a marathon on my bucket list, but never had the incentive to go do it," she said. "As he explained the benefits of the team, I thought, 'That sounds fun.' And me, being the competitive person I am, I decided I am going to train for a marathon."

Bredthauer's first marathon came in 2003 when she competed in the annual "Bataan Death March Memorial Marathon" held in New Mexico. The experience was far from easy.

"That was hell," Bredthauer said, laughing. "I came back and I didn't have any skin left on my heels. But I did it and I liked it."

Three months later, she ran at the Lincoln National Guard Marathon and, surprising herself, qualified for the "All Guard Marathon Team." It was the first of three such qualifications.

Bredthauer said the opportunity to compete on a national team that competes in marathons across the nation as part of a recruiting effort

designed to build awareness of the Army and Air National Guard was something that became a significant and on-going personal challenge.

"I enjoy the challenge of personally training to make the team... trying to push myself because it's a goal – a big goal," said Bredthauer. "They only take the top 15 girls... when I'm training, that's what I'm thinking about. I'm thinking about the fact that there are probably 50 other girls out there who are pushing themselves to make the team, too."

"I love competition and that's what I'm thinking about when I'm training to push myself," she added. "And I like the part of being part of a team. I'm not there by myself. I get to travel with a team."

According to Bredthauer, that competitive spirit applies directly back into her military duties. "You're personally pushing yourself, no matter what you're doing... you're personally pushing yourself to be the best that you can be and you're never satisfied with just being average... you're always looking to do better."

"You're always seeking leadership opportunities, which this fits right into your everyday life," she added. "You should always seek out to do the best that you can."

For Bredthauer, however, she didn't seek the opportunity to be a track coach – something she admits she never even considered doing – it, by a sad twist of fate, sought her out instead.

Track Coach

A little over five years ago, Bredthauer said, Weyers, her former track coach died unexpectedly, leaving the Sterling High School track team without a leader. Bredthauer said school officials looked around for a replacement and then soon

settled upon the former track stand-out who still lived in the Sterling area with her husband and family.

"I have never moved out of Sterling. I went to school there and have always lived in or around the Sterling area, so people see me running all the time," she said.

About six months before the start of the upcoming track season, high school officials approached Bredthauer and asked her if she'd consider signing on to be an assistant coach. After a brief consideration, she said sure, she'd give it a try.

Bredthauer quickly learned she had a lot of work to do to be ready for the rapidly approaching season.

"I can make myself do hard things, but how do I turn that around and try to get other kids to push themselves when they don't want to go anymore? When they think they're done, how do you get them to go further? How do you pull that drive from them?" Bredthauer said she asked herself. "That was hard for me at first."

Bredthauer said she dove into several books about coaching while preparing a plan for the upcoming season. She said she realized time wasn't on her side.

"Track season is fairly short, running from March until mid-May, so you've only got about three to four weeks before your first meet," she said. An additional factor, Bredthauer said, was that because of the school's size, boys and girls still trained together. "I had always run with the guys, but had never coached them. I really had to turn my brain onto how guys run versus girls. I knew all about girls' times, but I had to learn how to teach boys."

"I wasn't really worried, but I thought it might be a challenge to gain the respect of the boys," she added. "It ended up, however, not being much of a challenge."

Bredthauer said she soon learned that athletes – both boys and girls – are simply interested in whether their coach has their best interests at heart. "As long as you have the respect of the kids, they'll listen to you and they'll do what you ask and they won't question what you tell them."

Bredthauer said she thinks she earned that respect by taking the time to learn and research training techniques, building well-planned training sessions, and then communicating what the training would do to the athletes' bodies in preparation for the races. She said she also frequently ran with the runners during the training sessions to show that she, too, was living what she was preaching.

"It's important to show them that I've been in their shoes. I'm not

See COACH on 23.

Golden!

Year after season-ending injury, Army Guard recruit uses newly-earned mental, physical stamina to take gold at state track meet

By Sgt. Heidi Krueger
Staff Photojournalist

Growing up an Army brat, Brandon Cook knew he wanted to be in the Army, just like his father, retired. Lt. Col. Corey Cook, who had spent a career in the active Army.

So, it made perfect sense that when Cook turned 17, he began to talk to the Nebraska Army National Guard recruiters.

"I wanted a head start on my military career because I never really pictured myself doing anything else," said Cook.

Just a day before Cook was scheduled to travel to the Military Entrance Processing Station in Omaha, Neb., he had his first track practice of his junior year season at Waverly High School, Waverly, Neb., when suddenly he felt a strange tug in his leg.

"We were just doing some form running," said Cook. "Nothing too strenuous, but then all the sudden I was jogging on the back side of the track and my right leg clenched up."

"It was tough but I went to MEPS," added Cook, "especially with some of the exercises I had to go through."

Cook enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard on March 2, 2012, as an airborne infantryman in the Beatrice-based Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron (Reconnaissance and Surveillance). The next day, now a private in the Nebraska Army Guard, Cook went to his first Recruit Sustainment Program drill.

"I tried running the mile, but that just made it worse," said Cook. "I went to the doctor right away."

The diagnosis: Cook had pulled a hamstring muscle.

After weeks off from track, Cook slowly eased his way back into running, waiting until nearly the close of the season to see if he'd recovered enough to compete in the hurdles.

"By the end of the season I tried hurdles and that's when I pulled my other hamstring," said Cook.

That injury kept Cook from shipping off to basic training. According to Master Sgt. Brad Beiber, recruiting and retention noncommissioned



Photo courtesy of Pvt. Brandon Cook

Gold Medal Form: Pvt. Brandon Cook (third from left) competes in the Nebraska Class B 300 meter intermediate hurdles during the 2013 Nebraska State Track and Field Meet at Omaha Burke Stadium in Omaha, Neb.



Photo by Sgt. Heidi Krueger

Army Tough: Pvt. Brandon Cook does push-ups at the Waverly High School track and field just days before shipping to basic training on May 24. Cook took gold at this year's Nebraska High School state track field meet.

officer in charge, Nebraska recruiting officials did what they could to help him heal and continue his service in the Nebraska National Guard.

After a few months of recouping

Cook was back to running.

"It got better and I didn't notice any problems," said Cook.

By the time his senior year of high school arrived, Cook had recovered enough for officials to set

his ship date for basic training for a few days after graduation.

What neither Cook nor his recruiters realized, though, was that the delay would actually pay dividends on the track field. By the

'It motivated me just to know that you can't quit.'

— Pvt. Brandon Cook, Nebraska Class B 300 meter intermediate hurdles champion on how the Soldier's Creed helped motivate him after a season-ending injury last year.

time the 2013 track season arrived, Cook was ready to go.

"RSP really got me into better shape, which helped me in track, too," said Cook. "The running definitely helped."

Cook also learned the Soldier's Creed from RSP—especially the line "I will never quit"—which he used to help him get through the rigorous training sessions on the track.

"It motivated me," said Cook, "just to know that you can't quit."

By the time Waverly's Class B districts came around, Cook was more than prepared. Cook placed first in both the 110 meter high hurdles and the 300 meter intermediate hurdles. He followed that up by finishing just seconds shy of going to finals in the 110 meter high hurdles at Nebraska High School Track and Field Championships, while taking gold in the Class B 300 meter intermediate hurdles.

His time was so good, in fact, that he placed fifth overall for all classes competing at the event, while breaking the Waverly High School 300 meter intermediate hurdles record with a time of 39.64 seconds.

According to Cook, he wouldn't have been able to achieve all he did without the training and knowledge he received from the Nebraska Army National Guard.

Cook shipped for basic training on May 28. When he returns later this year, he plans to attend either Doane College in Crete, Neb., or Concordia University in Seward, Neb., and participate in track and field and Reserve Officers' Training Corps.

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just telling them, I've done it and I can still do it," she said. "I think it helped me, too."

According to Master Sgt. Shannon Nielson, the public affairs superintendent with the 155th Air Refueling Wing whose daughter, Stacia, has run for Bredthauer for the past three years, Bredthauer brings a number of very important talents to the coaching ranks.

"First of all, she is an amazing runner. She runs like a deer," said Nielson, who has known Bredthauer for about eight years and frequently runs with her. "She also had an incredible coach who helped her get to where she's at."

"More importantly, though, she's really a good mentor to the athletes. They really look up to her as a role model because she's such a good runner and she's been where they're at. She's also very prepared," Nielson said. "What they probably don't realize, though, is all that she is doing to get them prepared to compete at state. All those runs... they all pay off once they get to state and they're able to compete at that high level."

Bredthauer said coaching track at a small school meant constantly having to be flexible while creating innovative solutions to the fact that Sterling—like many other schools—doesn't have a track.

"We've run in pastures. We've run in empty creeks. We also have a block in town that's close to a 400-meter track that the kids like to call the 'death block' that us coaches call

the 'block of fun,'" she said. "Being a track coach really teaches you how to overcome adversity."

Nielson said one of those training events even dealt with a treasure hunt through Sterling. "She basically had an Easter egg hunt in which the kids had to sprint from place to place throughout town," said Nielson. "What they didn't realize was that they were getting in their 100-meter and 400-meter sprints. Instead, they were just focused on the fun that they were having finding these things."

"I think that kind of speaks to the type of creative coach Sarah is," she added.

According to Bredthauer, looking for fun and creative ways to accomplish seemingly mundane tasks reinforces a person's ability to deal with constantly changing situations or working with new people every year, each of whom come to the team with differing levels of athleticism or self-motivation, said Bredthauer. "Some are really willing to work. Others, you have to figure out what's going to make them go... what's going to make them spark."

That's similar to the challenges of being a PRIME BEEF manager, she said, in charge of roughly 60 Airmen. "I have to learn how to manage people here. There are all sorts of different personalities and I have to figure out here as well what makes them go... what makes them drive."

Communication and time management are also skills applied similarly to both coaching and military

management, said Bredthauer. "In track, I have about an hour-and-a-half to two-hours to get the work done. That's real similar to a drill weekend when there seems like there's never enough time to get everything done."

"Coaching is definitely good practice for being a leader in the military. You have to learn how to balance and manage time here as well as there," she added.

According to Bredthauer, school officials have been extremely easy to work with, realizing that her military duties often mean that she can't be at every practice. She said that's become an even bigger issue as her family has grown. Even though her parents and husband help out with her two kids, pressures on her time often require maintaining close awareness of the "big" calendar she maintains in her purse.

"The Sterling track team has really worked with me and my schedule," she said. "They realize that I work for the military and that I'm not going to be there all of the time. I'm there most of the time... but not all of the time. I really do feel lucky that they've been willing to work with my busy schedule."

Building a Growing Program
Over the past five years, Bredthauer said she and the other track coaches have noticed subtle changes in the way that the track program is perceived. Initially, it was seen as an "other" sport, or the "conditioning" sport designed to get

athletes ready for the upcoming fall season. That seemed to change two years ago when the boys took silver in the 2011 State Track and Field team championships in Omaha.

"That was the first time that any Sterling High School team had taken a trophy at the State Track Meet," said Bredthauer. "Other Sterling teams have won or placed at state, but not the track team. Taking home that runner-up trophy was huge."

According to Bredthauer, parents and townspeople began to attend track meets more frequently. More athletes turned out to compete.

"I see it becoming an actual sport in Sterling," she said.

Bredthauer also saw her girls' 3,200-meter relay team take runner-up in 2012 with a good chance at taking gold this past spring. An injury to a top runner, however, stunted that goal. Bredthauer said the injury actually served as a good life-lesson for the injured athletes, as well as all of the other track competitors.

"That was just a buzz-kill," said Bredthauer about the athlete who sustained a major knee injury during the basketball season. "She would've broke (my record in the 800-meter race) this year and she was also on the two-mile relay team that was all coming back."

"Still, she played a big leadership role for us," Bredthauer added. "She showed that even when you get knocked down, you can still come back... she met her challenge. She didn't feel sorry for herself, but in-

stead kept coming to every meet to help wherever she could."

Future goals

After having completed her fifth season as an assistant coach, Bredthauer said she realizes she may soon have to make a difficult decision. As her family and military commitments have grown, she said she's found herself having to miss more and more track practices. She said she realized that's not fair to the athletes who are counting on her.

"I don't think it's fair for me to miss practices," she said. "I don't think it's fair to the kids. I think they need a coach who is there almost every day, if not every day, to work with them, to give them the workouts and to just have that interaction with them."

Bredthauer said she finds herself thinking more often about taking a break—at least until her kids are older—so that the student athletes can receive more full-time support. She doesn't think that break would be forever, though. In fact, despite not having ever coached before, she's now convinced that it's probably a future path for her.

"Once I retire from (the military) I would really love to become a teacher and continue coaching. I kind of fell into coaching, but I found my love."

"I think that's what I really want to do when I leave the military." Considering all Bredthauer's already accomplished as an athlete, an Airman, a mother and coach, it seems like a pretty good plan.