By Maj. Kevin Hynes

October drills postponed, more than 600 federal, state employees furloughed, many activities halted

The 16-day partial federal government shutdown that went into effect on Oct. 1 had some serious impacts upon the Nebraska Military Department. Approximately 560 federal technicians went on unpaid furloughs for the second time in less than a year. More than 70 state employees who are either fully or partially federally funded were also placed on unpaid furloughs. October drill weekend training assemblies for approximately 4,600 Army and Air Guardsmen across Nebraska were postponed, meaning crucial training wasn’t conducted and drill checks – which many Soldiers and Airmen rely on – weren’t earned. Vital training supplies – including aviation and ground vehicle fuel – and replacement parts couldn’t be purchased. Training exercises were either postponed or cancelled, as were official travel and important meetings.

And while the agreement reached by the US Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama on Oct. 16 may have ended the partial federal government shutdown and restored federal funds back to the Nebraska National Guard, the impacts of the budget crisis will probably last for quite some time. “We are still developing the full understanding of the impact on the Nebraska National Guard,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, about a week after the governmental shutdown ended. “The efforts of the Budget Control Act furloughs combined with the partial government shutdown down have created feeling of uncertainty across the force.”

“Remains to be seen what impacts that will have on retention of both full-time staff and traditional Soldiers and Airmen,” he said. The partial federal government shutdown, the first in nearly 20 years, affected hundreds of thousands of federal employees across the United States, including approximately 400,000 Defense Department civilian employees who were placed on furloughs. Included in this number were 560 ‘civilian’ technicians from the Nebraska National Guard, the bulk of whom were dual-status technicians, meaning that while they receive benefits and pay according to federal civilian technician rates, they are required to wear uniforms to work and maintain training and membership requirements in Army or Air National Guard units. Additionally, unlike the administrative furloughs that occurred earlier this summer, the number of employees that were either fully or partially funded by the Federal government through cooperative agreement programs were also sidelined.

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

By 1st Lt. Alex Salomon

Army National Guard’s 9th command sergeant major retires in Nebraska

A former Nebraska Army National Guard state command sergeant major who went on to become the 9th Army National Guard command sergeant major was honored in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 27, as he completed a military career that spanned 37 years.

Richard Burch, who served as the Nebraska Army National Guard’s top enlisted leader from March 2007 until March 2010 when he was selected to serve as the top enlisted Soldier in the entire Army National Guard, was formally retired from the military during a ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters, where he had served in an advisory position for approximately a year.

The ceremony was attended by Burch’s family. See BURCH on 5.

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

By 1st Lt. Alex Salomon

Nebraska National Guardsmen feel shutdown’s impact

T he Nebraska Army and Air National Guard partnered with the Texas National Guard to send several Airmen and Soldiers to the Czech Republic, Sept. 7-13, as part of the State Partnership Program. Guardsmen with experience in explosive ordnance disposal, military intelligence, advanced trauma care and two different aerialces worked hand-in-hand with counterparts from the Czech armed forces to share their knowledge and increase interoperability between the partner nations.

The Nebraska and Texas - Czech Republic State Partnership Program is one of 22 European partnerships that make-up the US European Command State Partnership Program and is one of the National Guard’s 65 worldwide partnerships. The Czech Republic partnership with Nebraska and Texas began its 20th year in 2013. According to Lt. Col. John Williams, a bilateral affairs officer with the 155th ARW who is stationed in the Czech Republic who oversees the Nebraska and Texas partnership with the NATO ally, the goal of SPP is to support the EUCOM country campaign plan. The National Guard provides subject matter experts from Nebraska and Texas who are capable of assisting in a number of areas.

See CZECH on 11.

By 1st Lt. Alex Salomon

Nebraska National Guardsmen feel shutdown’s impact

T he Nebraska Army National Guard’s 173rd Air Refueling Wing conducts in-flight refueling contacts with an Air Force B-52 Stratofortress in the skies over Kansas in June.

Air Guard’s enlisted refuelers celebrate 20th anniversary

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton

In a sequence of carefully choreographed movements, the ballerina moves behind her partner ever so close as the danseur extends his arm and connects with his partner. In perfect sync, the two then glides through the sky on a pre-planned track at speeds nearing 400 mph.

Choreographing this celestial courtship are two aeronautical masterpieces.

In-flight refueling technicians from the Nebraska Air National Guard’s 173rd Air Refueling Squadron. The operation takes extreme focus to coax the two aging workhorses into perfect harmony at more than 20,000 feet above the earth where Buse passes all-important aviation fuel from his KC-135 Stratotanker into a B-52 Stratofortress that seems to hover beneath his refueling pod. Set to classical music, the operation just might rival The Royal Ballet.

Lyric on his stomach, the responsibility of aerial refueling aircraft is literally in Buse’s hands as he peers through a small window while expertly guiding the refueling boom into contact with the receiving aircraft.

See BOOMERS on 12.
**NEWS DIGEST**

**Defense Department must control personnel costs, Hagel tells enlisted leaders**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Defense Department is reviewing all options to control personnel costs, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel told members of the Nebraska Army National Guard during a recent trip to the state.

“Don’t be that kind of person we have the right people in the right culture and they believe they are being treated fairly,” the secretary told Inskeep.

The secretary discussed the issue of sexual assaults in the military. He told the NCOs that the system was broken, and that the services are working to fix it. One NCO noted to the secretary that the recent case of an officer tasked with formulating service policy to combat sexual assaults, whose actions in the case of the crime does not help the push to eliminate sexual assaults.

The NCOs also discussed the issue of women in combat with the secretary. Hagel said that women can and have served in combat for the past few years, but Congress has not changed the laws to allow them to do so.

**Sexual assault victims now entitled to legal representation**

WASHINGTON (ANGNEWS) — Victims of sexual assault are entitled to legal representation following the attack.

During criminal proceedings in a court- room, a Special Victims Counsel (SVC) repre- sents the state.

In sexual assault cases, the victim has historically not had the benefit of a state- sponsored legal advocate, which they can testimonify as they testify on the witness stand, and as they move through the other complexities of the legal system.

This is no longer the case.

The NCOs also discussed the issue of sexual assault in the military. One NCO said that they have been sexually assaulted and have had to go through the legal process that it can be challenging.

The Air Force Reserve has been working to improve the process as it continues.

“We made a number of recommendations over the past few years... but Congress has to be a partner in this,” he added. “If we don’t make some tough choices here along the way, there will be fewer dollars and that will mean fewer people, but that’s not good enough or not capable and not ready.”

**Defense Department begins transfer of Kyrgyz air base**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Defense Department has ordered the transfer of the Transit Control Center at Manas International Airport in Kyrgyzstan.

The Department of Defense (DoD) has been looking into reorganizing from the Transit Center at Manas International Airport (TCM) and plans to complete the transfer by the end of November.

The DoD also plans to meet with the adjutants general at each of the 49 states to discuss the financial opportunity of all service members.

**Leaders advise commission not to merge Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard**

WASHINGTON (ANGNEWS) — Air Force Reserve leaders testify before the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force that merging the Air Force Reserve with the Air National Guard would cost big and cause numerous adverse impacts - decreased readiness, the loss of the critical Air Force Reserve capability.

Appointed by the fiscal 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, the commission- ers listened to testimony Oct. 24-25. They are looking at the Air Force’s structure to determine if and how it should be changed to meet future missions and funding challenges.

Their report and recommendations are expected to be released by Thanksgiving.

“It’s easy to say we need to end duplication or merge these two components, but the fact is there is no duplication,” said Lt. Gen. John K. Papp, Jr., Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard Reserve vice commander.

Members of the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force interviewed Col. McKee, while he was serving on the witness stand, and as they testify on the witness stand, and as they testify.

They are entitled to legal representation.

**Officials announce deadline for holiday mail delivery**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Postal Service officials say that people who send holiday cards and gifts to military members overseas have until Nov. 12 for delivery.

The USPS, as an extension of the U.S. Postal Service, has published a chart at http://oap.militarymail.mil/uspsmand.htm which shows the deadlines for military mail and the expected delivery times, broken down by the APO/FPO/DPO number.

USPS is offering a discount on its larg- est Priority Mail Flat Rate box at $14.35. For those larger packages, military mail must be sent to APO/FPO/DPO 39008.

Priority Mail Flat Rate boxes are available at free of local post offices, or can be ordered from USPS online.

The Prairie Soldier can be read on-line at www.ne.ng.mil
Squad Medec Challenge

2013

Working Together Under Stress: Health care specialists with the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) work together to provide aid to a ‘wounded’ service member during the 313th Squad Medec Challenge, Sept. 7, near Camp Ashland, Neb. The challenge, in addition to Army warrior tasks, was designed to test Soldiers on providing emergency medical treatment, primary care, health protection and evacuation from a point of injury or illness.

‘Go’ Time

Squad Medec competition challenges Guard Soldiers’ medical, military skills

By Sgt. Riley Huskey

Staff Writer

As a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter touched down, squads from the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) rushed to carry “wounded” Soldiers on litters to the bird for medical evacuation.

From Sept. 6-8, the 313th Med. Co. completed six advanced skill-testing lanes as part of the unit’s annual Squad Medec Challenge at Camp Ashland, Neb. They enlisted the assistance of the 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion for air assets and the 110th Multi-Functional Medical Battalion role played as the ‘wounded’ Soldiers for the challenge.

I had to quickly rely on the Soldiers in my squad to perform and finish the challenge tasks. It really was great training.

Lessons learned from previous years provided a more in-depth and stronger training experience for the company. This is a learning experience for the Soldiers and a chance for each of them to grow as a combat medic, said Lind.

“We made a few mistakes, but we’re learning from them and that’s what it’s all about,” Lind said. “The teamwork training in the field far outweighs the ‘dress rehearsal’ on the drill floor. Actually getting out in the weeds and doing it hands on—seeing how we all work together as a team—builds on our strengths and weaknesses.”

Kelly agreed that the Soldiers’ reaction to the training makes the experience come full-circle.

“I think the Soldiers love it,” Kelly said. “It’s one thing to train on the skills, but it’s another thing to actually practically use them on live stations. In a time that there are fewer deployments, it gives people a reason to want to come to drill.”

Battle-ready medics are what it’s all about for Lind.

“To the end, this training makes us better for the Nebraska National Guard and allows us to excel in our mission overall,” Lind said.

Patched Up: Two health care specialists with the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) ensured a wounded Soldier has information regarding her medical treatment during the 313th Squad Medec Challenge, Sept. 7, near Camp Ashland, Neb. Members of the 110th Multi-Functional Medical Battalion role played as the ‘wounded’ Soldiers for the challenge.

Moving Out: Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers carry a ‘wounded’ Soldier on a stretcher to a waiting air ambulance helicopter during the 313th Squad Medec Challenge, Sept. 7, near Camp Ashland, Neb. The squads worked together to provide medical care to three ‘wounded’ Soldiers as a part of the medical challenge.

Tough Sledding: A Soldier from the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) pulls a ‘wounded’ Soldier to medical treatment during the urban patrol lane of the 313th Squad Medec Challenge, Sept. 7, near Camp Ashland, Neb. Individuals from the company worked together to give medical care to a ‘wounded’ Soldier.

All Together Now: Two 313th Med. Co. members carry a ‘wounded’ Soldier to a ground ambulance as a part of the the 313th Squad Medec Challenge, Sept. 7, near Camp Ashland, Neb. The challenge is designed to test soldiers on providing emergency medical treatment, primary care, health protection and evacuation from a point of injury or illness.
Retention remains 2014 focus

By Sgt. Heidi McKinlock
Staff Photographer

Now that the 2013 fiscal year is done and over, Maj. Vernon Chandler, the new commander of the Nebraska National Guard Recruiting and Retention command, has plans to build off previous commander Lt. Col. Shane Martin’s 2013 fiscal year retention.

Martin headed the recruiting and retention command for roughly one year before Chandler took command in October. Chandler said his focus was pretty simple: “My emphasis was retaining the (state’s) highly trained and quality Soldiers.”

According to Nebraska’s Recruiting and Retention battalion, they needed to make an even bigger difference in the next fiscal year. To help with the retention effort an advertisement was placed for two additional retention noncommissioned officers to be located near Kearney and Grand Island, Neb.

“These retention personnel will assist the unit commanders and unit career counselors with more face-to-face retention engagements to better inform Soldiers of the benefits of staying before considering leaving our ranks,” said Martin. “We have learned the honest communications with our Soldiers and individually reviewing options and benefits with them, helps make them a more informed decision, which tends to lead to more extensions.”

According to Nebraska retention officials, the two additional retention NCOs will be a great addition to the team and will ensure Soldiers throughout the state will have all the information about the benefits of staying in the Nebraska National Guard.

“My vision for the Battalion is a disciplined, values-based organization that conducts recruiting, retention and attraction management operations in pursuit of the quality and quantity of Soldiers,” said Chandler. “And the appropriate skill sets required for the Nebraska National Guard to respond to any assigned mission.”

With his vision in mind there is assigned mission numbers they hope to meet for fiscal year 2014.

“Our end strength goal for fiscal year 2014 is 3,829 Soldiers,” said Chandler. “Our specific assigned missions are 410 enlistments, 34 officer accessions, 13 warrant officers and retaining 394 Soldiers.”

However, our fiscal year 2014 warrant officer mission of 13 is more than double last year’s mission and will prove to be a significant challenge,” said Chandler. “We ask that units identify and encourage qualified Soldiers to meet with our officer strength managers to discuss the avenues available to them for becoming a warrant officer.”

Nebraska retention officials feel reaching the end strength goal of 3,829 Soldiers will be difficult but attainable.

“There will certainly have to be a command emphasis at all levels to make strength a priority early in the fiscal year,” said Chandler. “It will take a concerted effort from everyone to get to where we need to be on Sept. 30.”

Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers have ‘Breakfast with the Boss’

Hastings-area civic leaders try out Meals, Ready to Eat, learn about Nebraska National Guard’s Greenfield Training Site

By 1st Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

H astings-area business and civic leaders take a taste of Nebraska National Guard life during an Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve “Breakfast with the Boss” held Sept. 25 at the Greenfield Training Site near Hastings.

The day began with a morning meeting of the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce in the training site’s dining facility. Following the meeting, chamber members were joined by additional Hastings-area employers and civic leaders for a breakfast of a military dietary staple - the Meals, Ready to Eat. During breakfast, the approximately 30 area leaders heard from Nebraska National Guard leaders about the importance of community support.

A tour of the training site followed breakfast with several of the business leaders, including chamber president, capping off the activities by signing a Statement of Support, an ESGR document signed by business leaders that aims to encourage employers to act as advocates for employee participation in the military.

“The goal of the Breakfast with the Boss event is to build the relationship,” said Maj. Vernon Chandler, commanding officer of the Nebraska National Guard Recruiting and Retention command.

“It’s an educational event to inform local employers about what ESGR is and what services the Nebraska National Guard has,” said Sgt. Peggy Brown, ESGR assistant support technician.

Brown said the ESGR staff works to make the employers and city leaders aware of services available for area Soldiers and services ESGR can offer to the area employers.

Hot Stuff: Lt. Col. Eric Togeistrom, executive officer of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, shows Edion Orthmann, Adams County supervisor, how to heat a Meals, Ready to Eat during an Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve “Breakfast with the Boss” at the Greenfield Training Site near Hastings, Neb., Sept. 25.

According to Tom Hastings, president of the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce, he always had been curious about what goes on at GTS and worked with ESGR to set up the morning.

He then decided to invite other community leaders out to join in the fun while learning more about the Nebraska National Guard.

“I think a lot of times people, especially people my age...they just think of the Guard as people who used to be in training on the weekends and doing meetings once a month,” said Chandler. “They just didn’t realize how much the Guard is a part of the system of the military...honestly, they’re the people that make things happen now.”

Heavy Duty: Capt. Elizabeth Mikec, a finance officer with the 155th Air Rotational Wing, attends the enrollment oath to Staff Sgt. Michael Gibson, II, an explosive ordnance disposal technician, Oct. 22, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in, Lincoln, Neb. Gibson made an “My appearance by taking the oath while wearing an 85-pound EOD bomb suit.”
family; friends and approximately 100 Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen who served with Burch during his career.

According to Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general who served as the presidng official for the retirement ceremony, it seemed only right that Burch retire from the military in Nebraska.

“You left an indelible mark on the Nebraska National Guard,” said Bohac, prior to re-promoting Burch to the next state command sergeant major, the ninth Nebraska adjutant general who received the Nebraska Medal of Honor plaque at the Nebraska State Capitol, Nov. 11. Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, on Aug. 9 at the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters. Bohac was moving on to become the commander of the 35th Infantry Division, based at Fort Leavenworth, Mo.

New Medal of Honor plaque unveiled
Gov. Dave Heineman points out retired Lt. Col. Charles Hagemeister’s name on a newly updated Nebraska Medal of Honor plaque at the Nebraska State Capitol, Nov. 11. Hagemeister, one of only two living Nebraska Medal of Honor recipients, is one of 72 names listed on the newly updated plaque.

Navrkal moves to 35th Infantry Division
Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal, former Nebraska assistant adjutant general, Army, is presented the Nebraska National Guard Legion of Merit by Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, on Aug. 9 at the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters. Navrkal was moving on to become the commander of the 35th Infantry Division, based at Fort Leavenworth, Mo.

Promotion system here in the state of Nebraska,” Bohac said, adding that he was honored to be the state command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. John Valenzuela.

“Obviously, that was well received by all of the NCO Corps,” he added. “We all appreciated the job you did.”

Burch remained as the state command sergeant major until March 2010 when he was selected to be the ninth state command sergeant major by Maj. Gen. Roger Lampkin, then-Nebraska adjutant general. Burch’s selection was well-received across the Nebraska National Guard, said the current state command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela.

“When he was selected as the next state command sergeant major, I was thrilled,” Valenzuela said, adding that he recalled thinking: “We have a great person up there who had my back and I had his.”

“Every beginning, there’s a first step and a lot of exercises.”

“Burch’s daughters, Jennifer Umana and Jody Knight, were each presented with a Military Spouse Medal.

“Sergeant Major Burch has done this for decades, not just at the state level but the national level as well. He has clearly made a difference in the lives of Soldiers, Airmen and family members.”

“Along with recognizing Burch, the sergeant major’s family was also recognized during the ceremony. Burch’s daughters, Jennifer Umana and Jody Knight, were each presented with Military Child Medals, while Burch’s wife, Sandy, received the Military Spouse Medal.

“Sandy Burch received special praise from both Bohac and Jelinski-Hall.

“Thank you, Sandy,” said Bohac. “We all know that without you standing there next to him, Sergeant Major Burch would not have been able to accomplish all that he did.”

“Sandy,” said Jelinski-Hall. “You were the first lady of the Enlisted Corps of the Army National Guard.”

Burch agreed that his wife deserves the bulk of the credit for helping him reach the levels that he did. “She’s always been there. She pretty much raised the kids because my first full-time job was pretty hectic for those first few years... a lot of school, a lot of annual trainings... and a lot of exercises.”

“Sandy was always going full throttle for her role in assisting her husband during his military career, Burch told his wife. “I could always trust that things were in order when I got home.”

According to Bohac, he’s proud to have been able to be part of the organization and contribute to the National Guard’s important missions. He also knows that it’s time for that part of his life to conclude.

“For every beginning, there’s a first step and a lot of exercises. Burch said, adding that he was proud to have the support of all of you have provided me and my family. I am forever in your debt.”
In the days leading up to the shutdown, Congress, in one of its last official acts, passed the "Pay Our Military Act," which basically guaranteed that active uniformed military members and their families would be exempted from the shutdown.

That act was signed into law by President Barack Obama on October 11, just before the shutdown occurred.

Following the Oct. 1 shutdown, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel warned lawmakers that the budget impasse’s effects on U.S. military members and our nation’s safety and defense are "real and immediate.

"Here this great republic and democracy, the United States of America, shuts down its government’s doors, even though we are — or at least we are — a military — the United States military.

"Our training is going to be degraded over the next 30 days. That’s just not good for our force readiness, its not good for our force morale," Hale said.

"And I don’t blame them," Hagel added.

"That human dimension often gets lost in this great arena of debate in Washington — what we are doing to our people — who make our government function.

"Without quality employees, you will lack a dynamic system of national government. This is serious.

"That recall did not eliminate all of the furloughs, however. In Nebraska, 91 state employees who were affected by the partial federal government shutdown, Oct. 11, at the Joint Force Headquarters building at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. were affected.

"The short-term deal signed by President Barack Obama shortly before the shutdown. Although the decision in the year-long training plan.

"The decision, which was made on Oct. 11 by Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, after consulting with his senior staff and commanders, affected approximately 4,600 Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen.

"This was obviously a very difficult decision that I did not take lightly because of the obvious impacts that it will have on our Soldiers and Airmen, who depend upon their drill weekend checks, and our Nebraska National Guard units’ readiness," said Bohac.

"We are still living under this dark cloud of uncertainty, because we know that’s what we face.

"That was to serve this country an obligation to do our job as best we can," he said. "We come from different political parties, but we are Americans first.

"It’s a ‘Groundhog Day’ approach to budgeting," the comptroller said.

"The budget uncertainty will have an impact on staffing levels, equipment, and materiel," he said.

"I think we’re going to have to take a hard look at what we can, within the limits of time that is available to us, to what the wind range of contingencies, because we know what our future looks like.

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Partial Government Shutdown
Special Feature

Leaders worry partial shutdown may cause lingering effects on recruiting, retaining full-time force

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A fter seeing a significant percentage of its full-time force furloughed for the second time in less than a half year, the Nebraska National Guard – along with the other federal civil agencies – is wondering what types of negative impacts will be felt. In particular, leaders are concerned how the civilian employees may begin to look elsewhere for employment opportunities and that finding their replacements might become equally difficult.

At the shutdown’s height, more than 4,500 federal civilian employees – including 560 Nebraska National Guard federal technicians – were furloughed. That was more than 80 percent.

Additionally, while the Pay Our Military Act allowed the Defense Department to conduct annual training exercises, it did not allow the Nebraska National Guard to eventually postpone the Guard to conduct annual training exercise, it did not allow the Guard to conduct weekend training assemblies for the vast majority of its units across the state.

The affected state employees, who are either full-time or part-time Air Guardsmen, worry in such areas as the state facilities management office, civil engineering and at the base fire department in Lincoln. Those employees, who are available.

“We’ve got a great team. We will get through this. We will survive this,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general.

That was one of the key messages Maj. Gen. Bohac brought to four town hall meetings held in Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 7-8, to update members of the Nebraska National Guard on the latest information about the partial federal government shutdown. He also welcomed back the majority of the 560 federal civilian and dual-status technicians who were called to work after spending a week on unpaid furlough.

“We’re just going to have to operate that way, that’s just the way it is,” Bohac said. “I think you all know that, that there will be less turmoil in the way, those federal employees do not have to worry about the impacts of the Budget Control Act.”

(Editors’ Note: The American Force Press Service contributed to this article.)

Adapted general uses town hall meetings to talk to full-time force

By Maj. Kevin Hynes, 1Lt. Alex Salmon, Sgt. Heidi McClintock

“This week, we’ve had two recent furloughs that are fee-serviced-based, have existed. They’re why we serve in this day-to-day effort, to take care of them.”

Welcome Back: Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, speaks to a crowd of Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen affected by the partial government shutdown on Oct. 7 during a town hall meeting held at the Joint Force Headquarters building at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. Several town hall meetings took place to answer Nebraska Military Department employees’ questions about the effects of the partial government shutdown.

“We’re not anywhere near business as usual,” Bohac said. “I think you all know that, because the reality is, we have no operations and maintenance funds.”

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Soldier becomes first female Army Pathfinder in Nebraska

By Sgt. Jason Drager

Being an Army pathfinder is an accomplishment that anyone who is qualified should boast about. Being a female pathfinder in the state of Nebraska, however, is a distinction that only one can take pride in.

Spec. Carmen Ruiz, a motor transport operator with the 195th Forward Support Company, became the first-ever female pathfinder in the Nebraska Army National Guard when she graduated from Pathfinder School in November.

It’s a tremendous honor and something Ruiz said she was definitely proud of.

“I actually found out while at school that there had never been a female pathfinder in the state,” said Ruiz. “I didn’t think it would happen.”

“Every Nebraska soldier should know—after they graduate—that they can accomplish anything they want to,” said Sgt. 1st Class Edward Whitehill, readiness noncommissioned officer for the 195th.

“but it’s a great example that gender doesn’t matter in the military. It’s all about personal attributes and skills.”

The U.S. Army Pathfinder School, which is three-weeks long, is located at Fort Benning, Ga. Army Pathfinders specialize in navigating through forested terrain, establishing safe landing zones and relaying coordinates back to commands.

Ruiz’s class began with 66 students, two of whom were female.

By the time of graduation, only 32 students remained, including both females.

“I don’t think I could have ever gone to a school my unit sent me to and come home empty-handed,” said Ruiz. “I would be too disappointed in myself and I wouldn’t want my unit to be disappointed in me.”

“The reason we gave her the opportunity is because we’re confident in her abilities,” said Whitehill. “She’s very articulate. She’s always wanting to challenge herself.”

Ruiz had hounded her leadership about attending Jumpmaster School prior to going to Fort Benning. “The fact that it’s one of the hardest schools in the military was the most motivating factor to attend,” said Ruiz. “I’m always trying to push myself above and beyond.”

Ruiz said she was only given six days notice for the school. “One day they asked me how serious I was about going and I said, ‘extremely serious and I will pass,’” said Ruiz. “They told me to pack my bags.”

In addition to being a pathfinder, Ruiz is also airborne-qualified and a member of the Nebraska Honor Guard.

“It makes me more useful to my unit and it’s really important to me to make them and my leadership look great,” said Ruiz. “I know the more I can do and more useful I can be, the better off my unit is.”

According to Whitehill, the unit wants other Soldiers to realize there are some high-speed schools available for those who serve in the 195th.

He added it’s a great recruiting tool to have Ruiz as an example.

Ruiz said she doesn’t plan to slow down. “I’m going to be in the Army for 20-plus years. I’m going to be in the Army until I’m too old and they kick me out,” said Ruiz. “I just really love the lifestyle.”

Ruiz sees herself as someone younger female Soldiers can look to as a role model or mentor.

“I don’t even know how to tell you how much it means to me,” said Ruiz. “What makes me so proud is not that I’m the first female, but my unit had the first female. So, I’m proud for my unit.”

Nebraska Air Guard Crash, Fire, Rescue teams practice lifesaving skills

By Senior Airman Mary Thaec

A pproximately 40 firefighters from the Nebraska Air National Guard’s 155th Air Refueling Wing conducted a three-day crash, fire and rescue exercise using a training aircraft at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 4-6. The live burn was an extension of the University of Missouri’s travel-training aircraft, which is a propane-filled aircraft simulator.

The simulator was brought to Nebraska for a three-day crash, fire and rescue exercise at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 4-6, 2013.

Hot Mess: Members of the Nebraska Air National Guard’s Crash, Fire and Rescue team work to extinguish a “crashed” aircraft on an unused portion of flight line at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 4-6. The live burn was an extension of the University of Missouri’s travel-training aircraft, which is a propane-filled aircraft simulator.

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An extension of the University of Missouri travel-training aircraft, containing a propane-filled aircraft simulator on an unused portion of the flight line and set the plane ablaze with a dummy trapped inside.

The Nebraska Air National Guard’s Crash, Fire and Rescue team trained on egress by approaching the aircraft, rescuing injured and trapped victims, and dousing the fire.

The exercise was a tremendous opportunity for full-time state and Guard firefighters to brush up on skills learned during school and ensure they’re prepared if an incident ever occurs.

It gives everybody a chance to refresh all of the training the have had,” said Wd. The guys who go through technical school through the Air Force, of course they get it there. But, on the civilian side, they have to go to a college or some place that can provide that training.

The FAA, as well as the Air Force, requires each firefighter to do an annual burn so they can keep their training current.”

The crash, fire and rescue crew trained on egress by approaching the aircraft, rescuing injured and trapped victims, and dousing the fire. Wd said the whole process can be very challenging.

“they make an approach and set up the trucks on the aircraft, depending on the position of the aircraft, the wind, the terrain, other exposure,” said Wd. “Our first priority is rescue.”

“We can simulate by using the KC-135. We do egresses on that,” said Wd. “It gives the guys an opportunity to learn more about our aircraft we have on our home base, that’s the one we specialize in. However, there are a lot of different aircraft that come in and out of that airport, so we have to be on our game to be able to handle everything.”
155th Air Refueling Wing shares refueling knowledge with Czech Republic Air Force

By 1st Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

With more than 20 years of aerial refueling under their collective belts, say- ing members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing are experienced, would be an understatement. An aircrew from the Nebraska-based Air National Guard unit recently had the opportunity to pass on some of that knowledge when they visited the Czech Republic, Sept. 9-13, as part of the State Partnership Program. The State Partnership Program aims to increase military interoperability with key allies like the Czech Republic.

Along with sharing aerial refueling knowledge with the Czech armed forces, the KC-135R Stratotanker and its crew were able to participate in exercises with the Czech Republic’s neighbor, Slovakia, in addition to conducting joint exercises with members of the United States, so it’s good to see how they handled the situation and we didn’t get away,” said Conner with a laugh.

“I think it’s difficult for the Slo- vakians to get the opportunity to go head-to-head against a real aircraft in their airspace and simulate a real- world situation where we had the freedom to move where we wanted, do what we wanted to, and at the altitude we wanted to,” he added. “And they responded flawlessly.”

“Those same controllers are training the Slovaks, their part- ners,” he added.

According to Conner, working with the Czech and Slovak contr- olers went well. And to add some real- ism, the Nebraska aircrew tried to put the Slovakian MiGs to the test.

“We asked the controller if we were able to maneuver at our own nose with them – and see how they handled the situation and we didn’t get away,” said Conner.

“I think it’s an exciting opportu- nity for us to come out here and rep- resent the Nebraska Air National Guard and do the State Partnership Program with the Czech Republic Air Force,” said Conner. “We’re here to increase our interoperability and teach the Czech Republic pilots how to properly and safely air refuel.”

And with an ever-evolving mili- tary landscape, having NATO allies like the Czech Republic can only strengthen the global partnership and bolster NATO’s peacekeeping efforts.

“In this day-and-age I think it’s good to have allies that you train with, before a real-world event happens,” said Conner. “Today we were able to train with the Czech Republic Air Force. We learn from them, they learn from us.”

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Explosive Knowledge

Nebraska Air National Guard explosive ordnance disposal experts exchange information with Czech Republic Soldiers

By 1st Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

For more than a decade, the United States and its allies have been engaged in warfare against enemies with ever-changing tactics. Gone are the conflicts of the past with clearly-defined battle lines and enemies. Many of today’s wars are fought against a faceless enemy hiding within society. And all too often their weapon of choice is a cowardly improvised explosive device used to kill indiscriminately.

For that reason, explosive ordnance disposal experts have become vital in detecting and destroying devices designed to kill and maim.

Recently, ROE knowledge was shared between members of the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing and the Czech Republic as part of the State Partnership Program. Both the Nebraska and Texas National Guard partner with the Czech Republic.

The partnership, which began in 1993, is one of 22 European partnerships that make up the U.S. European Command State Partnership Program and one of 65 worldwide partnerships that make up the National Guard State Partnership Program.

Two EOD specialists from the 155th ARW joined four oth- ers from the Nebraska National Guard as part of the State Partnership Program.
In late 2011, an improvised explosive device exploded in the Logar Province of Afghanistan, severely wounding an American Soldier. His life was ultimately saved by another Soldier who was well trained in advanced combat trauma.

But the Soldier who helped save the American’s life was a complete stranger. This special relationship that evolved from half a world away. For his actions, Staff Sgt. Michael Novotny of the Nebraska Air National Guard was awarded the U.S. Air Forces Bronze Star for bravery. Novotny has recently attended a series of U.S. military professional health-care courses that focused on combat life saving and combat medicine.

Within hours, the decision was made to try to establish that training capability within the Czech Republic. "We brought Texas Soldiers to the Czech Republic to teach tactical combat casualty care to the Czech military so that they can then develop their own program for deploying Soldiers," said Williams.

The four Texas National Guard Soldiers used their first few days in the city of Vyskov, Czech Republic, to teach everything they knew in the classroom, eventually taking that knowledge into the field exercise.

"We did our classroom training the first two days and we were implementing the tactics of what we were talking about here in the field and getting into actual practical exercises," said Sgt. 1st Class James Balandran, the operations noncommissioned officer of the Texas Medical Command.

During the field exercise, the Czech Soldiers performed rotations of foot and mounted patrols where they had to locate, treat and evacuate wounded Soldiers. The Czech Soldiers also had to deal with terrain, small arms fire and improvised explosive devices all while evacuating their patients.

"They’re going through care under fire," said Balandran, who explained as the initial lifesaving stop after encountering an injured Soldier.

"Tactical field care is the next phase and that’s where they get more invasive with their care backlogging, splinting. And then the last phase they go to is called now evac-care and that is where they check the final interventions that they’ve done and call in medevac to transport them to a hospital." Balandran said, who returned from an Afghanistan deployment earlier this year, said he worked with Czech Soldiers while deployed. He added this was his second trip to the Czech Republic under SPP to share his medical knowledge, which is important because treatments are always evolving.

"Medical treatment is changing all the time," said Balandran. "From 2009 to now it has changed from night and day."

Balandran said the Czech troops had improved loops and bands in their medical training, so on this visit he wanted to focus on keeping up with medical advances.

"We are trying to get all the medical care on the same standard, so we can enhance the training."

Watchful Eye: Sgt. Antonio Haro (center), a medic with the Texas National Guard’s Medical Command, observes as Master Sgt. Stacey Michaelson, another Nebraska EOD specialist with the 155th Air Refueling Wing’s EOD team, teaches the Czech Soldiers from the Czech Republic medical knowledge when four Texas National Guard Command Soldiers travelled to the Czech Republic. Sept. 9-13 during a State Partnership Program visit. During the week the Czech medics learned techniques from the Texas Soldiers on how to create their own combat lifesaver classes.

"I know those guys are experienced," he added. "I know more than 20 years of American cooperation," said Vaclavik. "They have a couple tools as well...but the Talon is our most robust option. It’s got a world away from the Talon and the robots we have here."

"The Talon is our number one choice for deployed robots right now," said Frey. "We have a couple tools as well...but the Talon is our most robust option. It is a great threat to keep the enemy guessing."

Finally having robots at their home training area means a lot for the preparedness of the Czech EOD specialists.

"Having that robot here on stations means they can sharpen their skills so when they do their next deployment, which for them is very often, they’re going to be more proficient operators...which keeps people safe," said Frey.

The Czech Soldiers were excited to have the Nebraska Airmen on site because of their knowledge of the robots.

"I would say that we were interested into robot today because all of the stuff coming to the Czech Army has to be tested," said Warrant Officer 3rd Class Karel Vaclavik, a Czech EOD Soldier. "So we did small testing of this material is appropriate."

"I know it sounds weird a little bit, but we have to test if it’s appropriate for the specific job— for the EOD job," Vaclavik added. "In addition to training with the new robots, the EOD specialists worked with bomb suits and mine detectors."

"The Nebraska Airmen were also able to learn more about different explosive devices used around the world thanks to an amazing collection of devices immaculately displayed in three rooms within the Czech EOD school."

But the most important byproduct of actually interacting with counterparts from half a world away is simply sharing knowledge and experience level," said Frey. "These guys have had a high deployment tempo as well as an amazing training area."

"Any relationships you can build are important and more people in your field—that’s more experience you can draw to and get their side of the story and their experiences," he added. "So making this relationship is great, especially somebody that’s so far away.

The Czech Soldiers said the partnership with Nebraska has been great.

"I have to say that we really appreciate American cooperation," said Vaclavik. "I don’t know the best way how to share information than with U.S. guys, because you are the most experienced guys I’ve ever met," he added.

Vaclavik also said working face-to-face is the best way to share information.

"All of the operators, or EOD specialists, all of those guys have deployed in Afghanistan or Kosovo, but we don’t have possibility to upgrade the knowledge—just in cooperation with U.S. Army or U.S. military during the courses and during those meetings," said Vaclavik.

"I know those guys are experienced," he added. "They’ve been deployed already on the best goal is that we share our deployments and this is the best way how to learn new things or share experience."
in which the Czech Republic is interested. The desired end state is increased partner capacity and interoperability with a key ally.

“This is particularly useful given the coalitions the US operates in,” said Williams. “The enduring relationship that we’ve built with the Czechs can’t be emphasized enough. It’s a mission in which the National Guard is uniquely capable.”

Throughout the week many events were planned to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience between the two countries’ service members.

According to Williams, an EOD exchange between members of the Nebraska National Guard’s 155th ARW and the Czech 155th Air Refueling Wing was designed to help the Czechs learn more about newly acquired EOD equipment including robots, bomb suits and metal detectors.

“Equipment was purchased through a U.S. program. It’s really beneficial to supplement the contract training the Czechs received earlier this year with our own subject matter experts,” said Williams. “Our people can really fill in the gaps.”

Two EOD specialists from the 155th ARW worked with Czech soldiers in Bechyne, Czech Republic. “We’ve tried to get to know them, and try to authentically introduce ourselves and pass on our experiences, so they can judge that compared to theirs, which is very high,” said Tech. Sgt. Dustin Frye, a 155th ARW EOD specialist.

“Our main goal is help train them, and give them some equipment they’re receiving as well as build a relationship so we can partner and build on training we can do in the future – to see exactly what their capabilities are, where they’re lacking…” we can fill in and we can go from there,” he added.

Also during the week in the Czech Republic, Williams arranged an exchange between the Nebraska National Guard’s 675th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and the Czech 53rd Electronic Warfare and Surveillance Brigade to assist in developing a Czech exercise. Earlier this summer, the Czechs visited Nebraska to see first-hand how it’s done. Next year, the Czechs will put on the exercise with U.S. assistance.

According to Lt. Col. Jeffery Kilgore, operations officer for the 675th BSSB, the Nebraska soldiers used their time in Opava, Czech Republic, to plan and prepare for the upcoming exercise.

“The plan calls for much more coordination and synchronization between the 675th and the 53rd, as well as the Czech Embassy liaison officer (Williams) and both the Nebraska and Czech SPF directors in the field,” said Kilgore. “In the end, the 675th BSSB planners want to provide a well-planned, coordinated and sourced training plan, which is effective, yet challenging for the Czech Army.”

Off the ground, the airspace above the Czech Republic and neighboring Slovakia was busy as a Nebraska Air Guard airborne was sent to further the Czech’s training with the Slovakia’s BSAR with a KC-135R.

During one training mission, the Nebraska aircrew took off from Pardubice, Czech Republic, to perform a mock aerial refueling of a Czech Air Force JAS-39 “Gripens” as they flew over the Tata Mountain Range in Slovakia where they played the role of an unidentified aircraft in airspace shared by the Czech Republic and Slovakia and were intercepted by Slovakian MiG-29 ‘Pulcrams’ from the Slovakian Air Force.

The goal for the mission was simple. “The biggest thing we wanted to accomplish was to get the Czech Republic Air Force some actual flight time against a tanker,” said Capt. Edward Connex, an instructor pilot with the 155th ARW. “Much of their time is spent in the simulator and they probably get a 10th of what we Air Force pilots get back in the United States, so it’s good to see them up in the air.”

The Texas aircrew tackled an entirely different mission.

“The Czech Air Force is seeking to expand their close air support capability, so they joined this week by two instructor pilots from the Texas Air National Guard’s 168th Airlift Schoolhouse,” Williams said. “This is what we call a Traveling Contact Team. The U.S. pilots will assess possibilities and share valuable information to help the Czechs reach their goals.”

Finally, Williams, a training exercise officer, coordinated with the Czechs so, if they fly with the United States, they would be able to participate in a training exercise.

“Medical treatment is changing at a much faster rate than it used to be, so we need to be current with the knowledge and best practices,” Williams said. “We’ve been working with the Czechs on this for a long time.”

For more than a decade the United States and the Czech Republic have been partners in international military exercises in preparation for deployments in Afghanistan or Iraq, said Williams. “Medical treatment is changing at a much faster rate than it used to be, so we need to be current with the knowledge and best practices.”

A medical exchange program with the Czech Republic is part of the Nebraska National Guard’s State Partnership Program.

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The Czech Republic has a long history of providing support to the US military, including during the Vietnam War.

In conclusion, the joint exercises between the United States and the Czech Republic are beneficial to both nations.

“I think too often we look at this partnership as a one-way street and we go to share information, but I’ve seen many instances where we learn as much as we share,” said Williams. “The Czechs are NATO interoperable in many areas and often resource constrained when compared to their U.S. counterparts. This often contributes to different approaches to the same problems. For our Soldiers, it is important to see alternative solutions.”

“Prairie Soldier” November 2013

Helping Hands:

Sgt. 1st Class James Balandran, operations noncommissioned officer for the Texas Air National Guard’s 152nd Special Operations Medical Command, instructs Czech Republic soldiers as they tend to a “wounded” Soldier during an advanced trauma care field exercise near Vyskov, Czech Republic, Sept. 11. The Texas Soldiers were there as part of the State Partnership Program and worked to exchange medical treatment information with their Czech counterparts.

Partners:

(Standing from left) Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, Nebraska state command sergeant major, Maj. Gen. Daryn Burac, Nebraska adjutant general, Master Sgt. Stacey Michaelson, an explosive ordnance disposal specialist with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, and Tech. Sgt. Dustin Frey (front center), also an EOD specialist with the 155th ARW, work with Czech Republic Army Warrior Officer 2nd Class Jan Bradac, front left, the first sergeant for the 15th Engineer Brigade EOD Company, and another Czech Soldier at Czech Army base in Bechyne, Czech Republic, Sept. 12.

Foreign Relations:

Lt. Col. John Williams, a bilateral affairs officer with the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing who is stationed in the Czech Republic and oversees the State Partnership Program, speaks with a Czech Republic Soldier near Vyskov, Czech Republic, Sept. 11. The Texas Soldiers were there as part of the State Partnership Program and worked to exchange medical treatment information with their Czech counterparts.

MEDICS

when we are treating other NATO Soldiers they would know we’re doing and vice versa,” he added.

Balandran said working with Czech counterparts has been a great experience. “We’ve spent a lot of time trying to be as proactive as possible with regards to any training activities, he added. “We’re interested in our ways of medical training and making sure they understand our ways of our processes.”

“The Czech Soldiers couldn’t agree more. “It’s always a great opportunity to operate with our counter parts. It was a great opportunity to exchange information we received during our military deployments in Afghanistan or Iraq,” said Warrant Officer 1st Class Jaroslav Dulcan, a combat paramedic with the Czech Air Force. “We learned a lot about each other’s lack medical training material, which forces them to become very resourceful. The Texas Soldiers were able to provide some medical supplies to further strengthen the partnership. “But by no means was the learning one-way.

“Medical treatment is changing at a much faster rate than it used to be, so we need to be current with the knowledge and best practices,” Williams said. “We’ve been working with the Czechs on this for a long time.”

“I think too often we look at this partnership as a one-way street and we go to share information, but I’ve seen many instances where we learn as much as we share,” said Williams. “The Czechs are NATO interoperable in many areas and often resource constrained when compared to their U.S. counterparts. This often contributes to different approaches to the same problems. For our Soldiers, it is important to see alternative solutions.”

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Aerial Mentorship: Senior Airman Bradley Bouc (center), a boom operator with the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, finishes filling out the required aerial refueling paperwork on the flight deck of a Nebraska 159th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker during a training flight in June while Master Sgt. Michael Minnick (left) and Master Sgt. Mat Ellison (right), both instructor boom operators with more than 37 years of combined in-flight refueling experience, provide him with some advice.

BOOMERS continued from page 1.

One of those new positions was a little new, a little different. One of the original KC-135s wore out pretty quick,” Bouc said. “The cool factor of that part of the aircraft is well over 100 degrees and you sweat through your flight suit several times,” Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster, Nebraska state command master sergeant and former boom operator, said. “I think boom operators figured it out very quickly. There is the dirty sweaty part of the job. “As a wing, we have a lot of missions and they all go out and support the enterprise, but here, when we are working at home plate, everyone is working to get those planes in the air. That’s really what it’s about,” said Stevenson.

Boom Operators Job Description

Whether it’s refueling B-52 bombers during a training mission over Kansas, refueling those same aircraft while flying nonstop from Missouri to Guam, or passing fuel to fighters on patrol over a combat zone, making sure that American and allied airplanes have enough fuel to safely do their missions is the job of in-flight refueling specialists, or “boom operators.”

Operating an extendable hydraulic arm from a pod in the back of a KC-135R, boom operators need calm nerves and a cool confidence to connect with a receiver aircraft and transfer thousands of pounds of fuel into it. It’s a high-stress job that’s crucial to the 155th ARW’s ability to help project American force throughout the globe.

“As a wing, we have a lot of missions and they all go out and support the enterprise,” Bouc said. Boomer and Enlisted Guard – active duty has roughly six to seven hundred boom operators; the remaining half are employed by Guard and Reserve units.

Being part of that elite group requires a huge commitment and a tremendous sacrifice of time spent away from family and employers, said Chief Master Sgt. Russell Sladky, in-flight refueling manager and chief boom for the 173rd ARS.

Most traditional boom flights are three or four days a month on local training flights. Depending on the Airman’s civilian job, deployment range from about 30-60 days a year, although various trips can range from two days to 60 days, said Sladky.

The job is not always as glamorous as the flight suit makes it look, said Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster, Nebraska state command master sergeant and former boom operator. “I think boom operators figured it out very quick. There is the dirty sweaty part of the job that requires tying down cargo or loading passengers bags on days when the inside of the aircraft is well over 100 degrees and you sweat through your flight suit several times,” Forster said. “The cool factor of that part of the mission wears off pretty quick.”

“I never really thought of it as increasing
2001 terrorist attacks signaled major changes for Nebraska Air Guard, Spotlight on News

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton

We all over a decade has passed since the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Most service members remember很清楚地 what they were doing when they found out that two passenger jets had been attacked to its own soil by Islamic extremists.

A native Nebraskan, Stevenson worked long hours in the days following the attack to provide ground support in response to heightened security levels at government facilities and airports.

"It was really strange," said Chief Master Sgt. Russell Sladky, the chief boom operator with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 173rd AR Air Refueling Squadron. "I remember that day very well. Michigan, I think. I remember what time I was on the first plane and saw the second plane hit the second tower.

"I specifically remember one thing I had on alert," said Michaelson. "I was at the base. Getting something to eat and we wanted to go for a night flight. I was at the end of that fateful day, the alert, aircrew, including Sladky, had been alerted and found themselves flying a patrol aircraft out there with other targets.

"That's what turned me off from camp, we were air-borne within minutes. The engines were actually cranking as I jogged across the ramp with my head. On that one flight, we flew with the Guardians of the United States -- fighting the enemy, not with the enemy."

For those who love to travel and be with new people, becoming a boom operator might be a career for you. However, those who left their job to take on this career must also realize that receiving and giving air refueling is a job that requires you to be comfortable with the unknown.

There is also a level of professionalism between aircrew that is not typically seen in the ground military. The need to fly as a unit and the trust that comes with that trust is something the Nebraska Air Guard has been working to improve.

"There are also benefits to having the "white" traditional job in the Guard," said Forster.

One of those benefits is the ability to travel, which is a great perk of the job. However, there is a cost to this career: the amount of time away from home.

"It is very much a lifestyle change," said Forster. "You're not always flying with the same crew," he said.

"I've been away from home for close to two years," said Minnick. "I fly better than anyone else's." For those who are looking for a quick exit, this career is not for you.

"There is a lot of professionalism between aircrew that is not typically seen in the ground military," said Forster. "It's a direct tribute to the great work ethic and high standards that our unit has—especially the Maintenance Group. Our tankers always look better and feel better in 180,000 pounds than in 180 tons."
special bond
former bomber pilot expresses admiration for nebraska’s boomers

by tech. sgt. jason melton

with fuel levels waning, the pilot makes a call to a prepositioned air-refueling tanker about 15 minutes ahead of him—his gas-hungry bird is thirsty.

lt. col. jeff billingsley, nucleus- bomber operations chief at the national guard bureau at joint basemorona, mo., and former director of operations and pilot for the 110th bomb squadron of the missouri national guard, has a deep sense of pride in the job that enlisted aerial refueling specialists do on a daily basis.

even though the b-2 spirit has been labeled on of the most survivable aircraft in the world, it still relies on the tanker and skills of its refueling operators to stay airborne on missions, billingsley pointed out.

he recently recalled what it’s like to be the recipient of those enlisted aviation heroes’ handiwork.

after giving the pilots his call sign, altitude, timing information and identification code, he uses gps to close in on the tanker. at two miles out the procedure becomes less technical and both billingsley and ensign pilot look toward the refueling boom operator for the final contact.

during a recent deployment, billingsley got the chance to ride along on a 28-hour mission. “i think,” he said, “the receivers looked shiny and new when i first saw the boom myself, i was certainly glad i wasn’t responsible for trying to keep it in the tanker.”

we absolutely trust the boom operator and his or her refueling operation. at two miles out the b-2 enters the envelope, a lot of the success of the mission, and therefore the mission, depends on their skills and expertise,” billingsley added.

throughout his career when he flew the b-2, billingsley said he had the chance to fly the b-2 on his opening business with nebraska air guard tanker crews many times, including his second-to-last mission.

he said he shares a special bond with the nebraska unit because his good friend, nebraska air guard pilot lt. col. jeff link, was his roommate at delta air lines training and was the one who got him his last nebraska air guard refuel. according to billingsley when the two pilots were able to catch up to the tanker they gave him a hug and his fellow b-2 pilots.

“they were very mission-oriented, confident and experienced,” billingsley added.

the boom operator’s hard work helps provide the pilot with the much needed fuel to allow the airplane and its crew to stay in the fight.

one of the most technical things the boom operator does is when he or she makes contact with the tanker, it completes an electrical circuit between the two planes and we do an in-air refueling check with the boom operator.”

“it’s always a relief to hear the boom operator on the interphone,” billingsley said. “i could always tell how close we were to the tanker.”

“it’s always a relief to hear the boom operator on the interphone, and see our fuel gauge start to increase, it means we’re on,” he added.

billingsley’s longest flight from nebraska was more than 13,000 miles, lasted 28 hours and required four fuel refuelings.

“the lower you are on gas, the more relieved you are to first hear the tanker on the radio, then it finally means you’re able to refuel the tanker.”

when given the word. it was the first time that the nebraska air guard flew combat missions in support of the global war on terrorism within hours of the attacks.

by room of sept. 11, 2001, boom operators were passing gas to combat-configured fighter aircraft that were fully prepared to shoot down any rogue civilian airliner if given the word. it was the first time that the nebraska air guard flew combat missions.

special bond
former bomber pilot expresses admiration for nebraska’s boomers

by tech. sgt. jason melton

18 hours per day,” said stevenson.

“i got worried that he would burn out, but there was stuff that needed done and mike was that guy who would stay and stay and stay. it’s that kind of work that people remember about our boom operators. they aren’t going to remember your name, but they are going to remember that you’re a boy or girl and they’re going to remember the ‘n’ on your nametag.”

moving to the 3-person crew
the biggest modern challenge for the 155th arw may have been 9/11, but the biggest change for the boom operator came as the war in iraq was in its infancy.

the us air force, now supporting both oef and oif needs tanker aircraft to refuel u.s. and coalition aircraft around the world. these missions required kc-135s to have unrestricted access to domestic and international commercial and military airspace. additionally, new civil airspace communication, navigation, surveillance and air traffic management (cns/atm) requirements threatened to restrict the kc-135’s access to certain air space while limiting its ability to fulfill its mission.

without an upgrade to the kc-135’s avionics system, the usaf would face challenges in supporting missions around the globe.

the kc-135 global air traffic management (gatm) program took an aging aircraft, with an abundance of legacy equipment, and incorporated the latest cns/atm technology

the nebraska air guard became the first air guard unit and among the first to use the avionics system, the usaaf incorporated the latest cns/atm equipment technology with tradition, the nebraska air guard became the first air guard unit and among the first to use the avionics system, the usaaf incorporated the latest cns/atm equipment technology with tradition.

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Gordon Anderson: A legacy who set bar high for future generation of Air Guard boom operators

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Staff Writer

Master Sgt. Gordon A. Anderson, a boom operator in the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, was awarded, by a vote of his peers, the 2013 Nebraska National Outstanding Boom Operator of the Year in 2001 for his selfless service, spirit of teamwork, dedication to duty and sense of mission accomplishment.

The boom operator exudes a “Service Before Self” attitude which is reflected in their desire to always put the needs of others first. They are gracious, courteous, generous, compassionate, and bring a sense of humanity of all around them.

Anderson was the original boom operator hired by the Nebraska Air National Guard. Anderson set the standard high for the rest of the boomers, said Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster, Nebraska state command chief master sergeant.

“Hew went above and beyond to make people flying on the jet comfortable; making sure they had everything they needed to get the job done,” Forster said.

Anderson began his military career in the Nebraska Air National Guard as an RF-4C Phantom crew chief in 1984.

Having always loved flying, Anderson applied for, and was selected from more than 250 applicants to become a boom operator on the KC-135E Stratotanker.

He quickly became the envy of his peers, who struggled to match Anderson as he tirelessly supported the new tanker mission.

Anderson said there was a true calling for aviation and his love of flight was evident in every respect and a friend to all he met.

Anderson lost a three-year fight to cancer on May 21, 2001. To memorialize his spirit, pride, teamwork, and devotion to duty, his colleagues from the 173rd ARS decided to rededicate the Outstanding Boom Operator of the Year Award in his name. The award criteria, and all that Anderson represented, has evolved into an annual award in his honor. It was expanded to recognize the Outstanding Boom Operator in other activated wings, as well as an Outstanding Rated Officer, and an Operations Support person.

Forster said the perseverance working days at the boomers may have been what made Anderson really inspired other people around him.

Crews received special recognition based on a tally of one’s peers and not to those who can write the best rewards packs.

Which knew Anderson said his high ideals and accomplishments are qualities everyone of the 155th Air Refueling Wing should strive to attain and his attributes and ideals are the perfect basis for selecting award winners.

**BOOMERS**

continued from page 14.

front seats back,” said Stevenson.

When carrying more than 10 passengers, at least one flight-crew member must be with them at all times according to Air Force regulations, he said. The Guard decided early on that it would not give up its third set of eyes in the cockpit, enlisting an extra boom operator on flights with more than 10 passengers.

“The active duty was willing to accept that risk (of only two in the cockpit) and we weren’t,” said Stevenson.

Additionally, the war on two fronts required more troop movement. Because of this, Nebraska aircrews frequently found themselves transporting troops in and out of the areas of operation in addition to its tanker mission.

The four-member crew on “passenger haulers” significantly increased the operations tempo for Nebraska boom operators, requiring more of them to be gone more often, said Minnick.

“Before the GATM upgrade we were moving a few passengers and flight attendants, but that’s all we did,” said Minnick.

After the change he said boom operators became more integrated into the whole concept of flying the airplane. “We’re now a third set of eyes for the pilots. I feel like we’re having an important role involved in the entire refueling mission, not just one element of it,” said Minnick.

The boom operator in the cockpit crew and added quite a few new on-board duties, said Michaelson.

“Pilots need that third person in the cockpit to check circuit breakers and, in case of an emergency, fight fire. We learned to read approach plates and radio in takeoff times and codes. Before the change we were only on the radio while refueling.”

There were also added checklist procedures that included command and response from the pilots.

“It took a little time to get used to the new normal,” said Forster, “but the smaller crew size kept us better integrated into the whole concept of flying the airplane.”

While in Turkey, Nebraska boom operators refueled cargo and combat aircraft directly involved in Iraq. Since Sept. 11, 2001, Nebraska boom operators have served in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, serving at locations around the globe including bases in Iraq, Afghanistan, Qatar, Kuwait, Spain, France, Germany and several others.

In the past 10 years, the 20 Nebraska boom operators have flown more than 14,500 sorties, including over 1,300 combat sorties and 2,000 combat support sorties totaling more than 52,900 flight-hours.

**Future of Boom Operators**

Will the Nebraska Air Guard boom mission and the demand for its boom operators decrease as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down? Not likely, said Stevenson. There are enough potential enemies in Southwest Asia to maintain a footprint there, he said.

As long as the U.S. has airplanes and personnel in that region, there will be a need for them.

According to Stevenson, U.S. foreign policy is shifting toward North Korea, China and the Pacific Rim.

Air refueling becomes all the more important in that region because it’s not possible to operate between the Philippines and the United States, without fuel stops or fuel tankers, he said.

The Nebraska Air Guard’s air refueling mission is central to the Air Force mission.

“Stevenson, the outstanding boom operator of the year, is a service-life extension that will last another 40 years,” said Michaelson.

Those who knew Anderson said his high attributes were selfless, even before that was adopted as the core values in the Guard.

“I think there is another generation hard-handed aircraft they fly in, the seen- on-wools continues to seamlessly pass a wealth of knowledge to the newest generation of NEANG boom operators,” said Stevenson.

Boomers at 20

Over the past 20 years the three original watchers flew their colleagues retire or move on to different military careers, while also watching new generations of boom operators come and go.

In step with the mission-hard-handed aircraft they fly in, the sein- on-wools continues to seamlessly pass a wealth of knowledge to the newest generation of NEANG boom operators.

Through three generations of aircraft and three generations of boom operators, the KC-135 tanker continues on. Some estimate KC-135s will remain around for another 40 years, although only time will tell what missions may be bestowed on the aging beauty.

One thing is for certain, though, as long as it continues its tanker mission, it will require a boom operator to direct its performance in the sky.

“I think there is another generation left in the KC-135,” said Stevenson. “We’ve seen it, and the Air Force has a program called the Block 45, which is a service-life extension that will take the airplane out to 2040. That will make our planes 70-years old.”

“Engineering has been a service for both the old and the new.”

Reunion: Nebraska National Guard boom operators, past and present, celebrate two decades of in-flight refueling with the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, June 22. Forty of the total 51 boom operators attended the reunion at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.
Twelve Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and one South Dakota Army National Guard officer completed the OCS to graduate as second lieutenants during the OCS graduation ceremony held at Camp Ashland’s Memorial Hall.

Ft. Scott, Kans. — Thomas Ballard, the Nebraska National Guard’s 209th Regional Training Institute’s first Regimental Sergeant Major, hosted the Nebraska National Guard 2013 OCS Graduation Ceremony.

The OCS training followed by one weekend of annual training included two weeks of annual training totaling 17 months of training. The OCS program is not easy, but it feels good to be here graduating today. 

“Being a member of the Nebraska National Guard is one of the best decisions I have ever made. Whenever I think of my time in the Army National Guard, I think of the people I met, the things I have learned, and the places I have been. The National Guard has given me the opportunity to do things I never thought possible. Today’s ceremony serves as a reminder of why I joined the Guard. I have enjoyed every minute of my time in the Nebraska National Guard. My experience could not have been better. I would recommend being an Officer Candidate in the Nebraska National Guard to anyone who wants to serve their country and be part of something special.” said new 2nd Lt. Travis Rupp.

The traditional Officer Candidate Class 56 takes their oaths from Brig. Gen. Scott Gronewold, the assistant adjutant general of the joint staff. In addition, one Soldier was commissioned as a second lieutenant from the 2013 accelerated OCS program.

The Nebraska OCS Class of 2013 was given to Thomas Ballard. The leadership academic award with the upmost professionalism was Joseph Grundman. The candidates also expressed that their instructors would push them more and only accept everyone was able to strive to get through everything.

The Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

Making it Official: Officer Candidate Class 56 takes their oaths from Brig. Gen. Scott Gronewold, the assistant adjutant general of the joint staff for the Nebraska National Guard, during the Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony, Sept. 14, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Watch for changes in retiree health coverage, scheduled retiree briefing

Visit your local DEERS Office.

**De Rerum Novarum**

The Nebraska National Guard’s 209th Regional Training Institute has added another name to its impressive honor roll, Sept. 14, when a retired command sergeant major was inducted into the prestigious institute.

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. John Payer was honored during the Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony held at Camp Ashland’s Memorial Hall.

The RTI Hall of Fame was established to honor former staff members and/or graduates of officer candidate programs, who distinguished themselves in military or civilian pursuits. The individuals are selected based on their contributions to the overall development of the 209th RTI or the Nebraska National Guard Military Academy.

“Over the course of his career, Command Sgt. Maj. Payer served in all three organizations stationed at Camp Ashland,” said Maj. Charles D. Williamson, master of ceremony. "He exemplifies the character of someone who knows and always carries himself with the utmost professionalism in his role, instructor and mentor." Payer began his military career when he enlisted in the South Dakota National Guard and served as a platoon leader and a fire support specialist before transferring to the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1982 where he served as a staff sergeant and a squad leader.

The ceremony was held in conjunction with the 209th RTI Graduation Ceremony.

Roper was pleased to see a crowd comprised of family members, friends, fellow Soldiers and OCS candidates.

The Nebraska National Guard of the United States, the official state military arm of the State of Nebraska, is the state’s 42nd consecutive National Guard since the state was admitted to the Union on March 1, 1867. The state’s first National Guard was organized in 1866.

The Nebraska National Guard’s 209th RTI is located in Ashland, Nebraska. The RTI Hall of Fame is located at Ashland Institute in Ashland, Nebraska.

**Retiree News & Notes**

Public Affairs Office

**Retiree News & Notes**

Golden Bars

Nebraska Officer Candidate School graduates 13 from South Dakota

By Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Staff Photographer

Hall Of Fame Career: Retired Command Sgt. Maj. John Payer is inducted into the Nebraska National Guard’s 209th Regional Training Institute Hall of Fame, Sept. 14, at Col. Kevin Lyons at Camp Ashland’s Memorial Hall.

Camp Ashland institute inducts new member into Hall of Fame

By Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Staff Photographer

Camp Ashland, Neb. — The Nebraska National Guard’s 209th Regional Training Institute (RTI) inducts a new member into its prestigious Hall of Fame ceremony.

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Parenting website aims to assist in communications

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Survivors of single deployments and those separated from their families due to mission needs now have an online resource allowing them to hone their parenting skills as they reconnect with their children.

Pam Murphy, the Defense Department’s lead psychologist for the website, said the launch of http://www.militaryparenting.org offers an interactive, comprehensive and free computer-based training from a service member’s perspective on parenting and building strong relationships with their children.

“This interactive site makes the situations and their lives within the military. The more costs you have, the more savings should be in your plan," Thompson said.

"The more you save, the more you can help in reuniting parents and building resilience and helping them to be happy with their lives within the military. The more you can help in reuniting parents and building resilience and helping them to be happy with their lives within the military. The more you can help in reuniting parents and building resilience and helping them to be happy with their lives within the military."
W
ho would have thought that to change your last name would be such a hard task?

Not me. I always imagined, that in a flash of my dreams, getting married and taking his last name would be so easy. My last name was a right! I thought so, too, until I discovered something.

After joining the Nebraska National Guard, I fell in love with the whole perspective on the importance of my last name.

You never really know what becomes your identifier. I was not. I knew none of this when his NCO approached me and said he was being harassed by several young Airmen. The NCO, upon discovering his behavior, reported him in with his supervisory officer who committed the act also personally directed him to report to his first sergeant.

I realized that this wasn’t the first time the harassment had occurred. I was frustrated that he could not stop it. I realized that the heat of an intense intramural flag football, a game I was prepared to face, and the heat of an intramural basketball game were nothing compared to the harassment he could not stop. I realized that the Airman and I didn’t expect that this was going to happen. We have no idea how great that makes us.

However, since we were literally in the middle of a game, I had to act according to my duty. For the Soldiers and Airmen, for the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and the employees of the Nebraska Military Department, it is our duty for what you do and how you do it. Your service to protect and defend this great country and the people of Nebraska is invaluable. I say make a name for myself. I joined the National Guard because of the people I would lead; it is definitely one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.

On this Veterans Day I may not be a veteran, but it is definitely one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.

To tell you the truth, it is one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make. Keep in mind that each Airman made everything in his life, making sure that he or she would never have to make that decision again.

The first thing that I realized was that “we” would never want to talk about the event, for fear that someone else would be misinformed in my eyes and taking this opportunity to change a lot.

I was confused, I was angry. At least I had some idea what that meant. At least I knew how to make sense of it. Due to my traditional family name and my love for my Airman, my name was McClintock due to my traditional family name. I knew none of this when his NCO approached me and said I would probably be asked to change my name.

I don’t think I truly appreciated until after reality sank in, I had one question that Hagemeister seemed to be able to answer. I asked, "Since it was first placed around his neck by President Lyndon Johnson during the ceremony that I saw something truly remarkable. It's something that I can happily say, I made a name for myself. I joined the Nebraska National Guard, or any branch of the military in the world, and was able to do something extraordinary with the energy and positive attitude.

I realized that what this unassembled group of students, a few words and then an audience of more than 100 students, there was one thing I always told my Airman about all the articles I write for the newspaper. It’s really my honor to present the stories of men and women who serve the stories of men and women who served the stories of men and women who served. And with that, Sgt. Heidi McClintock is now reporting for duty.

**My Turn**

**Kevin J. Hynes**

**Editor, Prairie Soldier**
New Commander: Maj. Vernon Chandler (right) accepts the guidon of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion signifying his taking command of the unit during an Oct. 11 ceremony at the Spirit of 1778 Armory in Lincoln, Neb. Chandler took command of the unit from outgoing commander Lt. Col. Shane Martin.

The Nebraska National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion welcomed a new commander during a change of command ceremony held at the Spirit of 1778 armory in Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 11.

In attendance were friends, family and Soldiers of the battalion, Lt. Col. Shane Martin relinquished command to Maj. Vernon Chandler.

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, overheard the ceremony and reflected on the Martin’s success during his command. Recruiting and Retention achieved 101 percent of the enlisted mission, 100 percent of officer mission and 50 percent of warrant officer mission.

“At a time when strength matters more than ever,” said Bohac, “in order to deliver the mission day-in and day-out, not only for our roles as combatant partners to our alliances, but also to the citizens of the state, we had to ensure we had leadership the Soldiers we needed to meet the mission.”

“So, job well done,” he added, “you’ve served admirably in this position.”

Maj. Martin, on his reflection as commander and compared it to a nature walk after being told to enjoy the day, thought about the journey upon is selection as commander. “With a team of 30 officers and noncommissioned officers acting as the gardeners on this nature hike, we were able to nurture young warriors with a passion for the mission and a dedicated staff,” said Martin. Maj. Martin also acknowledged the contributions and watching the support of those young warriors shift to basic training. The journey, he said, would not be possible without their support in the road, he added.

“I am truly honored,” said Martin. “We improved our techniques and our processes because of it.”

“Even though it wasn’t an easy nature walk, it was an awesome opportunity and I really appreciate the leadership’s faith in me for this phenomenal opportunity to join this green mile,” he added.
Proven Warriors

Military Police test skills during annual challenge

By Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Staff Photographer

"I will always place the mission first, I will never accept defeat. I will never leave a fallen comrade."

Nebraska Army National Guard personnel participating in the Sept. 7 Military Police Challenge at the Mead Training Site truly lived up to the words of the U.S. Army’s Warrior Ethos when they competed in a two-day competition designed to test their abilities as Soldiers and as military policemen.

Members of the 402nd Military Police Battalion and one team from the 192nd Military Police "Law and Order" Detachment endured 10 fierce challenges during a 48-hour period, testing the Soldiers mentally and physically. Operating in teams ranging from three to seven Soldiers, the competition was designed to bring Guardsmen from different sections and platforms together in a competitive event.

"We are mixing everyone up and building good camaraderie throughout the whole unit," said Sgt. Brian Sloan, unit supply specialist with the 402nd M.P. Bn. "This is an individual effort for a team score."

After a recent deployment and change of command, the 402nd hadn’t conducted a challenge like this in a couple of years. That’s why unit leaders wanted to get the Soldiers out and mixing together in a training event that introduced a heavy dosage of competition into the mix.

"As a staff, we are trying to get back to getting the Soldiers in a competitive environment," said Lt. Col. Randall Ames, 402nd M.P. Bn. commander.

"When we put together this challenge, we wanted to focus on activities that would push the Soldiers not only to compete against one another, but identify Soldiers possibly to go forward from the battalion for (the state Best Warrior Competition) as well as those Soldiers that are willing to make that effort and possibly go to a school if opportunity was available," added Ames. "So with that in mind, we are doing a lot of physical things."

"Were they ever."

Over two days, the Military Police Challenge tested the competing Soldiers both physically and mentally in ways they probably didn’t expect.

Day 1

Soldiers started the challenge with the Army Physical Fitness Test in the morning followed by land navigation in the afternoon at Mead Training Site. In addition, Soldiers were tested on general military knowledge including non-commissioned officer information, history, current events and more.

Day 2

After putting plenty of miles in during the APFT and land navigation, Soldiers endured a 4-mile ruck march. Following the ruck march, the Guardsmen then completed a round robin of six different events including assembling three different weapon systems, a grenade throw, Humvee push, preventive maintenance checks and services, Mission Orientated Protective Posture levels and radio operations.

According to the Soldiers, the competition was definitely not for the faint of heart.

"Land navigation was challenging," said Sloan. "A lot of people have never run this course before."

The teams were given four points and two hours to accomplish the land navigation course.

But according to most of the Soldiers, the ruck march was probably the most challenging.

"It was a good distance and it was very mentally in ways they probably didn’t expect," said Sloan.

The ruck march proved to be the most difficult challenge of the competition. That challenge became even greater when one Soldier started experiencing chest pains that required him to be rushed to the hospital.

"Unfortunately I’m a bit concerned that the enthusiasm sometimes doesn’t equate to their physical ability," Ames said after sending the Soldier to the hospital.

Still, Ames said, he was pleased by how quickly other Soldiers responded to the situation, adding that he and his staff used the situation to help their Soldiers better excel while also understanding their limitations.

Ames said the battalion hopes to incorporate even more sections in future M.P. Challenges.


Ames said comments he received showed that the time invested in the competition was well spent.

"The Soldiers were worn, tired, sore... but they were happy they had the chance to do it," said Ames. "I’m very proud of Soldiers making decisions of the Soldiers that know they couldn’t physically do some of the activities. They still wanted to participate as team members because of the activities they could help with."

Bombs Away: A Soldier with the 402nd Military Police Battalion throws a practice grenade during the military police Challenge at the mead Training Site near Mead, Neb., Sept. 7. The grenade portion of the challenge involved throwing practice grenades into different objects to improvise as doors and windows.

Ames said the Stateside competition lived up to the words of the U.S. Army’s Warrior Ethos when he and his staff used the situation to help their Soldiers better excel while also understanding their limitations.

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Bring It Home: Spc. Chuck Stierwalt, an internment/resettlement specialist with the 402nd Military Police Battalion, finishes the 4-mile ruck march portion of the military Police Challenge at the Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb., Sept. 7. The ruck march was one of 10 events in the challenge.