

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Battle of Bismark: One Year Later



Photo by David Nore

Welcome Back: (From left) Sgt. Terence Ricketts and Pfc. Richard DeLancey are welcomed back to Nebraska by members of the full-time National Guard staff at the Army National Guard flight facility in Lincoln in April 2005 after the two members of the 1075th Transportation Company were evacuated back to the United States for injuries they received during the March 20, 2005 ambush near Salmon Pak, Iraq.

Nebraska truck drivers' heroism largely forgotten following bloody ambush in Iraq

Special Report

One year after Battle of Bismark, Prairie Soldier pieces together what happened March 20, 2005. Third of three-part series begins on 12.

Guard looking to keep more troops in ranks

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

As recruiting efforts across Nebraska continue to escalate, Guard officials are also turning a critical eye toward keeping as many people currently in uniform in the Guard as well.

According to Lt. Col. Steve Hurst, Nebraska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command commander, retaining those Guardsmen already in the organization is a critical piece to solving the state's
See RETENTION on 10.

Planning picks up for September air show

By Chief Master Sgt. Vicky Cerino
Staff Writer

For two days in September the skies over Lincoln will be the canvas for a world class air show.

Admission is free at the Sept. 23-24 Guardians of Freedom air show.

Hosted by the Nebraska Air National Guard and the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with the Nebraska Army Guard, the air show in Lincoln's Air Park will feature a star-studded cast including the U.S. Navy
See AIRSHOW on 19.

September 23-24
Lincoln, Neb.



Featuring
U.S. Navy Blue Angels, U.S. Army Golden Knights

Guard training leads Azerbaijanis to Camp Ashland

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

Five Soldiers from Azerbaijan recently teamed up with the Nebraska Regional Training Institute to learn more about non-commissioned officer training, U.S. Army style.

The Soldiers were part of the the National Guard State Partnership Program. Normally, Azerbaijan is partnered with Oklahoma, but according to Lt.

Col. Jerry Cusic, escort officer, the RTI training cycle in Oklahoma did not correspond with the time of the soldiers' visit, so Nebraska volunteered to assist Oklahoma in its partnership efforts.

The National Guard State Partnership Program links National Guard units from participating states with partner country defense ministries and other government agencies to improve bilateral relations. Following the dramatic political and mili-

tary changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall the concept has expanded considerably since 1993 to include all parts of the world.

According to Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, the State Partnership Program has been an important part of preparing Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen for deployments around the world.

"It is important that our Soldiers know how to operate over-

seas," said Lempke. "That means we need to be exposed to different cultures, different languages and know how to work with them. We will be doing more of this not less."

"The second thing is, we are just proud to show Nebraska whenever we can," he said during a reception for the visiting Azerbaijan officers and guests that included Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale.

Azerbaijan is a small coun-
See AZERIS on 6.

Nebraska cavalry Soldiers discover buried weapons cache in Iraqi field

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

As far as days in Iraq go, March 30 was an extremely good one for the members of Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry's 2nd Platoon.

While conducting a targeted raid mission northwest of Ramadi with members of B Troop, 104th Cavalry, members of the Nebraska Army National Guard cavalry platoon received a report from a child who said "some weapons were buried somewhere near the river bank."

According to 1st Lt. Jacques Smith, platoon leader for 2nd Platoon, Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, the Nebraska Soldiers took the report seriously.
See CACHE on 4.

Hastings student wins Air Guard nose

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

When Kayla Howsden heard her name called out while sitting in a school assembly at Hastings' St. Cecilia High School, the first thought through her head was: "Oh my gosh, I'm going to turn five different shades of red."

An admittedly shy person, Howsden said she hates standing in front of people.

She'd better get used to it, however. In September she'll be finding herself standing in front of a much larger audience - in this case tens of thousands - when the logo she designed is unveiled on the nose of a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker during the "Guardians of Freedom" air show in September.
See NOSEART on 19.



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Sunset Over Hastings: Kayla Howsden, a Hastings St. Cecilia High School senior, poses with her winning artwork, May 3 in Hastings, Neb. Howsden won the second annual Nebraska Air National Guard Noseart Competition, spotlighting the community of Hastings. Howsden's artwork will be unveiled on the nose of a Nebraska Air Guard KC-135R Stratotanker during the "Guardians of Freedom" air show in September.

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NEWS DIGEST

■ Guard, Reserves full partners in Defense Department force

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — The National Guard and reserve components are key players in America's ability to fight the war on terror abroad, and respond to security threats and national disasters in the homeland, Defense Department leaders said May 3.

These components are vital to America's total force strength, and integrated planning is the key to success in the future, Navy Adm. Timothy Keating, commander of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, and Paul McHale, assistant secretary of defense for homeland defense, said at the second hearing of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves.

The National Guard and reserves make up almost half of America's total military strength and are involved in every aspect of homeland defense and civil support, McHale said.

Air National Guardsmen and reservists fly almost 71 percent of the nation's air-defense sorties, and the Navy Reserve augments the active-duty Navy in the maritime homeland defense mission, McHale said. In the land domain, reserve forces are capable of serving in homeland defense reaction-force roles and will be able to do so, if authorized by the secretary of defense, under the 2005 National Defense Authorization Act, he added.

The National Guard provides emergency preparedness liaison officers in every state and in each of the 10 Federal Emergency Management Agency regional offices, he said. The National Guard also has a joint force headquarters in each state to provide communication between all Guard forces, he said.

Acting on lessons learned from the response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Northern Command has already taken steps to improve its collaboration with the National Guard and its ability to respond to natural disasters, Keating said.

"We don't want to engage in crisis action planning when we can anticipate those requirements through deliberate staff planning in a pre-crisis environment," he said.

■ Defense officials: Terrorists use internet for propaganda

WASHINGTON, AFPS — Terrorist networks are skillfully using the internet to raise money, recruit and train members, and to spread a message of hatred,

Defense officials said recently.

"The enemy's message, of course, is a gross distortion of American policy," Peter Rodman, assistant secretary of defense for policy and international security affairs, told the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. "It is at bottom an incitement to hatred, extremism and terrorism."

Rodman, along with U.S. defense contractors, presented a briefing to Congress that demonstrated how terrorists have used the internet for propaganda purposes. The briefing was developed by Defense Department contractors in conjunction with the Marine Corps, in particular the Marine Corps Training and Education Command, he said.

Defense contractors said they were continuously amazed at how terrorists are able to grab multimedia products or images off the internet and repackage them to fit their own goals and objectives.

For instance, terrorists use the internet to download DVDs, CDs, training manuals, pamphlets, and copies of sermons and speeches, and then distribute them at a local level. Terrorists in Iraq pass their message over the internet, via websites that constantly go up and down, through songs and stories that appeal to disaffected youths, defense contractors said.

The target audience for terrorist propaganda is recruitment-age youth, ages 7 to 25. Defense contractors said they have even seen products that are aimed at ages younger than 7.

"It is not necessarily directed at our forces at all, because our forces know that the claims they're making are not true," he said.

■ OEF, OIF veterans receive preference for federal hiring

WASHINGTON (AFNEWS) — More servicemembers are now eligible for veterans' preference when applying for government civilian jobs. Pres. George W. Bush signed into law the Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2006, which contained two provisions that broadened the definition of a "veteran" and clarified eligibility for those released or discharged from active duty.

The first provision gives preference to those who have served on active duty for a period of more than 180 consecutive days, any part of which occurred during the period beginning Sept. 11, 2001, and ending at the close of Operation Iraqi Freedom, regardless of location, provided they meet other eligibil-



Guardsmen help out Afghan school



(Above) Lots Of Good Work To Do: Theater Assistance Group Soldiers repair desks at the Family Village School, located just outside of Kabul on April 7. Among those participating in helping prepare the school for the upcoming session were members of Camp Ashland's 209th Regional Training Institute. (Left) Lending A Hand: Maj. Martin Riley and Maj. Bret Allgood, members of the 209th Regional Training Institute, paint window frames at the Family Village School April 7. The school received a much needed facelift during the community service project.

Photos courtesy of 2nd Lt. Mark Ruiz

ity conditions.

The second provision clarifies veterans' preference eligibility for individuals "who are discharged or released from active-duty service," provided that they, too, meet other eligibility requirements.

In the past, the statement only gave eligibility to "individuals separated from the armed forces." For more information, visit www.opm.gov/employ/veterans/

■ Military families can get online mental health screening

WASHINGTON (AFNEWS) — Service members from all components and their families can obtain a mental health self-assessment or screening through a website co-sponsored by the Depart-

ment of Defense and Screening for Mental Health Inc., a nonprofit organization.

Check out www.mentalhealth-screening.org/military/index.aspx for more information.

The link to the survey is under "Click for anonymous self assessment."

The program "grades" the completed survey and gives people an evaluation of their present mental health and provides assistance resources.

National Guard and Reserve members returning from overseas deployments also are authorized to use the website. Returning Reserve-component members have two years of health benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Air Force finalizes Airman Battle Uniform

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — The new Airman Battle Uniform is ready for production and will be available in fiscal 2007, said the Air Force deputy chief of staff of personnel.

Many factors were considered in developing the final uniform selection, with the concern for Airmen being at the top of the list, said Brig. Gen Robert R. Allardice.

"We were looking for a uniform that would be easier to maintain," he said. "We wanted to provide a uniform that the Airman wouldn't need to spend a lot of out-of-pocket expenses to maintain."

Also, Airmen's feedback throughout the process was beneficial in adding new pockets on the uniform.

"We listened to the Airmen's request where they wanted pockets to hold small tools and when they wear body armor the existing shirt pockets are not accessible or usable," Allardice said. "It will have the four pockets on the front of the shirt, and also a small pencil pocket on the left

forearm and two pockets on the lower legs. In addition, inside the side pockets and inside of the breast pockets there will be smaller sewn-in pockets to hold small tools, flashlights or cell phones."

The new uniform design is a pixilated tiger stripe with four soft earth tones consisting of tan, grey, green and blue. The ABU will have a permanent crease and will be offered in 50-50 nylon-cotton blend permanent press fabric eliminating the need for winter and summer weight uniforms.

Some other ABU accessory items:

♦ A tan T-shirt will be worn; Airmen will be required to maintain one tan T-shirt with an Air Force logo on the front and Air Force written on the back.

♦ Suede cowhide boots in matching green-gray color; like

the desert boot these will be polish-free and available in men's and women's sizes.

♦ The word color for the name, U.S. Air Force, and rank is midnight blue; nametapes and rank insignia background will be tan and will be sewn on using a matching tan color thread.

♦ The ABU adopts the battle dress uniform hat style for primary use and the floppy hat design will be used in some deployed areas.

"This is the uniform of the future," Allardice said. "Eventually when enough of these uniforms are manufactured, we will phase out the BDU and desert combat uniforms."

The new Air Force Airman Battle Uniform features a pixilated tiger stripe pattern in four soft earth tones consisting of tan, grey, green and blue.



Prairie Soldier

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Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Rolling Along: Col. Scott Gronewold and 1st Sgt. Tom Pirrone roll a pair of barrels around a National Guard parking lot during the 92nd Civil Support Team's Level A Olympics, April 5. This particular exercise was designed to show participants what it is like to operate under physical stress unit members may be encounter while responding to an incident.

■ Civil support team hosts April competition to help senior Guard leaders learn more about unit's unique capabilities

Level A Olympics

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Dribbling a basketball seems like a pretty simple task.

Heck, most people learned how to do it in elementary school or even earlier.

However, when a person combines dribbling and shooting a basketball with a totally encapsulated rubberized suit with supplied air – better known in professional circles as a Level A ensemble – well, that's a totally different matter.

Senior Nebraska National Guard leaders were given the opportunity to learn how exhaustingly difficult even the most easy tasks become in a Level A suit when the 92nd Civil Support Team hosted a "Level A Olympics" near its Lincoln, Neb., home, April 5. According to Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Lonowski, unit reconnaissance sergeant, the purpose of the day-long open house event was to familiarize senior state leaders with the capabilities and physical requirements of the state's newest unit.

"This is a physically demanding job that we do," said Lonowski. "You've got to have a lot of self discipline when you're working in a Level A suit in a potentially contaminated area. You have to be able think about what you're doing in an extraordinary amount of stress because of the presence of potential chemical contaminants or even bombs."

Lonowski said as the newest unit in the Nebraska National Guard with a unique mission of helping state or regional officials investigate incidents of potential Weapons of Mass Destruction attacks, unit members have unconventional training and physical requirements that don't easily fall within traditional Army or Air Force guidelines.

"The Level A Olympics was designed to help state leaders better understand what we do, how we need to train and why," said 1st Sgt. Tom Pirrone, who escorted Col. Scott Gronewold through a series of six to seven separate events that included carrying items across a compound on a litter, reading a material safety data sheet, site characterizing the external walls of a building with a chemical sensor, using an eye-dropper to move fluid into a beaker and shooting a basketball.

Pirrone said probably the biggest eye-opener for most people when putting on a Level A suit is how difficult it can be to do the most simple of tasks.

"You have to be able to manage your equipment," said Pirrone. "You've got to rehearse your movements."

Guard leaders typically spent between 30 and 40 minutes in the suit from start to finish, far short of the 60 or even 90 minutes that a member of the CST could spend while conducting reconnaissance of a potential hot zone. According to Gronewold,



Taking Aim: 1st Sgt. Tom Pirrone shoots a basketball while. The basketball shoot competition was designed to demonstrate limited visibility and restricted mobility in the suit. Several Soldiers missed numerous shots before making one basket.

that was more than time enough to gain an appreciation of the work that Nebraska Guardsmen do in the Level A suit.

"It's the ultimate extreme sport," said Gronewold, state training officer after spending more than a half-hour sweating profusely in the suit. "It was a real eye opener. You have to be extremely tedious in everything you do."

"It's very hot and constricting," he said, adding that he now better understands the training needs of the Guardsmen who have to wear the suit as part of their mission. "It gave me an appreciation of the equipment



Betcha Emeril Never Has To Deal With This: 1st Sgt. Tom Pirrone and Col. Scott Gronewold cut and sort parsley and measure water using an eye-dropper while wearing Level A suits. This exercise helped show participants the fine motor skills and hand dexterity a person needs while collecting samples in Level A ensemble.



Looking For Invisible Signs: Col. Scott Gronewold samples the air around a garage door window. Every possible route where gases can escape is checked using a five gas monitor while surveying the exterior of the building.



What A Workout: Sweatsoaked, 1st Sgt. Tom Pirrone and Col. Scott Gronewold take off their Level A ensembles after successfully completing the Level A Olympics. Current 92nd Civil Support Team survey members can spend more than an hour downrange in the suit and lose several pounds of water weight.

they need and the importance of constantly working out to stay physically fit. They need to stay in shape because it would be real easy to become a casualty if they're not."

'I'm proud as hell'

Retired general says Guard beating expectations despite tough missions

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

For those members of the Nebraska Military Department attending the April 19 Irish American History Luncheon who expected to hear a speaker talk about the military accomplishments of Irish Americans, retired Brig. Gen. James Murphy had a surprise.

Before launching into his speech, Murphy chose to speak to the audience about a recent conversation he had with the Secretary of Army during a week-long trip to Washington, D.C., and to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

"(The Guard's reputation and support) is at an all-time high. That was brought up to me several times by the Secretary of the Army," said Murphy, a former member of the Nebraska Army Guard who retired in 1993 after spending 36 years in uniform. "(The secretary) is a businessman and he too has realized how important the Guard has played its role."

"(The Army) has never held our population in such high esteem. That's what you have brought to the table. And you have done it so well," said Murphy about the National Guard's support of the Global War on Terrorism as well as its support during the recent national disaster caused by Hurricane Katrina.

In speaking about the National Guard's current public support, Murphy knows about

what he speaks.

Prior to retiring in 1993, Murphy served as the assistant adjutant general, Army, for Nebraska.

He also spent a career in a wide-variety of leadership positions including instructing future officers at Camp Ashland's Officer Candidate School.

Murphy also owns the Universal Information Inc., an Omaha-based clipping service that helps corporate and governmental organizations track mass media interest and support.

Murphy is also a civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army, a role in which he is responsible for helping promote good relations between the Army and public by acting as a spokespersons for and advisor to the Secretary of the Army, Army chief of staff and local Army commanders.

Murphy said that during his trip to the East Coast in April, he had a chance to speak with the Army chief of staff as well as many members of his staff. He also spoke with Lt. Gen. Russell Honore, commander of the First U.S. Army.



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Proud Nebraskan: Jim Murphy, civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army, speaks to a Nebraska Military Department audience during the agency's annual Irish-American History Luncheon, April 19. Murphy, who spent 36 years as an Army National Guard officer before retiring in 1993 as the Nebraska National Guard assistant adjutant general, Army, spent time during his speech talking about the present state of the National Guard as seen by senior U.S. Army leaders.

"Honore spent most of his time telling me what the Guard can do," said Murphy.

"I don't know that he knew that I had 36 years in the Guard. He just couldn't say enough about the Guard's contributions at New Orleans."

Murphy said as a result of the Guard's work overseas and at home, the Guard's reputation both within military and civilian circles is at an all-time high.

"I'm proud as hell of the Guard," said Murphy. "I don't think I've ever seen a time in our history where the Guard has stepped up to the plate and done their duty and done it extremely well and professionally. And the active force realizes this."

Nebraska Army Guard general assigned new responsibilities

By Lt. Col. Bob Vrana
State Public Affairs Officer

Major General Walter E. Zink, II, has been named commander, Task Force 1, Fifth United States Army/Army North, Fort Sam Houston, Tex.

In his new assignment Zink will command the task force, which would be assembled in the event of homeland defense or civil support operations.

Additionally Zink, along with the Fifth Army/Army North deputy commanding general, will oversee the task force's training, readiness and preparedness.

On Oct. 1, Fifth Army changed missions, becoming the Army component of U.S. Northern Command, which is responsible for U.S. homeland defense. Fifth Army/Army North will also respond to man-made and

natural disasters.

The organization was previously responsible for training, mobilizing and deploying U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard units.

Prior to the Fifth Army mission change Zink was assigned as deputy commanding general (Reserve Component).

"I'm pleased to be selected to serve with an organization that is responsive to the needs of our citizens in a homeland defense and civil support role," Zink said.

"I look forward to enhancing the Army's relationships with adjutants general and local first responders as we partner in providing Americans with a capabilities-based response to the full spectrum of situations that might confront our nation."

Zink served in the Nebraska Army National Guard for 32 years, rising to the position of assistant adjutant general (Army), before being assigned to Fifth Army.

In civilian life, Zink is a senior partner in the Lincoln law firm of Baylor, Evnen, Curtiss, Grit and Witt.

He and his wife, Carol, reside in Lincoln.



Zink



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Training In Nebraska: Spc. Chrystal Richey, a member of Falls City's Detachment 1, 173rd Chemical Reconnaissance Company, prepares for a patrol during annual training at the Greenleaf Training Site at Hastings, Neb., in April. Many of the Soldiers who attended the training, are now being mobilized with O'Neill's 755th Chemical Reconnaissance Company.

O'Neill Soldiers, other Guardsmen mobilizing

By Lt. Col. Bob Vrana
State Public Affairs Officer

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 755th Chemical Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company will be mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom in late August, Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, announced April 28.

The 755th Chem. Co. is located in O'Neill, but the unit will be augmented by Soldiers from other chemical units in Omaha, Nebraska City, Seward, and Falls City, and by Soldiers from other National Guard units across the state.

Approximately 175 Soldiers will make up the enlarged company, which is commanded by 1st Lt. Vincent Dvorak of Sioux City, Iowa.

Normally the mission of the chemical unit is locating suspected chemical or biological contamination and decontaminating contaminated personnel or equipment, however

the unit will be converted to a security force for this deployment.

The unit has already undergone extensive security training and will receive additional training at Camp Shelby, Miss., before deploying. Following that training the unit will report to the Central Command area of responsibility for approximately one year. The unit's ultimate destination will not be released until after it has arrived.

A send-off ceremony will be held for the unit prior to its departure. Details will follow at a later date.

There are approximately 800 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers currently deployed in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

That number is about 23 percent of the Army National Guard force in the state. More than 75 percent of the force remains available for homeland defense or other emergency response duties.

CACHE

continued from page 1.

"However, there was no riverbank nearby, so we started searching some adjacent fields with mine detectors," said Smith in an e-mail interview. "This is how it was discovered."

"It" was a large weapons cache. Buried in the ground, the Nebraskans found various Russian-made vehicle screening smoke grenades and PG-2 propellant charges, Chinese projectiles and a large stockpile of large caliber ammunition rounds.

"Overall, it was a good grab, got some bad stuff off the streets," said Smith.

In speaking with other reporters, Smith said the find was the result of persistence and familiarity with the local area and populace. "By earning the trust of the local Iraqi citizens, a small child felt safe enough to tell our Soldiers of possible weapons buried somewhere in the field," said Smith. "Not all of the people here are bad, but the insurgents continue to live and hide amongst them."

"The innocent Iraqi citizens want the area to return to a sense of calm and normalcy,"



Photo courtesy of 1st Lt. Jacques Smith

Getting Weapons Off The Iraqi Streets: Members of Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry (from left to right) Sgt. Daniel Walford, Sgt. Randall Barnason, Sgt. Thomas Scanlon and Staff Sgt. Tyler Powell, proudly display the part of the weapons cache they helped discover March 30.

Smith added.

Members of Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, from Hastings and Grand Island, have been stationed in Iraq for nearly one year. They have been serving in the critical region around Ramadi, capital of the Al Anbar Province.

Following the find, members of the base Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment, escorted by 2nd Lt. Mathew Misfeldt and Troop A's 1st Platoon, destroyed

the confiscated weapons in a controlled detonation.

According to Capt. Jeff Searcey, Troop A commander, the mission shows the success that American and Coalition forces are having in the volatile area. "Our actions are causing the insurgents to run out of places to hide," Searcey told reporters. "It is our combined Armed Forces team that the insurgents can't stop."

Air Refueling unit deploys overseas in June

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Approximately 200 Nebraska Air Guardsmen deployed to Incirlik, Turkey, during June in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

The deployment was part of the 155th Air Refueling Wing's regularly scheduled aerospace expeditionary force commitment.

The deployment began in late May and is scheduled to be completed during the first week of July.

While in Turkey the Nebraska Air Guardsmen provided aerial refueling to U.S. and Coalition aircraft supporting continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The 155th ARW is a KC-135R Stratotanker unit based in Lincoln, Neb.

This marks the third time in 18 months that the 155th ARW

has deployed its aircraft overseas for a month-long deployment in support of continuing American operations and commitments around the globe.

The Nebraska unit deployed to Turkey to support aircraft directly involved in Iraqi and Afghan operations from October thru December, 2004, and to Guam in May thru June 2005 in support of the American show of force in the volatile Pacific Rim.

During this current deployment, members of the Nebraska Air Guard helped support aircraft moving supplies and personnel into Iraq



Photo by Staff Sgt. Kary Schmit
Getting The Treatment: Lt. Col. Scott McPherson, state air surgeon, tests Master Sgt. Russell Sladky's elbow reflexes during routine checkups and training at Incirlik, Turkey.

In order to best minimize the impact on Guard families and employers, the month-long deployment was split into two two-week rotations of Air Guardsmen, primarily made up of aircraft crewmembers, maintenance specialists and other support staff.

"The 200 personnel supporting this effort are but a small portion of the over 500 individuals who deploy from

Lincoln each year with the Air National Guard," said Col. Steve Adams, 155th ARW commander in May at the start of

the current deployment.

"This level of support to the active duty Air Force in the Global War on Terrorism would not be possible if it were not for the support of our Guardsmen's families and employers," Adams said. "They willingly accept the challenges created when our personnel deploy around the world."

"We would not be able to do our mission if it weren't for these unsung heroes," he added. "The families and employers are helping in this war on terrorism."

In deploying to Turkey, the 200 Air Guardsmen joined approximately 50 other members of the unit who are currently deployed or preparing to deploy around the globe in support of a wide array of world-wide mission.

The majority of those Airmen are expected to be deployed anywhere from two to six months.

Nebraska Soldiers work hard to improve base defenses, local Iraqi civilian relations

By Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz
Public Affairs Sergeant

CAMP ANACONDA, Iraq – The 1-167th Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition) had not even taken official control of its mission before it was already busy working.

There are various missions the squadron has to do in its mission of providing base defense force protection at Camp Anaconda.

This all-important and ever-demanding mission focuses on how to make the layers of defense more secure and safer for Soldiers, contractors, workers and others inside and around the camp.

The 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA) has two key players involved in this task: 1st Lt. Brad Wangler and Sgt. 1st Class Scott Bates.

The two Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers work with various other entities on Camp Anaconda to build up the defenses.

Wangler, who is a police officer from Columbus, stated: "We work alongside contractors."

One of several contractors Wangler is currently working with is a Turkish company called Kulak. When projects associated with force protection need to be done, such as cutting grass along a perimeter wire or fence, Kulak hires employees and local civilians to complete the assignment.

Recently, Wangler and Bates had grass cutting on their minds. At a certain point around the Anaconda perimeter fence, officials determined that some tall grass needed to be cut to enhance protection and fields of view. Wangler and Bates had to coordinate the project and also make sure that the hired grass cutters were fed lunch.

Often in the Global War on Terrorism, people hear stories of combat or casualties. In this particular case, it was more of a goodwill operation: hire workers, pay them and buy them lunch.

Base defense force protection at times requires establishing

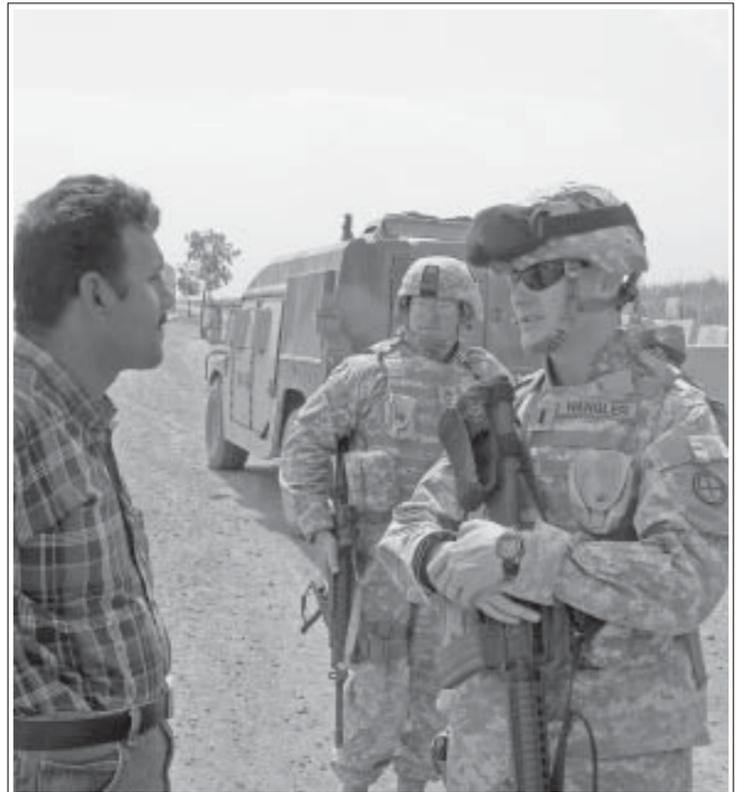


Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz
Getting The Job Done: (From right) 1st Lt. Brad Wangler and Sgt. 1st Class Scott Bates work with Bazeer from the Turkish Company Kulak to get some high grass around the perimeter of Camp Anaconda, Iraq, mowed by a local Iraqi farmer to help enhance protection and fields of view. Part of the project included buying the farmer lunch, thus helping community relations in the area.

"My mechanical organizational skills that I use back at my job in Lincoln will help the mission here."

— Sgt. 1st Class Scott Bates
1-167th Cavalry

relations with the local population and hiring them for jobs and tasks that benefit both the local Iraqis and Coalition Forces.

On this particular day, one of the contractors from Kulak named Bazeer (his first name) met one of the farmers and informed him to meet the U.S. Soldiers at a certain point alone to pick up the lunch that was provided. The local farmer did

just that and was very grateful to receive the food, water and juice.

Many local Iraqis are fearful of the insurgents who operate in the area. As a courtesy to the farmer, Wangler asked that neither his or his father's name or their tribe name be published.

This is one of many projects that both of these Soldiers will face during their tenure at Anaconda. Bates said: "My mechanical organizational skills that I use back at my job in Lincoln will help the mission here."

Bates, who lives in Beatrice, is employed by the Nebraska National Guard as a full-time automotive maintenance supervisor.

The job is huge, but according to Wangler, it's vitally important that he and Bates do their job well.

"My goal is the same as every Soldier's: improve the position of the defense to raise the force protection level."



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz

New Soldiers In Town: (Front, from left) Lt. Col. Martin Apprich, commander of the 1-167th Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance, Target Acquisition), and Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Hall unfurl their squadron colors during the April 22 transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Anaconda, Iraq.

Cavalry officially takes over new mission in Iraq

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Members of the 1-167th Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance, Target Acquisition) officially began its new mission in Iraq when it participated in a transfer of authority ceremony held April 22 at Camp Anaconda, Iraq.

In a ceremony held at the logistical supply base located north of Baghdad near the Iraqi city of Balad, members of the Nebraska Army National Guard squadron officially took over the responsibility for base defense force operations from Task Force 2-44th Air Defense Artillery.

According to a news release written by Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz, public affairs sergeant for the 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA), Lt. Col. Martin Apprich, 167th Cavalry (RSTA) commander, officially took authority over the mission from departing commander, Lt. Col. Donald G. Fryc during the symbolic raising and lowering of the incoming and outgoing unit colors.

The incoming squadron, 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA) will conduct base defense operations in conjunction with reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition.

The 1-167th, known as "The

Bold Ones," is under the 1/34 Brigade Combat Team and the 3rd Corps Support Command, writes Schultz.

The squadron is headquartered in Lincoln, Neb. Along with units from the Nebraska Army National Guard, the organization is also made up of units from New Jersey, Kentucky, Kansas, Minnesota, West Virginia and individual Soldiers from across the country.

In his departure comments, Fryc welcomed the 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA) while commending his own Soldiers for their hard work, writes Schultz.

"We have paved a legacy into the future," said Fryc.

The 2-44th ADA, "Strike Fear," was originally assigned as a gun truck battalion, conducting over 900 combat escort missions and logging over 1,750,000 miles throughout Iraq. The battalion encountered over 223 improvised explosive devices and small arms attacks, yet suffered no deaths.

The battalion was then reassigned the mission to provide base defense at Camp Anaconda, the largest base in Iraq.

In officially accepting the mission from the 2-44th ADA, Apprich said: "Wow. We have some boots to fill."

The 1-167th Cavalry (RSTA) is expected to be in Iraq one year.

Kearney headquarters wished well by families, city

By David Nore

Public Information Officer

Hundreds gathered at the Kearney High School gym May 30 to say farewell and good luck to approximately 50 members of the Kearney-based Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 734th Transportation Battalion, headed to Camp Atterbury, Ind., to begin training for a 12-month deployment in support of Iraqi Freedom.

Although it was a repeat of a scene that has occurred numerous times over the past three years across Nebraska, for the Soldiers, families, friends and community at large, the send-off was as powerful and as emotional as ever.

"I've been in the Guard for 27 years and I remember a time when the communities didn't care much for the National Guard," Lt. Col. Matt Parsley, commander of the 734th, told the crowd, "but I really appreciate the reception we are receiving tonight."

Interestingly enough, this marked the second sendoff for HHD, 734th Trans. Bn. for Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 2003 the unit was mobilized for the operation, however it remained at Fort Riley, Kan., for approximately four months before returning home to Nebraska. The headquarters is responsible for providing command and control of U.S. Army units engaged in all types of motor transport operations.

"Whether you are immediate family, extended family, community members or you just came for the refreshments, you are now a member of our family," Command Sgt. Maj. Bill Carlson told the crowd. "Our family is the most important thing to us."

Carlson called Jordan McHugh, daughter of Sgt. 1st Class Randall McHugh, to the stage for recognition in expressing her family pride and support for her father in a high school essay entitled "Support Our Troops" that was featured on the Oberlin, Kan., school website.

"I would like to recognize a young family member of one of our Soldiers," Carlson said as McHugh walked slowly to the stage. "She told each and every one of us why we are going there, why we are doing this."

McHugh read her essay to a formation of unit Soldiers at the Kearney Armory just prior to the public gathering in the Kearney High School auditorium.

Taking Care Of People

Guard first sergeant focuses on Airmen's needs during deployment

By Chief Master Sgt. Vicky Cerino

Staff Writer

Senior Master Sgt. Ken Nauert's love for taking care of people led him to volunteer for a 60-day deployment to one of the busiest bases in the Middle East.

Working an average 15-hour-day, six-days-a-week schedule at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, Nauert ate, slept and breathed his job as first sergeant for a communications squadron made up mostly of active duty personnel.

According to the Nebraska Air Guardsman, being a first sergeant is a bit like being a parent. Nauert's family was 140 military members and 87 civilians. The squadron is responsible for communications in the entire area of responsibility (AOR). This meant managing computers, phones, satellite, mail and multi-media.

Nauert said his 60-day deployment was an eye-opening experience. During his time in Qatar, he was involved in a myriad of personnel issues ranging from participating in a court martial to facilitating squadron members' meetings with VIPs – including former President George Bush.

Nauert said he expected he would be dealing with more disciplinary problems. He said he knew there would be family situations that would require intervention from the Red Cross.

"We didn't have as many disciplinary problems," Nauert said, "but we had a ton of family issues and also had situations where we had to help individuals straighten out their finances. When young Airmen leave the family back home, there's going to be problems. Deployments put a lot of stress on the family."

"I also had someone lose all the money they had with them. I had to find the right person to help."

To quote a term first sergeants use when helping people cope with problems – Nauert worked a lot on "life skills."

"I became real familiar with life skills. The stress level was real high in our squadron," Nauert said, adding that he had to call in the chaplain a number of times to talk to personnel. "What shocked me the most was the amount of issues people had back home – divorces pending. The spouse of a deployed member started selling off the couple's belongings."

Nauert said he used his training to help resolve issues. "You try to focus on



Photo courtesy of Senior Master Sgt. Ken Nauert
Helping Airmen Celebrate Their Birthdays: Senior Master Sgt. Ken Nauert, Nebraska Air National Guard, carries a tray loaded with steak and lobster for Airmen celebrating their birthday during a monthly celebration at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar.

the positive – that things will work out if they can hang in there. But it got to the point where some couldn't handle the stress and two in the squadron had to go home. They couldn't concentrate on their job."

He found the judicial process interesting. As first sergeant, Nauert was required to be at the side of a military member being court-martialed. "I had to try to keep morale up and put a positive spin on things."

When he wasn't conducting his mentally exhausting official duties, Nauert said he made sure he got around to see the troops. He went on mail runs because it was a good way to meet people and see if everything was going well. He also took time to meet around-the-clock arriving and departing aircraft. He visited people on the night shift. He attended intramural sports games to show support.

"I always tried to make the games. They told me I was their favorite supporter."

Keeping morale high was one of his main goals. Nauert said one of the best morale builders was the monthly birthday meals. Commanders, chiefs and first sergeants hosted and prepared a steak and lobster meal in celebration of birthdays during the month.

Nauert said birthday celebrations

and promotion ceremonies were special events. He said one Airman told him the birthday event meant a lot.

"He said, 'I'll remember that birthday for the rest of my life. Before, when I was deployed on my birthday, it was just another day.'"

Because many of the people who go into the Iraqi theater go through Al Udeid, it's a busy base. When a large influx of Soldiers doubled the number of people at the base, Nauert said his fellow 17 first sergeants were challenged to find everyone billeting.

Demand also increased when the emir of Kuwait died. All air traffic was suspended for three days, said Nauert.

Though Nauert was comfortable around the many people he never before had met nor worked with, he said being able to communicate with loved ones back home, and getting care packages, made all the difference.

"When you get a piece of mail, it's a big deal. It was like Christmas," Nauert said. "I never would have thought I'd feel that way. It's nice to get something. It makes a big difference."

Nauert said his experience was a great one. "I met a lot of neat people. I like taking care of people and there was a lot of that going on. It was really mentally draining, but I really enjoyed it. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

AZERIS continued from page 1.

try located on the Caspian Sea between Russia and Iran.

Nebraska has been affiliated with the Czech Republic for approximately a decade through the State Partnership Program.

Along with hosting Czech officer and soldiers in Nebraska, the state has also sent Soldiers and Airmen to Europe to familiarize the Nebraskans with the customs, traditions and working environment in that country, according to Maj. Brenda Fujan, Nebraska Partnership coordinator.

Fujan said much of what the National Guard tries to do is help its partner nations develop a modern military and teach them how military and civilian government coexist in a successful democracy.

For the five Azeri soldiers, observing NCO training was the focus of the trip to Nebraska. According to the visitors, there are many differences between the U.S. Military command structure and the Azeri Army,

not the least of which is how the NCO and Officer chains of command work together.

"Many times the colonels or senior officers have to check or supervise a lot of the things the NCOs would have to do in the United States Army," said Lt. Col. Tom Brewer, RTI commander.

"NCOs are the backbone of the U.S. Army and run the individual training and look out for the welfare of Soldiers."

None of the Azeri Soldiers, other than Capt. Elman Aliyev, had been to the United States before or spoke English. Because of this, Aliyev shared translator duties with Spc. Laura Yeramysheva, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard who is an Armenian who was born in Azerbaijan.

Aliyev has been to Georgia and Texas for both language and officer training. This was the first time that Azeri NCOs had participated in partnership program trip.

"We want to improve our

army and training. We have a long way to go, but are working hard on our changes. They may come slowly," Aliyev said.

"We have many differences, but we want to improve to make our army a stronger army," he said. "The main intent for this group is NCO development and training. There are many differences in the organization and rank structure in many of the old Soviet Bloc armies. NCOs didn't have the independent decision-making to do for individual soldier training."

Even small differences in the Nebraska training were noted by the Azeri soldiers.

"The (physical fitness) test is similar in the age groups, but the repetitions within the age groups are different. Our younger age groups have high numbers of repetitions, but the higher age groups have a lower number of repetitions than the U.S.," said Aliyev.

"We want to take back to our country the methods the U.S. teaches and improve our Army."



Photo by David Nore

American Training: Bayramov Humbat, a sergeant with the Azerbaijan Army, carefully goes through immediate action steps of the M-60 machine gun with Staff Sgt. Chrisofer Alt, Warrior Leader Course Small Group leader, prior to participating in a simulated ambush of a squad-sized element of Camp Ashland Soldiers.



Cleaning Up A Backlog: Spc. Michael Stineman, 267th Ordnance Company, washes a Nebraska Army National Guard truck.

Army Guard mechanics pitch in to help Lincoln shop catch up on backlog

Wrench Turners

By Spc. Lynn Weiland
Staff Writer

When the deployments of full-time technicians at the Field Maintenance Shop #1 in Lincoln caused a backlog of maintenance work, members of the 267th Ordnance Company stepped in to help out during their April drill.

According to members of the 267th Ord. Co. who helped out during the effort, the work helped unit Soldiers sharpen skills they had perfected during their own recent deployment to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

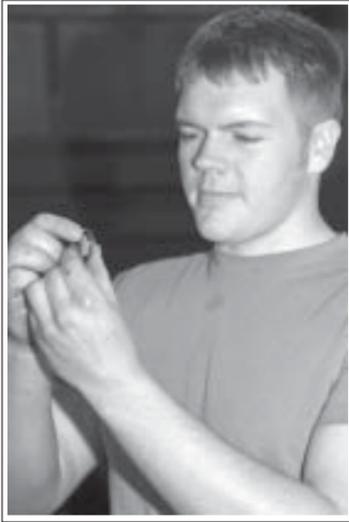
"While we were deployed, we were doing (this) job every day," said 1st Lt. Edwin Davis, 267th Ord. Co., which deployed to Iraq from February 2003 until February 2004.

"Now, a year after our deployment, many of the scheduled annual services are becoming due. Since we are not working as a Guard mechanic daily, things become backlogged and it is hard to catch up."

Davis said that continuing deployments across the state has adversely affected the Nebraska Army Guard's ability to keep up with the vehicle maintenance schedule.

The fact that many of the Soldiers mobilized are full-time maintenance technicians has increased the impact of the problem.

The Lincoln maintenance shop employs up to 30 full-time technicians, primarily filled by Soldiers who are also assigned to the 267th Ord. Co. and the 1-167th Cavalry Squadron.



Now Where Does This Go? Spc. Ben Cornish inspects a part before installing it on a Nebraska Army Guard vehicle during his April drill weekend. Cornish is a member of the Lincoln-based 267th Ordnance Company.

Right now, said Davis, 10-15 of those technicians are deployed.

"This is one of our biggest problems," Davis said.

"It's not that our full-time techs aren't trained, capable or willing to do the job, it's that they are not physically here."

Under normal circumstances, each National Guard unit is responsible for 25 percent of the maintenance on its wheeled-vehicles, and communications and electronic equipment.

Full-time technicians who work in maintenance shops pick up the remaining 75 percent.

"When a good lump sum of the full-time techs is deployed and many other units, who are preparing for mobilizations and aren't spending as much time



Working Together To Get The Job Done: Sgt. William McClure (bottom) and Spc. Mike Ritterling work together to loosen lugnuts on a truck tire during their April drill weekend.



Getting Down And Dirty: Spc. Patrick Tucker, 267th Ordnance Company, works beneath a Nebraska Army National Guard truck while helping the Lincoln-based Field Maintenance Shop #1 catch up on work after many of the shops full-time mechanics were deployed.

on maintenance, the 75-25 ratio isn't a good or realistic ratio anymore," Davis said.

That's part of the reason why the 267th Ord. Co. stepped up to help out on weekends to alle-

viates the workload.

"To have the 267th perform not only the 25 percent of general maintenance, but to also help the full-time technicians with the other 75 percent of the

things that are more time-intensive, will help get the job done," Davis said.

For example, in one weekend, members of the 267th Ord. Co. were able to help reduce the amount of backlog by approximately 500 hours.

This would normally take eight full-time technicians about a week or two to complete.

"Having so many vehicles backlogged with the amount of work to go along with it is really exciting and challenging at the same time," said Staff Sgt. K.C. Sohl, full-time technician and a senior mechanic with the 267th Ord. Co.

"I like it when there's a lot of work to do...especially when that work is (doing) the type of work that I signed up to do."

State maintenance team ready to help Nebraska Army National Guard units

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

As more and more Army Guard commanders find their unit's becoming swamped with maintenance issues, a Lincoln-based maintenance team is available to help.

According to Capt. Chris Weskamp, state surface maintenance manager's office, the

Maintenance Assistance and Instruction Team (MAIT) is an Army program (regulated by AR 750-1 paragraph 8-15).

"The MAIT is ready, willing and available to provide assistance and instruction in maintenance, maintenance management, equipment operation, equipment readiness and repair parts acquisition," he said. "The assistance is not limited to ve-

hicles but also includes power generation, weapons, masks, communication and NBC equipment."

"The Guard is more relevant today than ever, and unit and equipment readiness seems to be more important than ever before," he added. "Whether your unit needs help with preventative maintenance inspections, equipment operation or

preparing for inspections and deployments, rest assured that the results of the visit will be kept confidential."

The MAIT is a section of the Joint Forces Headquarters, J-4 Surface Maintenance Managers Office and has staff members available during the week as well as during drill weekends. The team will augment teams and gather resources

needed to fulfill the needs of the unit.

For more information on the MAIT Team, contact: Capt. Chris Weskamp at (402) 309-7180, christopher.weskamp@ne.ngb.army.mil; Chief Warrant Officer Doug Benes at (402) 309-7182, douglas.a.benes@ne.ngb.army.mil; or Sgt. 1st Class Tom Davis at (402), 309-7189, thomas.davis8@ne.ngb.army.mil.



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Waves Of Heat: Engine exhaust distorts Staff Sgt. Todd Sears, 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, as he directs a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker out of its parking spot, May 29, at the start of the 155th Air Refueling Wings annual Memorial Day fly-by salute of Nebraska's fallen veterans. Volunteering to support the annual flight were crew chiefs Sears and Tech. Sgt. Lyle Stara.



(Left) Final Checks: Capt. Randy Douglas, a pilot with the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, conducts a pre-flight inspection of his aircraft's main landing gear, May 29, before the start of the annual Memorial Day flight saluting the state's fallen veterans. **(Above) Taking Wing:** A KC-135R Stratotanker lifts off from the Lincoln runway at the start of the Nebraska Air Guard's annual Memorial Day salute. This year a volunteer crew of five conducted salutes of 72 separate Nebraska cemeteries in a three-hour timeframe.

Nebraska Guardsmen participate in national Memorial Day activities

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Two Nebraska National Guardsmen had the opportunity of a lifetime when they were selected to represent the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard at the National Memorial Day activities in Washington, D.C., May 28-29.

Marching with other representatives of the National Guard from across the United States, Sgt. Heath Blackwell of the Nebraska Army Guard's 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) and Master Sgt. Bill Norris of the Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Logistical Readiness Squadron, participated in the National Memorial Day Parade down Pennsylvania Avenue from the United States Capitol. It was the first time since 1938 that the National Guard had participated in the parade.

"It was awesome," said Norris, a computer operator in the Lincoln-based Air Guard squadron. "It was very touching and very emotional."

As part of its effort to recognize Guard veterans of the Global War on Terrorism, National Guard Bureau officials had each state select a member from both the Army and Air Guard who had deployed overseas in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

Each Guardsmen, in turn, was able to bring a family member of his or her choice for the weekend.

Blackwell and Norris both brought their wives.

According to Blackwell, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran who deployed to Iraq with Nebraska's 313th Med. Co. from 2004-05 and served overseas in Kuwait in 2001 and Bosnia in 2003, the weekend was an incredible experience.

"It was just great," said Blackwell. "Just awesome."

Along with marching in the National Memorial Day Parade down Constitution Avenue, May 29, Blackwell also participated in the National Memorial Day Concert held near the U.S. Capitol, carrying the Nebraska State Flag while John Schneider (aka Bo Duke) sang the National Guard Song.

This year's concert paid special tribute to the "Citizen Soldiers" of the National Guard and the impact that their service has had on their families at home.

Blackwell said the concert and the picnic at the Pentagon before the show were fantastic.

"It was the most amazing thing," said Blackwell, whose wife also got to meet retired Gen. Colin Powell during the concert. "It really made you feel good to be part of this tribute."

Also impressive, Norris said, was marching in the parade.

"During the parade, you could see thousands of older vets, who stood up and cheered us, clapped and waved their flags as we marched by," he said.

"It made the hairs stand up on your arms."

Officer helps Iraq-based military remember veterans' sacrifices

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

While members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard were helping the state recognize its fallen veterans and heroes, halfway around the world a Nebraska Army Guard officer was also helping members of today's current war remember the nation's fallen.

Lt. Col. Douglas Ladd, deputy commander of the Nebraska

Army Guard's 67th Area Support Group at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, awas the keynote speaker for the base's Memorial Day commemoration held May 30.

In speaking to members of the military currently serving in west-central Iraq, Ladd, a Vietnam War veteran encouraged his audience to remember the



Ladd

meaning behind Memorial Day.

"Memorial Day helps us remember those fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, friends, neighbors and fellow Americans who gave up their comfort and security at home so that Americans and others could have comfort and security in their lives," said Ladd.

"Memorial Day helps those who don't know, to learn about the sacrifices those fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, friends, neighbors and fellow Ameri-

cans paid for the love of their country. It helps those who don't know what the wages of war costs."

"It helps those that don't know...the loneliness, the fear and the uncertainty of what might be next," he said, adding later: "Memorial Day is to memorialize forever the costs of freedom, democracy and individual liberty. We as Americans have the responsibility to keep alive the memory of those brave men and women who gave their all."

Father, daughter meet up 7,000 miles from central Nebraska home

By Staff Sgt. Ryan Hansen
386th AEW Public Affairs

Family reunions are held everywhere, but not many of them take place more than 7,000 miles away from home.

But as luck would have it, 1st Lt. Nicole McCoy, chief of protocol for the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing, had the chance to meet up with her father, Army Master Sgt. Donald Nuss, at Ali Al Salem, Kuwait, May 22.

Nuss is deployed to Camp Al Asad, Iraq, where he manages the help desk for more than 15,000 Soldiers and 7,000 contractors. He was traveling out of the country for his two-week break and landed at the air base here only to be greeted by one of his own.

"I got to go out on the flightline, meet his plane and

see him step off," McCoy said. "It was really nice."

Both father and daughter are traditional, part-time Guardsmen with the Nebraska National Guard. McCoy is a member of the Air Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing, while her father is a member of the Army Guard's 67th Area Support Group.

Nuss has started a family tradition so to speak, as all three of his daughters have been part of the Guard at one time or another.

"I have two daughters currently in the Air Guard and my oldest daughter was in the Army Guard for 14 years," he said. "I'm very proud that they decided to serve."

His youngest daughter, Danielle, is a full-time staff sergeant in the Air Guard. She has deployed numerous times to the area and is returning once again



Photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Hansen

Family Reunion: 1st Lt. Nicole McCoy, chief of protocol for the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing, and her father Army Master Sgt. Donald Nuss, stand next to the "Rock" at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait.

in June. But while this is a source of pride for the family, it also causes some concern to their mother to have so many of her loved ones gone.

"She'd obviously like to have them back at home," he said.

"But I tell her the Air Force takes good care of them."

"My sister has been all over the place," McCoy said. "So I think seeing her come and go so often actually helps (Mom) realize that we're pretty safe here."

Members of the Nuss' extended family have also proudly served their country.

"My son-in-law was in the Army for 23 years and retired as a major and my second son-in-law, who is married to Nicole, is in the Army Guard and he's on his way to his second mobilization," Nuss said.

Home for the Nuss family is a farm just outside of Sutton, Neb., a small community in the southeastern part of the state. When Nuss' unit was activated last year, the 39-year veteran was given a choice whether to

deploy or not.

"I was told I didn't have to go because I was 58 and at that age we have a choice," he said. "But I told them if I could pass the physical and they wanted me that I would go."

"I passed the physical and I guess they wanted me," he added, laughing.

Before his year-long tour is over Nuss will be joined by even more members of his family.

"Before I go home I'll have two of my daughters and both of my son-in-laws over here with me," he said.

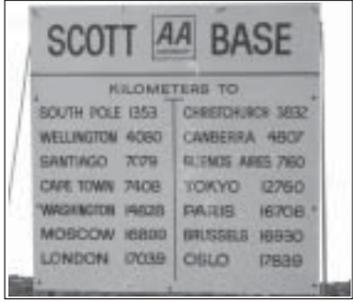
The convenience is nice in more ways than just one.

"It's really neat that I can call them up from my office and it sounds just like they're right next door," he said.

Seeing family members is always a good thing, but for the Nuss family, it's even better on the other side of the world.



Cold Welcome: Scientists and National Guardsmen arrive at McMurdo Station after flying to Antarctica aboard a New York Air Guard C-17.



Long Ways From Anywhere and Anyone: A Antarctic sign points out the distances to the rest of the planet's more populous communities.



Polar Sunshine: Penguins bask in the Antarctic sunshine near McMurdo Station. Penguins are a protected species on the South Pole continent.



Bottom Of The Planet: Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Douglas Irmer holds a t-shirt from his civilian church while posing for a photo at the geographic South Pole.



Polar Sunset: After months without setting, the sun moves toward the Antarctica horizon, ushering in another harsh winter for the South Polar continent.

By Tech. Sgt. David Brumley
Staff Writer

For many adventure lovers the chance to travel to the South Pole would be a major adrenaline rush.

For one Nebraskan Guardsman it was simply another chance to support his country.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Douglas Irmer, 155th Air Refueling Wing chaplain and senior pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Beatrice, Neb., left for his 53-day adventure, Dec. 30, 2005 and returned Feb. 27, 2006. Irmer deployed to serve as a Protestant chaplain at the Chapel of the Snows at McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

Irmer began his adventure by first traveling to New Zealand where he was supposed to get his cold weather gear and then catch a flight to McMurdo Station. Things didn't quite work out the way as planned, however.

"When I arrived in Auckland, New Zealand, I was supposed to pick up my checked baggage and carry it from the international terminal to the domestic one for the last commercial leg of the flight from Auckland to Christchurch, New Zealand."

Unfortunately Irmer's bags got stuck somewhere in the United States and didn't arrive in New Zealand until he was already in Antarctica.

Irmer said staff members in New Zealand pitched in to help.

"At Christchurch, the people with the United States Antarctic Project were very helpful. Finally they caught up with my luggage and said it should be arriving in Christchurch the next day (December 30). Sure enough, the bag came into Christchurch at noon on Dec. 30. The only problem was I left Christchurch at 10:00 a.m."

After leaving New Zealand, Irmer traveled to McMurdo Station, a key installation on the "bottom of the world" continent.

According to the National Science Foundation website, McMurdo Station is located on the Ross Sea and is Antarctica's largest station serving as a "gateway" to the continent for U.S. scientific field teams as well as the hub for most U.S. scientific activity.

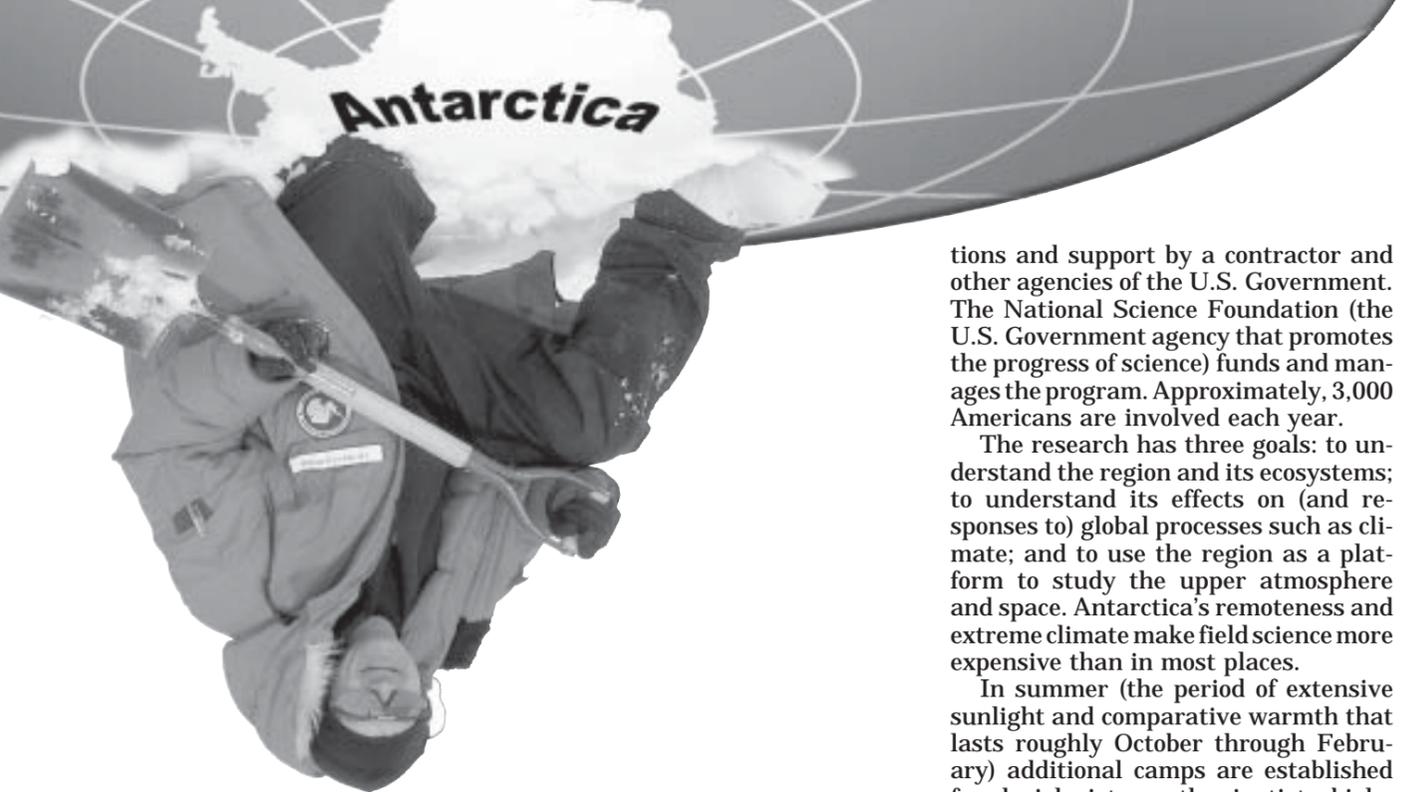
During the Austral summer, the population of scientists and support personnel at McMurdo often exceeds 1,000 people. In the austral winter (from February to late October), the population drops to roughly 180 persons.

Even at the height of the austral summer, the population at McMurdo is equivalent to the enrollment of an average American high school and is situated on a landmass the size of the United States and Mexico combined.

According to Irmer, working at McMurdo Station, where he provided for the spiritual needs of the local inhabitants, was one of the most interesting assignments he's ever had.

"It was a very unique experience," he said.

One of the first things Chaplain Irmer had to learn was to sort his trash for



Assignment: Bottom Of The World

recycling. No matter what kind of trash a person generates, it has to be sorted and placed into the appropriate bin, said Irmer.

All garbage is then taken off of Antarctica and returned to the United States.

Paper products can be incinerated (in the U.S.).

Light metal (aluminum foil) is recycled. Pop and beer cans, glass, bio-waste, mixed paper (like cardboard), food waste, even non-recyclable things have to be appropriately sorted and disposed of, according to Irmer, and foam packing peanuts are a banned substance on the ice.

Irmer said sorted trash is then packaged and shipped out at the end of the summer on the container ship that



Photos courtesy of Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Douglas Irmer

Long Shadows: Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Douglas Irmer, chaplain for the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing, stands next to a wooden cross on Ob Hill above McMurdo Station, Antarctica, on Feb. 12. Irmer recently served as a chaplain in Antarctica during a 53-day deployment to the ice-capped continent, during which time, the sun never set.

brings in fresh products for the winter.

According to the National Science Foundation website Americans have been studying the Antarctic and its interactions with the rest of the planet without interruption since 1956.

These investigators and supporting personnel make up the U.S. Antarctic Program, which carries forward the nation's goals of supporting the Antarctic Treaty, fostering cooperative research with other nations, protecting the Antarctic environment, and developing measures to ensure only equitable and wise use of resources.

The program comprises research by scientists selected from universities and other research institutions and opera-

tions and support by a contractor and other agencies of the U.S. Government. The National Science Foundation (the U.S. Government agency that promotes the progress of science) funds and manages the program. Approximately, 3,000 Americans are involved each year.

The research has three goals: to understand the region and its ecosystems; to understand its effects on (and responses to) global processes such as climate; and to use the region as a platform to study the upper atmosphere and space. Antarctica's remoteness and extreme climate make field science more expensive than in most places.

In summer (the period of extensive sunlight and comparative warmth that lasts roughly October through February) additional camps are established for glaciologists, earth scientists, biologists, and others. Large, ski-equipped LC-130 airplanes, which only the United States has, provide air logistics. Air National Guard crews operate these planes.

Getting used to one long, continuous day was a huge challenge for the Nebraska chaplain.

Located at the bottom of the planet, Antarctica doesn't have what would be considered by most to be a normal day. The continent enjoys one long day and one long night each year - with weeks of sunrise and sunset in between.

According to Chaplain Irmer, the sun finally set for the first time on the day he left McMurdo Station.

While having to deal with the inconvenience and harshness that comes with a deployment to Antarctica, there were many things Irmer said he appreciated.

"I enjoyed the Kiwis, because there is a big Kiwi presence there," said Irmer about the penguin-like bird. "It's (also) not every day you walk along and see seals lying around."

"There's a whole different brand of humor of down there. At the South Pole the relative humidity is eight percent and obviously it's very cold there. There's a store at the South Pole station that's called 'Store in a cold dry place,'" Irmer said. "Somebody had cut that off of a box."

Irmer said Antarctica also offered its inhabitants chances to do things few in the world ever experience.

"When I went to snow camp the ice and snow there is perfect for cutting blocks. One class built stonehenge out of snow blocks."

The biggest exploration for Chaplain Irmer came when he trekked to the South Pole. "I can't imagine there is anywhere else in the world quite like it," said Irmer, who spent three days and two nights at the pole with temperatures hovering around -43 degrees Fahrenheit.

According to the chaplain, one of the first things most folks do when they reach the pole is take a picture in front of the South Pole Marker. Irmer said many refer to the photos as "Hero Pictures."

"I'm not sure why, except maybe you are an explorer from the 'heroic age' if you make it to the South Pole."



This Is How The Army Talks: Sgt. Robert Cleary, 267th Ordnance Company, tells a group of Omaha high school students how members of his Nebraska Army National Guard unit uses radios mounted in their Hum-Vees to communicate with each other. Cleary was among dozens of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who descended upon the North Omaha Readiness Center to tell area high school students what the National Guard can do for them as part of the "Guard For A Day" activities.

Show & Tell

■ Eastern Nebraska students travel to Omaha to see what Guard has to offer

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

More than 200 Omaha-area students had a chance to take a break from school and see what the Nebraska Army National Guard has to offer during an April 21 "Guard For A Day" activity held at the new North Omaha Readiness Center.

A total of 243 students participated in the Guard activity designed to introduce prospective recruits to the different types of jobs and opportunities the Guard offers.

According to Staff Sgt. Maren Held, a Lincoln-area recruiter, the "Guard For A Day" event is an important part of the Guard's battle to develop interest in serving in the military.

"Anything that's going to draw some interest or attention and get people involved is a great tool," said Held while standing next to the National Guard's massive "Ultimate Challenge" inflatable obstacle course that was delivered to Omaha shortly after spending several weeks in Texas and Florida during Spring Break.

"If you can get that five-seconds worth

of face time to talk to somebody a little bit...and if they remember going through this obstacle course and they think of the National Guard...that's what we want."



One More: Staff Sgt. Ron Winterstein counts as Joshua Echinaiu, Omaha Burke High School, pulls his chin over the bar during a modified physical fitness test.

assigned to eastern Nebraska transportation, aviation, chemical decontamination, fire fighting and counterdrug units and organizations, said Master Sgt. Timothy Summers, event noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

The high school students also had a chance to learn more about the Guard's marksmanship, biathlon and marathon competitive teams, participate in physical fitness competition and football toss contest, and rapel down the Omaha Fire

"We want people to know who we are and recognize us wherever we are at, especially in the state of Nebraska," she added.

Along with the "Ultimate Challenge" obstacle course, this year's "Guard For Day Event" included static equipment displays manned by Soldiers assigned to eastern Nebraska transportation, aviation, chemical decontamination, fire fighting and counterdrug units and organizations, said Master Sgt. Timothy Summers, event noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

The high school students also had a chance to learn more about the Guard's marksmanship, biathlon and marathon competitive teams, participate in physical fitness competition and football toss contest, and rapel down the Omaha Fire



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Long Way Down: Emily Hotovy, an Omaha North High School student, rappels down the Omaha Fire Department's training tower, April 21.

Department's training tower.

"(The rappelling tower) has to be one of my favorite things to do," said Emily Hotovy, an Omaha North High School student who first rappelled last summer during her Army Junior Officer Reserve Training Corps summer camp. Because that camp wasn't funded this year, Hotovy said she signed up for the "Guard For A Day" event because she knew it might be her only to tackle a tower this year.

Later, Hotovy said she wasn't disappointed. "It was awesome," she said after being the first person in her group to rapel down the 50-foot training tower. "It was really fun. You've got to not be nervous about it...you're not going to fall because (the Guard Soldiers) aren't going to let you."

Hotovy wasn't the only one enjoying the event.

For Taylor Pache, an Omaha West Side High School freshman, signing up for the "Guard For A Day" event seemed like a great way to spend a beautiful spring day out of the classroom. He said he soon found out that the event was a "lot of fun."

"(The ultimate challenge) was really cool," he said after tackling the inflatable obstacle course multiple times during his group's stop at the course. While at the course, students were matched against each other in a race to be the first to successfully negotiate through and over several walls, up two "rock walls" and down two slides. "It was a lot harder than I thought."

The Omaha "Guard For A Day" event was the first of two planned activities for this spring. A second "Guard For A Day" was held at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings on May 3.

RETENTION continued from page 1.

force structure puzzle.

"Retention has got to become a commander's program," said Hurst in late May. "Commanders have got to do whatever they can to keep good Guardsmen in uniform, even if that sometimes means making a tough choice of helping a Soldier find a new unit when they're dissatisfied in their current job."

Retaining Nebraska National Guardsmen, simply put, is a huge challenge for the state with far-reaching impact. According to data compiled by Master Sgt. Susan Wendling of the Army National Guard's Military Personnel Services Branch Office, a total of 313 people have joined the Nebraska Army National Guard since Jan. 1. However, at that

same time, a total 252 Soldiers have left the Nebraska Army Guard for a variety of reasons ranging from end of enlistments, out of state transfers and retirements.

That means, for all the work Army Guard recruiters put into increasing the strength of the Nebraska Army Guard, the state has only shown an increase in assigned strength of 61 new Soldiers.

To help combat that trend, said Hurst, the National Guard is trying several different approaches ranging from reenlistment bonuses to increased training for career counseling.

For example, in May the Army National Guard released its latest reenlistment bonuses. Currently Soldiers with less than 24 years of total time in service can

earn up to \$15,000 for reenlisting to serve for an additional six years in uniform.

For those Soldiers wishing to extend for less than six years, the National Guard will give them a bonus of \$7,500 for their first three-year extension and \$6,000 for their second three-year stint.

What's more, if a Soldier decides to reenlist while serving in a declared "combat zone," those bonuses are tax-free.

The Guard is also using other tools besides bonuses to try to keep as many Soldiers in uniform as possible, said Hurst.

The Nebraska Army Guard recently signed on to send Soldiers across the state to the Career Counselor Course, a National Guard course designed to train unit retention sergeants.

That's a particularly important development, said Hurst, because a number of Nebraska units do not currently have career counselors assigned.

Hurst said the state has made it a priority to send as many Soldiers possible to the course, which will be held July 24 - Aug. 4 at Camp Ashland, Neb. Hurst said its particularly important for commanders to make sure they're sending the right kinds of Soldiers to the course.

"We want our career counselors to be Soldiers who are motivated and happy to be in the Guard," he said. "We want our counselors to be able to talk to the Soldiers in their units about why it's important to stay in the Guard...about the advantages of continued service."

Hurst said another tool open

to commanders is the Citizen Soldier Survey. In it, Soldiers are asked about a variety of topics relating to the Guard in general and their unit in particular. The results of surveys, said Hurst, can then be used by a commander to see what their Soldiers are thinking and concerned about.

"It can give a commander insight to why his or her Soldiers might be thinking about getting out of the Guard," Hurst said. "It's a good tool a person can use to hone in on what its going to take to get people to reenlist."

Currently, the survey is only open to units with 25 or more Soldiers.

Smaller units can contact the State Recruiting and Retention Office to set up a similar type of survey.

Students flood soggy site to learn about Army Guard

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A little bit of rain did not dampen the enthusiasm for around 200 central Nebraska High School students when they flooded the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, May 3, to participate in the "Guard For A Day" activities held there.

The recruiting event was the second held in Nebraska this spring, designed to give prospective recruits a chance to see what the Guard has to offer through displays and hands-on activities.

"The value is that we're giving (these students) a taste of what we do," said Maj. Will Prusia, an officer strength manager who was assigned to escort a group of students between the various activities and displays of Nebraska Army Guard equipment. "It gives us the chance to showcase the opportunities that there are in the National Guard."

"We also talk about the transfer of skills that the National Guard offers that they can then take into the civilian world," he added.

For example, Prusia said, in becoming a firefighter in the Nebraska Army Guard, Soldiers are trained and certified in first responder and fire fighting skills, things that people can take and use directly in the civilian world.

"There are some awesome opportunities for kids," said Prusia.

This year's "Guard For A Day" event included static displays



Tied Up: Sgt. Dominick Chase helps fasten Josh Englands safety harness before the Doniphan Trumble High School junior rappelled down a tower at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., during the Nebraska Army National Guard's Guard For A Day activities, May 3.

of helicopters, an M-1 tank, a counterdrug light armored vehicle, the Civil Support Team's weapons of mass destruction identification equipment and other vehicles used in Nebraska. Students also had opportunity to watch a weapons display, rapel down a 30-foot tower and race through the Guard's "Ultimate Challenge" obstacle course, a massive inflatable activity equipped with tunnels, slides and a large climbing wall.

"I'm having fun," said Jim Fricky, a Grand Island Senior High School junior after racing a buddy through the inflatable obstacle course. "I didn't expect it to be like this... everybody told me that we would just be watching things and not doing anything."

Shane Trofholz agreed. "It's pretty cool," said Trofholz, a senior at Kearney

High School. "I like it a lot. I've been thinking about joining the Guard after high school."

According to Spc. John Harris, a truck driver with the Columbus-based 1075th Transportation Company who answered questions about his truck, having students come out to Hastings to see what the Guard does both in Nebraska and overseas is critical to helping the Guard maintain enough Soldiers in the ranks to do those missions.

"I think it's real important to get (the students) enthused about the military and show them what we do and what we're about," he said.

One student already thinking about the Guard said the "Guard For A Day" activity was a lot of fun. So fun, in fact, that he has gone twice.

"I've been interested in the



Up They Go: Andrew D. Morgan and Shane Trofholz, Kearney High School, race each other through the National Guard's "Extreme Challenge" inflatable obstacle course.

Guard for a while," said Chase England, a junior at Doniphan-Trumbull High School. "I came out last year and it was loads of fun. I figured it would be fun again."

One thing England was extremely excited about was the chance to learn how to rappel down the site's tower. England didn't get the opportunity to rappel last year, so he was de-

termined to do it this time.

Still, climbing out over the ledge of the tower was "scary."

"I was a little hesitant at first. You look down and it's a little... I've never done that before. It's a little scary at first, but once you get onto it, you get the feel of it and you're alright."

"I'm glad for the experience," he added. "If I can, I'll do it again."

Recruiting program picks up steam as Guardsmen paid cash for successful enlistments

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A new Guard-sponsored program designed to give people cash for helping enlist new Soldiers and getting them to basic training is a big hit in Nebraska.

According to Lt. Col. Steve Hurst, commander of the Nebraska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command, by late May a total of 498 people across Nebraska had enrolled in the new national Guard Recruiting Assistant Program (GRAP), which gives people \$1,000 for every person they get to enlist in the National Guard and an additional \$1,000 for every enlistee who ship to basic training or who spend 90 days in a Guard unit for prior service members.

An additional 179 people were also in the pipeline to become certified in the program by the end of May.

Although that's short of the Guard's 100 percent participation goal for Nebraska, Hurst said it's definitely a good start. He added that because the program has not been renewed past the end of September yet, people need to get enrolled now.

"Rake in the money while you can," said Hurst. "We don't know that it's going to be there past September, so get involved now."

Nebraskans have already made quite a bit of money from the program. By late May, GRAP had paid out a total of \$41,000

for Soldiers enlisting into the Guard and an additional \$5,000 for people shipping to basic training.

Among those receiving money are a number of Soldiers who have already helped enlist multiple Guardsmen.

"It's definitely been a help for state recruiters," said Hurst.

The program has been so successful in the short time it's been available in Nebraska and across the United States that the Air National Guard also recently signed on to make GRAP available for its members.

According to Senior Master Sgt. Peggy Brown, Nebraska Air Guard recruiting superintendent, GRAP became available to Air Guardsmen on April 26. By late May a total of 25 people had enrolled in the Air Guard program while another seven were waiting to be certified.

Brown said that after the announcement, unit recruiters worked quickly to get the word out to the rest of the unit through posters, word-of-mouth and an informational briefing held during the May drill. "We've been very vocal about letting people know about it and how to sign up," said Brown.

Like the Army Guard program, GRAP has caught the interest of Air Guardsmen as well. Although the unit had not paid out any money by late May, the Air Guard recruiting office had received a number of referrals.

"We've got a lot people in the loop, but nobody has enlisted yet," said Brown.

"That will probably be changing shortly."

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Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Uhl

Caring For The Wounded: A member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1075th Transportation Company watches as medics and other 1075th Trans. Co. Soldiers load wounded members of Convoy 678N onto a helicopter following the Battle of Bismark, March 20, 2005.

Soldiers sprint through enemy fire to rescue comrade

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

'This can't be happening' Sgt. Terence Ricketts thought to himself through scalding, near paralyzing pain.

Lying wounded beneath a trailer in the center of a highway near a dusty, hardscrabble town called Salmon Pak, Iraq, the Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier watched with near-detached fascination as several large white and green tractor trailers drove past him, the shrill and booming sounds of battle still filling the air.

Suddenly a strange thought entered Ricketts' mind.

He'd been forgotten by the other members of his convoy who were finally moving forward after having spent nearly a half-hour under constant fire after during a bloody ambush on a four-lane highway just southeast of Baghdad.

It was just another bad moment in a day filled with bad moments for Ricketts.

A member of Convoy 678N – so called because it was the 678th convoy sent north into Iraq by the Kuwait-based 1075th Transportation Company's parent battalion – Ricketts and his co-driver, Pfc. Ricky DeLancey, had both been wounded when their truck became lodged in a mud-filled median and struck repeatedly by bullets, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars during the initial moments of the March 20, 2005, ambush, one of the largest ambushes of the entire Iraq war.

Of the two Nebraska Soldiers manning Truck #106, Ricketts had fared the worst.

First, he'd been critically wounded by an armor-piercing bullet that struck him just above his right knee and exited through his thigh, paralyzing him with pain. Moments later, a mortar-like projectile struck the hood of his truck, causing a metal piece of the truck's console to



Photo courtesy of 1st Lt. Charles Gilkey

Access Road: Kentucky National Guard Military Police Hum-Vee crews sit on an access road near several disabled insurgent cars that were found with their trunks open following the Battle of Bismark. Officials later surmised that the insurgents attacked Convoy 678N with the hopes of capturing hostages.

detach and pin him to the floor.

While Ricketts lay paralyzed, he watched DeLancey kick out the remaining windshield and crawl onto the still-burning hood and begin pouring steady fire from his M-249 squad automatic weapon (SAW) into teams of advancing insurgents who seemed intent on overrunning the stranded convoy.

Then, DeLancey disappeared off the hood of the smoking truck. Moments later, Ricketts heard the SAW again burst into action, this time the sound came from in front of his truck, as if someone was shooting from under one of his truck's tires.

Ricketts seemed to settle into his fate. 'We're going to die' he thought.

Suddenly the door across from

Third of a three-part Special Report

Ricketts' position burst open, filling the cab with light. Ricketts blinked, unbelievably as a small, blonde-haired face peered in at him.

It was Spc. Jennifer Beck, a fellow driver from the 1075th Transportation Company – a Nebraska Army Guard truck unit hailing from York and Columbus – who had been driving the first Army "green truck" directly behind Truck #106.

Looking at Beck, Ricketts said simply: "I'm stuck."

"I don't care," said Beck with a firm voice that belied her young age. "We're getting you out of there."

Climbing into the truck cab, Beck immediately began trying to pry Ricketts out from under the bent metal of the

console. The more she tried, however, the more the console and pain seemed to hold Ricketts in their grip.

Shouting profanities, Beck pulled harder. Finally, looking down at Ricketts, Beck said: "We're not leaving you here. If you're not doing it for yourself, then you're doing it for me...you're not staying here."

After telling Beck that his wounded leg was essentially useless, Ricketts agreed to try again. Pulling together, Ricketts finally inched forward and out from under the metal console.

Finally released from the truck, Beck and Michael Hart, a former U.S. Army Soldier turned civilian truck driver who had driven up alongside of Ricketts' stricken truck and had been manning DeLancey's machinegun for the past few minutes, then helped Ricketts to Beck's truck.

Once there, however, Beck found that her vehicle was now filled with her co-driver Sgt. Anthony Bloebaum, DeLancey, equipment and a wounded civilian driver who had hopped in the truck minutes earlier.

There simply wasn't any room to take Ricketts with her.

Telling Ricketts the news, Beck assured the wounded Omaha native that the next Nebraska truck would be along in just a few minutes to pick him up.

Hart then helped Ricketts to the ground where the injured Soldier half rolled himself under Hart's trailer, which seemed to offer the best refuge from the battle. Moments later Beck pulled away from the battle.

Seconds quickly turned to minutes, but still no one came. Instead, Ricketts watched as truck after truck drove past him, including the second Nebraska truck crew who had misinterpreted Beck's radio call saying they needed to pick up Ricketts, instead thinking she said someone had recovered Ricketts

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and the way out of the ambush was now clear.

Suddenly, a foreboding thought entered Ricketts' mind as Hart continued to fire DeLancey's machinegun in front of Truck #106, keeping the insurgents from discovering the wounded Soldier's location: the rest of the Soldiers didn't know he was still here.

He'd been forgotten.

A strange sense of ease suddenly swept over Ricketts.

"I didn't want any of them to stop necessarily," the Omaha native would say a month later. "I didn't feel safe where I was, but it was better than being in a burning cab. And, I thought: 'You guys aren't supposed to stop anyways.'"

"I would've felt terrible if somebody had stooped to try and save me and got killed doing it, because I was already wounded."

Background

The March 20, 2005, attack on the Nebraska convoy near Salmon Pak, Iraq, had been blazing for approximately 30 minutes and already the Nebraska Soldiers had withstood virtually everything the insurgents could throw at them. Rocket propelled grenades. Volumes of small arms fire. Mortars. Improvised explosive devices.

Luck initially seemed to be against the American and foreign civilian drivers of the 33-vehicle convoy. Already understaffed when one of the unit's armored "Green Trucks" was disabled by a metal road spike on the first day of the mission from Kuwait to Camp Anaconda, the convoy was further handicapped when its commander – Staff Sgt. Jeff Uhl – became physically isolated from the rest of the unit during the first moments of the battle when a southbound sports utility vehicle was thrown by a roadside bomb into Uhl's lane.

Uhl and his driver, Spc. Tim Bos, were able to negotiate around the burning vehicle, but the rest of the convoy wasn't as lucky. Unarmored "white trucks" – driven by non-English speaking foreign drivers – immediately began screeching to a stop to avoid the burning SUV, setting off a calamitous chain of events.

Instead of continuing north toward the safety outside the "kill zone" as the American Soldiers had been trained, the civilians quickly fled their vehicles as bullets and RPGs began slicing through their trucks' thin, unarmored metal skin. Those same civilians were now hiding behind vehicle wheels or in a nearby ditch, creating a roadblock that prevented the rest of Convoy 678N from moving forward.

Within minutes several civilian drivers and four Nebraska Army Guardsmen were wounded. A fifth Soldier – assigned to the convoy's guntruck escort – was also shot while his crew attempted to shield the convoy from the incoming fire. When a second shot punctured an onboard fire extinguisher and filled the Hum-Vee with "smoke," the guntruck commander ordered his driver to move to the rear of the convoy, out of the direct line of fire.

The convoy's two other guntrucks also faced problems.

After pulling toward the center median, the first armored Hum-Vee – manned by a four-person crew including a senior sergeant experiencing his first convoy – began pumping machinegun fire into the insurgent position, part of a pre-planned strategy to give the convoy covering fire as it moved out of the kill zone. After approximately 15-20 minutes of near constant firing as the convoy stood motionless in the lane behind them, the first Hum-Vee crew became critically short of ammunition and was forced to move north toward the convoy consolidation point.

At the same time, the convoy's rear guntruck, which already had three flat tires due to incoming fire, was ordered forward to replace the now-departing

middle Hum-Vee. Despite the damage, the commander of the rear guntruck – callsign "Regulator 3" – ordered his driver forward.

Finding a break in the convoy line that allowed Regulator 3 to move through the median and onto the southbound lane, the crew noticed three other Hum-Vee crews battling insurgents along an access road that bordered a grove of trees and open field.

Seeing a wounded American Soldier lying on the ground, the commander of the rear Hum-Vee, Sgt. Rondell Brown, told his driver to move up alongside of the other Americans – members of the Kentucky Army Guard's 617th Military Police Company – who had been shadowing approximately a mile behind a southbound convoy when those vehicles ambushed at about the same moment the Nebraska convoy was hit.

While Brown jumped out of his vehicle and began helping the wounded Soldier, the two other members of his crew rushed to join Kentucky Guardsmen who had formed a firing line along a dirt berm next to the access road. They were soon joined by two more guntruck crews from Battery B, 1-623rd Field Artillery, who had been escorting the southbound convoy at the start of the ambush.

Back in Convoy 678N, the 1075th Transportation Company truck crews had been under near-continuous fire for approximately 20-30 minutes when they finally began to seize the initiative, rescuing several of their wounded comrades while getting parts of the convoy moving again toward the relative safety where Uhl and Bos had established the convoy casualty collection point.

First out were Spc. John Harris and Spc. Jacob Graff, who were both wounded as they negotiated through the hail of gunfire. They were soon joined by several military and civilian trucks.

The rest of the convoy, however, stood motionless on the road, blocked by the abandoned civilian vehicles.

Frustration At The Tail

For Spc. Joshua Birkel, the last 20 minutes or so had been among the most frustrating of his life. A mechanic with the 1075th Transportation Company, Birkel had been stationed at the tail end of Convoy 678N as it moved north along Alternate Supply Route Bismark toward Camp Anaconda, ready to work on any mechanical problems during the journey north.

Birkel said the second day of the convoy had started out well, unlike the first when one of the convoy's armored green trucks had been disabled near the Iraqi border by a metal spike thrown in the road.

After spending the night at an American way station, the convoy had moved onto ASR Bismark – an alternate supply route that American and Coalition truck crews often used to keep insurgents guessing. Birkel said as the convoy turned onto ASR Bismark, he allowed himself to relax slightly.

"It was just a Sunday... a nice Sunday morning," Birkel said. Besides, he added, in his mind this was one of the safer parts of the journey route to Camp Anaconda.

At around 11:20 a.m. Birkel and his co-driver, Spc. Jay Schrad, had just negotiated their trailer-less bobtail through an Iraqi checkpoint and were accelerating to catch up with the rest of the convoy when "we started hearing rounds."

Suddenly the orderly column in front of the two Nebraskans dissolved into chaos as trucks swerved about to avoid each other as the entire convoy screeched to a halt.

"Once the rounds started coming, we stopped like that," said Birkel, slapping his hands together. "When you stop 30 to 40 trucks like that, it's not pretty. Trucks were intermingled."

Although Birkel had already logged several missions into Iraq, it was the



Photo courtesy of 1st Lt. Charles Gilkey

Spoils Of War: A Kentucky Army National Guard Military Policeman poses with some of the dozens of weapons confiscated after the battle. Members of the Kentucky National Guard's 617th Military Police Company fought a pitched battle against a numerically superior and heavily armed insurgent force on an access road near Alternate Supply Route Bismark.

first time he'd actually been under fire. The experience, he said, was shocking.

"I was scared," said Birkel, a Columbus native who had been a sophomore at the University of Nebraska-Omaha prior to his unit's late-2004 deployment to Iraq. He hoped to become a teacher someday.

"Your body's natural reaction is, you slump down, start lowering your seat to get behind the metal of the door. You just want to get behind anything. It gives you kind of a false sense of security when you get behind anything," he said.

In front of Birkel, Spc. Michael Sharples and Spc. Thomas Heesacker in Truck #101 were also shocked at the violent ambush that unfolded in front of their windshield.

"I wasn't expecting anything to happen on Bismark," said Sharples, a Fullerton, Neb., native and Wayne State College junior prior to the deployment. Like Birkel, Sharples was also studying to become a teacher.

Sharples said the insurgents were normally most active on Main Supply Route Detroit, which lay miles ahead closer to Camp Anaconda. Because of that, he said he too had relaxed slightly after passing through the Iraqi checkpoint, his mind focusing on the dangers ahead.

After moving through the checkpoint, Heesacker jammed the accelerator to the floor, pushing Truck #101 hard to catch up with the rest of the rapidly departing convoy.

"Right when we were starting to catch up, they started screaming on the radio 'Contact Left,'" Sharples said. "At that time, it's no big deal. I've been shot at before. Just keep going through."

As the Nebraskans barreled down the road, Sharples said he and Heesacker instinctively let the air out of their seats to gain protection behind the truck's armor. Sharples also grabbed his M-249 SAW and pulled the charging handle "to get ready in case I had to fire it."

Suddenly, the convoy came to a dead stop in front of Sharples and Heesacker.

A few seconds later a voice came over the radio.

"It was Ricketts and DeLancey. They're stopped. They're stuck in the mud," said Sharples.

"I started thinking to myself, this is not good if they're stopping ahead," Sharples said. "I could see them ahead starting to get bunched up. I told (Heesacker) to slow down so if we did have to move, we would have a bigger gap in there. And then, right after I told him to slow down, Ricketts came on the radio say he was shot in the leg."

As Truck #101 came to stop, Heesacker left a gap between his truck and the unarmored white trucks in front of him. From the right-hand seat of Truck #101, Sharples said he could see little of the battle raging ahead.

"I couldn't hardly see anything," he said. "On our left was a house with a couple of date trees around it. And they're saying 'Contact Left' (so) I am immediately looking over at this house, thinking that maybe some fire was coming from there."

"One thing I noticed was that there was a date tree on fire," said Sharples, adding he thinks a mortar round or RPG had probably started the blaze. "I scanned that house and the warehouse where (the gunfire) was actually coming from. I had the weapon out the window on the right side, but I kept looking back to the left because they were screaming 'Contact Left, Contact Left.'"

As Sharples looked toward the warehouse, he suddenly heard several shots. These, however, weren't coming from the left, but rather from near a group of trees that bordered the northbound lane on the right.

"I immediately returned fire at the grove of date trees," he said. "I started firing into the trees. After that, there were no more shots from the right side... I just laid down suppressive fire over there."

Behind Sharples and Heesacker, Birkel and Schrad were also trying to

See AMBUSH on 14.

Convoy 678N, Phase III

Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Uhl
Coordinates convoy recovery operations at collection point.



Spc. Tim Bos
Reunited with fiancée, helps treat wounded.

Pfc. Ricky DeLancey
Wounded, evacuated by helicopter to Baghdad then Kuwait.



Sgt. Terence Ricketts
Wounded and left behind, rescued by Sharples, Birkel.

Sgt. Anthony Bloebaum
Helps Uhl coordinate evacuation of wounded.



Spc. Jennifer Beck
Worries about Ricketts, helps treat wounded.

Spc. John Harris
Wounded, treated and evacuated to Germany.



Spc. Jacob Graff
Wounded, evacuated to Baghdad then Kuwait.

Spc. Kelly Kinzer
Misunderstands Beck, leaves ambush without Ricketts.



Spc. Paul Rullo
Misunderstands Beck, leaves ambush without Ricketts.

Spc. Thomas Heesacker
Provides covering fire for Birkel, Sharples.



Spc. Michael Sharples
Sprints through fire to move civilian drivers, finds Ricketts.

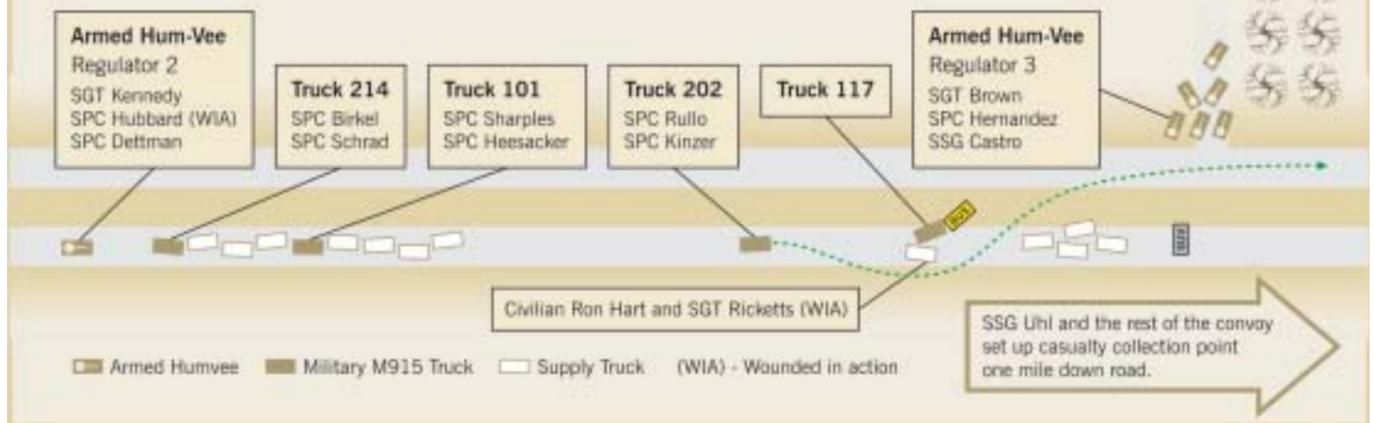
Spc. Joshua Birkel
Sprints through fire to move civilian drivers, finds Ricketts.



Spc. Jay Schrad
Provides covering fire for Birkel, Sharples.

Convoy 678N

After about 30 minutes of sustained fighting, approximately two-thirds of Convoy 678N had moved out of the ambush kill zone. A number of Soldiers, however, still remained blocked in on the highway behind the roadblock caused by the civilian truck drivers. Among those still in the kill zone were Sgt. Terence Ricketts, who lay on the side of the road, and two 1075th Transportation Company truck crews located at the rear of the convoy.



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understand what was going on in the convoy. According to Birkel, as soon as their truck stopped, the two Soldier began developing a plan.

"Nobody was moving," said Birkel. "We knew that we weren't going to be able to just go through it. So, we figured we'll wait until everyone else rolls through and we'll get an open road and we're going to just hammer down and pass through as fast as we can."

"And then, as more minutes went by, we realized obviously that was not going to happen," he said.

While Birkel scanned the area around his truck he noticed groups of civilians moving along the protected forward, right side of the convoy. It was the civilian drivers who had already exited their vehicle in search of someplace safe to hide.

Birkel said he almost shot at them. "I didn't know they'd jumped out," Birkel said, adding he had reason to feel edgy.

"Everything was coming from the left, but every once in a while you would hear one or two shots coming from the right. But, for the life of me, I couldn't see where it was coming from," he said. "(We) were trying to look everywhere. You could see about 10 (civilians) and they looked just like the Iraqis."

"There were about 10 of them huddled up in a ditch about halfway up the convoy. They would get up and then they would get back down," said Birkel. "I almost shot them because I didn't know (who) they were."

As the two Nebraska Soldiers sat waiting in Truck #214, Birkel said they took very little fire from the insurgents. Part of that was due to the fact they were shielded somewhat by the house facing them to the west and part of it was due to the armored Hum-Vee located directly behind them, which was taking the largest concentration of insurgent fire, flattening three of its tires.

Suddenly, after about 15-20 minutes of near-constant shooting, Convoy 678N's heavily damaged middle guntruck pulled up alongside the rear guntruck. After speaking for a few moments, the commander of the middle guntruck ordered the rear crew forward to lend covering fire for the trucks located at the middle portion of the convoy.

As the rear guntruck moved out, the middle guntruck commander, Sgt. John Kennedy from the 518th Guntruck Company – an ad-hoc unit created from several active Army and National Guard organizations that had given support to the 1075th Trans. Co. often in the past – radioed to Birkel and Schrad that he needed help. His Hum-Vee was inoperable. "Their driver was shot," said Birkel. "They said their truck was broke."

Scrambling out of his bobtail, Birkel ran back to the disabled Hum-

"These guys are going to get us killed."

— Spc. Michael Sharples

referring to civilian truck drivers who blocked road

vee, hooked up a tow bar and then hustled back to his truck to wait for the convoy to start moving again.

Minutes continued to pass with no sign that the convoy was going anywhere. Birkel and the rest of the Soldiers waiting at the tail end of Convoy 678N realized they were stuck and they weren't leaving anytime soon.

Heroism On The Access Road

While Convoy 678N continued to struggle on the main highway, a huge battle was taking place on an access road that ran perpendicular to the southbound lane of ASR Bismark.

There, three armored Hum-Vee crews had taken up a position on the road near an orchard and field, hoping to turn the insurgent flank.

Instead, the MPs – members of the Kentucky Army National Guard's 617th Military Police Company – quickly learned that instead of turning the enemy's flank, they'd instead driven into the center mass of the insurgents and were now taking fire from both sides of the access road.

According to the 617th MP Co.'s after action review, after dismounting from their Hum-Vees and disabling several cars lined up with their trunks open on nearby road, Staff Sgt. Timothy Nein (squad leader), Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester, Sgt. Dustin Morris and Spc. Ashley Pullen ran to a nearby berm and began engaging insurgents located in the trees and nearby field.

Other MPs ran to what they believed was non-contact side of their Hum-Vee and started pouring fire into a nearby irrigation ditch.

Within minutes three of the Guardsmen on the "protected" side of the Hum-Vees were wounded by gunfire coming from a hill and building to their rear.

The MPs were essentially surrounded. As Spc. Jason Mike, medic, struggled to render assistance to the injured Soldiers, the other Kentucky MPs on the berm poured fire into the enemy positions.

Within minutes, Nein killed an insurgent as he peaked around a tree while Hester killed two more insurgents who were firing from behind a small dirt mound.

"I just put that little dot on him and squeezed the trigger," Hester later told a reporter from the *Washington Post*. "It hit him and he fell down. I was like, 'Whoa I just killed somebody.'"

"Before that first one, it was almost like it wasn't real," she told the reporter. "Now it was for real."

Behind her, Mike – a former college

fullback now turned medic – was continuing to fight for his comrades' lives. After pulling the third wounded Soldier under his Hum-Vee for cover, Mike set up a squad automatic weapon on the trunk of a nearby Hum-Vee and began firing toward the main irrigation ditch with one hand while using his other hand to fire an M-4 rifle in the opposite direction toward insurgents on a nearby hill.

Mike was soon joined by Spc. William Hayes, a Kentucky Soldier who had been manning a .50 caliber machinegun in his Hum-Vee turret before being struck by a bullet in the hand. Now bandaged, Hayes began blasting away again at the insurgents in the irrigation ditch.

While Hayes and Mike pumped rounds into the insurgent positions, Nein was informed that his Soldiers were taking fire from the rear. Realizing that much of the fire seemed to be coming from a hill behind the MPs, Nein tossed a grenade at the sandy knoll, causing the firing to stop. Nein then scrambled over the berm and up the hill to take care of any remaining threats. When he got to the top, he realized the hill was now empty.

Returning quickly back to the berm, Nein ordered a nearby MP, Spc. Ashley Pullen, to help the wounded, particularly Sgt. Joseph Rivera who was critically injured when a bullet struck him in the back and exited out his stomach.

Pullen quickly moved her Hum-Vee closer to Rivera to give him better protection. She was soon joined by the MPs' third Hum-Vee, which was also moved to better protect the wounded Soldiers.

According to the *Washington Post* account of the battle, after moving her Hum-Vee, Pullen jumped out and began treating Rivera. Pullen said when she tried to place a bandage over Rivera's wound he screamed in pain, saying that he couldn't feel his legs.

"Think about your son," Pullen reportedly said. "Think about him. Think about anything but this."

Unnamed Participants, Unanswered Questions

While the actions of the Kentucky Military Policemen during the access road battle have been well documented, less so were the activities of the other units participating in the fight.

In the Kentucky MPs' after action report written weeks after the battle, the unit mentions that the original members of the southbound convoy's guntruck escort, callsign Stallion 33, pulled onto the access road at some point during the fight to lend a hand.

The report also cites: "an (unknown) U.S. vehicle (possibly 1075th gun truck) arrived and an (unknown U.S. Soldier (thin, African-American male, with green (interceptor body armor)) assisted Pullen and Mike in providing first aid to Rivera."

While this is technically true, according to members of the 1075th Trans. Co.

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who were there that day, it doesn't really tell the whole story of the contributions the 518th Guntruck Co. crew made that day.

In its after action report, the 1075th Trans. Co. asserts that the "unknown Soldier" was actually one of three members of third 518th Gun Truck Company Hum-Vee crew which had been at the rear of Convoy 678N before being called forward.

According to the Nebraska AAR, after pulling toward the middle of the stopped convoy, the commander of the rear armored Hum-Vee, Sgt. Rondell Brown, noticed a wounded American Soldier lying on the access road. Brown ordered his driver, Sgt. Alex Hernandez, to pull up onto the access road to help.

After stopping on the access road, "Hernandez and Brown dismounted and moved the injured (Kentucky National Guard) Soldier into his (Hum-Vee,)" the report states.

"Hernandez performed first aid on the Soldier while Brown ran back to his (gun truck) to call for a (medical evacuation helicopter); Brown was informed that a MEDEVAC was already inbound for his location, so Brown set up a defensive position in the (gun truck) line with his M-249 SAW. (Aaron) Castro also took up a defensive position."

According to the Nebraska report, members of the convoy gun truck crew continued fighting next to the Kentucky MPs for approximately 10 or more minutes, during which time they were also joined by the two crews from the southbound convoy's guntruck escort, call sign Stallion 33, who left after a few minutes to set up an evacuation point further to the south.

During that time, media and the Kentucky and Nebraska reports say the MPs suppressed insurgents located in a nearby two-story building with MK-19 grenades and a AT-4 round fired by Spc. Casey Cooper, the Kentucky MP turret gunners who had been wounded early in the battle when his Hum-Vee was struck by a rocket propelled grenade while turning onto the access road.

After killing several insurgents and momentarily suppressing fire from that building, the Soldiers again turned their attention back to the field where, in their eyes, most of the remaining insurgents were located.

According to the Nebraska report, heavy fighting continued on in the orchard and nearby field. At one point the insurgents - in an apparent attempt to break through the American firing line - mounted a coordinated rush, but were repelled by the U.S. Soldiers.

Helping beat back that charge, the Nebraska report says, was Brown who served as the base of fire with his M-249 SAW. At no time does the Kentucky after action report mention this.

According to Staff Sgt. Jeff Uhl, Convoy 678N commander, that omission continues to bother members of the northbound convoy.

"There's absolutely no mention of us being there in (Kentucky's) accounts of (the battle,)" said Uhl months later. "And I can understand it to a certain point because they didn't stop and ask people, 'What unit are you from?' when it was going on."

"But I would've thought that somebody would've pieced it together to say that there were other units involved," he added.

Uhl also points to the MP's spot report made to higher command shortly after the ambush. In it, the spot report specifically cites: "Raven 42, Viper 16 and War Pig engaged the (insurgent force) that resulted in twenty-four enemy (killed in action) and seven enemy (wounded in action) and one detained enemy personnel." Before that statement, the spot report mentions "1075th TRANS (War Pig)" in its account of the units involved in the ambush.

"War Pig was my personal call sign," said Uhl. "So they did know that we were there."

What the MPs' report and subsequent

news reports do mention, however, is the fact that as the fighting continued, Nein was forced to make a critical decision. According to the *Washington Post* article, Nein noticed several insurgents still located in the ditch continuing to fire at his Soldiers from a defensive position approximately 30 yards away in the field.

"We've got to go in there," Nein reportedly told Hester.

Together, the two Soldiers rolled over the berm and into the ditch and moved forward. Every few minutes, the Soldiers would stop and fire at the insurgents, who tried to keep the Kentuckians at bay with bursts of automatic fire from AK-47 assault rifles.

Getting closer, the Kentuckians began throwing grenades at the insurgents. Finally, the shooting stopped.

Climbing from the trench, Hester and Nein were surprised to find wounded and dead insurgents lying in heaps in the ditch, orchard and nearby berms.

Communication Problems Persist

Back on the highway, the two rear Nebraska Army Guard truck crews were becoming increasingly anxious. As several trucks in front of them slowly began to move out, both crews realized that the way was anything but clear because the civilian truck drivers at the front of the convoy were still hiding in the ditch, refusing to get back into their trucks and drive on.

According to Sharples, the longer he waited in his truck, the more infuriated he became.

"None of the truck drivers moved," said Sharples, whose cousin DeLancey was wounded in the truck up ahead. "It p***ed me off. I was extremely mad."

"I was like, 'These guys are going to get us killed'... words just can't describe how scared and upset about it I was," Sharples said. "The trucks were just sitting. And then I started looking around on the right side again and I could see truck drivers, the civilian truck drivers, were laying in the ditch hiding... a couple of them ran off into the grove of date trees."

Suddenly, Sharples noticed with horror that a group of insurgents were beginning to move toward the disabled Nebraska truck. At about the same time, communication with DeLancey and Ricketts disappeared.

"At this time, the insurgents started doing kind of like five-second rushes," said Sharples. "You could see the top halves of their bodies running behind the berms."

"And in DeLancey's truck...they'd gone silent. They weren't saying anything on the radio anymore," he said.

Sharples knew he needed to do something to help the wounded Nebraskans.

"I was thinking, 'Rick's up there. I've got to do something to help him,'" said Sharples.

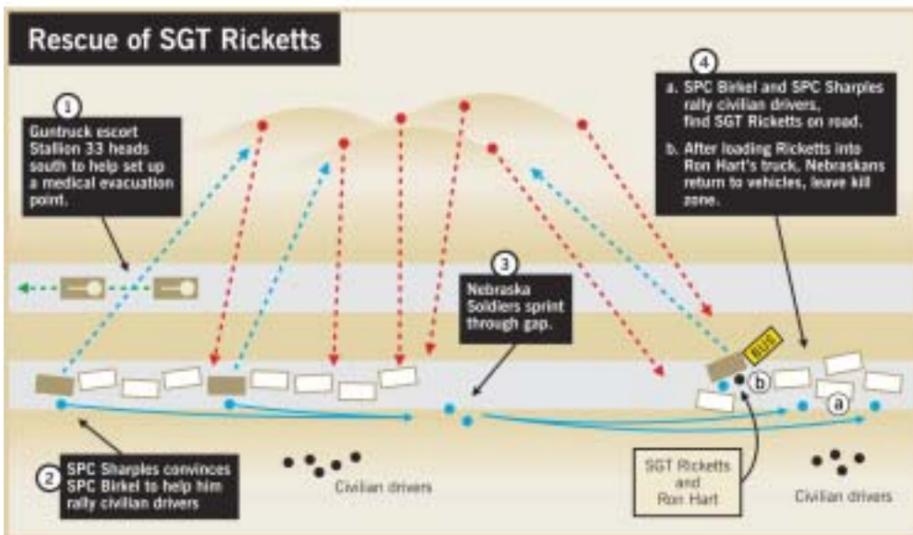
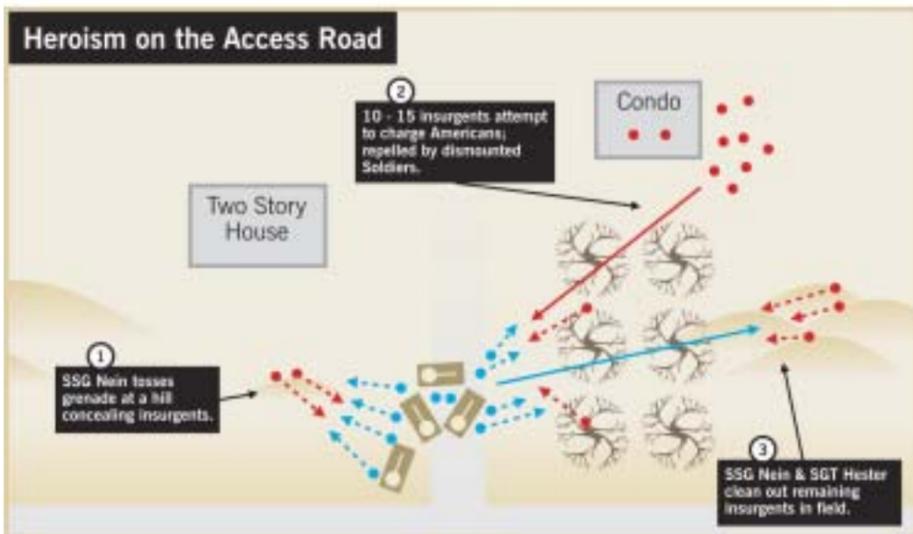
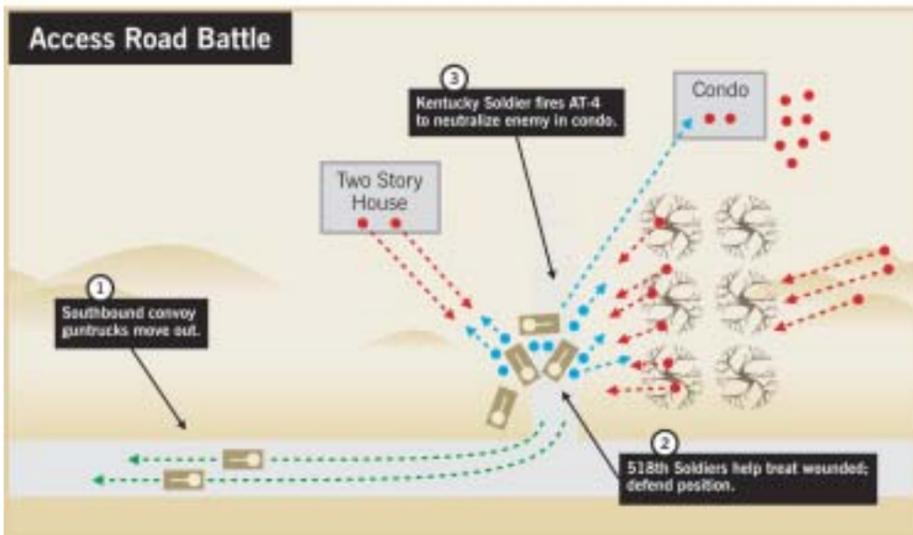
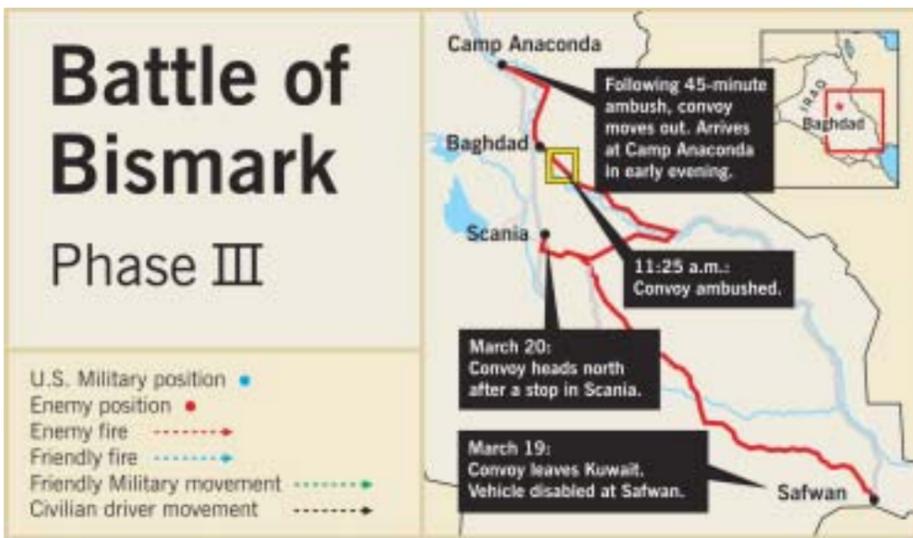
"So I opened my door and I kind of stood on my step and I laid my SAW in the crack of the door and I fired across the hood," Sharples said. "I don't know if I hit anything, but I fired at what I could see. You could see them... they're a ways away, like maybe 250 meters from where I was at. You couldn't see very much of them, but you knew it was a person back there."

"They were running toward the truck, so I fired at them," he added.

A few moments later, Sharples watched as Ron Hart pulled up next to Truck #117 to assist the stranded Soldiers. He was soon followed by Spc. Jennifer Beck and Sgt. Anthony Bloebaum in Truck #106.

Within minutes, Sharples said Beck radioed back to the rest of the remaining convoy that she'd picked up DeLancey and another wounded civilian driver and she was now moving out.

"At this time, I'm thinking, good, we're finally going to get them moving," said Sharples. "But then she came on and said that the next truck needs to pick up Sergeant Ricketts, that he was on the ground behind (Hart's) truck."



Sharples then watched as Rullo and Kinzer moved out, slowing for a second near Hart's truck before accelerating down the road. At the time, Sharples said he assumed that Rullo and Kinzer had picked Ricketts up.

"I really couldn't see what was going on, but I know that they slowed down and then they took off again," he said.

Just to make sure, Sharples radioed ahead. "I said, 'Did anybody get Sergeant Ricketts?' And it must've been somebody from the 518th, who said, 'Yeah, he's here,'" said Sharples. "I think they got it mixed up with Ricky and Ricketts."

Sharples turned his mind back to the problem of getting out of the kill zone.

Where's Ricketts?

A mile or so to the north of the kill-zone, members of Convoy 678N were beginning to trickle into the consolida-

tion and casualty collection point that Uhl had set up shortly after pulling to the side of the road while moving back to reenter the ambush site.

As civilian and military trucks pulled into the consolidation point, Uhl and the other 1075th Trans. Co. Soldiers quickly conducted headcounts, treating the wounded, setting up a defensive perimeter, coordinating medical evacuations and dozens of other tasks. They were soon joined by Soldiers from a separate south-bound Heavy Equipment Transport Truck convoy who had pulled to the side of the road to lend a hand.

Among the Nebraska Soldiers helping out was Spc. Jennifer Beck.

A Clarks, Neb., native who had been studying fitness and sports management at Fremont's Midland Lutheran College, Beck was confronted with a wide array of emotions as she pulled her

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truck into the consolidation point.

Finally out of the kill zone, Beck said she felt relief in having driven wounded DeLancey and a civilian foreign driver to safety. She also felt relief at seeing her fiancé, Spc. Tim Bos, after the harrowing experience.

Mostly, though, Beck said she worried about Ricketts.

"It's by far the worst feeling to get him out of there, but you can't take him because there's no place to put him," said Beck. "And it sucked leaving him there."

Still, Beck said she remained confident that Ricketts would soon be at the consolidation point when Spc. Kelly Kinzer and Spc. Paul Rullo arrived.

After Beck jumped from her truck and greeted Bos, the two Nebraskans quickly began helping DeLancey, trying to convince the still terrified Soldier to take his interceptor body armor off so medics could evaluate his wounds.

As she worked, Beck said, her mind kept focusing on the Soldier she'd left behind.

"He doesn't show up and he doesn't show up," Beck recalled thinking.

Suddenly, somebody called out that Ricketts was inbound with Kinzer and Rullo. Grabbing a nearby litter, Beck and several other Soldiers ran to the approaching truck, waiting to help carry Ricketts to the waiting medics. As Rullo and Kinzer jumped out of their truck, Beck's worst fears were suddenly realized.

Ricketts wasn't there. He'd been left behind.

Beck recalled: "When Kinzer and Rullo got up there, I remember yelling at them, 'You guys left him there? I told you to pick him up.'"

"I was just so mad because we got him out of there, we got him to the back of the truck and we had to leave him there," she said. "And we couldn't do anything else about it...it just sucks."

Later, Beck said, she understood how the confusion was caused. Communication between the convoy vehicles was spotty at best. What was worse, she said, was that there wasn't a good way to let the Soldiers still in the kill zone know where Ricketts was.

"He's still back there. We know it, but the people back in the kill zone don't know it because...we were all trying to do separate things."

Sprint Of Their Lives

At about the same time that Rullo and Kinzer moved out of the kill zone, the first air support began arriving on scene to help the embattled Soldiers. First on the scene, said Sharples, was an F-16 fighter that flew low over the area in a show of force.

Shortly after that, Sharples decided it was finally time to act.

"I told Specialist Heesacker, stay here. I'll be right back," said Sharples.

Opening his truck door, Sharples quickly dropped to the ground and began running alongside the remaining trucks, careful to keep the vehicles between him and the main avenue of fire.

Within a few steps, Sharples began encountering terrified civilian drivers huddling next to their wheels and the nearby ditch.

"I remember opening doors to see if people were still in the trucks," said Sharples. "There were bullet holes in the windshields. They looked like Swiss cheese."

"I was so scared that I was going to find a wounded (civilian driver) or a dead (driver) in there, but none of the drivers were in there anymore," he said. "I kept running up, but when I got to the gap where Rullo and Kinzer's truck (had been), I kind of stepped out a little bit and then I heard a bunch more gunfire. I heard a couple rounds from the left and I could see them hitting the ground in front of me."

Sharples said the gap between the stalled trucks seemed immense.

"I said to myself, 'I'm not going to run



Aftermath: (From left) Pfc. Ricky DeLancey and Sgt. Terence Ricketts, 1075th Transportation Company, Nebraska Army National Guard, stand next to the remains of Truck #117 several days following the March 20, 2005, Battle of Bismark. The two wounded Soldiers were evacuated back to their home base in Kuwait following the ambush near Salmon Pak, Iraq.

across that big gap by myself... I'm not going to do that," Sharples said.

"So I started running back and as I was... I could hear a couple more pop shots. I think I could hear two or three more of them going over my head."

While Sharples conducted his reconnaissance, Birkel - sitting at the rear of the convoy in his bobtail - suddenly had a thought. Reaching for his radio, he called back to the crew of the disabled Hum-Vee connected to his truck.

"What's wrong with your vehicle?" he asked the commander.

Told that the Hum-Vee's transmission had been damaged during the fighting, Birkel jumped from his truck and ran back to the battle-scarred guntruck to investigate himself. He quickly determined that the vehicle actually wasn't disabled at all.

"When the driver got shot, he slumped over and (put the Hum-Vee) in low. So it really wasn't disabled," said Birkel. "So we disconnected the tow bar and then I ran back to my bobtail and got back in."

Birkel had barely settled into his seat when Sharples appeared at his door.

"You need to help me get these guys out of here," said Sharples, pointing to where the civilian drivers were hiding. "There's a big gap up there and I don't want to do it alone. Maybe we can cover each other or something."

Birkel looked back at Sharples wide-eyed. "At first he was like, 'No, I'm not going to do that,'" said Sharples.

"C'mon man, we're never going to get out of here if we don't get these truck drivers back in their trucks," Sharples pleaded.

Finally, Birkel agreed to come along. "I thought, 'We're not going to get out of here if we don't get them back in their trucks,'" said Birkel.

Turning to his co-driver, Birkel said: "Schrad, I'm going."

"I got out as fast as I told him because I knew he probably wouldn't want me to go," said Birkel. "And when I got out, that's when they started shooting at us."

Back in the bobtail, Schrad began firing his weapon, hoping to cover his



One of the Battle of Bismark's Many Heroes: Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester, Kentucky Army National Guard, stands with a captured insurgent automatic rifle in the field that she attacked with fellow Kentuckian Staff Sgt. Timothy Nein to clean out insurgents fighting from an irrigation ditch. Both Hester and Nein earned the Silver Star for their actions.

convoy mates as they moved out to get the road ahead cleared.

Birkel said that between each vehicle, there was a small gap that the two Soldiers had to negotiate. Often, as the two Guardsmen ran through the small gaps, the sounds of gunfire followed them.

"Every time we would run through the gap, I would think 'Well, I'm going down here,'" said Birkel. "And every time we would make it."

As the two future teachers continued forward, things began to fade away at the periphery, said Birkel.

"I was just so focused," he said. "When I was running, I heard nothing...just dead silence. I didn't hear any rounds, I couldn't hear anything. I think it was probably better because then I would've been scared."

When the two Soldiers finally got to the largest gap, Sharples said the space seemed huge. Leaning around a truck, Sharples fired off several rounds before

the two sprinted across the opening.

Surprisingly, no shots followed the Soldiers.

By then, Sharples said, two AH-64 Apache helicopters had arrived to provide additional air support to the battle. Their presence, he added, seemed to help tremendously.

'Get In Your Truck'

Safely across the gap, Sharples and Birkel quickly began rounding up the frightened civilian drivers and "encouraging" them to get moving.

"There was a (third country national) that was shot in the butt," said Sharples. "And he was hiding behind his tire. I helped him get into one of his friend's truck and I told him to drive up the road until he saw the convoy."

Other civilian drivers soon began picking themselves up from the ditch, eager to hear what the American Soldiers had to say.

"They were scared," said Sharples. "I said, 'Get in your truck and drive.' So they started driving."

While Sharples tried to rally the nearest civilians, Birkel ran further to the front, hoping to get those drivers back into their trucks and moving again.

Reaching a group huddling in the ditch, Birkel said the drivers looked terrified.

"They didn't want to get out," he said. "They didn't want to get back in their trucks."

After getting the civilian drivers' attention and pointing the way for them to move, Birkel finally got the drivers to stand and move toward their trucks.

"Once we got them out of the ditch, we started working our way back," said Birkel.

Birkel said he was just about to turn around to run back to his bobtail when a civilian driver grabbed his shoulder to get his attention. "He pointed out and that's when (I) saw Sergeant Ricketts laying on the ground."

Birkel quickly ran toward Sharples, yelling and waving for him to come help. Seeing Ricketts lying on the ground, Sharples said his first emotion was anger.

"I was mad and upset," he said. "I got

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on the radio and said, 'I thought you guys had said you had Ricketts. Why is he still here?'"

"I don't know," came the reply. "Get him up here because the choppers are here."

Birkel said Ricketts seemed in considerable pain when they reached him.

"I asked him how he was doing," said Birkel. "I was just trying to reassure him that he was going to be okay. By that time he was more or less on the verge of (passing) out. So he really wasn't saying much."

"He was just kind of moaning that he was hurt."

Ricketts said he remembers little of the final rescue. "Some of the (foreign) drivers were yelling, 'American down,'" said Ricketts. "(Birkel) came running over to me with no cover whatsoever between me and my trailer...and pulled me over to side of the road."

"There wasn't a lot that Ron Hart could do for me. All he was doing, basically, was suppressing fire from the front of the truck," he added. "I was almost passed out from the pain. I only remember Birkel loading me up."

After assessing Ricketts' wound, Birkel said he was surprised at how little Ricketts was bleeding. "The doctors said the bullet cauterized the wound, so it didn't bleed much," he said later.

Birkel and Sharples then carefully gathered up Ricketts and carried him to Ron Hart's truck.

Yelling to Hart, Sharples and Birkel told the retired U.S. Army sergeant to move out toward the casualty collection point. Before Hart started driving forward, Birkel said the two Guardsmen handed him DeLancey's machinegun, which he'd been using to hold off the insurgents.

"He'd been using it, so I figured he might as well keep using it," Birkel said.

With Hart finally moving out with Ricketts, Birkel and Sharples turned around and began running back toward their waiting trucks. Along the way, they realized their work still wasn't done.

"We had to disconnect one of the white trucks...an air hose broke, so it couldn't pull its trailer out," said Birkel. "So, we grabbed the bobtail and swapped it out."

The two Soldiers then jumped back into their trucks and pulled out of the kill zone as well.

Finally, after being under nearly constant fire for approximately 40 minutes, the last Nebraska National Guard Soldiers of Convoy 678N were leaving the kill zone.

Cleaning Up The Battlefield

As the final moments of Battle of Bismark came to an end, all that was left to do was care for the casualties, identify the dead and collect discarded weapons.

On the access road, noticing that the critically wounded Kentucky Soldier needed immediate help, Sgt. Alex Hernandez jumped into the Hum-Vee with wounded Sgt. Joseph Rivera and drove him to where the south-bound guntruck crew had set up a medical helicopter landing zone. As he pulled out, Sgt. Rondell Brown, who was driving "Regulator 3," radioed to Rivera that he was following him.

However, as he pulled out of the access road, Brown noticed that "Regulator 2" was still hitched behind the maintenance bobtail on the highway.

Pulling up to the "disabled" Hum-Vee, Brown was informed that the wounded driver of the middle guntruck needed immediate help. Pulling Spc. Ryan Hubbard out of the vehicle, Brown and Staff Sgt. Aaron Castro carried him to a recently arrived quick reaction force Hum-Vee, which then drove him to the waiting helicopter.

A few minutes later, Hernandez pulled up next to the two 518th Guntruck Company Hum-Vees, jumped out of the vehicle he was riding in, and then rode with the two convoy guntrucks up to where Uhl had established the convoy

collection point.

They were soon joined by the remaining Nebraskans in Trucks #101 and #214.

While the remnants of Convoy 678N pulled out of the kill zone, other Kentucky National Guard military policemen — part of a quick reaction force called in by the beleaguered Guardsmen — began arriving to help out. What they found was shocking.

Strewn about the sandy berms, tree orchards and buildings were 26 dead Iraqi insurgents, six rocket propelled grenade launchers, 16 rockets, 15 machineguns, 22 assault rifles, more than 2,900 rounds and 40 hand grenades.

Additionally, American forces captured eight insurgents.

According to MP reports, many of the insurgents — both dead and wounded — were found carrying flexi-cuff binders, leading American officials to believe that the insurgents had intended to capture as many drivers — American and foreign — as they possibly could for future propaganda or ransom efforts.

The damage sustained by the American and foreign drivers was equally telling. Five American Soldiers assigned to Convoy 678N were wounded, while three Kentucky National Guard Soldiers were also injured. Three civilian drivers from the Nebraska convoy were also hit, while the Kentucky MP accounts say that three other civilians were killed and four others wounded.

Enemy fire also destroyed two 1075th Trans. Co. M-915 trucks and four civilian tractor-trailer systems.

Caring For The Wounded

Back at the Nebraska collection point, Spc. Jennifer Beck paced about nervously. Her thoughts continued to focus on the Soldier she'd left behind.

Finally, Ron Hart pulled up in his civilian truck with Ricketts. Beck said her heart soared as she looked up to see Ricketts being carried on a litter.

"That was by far the best feeling I've had in that entire day or the days after that," she said. "I was working on DeLancey, trying to put an IV in him, and they brought (Ricketts's) litter past me and put it in front of Harris."

Medics quickly began cutting off Ricketts pants to get at his wounded leg.

"I went over and talked to him," said Beck. "I'm just like...breaking. I don't even remember what I said to him."

"I'm fine," Ricketts told Beck. "I'm going to be fine."

Beck said she tried to keep Ricketts spirits up by telling him that the medics were going to take great care of him. "We'll see you back at Arifjan," Beck told Ricketts, referring to the Nebraskans' home base in Kuwait.

Suddenly, Beck said, emotion began to well up in Ricketts' face.

"Will you tell...?" Ricketts said several times, unable to get the words out. "Will I tell who what?" asked Beck.

Finally, Beck said Ricketts covered his face with his hands and told Beck to tell his girlfriend that he was alright... that he would see her in a few days.

After getting Ricketts' girlfriend's e-mail address and assuring the Omaha Soldier that she would contact his girlfriend as soon as possible, Beck stood back as Ricketts, DeLancey, Graff, Harris and the wounded foreign driver were carried to the waiting helicopter and flown away.

One thought persisted in Beck's mind, she said, as she watched the Soldiers flew off. They were alive.

The feelings were especially strong as she thought of Ricketts. "That was the best feeling, when he was able to talk to me and tell me that stuff," she said. "It was just awesome seeing him because... I don't know."

After leaving the collection point, the wounded were flown to a Baghdad hospital for treatment. After their initial treatment there, the five were then flown to Camp Anaconda where Ricketts, DeLancey, Graff and the wounded civil-



Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Uhl

Litter: Bandages and tape litter the ground between the trucks of Convoy 678N as Soldiers and civilian drivers prepare to depart the casualty collection point set up by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Uhl during the Battle of Bismark. While many of the Soldiers who participated in the battle returned that afternoon to their base camps, for the members of Convoy 678N, there was still a mission to complete.

ian driver waited for an aircraft that took them back to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Harris, whose neck and head wounds were so bad that he need surgery, waited to be evacuated back to a hospital in Germany and later the United States for further treatment.

Back at the collection point on Alternate Supply Route Bismark, Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Uhl, convoy commander, finally reunited with what remained of his convoy, quickly began to reallocate his resources. Now short four American drivers and one civilian driver, Uhl realized that he had to keep going.

"We still had a mission to do," he said.

Beside, groups of Iraqi civilians were beginning to gather around the perimeter of the collection point, acting suspiciously.

After sitting at the collection point for a short while, unsure of intentions of the crowd, Uhl had the convoy form up and begin driving once again toward the north.

The convoy finally reached Camp Anaconda later that night.

Uhl said that as the convoy approached Anaconda, they were asked if they wanted to unload their cargo or wait until the next morning. "We'll wait until tomorrow," Uhl radioed back.

After pulling to a stop, the drivers were met by members of a second Nebraska convoy, which had been scheduled to return to Kuwait earlier that day but had been delayed when the ambush caused officials to close the route to American and Coalition traffic.

Staff Sgt. Boe Searight, commander of the second Nebraska convoy, waited to greet the Soldiers with boxes of pizza.

After parking their trucks and eating pizza, Uhl and Sgt. Athony Bloebaum, assistant commander of Convoy 678N, followed Searight to the camp medical treatment center to check on their wounded.

Harris, said Bloebaum, had obviously fared the worst and was waiting for the

plane that would take him back to Germany for the first of several surgeries.

"He was pretty drugged up," said Bloebaum. "He had blood in his chest and stomach, so Searight and I held him up so that he could spit that stuff out."

Later, after Harris and the rest of the wounded Soldiers were loaded onto aircraft for their flights out of Iraq, the remainder of Convoy 678N settled in for a fitful night's sleep, each trying to come to grips with what they'd gone through.

They'd literally just driven through hell. Worst yet, they would have to return back over those same roads yet again when they returned to Kuwait in several days.

What the Nebraska Soldiers didn't know at the time, however, was that after the Kentucky Soldiers returned to their base camp in Iraq, word of the battle was already circulating.

Within 24 hours, much of the major American media outlets in Iraq descended upon the Kentucky Soldiers' camp in an effort to tell the story of the Battle of Bismark.

By the time the Nebraskans returned to Kuwait several days later, the stories they saw on such cable news outlets such as CNN and Fox News, told of how a group of Kentucky National Guardsmen "single-handedly" defeated a huge insurgent force that had ambushed an "unarmed civilian" truck company.

In those national media stories, not a single mention was made of the contributions of the Soldiers in the "unarmored, civilian" truck convoy.

The Nebraskans, it seemed at the time, simply hadn't been there. It's an omission that continues to anger the members of the 1075th Transportation Company today.

But those thoughts were days into the future. On this night, March 20, 2005, the members of Convoy 678N were tired to the bone.

For now, the Soldiers rested.

Coming in August: Epilogue

Current military members may be at risk by data loss

WASHINGTON, (AFPS) – Active-duty service members and members of the National Guard and Reserves may be affected by the recent personal data loss by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the VA announced June 6.

The VA announced that the records stolen from the home of a VA representative in May might include personal information of people currently in the military, according to a VA news release.

Initial findings from VA indicated the personal information on about 50,000 active duty, National Guard and Reserve personnel may have been involved.

As the two agencies compared electronic files, VA and the Department of Defense learned that personal information on as many as 1.1 million active-duty service members, 430,000 National Guardsmen and 645,000 members of the Reserves may have been included.

In May, the VA learned that

an employee took home electronic data without authorization, in violation of established VA policies.

The employee's home was burglarized and the data were stolen. Included were names, Social Security numbers, and dates of birth for up to 26.5 million veterans.

Several resources are available to service members and veterans who may have been affected by this data loss.

The VA has set up a special web site and a toll-free telephone number: www.firstgov.gov and 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636).

Each features up-to-date news and information on the data compromise.

The website provides steps on how to check credit reports, how to guard against identity theft and who to call if an individual believes any fraudulent activity is occurring with his or her personal information.

Information relating to identify theft also is available at www.militaryonesource.com.

Blue replacing green as Army service uniform

WASHINGTON (ARNEWS) – Army service uniforms will be streamlined to one blue Army Service Uniform, the Army announced June 4.

"World-class Soldiers deserve a simplified, quality uniform. The blue Army Service Uniform is a traditional uniform that is consistent with the Army's most honored traditions," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston.

Many Soldiers already own an Army blue uniform (now to be called the Army Service Uniform) and may continue to wear it. Improvements will be made

to the fabric and fit. The new uniform will also be wrinkle-free.

The uniform will also include a gold braid on the trousers for E-5's and above. Additionally, the service cap will be authorized for wear by NCOs as well as officers.

Introduction in the Army Military Clothing Sales Stores should begin in fourth quarter of fiscal year 2007. Introduction in the Clothing Bag should begin first quarter 2009. The Mandatory Possession Date is expected to be fourth quarter fiscal year 2011.



Photo by David Nore

Honoring A Late Guardsman: Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke points out an inscription honoring the late Brig. Gen. Gale Shields to Shields' wife, Lou, on the painting, "Arrival at Fort Leavenworth - 1882." Shields, who served as the Nebraska Army National Guard chief of staff from 1987-90, owned the painting as well as another entitled, "Peace With Honor." Both were donated to the Nebraska National Guard Adjutant General's Headquarters in Lincoln.

Former Army Guard chief of staff's family donates paintings to Guard headquarters

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Visitors to the Adjutant General's Headquarters in Lincoln now have a chance to view two distinctive military-themed paintings while remembering the contributions of a former Army Guard state chief of staff, thanks to a donation by the late-Soldier's family.

In a ceremony held at the TAG Building May 31, Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, officially accepted a pair of paintings donated by the wife and daughter of the late Brig. Gen. (Neb.) Gale Shields, who served as Army Guard chief of staff from May 1987 until June 1990.

"We will think of (Gale) whenever we view these," said Lempke after accepting the

Don Stivers paintings entitled, "Arrival at Fort Leavenworth - 1882" and "Peace With Honor."

According to the late general's wife, Lou, who attended the ceremony with her daughter, Lori, Shield first bought the paintings years ago at Fort Benning.

"At the time, we hardly had a penny to our own name," said Lou Shields, laughing. "When Gale brought them home and told me that he'd bought these two paintings for our home and what they'd cost to frame and mat...I almost left him right there."

Over the years the paintings hung in the main entry to the Shields' home.

Recently, however, Lou moved to a smaller home and realized she needed to find a new place for the artwork. After talking with retired Col. Cliff Lant, Shields decided to donate

the paintings to the National Guard.

"Those who know Gale, know that the military was his whole life," said Lou. "We're very honored to have them hang here and hope that they will go with you when you get the new building built."

"I know that Gale would just be so proud to have these paintings hang here."

According to Lempke, the donations are a perfect part of a change in décor in the hallways of the Nebraska Guard headquarters building.

"We're doing some things in the building to help us remember why we are doing what we do while also helping us remember those who served so honorably before us," said Lempke.

"These two paintings are perfect for what we want to do."

Barbara brought unique leadership qualities while helping family

By Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke
Adjutant General

My sister Barbara died not long ago of cancer at age 56.

Her loss was tough on the entire Lempke family because she was special in so many ways.

As a self-subscribed student of leadership, I happened to witness a very unique and indescribable style of leadership in her.

I have yet to find her qualities adequately described in leadership readings. It was a subtle approach with qualities far different than what we normally expect in leaders.

To be sure the family usually turns to me on matters requiring classic, hardnosed leadership (get us from point A to point B without regard for family feelings, for example) because they know I've been trained to lead and certainly have had plenty of practice.

I usually have formulated a plan for something and am ready to move out while the rest of my five siblings are still arguing irrelevant points (or so it seems to me.)

But on matters of heart the family would tend to listen to Barbara more

often than not – but not in the sense that

she desired to step into situations and assume control.

I use the word "listen" guardedly because it wasn't that Barb attempted to use particularly strong oratory or persuasion skills. It was more like that just being the way she was seemed to make a difference in the rest of us.

She didn't seek the floor often; in fact, she often stayed back.

One wouldn't consider her visionary. She did not seek greater leadership responsibility either within the family or in her job. Most descriptions of leadership styles include some reference to aspiring to control something; Barbara never exhibited this trait around family.

Yet she possessed qualities that attracted others to her spirit. It is quite different being placed in a leadership position and having people report to you by designation and having those unexplainable qualities that draw people to you for reasons they don't necessarily comprehend, and you don't either.

LEMPKE on LEADERSHIP

In researching different

leadership types I found three that to some extent begin to explain the traits Barbara had.

Quiet leaders as described in the ChangingMinds.org website "...base their success not on ego and force of character but on their thoughts and actions. Although they are strongly task-focused, they are neither bullies nor unnecessarily kind..."

Barbara was certainly all of that. She would never impose herself on others; yet she would bend over backwards to help.

Invisible leaders, as described by Sean Turner in the website www.renewamerica.us "allow their constituents to seek their desired ends, and in doing so, respect the smallest minority — the individual." Invisible leaders work behind the scenes and are seldom credited with the great outcomes they can produce.

Barbara certainly didn't get credit for what she accomplished. People remember her as always being reliable, committed, and helpful, but not as a "mover and shaker."

As I look back on various family situations through the years, Barb's influence on the final outcomes becomes readily apparent—though it wasn't at the time.

Go to leadershipforchange.org for a great article about Rosa Parks called "The Hidden Leaders" by Richard Louv. This story chronicles the observations of George Walker Smith who knew Rosa Parks before the famous moment when she refused to go to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Ala., in 1955.

He tells how Rosa did not just take this action on the spur of the moment. She had been for many years a quietly dedicated advocate for civil rights. This one very public act overshadowed years of service to the cause.

Rosa never sought publicity or glory. Like her, my sister never sought gratitude for the many family situations she helped with in her own private, quiet way. Like her, Barbara was steady, committed, and focused.

Someday I hope to capture and explain to the world the essence of those special qualities that my sister Barbara had that made her so important to the Lempke family. I have yet to find the word, or group of words to do that.

Air Guardsmen help hook fish with special needs students



Wow, What A Catch: Senior Master Sgt. Bill Kerns, Nebraska Air National Guard, celebrates with a Goodrich Middle School student after the two bagged a largemouth bass at the Pfizer lake in Lincoln on May 19. More than 20 Nebraska Air National Guardsmen volunteered to help special needs students from the Lincoln school during their annual fish outing.



Careful You Don't Hook Yourself: 2nd Lt. Bob Mangels, 155th Air Refueling Wing intelligence officer helps a Goodrich Middle School student connect a "special" lure onto her fishing string during the school's annual fish outing at Pfizer Lake in Lincoln, Neb., May 19.

Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

AIR SHOW continued from page 1.

Blue Angels, the U.S. Army Parachute Team Golden Knights (sponsored by the Nebraska Army National Guard), Tora! Tora! Tora! and the Shockley jet truck.

A number of other air demonstrations are also planned including an F-16 demonstration, flights by the U.S. Army and Nebraska Army National Guard and the Red Baron aerobatic team. Patrons will also be able to touch, walk through and talk to the aircrews of current and historic military and civilian planes parked row after row.

"We'll have something for everyone. People coming from all corners of Nebraska, as well as those who live in the region around us, can expect a day or weekend filled with fun," said Lt. Col. Keith Schell, air show director.

"This will be the biggest air show in Nebraska this year."

Along with the aircraft displays and demonstrations, the air show will feature many different exhibits including a Navy dive tank and aircraft simulator, Army, Air Force and National Guard Recruiting Nascar displays, a rock climbing wall, recruiting Hum-Vee, and an antique car show.

Military recruiters representing each of the military branches will also be trying to attract men and women to their booths with giveaways and unique exhibits.

Admission and parking are free. Gates will be open from 9:30 to 5 p.m., with flying beginning at 11 a.m.

While most people will only see the finished product, simply planning an air show of this magnitude takes an unimaginable amount of coordination.

One of the first steps was to get support from the Lincoln Airport Authority, which gov-

erns airport and airspace issues in Lincoln. "Bob McNally and Brian Johnson have been extremely helpful in coordinating the various issues we have to work," said Schell.

Other hurdles, like dealing with security and traffic issues, have also had to be dealt with. And because one of the air show days falls on a football Saturday - that throws an extra wrench into details for the team to work on.

"It's also the last weekend of the fiscal year and some military units may have to reduce their budgets 10 to 20 percent. A few static display aircraft may have to cancel," Schell said. "But we're prepared and still will have plenty of aircraft."

Schell said it's a unique challenge coordinating both the military and civilian aspects of the event. "The Air Guard is responsible for the military aspect of the air show, such as coordinating military aircraft performers and display aircraft and equipment," he said.

"The Chamber of Commerce is providing the critical function of finding funding sources through sponsorships as well as coordinating food and souvenir vendors.

"The Chamber's been working really hard to get the sponsorships," said Lt. Col. Bob Stevenson, assistant air show director, Nebraska Air National Guard. "It shows the support from both military and civilians. We wanted to be more of a state (and) Midwest air show. We couldn't have done this on our own."

Jerri Van Horn, air show coordinator for the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, said major sponsors include: Cabela's, the City of Lincoln, Duncan Aviation, McDonald's, Lincoln Benefit Life, Farmers Mutual Insurance of Nebraska, and Southeast Community College.

Van Horn said the Chamber quickly recognized that putting on a successful air show was important to both the Air National Guard as well as the city of Lincoln.

"The Chamber will help the Guard put on a successful air show that will promote military recruitment and patriotism, as well as have a potential \$4 million economic impact on our region," Van Horn said.

She said four chamber staff members are also working on the air show.

"The chamber's key responsibility is to raise money to underwrite the air show. We're also playing a key role in the publicity campaign, securing volunteers and assisting with the logistics such as porta potties, trash removal, concessions and fencing."

Stevenson said planners also are receiving support from Offutt Air Force Base, and Omaha.

Van Horn said target audiences include Nebraska, northern Kansas, southern South Dakota, and eastern Iowa. Marketing and publicity will include 40 billboards throughout Nebraska.

"We have received nearly \$300,000 in-kind advertising commitments from television and radio stations, newspapers, a billboard company and advertising agencies."

Air show planners hope to draw 100,000 people each day to the air show.

As is customary on Friday before the air show, the Blue Angels will perform an invitation only practice air show for children and adults with special needs.

For more information about the air show, check out the website at www.lincolnairshow.com

NOSEART continued from page 1.

Guard's upcoming "Guardians of Freedom" air show.

On May 3 Howsden's artwork "Hastings Sunset" was selected to represent the city of Hastings on the front of an Air Guard aircraft, part of a continuing Air Guard community outreach program designed to spotlight Nebraska communities and the Guardsmen who hale from those cities. The artwork, once placed on the aircraft, will stay on the Stratotanker for the foreseeable future as the KC-135R deploys around the world in support of continuing operations.

Howsden, who has been interested in art since middle school, said she was flabbergasted at the thought of having her artwork seen around the world.

"I never thought that I'd win," said Howsden. "I can't wait to see it on the side of a plane."

The Nebraska Air National Guard Nose Art project is actually a year-long project. Members of the Lincoln-based refueling wing are first encouraged to make nomination packages for their cities and why they should be selected. Once a city is selected, the unit then approaches community leaders with the idea before formally presenting it to local middle school and high school students.

Students are then encouraged to conduct research before designing a logo that best describes their community's heritage and history. Completed logos are then subjected to local and Air Guard selection boards before the final selection is made.

In winning the competition, Howsden's logo - which featured a sunset, windmill and the words "Hastings" - was selected from more than a dozen submissions made by students at several Hastings middle and high schools.

According to Hastings Mayor Matt Rossen, the community is thrilled to participate in the competition, which will ulti-

mately help advertise the city to a world-wide audience.

"Isn't this pretty awesome?" asked Rossen during the morning announcement ceremony held at St Cecilia's gymnasium. "This really is an outstanding tribute to this community."

"This artwork here is going to be traveling all over the world representing Hastings, Nebraska," Rossen told the students. "This is something pretty special for this community, something that's really exciting for this community."

In making the announcement, Col. Robert Athan, 155th Operations Group commander who represented Col. Steve Adams, wing commander, read a letter commending Howsden for her work. "Your talent and creativity is obvious and we feel that your artwork represents the City of Hastings and the state very well."

Placing second and third in the competition were Abby Gentert (Hastings High School) and Anne Wahlmeier (St. Cecilia High School), respectively.

Howsden, who plans on staying close to home next year by attending Central Community College in Hastings with eyes on a potential teaching degree, said she tried to design a logo that would stand out.

"Whenever I thought of Nebraska, I thought of sunsets and then I thought of windmills," she said. "It just all started coming together."

This isn't the first time that Howsden's work has been noticed. In seventh grade she participated in an anti-drunk driving artwork campaign, following which the artwork she created was chosen to be placed on an area billboard.

"That was cool, but it wasn't this big," she said. "And it wasn't in front of the whole school."

The final unveiling will take place during the Guard's air show in September.

STARBASE essay winner honored



Photo courtesy of STARBASE Nebraska

National Guard program ends school year, plans larger program for 2007

Hannah Higgins, an Lincoln Elliott Elementary School fifth grader and winner of the 2006 STARBASE Math, Science and Technology Essay Contest, accepts a plaque from Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, and Ms. Sally Ganem, first lady of Nebraska.

Higgins was selected from 1,047 students who attended STARBASE Nebraska during the 2005-06 school year and a group of 35 finalists. She also won the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. in June for four days to attend the Nebraska Congressional Delegation Wednesday morning breakfast, visit America's valued museums and tour numerous national memorials.

STARBASE Nebraska just completed its fourth year, and is planning 28 classes for 2007. An Aerospace Education Academy located in Lincoln, the STARBASE program is a federally funded Nebraska National Guard program that provides 20 hours of hands on experience for fifth grade students in math, science, and technology through aviation, aerospace and space exploration.

The academy conducts a four-day programmed curriculum that gives local schools (with at-risk children given priority) an opportunity to expand their experiences and knowledge in math and science.



Photo by Sara Cease

Guard kids treated to Easter Egg hunt

That Rabbit Sure Has Been Busy: Dozens of Nebraska National Guard children swarm through the grass at Lincoln's Antelope Park, April 15, during Operation Hidden Egg. According to Sara Cease, National Guard state youth coordinator, approximately 300 people participated in the Easter Egg hunt that featured hundreds of hidden eggs and candy. Special camouflaged eggs were also hidden and, if found, turned in for prizes. Operation Hidden Egg was sponsored by the State Family Program in conjunction with the Elks Club and the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department. Along with the Easter Egg hunt, families also participated in a potluck lunch. The event was open to all children of Nebraska National Guard members.

Sesame Street to teach military children coping skills

WASHINGTON, (AFPS) – Elmo and his red, fuzzy father will star this summer in an effort to teach young military children and their caregivers how best to handle a parent's deployment in a program called "Talk, Listen, Connect: Helping Families Cope with Military Deployment."

This July, Sesame Workshop, the makers of Sesame Street, will launch the program as a DVD kit. Performed in English and Spanish, it will not air on television but will be distributed free to schools, childcare programs and family support centers, thanks to a gift from Wal-Mart stores and other sponsors.

Jeanette Betancourt, vice president for content design at Sesame Workshop's education and outreach division, said an analysis of the resources available to help children with this problem exposed a need.

"We found that although there was a wealth of information around deployment, it seemed to be targeted much more to children that were more school age, less so, materials that involved young children — preschool — and then even less so, Spanish language materials."

The kit is the result of analysis done by the workshop with support from the New York State Office of Mental Health and the Military Child Education Coalition. Focus groups composed of families with deployed members made up a large part of the study, Betancourt said.

The kit covers all phases of deployment — from predeployment to homecoming — and the unique challenges each phase poses, she said.

Sesame Workshop, a nonprofit education effort, has been doing these special projects since its inception in 1968. The group has done outreach projects on subjects like early literacy, asthma, lead poisoning, going to the doctor and school readiness.

Soon after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the workshop did a special set of TV programs called "You Can Ask," which focused on fear and grief in



Photo by Richard Termine for Sesame Workshop

Reaching Out To The Youngest Military Family Members: Sesame Street's Elmo and his dad tape a segment for "Talk, Listen, Connect," an outreach program for military families created by Sesame Workshop in New York, April 20. The bilingual DVD is part of a package of complimentary materials that will be made available to military families beginning July 2006.

children under age 5. The TV programs, in English, Spanish and Chinese, were repackaged and distributed to childcare programs, mental health care programs, and the like, via the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Those programs' success helped lead to "Talk, Listen, Connect" because they developed an interest "on how we could talk about difficult topics with young children," Betancourt said. That model led to a partnership with Wal-Mart on this outreach project.

"We were looking for ways to meet an

unmet need," said Mia Masten, Wal-Mart's northeast U.S. director for community relations. She said that when Sesame Workshop approached Wal-Mart, the retail giant gave \$892,540 to produce the project, noting also that many of the company's employees are Reserve and National Guard members.

"It's really an extension of our long-term relationship with military families," Masten said. Wal-Mart is a member of America Supports You, a Defense Department program highlighting grassroots and corporate support for

the nation's troops and their families.

Retired Marine Maj. Gen. Charles Bolden is an advisory board member on the project. He and several military members met with educators during a conference here in January and connected Sesame Workshop with the Military Child Education Coalition, which helped support the focus group research prior to taping.

Bolden said everyone on the panel agreed a significant portion of their time should be devoted to the unique problems of Guard and Reserve families.

"For people in the Guard and, to some extent, the Reserve, this is kind of foreign to them, and deployments are not something they ordinarily did prior to now," he said. "Sesame seemed to have come up with a way to reach out to these kids who aren't in a military community the way that the active duty folk are, so that was one of the reasons that we felt they should be a special target for this project."

According to a 2003 demographics report by the Defense Department, 661,402 children of military members are under the age of 5. This project will produce 138,000 DVD kits, according to a press release.

Bolden and other retired military officers have offered to help distribute the DVDs "so that we reach the maximum number of families in the most critically needed areas," he said.

Although this program is targeted toward military children, Bolden said he already sees a benefit he had not foreseen when the project began.

"Military children are not the only ones who are involved in separation and deployments and the like," he said. "One of the benefits that you get by doing something like this is that you're also able to reach, say, kids from the State Department, kids from oil and gas companies, people whose parents are moving around and deploying all the time and undergo excessive absence much the same as military kids do."

New state youth coordinator giving voice to military kids

By Spc. Tegan Kucera
Staff Writer

Being a military child has never been easy. In the last few years, however, it's gotten a whole lot harder as Guardsmen from across Nebraska are mobilized and deployed away from home for months at a time.

To help the state's children better cope during these mobilizations, the Nebraska National Guard recently hired Sara Cease to be the state youth coordinator, a new position within the Family Assistance Center.

Cease, who is single without kids, said some people don't understand how she can be a state youth coordinator and not have any children of her own. It's actually quite easy, she often tells them.

"I think I can concentrate on military kids since I don't have my own yet," Cease said.

Cease has been working with kids for many years. Before going to work for the Guard, she worked with the Lincoln Park and Recreation for over six years while attending college. There she worked with kids before and after school. She also worked for a bank, which gave her experience in organizing some

"I just want the kids to be able to be kids and not have to worry about that stuff."

— Sara Cease
state youth coordinator

of the meetings.

Cease said both jobs gave her the experience she needs in order to do the best she can for military children. It's a critically important job, considering the amount of kids currently affected by mobilization.

"Our main issue with our kids is getting them to know that they aren't alone."

Cease said her overriding desire is to help give kids a voice and an outlet.

"The overall goal is to provide support to the military children because they have been forgotten," said Cease, who has been in her current position for the past six months. "People just figure that they're fine and that they're resilient when they aren't."

The state youth coordinator position is a new one throughout the Army National Guard. Because it's such a new position, Cease said she often has to come up with a lot of things from scratch.

Some of the activities Cease

has helped coordinate were a Haunted House during Halloween and an egg hunt during Easter.

Although these events were for the younger children, older kids haven't been forgotten, either. In April "Nebraska Military Teens," a new organization for teen-aged kids of military men and women, held its first meeting.

Additionally, in July Nebraska will be one of the 22 states to host Operation Purple Camp. The camp is for the children of military members in the area.

The camp will be held at Camp Kitaki, July 2-8. It will have different activities for the kids including service days: an Air Force day where the kids will go the Strategic Air Command Museum and an Army day at Camp Ashland.

The camp is for children 9-14 years old.

According to Cease, one of her biggest challenges has been contacting the right people to get all the information out.

Cease said she would like to have volunteers throughout the state to help her accomplish her biggest goal.

She also wants to go into schools and help educate some of the state's educators about the needs that some military



Photo by David Nore

Advocating For Guard Kids: Sara Cease, new state youth coordinator, stands next to a poster advertising "Operation Military Kids" while holding a book entitled "A Very Long Time," both of which are designed to help kids cope with the stress brought on by the mobilization and deployment of a family member.

children might have.

Cease said she would also like to have is a mobilization process for the kids so that they understand what is going on and what they can do to help.

"I just want the kids to be able to be kids and not have to worry about that stuff. If I can do what I can in the schools and communities to make life easier for them, then great."

Nebraska's warrant officer corps continues to grow, more needed

A couple of weeks ago at the Warrant Officer Career Center (WOCC) at Fort Rucker, Ala., I was able to participate in graduation events for two of Nebraska's newest warrant officers: Justin Chadwick and Vonloh.

The graduation class was particularly large as 104 Warrant Officers were sworn into the Army that day. I must tell you that as Maj. Gen. Andy Bell addressed the graduates, I was filled with pride in the Army and the Warrant Officer Corps.

Currently four warrant officer candidates are in training and are scheduled to graduate in June. When these four Soldiers raise their hands and take the oath, Nebraska's warrant officer strength will grow to a milestone number of 100, a number we have not seen in Nebraska in quite a while. Interest in becoming a warrant officer is on the increase, but we still have a long way to go to reach authorized strength of 138 this year with additional authorizations coming next year.

On another note, all warrant officers need to plan on attending a warrant officer call Sept. 9 at Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall. It will be a day of briefings from Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke and the command group.

Chief Warrant Officer Poyas Haynes, command chief of the National Guard Bureau, is planning on joining us and he will give us the latest news on national warrant officer matters. Officer Professional Development (OPD) time is planned as well as group breakouts to discuss warrant officer issues.

This will be a good opportunity to network and I hope we can do some warrant officer team building.

The opportunity could present itself for Nebraska to teach WOCS Phase 2 at Camp Ashland's Regional Training Institute. I just returned from Camp Atterbury, Ind., with the information that is required for Nebraska to begin teaching WOCS Phase 2 in January 2007.

Many hurdles need to be jumped yet

Chief's Business

By Chief Warrant Officer Steve Weber
Command Chief Warrant Officer

before command can make a decision as to whether or not Nebraska will implement this opportunity. One major hurdle is to come up with a couple of Warrant Train, Assess, Counsel (TAC) officers. Two Chief Warrant Officers – either chief warrant officer two or chief warrant officer three – are needed to commit to attend TAC training at Fort Rucker, Ala., and be ready to teach Phase 2 WOCS.

If interested, please give me a call (402) 309-7074.

As we continue to work on General Lempke's goals for 2006, please remember to encourage all Soldiers who have previously deployed and returned to National Guard status. Thank them for their service and tell them Nebraska recognizes and appreciates the sacrifice their families endured.

Currently we have 21 warrant officers deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom and three others on alert for deployment later this summer.

Thanks to the following Nebraska Army National Guard Warrant Officers for their dedicated selfless service to our country: CW5 Tom Dahlgren, CW4 Timothy Gragert, CW4 William Jepsen, CW4 John Regan, CW4 Scott Rivers, CW4 Martin Adkins, CW4 Tom Cerny, CW3 Teresa Domeier, CW3 Kenneth Henderson, CW3 Jason Graff, CW3 Matthew Stewart, CW3 Scott Zaske, CW3 Keith Osterhoudt, CW2 Paul Robinson, CW2 Marla Stephen, CW2 Guy Canter, CW2 Brent Brozovsky, CW2 Charles Baker III, CW2 Joseph Dolton, W01 James Hurley, and W01 Andrew Eiler.

We acknowledge your families' sacrifice. We are proud of what you are doing to spread liberty and to bring freedom and democracy to the people of Iraq.

In today's environment, people must fight urge to become complacent dealing with security

Complacency. This word is currently a buzzword throughout the United States.

Many people are beginning to forget the hard lessons learned from the terrorist attacks in 2001. Throughout history a major event or paradigm shift will occur and the American people will do their best to rise to the occasion. However, as time goes by, it is human nature to begin to "draw down" or lose resolve.

Consequently, it is sometimes more difficult to maintain security than it is to establish it.

It has been a difficult process to obtain the current level of security found throughout the country. It would be unfortunate to lose it and have to experience a tragic event to reacquire it.

Terrorists will always be planning new and more destructive ways to harm Americans. We cannot become complacent and need to always be proactive or "one-step-ahead" in order to protect ourselves, our families and resources.

Some people now want to believe that we have eliminated the threat of terrorism on our soil and can go back to life as normal. Unfortunately, the world is continually changing and we must change with it. We cannot go back to the way we led our lives on Sept. 10, 2001.

On the whole, people have adapted to the new security environment we find ourselves in and pay more attention to the security conditions of their workplaces, homes and other locations.

Understandably, it is difficult to always maintain a high level of security awareness and this should be reserved for times when a credible threat is present. However, general security awareness has to be maintained by everyone in order to safeguard the homeland.

Below are a few things everyone should do to maintain general security

Protecting Yourself

By Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder
Air Guard Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection Office

awareness.

General Security Awareness

- ♦ Watch the news and stay current with local, regional and global events;
- ♦ Be alert for anything suspicious or out of place;
- ♦ Report all suspicious persons or vehicles loitering near your home, workplace or in unauthorized areas. Attempt to provide a complete description of the person and/or vehicle to local law enforcement or security personnel;
- ♦ Do not open doors to strangers and report unsolicited contacts to local law enforcement or military police;
- ♦ Question people who do not appear to belong in your workplace. Ask for identification or contact police/security personnel if you feel uncomfortable doing it;
- ♦ Avoid giving unnecessary personal details to anyone unless their identity can be verified;
- ♦ Advise people close to you of where you are going, what you will be doing, and when you should be back;
- ♦ Memorize key phone numbers – local law enforcement, fire, military police, and other first responders.
- ♦ Remember, Force Protection and Security is everyone's business and everyone needs to maintain a general level of security awareness.

Please contact the following for more information: Capt. Ryan Earleywine, Nebraska Army National Guard, (402) 309-7406 or Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder, Nebraska Air National Guard antiterrorism noncommissioned officer, (402) 309-1565.

Education Notebook

■ August education fair will give opportunity to learn how to fit educational pursuits into busy schedules

By Chief Warrant Officer Robyn Huskey
State Education Officer

As working professionals, people know the difference that a bachelor's, master's, or even a doctoral degree can make to one's career.

But how can a person fit a college education into a busy schedule?

Attend the Nebraska Army National Guard Education Fair and find out.

At this education fair, scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 5 at the National Guard armory in Lincoln, people will be able to visit with representatives from all the major universities — and they never have to leave the office.

A university representative will be available to answer questions about scheduling classes, transferring credits, receiving credits for prior work experience, financial options, and employer tuition programs.

Take advantage of this opportunity to explore the many options available by attending the Nebraska Army National Guard Education Fair!

Participating Institutions:

University of Phoenix - Omaha campus; University of Nebraska - Lincoln; University of Nebraska - Kearney; University of Nebraska - Omaha; Hastings College; Doane College; Nebraska Wesleyan; Concordia College; Dana College; Peru State College; Wayne State College; Chadron State College; Creighton University; Hamilton College; Vatterott College; Bellevue University; Metropolitan Community College; Iowa Western Community College; Southeast Community College; Midland Lutheran College; Clarkson College; Education Quest Foundation.

O'Neill, Norfolk and Omaha. Interested in starting a group in your community? The State Family Program has resources available to help you get started.

The Parents of Nebraska Military is coordinated by the National Guard State Family Program. Questions or comments should be forwarded to Nicole Effle, Nebraska Air National Guard Family Readiness coordinator, at (402) 309-1588 or nicole.effle@nelinc.ang.af.mil.

♦ Kids Mobilization Day

The National Guard will sponsor a youth mock deployment, Aug. 5-6.

In partnership with Nicole Effle, Air Guard Family Readiness coordinator, the National Guard will host a one-day camp for kids, ages 5 and up. Kids will be able to "deploy" to several stations during the day with educational and team building activities at all. For more information contact Nicole Effle (402) 309-1588 or Sara Cease at (402) 309-7338.

Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



Online training can help build Family Team

By Maj. Drey Ihm

Family Program Office

There is a resource you should check out if you haven't already. It's called Guard Family Team Building (GFTB), and consists of training that is available online.

People can learn more about GFTB by visiting the Learning Center and start training today at www.gftb.org.

GFTB is a program designed for everyone: spouses, parents, children, retirees, civilians and interested community members. It helps teach about all aspects of life associated with military service, particularly the National Guard.

The Guard Family Team Building program was built with the goal of increasing family self-reliance, which will promote individual and unit readiness, family readiness and well-being.

Guard Family Team Building is a specifically designed education and training program for and about the National Guard community.

Program modules cover a wide variety of topics most often requested by families and National Guard leadership. Modeled on the successful "Army Family Team Building" program and still tied to it through funding and guidance from the Department of the Army, GFTB was specifically developed to educate and empower the National Guard Community.

GFTB provides training for volunteers to be instructors at the local level. It also provides instruction by various means to all families. It's an ongoing and progressive program meeting the needs of Guard Families while also providing peace of mind for the deployed Guard member by promoting family preparedness and self-reliance through training.

It is an inviting, exciting and enjoyable training experience.

Through GFTB, officials hope to pro-

vide family readiness through programs designed to provide training modules, deliver continuous and progressive programs to meet the needs of the Guard community, and create an exciting and rewarding training experience and enhance family readiness of Guard members.

All family readiness groups, (FRG), can access this site and utilize it in their meetings. Family assistance centers may also offer this training upon request by the FRG.

GFTB modules currently available online are as follows:

♦ **Introduction to the National Guard** – Get to know all the ins-and-outs of the National Guard such as its organization, missions, support services, and its customs and courtesies. See if you have what it takes to climb the "chain of command."

♦ **History of the Nation** – Discover how the National Guard helped shape the country, and learn all about the past and current missions of the Army and Air National Guard throughout the last four centuries.

♦ **Effective Leadership** – Instruction on leadership traits from the perspective of the group and the leader. It covers leadership styles and problem solving techniques essential for effective leadership.

♦ **Conflict Management** – Explores the management of conflict and focusing on communication, listening skills, problem solving and conflict management for resolution.

♦ **Stress Management** – Learn about the definition, causes, symptoms and effects of stress. Discuss methods of controlling, eliminating and properly utilizing stress.

♦ **Resources Around You** – Overview of networking with Guard and community resources.

♦ **Deployment and Reunion** – The effects of deployment and reunion on Guard members and their families.

♦ **Family Readiness Groups** – How to establish, conduct and maintain a Readiness Group. The course also examines group's relationship with the parent organization or unit.

♦ **Family Finances** – In this course, you will learn how to manage your personal finances and plan for future needs. You will also learn strategies to deal with debts and live within our means.

♦ **Introduction to Guard Family Action Plan** – Introduction to the Guard Family Action Plan Topics include the history of GFAP, issue submission, the Action Plan process and issue reporting.

♦ **Youth Stress Management** – It's not always easy being young. In fact, having to deal with the pressures involved at school, home and with the National Guard can make your life stressful. How do you keep all of these stressors under control?

This course will not only help you learn how to identify when you are under stress, provide you with skills to effectively help yourself and others in your community deal with these challenges.

♦ **Dealing with Deployment** – Adjusting to life during times of deployment can cause much emotional and physical stress.

For instance, do you know what kinds of reactions and thoughts you may experience during each phase of deployment? Do you know some things you can do for your deployed family member to make separation easier for you?

If you are a parent or educator, do you know how to effectively support and help your loved ones or students?

By participating in this course, you will learn how to ease the anxiety associated with deployment.

Interested in completing training online? Visit the online Learning Center and start online training today at www.gftb.org.

Events planned across state for Nebraska's military families

By Nicole Effle

Air Guard Family Readiness Coordinator

New activities and events are developing all the time to better support the needs of all military families across the state.

Although based within the National Guard, the State Family Program is open to addressing the needs of families from all branches of service and we look forward to getting to know new families and military personnel. The following are a few of the newest initiatives:

♦ Military Family Summer Bazaar

Saturday, July 8, will be the first Military Family Summer Bazaar. The event will take place in the vehicle maintenance area of the Air National Guard base in Lincoln from 4-6 p.m.

All military families are invited to show their wares to other military members and their families. The event is not

a fundraiser, but rather an event to encourage joint participation between the branches of service and raise awareness of the abilities and hobbies of fellow military members and their families.

People may reserve a booth (six-foot table) to display and sell any handmade items such as: crafts, jewelry, art, photography, etc. (Home Sales companies such as Mary Kay, Pampered Chef, Avon and PartyLite, etc. are not allowed at this event.) For more information, questions or to reserve a booth, please contact Nicole Effle at (402) 309-1588 or nicole.effle@nelinc.ang.af.mil.

♦ Parents of Nebraska Military

With the current number of Nebraskans being deployed to various locations around the world, there is a growing need to provide support to all family members, including parents.

Until now, there has been little for-

mal support for this overlooked but extremely important population. The Parents of Nebraska Military will provide parents of military members the resources they need to support their children throughout their military careers whether stateside or abroad.

The goal of the group is to ensure these parents can have access to the support and resources they need. The group will meet the first Saturday of every month, (except August which will meet on the 12th), from 10:30 a.m. - noon at the Eiseley Branch Library, 14th and Superior, in Lincoln.

A Scottsbluff group will meet Saturday, July 8, and the first Saturday thereafter, from 11 a.m. - noon at the Red Cross Building in the Old St. Mary's Hospital. The meetings are open to parents with children in any branch of service including National Guard, reserves and active duty.

Groups are beginning to form in

State making strides in flu planning, recruiting efforts

Next to asking how our troops are doing, people want to know about pandemic flu and recruiting.

So here is my "two cents worth" on both.

A pandemic flu is not something that has or is occurring in the United States—but it's something that could occur under certain conditions.

The most common form discussed is avian influenza, which is common in wild and farm birds. If the avian virus (or some other one) happens to mutate into a form that can easily infect and be transmitted among humans, the conditions for a pandemic exist.

Vaccines must be created for each new form of influenza. New seasonal influenza strains are generally controllable by modified vaccines from old strains.

Experts estimate that more than four months will be necessary to create a new vaccine for a drastically new strain from an avian mutant. So other measures are necessary to prevent a pandemic.

These are common sense things that are easy to implement with a little preparation. In August, the *Prairie Soldier* will contain an insert with steps each family should take to prepare.

Properly cooked poultry is always safe to eat. Cooking it to at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit kills food-borne germs and influenza viruses.

But handling dead birds might transmit the virus. Being in areas of high bird concentrations (ponds, feeding areas, etc.) also increases the risk of exposure to the avian virus.

If the potential for a pandemic emerges, widespread reductions in common services will occur. People will stay away from work and other places because of having been exposed to the virus or wanting to avoid being exposed. Schools, daycare centers, medical offices and other important operations may close or be curtailed.

Families need to be ready with contingency plans and stocks of critical items.

A common misconception is that the

**The Adjutant General
Major General
Roger P. Lempke**



pandemic flu afflicts the young and old most severely. The Spanish Flu in 1918 actually struck the most resilient portion of the population the hardest. So families should prepare for the unexpected.

Thanks to the state Health and Human Services Agency, and in particular, Dr. Joann Schaefer, the State Surgeon, Nebraska has perhaps the best plan for battling a pandemic situation in the nation. The National Guard and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) play important roles in that plan.

Families will receive information on dealing with a pandemic through many sources. Preparation is not difficult, but families must devote time to do it right. If a pandemic hits then many of the preparation steps will become impossible to accomplish.

Many people become frightened when the topic of pandemic arises. But I say: "Don't be scared—be prepared."

This spring the Nebraska Army National Guard has had some its greatest recruiting months ever. The Guard Recruiting Assistant Program (GRAP) where Soldiers earn up to \$2,000 for referrals has been a great help.

End strength in the state peaked at just over 3,400 in 2004. We are now at 3,350 after having dipped to around 3,204 in February 2005. The state's ultimate goal is 3,450.

End strength depends on both recruiting and retention. Nebraska continues to be a national leader in retention indicators.

We work particularly hard at making sure the new recruits that come to us make it through basic training and individual skill training.

In the coming months new promotions and materials will be coming out to keep our recruiting momentum going.

'Lighting the path to freedom'

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt of a letter sent to Wanda Cornett by an Iraqi citizen named Aziz, who is working with Cornett's son Joe, a member of the 189th Transportation Company currently serving in Iraq. It has been edited for space.

Hi MOM...

lets talk about my family: we live at the same house which is 500 squir meters, we hve 8 bedrooms and a big garden, my family members are : me my wife, my 2 kids, my mom her name is Athia, my brother Abdulla who will get married on september, 3 sisters Nadia, Sana & Hana, my father and my step mom, my father have 2 wives which i dont like it & dont agree that w can hav more than one wife, yes we all moslems but i dont accept many of what my religion says.... anyway, all of us been in school, exopt my mom, but she read & write arabic, and few english words without being in a school cuz we thought her.

i worked this week with joe and we had fun, i saw a lot of pics that ya sent him. but this friday was kinda disaster cuz klemme told me that they "189th" maybe will not work with us as an escort any more. and that made me CRY like a lil kid, i swear i dont cry often but i was shocked cus i am attached with your boys & girls.

i dont know what will happen to me if they left iraq, every one will get upsit , i can garantee this. everyone is workin at the base just to be with 189th FREEDOM FIGHTERS, thats wha i call them. cuz they are fighting for us, our freedom...

i was born in kuwait, my mom & dad are iraqies,i am teir first child. i lived there for 16years, then saddam invaded kuwit, so my dad said we have to move to iraq cuz he knew that this will be a disaster, so we did. it was horrebl during Desert Storm War, bodies everywhere, i mean everywhere from the bombing by the coalition forces.

then there was a Rising up against saddam in the south & north of iraq, so the rebellious killed almost the Ba'ath Party High ranks, it was saddam party, it was another war but this one took only 3 to 4 days. every one was MORE than

happy, cuz we thought that there will be no more saddam and thanx for the americans, BUT guess what!! the americans LET US DOWN !! and they let saddam kill the people in south & north of iraq!!

whats goin on?! every one was shocked, how could the american let saddam bomb us ??! " "

That is the major reason we have people who suspect the intents of america", then after saddam's troops defeated the rebellious, they gathered us and they forced everyone to leave his house EVERY SINGLE PERSON left his house, so tthey gathered us in a park, then they separated the female and took the males to another place and i was with em. they left us there for more than 8 hours, and they brought guys who are from the rebelious and forced them to identified the others, and there was buses waiting the GUILTY ones and few times we heard them shouting inside the bus, guess there was some executions inside the buses.then ethey let us go home after that unforgettable 8 hours...

from 1990 to 2003, NO ONE HAD A DREAM. saddam killed the dreams inside us, we were living like ROBOTS, no feelings no dreams no one can talk or think or write. IS THIS A LIFE? just imagine someone was living like this in 20 century!!! when your people came to iraq they drived away a heavy nightmare from more than " 20 MILLIONS person" just LOOK at the number 20 millions, and there is people now saying that " that there was no REASONS for that war!!!!!!" who could they! i know that some of them lost their kids in the war, BUT THEY SHOULD KNOW THAT their kids are MARTYRS, they gave their souls definding for a NOBLE case, maybe they are not fighting for the americans BUT THEY ARE FIGHTING IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY against the EVIL. every single blood drop that FLOW in our country will be a star lightining the path of freedom here and everywhere.

Please let everyone know that your people here are very welcomed in our houses and hearts inspite all what you ever heard or see through the media.special thanks for: EVERY 189th SOLDIERS

your son aziz

While June 8 hailed as major victory in war, June 9 also important

When somebody finally gets around to writing the history of the Global War on Terrorism, June 8 will undoubtedly go down as one of those "good days" in this long conflict.

On that day American and coalition forces finally located and killed one of the most barbaric and bloodthirsty terrorists of the modern era - Abu Musab Zarqawi .

It was definitely a good day for the good guys.

For me, personally, June 9 was also a day of extreme importance. Let me tell you why.

For those of us who were wearing uniforms on Sept. 11, 2001, the months following the terrorist attacks and the war in Afghanistan were filled with an amazing and continuous flow of public support for the men and women of the United States military charged with prosecuting this war against an international network of faceless terrorists.

Songs were written. Videos produced. Donations made. Stories told. Parades held. Support projects conducted.

Much of the public support came in much more personal ways as well. I don't think I'm alone in saying that I doubt that I could count how many times I

was stopped on the street, in restaurants and stores, at gas stations... wherever... and thanked by members of the public for being in the military.

And those thanks came from people of all races, genders and ages.

It was, in my mind, one of the most emotional times in my military career. It seemed as though the people of this country had finally returned their trust back to the men and women of the United States military after the tumultuous years during the Vietnam War.

It was as if they were looking for us - all of the collective men and women who wear this nation's uniforms - to protect them, to help them believe in something good, to restore their trust in a suddenly fuzzy future.

In a way, it seemed as though America had finally matured from its Vietnam experience.

Recently, though, I've started wondering to myself if that trust was still there.

Granted, communities and individuals have continued to pour support to the troops in a variety of ways. But something

My Turn

Editor, *Prairie Soldier*

Kevin J. Hynes



had seemed to change.

Over the last 12-18 months, people had seemed to stopped coming up and thanking me for my service. Many of them now seemed to look at me as though they were looking for something, something I couldn't put my finger on.

Often I wondered to myself: Had we as a nation really grown up that much since the Vietnam War? Could Americans - especially those Americans who are opposed to a war - still support those who enlist to fight that conflict?

Jump ahead now to June 9, the day after the death of Zarqawi and the return of the USS Cole to active duty after nearly being sunk by a terrorist bomb.

On the way home from work that day, I stopped off at a store to pick up something for my two sons. As I entered the store, I was stopped by an elderly lady who hugged me, thanked me for my

service and then added: "This is a good day for us, isn't it? We finally got one of those bad guys."

Smiling, I thanked her and then continued to pick up what I needed. Later, as I left

the store, I was again stopped, this time by a young teenaged boy - longish hair, scraggly beard, baggy pants - who, like the elderly lady, thanked me for my service before adding: "We got one...now let's get the other," as he smiled and gave me a huge thumbs-up sign.

After thanking him, I started thinking.

Was this what those earlier looks had been about? Were those people who looked at me with questioning eyes, actually looking for something?

Had several years' worth of television, radio and coverage of the continued wars in Afghanistan and Iraq so confused them to the point that they were searching in my eyes for what to believe?

We're they looking at me for signs as to whether I still believed in this battle?

I think they were.

I also think its no surprise that when Gallup released its

annual poll on who the public respects more just days after Zarqawi's death, that the military was at the top of the list - above law enforcement, organized religion and way above big business, unions, government and the national media.

I think it shows that American trusts it's military to do the right thing and recognizes the difficulties its military men and women are under. It also looks to the military - all of us who wear a uniform - to tell them what's really going on. That if we appear disillusioned, maybe they should too...but if we remain resolute and positive in our ultimate outcome, then there's a reason they should remain positive and confident as well.

That's a trust none of us should take lightly. It's a trust that we could easily lose if we're not careful.

June 8 was an important day in the Global War in Terrorism. For me, June 9 was as well, for it was that day that I think I really started to understand how critical a part in this war all of us play, even those of us who have yet to place a step on Middle Eastern soil.

It was a day that my role seemed suddenly clear.

AWARDS

Army National Guard Bronze Star

Col. Thomas E. Schuurmans
Master Sgt. Brian T. Folts
Sgt. 1st Class Ritchie D. Inns
Sgt. George R. Babcock
Sgt. Joseph D. Busing
Sgt. Robert S. Hutt
Sgt. Justin R. Vonloh

Purple Heart

1st Lt. Matthew S. York
Staff Sgt. George B. Goodon
Staff Sgt. Lauren J. McConnell
Sgt. Robert S. Hutt
Sgt. Jeremy S. Borrell
Sp. Anthony D. Revas
Combat Action Badge
Capt. Jeffrey C. Searcy
2nd Lt. Jacques J. Smith III
Staff Sgt. Steven T. Harris
Staff Sgt. Tracy A. Polage
Staff Sgt. Darron M. Rohe
Staff Sgt. Chad M. Rowe
Sgt. Matthew T. Broman
Sgt. Michael L. Etherton
Sgt. Sion T. Odom
Sgt. Lucas J. Smith
Sgt. Michael S. Weichman
Sgt. Jeremy J. White
Sgt. Matthew G. Wilkins
Sp. Matthew J. Adams
Sp. Jennifer L. Clifford
Sp. Leonard P. Robinson
Sp. Drew P. Scott
Sp. Louis L. Svoboda
Pfc. Jon T. Regnier
Pfc. Matthew S. Turvey

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Ronald W. Carda
Chief Warrant Officer Kelli R. Brewer
Command Sgt. Maj. Eddie D. Lytle
Sgt. 1st Class Eric S. Clyne
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey L. Salomons
Sgt. Bret A. Liermann

Joint Service Commendation Medal

Sgt. Dustin Young

Army Commendation Medal

Lt. Col. Thomas R. Brewer
1st Lt. Daniel S. Claessens
1st Sgt. Michael R. Oliver
Sgt. 1st Class William C. Cary
Sgt. 1st Class Kelly J. Cramer
Sgt. 1st Class Michael A. Davis
Sgt. 1st Class William E. Delp
Sgt. 1st Class Johnny R. Eynetich
Sgt. 1st Class Michael A. Kinghorn
Sgt. 1st Class Richard L. Mundy
Sgt. 1st Class David L. Stanek
Staff Sgt. Jay F. Bottorff
Staff Sgt. Charles W. Collins
Staff Sgt. George B. Goodon (for Valor)
Staff Sgt. Bradley Huston
Staff Sgt. Joseph A. Liske
Staff Sgt. Daniel McAdams
Staff Sgt. Lauren J. McConnell
Staff Sgt. Tyler D. Powell (for Valor)
Staff Sgt. Chad M. Rowe (for Valor)
Staff Sgt. Benjamin J. Radke
Staff Sgt. Jason M. Schiermeyer
Staff Sgt. Michael W. Travis
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey M. Uhl
Staff Sgt. Mark A. Wigstone
Sgt. Earl L. Bascue
Sgt. Michael D. Belleci
Sgt. Mark R. Brown
Sgt. Michael J. Dennis
Sgt. Scott D. French
Sgt. Kristine D. Hulse
Sgt. Christopher J. Marcelllo
Sgt. William M. McClure
Sgt. Sion T. Odom
Sgt. Adam Schroeder
Sgt. Gary L. Wittwer
Sgt. Daniel J. Walford
Sp. John P. Adams
Sp. Bo D. Fisher
Sp. Cody A. Graff
Sp. Joseph A. Hansen

Sp. Tyler E. Horning
Sp. David L. Munoz
Sp. Mark A. Noziska
Sp. Marcus A. Paczosa
Sp. Anthony D. Revas (for Valor)
Sp. Matthew W. Slatter
Cpl. Thomas J. Sorensen
Cpl. Antonio G. Todd
Cpl. Brett Yochum

Army Achievement Medal

Master Sgt. Wayne R. Kerns Jr.
Master Sgt. Steven M. Klein
Sgt. 1st Class Scott D. Bates
Sgt. 1st Class John Hartig
Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz
Staff Sgt. Luke G. Daugherty
Staff Sgt. Jason C. Grams
Staff Sgt. Daniel V. Norris
Staff Sgt. Jason Weston
Staff Sgt. Jeffery Swanson
Sgt. Matthew D. Carper
Sgt. Jeffrey D. Fling
Sgt. Jonathan Hanseling
Sgt. Curtis Iliff
Sgt. Bradley Johnson
Sgt. Lucas Mitchell
Sgt. Callen B. Stenglein
Sgt. Josiah P. Warren
Sp. Brent Benes
Sp. Andrew Filips
Sp. Blake Hampton
Sp. Micah Kallio
Sp. Stephen Kane
Sp. Daniel L. McCoy
Sp. James McPherson
Sp. Aaron S. Ramos
Sp. Jason Sindelar
Sp. Benjamin D. Taake
Sp. Brad C. Utterback
Sp. Stephen Walton
Pvt. Cory Walcott

Nebraska National Guard Meritorious Service Medal

Maj. Michael P. Akins

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal

Master Sgt. Wilfred J. Bindel
Staff Sgt. Gerald D. Bouska
Staff Sgt. Greg A. Luetenhaus
Sgt. Sarah M. Pannill
Sgt. Sarah A. Wales

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal

Lt. Col. Dale R. Vrana
Chief Warrant Officer Mark D. Roland
Sgt. 1st Class Teresa A. Flynn
Sgt. 1st Class Derek L. Whisenhant
Staff Sgt. Patrick C. Bruning
Staff Sgt. William A. Bushousen
Staff Sgt. Matthew M. Hansen
Staff Sgt. Robrenna Redl
Sgt. Clinton F. Brady
Sgt. Jared M. Burget
Sgt. William M. McClure
Sgt. Jason T. Meyer
Sp. Octavio Baeza
Sp. Jonathan S. Eckert
Sp. Hunter C. Isley
Sp. Marcos A. Moreno
Sp. Shawn M. Sims

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Chief Warrant Officer Timothy D. Schlupp
Command Sgt. Maj. Eddie D. Lytle
Master Sgt. Tracy L. Schuppan
Sgt. 1st Class Michael L. Lederer
Sgt. 1st Class Michael L. Lederer

Air National Guard

Chief Master Sgt. Randall L. Hansen
Master Sgt. Brent R. Elliott
Tech. Sgt. Todd R. Hart
Tech. Sgt. Anthony E. Jay
Tech. Sgt. Jerry D. Kunz

Nebraska National Guard Recruiting Achievement Medal

Sp. Austin H. Tonniges

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Colonel
Kevin L. Neumann
Steven E. Olson
Lieutenant Colonel
Amy S. Lyons
Captain
Mark J. Eichler
Jason K. Hesser
Chadd J. McMahon
First Lieutenant
Kevin L. Janousek
Chief Warrant Officer Four
Scott J. Zaska
Chief Warrant Officer Three
Daniel N. Hill
Chief Warrant Officer Two
Shawn L. Miller
Michael S. Nagasawa
Gena L. Norton
Monty A. Woodward

Sergeant Major

Eric W. Maynard
Master Sergeant
Eugene D. Rains
Sergeant First Class
John G. Weddel
Staff Sergeant
Sean M. Beckman
Kyla M. Boersma
Ryan M. Carlson
James A. Kallio
Karen R. Matheny
Robin J. Trosper
Sergeant
Bermudez H.A. Lima
Shane E. Newman
James F. Roark
Robert G. Wheeler
Specialist
Lemarcus D. Gaskins
Chrystal J. Hammond

Sgt. 1st Class Terence G. Burns
Sgt. 1st Class Carl K. Dehling

Staff Sgt. Matthew G. Baker
Staff Sgt. Cecilio T. Roman

Owen P. Kramer
Zachary A. Long
Christopher M. McIlheran
Kraig O. Shaw
Kole W. Talkington

Private First Class
Lindsay M. Loftus
Daniel J. Tenorio
Jessica A. Zimbelman
Private Two
Alex R. Bontrager
Melissa R. Findlay
Dwayne C. Nielsen
Levi S. Urbom
Stanley I. Washington

Air National Guard

Colonel
David D. Zwart

Lieutenant Colonel
Mark C. McMahon
Captain
Matthew A. Clough
Pamela J. Geistlinger
Michael H. Piening
Chief Master Sergeant
Douglas A. Richard
Senior Master Sergeant
William J. Kerns
Kevin L. Naumann
Gary F. Sparks
Master Sergeant
Frank J. Albrecht
Cole S. Foster
Angel K. Freeman
Rhonda L. McClellan
Vernon L. Moore
Richard H. Stephens

ENLISTMENTS

Army National Guard

Recruiting and Retention Command
Timothy L. Marquez
Mitchell S. Scott
Training Site Command
Steven R. Paulson
Medical Command
Christopher S. Hahn
Daniel C. Nichols
Rebecca J. Schiewe
92nd Troop Command
Dereck E. James
Matthew L. Robinson
Rolando Rodriguez
Joint Forces Headquarters
Kelli J. Hatzebuehler
Gena L. Norton
Eric M. Ruggiano
1st Battalion, 209th Regiment
Duane R. Bleich
Headquarters, 209th Regiment
Brandon R. Gladwin
Eric L. Thornbrugh
600th Transportation Company
Michael A. Alkire
Craig E. Downs
Robert L. Fitchhorn
David K. Gangwish
Justin L. Gay
Adam D. Greene
Douglas K. Hartman
Severo Hernandez Jr.
Nicholas E. Hoffmann
Derrick A. Jackson
Steven C. Johnston
James M. Mosel
Trevor J. Ocken
Jean M. Pieper
Travis M. Schwartz
Gregory M. Shockey
Wesley K. Smith
Kenneth J. Whitehead
Allen J. Wichman
1618th Transportation Company
James R. Flores
Bobbie L. Hunter
Jess A. Myers
Norris N. Shuck
David J. Supanchick
Joshua D. Tobaben
Detachment 2, 1618th Transportation Company
Allen L. Abbott
Jeffrey J. Campbell
Troop A, 1-134th Aviation
Sean M. Deeds
Christopher P. Hallauer
Elliott J. Gray
Ryan D. John
Breanna M. Morse

Nathan T. Nebelsick
Daniel S. Steinspring
Michael G. Uhing
Gary N. Webster
Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-134th Aviation
Cody A. Anderson
Kasandra B. Cervantes
Michael L. Folkerts
Devin E. Frerichs
Zachary S. Hartmann
Jonathan V. Naber
Keith W. Tinnell
Detachment 2, Company A, 449th Support Battalion
Troy D. Bendickson
1057th Transportation Company
Chasidy A. Garrett
Dusty J. Ginsbach
Casey J. Ryan
Korey L. Thompson
Blake L. Vela
Anthony L. Wilcox
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 168th Quartermaster Petroleum Support Battalion
John A. Girard
Mitchell R. Peterson
Guinio W. Volpone
Patrick A. Voshell
111th Press Camp Headquarters
Aryka L. Hill
Melisa M. Ventre
192nd Military Police Detachment
Sarah K. Beck
Mark K. Walls
754th Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company
Peter A. Blackburn
Lyle B. Powell
Kristopher Schneckenberger
1074th Transportation Company
Rick D. Dahlgren
Detachment 2, 1074th Transportation Company
Clinton F. Brady
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 867th Quartermaster Battalion (Petroleum Supply)
Scott R. Ehler
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 867th Quartermaster Battalion Rear Detachment
Spencer P. Murdock
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 126th Chemical Battalion
Dennis E. Kerr
Michael E. Pullman
267th Ordnance Company
Brandon T. Austin

Renee A. Faber
Cameron M. Gill
Kasey E. Gillihan
Jacob W. Hansen
Seth A. Noble
Kyle D. Outz
Matthew S. Plantenberg
Philip D. Pohlmeier
Cory D. Richters
Kristopher C. Spencer
Michael W. Victor
Monty A. Woodward
Detachment 2, 267th Ordnance Company
Bradly E. Kling
Christopher Seiley
1075th Transportation Company
Tennille R. Hess
Detachment 1, 1075th Transportation Company
Adam E. Porter
173rd Chemical Company
Alexander G. Anderson
Detachment 1, 173rd Chemical Company
David W. Downing Jr.
Detachment 2, 173rd Chemical Company
Nicholas J. Dunning
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 110th Medical Battalion (Evacuation)
Daniel L. Jones
Douglas C. Vance
Detachment 1, Troop B, 1-167th Cavalry
Mark A. Lantosh
Kyle E. McIntyre
Brian A. Schwarz
Jonathan D.D. Wymmer
Troop C, 1-167th Cavalry
Steven R. Aman
Eric R. Blackburn
Robert P. Bowers Jr.
Christopher M. Brammer
Cory W. Drummond
Jamie D. Hanson
Dustin J. Knoell
Jason B. Libal
Colin J. Neuhalfen
Robert T. Ohnesorge
James J. O'Malley IV
Tyler P. Potts
Eric R. Runquist
Robert E. Sherard Jr.
Brandon J. Wright
Detachment 1, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-167th Cavalry
Christopher E. Moulton
Justin C. Walters

105th Personnel Detachment
Anna P. Bach
Justin J. Eickmeier
Amy M. Lopez
William T. Rader
Company B, 2-135th Aviation
Justin K. Chadwick
Justin R. Vonloh
Detachment 1, Company D, 2-135th Aviation
Paul W. Norden
David D. Stickney Jr.
623rd Engineer Company (Vertical)
David P. Hoggatt
Terry A. Lusero
Jesse K. Schmitt
James F. Schreiner
Kevin A. Simnick
Brian D. Sloan
Landon D. Wakefield
41st Rear Operations Center
Justin L. Burry
Joshua P. McClure
Daniel E. Milburn
Gregory L. Nun
Jay D. Weber
313th Medical Company
Shawn M. Humphrey
Lynda L. James
Lauree R. Lenz
Jeremy W. McConkey
Tamara R. Mikolajczyk
William F. Montoya
Kelly G. Olinde
Jeigh A. Tushick
Chad A.
134th Infantry Detachment
Joshua J. Hatheway

Air National Guard

155th Air Refueling Wing
Marilynn Ryan
155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
Trevor Piening
155th Civil Engineering Squadron
Michael Budke
Shawn Murphy
155th Logistics Readiness Squadron
Darci Sitzman
Bradley Spomer
155th Medical Group
Kevin Hartwig
Matthew Kirkendall
Rebecca Rose
155th Maintenance Squadron
Seth Harrell
Mary Moertl
Richard Owen III
Christopher Riley
Nathan Tesch

Air Guard maintenance squadrons receive new commander in May

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's two maintenance squadrons experienced a changing of the guards, May 5.

In a single change of command ceremony, the 155th Maintenance and 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron welcomed new commanders to their units and bid farewell to another.

Assuming command of the 155th Maintenance Squadron was Lt. Col. Kenneth Husted who replaced outgoing commander Lt. Col. Steven Plamann. Assuming command of the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron was Maj. Barbara "Bobby" Buls, who replaced Husted.

"We not only have one change of command today, but two," said Lt. Col. Keith Schell, 155th Maintenance Group commander. "So that makes today doubly special."

Buls enlisted in the South Dakota Air National Guard in May 1986 where she served as a ground radio operator, attaining the rank of staff sergeant.

She was commissioned as a second lieutenant in July 1992

through the Air National Guard Academy of Military Science.

Buls transferred to the Nebraska Air National Guard in July 1999, serving as a maintenance officer in the 155th Aircraft Generation Squadron, now designated the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

In April 2006, she was selected as the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron commander. In assuming her first command, Buls said she was excited for the opportunity...

"On this day, there is no unit that I would rather belong to, no better squadron that I could wish to command, and there are no



Buls



Husted



Plamann

finer Airmen than the men and women of the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron that I could serve beside," she said, adding that since joining the unit in 1999, she's watched many seasoned crew chiefs retire from the unit only to be replaced by an equally talented maintenance specialist stepping up to the challenge. "Today it is my day to step forward... a step I take without hesitation because of those who have come before me."

Husted began his military career by enlisting in the Nebraska Air National Guard in 1982, serving as a J-79 turbo-jet engine mechanic. He was com-

mander.

Husted said he's proud to be able to return to the 155th Maintenance Squadron as its commander. "I'm excited to come back."

"I'm looking forward to a unique opportunity where I will be leading the flightline and the maintenance squadron on the full-time side. I think that will open up some opportunities to enhance both squadrons."

Plamann enlisted in the Nebraska Air National Guard in 1980 as an aircraft maintenance specialist assigned to duties on the flight line in support of the RF-4C reconnaissance mission.

He was commissioned in 1986 through the Air National Guard Academy of Military Science.

He completed Specialized Undergraduate Navigation Training in 1987 and attended the RF-4C RTU, graduating as a weapons system officer in 1987.

In 1990 he was selected to become a pilot for the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron and completed Undergraduate Pilot Training in 1991. In 2004 he was selected as the 155th Maintenance Squadron commander.

Plamann said the time he spent as squadron commander were among the best he's spent in the military.

"The past 23 months, it has been an absolute privilege and honor to serve as the commander of these fine men and women standing here today," he said, adding that the unit was tested during numerous inspections, two major deployments and a transition to the Global Air Traffic Management (GATM) system.

2006 Lincoln National Guard Marathon

Five Nebraska women on All Guard team

By Spc. Sheila Swantek
Staff Writer

■ One third of National Guard women's marathon team from Cornhusker state

This year's Lincoln Marathon proved to be *they* for the Nebraska National Guard women.

A total of five Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team women earned berths onto the elite Women's All Guard Marathon Team, taking a third of the 15 total national spots available.

What's even more impressive was the fact that two of the Cornhuskers were rookies, competing in their first 26.2-mile race during the annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon held May 7 in Lincoln, Neb.

Leading the way for Nebraska was Officer Candidate Jessica Hoelting, a rookie marathoner and first-time runner on the state team who finished the race in 3:33.42.

"Running has always been something that I have enjoyed, but I have never taken it to this level before," said Hoelting, who recently returned from a year-long deployment to Iraq as a member of the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), during which she was named the Army Times Soldier of the Year and earned the Red Cross Military Tribute to Heroes Award.

"The mental aspect of how far the race is was the most challenging for me."

Hoelting said even though she'd never competed in such a difficult race, she still set high goals for herself.

"My goal was to be able to run the entire race and still finish strong," said Hoelting.

"It's been an amazing year and this just adds to it," said Hoelting. "It's an honor not only to be part of the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team, but the All Guard Team as well."

Following Hoelting to the finish line was Staff Sgt. Jenny Kramer, personnel service sergeant for Lincoln's Joint Force Headquarters, who also earned her first seat on the national team.

Kramer, who has competed in the Lincoln Marathon several times in the past few years, said the lessons she learned during those earlier races helped her this May.

"I know now that you have to train properly to get on the All Guard Team," said Kramer, a member of the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team since 2002.



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

All In The Family: (From left) Sgt. Tarissa Battenhorst, Staff Sgt. Jennifer Kramer and Staff Sgt. Penny Hytrek pace each other around a Lincoln, Neb., lake during the Lincoln National Guard Marathon, held May 7.



Top Form: Officer Candidate Jessica Hoelting, former Army Times Soldier of the Year and member of the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team, runs along the Lincoln National Guard Marathon course.



Heading Toward the Finish Line: Command Chief Master Sgt. Barbara Gossage and Senior Master Sgt. Scott Tontegode run together during the Lincoln National Guard Marathon held May 7.

Kramer said her biggest goal this year was simply to run fast enough so that she could run with her sister, Staff Sgt. Penny Hytrek on the All Guard Team. In order to do that Kramer,

Hytrek and cousin, Sgt. Tarissa Battenhorst trained hard during the weeks leading up to the race.

"We trained differently for this one," said Kramer. "We fol-

lowed a very strict 16-week program," she said.

Even with all the training Kramer said, there were still some challenging moments during the race. "I was good up

until Mile 22. At that time I just tried to persevere and not let any females pass me," said Kramer, who went on to record a personal-best time of 3:48.27. "I was going to get my spot on the All Guard Team no matter what it took."

Another first-time marathon runner, Battenhorst of Lincoln's Medical Command, said the training program was easily the biggest difference maker.

"We all trained so hard to be able to make the team," said Battenhorst, who trained with Kramer and Hytrek throughout their 16-week program.

During the Lincoln race, Battenhorst said the three women ran together until about the 20th mile.

"I am so thankful that I had people to run with, especially during those times when it's hard to stay motivated," said Battenhorst, who logged a time of 3:43.22, second-best among Nebraska women.

She said she learned a lot during the marathon which will undoubtedly help her as she begins competing around the country as a member of the national team.

"I know that it will be hard at times, but it will be fun to be able to share something that we all have in common and take it one step further in order to push each other to the next level," said Battenhorst.

Also making the Nebraska team were Hytrek and Command Chief Master Sgt. Barb Gossage, who both have been on the national team multiple times. Hytrek, a personnel sergeant with the Joint Forces Headquarters, finished with a time of 3:52.30, while Gossage, the command chief master sergeant for the 155th Air Refueling Wing, finished the marathon in 3:48.29.

Just barely missing out on a national team spot was Spc. Jennifer Telecky, 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), who finished the race in 4:16.38, just three minutes out of the last spot.

Leading the Nebraska men was Master Sgt. Guy Boden, supply analyst for Lincoln's 155th Air Refueling Wing, who finished the race in 3:24.10. Boden, who qualified to compete in the Boston Marathon, said he is excited about how far he has come, improving his time every year.

"This feeling is addictive. Once it gets in your blood it's there forever," said Boden.

Guard runners say Lincoln sweet sight after year in Middle East



Photo by Sgt. Katie Loseke

They're Off: Runners begin the first steps of the 2006 Lincoln National Guard Marathon near Memorial Stadium on the campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, May 7. A number of National Guard runners were competing in Lincoln after spending last year deployed overseas to the Middle East.

By Sgt. Katie Loseke

Associate Editor

After months of jogging through ankle-deep sand in Iraq and Kuwait, National Guardsmen from across the nation returned to the states to pound the pavement in Lincoln, Neb.

More than 200 Army and Air National Guardsmen competed in the 2006 Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 7.

For many of those Guard athletes, this year's rigorous 26.2-mile race was a welcome reprieve after serving for months overseas in the Middle East in support of continuing operations there.

"It's great to get back into the program after missing a year," said Staff Sgt. Robert Schnell, one of the newest, old members of the "All Guard" Marathon Team. "Emptying the sand out of my running shoes was a small price to pay for winning a spot on the marathon team."

Schnell, a motor sergeant with the Arizona's Army National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 158th Corp Support Battalion, is just one of many runners who returned from a deployment within the last year and still managed to qualify for the team, despite the limited training time available overseas.

According to Schnell, the 125

degree heat that he had to run in while serving at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, from August 2004 - September 2005, was not enough to deter him from his training. He made the "All Guard" Marathon Team for the sixth year out of seven, with a time of 2:45:27.

"I love being a part of the team. It is one of the reasons I stay in Guard," said Schnell.

Another recent deployer, Capt. John Plunkett from the Louisiana Army National Guard, not only battled the heat and sand he encountered while serving at Camp Anaconda in Balad, Iraq, he also had to battle the wrath of Hurricane Katrina less than six months after he returned home

See MARATHON 26.

2006 Lincoln National Guard Marathon

Top finishers' eye big goals in upcoming marathon season

By Spc. Riley Huskey
Staff Writer

More than 200 National Guard runners from across the United States descended upon Lincoln, Neb., May 7, with one goal in mind: making the team.

Each year in May, Army and Air National Guard runners from across the United States head to Lincoln, Neb., to compete in the Lincoln National Guard Marathon in hopes of securing a spot on the All-Guard Marathon Team.

Leading the way for the Guard was 1st Lt. William Bohlke, who crossed the finish line in 2:34.11, good enough for third overall in the 26.2-mile race that attracted more than 4,000 competitors.

"Going into the marathon, I was wondering what I was able to do," said Bohlke, a pilot in the Puerto Rico Air National Guard. "After training hard for six months, I was not going to let my hard work go to waste; I was not going to let my training effect my performance."

After graduating from a rigorous and mentally challenging aircrew survival training course just two days before the race, Bohlke said he went into this year's National Guard Marathon Team trials with big goals.

"If I do not get deployed, I plan on winning the Air Force Marathon," Bohlke said. "I brought home the gold last year for the half-marathon, so there's no reason I can't win the full. My biggest goal would be to win all of the Armed Forces marathons."

Bohlke said he used his survival training as motivation for the Lincoln race.

"You can take whatever it is that you're doing and use it as motivation," he said. "I'm just happy. This race proves to me that I'm taking a step in the right direction. It's easy to get



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Running Strong: Sgt. Michelle Elliott moves along the Lincoln National Guard Marathon course enroute to winning the Guard women's race in 3:21.47.

burnt out."

Bohlke credited the weather in Lincoln with also contributing to his winning time.

"There may have been a slight breeze today, but the overcast sky was the winning kicker," Bolke said. "When it came to keeping my pace on the course, I kept telling myself: 'Stick to your guns, it'll all come back.'"

Bohlke wasn't the only top Guard runner with eyes set on big goals in the upcoming running season. Staff Sgt. James Bresette, a surface mechanic with Arkansas Army Guard's 224th Maintenance Co., said he was happy with his time in this year's Lincoln Marathon, which he completed in 2:43.12. Still, he's got bigger goals in mind.

"My overall goal for this season is to set a new personal record," said Bresette, who won the Guard's Masters (Over 40) Division and placed 10th overall in Lincoln. "Because I'm in school now, taking college Algebra, I've had to cut my mileage. After today, this season looks very promising; even with the cut-backs, I'm still right where I want to be."

"I'm getting old, but as long as I can keep running, I'm going to try and continue to reach that goal," said Bresette.

Bresette said that controlled running was a key for him in Lincoln. "By about Mile 12, I

thought I better maintain my motivation. I went out too fast, slowed down in the middle and knew I needed to finish strong," he said. "Between Mile 12 and 18, I slowed down, recovered and went back to my normal pace."

While the top men runners had their eyes focused squarely on making the annual "All Guard" Marathon Team, this year's top Guard female runner was simply excited just being in Lincoln. Sgt. Michelle Elliott, an AH-64 Apache helicopter mechanic with the Missouri Army Guard's 135th Aviation Battalion, traveled to Lincoln by herself as the only member of the Missouri team. She said she had just learned about the team shortly before the marathon.

That didn't mean that she didn't have high hopes, though.

"I just wanted to come here and make the team," said Elliott, who won the Guard Women's race with a time of 3:21.47, placing ninth overall. "It's such an honor to be here and now a member of this team—I just wish more people knew this program was here and available."

"I love what I do, and I love being in the Guard," Elliott said. "I don't know where I would be right now if I wasn't in the Guard—this has completely changed my life."

Elliott was ecstatic with the response she saw from the crowd.

"I have not seen more excitement or motivation in the supporters that come out to cheer on the race than here in Lincoln," Elliott said. "Out of nine, this is the best marathon I've ever run."

The Lincoln National Guard Marathon serves as the annual qualifier for the "All-Guard" Marathon Team, which annually competes in races across the United States, representing the National Guard and assisting in the organization's recruiting efforts. The team is made up 40 men and 15 women.



Photo by Spc. Riley Huskey

Championship Smile: 1st Lt. William Bohlke, Puerto Rico Air National Guard, smiles and holds his hand up in victory as he crosses the finish line of the 2006 Lincoln National Guard Marathon. Bohlke won the National Guard Men's gold after completing the marathon in 2:34.11, good enough for third overall in the race.

MARATHON continued from page 26.

from the desert.

"I thought running while wearing battle rattle overseas was hard, but it was impossible to run in the 12 feet of water that lined the streets and buildings of New Orleans," said Plunkett.

Plunkett, who was deployed from the spring of 2004 to the spring of 2005, said he had just started to get back into his training routine when the hurricane hit the Gulf Coast in late August.

As a UH-60 Blackhawk pilot, Plunkett was one of the first rescuers on the scene.

Plunkett said he began flying rescue missions the day the hurricane hit and didn't stop flying until October.

He said they were flying 16-20 hours a day and sleeping on the superdome helicopter pad, which left little time for training.

"We were rescuing 400-500 people a day. It took a lot of coordination, speed,

and determination. It was definitely training, just not the type of training I was used to," said Plunkett.

Plunkett was able to return home in February of 2006 when his Hurricane Katrina deployment was finished.

"I got in four months of good training after I recovered from the hurricane duty," said Plunkett.

"My training was - in a way - thrown to the wind, but you do what you can to get

it done."

Even with little time to prepare, Plunkett was able to qualify for the "All Guard" team again. He finished the 26.2-mile trek in 3:09:39.

"The deployments have affected us in numerous ways. We have lost friends, lost time and lost training, but we have not lost our spirit. We will continue to run hard just like we will continue to fight hard," said Plunkett.

2006 Lincoln National Guard Marathon Results

All States Competition

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Puerto Rico #1 (8:22.59) | 21. Illinois #1 (10:54.38) |
| 2. Oregon #1 (8:29.11) | 22. Florida #1 (10:57.55) |
| 3. Indiana #1 (8:33.32) | 23. Delaware #1 (11:07.56) |
| 4. South Dakota #1 (8:34.14) | 24. Nebraska #2 (11:09.49) |
| 5. Wisconsin #1 (8:35.18) | 25. Kansas #2 (11:21.22) |
| 6. Pennsylvania #1 (8:57.19) | 26. Ohio #1 (11:27.49) |
| 7. Minnesota #1 (9:02.27) | 27. Nevada #1 (11:42.24) |
| 8. Washington #1 (9:32.20) | 28. Nebraska #3 (11:49.06) |
| 9. Alaska #1 (9:47.07) | 29. New Mexico #1 (11:50.48) |
| 10. Kentucky #1 (9:49.19) | 30. Louisiana #1 (11:57.02) |
| 11. North Carolina #1 (9:52.12) | 31. South Dakota #2 (12:05.00) |
| 12. Kansas #1 (9:53.00) | 32. California #1 (12:33.01) |
| 13. Texas #1 (10:06.10) | 33. Nebraska #4 (12:38.21) |
| 14. Virginia #1 (10:07.39) | 34. Illinois #2 (13:57.14) |
| 15. Maine #2 (10:18.58) | |
| 16. Arizona #1 (10:26.33) | |
| 17. New York #1 (10:32.01) | |
| 18. Maine #1 (10:38.27) | |
| 19. Nebraska #1 (10:47.41) | |
| 20. South Carolina #1 (10:51.23) | |

Top 20 Males

1. William Bohlke (2:34.11)
2. Troy Harrison (2:35.18)
3. Michael W. Berquist (2:41.07)
4. James Bresette (2:43.12)
5. Timothy Vandervlught (2:44.50)

Top 20 Females

1. Michelle Elliott (3:21.47)
2. Holly Scott (3:24.35)
3. Martha Swatt-Robison (3:30.40)
- 4. Jessica Hoelting (3:33.42)**

Nebraska Finishers

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 5. Paulette Goodwin (3:34.00) | 75. (4) Jessica Hoelting (3:33.42) |
| 6. Tarissa Batenhorst (3:43.22) | 80. Zachary Labrayere (3:35.38) |
| 7. Casey Schmitt (3:43.36) | 85. Kevin Fedon (3:37.10) |
| 8. Jennifer Kramer (3:48.27) | 86. Thomas Brewer (3:38.00) |
| 9. Barbara Gossage (3:48.29) | 87. Jeffrey Wickett (3:38.14) |
| 10. Melanie Rowton (3:49.41) | 90. (6) Tarissa Batenhorst (3:43.22) |
| 11. Penny Hytrek (3:52.30) | 98. Daryl Bohac (3:47.53) |
| 12. Rosa Bartol (3:55.29) | 100. (8) Jennifer Kramer (3:48.27) |
| 13. Stacy Fagan (4:01.02) | 101. (9) Barbara Gossage (3:48.29) |
| 14. Jennifer Butler (4:01.40) | 107. (11) Penny Hytrek (3:52.30) |
| 15. Mary McEwen (4:02.26) | 108. Scott Tontegode (3:53.10) |
| 16. Rose Mattie (4:04.15) | 109. Steven Loftis (3:53.57) |
| 17. Isolina Negron (4:07.52) | 113. Robert Schantell (3:57.10) |
| 18. Devika Hull-Jenkins (4:12.29) | 132. Ben West (4:15.43) |
| 19. Jennifer Telecky (4:16.38) | 133. Russell Virus (4:16.34) |
| 20. Pamela Frost (4:18.54) | 134. (19) Jennifer Telecky (4:16.38) |
| | 136. Darin Mongeon (4:22.14) |
| | 146. (27) Jennifer Fotinos (4:54.26) |
| | 153. (30) Luann Hernoud (5:13.56) |

(Nebraska teams, runners in bold)



Photos by Capt. Dale Burrage

Top Athletes: (From left) Spc. Rob Pilcher, 313th Medical Company) and Bo Ruud, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cornhusker linebacker, carry the Cornhusker State Games torch near Kimball, Neb., along Highway 30. The two Nebraskans were the first of an estimated 800 runners who will carry the torch on its 1,100-mile journey to Lincoln for the start of the 2006 Cornhusker State Games. Pilcher was named the 2005 National State Games Male Athlete of the Year after winning five gold medals at last year's Cornhusker State Games while home on leave from a year-long deployment to Iraq.



So, How Heavy Is This Thing? Spc. Rob Pilcher and Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, talk together while Lempke examines the Cornhusker State Games torch near Kimball, Neb. Lempke was recently named the general chairman for the 2006 Cornhusker State Games, to be held in Lincoln July 14-23.



On Guard: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard stand at parade rest near the Guard's recruiting Hum-Vee before the start of the lighting ceremony for the annual Cornhusker State Games Torch Run, May 24, near the Nebraska-Wyoming border. The National Guard is helping sponsor this year's torch run.

Guard helping state celebrate Nebraska athletes

National Guardsmen participate in annual torch run ceremony

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The opening ceremony for the annual Cornhusker State Games torch run had a decidedly National Guard flair this year.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln linebacker Bo Ruud and Nebraska Army National Guardsman Spc. Rob Pilcher kicked off the annual torch run across Nebraska when they ran the opening mile, May 24. Starting at the Nebraska-Wyoming border near Kimball, Neb., Pilcher and Ruud ran together along the Highway 30 shortly after the torch lighting ceremony.

Pilcher, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), was named the 2005 State Games Athlete of the Year after amassing a 13-0 record and five gold medals in wrestling at last year's Cornhusker State Games. He competed during his two-week leave from duty in Iraq last summer.

Along with the state honor, Pilcher was later named the National State Games Athlete of the Year.

Ruud, who collected 80 tackles including 14 for losses, was the third leading tackler for the 2005 Nebraska Cornhuskers, who capped an 8-4 season with a come-from-behind victory of Michigan in the Alamo Bowl.

The redshirt junior from Lincoln missed spring practice with a broken arm suffered before the bowl game, but is expected to be ready to play in the season-opener against Louisiana Tech on Sept. 2 in Lincoln.

Along with Pilcher, the Nebraska National Guard had a major presence at this year's torch lighting ceremony.

Also participating in the ceremony was Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, who has been named the general chairman of the 2006 Cornhusker State Games.

"The general chairman traditionally serves as the face of the Cornhusker State Games sponsors and volunteers," said Dave Mlnarik, Cornhusker State Games executive director. "General Lempke is an ideal chairman given the National Guard's support since the games began."

The Nebraska National Guard is the co-sponsor of the Torch Run and Tobacco-Free Nebraska. The Torch Run is conducted annually to promote entry into the Cornhusker State Games.

Pilcher and Ruud were the first of an estimated 800 runners expected to carry the torch during its 1,100-mile journey to Lincoln.

As sponsor of the run, the Nebraska National Guard will escort runners in its special "National Guard" recruiting Hum-Vee.

Officials said that several torch ceremonies will be held at National Guard armories across the state.

Nebraska National Guardsmen and their families are also eligible for a \$20 discount in entry fees to the Cornhuskers State Games.

Those interested can apply by requesting an entry fee coupon via e-mail at info@CornhuskerStateGames.com.

The 22nd annual Cornhusker State Games takes place July 14-23 in Lincoln and are expected to attract 12,000 Nebraska athletes of all ages and abilities. Competition is offered in 58 sports.

For more information, check out CornhuskerStateGames.com or 1-800-30-GAMES.

(From Nebraska Sports Council news releases)

2006 TAG MARKSMANSHIP COMPETITION

Where the Good Become Great!

**AUGUST 4, 5, 6
GREENLIEF TRAINING SITE
HASTINGS, NEBRASKA**

Earn points towards the expert in competition badge. Open to all Nebraska Army and Air National Guard wanting to participate in sniper, rifle, pistol, and machine gun marksmanship competition. Talk to your state marksmanship office.

SSG Shawn Young at 402-309-7866
CMSgt Doug Lierz at 402-309-1242

2006 TAG APFT COMPETITION

WHERE THE BEST PROVE IT!



**AUGUST 12TH
MEMORIAL HALL, CAMP ASHLAND**

Competition will begin at 0830. Standards will be held in compliance with FM 21-20. Open to all Nebraska Army & Air National Guard, who want to compete individually or as a team. For questions regarding the competition, please contact SFC John Murphy at 402-309-7359 or CSM John Payer at 402-309-7355.



High School wrestling team sends four athletes into Guard

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

When members of the Pender High School "Pendragon" Wrestling Team concluded their season at the 2006 State Wrestling Meet in Omaha at the Quest Center, they did so comfortable in the knowledge that they'd just completed a historic outing for the northeastern Nebraska team.

The team's fourth-place finish in the Class D tournament was the best in school history as were the school's seven state qualifiers and four state medalists, of which one was a gold and a second was silver.

This year's team also featured another unique feature that few knew about. Of the 13 athletes who went out for wrestling this year, four have joined the Nebraska Army or Air National Guard and will be attending basic training this summer.

"To tell you the truth, I wasn't even paying attention to it until (Assistant Coach) Dallas Bartlett brought it up," said Head Coach Dennis Oliver, himself a nine-year veteran of the Nebraska Army Guard, having served as a tank crewman in Holdrege and Kearney during the 1980s.

Joining the Guard from the team are seniors Joseph Sherwood, Travis Dunn and Gage Bowder, and junior Cordero Hansen. Sherwood, Dunn and Hansen joined the Nebraska Army Guard, while Bowder joined the Air Guard.

Three of these new Guardsmen were among the seven school athletes who wrestled at state, taking a fifth, second and first place medal at the March meet in Omaha featuring the top high school wrestlers from across Nebraska. The other was a first-year wrestler who, despite being a rookie, managed to do extremely well.

According to Bartlett, Air Guard wing human resources advisor who served as first sergeant of the 155th Security Forces during its 18-month mobilization following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, seeing so many members of one small team join the Guard was surprising at first.

"I was surprised by the first (enlistment), but then the other ones started talking about it here and there," said Bartlett. "Kids always ask me in class about being in the Guard."

Even though the new Guardsmen come from one small 13-man team, the reasons they joined the Guard are diverse. For some, it was a chance to earn money for college. For others, it seemed like something interesting to do or a chance to follow family members into uniform.

The first Pendragon to join the Guard was Benjamin Sherwood, a first-time wrestler who competed in the 275-pound weight division. He said a Guard recruiter helped spark his interest.

"The recruiter came to school and really presented a great opportunity for college," said Sherwood, who compiled an impressive 22-16 record in his only year as a wrestler. "If I went full-time, I probably would have the same opportunity to go to college and get a degree."

"That was what started it...the money opportunities," said Sherwood.

Sherwood said he initially wanted to join the 189th Transportation Company in nearby Wayne as a truck driver before a doctor discovered he was color blind, causing him to enlist instead as an administrative clerk in Lincoln's 105th Personnel Detachment.

News of his enlistment soon spread throughout the 96-person school and small town.

"(The news) was pretty much around the school the day I did it," he said. "I got out of school to go to the (Military Entrance Processing Station) office...it's a pretty small school and small town, so everybody knew."

Sherwood said friends and classmates soon began asking him questions about the Guard. Among those asking were members of the wrestling team. Within a short amount of time, other team members also enlisted.

Guard Grapplers



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Recent Enlistees: Four members of the 2006 Pender High School Wrestling Team enlisted into the Nebraska National Guard in recent months. Joining the Guard are (from left) Benjamin Sherwood, who enlisted into the Army Guard's 105th Personnel Detachment; Travis Dunn, who joined Wayne's 189th Transportation Company; Gage Bowder, who enlisted into the Air Guard's 155th Civil Engineering Squadron; and Cordero Hansen, Wayne's 189th Trans. Co. Of the four wrestlers, three took medals at this year's state wrestling meet, with Dunn winning gold in the Class D 125-pound weight division and Bowder taking silver in the 119-pound division.

The second to follow Sherwood into the Guard was fellow senior Dunn.

"It seemed like a great way to pay for college and it's close to home," said Dunn, who joined the Wayne unit as a truck driver. "It also seemed like an interesting thing to do."

As a wrestler, Dunn took gold in the 125-pound weight division, coming from behind in both of his final matches in Omaha.

His last victory came as a result of a pin in the final minute of the match.

"I accomplished my goal," said Dunn, who finished the season with a 37-5 record and 138-36 career record, the last of which was a school record. "It wasn't easy. I was behind and I had to get a pin."

Along with Dunn's career record, he also set school records for the most team points (836.5) over a career, most pins (73) in a career and shared the career record

for three-point nearfalls with fellow senior and Guardsman, Gage Bowder.

According to Bowder, who took silver at state in the 119-pound weight division, joining the Guard was something he'd wanted to do since his early childhood.

"The planes...I've always liked the planes since I was young," said Bowder, who joined the Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Civil Engineering Squadron as an electrician in January. In joining the Air Guard, Bowder joined his sister, brother, uncle and aunt in the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing.

Bowder said his sister, Staff Sgt. Anita Lovell, helped set up his meeting with a unit recruiter. He went to his first drill in February and came away impressed.

"I liked it," he said. "It's something that not too many people ever get to experience."

While Bowder waits to attend basic

training, he said he's received plenty of advice from his family and coaches on what to expect.

"The whole family has given me some advice. I've also talked with people from other branches of service and they've all given me advice," Bowder said. "I think the physical training part has pretty much been taken care of (through wrestling). The mental part...I don't know if wrestling is going to help."

"(The biggest thing they've told me is), you're not there because you have to be, you're there because you want to be," Bowder added.

As far as wrestling goes, Bowder, who hopes to study either computers or electronics in college, said his most vivid memory will be getting the opportunity to participate in the annual "Parade of Champions" following this year's meet.

"(The parade) is really one of the best things things I've ever experienced," said Bowder, who finished the year with a 34-6 record and a 164-61 career. "Only two people in each weight division from each class in the state get to do that."

The final member of the team to join the Guard was Cordero Hansen. As a junior, Hansen was also the first to attend basic training, leaving for Fort Jackson, S.C., less than a week after classes let out for the year in mid-May.

Hansen, who joined the Wayne unit as a truck driver, said his brother and Bartlett both provided the spark.

"My brother is in the Marine Corps and I've always looked up to him. Also, during the Veterans Day program, (I was impressed) how people looked up to Mr. Bartlett when he was in his uniform," said Hansen, who placed fifth this year at the State Meet, competing in the 103-pound weight division. Hansen, who finished the season with a 33-6 record and is on pace to win more than 100 career matches, said he believes the training he received through the wrestling program has prepared him somewhat for the challenges he expects to face at basic.

"(Coach) Oliver runs practice pretty hard," said Hansen, who hopes to study Criminal Justice in college someday. "I think that I'll be pushed even more, but I'll be able to push through that wall."

According to Bartlett, the fact that all four of the school's current enlistees are members of the wrestling team is simply coincidental. Still, he said, the four seem prepared for their first full-blown taste of military training.

"Two of the guys are in track and they're all very athletic. I'm not worried about them qualifying when they get to basic training," said Bartlett. "We don't run our practices like boot camp...so, it's probably a coincidence that they're all on the wrestling team."

"As with any athletic endeavor, there's a certain amount of discipline and self-sacrifice. And all four of these guys were very good," he added.

Bartlett said that mindset was clearly evident throughout the season. Even though the school did not field a complete team with wrestlers in each of the weight classes, the wrestlers and team continued to improve.

"They're certainly dedicated to this sport because as the season went on, the success kept rolling in...it made their ambition even greater," said Bartlett, adding that the sports rough competitiveness is probably what helped attract the athletes to the Guard.

Oliver said he expects that drive to continue as the wrestlers now attempt to tackle a new profession.

"Physically, I think they're already prepared," he said. "It's the mental part of boot camp and basic training... they're not used to that where it's one thing... military."

According to Sherwood, he and the others know they're in for a huge challenge.

"I think wrestling has helped me learn how to keep going though it hurts," he said. "I'm sure its going to be challenging...but after wrestling, I think we should be able to meet it."