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Back from war 1109th returns home to family and friends

Pvt. ANGELA GUSTAFSON
65th PCH

They're home!

After a year of anticipation, Soldiers of the 1109th Aviation Classification Repair Activity Depot finally came home to their families.

The return ceremony was held Feb. 28, in the hangar of Groton-New London Airport, home to the unit.

More than 200 Soldiers from the unit, including 70 members of the Mississippi Army National Guard were activated last December and January. The unit was stationed in Arifjan, Kuwait. During support missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, teams were sent forward to perform repairs on aircrafts.

This was not the first time that the 1109th had been activated. The unit participated in Operation Desert Storm and 100 members were sent to Somalia.

"We pretty much get deployed every time," said Maj. Robert Burnside, the unit commander. "The 1109th is older than most. There are many veterans from Desert Storm and even several veterans from Vietnam. We have a good core of young Soldiers,



A Soldier from the 1109th AVCRAD gets a hero's welcome from his family upon returning to Connecticut. (Photo by Pvt. Angela Gustavson, 65th PCH)

but the bulk of the unit is more experienced." About 40 percent of the 303-member unit is prior service. The anticipated time of mobilization was six months. However, while waiting for a replacement unit from the Missouri Army National Guard to rotate in, the president turned off that rotation and extended the mobilization to a year.

With the constant changing of the unit's return date, this deployment, like many others, was very hard on the families and soldiers.

"Now that it is over, it would have been better to know they would have been there a year when they left then to find out later," said Burnside.

The friends and families have been apprehensive for the homecoming of the Soldiers of the 1109th.

"You're waiting for it and all of a sudden it's here. It is kind of strange, good, but strange," said Kazimiera Kozlowski from Lebanon, Conn., wife of Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Oparowski.

"This last week has been the longest because of the anticipation," said Robert

See AVCRAD RETURNS Page 14-15

Officials work on balancing Guard force

ARMY MASTER SGT. BOB HASKELL
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

Governors will be able to call on at least 50 percent of their National Guard forces for homeland-defense missions and other state emergencies because of a plan to realign Army and Air Guard units during the next few years, the chief of the National Guard Bureau said.

"We will balance our forces, focusing on the right force mix and the right kinds of units with the right capabilities in every state and territory," said Army Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum while addressing the National Governors Association's winter meeting here.

The intent is to have no more than 50 percent of the 460,000-person Guard force involved in the nation's warfighting effort at any given time. With this, between 50 and 75 percent of the force can be available "on a no-notice, immediate basis" for missions on their home turf, General Blum said.

"We must develop a predictive deployment model ... that ensures the [Guard] force is managed to permit (about) 25 percent to be deployed to the warfight; with another 25 percent training to replace those already deployed; and ensuring that a minimum of 50 percent remain available to the governors for state missions, homeland defense and support for homeland-security operations," General Blum said.

"To get to this end-state, we are going through a top-to-bottom rebalancing nationwide," he said. "It will result in a more evenly distributed burden-sharing throughout the Guard, enhanced capabilities in the National Guard in each state and a better level of predictability for when the force may be needed.

"The model will be based on a goal of no more than one substantial deployment every five or six years for Guard soldiers and one deployment every 15 months for Guard airmen, he said. General Blum also asked the governors to support legislation that the Defense Department has proposed to expand the authority of Title 32 of the U.S. code.

See BALANCING Page 21

Company C, 242ND Eng. Bn. returns from Operation Noble Eagle duty at Fort Drum



A happy dad from the 242nd spends some play time with his daughter. (Photo by Spec. Jesse J. Stanley, 65th PCH)

STAFF SGT. STEVE MARKOWSKI
65th PCH

When "Operation Noble Eagle" called Connecticut Army National Guard units to provide force protection at Army bases in the northeastern U.S., more than 125 members of Company C, 242nd Engineer Battalion responded.

The engineers, accustomed to overcoming various obstacles in challenging environments, found themselves facing new challenges. After putting their civilian lives on hold in May 2003, Company C engineers also left their traditional military roles to learn new skills augmenting military police at active duty bases. The 400 Connecticut Guard soldiers called up for Operation Noble Eagle were deployed throughout the Northeast Region to provide force protection at several military posts.

See 242nd RETURNS Page 28

Up Front with the Adjutant General

Celebrate: Returning units and Women's History

After more than a year of sending units off to war around the world, it is nice to finally welcome two units back to Connecticut.

Company C, 242nd Engineers returned to Connecticut early in February after successfully performing Homeland Security duties at Fort Drum, N.Y.

The 1109th AVCRAD also returned to Connecticut late in February after an equally successful year in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

It was a wonderful, heartwarming experience at both returns to see our Soldiers reunited with their families after having been so far away from them for so long. We must now focus on making their return as seamless as we possibly can, while remaining focused on the fact that we have many more Soldiers still deployed in the Global War on Terrorism.

The AVCRAD saw firsthand the results of combat on aircraft of all kinds. The men and women of the AVCRAD performed their duties exceptionally well and got the aircraft back where they were needed most.

And that brings me to the discussion of the growing importance of the role of women in the military.

Women make up 10 percent of the National Guard nationwide, 15 percent of the Connecticut National Guard, and while they are still not allowed into combat units, they do see combat. And some get taken prisoner while others die. As of Feb. 29, the Defend America Website reported 25 American

servicewomen had been killed during hostilities overseas.

Two of the most famous Prisoners of War during this conflict were women: Pfc. Jessica Lynch and Spec. Shoshana Johnson, both from the 507th Maintenance Company. Their convoy came under fire while on a routine mission, and both were taken prisoner.

Both have since returned home to their loved ones with serious injuries that will plague them for the rest of their lives, but the important thing to remember is that any Soldier, regardless of unit, can be killed or taken prisoner while doing their jobs.

Our own 143rd Military Police Company has many women in its ranks, as do the 248th Engineer Company and Company G, 104th Aviation Regiment, some of whom have been injured doing their jobs. And now we have sent the 118th Medical Company into Iraq, another unit with many women serving proudly.

These are not combat units, but their missions still take them into harm's way, and some of our female Soldiers will be awarded the Purple Heart for their sacrifices.

Times and circumstances have changed, and we must be prepared for those changes. Our female Soldiers have shown they can handle those changes, and we must celebrate their courage and their strength.

March is Women's History Month, and on Friday, March 26, the Connecticut National Guard, in conjunction with the United States Postal Service, will present a program honoring women entitled "Women

Inspiring Hope and Possibility." The program will take place from 10 a.m. to noon at the Torp Theater, Central Connecticut State University, New Britain.

This year's keynote speaker is Commissioner Linda Schwartz, Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs, herself a veteran of the United States Air Force where she served as nurse. She was medically retired from the Air Force due to injuries she received while on active duty as a flight nurse during the Vietnam War.

Commissioner Schwartz is a tireless advocate for the rights of all veterans.

Also joining the celebration as a special guest will be Susan H. Hoover, Special Projects Director for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Hoover directs a variety of projects that focus on women's equity issues such as increasing women's access to high skill, high wage non-traditional occupations, pay equity, gender equity in employment and women's health care.

We look forward to seeing you all at this very important day as we celebrate the contributions of women in general, and our own female Soldiers and Airwomen in particular.



Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno
Adjutant General

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Second Company Governors Horse Guard

First Company Governors Foot Guard

Second Company Governors Foot Guard

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Perspectives

How has the Global War on Terror changed the way you feel about women in combat?



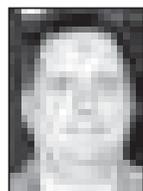
STAFF SGT. MICHAEL D. FIELDER
103rd LOGISTICS
READINESS SQUADRON

I think if they can join the Guard and train, and are willing to give their life for this country, they should be able to.



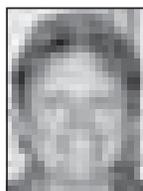
MASTER SGT. DONNA L. GEROW
103rd FIGHTER WING

I think it [female service] is more accepted now then when I came in. As well as things like women going to countries where women are not held in as high regard as this country holds them.



TECH. SGT. WILLIAM J. SPOKES
103rd COMMUNICATIONS
FLIGHT

It [combat service] is part of equality. Women have always done an excellent job this is just another part.



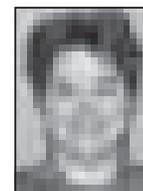
MASTER SGT. CAROLYN C. OWEN
103rd OPERATIONS
SUPPORT FLIGHT

It is a lot different than when I came in 28 years ago. I could not even fire an M-16 in basic training. Now we [women] are right down in the trenches and above in fighter jets.



COL. JOHN P. SWIFT
103rd FIGHTER WING
VICE COMMANDER

No change for me. I have served with women my whole career. If the woman is fully qualified, be it security or and A-10 pilot, I am happy.



TECH. SGT. MICHELLE M. WINK
103rd MISSION SUPPORT
FLIGHT

I definitely never thought about it until this war. I don't think it [gender] matters when they are doing their jobs like anyone else.

National Guardsmen: Right where they want to be

MIKE BRENNAN
FORT HAMILTON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Fewer than 10 miles east of New Haven, Conn., after Interstate Route 95 breaks east northeast along the Connecticut shoreline towards Cape Cod and the beaches and port towns of New England, sits the town of Branford.

Situated in town is the army for the 242nd Engineer Battalion, Charlie Company, a unit dedicated to providing combat engineering support to combat forces. The company commander and first sergeant went to Branford High School ten years apart.

The 242nd came to Fort Hamilton in mid-December after six months at Fort Drum near Waterville, NY on the Canadian border, and as Capt. Pat Libero puts it, "the guys who are here wanted to be here."

On a sunny Wednesday in late January at "zero dark" hundred, the 242nd roused themselves for a six-mile road march with

rucksacks and cold weather gear along the promenade below the Verrazano Bridge. With a wind chill that made the temperature feel like 2 degrees, the men grabbed their guidon and got moving into high gear along the narrows.

Libero was satisfied with the six-mile march completed in approximately 90 minutes saying, "the men did well coming off of fewer marches in recent weeks."

The regular PT schedule for the unit was altered with the re-deployment from Fort Drum to Fort Hamilton.

"Our unit could be called to the Balkans if need be," Libero added emphasizing the need for cold weather conditioning. The 242nd arrived at Fort Drum in June 2003 and "there were days when you wore your poly pro to keep warm," Libero said referring to the special fabric that makes up a soldier's cold weather underclothing.

As civilians, Libero and 1st Sgt. Masotta also have their hands full. Libero is a Sales Director for a medical company. Masotta is a civil engineer and the Director of Public Works for the town of Branford.

"Most of our unit's soldiers are college-age guys. They go to UConn, Central Connecticut University, and a number of them are now deciding that they want to be in the Army as active duty. It's alright if they leave the 242nd, because the Army gets them if I lose them."

The soldiers of the 242nd found their mission to be the same as it was at Fort Drum with some modifications since Fort Hamilton provides services for so many civilians and retirees.

"We have the same mission and we received additional training from the Provost Marshall's Office, but the standards remain the same," said Libero.

"No one really travels to Fort Drum to use the PX or the commissary," said Masotta. This is part of the assets an urban military installation like Fort Hamilton has to offer, particularly in regards to goods and services available in the community. "An hour ride to a rib house in Syracuse was your big night out."

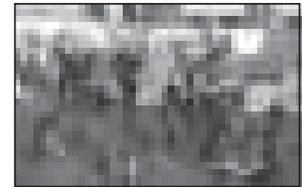
"The men are really enjoying the mission," Libero said about the unit's assignment here in Brooklyn. In their downtime, "The guys are getting out into the city; there are definitely not any 'room-rats.'"

"They take being the first and last line of defense (of Fort Hamilton) very seriously. Our philosophy is that we accept the responsibility of being the first at the gate so the community at Fort Hamilton has a safe place to work and live. We follow Col. William's standards and we feel this is our post now, also."

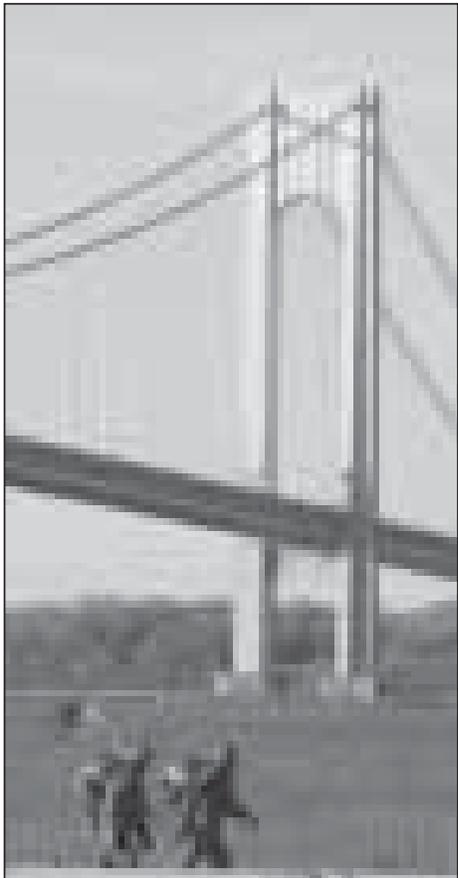
And what about the great energy the men are bringing to their jobs on post?

"You can't ask more as a commander when your soldiers understand their roles and enjoy being soldiers," said Libero.

Neither can we. Welcome to Fort Hamilton, Charlie Company.



The soldiers of Charlie Company prepare for the six-mile road march. (Photo by Mike Brennan, Fort Hamilton Public Affairs)



The guidon for Charlie Company of the 242nd Engineers Battalion, marches past the Verrazano Bridge. (Photo by Mike Brennan, Fort Hamilton Public Affairs)



A Soldier from Charlie Company, 242nd Eng. Bn. checks the identification of a driver before allowing the vehicle to enter Fort Hamilton. (Photo by Mike Brennan, Fort Hamilton Public Affairs)



The Northeasterly wind whips the company guidon as Charlie Company, 242nd Engineers, Connecticut Army National Guard marches past the Verrazano Bridge with Staten Island in the background. (Photo by Mike Brennan, Fort Hamilton Public Affairs)

Medics in the mist

SPEC. KATHLEEN GIUFFRÉ
143rd MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

The medics of the 143rd Military Police Company have been vital to the health and well-being of their MP's during their deployment to Baghdad, Iraq. The duties of the five medics; Sgt. Erica Buonocore, Sgt. Mc Whorter, Spec. Jason Gilbert, Pfc. Hyppolite and myself, include running a Battalion Aid Station for the 709th MP Battalion and providing medical support to the MP's during missions.

Working in the Battalion Aid Station has been a challenge for the medics of the 143rd, as well as an opportunity to expand their medical knowledge and expertise. Alongside medics from the 615th MP CO out of Germany and the 135th MP CO from the Ohio National Guard, the 143rd medics treat patients with illnesses and injuries ranging from the colds and flues to heat injuries, lacerations and fractures.

Since there are no doctors at the 709th BAS, patient care falls directly onto the shoulders of the medics.

"There are some things we can't treat here," said Buonocore, head medic of the 143rd. "But we give the best care that we can to everyone that comes to us."

In addition to treating patients, they have also been able to share their knowledge by



giving Combat Lifesaver certification and recertification courses. They show the Soldiers of the 709th Battalion how to apply tourniquets, give mouth to mouth, and administer I.V. treatment.

As well as their responsibilities in the Aid Station, the 143rd medics provide direct support for their platoons. They have accompanied them on raids and daily patrols.

"Whenever we've done a raid, our medic has been right there with us," said Pfc Patrick Hackett, of first platoon. "It's great to know they're ready if anything happens."

"The highlight of the deployment has been going out with my platoon. I try to go out as often as I can," said Gilbert, the medic for 3rd platoon.

Deploying to Iraq has offered the medics of the 143rd MP CO a unique opportunity

for growth as both medics and Soldiers. Their knowledge and skills have been tested and increased through daily use in the situations they have encountered in Baghdad. They look forward to returning home to their friends and families, but until then, the 143rd MP CO's medics will continue to treat their MPs with highest level of care possible.

Military Police Operations: 24/7 we never sleep

MASTER SGT. JOHN MINASIAN
143rd MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

It's 0001 hours. While most people are sleeping, the 143rd MP Tactical Operation Center (TOC) begins a new day.

The MP night patrols are finishing up their debriefs and then things usually wind down for a few hours. Midnight shift has first eyes on the new day. They do a lot of pre-mission checks for the company; they ensure the company sustainment missions, such as convoys for food, water and mechanical parts are ready to depart on time.

Staff Sgt. Thompson, newly assigned to the midnight shift, brings his experience from Desert Storm and his experience as a Connecticut State Trooper. He ensures that the incoming reports from the patrols are detailed and concise.

Staff Sgt. Bispham, who is one of the original members of the Operations Section, has been indispensable; his in-depth knowledge of FM communications and the ability to troubleshoot issues with electricity has been a Godsend, and without him we would not be in business.

The TOC is the first thing we set up, before anything else. The commander has to be able to conduct missions as soon as he

needs to.

At 0800 hours, the duty day begins in the 143D Military Police Company. We are tracking two 8-hour shifts of MPs in the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) stations, combine that with four platoons. MP platoons normally operate dispersed, and in a TOC things can get pretty hectic.

The stations call in significant actions, called SIGACTS, which occur during the day and how the detainees are being treated. A lot of times we help provide the checks and balances between the missions of the company and the platoons in the field.

"Reports, debriefs, and the mail, they definitely keep me on my toes," says Sgt. Self who is in charge of the Administrative arm of the operation center.

Master Sgt. Mark Youngquist, the day shift operations sergeant, explains that the operations section has demonstrated considerable flexibility in adapting to our ever changing mission.

The mission for the operations section first was training at Ft. Drum for a Combat TOC; an information hub, which would be in a high tempo, time-constrained environment, monitoring units, detecting threats, engaging enemy units.

When we arrived in Baghdad the major fighting was over. The operations section switched gears and began tracking law enforcement and security missions. We first had to get a situational awareness of the current Area of Operations we were being assigned to. We obtained maps, overlays and radio call signs. It is very easy to get overwhelmed by incoming information.

Staff Sgt. Young brings his expertise on MP individual and team tasks. His specialty is ammunition accountability and ranges. He works as a training NCO on the full time side of the house. He is also the only member of operations to have six confirmed kills; four dogs and two rats; you see Young is also our unit Animal control officer.

At 1700 hours, the sun begins to set and so starts the swing shift. Things are usually hectic during this shift.

Master Sgt. John Minasian, swing shift Operations Sergeant says, "It's as if everybody knows when shift change is. We monitor when the second MP shift departs and when they are set up. It's a lot more stressful then I originally thought or imagined in regards to the sense of frustration when things go wrong and I can't be there to assist them except through

radio communication. It's not easy trying to keep the pulse on the actions of the platoons. And I really worry about them when they are out."

Sgt. Roberge always has a kind word and a warm greeting to the incoming and outgoing patrols, which really shows and is appreciated by the MP patrols. Spec. Mesaros, our administration "Guru" has a special skill that comes in handy; he is our resident expert on weapons. He can literally identify and give you the specifications on any weapon that has been confiscated.

"I compile the reports from the four different stations to ensure that they are coherent and transmitted in a timely manner. And I really miss the SKS they brought in. It was in great shape." Sgt. 1st Class Marc Pucinski says that our operations section has an interesting cast of characters

"I love working this shift because I can get a lot of my "other" work done." Pucinski is our Readiness NCO when not deployed, and even here he handles many of the issues such as personnel actions, unit status reporting, and acts as a go between for our family support group.

At 2400 hours Midnight shift comes on for another tour.

Gate duty serious business for MPs, ICDC security team

SPC. CHAD D. WILKERSON
372ND MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Protecting an entire military post from enemy attack is a job that military police offices from the 143rd Military Police Company and their Iraqi Civil Defense Corps colleagues take very seriously.

The 143rd, an Army National Guard unit from Hartford, Conn., part of Task Force 1st Armored Division, is responsible for a gate to Forward Operating Base Falcon, home of 1st Armored Division Artillery.

With the help of some fellow soldiers from the ICDC, they screen all incoming vehicles and personnel for possible threats to the safety of the post.

“We are maintaining overall security for this post,” said Sgt. Kevin Arrojado, team leader with 1st Platoon, 143rd MP Company. “With the present threat of (improvised explosive devices), car bombs and overall terrorist attacks, our presence is absolutely necessary.”

The gate is a multilayered defense with high-walled perimeters and lookout towers to deter any threat, said Arrojado. Like any military fortification, however, the gate relies heavily on manpower – U.S. and Iraqi manpower.

“We have several lines of defense here at the gate, and the ICDC personnel here are American-trained to help us out with screenings and traffic control,” said Arrojado. “These ICDC (soldiers) are professional and do an excellent job out here.”

The presence of ICDC service members is surprising to many Iraqis who enter through the gate and (they) stand as a statement to would-be attackers and members of the community, said Spc. Armando Bettini, military policeman with the 143rd.

“Their presence shows the Iraqis that we



An Iraqi Civil Defense Corps soldier searches workman before allowing him to pass through a gate at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad. (Photo by Spec. Chad D. Wilkerson, 372nd MPAD)

are serious about integrating Iraqis into the country’s security,” said Bettini. “Development, coexistence and training with ICDC personnel show Iraqis that we are not leaving until our mission is complete.”

It also shows that the Iraqis are taking a greater role in their country’s security.

As they enter the gate, drivers are ordered to slow their vehicle and prepare

to be searched. Signs written in English and Arabic spell out the consequences of ignoring orders from gate personnel or for trying to run through or avoid the checkpoint.

All “pat-down” searches are performed by ICDC servicemen under the MPs’ supervision.

Bettini said that all security searches are conducted with the safety of FOB Falcon’s Soldiers’ safety in mind, allowing the Soldiers

to relax in their living areas during and after carrying out their daily activities.

“We keep the FOB safe so troops can feel safe in a secure environment,” said Bettini.

Luckily, the gate has not had any direct-attack incidents under the 143rd, said Arrojado, but the MPs and ICDC soldiers are always alert, prepared and ready for any challenge.

Connecticut’s MPs restoring law and order in western Baghdad

1st LT. MICHAEL V. ROSSI
143rd MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

It has been a long, hot summer for the men and women of 2nd Platoon, 143rd Military Police Company.

The early September weather in Iraq is starting to offer a respite from the 130^o temperatures that plagued the city during the height of the summer.

The MPs, already acclimated to the weather, are finding the beginning of the fall season here more comfortable.

Temperatures ranging in the high 90s to low 100s are easier to bear for a platoon that has spent the better part of the last five months in a climate 20 to 30 degrees warmer. Since arriving in the Persian Gulf and entering Baghdad, 2nd Platoon has been working hard to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

They have been assigned to the 709th MP Battalion and tasked with restoring law and order to the western half of the war-torn city.

Working closely with the Iraqi Police Force (IPF), the MPs have been patrolling the streets and working to restore the IPF as an effective law enforcement organization.

It is a difficult and dangerous job. Many times, the platoon has come under direct fire from criminal or terrorist elements.

The Soldiers have seen poverty on a scale unequalled in the United States.

They have also frequently seen the ugly and brutal results of violent crime.

Most of these Soldiers are in their late teens and early twenties.

Many of them are fresh out of high school. Quite a few of them were taken

out of college courses to deploy here.

Despite their young age, these Soldiers have served with professionalism and competence. They have been given a difficult task and not only met the standard, but exceeded it.

The platoon has drawn praise from the 1-13th Armor Battalion of the 1st Armored Division for their performance while serving as a direct support MP platoon.

Second Platoon, along with the rest of the 143rd MP Company, has set the standard in West Baghdad when it comes to patrolling and law and order operations in the 709th MP Battalion area of responsibility.

Despite their success, the MPs are growing weary from their labors.

While morale continues to remain high, the casual observer cannot help but notice the fatigue that has slowly begun to creep into

the young Soldiers’ faces.

Eyes that were once innocent now have a hard edge to them.

Thankfully, they retain their sense of humor and their dedication to looking after each other.

Somehow, they always find some humor in every situation.

The Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, 143rd MP Company are tired. They are worn.

But they know that there is still a mission to accomplish.

Since their platoon’s arrival in Baghdad, they have made significant strides to reduce crime and improve security.

While they may not know how long it will be until they see home again, they know that they are making a tangible difference in the Iraqi peoples’ lives.

C-23: A small cargo plane that makes a big difference

LT. COL. ROBERT JOHNSON
CFLCC PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

It sits like a big green bumble bee on the pavement and you ask yourself, "Can this thing really fly?"

Like the bumblebee, the Army's C-23 Sherpa airplane certainly looks like it would defy logic and gravity if it did fly. With its stubby wings, bloated body and twin tails, this small but able cargo aircraft can not only fly, but excels in the role of intra theater transport of cargo and personnel.

"It's a great little plane," said Staff Sgt. Edward McKenna III, crew chief for one of the Sherpas of I Company, 185th Aviation Battalion stationed at Ali Al Salem Airbase.

The C-23 can be configured to haul cargo or personnel. It can easily handle twenty people or three pallets of cargo, said the Mississippi native McKenna. The plane may be slow, but it can reach most distant airfields without a fuel problem. Its appetite for fuel is much less than the CH-47 Chinook medium-lift helicopter. Because of this, it's economical to fly the Sherpa when speed is not essential.

"We fly almost everyday to somewhere in the theater." An air crew gets at least three missions a week since the aircraft was brought into Kuwait back in June and we fly anywhere in the theater except Baghdad, added McKenna.

"We tried flying into Baghdad once, but we're just too slow for the threat." The plane got shot at several times before it got onto the ground. So we stay away from high threat areas and use other tactics to stay safe, said McKenna.

This day's mission was not into Baghdad, but further north into Kirkuk as part of a three plane convoy ferrying school supplies for a civil affairs program in the 173rd Infantry Brigade. Each plane was loaded with two pallets of school supply materials.

"We have everything from crayons to glue sticks," said Staff Sgt. Steve Silva, the second crew chief on the flight.

Silva, a National Guard Soldier from California, has been flying C-23's since 1998. The mission to Kirkuk was a regular part of Silva's routine and he guided the "Sherpa rookie" passengers through what to expect during the 2 1/2 hour flight.

"We're not pressurized, so when we climb to above 14,000 feet, you may get a headache if you don't use the oxygen masks," instructed Silva. And, because the back door doesn't seal, the cargo-passenger area will get pretty cold during the trip.

Silva further pointed out the creature comforts of the aircraft that include a not-so-gender-friendly tube for bladder relief in-flight. No meals would be served today and the in-flight movie would be the Iraqi countryside from 14,000 feet as seen out the many large windows on the aircraft.

Despite its ungainly appearance and awkward size, the C-23 provides a relatively stable ride. The Sherpa floats like a butterfly

with its smooth flight. Smooth until descending for the landing, anyway. Then the plane stings like a bee.

"We will be above 14,000 to give us protection from small arms fire," said Silva. "But when we start to descend for landing, we will drop at a rate of about 2,000 feet per minute. It's a fast drop and your ears may hurt."

As the plane approached Kirkuk Air Field, it started a steep dive until it was seemingly just above the treetops and houses. At less than a thousand feet, faces of children and men tending sheep could clearly be seen as they looked skyward at this flying marvel. A smooth landing, a quick refuel and off-load of supplies and the green bumble bee was ready to fly again.

As the Army's cargo aircraft, the C-23 Sherpa is dwarfed by its larger cousins of the Air Force.

"The Sherpa holds about one-eighth the cargo of a C-130," noted Silva. And with its wings removed, the plane would probably fit into the belly of the C-17. But that's not how the C-23 got into theater.

"It was flown here." The company is made up of detachments from Missouri, California, Mississippi and Connecticut and they rallied the planes to a central location in the states. Then every aircraft was flown from the states to Kuwait with stops in Canada, Newfoundland, Iceland, Scotland, Germany, Italy, and Israel. Then over Iraq and into Kuwait. It took them nine days to get here, said a proud Silva.

"Nine long days," added McKenna.

Nine days to arrive and nine months in action have proven this bumblebee ready for flight.



A C-23 Sherpa aircraft sits on the tarmac while the crew readies the plane for its next mission. (Courtesy photo)



Staff Sgt. Nat Orme straps down cargo in C-23 awaiting take-off. (Courtesy photo)



Crewmembers guard supplies waiting to be off-loaded from a C-23 Sherpa at Ali Al Salem Airbase. (Courtesy photo)

Commemorative Black Lightning paint scheme

MAJ. GEORGE WORRALL
103RD FIGHTER WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

With a World War II paint scheme of a bold black lightning bolt running the length, a very special aircraft graces the flight line at Bradley Air National Guard base. This is no museum piece though, instead it is an A-10 Warthog of the 118th Fighter Squadron painted with a commemorative paint scheme from the unit's rich history.

Capt. Brian M. Boeding, A-10 pilot, 118th Fighter Squadron, proposed the idea of the commemorative jet with Staff Sgt. George Schryer, supply craftsman, 103rd Logistics Readiness Squadron.

"We asked for Col. Swift and Col. Scace's approval and with a couple rough sketches and they gave us the go ahead," said Capt. Brian M. Boeding, A-10 pilot, 118th Fighter Squadron. "We just thought it would be a good idea to do a unique paint scheme for our unit's 80th anniversary."

So why did they pick the World War II black lightning paint scheme?

"We were in combat for a year and half in China," said Boeding. "There are very few guard units that can say they spent that significant a period of time in a combat zone flying missions in World War II."

Called to federal service in 1940, the Flying Yankees performed long-range anti-submarine patrols before training for a fighter/bomber mission utilizing P-40 and P-51 Mustangs. In late 1943 they were committed to the China-India-Burma Theater of Operations. Designated the 118th

Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron the unit became a component of the 23 Fighter Group - better known as The Flying Tigers. The squadron flew daily fighter and ground support missions against the Imperial Japanese infantry and cavalry forces with resounding success displaying the black lightning bolt on their aircraft.

With an idea and the commander's approval to proceed it was time for the final design.

"Capt Boeding gave me some old photos of the planes we had in China," said Master Sgt Jon M. Clark, maintenance training manager, 103rd Maintenance Group. "I adapted the design from our P-51s in WW-II to fit on an A-10 then I used the computer to adapt it to the A-10 for a 80th anniversary paint scheme sample rendering."

Armed with the design it was time to put paint to aircraft.

"I had fun doing it and I really liked seeing how it came out, said Tech. Sgt. Daniel A. Taylor, aircraft structural repair specialist, 103 Maintenance Squadron, who was one of the people who painted the final design. "It was little more interesting since we were allowed to break away from the routine of the normal paint scheme."

Aviation enthusiasts quickly learned of the aircraft and decal sheets for model airplanes are already available. The aircraft was also photographed for upcoming A-10 hardcover books and national aviation magazines. The aircraft, #621, will display the commemorative paint scheme until October 2004.



Nate Leong, aviation photographer, Air Forces Monthly, photographs the commemorative paint scheme of 621 for an upcoming issue of the magazine February 27, 2004. (Photo by Maj. George Worrall, 103rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs)



The concept design created with graphics software by Master Sgt Jon M. Clark, maintenance training manager, 103rd Maintenance Group, to finalize the design of the commemorative paint scheme. (Altered photo graphic by Master Sgt. Jon Clark, 103 MG)



The 118th Fighter Squadron commemorative paint scheme A-10 in flight, the aircraft will keep the lightning bolt until October 2004. (Air Force photo)

Construction Platoon busy with good will, operating base

FIRST LT. STEPHAN NOWAKOWSKI
248th ENG. PLATOON LEADER

Greetings to everyone back home from Iraq. Everyone here from the 1st General Construction Platoon of the 248th Engineer Company hopes that you had a safe and happy holiday season.

We have been busy here at Camp Junction City in Ar Ramdi Iraq, as the 1st Brigade Combat Team has arrived and made themselves at home for the next year. The 3rd Armored Cavalry has left us to go west, and now we are surrounded by the patches of the 1st Infantry Division, known as the "Big Red 1."

They have been busy keeping the area west of Baghdad safe from insurgents, and we have been busy supporting them and their quality of life. Our operational tempo has been increased, and as we have learned the US Army fights at night and we have all learned to work in the dark.

The operating base that we have been

assigned to is slowly coming to life, through the hard work of all of our Soldiers. Sgt. Jason Postemski has proved his worth several times over, as he has been largely responsible for restoring power and lights to many of the building here on post. He has gotten assistance from Sgt. Nic Calabrese, Sgt. Nicholas Trahan, Sgt. Rocco Gentile, and Spec. James Carney who have all had to learn not only how to wire a building correctly, but also the Iraqi way!

Staff Sgt. Kevin Terrell has been very busy, first with the rehabilitation of several buildings at Al Asad and recently with the construction of the PX store here at Junction City. He had plenty of help from Sgt. Dan Campofiore, Spec. Zakary Poston, Spec. Josh Couch, Spec. Steven Doherty, Spec. Angela Fortenberry and Sgt. Doug Morton.

Staff Sgt. Vera Richardson has recently completed construction of an observation post that will be used to help protect coalition forces. Spec. Tye Frazer was able to use his

masonry skills to help with the construction while Sgt. Jed Couture and Spec. Ernesto Rios-Soto provided extra hands and know-how to complete the project to standard. Sgt. Stephanie Baldwin had been very busy at Al Asad, and now again she is working hard to provide showers and running water to all Soldiers at Junction City.

As the rainy season is now upon us, drainage has been a huge problem with all the mud that the season brings. Sgt. Terrell Nickson, Spec. Stephanie Garthwait, Sgt. Gerry Santos, Spec. Michelle Bergeron, Spec. Charles Anadore, Spec. Michael Castillo and Pfc. Lauren Williamson have all been busy supporting the Horizontal Platoon with dump trucks and haul assets as they maintain the roads and improve the drainage here on post.

Spec. Craig Michaud has been high in demand as an equipment operator, installing culverts and trenching drainage lines. Sgt. Ed McCorkindale has been busy

with supervising the gate that admits local Iraqi contractors and suppliers, a job that directly influences our force protection and quality of life as most of these contractors are improving our buildings. With almost 1 million dollars in cyclic inventory Sgt. 1st Class Heather Marien has been busy managing our building-materials yard, with the help of Spec. Heather Magao.

As for me, I get to enjoy the pride that comes with being the 1st General Construction Platoon Leader. I am truly in awe when I think of what our platoon has accomplished, how we all perform under stress, and how close we have all become. What you see above is only a sample of what we have done while here in Iraq, and our work here is not yet done. But someday we will be home and we will all leave here knowing that through our hard work a small section of the world is a little safer, and a little better.

Feeling privileged to work with professional Soldiers

FIRST LT. ROBERT DOLLAK
HORIZONTAL PLATOON LEADER
248th ENGINEER COMPANY (CBT) (HVY)
AR RAMADI, IRAQ

Privileged.

That is the word that comes to my mind as I enter the 10th month of deployment with the Horizontal Platoon of the 248th Engineer Company.

I am extremely privileged to have the opportunity to lead and serve with such high quality soldiers.

Soldiers who although only part-time National Guardsmen have risen to meet every challenge to come their way. Soldiers who consistently do their jobs in an extremely professional manner, often times outshining their active duty counterparts in the process.

From night operations outside the wire, to base camp construction and demolition, and various combat heavy operations, the men of my platoon have displayed immense determination to perform all missions assigned to them at the highest possible standard.

I have even received requests from active duty units for particular Soldiers to accompany them on certain missions because of the high degree of skill my men have displayed.

The Horizontal Platoon has been involved in force protection missions to clear routes of improvised explosive devices for Coalition forces, barricade protection of Iraqi Police forces, road building, and security for convoys.

Each time the platoons' skills have impressed the active duty leadership as well as our own company leadership.

I wish for the families of these men to know that their husbands, sons, brothers and fathers have contributed immensely to the efforts of all the Coalition Forces.

As we begin to near the end of our combat deployment we will continue to strive to be a valuable part of the efforts to restore peace to this country.

Lastly, we eagerly anticipate our return to all of our friends and loved ones in the great State of Connecticut.

The 'Heartbeat' continues to make a difference

SGT. 1st CLASS BURKE
UNIT OPERATIONS SERGEANT
248th ENGINEERS

Happy New Year from the Headquarters Section.

We enjoyed several events during the holiday season with our Battalion, 1 EN.

A traditional Christmas Tree Lighting with Christmas Carols, a Battalion Holiday Celebration and a Traditional Christmas Meal was provided.

With the holidays past us we are back to the grindstone.

We are making a difference here and you can see the job satisfaction in the Soldiers as we work tirelessly to support our fellow troops.

Our Soldiers continue to succeed each and every day.

The weather remains constant and relatively comfortable with a few nights that get pretty cold.

The Headquarters Section, otherwise known as the "Heartbeat" continues with twenty-four-hour operations.

Communications Section, led by Sgt. Deer is doing a superb job monitoring three different radio stations, weekly COMSEC changes and maintaining all the equipment. Spec. Gee, a Radio Operator competed against some of the best in the battalion Soldier of the Month board for January and came up just a little short as top candidate.

Staff Sgt. Carpenter, unit supply sergeant has been extremely busy ensuring all Soldiers have the proper clothing and equipment to complete the missions.

Staff Sgt. Butterworth, has now surpassed any Soldier in the unit by leading yet another seven convoy missions this month.

Thanks once again for everything you are doing which allow all of us here to focus on the mission.

We would not be successful without your continued support.

We as a family are making a difference in support of OIF knowing that through our hard work the world is a little safer.

God Bless the USA

Connecticut Guardian, staff win national awards

The National Guard Bureau Public Affairs Office announced the winners of its 2003 Media Competition in February and Connecticut finished in the top three in six categories.

The *Connecticut Guardian* placed first National Guard-wide in the Tabloid Newspaper category. (Tabloid refers to

the size of the publication.)

Staff Sgt. Carolyn Aselton of the 103rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office also received a first place finish in the Outstanding Contribution by a Contractor/ Stringer Category. This category looks at a series of three articles submitted by the entrant.

Both first place winners go on to the Keith L. Ware Competition which is an Army-wide contest.

Staff Sgt. Steve Markowski of the 65th Press Camp took third place in the Stand Alone Photo Category.

Sgt. 1st Class Debbi Newton took second place in the Photojournalism Category and

was tied for third in the Newswriting Category.

And the *Family Deployment Supplement to the Connecticut Guardian* finished third in the Special Achievement in Print Media Category.

Awards will be presented to the winners at the National Guard Bureau Public Affairs Conference in October.

A doc reports from the front

LT. COL. RICHARD YOUNG
118th MEDICAL BN.

Fort Drum, NY (near the Canadian Border), Home of the 10th Mountain Division

First, I wish to thank each of you for your heartfelt support. When I am with my Army family, it is very comforting to me to have the prayers, best wishes, and love of my family at home. I hope through these periodic letters you will have some idea of what I am experiencing and also a better understanding of the mission of our soldiers.

The Journey Begins

Dr. Gerard Curran and I are the physicians for Headquarters Company, 118 Medical Battalion. We departed Connecticut on 22 Jan after goodbyes to our families. After a six-hour trek through a snowstorm, we arrived at frigid Fort Drum. With the entire northeast locked in cold Canadian air, the outdoor temperature is generally about 10 degrees with the wind chill below zero. As a result, we are dressed in polypro underwear and white "mickey mouse" boots to protect against frostbite. How this prepares you for the deserts of Iraq is anyone's guess. We joke with each other that we'll eventually deploy to Alaska!

Docs and Dentists

There are 16 of us who arrived (12 docs and four dentists, all National Guard from Connecticut, Wisconsin, Massachusetts and Ohio (13 male, three female). It is a super group of docs and we eat, go to class, exercise, and yes, complain together. The deployment is a particular hardship to our three dentists, all of whom are solo practitioners. They had to temporarily close

their offices, with repercussions for their staffs. There is another pediatrician from Dedham, Mass., who also served in the Indian Health Service. We have a child psychiatrist from New Bedford, Mass. Other specialties include Ob-Gyn, Emergency Med, and Internal Medicine.

These are dedicated and patriotic professionals. Once we arrive in Iraq, we will divide into smaller units which will be assigned to field units either in Baghdad, or Northern or Southern Iraq. Capt. Cunha, our personnel officer, is uncertain how the Army will find docs to replace us after our promised 120-day tour of duty. As we do the arithmetic, none of our states has a surfeit of physicians / dentists. We are concerned that as the United States commits itself to a force of 100,000 soldiers in Iraq for the next several years, the pool of docs / DDS's from which to draw will be depleted.

Mobilization

This is the Army's term for all preparation prior to deployment. For us, it meant smallpox shots and anthrax immunizations. The smallpox requires 15 jabs of the needle for those of us who were previously vaccinated, but only three for the younger folk. Very itchy with a huge red wheel and an ulcerating center. Not very pretty. We were also issued four sets of desert uniforms, a Gore Tex parka, a Ballistic protective vest (40 pounds with the ceramic plates), and two sets of tan boots.

This past week has been filled with training (9 mm pistol, Geneva Convention, unexploded ordnance, improvised explosive devices, land navigation). All of

this is done outdoors with the temperature between 0 and 10 degrees. We also attended briefings on the law of war (ethics of war), treatment of enemy POW's and convoy protection. We are glad when the training day ends and we return to the warmth of our quarters.

Life at Fort Drum

The food is excellent and (overly) plentiful. For the last several days, we have substituted a 20 minute run at the gym for the omelettes, hash browns and bacon. Lunch and dinner menus feature lots of salad, entrees (meat loaf, pork chops, hamburgs, all accompanied by ubiquitous brown gravy), desserts and sundaes. I guess in the frigid North, food becomes a principal source of satisfaction. We are back in the barracks in the evening to allow for packing, emailing, and personal time.

Faith Services at Fort Drum

We were fortunate to attend Protestant services the first week and Catholic services the second. Both were excellent. The Protestant chaplain is a very young lieutenant. There was a "deployment" candle lit for the soldiers afield. The second Sunday, we attended Catholic services. It is held in the same Chapel, but the cross can rotate so that the Protestants see only a plain cross, while the Catholics see Jesus on the cross. There were special prayers and silence for soldiers of the 10th Mountain Div. who were killed in Afghanistan. Fr. Ude, the Catholic Chaplain, gave a remarkable sermon on Paul's 12th letter to the Corinthians on Love. His bottom line: Love endureth all.



Dr. (Lt. Col. Richard Young of the 118th Medical Company undergoes some cold weather acclimation at Fort Drum. He, and his company are now in Iraq where the weather is much different. From time to time during his deployment, the doctor will be reporting on the experiences he and his unit share in the Global War on Terror. (Photo courtesy Lt. Col. Richard Young)

What's ahead?

We depart for the Middle East soon and will arrive in Kuwait. There will be more briefings there as we prepare to convoy to Iraq. It is a time of peril for US Troops as there is a massive exchange of Soldiers departing and arriving. At this point, all we can hope and pray for is the continued safety of our Armed Forces.



Photo at top:
Learning to recognize types of mines and explosives (especially, how to avoid them)!

Photo at left:
These are the Docs (14) and Dentists (4) in the Medical Battalion. They are from Connecticut, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Ohio. All but one were Patriot fans!

(Photos courtesy Lt. Col. Richard Young)

Air Base offers celebration of Ash Wednesday

MAJ. GEORGE WORRALL
103RD FIGHTER WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

About ten Airmen from the 103rd Fighter Wing took a break from their workday routine to share in an Ash Wednesday service Feb. 25.

"I think it is a great opportunity for Airmen to take a break from their day and spend a moment to think about the holiday and what they want to do for lent," said Senior Master Sgt. Michael J. Romeo, inspector general administrator, 103 Fighter Wing.

Many appreciated the convenience of the on-base service.

"It is great to be able to have it here at the guard," said Tech. Sgt. William J. Spokes, telephone repair craftsman, 103rd Communications Flight, who has attended the service on base for several years. "It was excellent."

A service the chaplain is happy to provide. "I have performed the service since I came here [103rd Fighter Wing] in 1988," said Chaplain (Maj.) Joseph D. Nguyen, chaplain, 103 Fighter Wing. "It is good for the people who probably would not have a chance to get to church otherwise. I performed one mass in morning, this one, and have two to go."

Ash Wednesday dates to the seventh century when a pope named Gregory the Great moved the start of the Lenten fast to a



Moments after the Ash Wednesday service, Chaplain (Maj.) Joseph D. Nguyen, chaplain, 103 Fighter Wing, packs the paraphernalia he needs and departs to perform Ash Wednesday services off Bradley Air National Guard Base February 25. (Photo by Maj. George Worrall, 103rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs)

Wednesday. The move was to allow 40 days for the older tradition of fasting while not counting Sundays, when feasting is allowed.

The ceremony of marking foreheads with ash is to remind those that ask forgiveness of the bible's symbol of repentance - sackcloth and ashes - and their mortality.

"In the mass, it is a time to remember 'You

are dust, and to dust you will return' (Gen 3:19)," said Nguyen. "And to actually remind you, you are dependent on God. When you came into this world you had nothing, and when you go out you will have nothing, because when you die you become dust again."

The ashes come from the palms from the



Chaplain (Maj.) Joseph D. Nguyen, chaplain, 103 Fighter Wing, applies palm ashes to heads of guard members at the close of the Ash Wednesday service on Bradley Air National Guard Base. (Photo by Maj. George Worrall, 103rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs)

previous palm Sundays.

"We burn them [palm leaves] and save the ashes for the next [year]," said Nguyen.

Fort Stewart to increase its deploying units by 66 percent

SGT. 1ST CLASS MARCIA TRIGGS

(Editor's note: This is the second in a series of articles on Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker's focus areas. This one discusses "Modularity.")

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Jan. 20, 2004) - "It's like breaking China," said the commanding general who has proposed to make his division larger, diversify his brigades and turn all his Soldiers into riflemen.

Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga., seized Baghdad and helped in the stabilization of Fallujah. They know what tactics work against an unconventional enemy, and what vulnerabilities make American troops targets.

Their task now is to turn their three brigades into five rapidly deployable "brigade units of action" that are able to plug into any division and independently fight a high intensity conflict.

"The chief told me that he wants five maneuver brigades ... to respond to all the needs of combatant commanders when a crisis occurs, and he said that he wants it to happen ASAP," said Maj. Gen. William Webster, 3rd Inf. Div. commanding general, referring to instructions given to him by the Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker.

Part of Schoomaker's instruction was to see if the reorganization could take place

using existing resources within the division. However, the proposal on the table now would cause the division to get larger by about 2,000 to 3,000 troops, said Webster. The brigade numbers would stay the same, but combat troops would decrease by about 10 to 15 percent, he added.

Each brigade unit of action will have one fewer company-size element and less artillerymen, Webster said. However, it will have more military policemen, better command and control assets to talk to each other over long distances, and more certified troops to call in close air support, he added.

The transformation of the mechanized division will require more than requesting more troops and equipment; the Soldiers are in for some tumultuous times because they are going to have to break precious ways the Army used to do business to create a new organization.

"Soldiers don't mind breaking things," Webster said, "but in the beginning it will be difficult because there will be some frustration and confusion. It's not something that they can't do, but it will be a big challenge.

"They will need to get their equipment combat ready again. Junior leaders will have to learn a number of new tasks and then retrain a lot of new Soldiers. There will be engineers, medics, artillerymen and a host of other Soldiers who will be assigned to a

brigade commander who is not accustomed to taking care of Soldiers with their job specialties."

Change has begun, and one of the first lessons learned from Iraq that is being implemented into the reorganization is making sure that every Soldier is comfortable being a Soldier first, Webster said. Soldiers must be confident and competent with their own weapons and be able to pick up their buddies' weapons, he added.

There is a program in place now were Soldiers will be shooting a lot more ammunition and using a lot more simulators than before, Webster said. Everyone from the journalists and the mechanics to the brigade commander will have the same level of confidence along with being able to live and defend themselves in the field from the front to the rear," he added.

"The enemy is learning from us," Webster said, "and they know that not all of our vehicles are armed and that not all of our Humvees are armored, and they're looking for vulnerabilities to strike with explosive devises and rocket-propelled grenades.

"So we want our Soldiers and their vehicles to exude a fearless confidence that would make the enemy think twice before attacking a convoy or command post."

Webster is working with the Army staff to acquire more machine guns and grenade

launchers to put on vehicles, so on the battlefield there will be more crew-served weapons to attack or defend.

While in Baghdad the division had to secure high value assets and set up numerous checkpoints to prevent terrorist attacks. Security missions alone started to absorb Soldiers and equipment all over the city. Webster's goal is to train more Soldiers to fight, so that combat Soldiers don't have to be used to secure a service support unit.

Besides changes to training tasks, other challenges at the division level will be overcoming the chaos that will occur when every unit identification code is affected. UICs are alphanumeric codes that help supplies flow to units. It's a system that allows personnel actions to occur, training readiness to be recorded and money to be budgeted.

"We are going to perform a very complex process of moving property from one UIC to another," Webster said. "I predict that some parts we order for one company will show up in another company. We're just going to have to make sure that things don't go awry."

In order to make sure that this massive restructuring project meets the Army chief's guidelines, a division staff was created. Lt. Col Eric Wesley is the chief of

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The state of the Connecticut National Guard

MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM A. CUGNO
ADJUTANT GENERAL

Our Nation is at war. We are fighting a war unlike any that we have fought before. It is a war fought against a global terrorist network, whose leaders, soldiers and supporters are unlikely to surrender in the foreseeable future. It is a war that has many fronts. Some of the fronts, such as those at national borders, are discernible. Other fronts, like those in cyberspace and in the hearts and minds of the American and foreign populations, prove difficult to pinpoint and evaluate. Although this war began before the infamous terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that day is recognized as the beginning of the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

In the State of the Union Address last month, President Bush stated that "some people question if America is really in a war at all. They view terrorism more as a crime, a problem to be solved mainly with law enforcement and indictments. . . . After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. The terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States, and war is what they got."

In the twenty-eight months since our Nation was attacked, the United States Armed Forces, in conjunction with coalition forces, have liberated fifty million people in two countries (Afghanistan and Iraq) by overthrowing the terrorist regimes that controlled them. Our forces have captured or killed 46 of the top 55 wanted in Iraq, including Saddam Hussein, and nearly two thirds of known al-Qaeda operatives. Just this week, we captured Muhsin Khadr al-Khafaji, number 48 on the "most wanted" list. Our Forces have hunted down thousands of terrorists, disrupted terrorist cells across the globe and in the United States. It is likely that the GWOT has prevented additional terrorist attacks on the United States and other countries.

Last year, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers stated, "We are a nation at war. This is the time for our military to rise to the occasion and serve the nation at a time like no other." To our military, the existence of war was obvious. Their preparations for and deployments to harsh environments in Southwest Asia crystallized "war" as an actual and personal reality. Yet, the statement itself serves as a reminder that some of us were not and still are not convinced that America is "at war."

Our military always rises to the occasion. The military serves the nation as effectively during peace as it does at war. Whether at peace or at war, members of our Armed Forces provide the force needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country, to fight and win our wars. Ultimately, the mission is to preserve the many freedoms our Nation enjoys and to uphold the rights of the American people as guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

To secure the American way of life, our service members sacrifice many comforts and privileges that Americans are apt to take for granted. On a daily basis, our forces endure family separations, while deployed to

forgotten distant lands where they sustain casualties on a daily basis. The families of our Armed Forces conversely feel the void left by their deployed loved ones, left behind to cope with the loneliness of isolation, often feeling helplessness, especially in the face of unnerving, unrelenting news of casualties. To be sure, they and their families have risen and will continue to rise the occasion.

Our Armed Forces (1.4 million active and 1.3 million reserve) and their families do not question the fact that America is a war. Members of our force understand the personal and professional implications of the war. With over 535 American dead in Iraq and over 100 in Afghanistan - and thousands of serious injuries, including thirteen from Hartford's 143rd Military Police Company - our Armed Forces understand firsthand the personal and professional implications of the GWOT. To us, GWOT is defined and measured in terms much more valuable than the hundreds of billions of dollars spent to finance the GWOT operations.

Almost on a daily basis, C-17 transport planes land at nearby Andrews Air Base with seriously wounded soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan, who are loaded on ambulances for treatment and rehabilitation at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), in Washington, D.C. Last month, I visited wounded soldiers at WRAMC. Many of the scars borne by our soldiers recovering there were a result of amputations, injuries sustained from rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices and mines. They do not suffer from the kinds of injuries caused by bullets. A visit to our warriors recovering at WRAMC is sure to drive the toll our service members pay deeply home.

On September 14, 2001, in response to the terrorist attacks, President Bush proclaimed a national state of emergency. He also issued Executive Order 13223, ordering the Ready Reserve of the Armed Forces to active duty. Under this call to active duty, hundreds of thousands of Reservists have been called upon to drop their civilian affairs and report for military duty. Thousands were called, performed military duty and were released back to their reserve status. Today, nearly 200,000 Reservists are mobilized, fighting the GWOT. Of the mobilized Reservists, 140,000 are serving overseas. Those deployed to Southwest Asia are required to serve one year "boots-on-the-ground." Most Reservists serving in Southwest Asia will have been mobilized and separated from their families for nearly eighteen months upon demobilization and return to their civilian occupations.

The National Guard, the oldest component of the Armed Forces, is an integral and indispensable partner in our national security. Nearly 500,000 (350,000 soldiers and 110,000 airmen) of our 1.3 million Reservists are National Guardsmen. Our Guardsmen are citizen soldiers and airmen, service members who serve our respective states as well as our country. We are your neighbors and coworkers who,

in times of peace, perform military training, preparing for the inevitable call to arms or civil disasters. We train to the same standards of our active-duty counterparts. We number twenty percent of the Total Force; yet receive a fraction (under five percent) of the defense budget.

Since September 11, 2001, we have mobilized nearly 40 percent of our Nation's Reserve. That percentage will continue to increase, as the Reserve is called to shoulder a larger role in the GWOT. Under the ongoing Iraqi troop rotation, 130,000 U.S. troops will leave Iraq and be replaced with 110,000 fresh soldiers and Marines. At the same time, 11,000 forces turn over in Afghanistan.

As much as 40 percent of the new Iraqi Freedom force will be Reserve and National Guard troops, who now expect deployments well beyond a year - extended if necessary as previous Reserve and regular force deployments have been. Citizen soldiers now comprise about 22 percent of the roughly 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq. By the time the rotation is complete, nearly half the new Iraqi Freedom force will be members of the National Guard and Reserve. An American force of that size - and composition - will be required for years, at least through the year 2006.

As with politics, wars, even if the battles are fought in distant lands, are also fought locally. The Connecticut National Guard has fully participated in the GWOT. Immediately following the September 11th terrorist attacks, Connecticut National Guardsmen responded to the call of the Governor, rapidly mobilizing and deploying to provide security at our airports and at critical infrastructure points, such as Millstone Nuclear Power Plant, the Gold Star Bridge and the New Haven Tank Farm. Our Connecticut soldiers and airmen always rise to the occasion, whether for local relief in response to an emergency or for our Nation's defense in response to war.

Since September 11, 2001, the Connecticut National Guard's 5,000 soldiers and airmen have been called to perform duty under state and federal authorities. Thousands of our soldiers have performed state duty securing Connecticut's critical infrastructure. More than 2,000 of our soldier and airmen have mobilized and deployed, nearly 50% of our entire force, to support the GWOT. Connecticut National Guardsmen have performed and are still performing duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bosnia, Germany and Italy. Our Guardsmen routinely deploy throughout Connecticut and to nearly every state in the nation, either for domestic security missions or for training.

In support of the war, the Connecticut National Guard is providing soldiers and airmen in a wide array of occupational specialties. We are sending doctors, lawyers and chaplains. We are sending our fighter and helicopter pilots, military police, engineers, mechanics, infantry and artillery soldiers. Our personnel perform duty of all descriptions, from the construction of

bridges and the boring of wells to the providing of close air support for ground troops and the training of the new Iraqi police forces. We are there in force.

Our personnel, your neighbors and coworkers who are members of the Connecticut National Guard, fully participated in the liberation of Afghanistan and Iraq. We are now participating in their reconstruction. We are also conducting essential missions in Connecticut and our sister states and across the globe. For duty, honor, state and country, we always rise to the occasion.

The Connecticut National Guard is a unique dual-status agency, having both federal and state missions. The federal mission is to maintain properly trained and equipped National Guard units for prompt federalization in the event of war, domestic emergencies or other exigencies. The state mission is to coordinate, support and augment federal, state and local authorities in emergency response; provide emergency management planning, funding, and training assistance to communities; and conduct community service programs. The National Guard, a capable force available to state governors for civil and emergency relief, is a full and equal partner in the defense of our Nation, in times of war and peace.

Whether individual Americans believe we are at war should not undermine our collective support of our service members and veterans. The American people, especially our federal and state elected officials - in Congress as well as in our state capitols - should wholeheartedly support our Armed Forces, our Total Force - Active, Reserve and National Guard. We, as a Nation, must not permit the amorphous composition of the enemy and the debate over the definition and nature of this war to corrupt the reality of our national values and undermine our resolve to defeat our enemies. Likewise, we must ensure that we do not alienate the spirit of our national treasure - our Armed Forces - who are dedicated to our liberty, national security and defense, who sacrifice much for our common interest and benefit, who ask for - and receive - little in return.

This session, I've introduced legislation to our General Assembly to ensure that Connecticut's service members and veterans receive well-deserved recognition for their sacrifices and efforts. Some view this legislation as controversial, even radical, in that it streamlines existing programs and thinking regarding our military and veteran communities. We, as a society, must react to our changing environment and improve our response to the plight of our service members and veterans, lest we - and those whom we serve - become too unmoving, too bureaucratically entrenched to accomplish the mission. The time to improve the rewards for those who have sacrificed and who are sacrificing for us is now. Our delay or denial, in regard to support for our service members, veterans and their families, is ultimately our disgrace.

Record of Connecticut Men in the War of Rebellion

Editor's Note: This is the fifth monthly installment of the history of Connecticut's service in the Civil war, as published in the RECORD OF SERVICE OF CONNECTICUT MEN IN THE WAR OF REBELLION, 1861 TO 1865, from the History of the Second Connecticut Volunteers written by Gen. James B. Coit, Private IN Co. B. (Transcribed by Staff Sergeant Brett W. Wilson, Administrative Assistant to the USPFO for Connecticut)

I. GENERAL STATEMENT

THE history of this command is in some respects unique. It began active service, a battalion of four companies, fighting bushwhackers among the mountains of West Virginia in March, 1862, and ended it, a regiment of twelve companies, by escorting General Grant when he went to receive Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House in April, 1865. Meanwhile it had spent three months with its army corps within the defenses of Washington, and fourteen months, for the most part on provost duty, in Baltimore; so that its brilliant record in the field was acquired by a fighting service of but about twenty months, seven as a battalion and thirteen as a regiment. Yet such was its exceeding activity when at the front that it was engaged with the enemy in some form over ninety times, and suffered loss at his hands in killed, wounded, or missing on over eighty different occasions. Its regimental service was in Sheridan's renowned cavalry, in the division commanded at first by Wilson and afterwards by Custer. It fought cavalry, infantry, and artillery, mounted and on foot, in the field and behind breastworks; and its captures of prisoners, wagons, guns, and flags were very considerable.

Allowing for names appearing on its rolls twice or more because of transfers from one company to another, for deserters, for rebel prisoners enlisted at Baltimore and transferred to the Northwest to fight Indians, and for others nominally but not really serving in it, a careful inspection of the rolls at the Adjutant-General's office fixes the number of persons actually doing duty in this command at 1,361. Of these, in round numbers, 100, mostly re-enlisted veterans from the original four companies, served nearly four years, 300 about three years, 100 about two years, 600 about a year and a half, and the remainder but a few months. Thirty-two of its officers

and men were killed and ninety-seven wounded in battle, while of its entire number 205, or almost fifteen per cent., lost their lives in service; and, although no part of the command was ever taken in a body, the captures from it were 304, or over twenty-two per cent of the whole, nearly a quarter of whom perished in prison;—forty seven in Andersonville alone; and its casualties of every sort, so far as recorded, were 772, or over fifty-six per cent. Of its enlisted men forty-three afterward became commissioned officers, receiving in all seventy-nine commissions. Among these were three who attained the rank of Major,

and ten that of Captain; while of its officers three became brevet Brigadier-Generals, there being but three volunteers from Connecticut of a higher rank, and but fourteen others of this; and of the twelve Medals of Honor awarded by Congress to Connecticut soldiers for distinguished bravery three, or one-quarter of the whole, were awarded to members of

Early in May the brigade moved up the valley, and was present on the 8th at the battle of McDowell. The battalion covered the rear of our army as it fell back, repulsing an attack by Ashby's cavalry near Franklin on the 11th. Jackson having driven Banks from Strasburgh across the Potomac, our army, under Fremont, hastened to intercept

one hundred recruits, and was entirely refitted and remounted. In December it moved with its corps to Stafford Court House, where it remained a month, scouting and picketing, when it was ordered to Baltimore for provost duty and to be filled up to a regiment.

III. HISTORY WHILE BEING RECRUITED TO A REGIMENT January, 1862 — February, 1864

During this period the headquarters of the regiment were at Camp Cheesebrough, Baltimore, Md. Major Fish was provost marshal. The secession element being strong in Maryland, the business of the office was large. Several officers from the regiment were appointed assistant marshals, and large details of its men were constantly on provost duty in the city and on provost and scouting expeditions to various parts of the State. Captain Farnsworth had charge of the camp. Under his energetic lead the men rebuilt the barracks and erected officers' quarters, paved the company streets with brick, and graded and turfed the ground between. Barns were also built, and a hospital and chapel. July 5th he was ordered with 180 men to Harper's Ferry, then occupied by the enemy. On the 14th, with forty-nine men, he attacked a rebel picket on Bolivar Heights, numbering, with their reserve, 200 or more, but his horse becoming disabled under him, he was captured with more than half of his men; the remainder withdrew, bringing several prisoners captured by them. August 7th the battalion took part in an expedition under Colonel Vinton, Sixth Michigan, which was surprised in camp at night near Waterford, Va., and suffered considerable loss. Later, the First Connecticut, under Lieutenant Rogers returned the compliment by surprising a rebel camp in the same region and capturing a large number of prisoners. Afterwards, with other troops, it made two expeditions to Winchester, and one in November, of fifteen days, to Harrisonburgh, meeting the enemy each time. Meanwhile, large additions were being made to the regiment. In January, 1864, its ranks were full, and Major Blakeslee, who had been on recruiting service for some time, was ordered to Baltimore to assume command. The detachment at Harper's Ferry was sent back and the recruits put under rigid drill and discipline. The regiment was mounted and fully equipped, and on March 8th, 675 strong, marched to join the Army of the Potomac.

this regiment. These figures tell a story of endurance, courage, and achievement of which the First Cavalry may well be proud. They include an unusual number of heroic personal adventures, without which the regimental history cannot be complete, but for which there is no room in this brief official record.

II. HISTORY AS A BATTALION October, 1861 — December, 1862

The Connecticut Cavalry was originally organized as a battalion of four companies, one from each congressional district in the State. The call for it was issued October 1, 1861, and on the 23d it assembled at Camp Tyler, West Meriden, with full ranks. It remained here on drill and discipline until February 20, 1862, when, under command of Major Judson M. Lyon, it proceeded to Wheeling, Va., arriving on the 24th. March 27th it was assigned to the brigade of General Robert C. Schenck and ordered to Moorefield, Va., to fight guerillas. It was very active here, covering the ground with its scouting parties for many miles up and down the South Potomac valley, and penetrating into almost every recess of the mountains on either hand.

him. The battalion led the advance over the mountains. At daylight, May 30th, it met and repulsed the enemy's cavalry at Wardsensville. June 1st, at dusk, it overtook and charged Jackson's rear at Strasburgh, and in the pursuit of him up the valley was constantly in the advance. It joined in the sharp cavalry fight near Harrisonburg, June 6th, where the rebel General Ashby was killed, and in Fremont's battle at Cross Keys, two days later. On the 9th it made a dash to save the bridge at Port Republic, but too late for success. The army now retired down the valley, and on July 10th crossed the mountains to Sperryville. About this time Major Lyon resigned and Captain Middlebrook assumed command. The battalion, now in Sigel's corps, arrived at Cedar Mountain August 9th, just at the close of the battle there, and on the 12th joined in the pursuit of Jackson to the Rapidan. With its brigade, under Colonel Beardsley, Ninth New York, it fought through Pope's disastrous campaign and helped to cover the shattered fragments of his army on its retreat. It was now badly used up and to a large extent dismounted, and lay with its corps in camp near Washington three months, during which time it received about

Connecticut Military Department News

CT-ESGR "BossLift 2004" visits San Diego

RONALD E. LEE
FIRST SGT. (RET.) USAR
CT-ESGR PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHAIRMAN

One would have thought that the Connecticut Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (CT-ESGR) "BossLift 2004" was specifically planned to get us out of the New England deep freeze by going to sunny San Diego, Calif. but that was hardly the fact. Although the change in weather was a welcomed relief, the "BossLift" served to educate employers on the current status of the U. S. military, especially from the viewpoint of what their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve components are actually doing when they leave their civilian jobs to serve their country.

On the bitter cold morning of Jan. 21, 10 members of the CT-ESGR and 34 employers from diverse corporations and businesses located throughout Connecticut loaded onto a KC-135 Stratotanker flown by the 151st Air Refueling Wing of the Utah Air National Guard.

These aircraft carry approximately 300,000 pounds of fuel and are capable of in-flight refueling at a rate of up to 6,500 pounds of fuel a minute. While enroute to San Diego the employers were allowed to visit and inspect the entire interior of the aircraft from the cockpit to the refueling station in the rear of the plane.

Upon arrival at the Naval Air Station, North Island, San Diego, we received a briefing by U.S. Navy LCDR Story of the Naval Readiness Command. LCDR Story explained how the Navy fleet has been downsized from a Cold War era fleet of 600 ships to a present fleet of 250 ships and 280,000 personnel.

We were hurried onto a bus for a road trip to Camp Pendleton, home to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, and a briefing at Camp Talega by United States Marine Corp. Col. Williams and his staff. We met and talked with a young Marine, Sgt. Steven Ferruci, who had just been called back to active duty from his home in New Haven, Conn. After the return trip everyone was assigned billeting in the Navy Combined Bachelor Housing and later enjoyed a greeting by Capt. McGrath, Commanding Officer, Naval Reserve, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet and dinner at the Officer's Club. The long day and time change between coasts began to have an affect everyone so it was an early evening in preparation for the next day's activities.

Thursday started off at 0630 (that's 6:30AM for non-military folks) with a military breakfast at the Navy Galley and then a trip to the U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) for a look at how young men are in-processed from civilian life into Marine

recruits. An informative briefing by USMC Col. Spencer, Chief of Staff at the MCRD, explained how the depot consists of 388 acres adjacent to the San Diego Airport that are dedicated to transforming young men into USMC "warriors."

Established in 1923, this training site focuses on receiving; basic training; education; martial arts training; weapons and field training; the Crucible (a grueling 54-hour event where the recruits apply all of the skills learned in a series of 32 challenges over a course covering 40 miles while getting just four hours of sleep each night and eating only three meals over a three-day period); the Transition Phase; and finally, after 12 weeks, graduation and, for the first time, the right to be called "Marine."

An average of 96.69 percent of all recruits are high school grads with more than 70 percent graduating in the upper portion of their class. Approximately 1.24 percent are college graduates; 2.02 percent non-traditional grads; and only .05 percent are non-graduates.

This impressive visit culminated with a trip to Instructional Training Company where recruits are taught to survive in deep water. They must complete a 30 minute float/swim while wearing their full uniform, five-pound helmet, boots, 60-pound pack, load-bearing vest, and carrying their nine-pound M-16 rifle.

Following lunch with young Marines, we went to NAS North Island for a visit to the Aircraft Carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74). The tour included areas ranging from the bridge, flight deck, and hangers to personnel areas.

We then went aboard the USS Duluth (LPD-6) and were given a briefing by the Executive Officer, LCDR Fulgham. Tours throughout the ship were given by ship's personnel to include a visit to the bridge, combat information center (CIC), flight deck and well deck; a large floodable docking area inside the hull of the ship which enables landing craft loaded with troops and equipment such as tanks, trucks, etc. to depart and enter the ship through the stern gate.

At the same time troops and equipment can be loaded via helicopter from the flight deck. Fulgham proudly pointed out that the Duluth landed the first Marines in the assault of Iraq last year. She returned from combat this past June 2003 and is tentatively scheduled for decommissioning sometime between 2005-2008.

As the sun was setting and we were awaiting the retirement of the colors (lowering of the American flag) we met CMDR Gene Emert, Commanding Officer of the Duluth, who spent a considerable amount of time with us and thanked us for visiting his ship.

Again we were on the bus and off to the North Island NAS airport for our flight home.



ESGR members and guests get a tour of a Coast Guard helicopter during a recent "BossLift" to San Diego. BossLifts are a good way for Guard and Reserve employers to see firsthand what their employees do when on military duty. (Photo courtesy CT ESGR)

Everyone remarked about how positive the military personnel were and the high morale of not only the troops who had returned from Iraq and Afghanistan but also those who were preparing to go over there.

Participants witnessed first-hand the refueling of an E-3 Sentry airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft that provides all-weather surveillance, command, control and communications needed by commanders of U.S. and NATO air defense forces, the premier air battle command and control aircraft in the world today.

As an air defense system, E-3s can detect, identify and track airborne enemy forces far from the boundaries of the United States or NATO countries. It can direct fighter-interceptor aircraft to these enemy targets. Experience has proven that the E-3 Sentry can respond quickly and effectively to a crisis and support worldwide military deployment operations. Producing wide-eyed, jaw-dropping excitement and amazement, everyone enjoyed seeing this plane "up close."

As the temperature cooled down the excitement, stories, and camaraderie escalated until we arrived back in Connecticut. The cold, biting winds reminded us that this wonderful trip was over. Everyone promised to keep in touch, to exchange photos, and to tell family, friends and co-workers about this marvelous trip and the great job our military members (and the CT-ESGR) are doing!

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

If you would like to know more about the ESGR and how we can be of assistance to you or your employer please stop by our office at 196 West Street, Rocky Hill, CT, call (860) 548-3200 or visit the website at www.esgr.com.

First Company Governor's Foot Guard Band centennial concert

The First Company Governor's Foot Guard Band continues its yearlong centennial celebration with a jubilee concert in the true military concert band tradition.

Musical Director and Bandmaster Captain Laura O'Connell's program includes rousing marches, symphonic selections and patriotic medleys that will highlight the musicianship and versatility of the band.

Special guest for the afternoon concert is Captain Lewis J. Buckley, Director of the U.S. Coast Guard Band who will conduct the Foot Guard Band in the performance of his composition, *The D.H.S. March*. Highlighting the concert will be a composition by composer Robert Sheldon, commissioned by the Foot Guard to honor the Band's 100th anniversary.

Maj. Dennis Conroy, Commandant said, "Many consider our band a true Connecticut treasure and the premier Military Band in the State. The First Company Governor's Foot Guard Band leaves the audience inspired and always wanting more."



A young girl signs a banner welcoming home one of the Soldiers of the 1109th AVCRAD from Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Photo by Pvt. Angela Gustavson, 65th PCH)



A Soldier of the 1109th AVCRAD (Aviation, Classification, Repair Activity Depot) receives a hero's welcome home, a loving smile and a bouquet of flowers from a proud family member upon his arrival at the AVCRAD facility in Groton. (Photo by Pvt. Angela Gustavson, 65th PCH)



AVCRAD Return Home

From Page 1

Burns of Preston, Conn., father of Sgt. Jeffery Burns. Nancy Rannenber was physically draining, because every month she kept thinking the coming home.

"It made me nervous," said Allen Williams, father of Sgt. 1st Class feelings about the extension. "You just don't know what's going to ha

Friends and families were able to find comfort in the steady contact Soldiers were also blessed enough to receive a little rest and relaxation

"We emailed every week, and he came home for a little while in N Woodbury, Conn., sister of Sgt. Lawrence A. Helie II.

Doreen McHugh from Groton, Conn. said that her husband, Sgt. 1st C place a few phone calls around the holidays and emailed his family off

With the Soldiers of the 1109th home, everyone is looking forward to Mr. Williams said that his son would be taking time to get back into

"We've got to let them have their time and work everything out the Soldiers.

"We weren't happy about him leaving, but now what he had to do is c to the way it was," said John Porter of Mansfield, Conn., friend of one

The 1107th AVCRAD from the Missouri Army National Guard rotate Welcome home 1109th. Madison and David Penta, Sgt. Helie's young

missed you!"



Soldiers of the 1109th AVCRAD are greeted by banners, hugs, kisses, friends and co-workers upon their return to the AVCRAD facility in Groton. (Photo by Pvt. Angela Gustavson, 65th PCH)

AVCRAD Returns Home!

Sgt. Jeffery Burns. Nancy Rannenberg from Cromwell, Conn. said that it every month she kept thinking that her son, Sgt. John Kelleher was

en Williams, father of Sgt. 1st Class. Eric C. Williams, when asked his u just don't know what's going to happen."

to find comfort in the steady contact they had with their Solders. Several h to receive a little rest and relaxation.

he came home for a little while in November," said Jeanne Penta, from Lawrence A. Helie II.

Conn. said that her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Michael T. McHugh was able to holidays and emailed his family often.

home, everyone is looking forward to getting life back to normal. would be taking time to get back into the swing of things.

eir time and work everything out themselves," he said of the returning

aving, but now what he had to do is done and it's time for life to get back er of Mansfield, Conn., friend of one of the returning Soldiers.

Missouri Army National Guard rotated in to replace the 1109th. n and David Penta, Sgt. Helie's young niece and nephew said it best, "We



The many faces of reunion...



...could be seen as Soldiers reunited with loved ones...

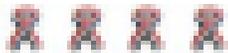


...as they returned from a year-long overseas deployment...



...in support of the Global War on Terror. The Soldiers are all part of the 1109th AVCRAD and were celebrating their return to family, friends, the AVCRAD facility and Connecticut. (Photos by Pvt. Angela Gustavson, 65th PCH)

A quiet moment in a crowded location for one AVCRAD Soldier. (Photo by Pvt. Angela Gustavson, 65th PCH)



are greeted by banners, hugs, kisses and shouts of glee by family, e return to the AVCRAD facility in Groton after a year-long overseas la Gustavson, 65th PCH)

Social Security FAQ on a weekend drill

A government pension could reduce your social security benefit

COL. GARY OTTENBREIT, (J6) DIRECTORATE AND ROBERT G. RODRIGUEZ, PUBLIC AFFAIRS, SOCIAL SECURITY

A government pension can be a federal pension (such as the National Guard pension from the DOD), a State pension (such as State Policeman or Teacher) or a local pension (such as a town or city fireman or policeman).

If you will receive Social Security as well as a pension for government work, be sure you understand how a government pension could affect the amount of your Social Security benefit.

There are two ways that your benefits could be reduced by another pension.

One is called the "windfall elimination provision" (WEP). It could affect the way your retirement or disability benefits are calculated if you will receive a pension from work on which you *didn't pay* Social Security taxes.

Generally, this provision affects people

who spent most of their career working for a government agency, but who also worked at other jobs where they paid Social Security taxes long enough to qualify for retirement or disability benefits.

Also, people who worked in a job where they didn't pay Social Security taxes, such as in a foreign country, may be affected by the (WEP).

The other way your benefits could be reduced is called the "government pension offset."

It applies only when you receive a pension from a government job on which you didn't pay Social Security taxes and you're eligible for Social Security benefits as a spouse, widow or widower.

[Note: You are eligible for a benefit

based on the social security taxes (FICA) your spouse paid]

Before the Social Security law changed in 1983, people who worked in jobs that were not covered by Social Security received benefits that were calculated as if they were long-term, low-wage workers.

As a result, they received higher benefits in addition to their other pension. The current benefit calculation formula eliminates this windfall.

You can get more information about the offset from the Internet at www.socialsecurity.gov or by calling Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 or visiting your local Social Security office.

A Federal Employees Retirement Calculator can be found on the website, FIRSTGOV for Seniors, at www.seniors.gov. The calculator helps federal employees estimate their future retirement benefits.



Officers Club of Connecticut March Events

Friday, March 12

Club Night, St. Patrick's Day Dinner Dance
6 p.m. \$21.95 plus tax and tip
Reservations by calling 249-3634

Saturday, March 13

Club open after St. Patrick's Day Parade

Monday, March 15

House Committee Meeting
2:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 18

MOAA Luncheon
12 noon

Saturday, March 27

OCS Regimental Dining In
6 p.m.

Bar and Lounge open daily at lunch and from 4 p.m. to....

Club open for lunch daily from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Welcome our new chef, Saul Brown.

To book a party or event, call (860) 249-3624

Advertisement for the Officers Club of Connecticut. It features a large date 'MARCH 12, 2004' and lists various events and activities. The text is somewhat blurry but includes details about a dinner dance, a parade, a committee meeting, and a luncheon. There are also some logos and decorative elements.

Pilots, friends, brothers-in-law, now Warrant Officers 5

Sgt. 1st Class Debbi Newton
State Senior PA NCO

January 2004 marked a milestone for Alan Oliver and Tom Bothur.

Friends since meeting in 1978, brothers-in-law, veteran Vietnam pilots, both were pinned to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 5 on the same day by Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno, adjutant general of the Connecticut National Guard.

"This is a great day for the aviation community," said Cugno during the ceremonies. "It is also a great day for Alan and Tom. This is not an easy rank to get, and to have two pilots get pinned on the same day is a testament to them, their units and the aviation community of the Connecticut Guard."

Oliver began his trek towards a military career when he joined the Army in April 1968.

"I've spent my entire military career and civilian career in aviation," said Oliver, who works for the Stratford-based Sikorsky.

As a pilot in Vietnam, Oliver flew what he called "Sneaky Pete" missions with the 195th Assault Helicopter unit after arriving in August 1969.

Bothur, who arrived in Vietnam only two weeks after Oliver, flew with the 335th Assault Helicopter unit. His missions varied between aerial assaults, Soldier insertions, medical evacuations and supply runs.

After Vietnam, Bothur joined the Connecticut National Guard in March 1971 where he flew with Company A, 126th Aviation. Oliver came onboard with the 143rd Corps (Aviation) in March 1975.

It wasn't until 1978 that the two met and became lifelong friends. And it's a friendship that anyone who spends anytime around them finds infectious. One of the two always throws a jab at the other, who immediately fires back a volley of his own. Smiles and laughter seem to be the order of the day when they are together, whether at an Aviation

Safety Day event, or at lunch together as civilians.

Their friendship has survived a long time and has brought with it all the benefits of such a friendship: loyalty, laughter, sharing of good times and bad, and years full of memories. But there is one thing that came out of this friendship that neither really expected.

"He married my sister," said Bothur of Oliver.

"We met in the Guard and now we're brothers-in-law," said Oliver, which immediately started another round of good-natured rib jabbing between the two.

Oliver, who is the only Hispanic pilot in the Connecticut Army National Guard, works out of the Army Aviation Support Facility (AASF) in Windsor Locks. Bothur works out of the AVCRAD in Groton. Both have experienced changes and growth in the aviation community during their military careers.

"So much has changed and improved over the years," said Oliver. "Tactics, force structure, education of the new pilots, training for threat, and the education and technological expertise that is required now."

"When we first started flying, we flew at night, low level, unaided," said Bothur. "Now we have night vision goggles. The technological advances have been enormous in the field."

The Connecticut National Guard Aviation Safety program has always been consistent within the state, said Oliver. He pointed to the large number of pilots, himself included, that had received safety awards earlier that day for 500, 1,000, 1,500, 2,000 and even 5,000 hours of flying without incident.

"That's something we are always aware of

and train for all the time," said Oliver.

"And we couldn't do what we do safely without the mechanics, cooks, maintenance guys, refuelers, everybody," said Bothur. "It's a team effort and we need to acknowledge and thank everyone who helps keep us safely in the air. It's all of us working together."

Bothur and Oliver both agreed that the Connecticut aviation community is very close up and down the rank structure.

"We're in close quarters," said Oliver. "Everybody's lives depend on everyone else doing their jobs."

Other changes in the field since the two first became military pilots include the education level required to become a pilot.

Perspective pilots, and anyone who wants to be in the aviation field, must have strong backgrounds in science and mathematics.

"The education required is a little higher than most fields," said Bothur. "What it requires is a high technical skill level, from pilots to mechanics. The mechanics need to be able to read schematics and interpret them to keep the helicopters functioning."

Most schools in the aviation field require a year-long commitment, some even more, with flight school averaging nine months.

Today's helicopter pilots are still flying wartime missions, only not over and into the jungles of Vietnam. Now it's over and into the deserts of Afghanistan and Iraq. It's also into urban areas of countries around the world.



Warrant Officers 5 Tom Bothur and Alan Oliver stand by one of the Connecticut Guard's UH-1, Huey, helicopters. Both piloted the Huey while in Vietnam. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Debbi Newton, State Senior PA NCO)

Connecticut's AVCRAD has just returned from a year overseas working on aircraft flying just those types of missions.

Company G, 104th Aviation Regiment, a Chinook unit, is still in Afghanistan supporting the 10th Mountain Division and doing extraordinarily well. In fact, the 104th has just received the prestigious AAAA award as outstanding National Guard Unit of the Year.

Recruiting and retention within the aviation community has never been a problem, despite the fact that the field requires more than the traditional one weekend a month for pilots to maintain their flight status. In fact, it takes about 100 days per year.

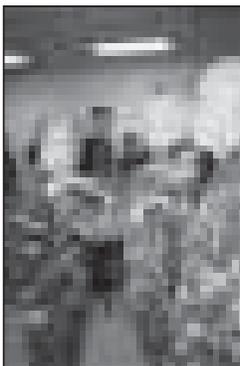
"It's been enjoyable for me," said Oliver of his 30 years in military aviation.

"I still enjoy it or I wouldn't still be here after 33 years," said Bothur.

Of course, having a very good friend who you can laugh and cry with, as well as your brother-in-law around all the time doesn't hurt.

Somehow, though, one gets the feeling that without the familial ties, these two would always maintain their friendship even without the structure of the military aviation community.

It's just that the aviation community gave them the wings to make their friendship soar.



Alan Oliver gets pinned to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 5 by Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Debbi Newton, State Senior PA NCO)



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Tom Bothur (l) and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Alan Oliver (r) sit in the cockpit of a Blackhawk helicopter. The two were UH-1, Huey pilots during the Vietnam War and both are now pilots with the Connecticut Army National Guard. They met as members of the Guard in 1978 and have remained friends since. Oliver is married to Bothur's sister, and they share the same pinning date to the rank of Warrant Officer 5. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Debbi Newton, State Senior PA NCO)



Tom Bothur gets pinned to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 5 by Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Debbi Newton, State Senior PA NCO)

Military Matters



Here's to the next step: Planning for a Military Retirement

Pfc. JORDAN E. WERME
65th PCH

After 20 years of service in the United States armed services, every Soldier, Marine, Airman and Sailor looks forward to the post-military freedom of retirement. And with proper planning the transition to retired life can be easy.

For reserve component Soldiers looking forward to retiring there are some key factors to keep in mind, said Staff Sgt. Terry M. Mahon, Retirement Points Accounting Manager NCO.

Once a National Guardsman has completed six years of qualifying reserve service and 20 years of total service, he is eligible for a full military retirement, and to receive full retirement benefits beginning at age 60.

In order for a year of service to qualify toward retirement a Soldier must accumulate a minimum of 50 retirement points, said Mahon.

Retirement points are awarded as follows: one point for each day on active duty, one point for each four hours of MUTA (maximum of two points per day), one point for each three-hours of correspondence course completed and 15 membership points per year.

Inactive duty points may not exceed 90 in any year, and total points may not exceed 365 annually (except for Leap Year, when the total is 366).

"If you don't have 20 good years," said Mahon, "you can't get the benefits. The 50-point years for retirement are often overlooked."

In order for a qualifying Soldier to receive retirement benefits, DD form 108, Application for Retired Benefits, must be submitted to the Soldier's administrative department approximately four to six months prior to his 60th birthday.

Retirement benefits are paid based on the highest grade held.

For officers and enlisted personnel the grade must be held for a minimum of 185 consecutive days for the pay to be reflected in retirement.

Warrant officers must have at least 31 consecutive days in grade to receive the higher benefits. Highest grade held does not carry over if grade was reduced for inefficiency with prejudice or misconduct. Highest grade also does not apply to AGR.

"Once every quarter we send out a memo to everyone who qualifies for retirement," said Mahon.

"They get a memo to attend a briefing,

which is mandatory if you want your 20-Year Letter. And you need the letter to retire. The briefings are held once per quarter, and can be held one-on-one. We will make arrangements to make sure you get the briefing."

For younger Soldiers the time to start planning for retirement is now, said Mahon. Make sure to review your annual retirement point accumulation and to point out errors as soon as possible.

"It's easier to fix a problem when you catch it early," said Mahon. "It can take forever to correct paperwork later."

Some other overlooked aspects of retirement are the points earned from ACCP courses, said Mahon. Most Soldiers remember their correspondence courses for promotion points, but not for retirement, he said.

Retirement benefits also include the Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan, which is set up to provide a Soldier's family with continued retirement benefits in the event of the retired Soldier's untimely passing.

For more information on retirement contact Staff Sgt. Terry Mahon at terry.mahon@ct.ngb.army.mil or call the Personnel Service Branch at (860) 548-3230.

Tax Relief Act supports Servicemembers and families

SECOND LT. CELINE MARINI
ASSISTANT PIO

The Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 was signed into law by the President on Veteran's Day included several favorable tax provisions for service members and their families.

One provision is a gross-income deduction of up to \$1,500 for overnight travel expenses for National Guard and Reserve members.

Transportation, meals, and lodging expenses may be deducted for reserve meetings more than 100 miles away from home.

The Act also increases death gratuity payment to \$12,000 and provides that the full payment is tax-free.

"That portion of the Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 is retroactive to Sept. 10, 2001, to provide for service members who died in the terrorist attacks the following day and in the ongoing global war on terror," said Army Lt. Col. Janet Fenton, director, Armed Forces Tax Council.

"If you are killed on active duty regardless of whether you're in the theater, or in a training accident or die from disease, your family receives \$12,000 death gratuity that is not taxed," she added.

"And that's a big change. In addition any future increases to the death gratuity will remain tax free."

The death gratuity has been \$6,000 since 1991, with half of it being taxed, said the director.

"It just didn't seem to be fair for the military family who was left grieving for their service member to get hit with a tax bill," she added.

The tax act also provides for extra tax-filing time for troops serving in contingency operations.

The internal revenue code allows service members who are serving in combat zones or hazardous duty areas have an extension of time – usually 180 days from the time the person leaves the combat zone to file their taxes.

The act includes modifying eligibility criteria of tax-exempt veterans organizations; tax-free treatment of homeowner assistance program payments; suspensions of tax-exempt status for designated terrorist organizations; and extension of victim's tax relief to astronauts who die on space missions.

WELCOME HOME 242nd ENG

Education Essentials: *Grantham University Distance Education*

SGT. 1st CLASS DEBBIE WILSON
INCENTIVE MANAGER

Grantham University Distance Education offers an Associate of Science and Bachelor of Science Degree Programs in Business Administration, Engineering Management, Information Systems, Software Engineering Technology, Computer Science, Computer Engineering Technology and Electronics Engineering Technology.

Take control of your life and take Distance Learning Courses if classroom time does not fit you schedule. I can speak from personal experience with the college. I enjoy the coursework not to mention I am enrolled in the BSBA program. The school allows you up to four months to complete two classes. If you discipline yourself and stay focused you can complete the course in a timely manner.

I chose this path because I attended Capital Community College and it did not fit my schedule. I considered Excelsior and again it did not work for me. The timing for earning my degree was still off.

Last year a co-worker, Sgt. 1st Class Linda Patnod was searching the website and said Hey Deb, how would you like to go to school for free? I must say the free caught my attention. I thought for a minute. this cannot be true earn a degree with no out of pocket expense. Sure and behold it's true, I'm currently enrolled in the BSBA degree Program with Grantham University and the coursework is based on today's life and experience and I love it, not to mention the timing is right.

The program may not be for everyone. It works for me because I do not have to sit in a classroom from 6-9. I can complete the course

at anytime as long as the work is completed by the Ending date of the Semester.

Some of the benefits you receive from attending Grantham University Distance Education. The school is accredited. No out of pocket expense; you may qualify for a Military Scholarship, which means as long as your grades are a C and above and you complete the entire course satisfactorily you pay no out of pocket expense. You do not pay for books or fees. Everything is done on-line minus the final exam. The final exam must be proctored by the Education Service Officer or someone who has permission to proctor exams. Registration, Testing, Communication with the Instructors are all done on-line.

For further information visit www.grantham.edu



CHIEF MASTER SGT.
WANDA WAWRUCK

Enlisted Update

Recognition/Fitness Program

Welcome back to our Air Control Squadron (ACS) personnel who recently returned from the "sand box."

This unit has experienced the busiest schedule since 9/11 completing their second extended call-up. In reviewing their schedule...they will enjoy a short break before their next commitment that will consume the summer months.

The members and their families have made a huge sacrifice for our Country and State; proudly representing the Air Force, Air National Guard and Connecticut National Guard...we appreciate all that you do.

We will formally recognize ACS, families, and many other organizations that served and continue to serve at Camp Rowland on September 11, so stay tuned for details in the near future.

During this time of year, we select and recognize our outstanding performers in the State. Before I share who they are, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the many people (Commanders, Chiefs, and staff support functions) in the process of developing the awards packages.

I appreciate your dedication, time and effort in recognizing our many outstanding airmen.

Now for the announcement of our 2004 State Outstanding Airmen of the Year...these individuals will move on to the National competition at the National Guard Bureau this month. Let's wish them the best as their records compete against the remaining 54 States and Territories.

They are: Airman of the Year Sr. Airman Victoria Lashley, 103 ACS; NCO of the Year, Staff Sgt. Aaron Gow, 103 ACS; SNCO of the Year, Senior Master Sgt. Timothy Shaw, 103 Security Forces Squadron (SFS); and First Sergeant of the Year, Master Sg. Edward Gould, 103 Aircraft Maintenance Squadron (AMXS).

Other State award recipients recognized: Junior Officer of the Year, Capt. Joseph Sorrentino, 103 ACS; Honor Person of the Year, Master Sgt. Edward Gould, 103 AMXS; and Command Chief's Award, Sr. Airman Christine Mihalik, 103 ACS.

Please take the time to extend your congratulations to our outstanding airmen.

A hot topic on everyone's mind is the adoption of the new Air Force fitness program and why we are converting back to "the run."

Simply stated, we are postured for more Air Force commitments, and in doing so; we must follow the same readiness standards. Current tempo deploys us to many austere areas of the world where the terrain and weather is nothing like what we are accustomed.

We have to be in the best physical shape possible to overcome the elements and perform our duties as well as we do to home. This means some of us need to change our behavior through increased aerobic activity and a healthier lifestyle.

Prior to the CSAF's decision to return the Air Force to a fitness program that includes running, he asked his staff to conduct an analysis to find the best methods of fitness for our force.

In doing so, the Air Staff gathered data from the Cooper's Aerobics Center Longitudinal Study, the National Institutes of Health, and the Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research.

Combinations of the results were used to develop the criterion for the new program that consists of three elements: aerobic fitness (the primary component) measuring cardiovascular ability, waist circumference, and strength conditioning.

All three components make up the program shifting the focus to a health-based standard...designed to motivate change and promote healthier lifestyles.

For those scheduled to attend in-residence PME, you will be expected to participate in this new program while attending school.

For those with documented medical complications, the aerobic steps are the alternate method for the run. As additional information is received, we will continue to educate the force through your respective Commanders and First Sergeants.

Thanks to all who continue to provide feedback on topics you would like me to address in articles. As always, I look forward to seeing you in your respective units.

Guard Voices

Foodshare says Thank You

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your donation of 300 pounds of food to Foodshare in November 2003. We apologize for the delay in processing your acknowledgement letter. This is due to a processing error caused by the high volume of donations received during November. We greatly appreciate your donation. It is so gratifying to know that we can count on your continued support of Foodshare's work to end hunger.

Hunger is a serious problem in our community. In greater Hartford over 100,000 people seek food assistance each year. This is about ten percent of the population. Even more upsetting, 40,000 of our community's hungry people are children.

Whether it's fresh vegetables from the

Mobile Foodshare truck, a bag of groceries from a local food pantry, or a hot meal at a shelter for homeless people, our neighbors in greater Hartford are getting the food they need to survive, grow, and prosper because of caring people just like you.

Thank you for helping restore hope to families facing the difficult economic times and the high cost of living. In restoring hope, you cannot only help change individual lives, you can indeed help change the world!

Sincerely,
Maurice D. Casey
Food Donations Coordinator

The Pledge of Allegiance

From a speech made by Capt. John S. McCain, USN, (Ret) before the 1988 Republican Nation Convention. McCain represents Arizona in the U.S. Senate:

As you may know, I spent five and one half years as a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War. In the early years of our imprisonment, the NVA kept us in solitary confinement or two or three to a cell. In 1971 the NVA moved us from these conditions of isolation into large rooms with as many as 30 to 40 men to a room. This was, as you can imagine, a wonderful change and was a direct result of the efforts of millions of Americans on behalf of a few hundred POWs 10,000 miles from home.

One of the men who moved into my room was a young man named Mike Christian.

Mike came from a small town near Selma, Alabama. He didn't wear a pair of shoes until he was 13 years old. At 17, he enlisted in the US Navy. He later earned a commission by going to Officer Training School. Then he became a Naval Flight Officer and was shot down and captured in 1967.

Mike had a keen and deep appreciation of the opportunities this country-and our military-provide for people who want to work and want to succeed. As part of the change in treatment, the Vietnamese allowed some prisoners to receive packages from home. In some of these packages were handkerchiefs, scarves and other items of clothing. Mike got himself a bamboo needle. Over a period of a couple of months, he created an American flag and sewed on the inside of his shirt.

Every afternoon, before we had a bowl of soup, we would hang Mike's shirt on the wall of the cell and say the Pledge of Allegiance. I know the Pledge of Allegiance may not seem the most important part of our day now, but I can assure you that in that stark cell it was

indeed the most important and meaningful event.

One day the Vietnamese searched our cell, as they did periodically, and discovered Mike's shirt with the flag sewn inside, and removed it. That evening they returned, opened the door of the cell, and for the benefit of all us, beat Mike Christian severely for the next couple of hours. Then, they opened the door of the cell and threw him in. We cleaned him up as well as we could.

The cell in which we lived had a concrete slab in the middle on which we slept. Four naked light bulbs hung in each corner of the room. As I said, we tried to clean up Mike as well as we could. After the excitement died down, I looked in the corner of the room, and sitting there beneath that dim light bulb with a piece of red cloth, another shirt and his bamboo needle, was my friend, Mike Christian. He was sitting there with his eyes almost shut from the beating he had received, making another American flag.

He was not making the flag because it made Mike Christian feel better. He was making that flag because he knew how important it was to us to be able to pledge allegiance to our flag and our country.

So the next time you say the Pledge of Allegiance, you must never forget the sacrifice and courage that thousands of Americans have made to build our nation and promote freedom around the world. You must remember our duty, our honor, and our country.

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Visit the
Connecticut Guardian
on-line at
www.ct.ngb.army.mil

Homefront

In defense of Connecticut's children: *Are inhalants legal?*

CAPT. ANNE-MARIE GARCIA
DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION ADMINISTRATOR

Parents may be shocked to find out that some of the most lethal drugs can be found in the common household.

Inhalants: a.k.a. all kinds of household goods, poppers, whippets, laughing gas, amyl nitrite, butyl nitrite, nitrous oxide, rush. Inhalants affect your brain.

Inhalants are substances or fumes from products such as glue or paint thinner that are sniffed or "huffed" to cause an immediate high.

Because they affect your brain with much greater speed and force than many other substances, they can cause irreversible physical and mental damage before you know what's happened.

Inhalants affect your heart. Inhalants starve the body of oxygen and force the heart to beat irregularly and more rapidly—that can be dangerous for your body. Inhalants damage other parts of your body.

People who use inhalants can lose their sense of smell; experience nausea and nosebleeds; and develop liver, lung, and kidney problems.

Chronic use can lead to muscle wasting and reduced muscle tone and strength. Inhalants can cause sudden death. Inhalants can kill you instantly.

Inhalant users can die by suffocation, choking on their vomit or having a heart attack. Inhalants can kill you the very first time you use them.

Inhalants include a large group of chemicals that are found in such household products as aerosol sprays, cleaning fluids, glue, paint, paint thinner, gasoline, propane, nail polish remover, correction fluid and marker pens.

None of these are safe to inhale—they all can kill you.

Chemicals like amyl nitrate and isobutyl nitrate ("poppers") and nitrous oxide ("whippets") are often sold at concerts and dance clubs.

They can permanently damage your body and brain. Chronic inhalant abusers may permanently lose the ability to perform everyday functions like walking, talking and thinking.

The vast majority of teens aren't using inhalants. According to a 1998 study, only 1.1 percent of teens are regular inhalant users and 94 percent of teens have never even tried inhalants.

Know the signs, how can you tell if a friend is using inhalants?

Sometimes it's tough to tell. But there are signs you can look for.

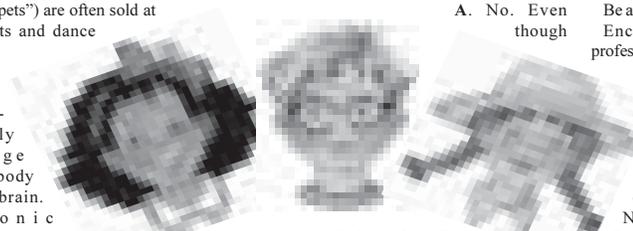
If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may be using inhalants: slurred speech, drunk, dizzy,

or dazed appearance, unusual breath odor, chemical smell on clothing, paint stains on body or face, red eyes and runny nose.

Q&A

Q. Since inhalants are found in household products, aren't they safe?

A. No. Even though



household products like glue and air freshener have legal, useful purposes, when they are used as inhalants they are harmful and dangerous. These products are not intended to be inhaled.

Q. Doesn't it take many "huffs" before you're in danger?

A. No. One "huff" of an inhalant can kill you. Or the 10th. Or the 100th.

Every huff can be dangerous. Even if you have huffed before without experiencing a problem, there's no way of knowing how the next huff will affect you.

Q. Can inhalants make me lose control?

A. Yes. Inhalants affect your brain and can cause you to suddenly engage in violent, or even deadly, behavior. You could hurt yourself or the people you love.

What can you do to help someone who is using inhalants?

Be a real friend. Save a life. Encourage your friend to seek professional help.

For information and referrals, call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 800-729-6686.

To learn more about inhalants or obtain referrals to programs in your community, contact: SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information 800-729-6686.

The bottom line: If you know someone who uses inhalants, urge him or her to get help.

If you're using inhalants—stop! The longer you ignore the real facts, the more chances you take with your life. It's never too late.

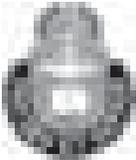
Talk to your parents, a doctor, a counselor, a teacher, or another adult you trust.

Do it today!

If you would more information on drug education resources contact the Connecticut National Guard Drug Demand Reduction Program at 860-493-2724.

Chaplain's

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CHAPLAIN (MAJ.) KEVIN P. CAVANAUGH

There was a terrible shipwreck—and only one man

survived, cast ashore on a tiny island with nothing but the clothes on his back

For a while he hoped for rescue, but as time passed, he knew that he would have to make a life there on the island. And that is what he did.

He taught himself to fish, to hunt, to garden and to cook.

He built himself a little cottage overlooking the bay.

He even carved a flute that he played each evening.

One day he hiked to the top of the mountain at the center of the island to see what he could see.

What he saw when he got up there was a tower of smoke coming from his cottage.

Writing straight with crooked lines

Instantly he knew that his home was going up in flames.

He ran down the mountain as fast as he could. But it was too late.

The cottage was in ashes—and his flute, his garden, his tools, his bow and arrow—everything that he had made with his own hands was gone—all gone!

He wept. He raged. He cursed God. He despaired.

Finally, as night came, he collapsed on the sand and fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning he was awakened by sailors who had rowed ashore from a great ship to rescue him.

"But," he exclaimed, "how, after all this time did you know that I was here?"

Puzzled, the captain looked at him and asked: "Why, that's easy. We saw your smoke from the signal fire."

Often times it is when all seems lost and we feel empty and alone that God has a way of surprising us—usually in a manner that we

least expect.

On several occasions, it has been my privilege to be with others as they reflect upon the way that God has moved in their lives and guided their life's journey.

In doing so, I have come to appreciate something that I have found to be true in my own life as well: life often takes unexpected twists and turns.

Circumstances and events often impact us in ways that we did not plan, envision, or expect.

We need to realize that, with all that, there is nothing we can't handle. God assures us that He is with us in all things.

I encourage you to take some quiet time, reflect on the journey you've taken, and examine how God has worked in your life.

Perhaps you, like the shipwrecked man, will find that He has written straight using crooked lines.

May God guide and bless you in all things.

HANDYPERSON HOTLINE

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TODAY
TO VOLUNTEER
YOUR SKILLS



Celebrating Black History Month



Cynthia Z. Barksdale (left), actress and professor at Asnuntuck Community College, gave a moving performance of Black poetry during the celebration, while Dr. Gayle Pemberton (right), professor of English and African-American Studies at Wesleyan University, discussed the Harlem Renaissance and the importance it still plays today. (Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Debbi Neton, State Senior PA NCO)



The 2004 Black History Month Academics Competition award recipients are: Joshua Thompson, Berlin High School, Berlin; Latrice Monet Hampton, Worthington-Hooker School, New Haven; and Brandon Parkes, Whisconier Middle School, Brookfield. The students each received a certificate, a savings bond from the United States Postal Service and the Adjutant General's Coin for Excellence. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Debbi Neton, State Senior PA NCO)

Transformation

From Page 10

Reorganization, G7, and he served as the executive officer for the division's 2nd brigade combat team during the push into Baghdad.

"We have a near-term mission," Wesley said, "which is to plan and then develop a course of action to increase our deployable entities and ensure that the division doesn't have to deploy every time a brigade-size element does."

"In the meantime, we must remain combat ready. We don't have the luxury of conducting tests, standing down a unit for

an extended period of time and experimenting."

This is not a 3rd Inf. Div. initiative, Wesley iterated. This is an Army initiative, and Training and Doctrine Command has the long-term mission, he said.

TRADOC was given the responsibility of focusing on Modularity, which is one of Schoomaker's 16 focus areas, Webster said. Modularity would give smaller units a degree of flexibility and more power. The 3rd Inf. Div.'s role is more immediate, but will keep TRADOC informed to help them with their long-term Armywide reorganization plans, he said.

Previously, whenever there was a change to be made in the Army it would be handed to

TRADOC to do an analysis and within a few years come up with and execute a plan, Wesley said. Now both organizations have parallel guidance.

Reorganize, train, tweak some more and go back and train some more until it's time to deploy again, is the direction Webster has from Schoomaker. The first newly formed brigade unit of action will be trained at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin Calif., in March.

The first three brigades will be fairly easy to reorganize, but standing up the last two will take some time because more people and equipment are needed to make them

whole, Webster added.

The 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky., commanded by Maj. Gen. David Petraeus, has the mission of reorganizing next. The 101st Abn. Div. has officially begun to redeploy their more than 18,000 troops after serving in operation Iraqi Freedom.

"What I have initiated to do for (Major) General Petraeus is to let him know what courses of action didn't work for us and what concepts caused the Army staff some difficulties," Webster said. "We will offer them anything that will help them start at a level further down the road than we started."

Balancing the Force

From Page 1

"The proposal would permit expanded use of federally funded National Guard forces, under the respective governor's control, for homeland defense and support for homeland-security operations," he said. "This is the best of both worlds for all concerned."

The 367-year-old National Guard has already transformed itself into a more reliable, ready, relevant and accessible force for the war against terrorism, General Blum said.

"To date, your adjutants general have consolidated 162 ... headquarters organizations into 54 standing joint-force headquarters," said General Blum, who initiated the transformation in May.

"In times of emergency, your standing joint-force headquarters provide for rapid response and better integration of National Guard assistance from your neighboring states through existing emergency mutual assistance compacts," General Blum said.

"Additionally, the standing joint-force headquarters provide improved access to all Department of Defense assets within your state or territory, should they be needed," he said.

"We do not foresee a reduction in the number of people in the Guard," General Blum said. "We do see a National Guard with enhanced capabilities to perform all of its missions."

Guardsmen have performed extremely well during the war against terrorism, General Blum said.

"In combat, the performance of our soldiers and airmen has been magnificent," he said. "They bring civilian-acquired skills and life experiences unmatched by their active counterparts and are even more effective because of this. They are America's home team. And they bring your communities and those values to the fight. At the current deployment rate, 80 percent of the Guard's forces will be combat veterans as well as homeland-security veterans within the next 36 months, General Blum said.

"The numbers vary daily and have ranged as high as 75 percent of one state's National Guard being deployed," General Blum said. "Governors and adjutants general have told me this is unacceptable."

That is why it is time to even the load among all of the states, he said.

"I cannot deliver this model today because our Guard force is not properly balanced ... among the states, nor is it properly balanced among the active, Guard and Reserve [forces]," General Blum said.

"But when accomplished," he said, "it will provide you, the commanders-in-chief, the maximum possible capabilities at your disposal for state missions, homeland defense and support for homeland-security missions."

"This model will ensure that no governor is left without sufficient capabilities in the state," he said.

Guarding Your Rights

Legal Affairs: *Legal status, legislation for Guardsmen*

CAPT. TIMOTHY TOMCHO
JAG OFFICE

The legal status of National Guard soldiers and airmen often mystify our active-duty counterparts, as well as many of us.

A Guardsman's legal status is more than a function of who is paying the bills. The federal government pays for much of our duty, evidenced by the leave and earnings statement issued by Defense Finance Accounting System (DFAS).

The federal government pays our wages, whether we are operating as active-duty (mobilized) forces or traditional National Guard (M-Day) forces.

Connecticut pays our wages when we are operating under a Governor's call to duty — as a member of the Quick Reaction Force (QRF), for example — we are performing State Active Duty. Thus, National Guardsmen have three (there are more) categories of legal status:

- **Federal** — "active duty" under title 10 of the United States Code

- **State/Federal** — "traditional and full-time Guardsmen," under title 32 of United States Code

- **State** — "state active duty," under title 27 of the General Statutes of Connecticut

The State Military Department is comprised of the Connecticut National Guard, the Office of Emergency Management, the Governors' Guard and the State Guard.

The adjutant general is the "commissioner" of the Military Department. The adjutant general, as a state employee, is authorized under section 27-19 of the General Statutes of Connecticut the rank of lieutenant general.

As a state agency head, the adjutant general is responsible for the presentation and introduction of agency legislative proposals to the Connecticut General Assembly (state legislature). State agencies

traditionally introduce their proposals to the committee within the General Assembly that has cognizance.

The Public Safety Committee is the agency to which the Military Department introduces bills.

In February, the Public Safety Committee voted to "raise" six Military Department proposals into bills.

The vote to raise the proposals into bills means that the proposals will be drafted into proper legislative language. The bills will also receive a public hearing. The six Military Department proposals raised by the PSC are as follows.

- **Senate Bill 315, AN ACT ALLOWING ACCESS TO THE SOLDIERS, SAILORS AND MARINES' FUND BY MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD.**

This bill provides for equal access to the assistance offered by the Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund to members of the Connecticut National Guard. The bill also opens eligibility to the fund to active-duty personnel from Connecticut.

- **Senate Bill 316, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BONUS FOR CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD VETERANS OF OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM AND IRAQI FREEDOM.**

This bill provides a \$50 per month bonus (maximum \$1,000 bonus) to Connecticut soldiers and airmen for each month spent in Southwest Asia in support of Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom.

- **Senate Bill 317, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD RELIEF ACCOUNT.**

This bill establishes a Military Department Relief Fund for use by the Adjutant General for relief of military personnel and their families. This also provides for the fund to be listed on Conn. State income tax returns,

enabling taxpayers to make donations.

- **House Bill 5362, AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS' BENEFITS.**

This bill requires centralized compilation and documentation of all veterans benefits conferred by the State of Connecticut to eligible veterans during a calendar year by the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs, allowing for analysis of the benefits for fiscal purposes. It also clarifies the inclusion of the National Guard as a part of the Armed Forces of the United States.

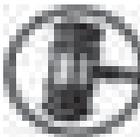
- **House Bill 5363, AN ACT CONCERNING THE EDUCATION GRANT TO CHILDREN OF DECEASED OR DISABLED VETERANS OR MISSING IN ACTION MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES.**

This bill increases the educational grant (from \$400 to \$1,000) provided by the state of Connecticut to children of deceased, disabled or missing-in-action veterans.

- **Still Unnumbered, THE MILITIA**

This bill revises Chapter 504, "Militia" General Statutes of Connecticut, to eliminate obsolete sections like those that make reference to a naval militia, and to more accurately reflect the operations of the National Guard and the Militia

"These bills, when passed, will enable our service members, veterans and their families, to recognition and assistance that they so rightly deserve," said Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno. "This legislation duly recognizes the contributions made by Connecticut National Guard soldiers and airmen as full partners in our state and national security. The time to improve the rewards for those who have sacrificed and who are sacrificing for us is now."



The National Guard Association of Connecticut has been very busy during the past month attending informational hearings and testifying before the state Public Safety Committee urging passage of bills benefitting members of the Connecticut Guard, retirees, Militia members and their families.

On Feb. 19, an informational hearing on the administration of the Soldiers', Sailors', Marines' Fund was held at the state capital. The fund has come under fire lately for the way it has been managed. Two hundred people, mostly military members and retirees, packed the hearing room.

Mr. Gerald Dierman, fund administrator, was on hand to explain the history of the fund, who is and is not eligible for assistance and what items are covered under the fund.

Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno, the adjutant general, asked that all National Guardsmen be included in the fund. Only those that have served on Title 10 active duty for 90 days or longer are eligible. He wants all Soldiers and Airmen who have served on Title 27 and Title 32 to be covered, also.

After the informational hearing, Cugno met with Dierman, and an agreement was reached to include all Guardsmen in the fund.

Later in the month and into March, members of the NGACT presented oral and written testimony to the Public Safety Committee urging passage of several Senate and House bills before them.

On Feb. 26, 23 people testified before the committee, including Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, for passage of Senate Bills 315, 316 and 317 and House Bills 5362 and 5363 (see *Legal Affairs* column for details of these bills). On March 2, the committee voted to send Senate Bills 315 and 317, and House Bill 5362 to the floor, and Senate 316 to the Appropriations Committee.

Also on March 2, members of the NGACT and others testified before the Public Safety Committee on House Bill 5489, The Organized Militia. We are hopeful that a vote will be taken to pass this bill to the next phase.

On March 4, testimony was given before the Public Health Committee urging passage of a Senate Bill that would require John Dempsey Hospital and the University Of UConn Medical Center to enroll as TRICARE Network providers.

We will keep our eyes on all these bills and keep you informed of their status.

If you are interested in becoming more involved with our legislative efforts, or in joining the NGACT, please contact us at 860-247-5000. Someone will return your call.

State Inspector General moves to VA Hospital complex in Newington

The State Inspector General for the Connecticut National Guard has re-located from the Hartford Armory. Effective Monday, Feb. 9, 2004 the IG office and staff is located on the first floor in building 34 of the VA Hospital in Newington.

The IG office is now more accessible to all members of the Connecticut National Guard and their family members. The move, to offices formerly occupied by the mobilized and deployed 118th Medical Battalion, provides soldiers with a private entrance and ease of parking in a lot adjacent to the new location on the south end of the hospital complex.

Soldiers needing assistance can now visit the Inspector General anonymously and in a private location.

The new phone number for the Inspector General is 860-878-6708.

Inside OCS

The heart of OCS as seen by one non-traditional candidate

OC KEVIN ZRENDA
OCS CLASS 49

I grew up in East Lyme, home of Camp Rowland. I played high school football on its parade field. Now I am attending OCS, training to become an officer in the Connecticut Army National Guard. As an "OCS Enlistment Option," I have gone directly from Basic Combat Training to OCS, and my perspective may be a little different than the typical soldier.

Before arriving at Camp Rowland, I knew very little about OCS, other than that it was one of the main routes towards becoming an officer: a state-based program, it differed from the federal program in that it spread a 14-week program into one year's worth of weekend drills and two annual trainings in the field.

At first, OCS seemed an extension of Basic Training. What previously had been Drill Sergeants at Fort Knox scrutinizing and yelling at my every move, have now become TAC Officers and TACNCO's. But while we are still scrutinized over the manner in which we execute orders, we are also scrutinized in how we lead.

While OCS does share similarities to BCT, the similarity has decreased over time. The TACs become more approachable as you progress from Phase 0 to Phase I and now to Phase II.

I can only sense that this trend will continue as the TACs continue to instruct us on the finer points of being an officer: setting an example, leading from the front,

seeing your unit as both family and team, trusting your senior NCOs, and preparation, preparation, preparation.

Every month the student leadership is given the task of executing the training schedule to perfection. Given the stressful environment that the TACs create and force us to operate in, we are drilled in the axiom that planning translates into the ability to operate under fire.

In OCS, you can expect an ample amount of classroom time, and lessons incorporate real-world examples.

Just recently, suicide bombers dressed as Muslim Clerics (priests, of all unbelievable things) killed almost 70 people in northern Iraq. We have covered similar scenarios within our classroom environment.

Instructors and TAC Officers encourage questions and guide debates on often tricky subject matter, such as tactics or ROEs. Not only do we learn academically, but time is given to contemplate our own role within the armed forces of the United States, and I believe this is an area where OCS excels.

It's pretty easy to quit—just walk onto the OCS area green, and ring the shiny gold bell. But then, perhaps, you will remember talking about what it must have been like to be a Vietnam veteran, returning home to oftentimes ungrateful crowds – and the thought of walking away from service stops. All of this is to say that you really focus on your reasons for joining the Connecticut Army National Guard.

Well, so far as I can figure, it is not the

money. Though some of us join for the educational or health benefits, or for the extra checks, these things are not what keep us. I believe what keeps most of us is the same thing that OCS is trying to instill in each of us: a sense of honor and leadership. OCS teaches the lessons of what happens in the media when one soldier makes a poor decision.

It reinforces the lesson that intangibles are what make good officers, or any soldier for that matter. And we in the National Guard have a special role in society as citizen-soldiers.

My fiancée, Alora, is carrying our first child, but she remains strong in her support of my military service.

Though career and other benefits help, support by our family, friends and loved ones holds up because of the values we strive to defend.

It is a good thing we are doing. I know there are tough conversations that families have in private, and explaining my desire to branch infantry has been difficult.

But I have been thankful for the support at OCS along the way – the sharing of stories with classmates and TACs, or the help in finding needed resources.

The motto of our class, Class 49, is "Honor Leads the Way." I believe in that motto, and as citizen-soldiers we are called on to live that motto to the best of our ability.

We joined knowing are lives will be at risk, but we signed anyways, knowing that deep down it was a risk made worthwhile for the

values we will defend.

And that is the heart of OCS – training competent and able leaders with a strong sense of values—dedication to the values of America. No society can be truly 'good' or virtuous if it cannot claim to have virtuous soldiers. If we as soldiers cannot set the standard—and we are called on even more for our roles as both citizens *and* soldiers—then how can we expect the rest of society to uphold some standard of morals, decency, and values?

And so we lead the way in defense of those most cherished values. All America will ever need is more good men and more good women. OCS teaches the skills and values necessary to develop those men and women into leaders.

In private life I am getting certified to teach high school history and coach baseball. I joined the Guard to pay back part of the debt I owe to those who came before us, died for us. Though names have been forgotten, I try not to forget that when I take the field as a baseball coach, it is they who have given us this beautiful weekend afternoon and this green infield diamond. It is they who let us argue about how our own government should be run.

OCS remembers these heroes by leading us to the paths of their footsteps, building the skills to follow them, if one can say that is possible.

In the least, we learn that being a true officer is remembering their deeds through our actions in the present.

Why Diversity?

Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility theme for Women's History Month

SUBMITTED BY SGT. 1ST CLASS SCOTT J. FARRELL
STATE DIVERSITY INITIATIVES COORDINATOR (SDIC)

Since its beginnings the United States has been blessed by noteworthy women who played defining roles in shaping our Nation. These contributions have enriched our culture, strengthened our nation, and furthered the Founders vision for a free and just republic that provides opportunity and safety at home while influencing security abroad.

The history of American women is an expansive story of outstanding individuals who sacrificed much and worked hard in pursuit of a better world. This inspiring nature of determination that shaped these pursuits continues to serve as an example to those who seek to better our nation. Women's History Month provides our country the privilege of honoring the countless contributions American women have made throughout our history.

On March 26th, 2004 The Connecticut National Guard in conjunction with the

United States Postal Service will host its 2004 Women's History Month Celebration at the Torp Theater, Central Connecticut State University, New Britain Conn. The event will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The 2004 National Theme of "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility" recognizes American women who have led and won struggles for equality and civil rights, created and advanced educational and professional opportunities and made great contributions to the arts, sciences, and humanistic causes. It also recognizes the innovative women of today who continue to further these efforts and expand the frontiers of possibility for generations to come.

The United States Postal Service will be unveiling the Wilma Rudolf stamp image as part of its distinguished American stamp series. Wilma Rudolph overcame a childhood plagued by serious illness to become one of the nations greatest athletes. Our "2004 Women's History Month Celebration" is open to the general public. We encourage all

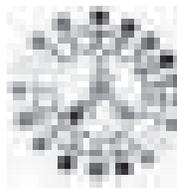
members of the Connecticut National Guard and civilian community to join us as we celebrate "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility." We are confident this event will be a most enjoyable and educational experience. Light refreshments will be served at the conclusion. To confirm your attendance, please contact Spec. Kristy Mullan at (860) 878-6721.

This year we are very pleased to have Commissioner Linda Schwartz, Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs for the State of Connecticut join us as Keynote Speaker. Commissioner Schwartz, former Chair of the Vietnam Veterans of America National Task Force on Health Care was appointed to this post in May of 2003. She is the first woman and first nurse in Connecticut's 140 years of service to veterans to be named as Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs and the second woman in U.S. history to direct state department veterans' affairs. Commissioner Schwartz has a long

history of involvement in nursing and veteran organizations.

Also joining us this day will be our Special Guest Susan H. Hoover, Special Projects Director for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission's mandate is to study all matters concerning women, to inform leaders about the nature and scope of discrimination, to serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with services for women, to promote consideration of women for governmental positions, and to work with state agencies to assess programs and practices as they affect women. Susan directs a variety of projects that focus on women's equity issues.

We look forward to seeing you there.



Health & Fitness

Your Health Matters: *Mad Cow Disease: Separating fact from fiction*

CAPT. KATHLEEN L. KING, APRN

"Mad Cow" disease, also known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), is a fatal illness that strikes the central nervous system of cattle, that's right, CATTLE. First diagnosed in Great Britain in 1986, it is now found in 33 countries around the world.

The outbreak in the UK may have started from the feeding of scrapie-contaminated sheep meat-and-bone meal to cattle. Scrapie is a disease of sheep that is related to BSE in cattle.

In cattle, the BSE agent has been found in brain tissue, spinal cord tissue, and in the retina of the eye. Some studies suggest that the BSE agent may also be present in the small intestine and bone marrow. Mad cow disease has an incubation period from 2-8 years in cattle. The incubation period is the time between when the cow is infected and symptoms appear. Symptoms in cattle include a quick deterioration of the nervous system, such as erratic behavior, abnormal posture, weight loss, and eventually death.

The agent responsible for BSE is generally believed to be a malformed protein called a prion. Prions cause normal proteins in the brain to become

deformed, making sponge-like holes in the brain, called spongiform. In later stages of the disease, these brain abnormalities may be detectable by x-ray or MRI. A true diagnosis can only be made on autopsy. There is concern because it appears that the agent that causes mad cow disease in cattle causes a related disease, variant Creutzfeldt Jakob disease (vCJD), in people who infected cattle. The disease, vCJD, is rare, usually found in younger people, and very hard to diagnose until the disease is in its later stages. The incubation period for vCJD in humans is unknown. It is estimated to be 10-15 years. The symptoms in humans include memory and judgment impairment, confusion, blindness, and loss of muscle coordination. The disease progresses very quickly, and the victims may lose the ability to speak, become comatose, and die. There is no known treatment or vaccine to prevent disease in humans or cattle.

According to the World Health Organization, there have been 129 cases of vCJD from October 1996 to November 2002, mostly in the United Kingdom. The US Food and Drug Administration estimates that as of May 2003, there have been 139 cases of vCJD worldwide. As of this printing, there has only been one

case of vCJD identified in the United States. This young woman contracted the disease while living in the United Kingdom, and here symptoms appeared years later after she moved to the US. In Europe and Great Britain, almost every beef animal is tested for mad cow disease. Recently, there was a sick cow found on a farm in Mabton, Washington. It was unable to walk when it reached the slaughterhouse, which under USDA rules triggers automatic testing. Later it was found that this cow had been bought from a farm in Canada, and it is believed that the cow was infected prior to being moved to Washington State. BSE is spread only by the consumption of infected feed, and is not transmitted from cow to cow. It is thought that BSE entered the cattle food chain from feed made from sheep infected with a similar disease. Most food products from these animals have been banned from use in the United Kingdom in 1988, in the United States since 1989, and in all of Europe since 1997.

Most researchers assume that the more the infected beef is consumed, the greater the risk of contracting the disease. But the type of beef also matters. Processed meats such as sausage may be the riskiest, because

they are more likely to contain bits of brain and spinal cord, where prions are bound. Muscle cuts of meat have almost no risk, because the disease is typically spread by consumption of brain or nerve tissue. Milk and milk products are considered safe. The Food and Drug Administration continues to work with the USDA and the Customs Service to stop produces with cattle derived materials from being imported to the US from BSE restricted countries, including Canada.

Sources of information for this article include: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Division of Viral and Rickettsial Diseases (www.cdc.gov) CNN Washington "First apparent U.S. case of mad cow disease discovered", 24Dec03 (www.CNN.com/usnews) MEDLINEplus Medical Encyclopedia: Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease (www.MEDLINEplus.com) National Institutes of Health, National Institutes of Environmental Health Services (www.NIEHS.nih.gov) Trust for America's Health (www.healthamericans.org) United States Department of Health and Human Services, United States Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (www.cfsan.fda.gov, www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/bse.html)

New temporary health benefits for Guard, Reserves announced

The Department of Defense announced that it will implement the "2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program" for certain eligible Reserve Component sponsors and their family members.

The Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal 2004 authorized new health benefits, some permanent and some temporary. The 2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program includes three temporary Tricare benefit provisions; some are effective as of Nov. 6, 2003, and all expire Dec. 31, 2004. Total expenditures for these new provisions may not exceed the \$400 million limit established by Congress for fiscal 2004. Tricare Management Activity will implement the new provisions in phases starting in the spring.

"These new temporary provisions were designed by Congress to improve readiness and enhance access to care for Reserve servicemembers and their families," said Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. "We are implementing these new provisions as soon as possible," he said.

One provision temporarily authorizes Tricare medical and dental coverage for Reserve component sponsors activated for more than 30 days and their family members. Eligibility begins either on the day the sponsor receives delayed-effective date active duty orders or 90 days.

A second provision temporarily extends eligibility for Tricare benefits to 180 days under the Transitional Assistance Management Program for Reserve component sponsors who separate from active duty status during the period Nov. 6, 2003 through Dec. 31, 2004, and their eligible family members.

The third provision temporarily extends Tricare medical benefits to Reserve component sponsors and family members who are either unemployed or employed but not eligible for employer-provided health coverage.

These temporary provisions end on Dec. 31, 2004.

"We encourage Reserve component sponsors and family members to save health care receipts, claims and explanation of benefits for dates of service from Nov. 6, 2003, through Dec. 31, 2004. This is

necessary in the event the sponsor is determined to be eligible and the care qualifies for retroactive Tricare reimbursement once the 2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program begins," said Winkenwerder.

The three permanent health benefit provisions of the NDAA include: benefit counselors for the Reserve component in each Tricare region; authorization for medical and dental screening and care for members alerted for mobilization; and Tricare eligibility for reserve officers pending orders to active duty following commissioning.

Additional information for Reserve component families, who have questions regarding the Tricare benefit or need assistance processing Tricare claims, are available on the Tricare Web site at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/> and the Reserve Affairs Web site at <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra>. Each Tricare region will soon have a designated beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinator available to assist members and families with understanding and using their enhanced Tricare benefits.



Sports



Friendly Competition

DAYTONA INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY, Fla. -- The military-sponsored NASCAR cars line up on the speedway, ready to kick off the 2004 Nextel Cup season here Feb. 15. Ricky Rudd (far right) drove the Air Force-sponsored Wood Brothers Racing #21 car. The other service's drivers are (from left) Greg Biffle for the National Guard; Bobby Hamilton Jr. for the Marines; Casey Atwood for the Navy; Joe Nemechek for the Army; and Justin Labonte for the Coast Guard. Standing with the drivers are representatives from each service. (U.S. Air Force photo by Larry McTighe)

WELCOME HOME 1109th AVCRAD

11th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

11th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Retirees' Voice

Keeping an eye on national legislative efforts benefitting retirees and members

Sgt. 1st Class (Ret.) JOHN BEDNARZ

Congress is not in session as I write this but will return on Feb. 20. These are the times to catch them face-to-face while they are in their districts, and let them know how you feel about certain legislation.

There are a number of pending bills that are of interest to the retiree. H.R. 3763 introduced by Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL) as a companion bill to S. 1916 would increase the basic Survivor Benefit Plan, post-age 62 annuities to 55 percent over a ten-year period.

As it stands now at age 62 the annuity drops to 35 percent. Congressional delegates from Connecticut that are among the 245 co-sponsors of this bill at the latest tally are Rosa DeLauro (Budget and Appropriations Committees) and Rob Simmons and John Larson (Armed Services Committee).

Another pair of bills titled 'Keep our Promises to America's Military Retirees Act' is H. R. 3474 and S. 2065. These bills, if enacted, would waive the required Medicare Part B co-payments under TRICARE for Life for military retirees who entered the service prior to Dec. 7, 1956.

For military retirees who have difficulty accessing doctors, or are underserved by the TRICARE system, they would be given the option of electing coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP) rather than TRICARE.

For military retirees who cannot access TRICARE pharmacies due to physical or medical constraints, they would set up a system to reimburse pharmacy expenses - at TRICARE rates.

Of course Congress is still determined to set thing straight with the 'Concurrent Receipt' of military retired pay and disability pay. Bills S. 392 and H. R. 303 call for full concurrent receipt for all retirees, regardless of the circumstances of their disability.

They would allow military retirees to receive their disability payment as determined by the VA and also receive the full retirement, which they earned, period.

If your ready to let your Congressman or Congresswoman know how you feel about these and other matters, I have a plan for you.

Get on your computers and go to www.eangus.org if you're an enlisted member of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) (which I'm sure you are), or www.capviz.com/moaa/ if you're an officer member of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) (which I'm sure you are).

And even if you are not a member you are welcome to go to these sites.

They have a remarkably easy method of contacting your Senators and Representatives, usually by e-mail (the preferred method since the Anthrax scare).

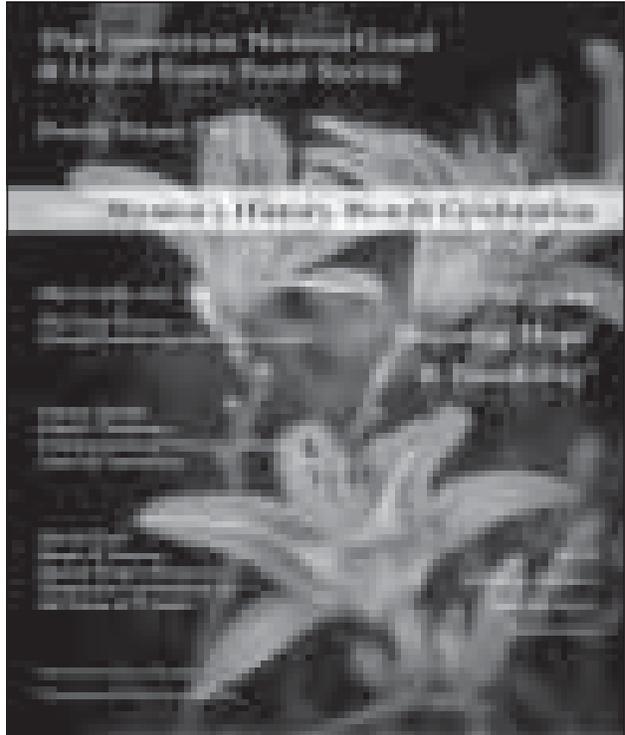
Now if you want to count yourselves as a member of one of these fine organizations that are working their butts off for you, simply contact the National Guard Association of Connecticut (NGACT) at National Guard Armory, 360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105 or call 860-247-5000 and leave a message (They do not have a full time staff member to man the phone, but they'll get back to you).

Do you know these guys?



Taking the oath during ceremonies at the old Chapel at Camp Rowland. (Photo submitted by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Steve Mulligan)

If you have a picture of historical nature to share with our readers, email if possible to debbi.newton@ct.ngb.army.mil or mail to Sgt. 1st Class Debbi Newton, Public Affairs Office, National Guard Armory, 360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105-3795.






**CONNECTICUT ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
OFFICIAL CALENDAR FOR 2004**

**CLASS 49 DINING IN
SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 2004**

**WINDSOR CLUB, HARTFORD ARMY
HEADQUARTERS ST., HARTFORD, CT 06105**

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HEADQUARTERS ST., HARTFORD, CT 06105

Coming Events

March

- March 10**
NGACT Executive Board Meeting
- March 17**
St. Patrick's Day
- March 20**
NGACT Annual Conference and Dance
- March 26**
Women's History Celebration
- March 27**
EANGUS Area 1 Caucus
- March 27**
OCS Class 49 Dining In

April

- April 9**
Good Friday
- April 11**
Easter
- April 14**
NGACT Executive Board Meeting
- April 26**
NCOES Graduations

May

- May 9**
Mother's Day
- May 14**
Armed Forces Day Luncheon
- May 15**
Armed Forces Day
- May 31**
Memorial Day

In future issues

- The Dangers of Club Drugs
- Women's History Month Celebration
- Air Guard undergoes ORE
- Civil Air Patrol
- Homecoming Stories

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month previous to publication.

Employment Opportunity

Event Date: Ongoing/Regular/One-time

Pay Rate: \$12.00 Hourly/Annual Salary

Work Hours: 8:00am-4:00pm

Location: 1000 Main Street, Hartford, CT

Job Title: Customer Service Representative

Job Description: We are seeking a Customer Service Representative to provide excellent customer service to our clients. The ideal candidate will have a high school diploma and previous retail or customer service experience. This is a full-time position with excellent benefits.

How to Apply: Please send your resume and cover letter to: HR Department, 1000 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06105. We are an equal opportunity employer.

242nd Returns from Operation Noble Eagle

From Page 1

The 90 Company C Soldiers who deployed to Ft. Drum returned home after approximately seven months on the job. These Soldiers provided security at all of the gates on Ft. Drum, as well as the ammunition supply point for the entire base. After returning in time for terminal leave and opportunities to get their lives back to normal, a ceremony at their home army allowed their National Guard colleagues and their neighbors in Branford an opportunity to say "Thank you!"

The engineers performed their temporary jobs very well, according to someone who is quite familiar with the more traditional mission of the combat engineers.

"You did an outstanding job, and you made me very proud" said Adjutant General Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno, a former commander of the 242nd Eng. Bn. He thanked the troops for deploying on short notice, but also let them know that the same scenario could arise again. "Don't go too far, I will call on you again. My roots are here. You are my unit."

The accolades do not begin or end with the adjutant general. Local and state officials attended the ceremony to thank the engineers for their service, and U.S. Representative Rosa DeLauro, whose Third Congressional District includes Branford, sent a letter of thanks. The unit was also presented with a citation from the Connecticut General Assembly. Branford First Selectman John Odie, who served with the Naval Reserve during the Vietnam War era, thanked the Soldiers on behalf of their respective home towns - but especially on behalf of the town that is home to Company C.

"Branford has always supported its military folks," Odie said. "As a town, we owe you a huge debt of gratitude."

For its work while on active duty, the unit was recognized by the Ft. Drum Directorate of Emergency Services for the successful discovery and confiscation of illegal drugs, unregistered weapons and detainment of wanted individuals. One of the most unusual incidents occurred one night when someone with a fake ID tried to drive a civilian truck onto the base. It turns out there were also some suspicious passengers



Members of Charlie Company, 242nd Eng. stand in formation during ceremonies welcoming them home from Operation Noble Eagle. (Photo by Spec. Jesse J. Stanley, 65th PCH)

in the cargo area of the truck.

"They almost got through," said Sgt. Nick Sinatra, a team leader who described the vehicle as a "U-Haul type truck." Sinatra was on duty that night at a separate gate, but said it didn't take long for him to hear about the incident. "(The guards from Company C) became suspicious, so they asked for a second form of ID."

When the driver could not provide what the guards were looking for, the truck was searched.

"There were three more guys in the back of the truck, which itself is illegal. What they were trying to do on the post, we don't know," Sinatra said.

Typically, a gate would be staffed by two MPs, and two Company C engineers. All

deployed members of Company C were trained in force protection tasks and rules of engagement.

"We went through a validation period when we arrived," said Spc. Craig Michalowski, also a team leader. "We learned about detaining people, and spotting any kind of illegal paraphernalia."

In suspicious cases, the MPs would search vehicles, Sinatra said. At most gates, Co. C Soldiers and their counterparts would routinely use rolling mirrors to check underneath vehicles. Large trucks, such as semis, would go to a special gate, where the procedure was handled by a team of security personnel.

"The trucks would first go through a civilian scanner, which was like a large X-

Ray machine. If the scanner would see something that looked like a weapon, then the MPs would search the truck," Sinatra said.

In addition to learning force protection skills, the engineers faced other challenges through the deployment, according to Sinatra and Michalowski. Both said it was difficult to get their lives in order in less than a month.

"Getting up and going was the hardest part," Michalowski said. "Being with the guys gets you through it."

Putting one's life on hold is not easy, they said, especially for an unknown period of time. Both had their college and professional lives interrupted for more than half a year. Michalowski tried to get back into his physical education degree

program at Southern Connecticut State University, but was not able to get into any classes.

Sinatra, a junior at Central Connecticut State University, said he returned just in time to register for the Spring 2004 semester in his math education program. But, he missed more than six months from his job as assistant manager of the Agway store in North Branford. He also moved out of his apartment prior to the deployment.

The force protection mission has not ended for 36 members of Company C, who are still fulfilling that assignment at Ft. Hamilton, NY, expecting to return home in May. The speakers at the event in Branford expressed long distance gratitude to those Soldiers, as well as the more than 200 Connecticut Army Guard Soldiers still on active duty supporting Operation Noble Eagle.

In addition to Ft. Drum and Ft. Hamilton, Connecticut Guard units have provided security at the United States Military Academy, West Point, NY; Ft. Monmouth, NJ; Ft. Dix, NJ, and the United States War College in Pennsylvania. Approximately half of the more than 400 Connecticut Guard Soldiers who deployed for Operation Noble Eagle are still performing their assigned missions.

At the time of the ceremony, a total of 956 Soldiers and Airmen were "deployed somewhere in the world at this time," Cugno said. Many of those Soldiers are serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.



Soldiers of the 242nd receive their Operation Noble Eagle medals from Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno (l) and Brig. Gen. I.J. Zembrzowski (r). (Photos by Spec. Jesse J. Stanley, 65th PCH)



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