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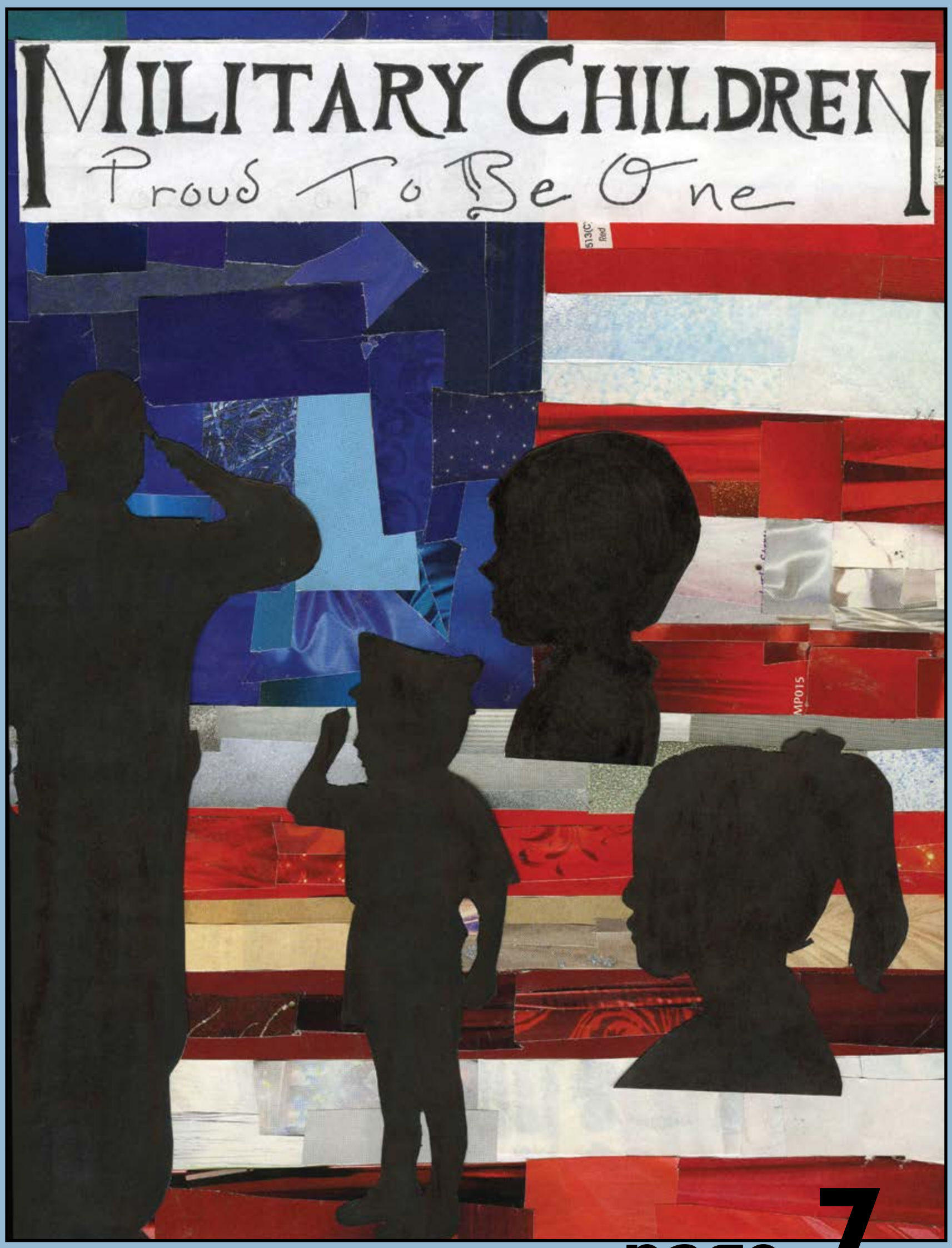
GRIZZLY

Official Newsmagazine of the California National Guard



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Leadership Corner

Preventing sexual assault is everyone's duty

Major General David S. Baldwin

In the Armed Forces, it is essential that we live by our core values and treat each other with dignity and respect. Sexual assault is an affront to those values and violates everything we stand for as defenders of this country.

On the battlefield, we are exceptional at taking care of one another. It would be a source of great shame if we did not extend that same ethos of care to victims of sexual assault and bring that same intensity and level of execution to the fight against criminal activities within our ranks.

Aside from the obvious moral imperative to stop these heinous crimes, sexual assaults have a devastating impact on the order and discipline of a military organization. Our profession of arms is built on trust, and we must foster a climate of trust within each unit.

April is observed nationally and by the Department of Defense as Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a time when organizations throughout the military are encouraged to raise awareness and promote prevention through special events and educational initiatives. Another key reason for observing Sexual Assault Awareness Month is to show support for victims of sexual assaults.

Unfortunately many victims are reluctant to come forth and report such an incident. Hopefully the myriad activities scheduled for this month throughout the California National Guard show our members that we are committed to supporting victims as they heal from such a traumatic event, that we are eager to prosecute offenders to the fullest extent of the law and that we will continually renew and intensify our efforts to stamp out sexual assault in the Cal Guard.

Unit leaders must understand that victims — and perpetrators — are watching us to see how we react when incidents are reported to a chain of command. They are paying attention to how we treat our victims, how we investigate and punish perpetrators, and how we act on a daily basis when lesser offenses such as inappropriate workplace comments are committed that can lead to a culture of tolerance if left unchecked.

Commanders are responsible for the readiness of their unit and the health and welfare of their service members. Sexual Assault Awareness Month is an excellent opportunity for you to engage your unit to emphasize your personal commitment to preventing sexual assault and to discuss the importance of bystander intervention.

By establishing a non-permissive climate in which potential offenders know they will be investigated and held accountable, we can reduce incidents of sexual assault. Both civilian and military justice systems await a Soldier or Airman who commits this terrible crime, and we will dedicate all the resources at our disposal to bringing perpetrators to justice. They will not get away with it.

Preventing sexual assault is not a job for unit leaders alone: It is the responsibility of every person in the California National Guard to not only watch your own behavior but monitor that of the people around you so that you can be prepared to intervene when a potentially dangerous situation arises. This requires constant vigilance and the courage to step up and do something when a situation calls for it.

Our success depends on the daily and continued commitment of every one of us to create a climate of mutual respect in which sexual harassment and sexual assault are not tolerated, condoned or ignored. This organization is strong because of our values of service, sacrifice, loyalty and doing what is right. By drawing on these strengths, we can and must stop sexual assault within our ranks.

If you are a victim of a sexual assault, report it to your chain of command or a victim advocate. If you know someone who is a victim, report the incident and encourage them to report it and seek assistance. Though we prefer complete reporting, if you do not wish to initiate a formal investigation, a victim advocate can confidentially assist you in obtaining medical help and counseling. Our first priority is to ensure that victims are protected and receive whatever assistance they need.

For assistance, call the CNG sexual assault response coordinator, Jennifer Lucero, at 916-854-3448 or 916-869-0787, visit www.calguard.ca.gov/j1/Pages/SAPRP.aspx or call the Department of Defense Safe Helpline, which is available 24 hours a day, at 877-995-5247. The Safe Helpline can also be reached at www.safehelpline.org.

For more on this very important topic, turn to page 18.

Take advantage of employment resources

Command Sergeant Major William Clark Jr.

Alleviating unemployment in the National Guard continues to be an area that deserves the attention of leaders and other service members alike. Having Guard members who are not able to work or earn a decent wage impairs our overall readiness and creates stress on individuals and families. Unfortunately our Soldiers and Airmen are experiencing unemployment at a rate 5 percentage points higher than the state average, which is already one of the nation's highest at 9.9 percent.

Thankfully our senior leaders and many of our elected officials have joined some generous corporate and community partners in taking steps to make employment a reality for thousands of California service members.

Every California National Guard member should know about the CNG's Work for Warriors (WFW) job assistance program. The full-time WFW staff is ready to assist you, free of charge, in refining your resume, improving your interviewing skills and matching you with Guard-friendly employers that are seeking workers with your skill set.

The WFW staff is composed of service members like you, but they have acquired many valuable insights from the companies they work with to place service members in jobs. They've learned that resumes need to be honest, free of jargon and tailored to the field of work for which a service member is pursuing. If a WFW staff member instructs you to do something or to speak in a particular way, it is for one reason and one reason alone: to get you hired.

In many ways the drawdown of forces abroad that has occurred in recent years and continues today resembles the end of World War II, when millions of service members reintegrated into American society. Their transition was eased by the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, which established the original G.I. Bill program and provided yearlong unemployment benefits for veterans transitioning into the civilian workforce.

Those WWII veterans aggressively took to their studies and on-the-job training, which in turn fueled the post-war economy. Americans needed homes and apartments during the Baby Boom era and they needed cars to use on hundreds of miles of new highways. Even more so, post-WWII national security concerns led to a nuclear arms race that demanded the best scientists, engineers, machinists and managers America had to offer. Those were just some of the professions that veterans were readily available to fill.

We don't have to drive far in California to witness major road construction, and new housing construction is picking back up in many locations throughout our state. Space exploration, a byproduct of the nuclear arms race, is now being embraced by private companies, and there is a quickly growing need for cybersecurity personnel. All of these professions and others represent opportunities for our Soldiers and Airmen. If you're a CNG member who needs help, get it. The resources are available to you.

Leaders, do your part to assist them. Unemployment in the CNG is not a part-time problem, and it needs our leaders' persistent awareness. Leaders must seek out members in their organizations to assess who is working, who has part-time employment, and who needs assistance. Find time to follow up with your unemployed or underemployed troops before, during, and after drill weekends until they find work that suits their needs.

Let's also take advantage of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill so that service members can increase their knowledge and not just find jobs in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, but lead those professions.

For more on WFW, visit www.calguard.ca.gov and click "Jobs" at the top of the page, call 916-854-4426, email ng.ca.caarng.mbx.jobs@mail.mil or find WFW on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CalGuardWorkForWarriors.

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April

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Submissions

Articles:

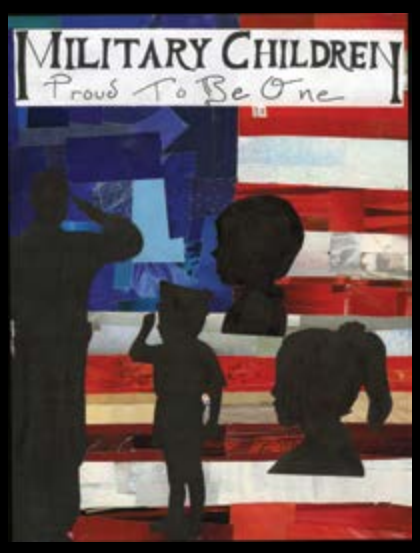
- ★ Articles range from 350 to 2,000 words. All articles should be accompanied by multiple high-resolution images.
- ★ Include first names, last names and military ranks. Always verify spelling.
- ★ Spell out acronyms, abbreviations and full unit designations on first reference.
- ★ Only submit articles that have been approved by your unit's public affairs officer.

Photographs:

- ★ Highest resolution possible: MB files, not KB.
- ★ No retouched photos, no special effects.
- ★ Include the photographer's name and rank, and a caption: what is happening in the photo, who is pictured and the date and location.

E-mail submissions and feedback to:
brandon.honig@us.army.mil

Cover Shot



Artwork by Emily Ferguson

A collage created by Emily Ferguson, age 17, earned first prize in the annual Grizzly art contest. Emily's father, Staff Sgt. Michael Ferguson, is currently deployed to Afghanistan with Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, based at Mather Field near Sacramento.

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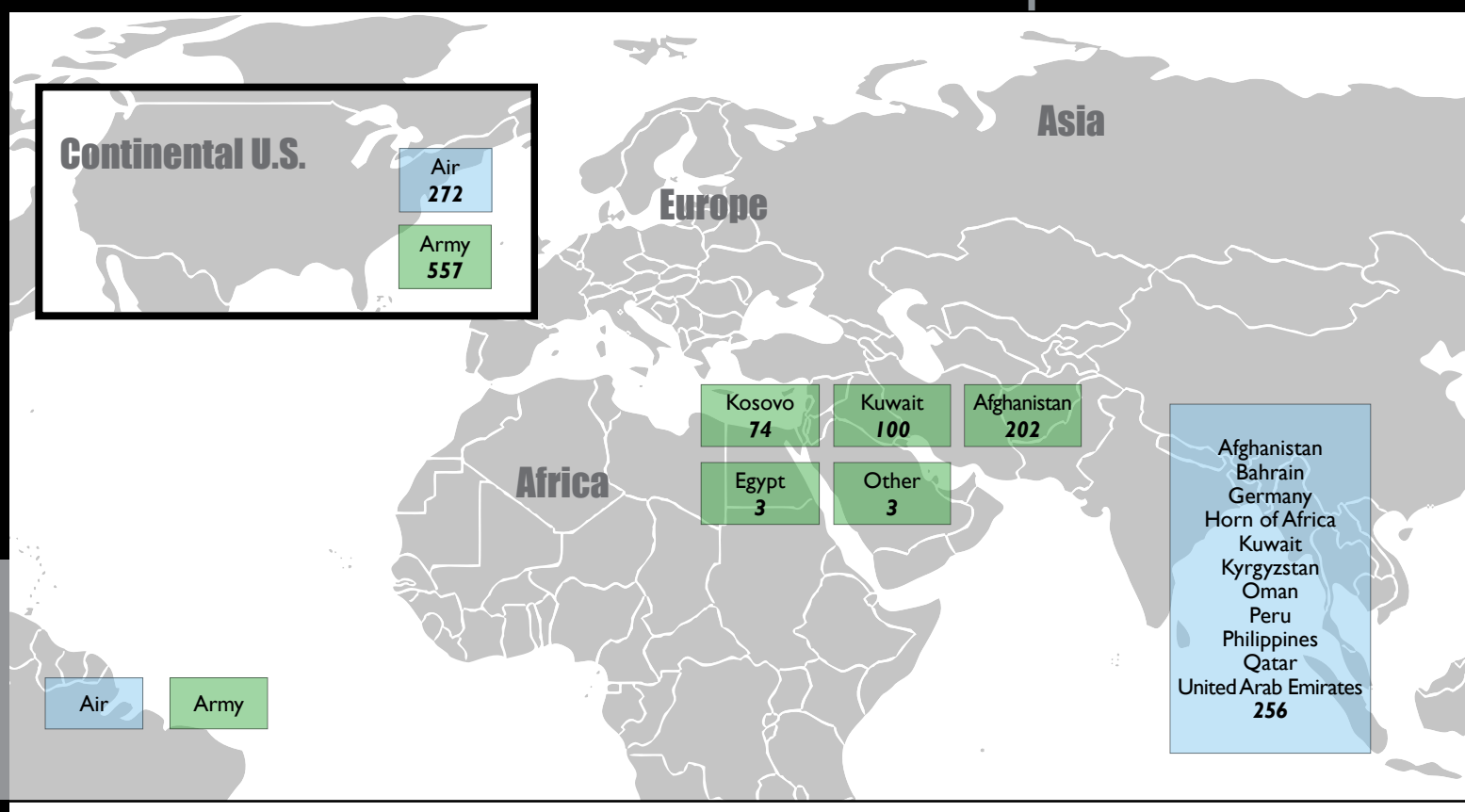


Train of terror

The 95th Civil Support Team and a host of other first responder agencies tackle a simulated nerve-gas attack on a Bay Area commuter train

By 1ST LT. JASON SWEENEY
California Military Department Public Affairs

Photos by 1st Lt. Jason Sweeney

The scenario is a commuter's worst nightmare: Terrorists overrun a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) train, take hostages, then release a nerve agent following a bloody shootout with a SWAT team.

That nightmare came to life in realistic fashion during a multi-agency exercise April 7 at the Millbrae BART Station near San Francisco International Airport. The purpose of the exercise, run by the California National Guard's Hayward-based 95th Civil Support Team (CST), was to test the CST's ability to work with first responders during a terrorist incident involving a weapon of mass destruction, or WMD.

The exercise kicked off early that Sunday morning when a group of armed terrorists took hostages in a BART car, which was then stormed by the San Mateo County Terrorism Counter Assault Team — a multi-jurisdictional SWAT team that specializes in responding to WMD events.

The roles of terrorist and passenger were played by members of the California Army National Guard's 297th Area Support Medical Company, the California State Military Reserve and civilian volunteers. Former Hollywood make-up artist Jeff Pereira volunteered to make the victims' wounds look real.

"It was definitely interesting with the live actors," 95th CST survey team member Spc. Kristopher Chelini said of the role players in the exercise, called BAYEX 2013. "It gave some added realism."

TOP: Spc. Kristopher Chelini of the California Guard's Hayward-based 95th Civil Support Team takes a sample of a suspected nerve agent inside a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) car April 7 during terrorism-response exercise BAYEX 2013. A volunteer playing the part of a dead terrorist lies nearby. ABOVE RIGHT: California State Military Reserve Spc. John Saunders plays the role of an injured commuter at the Millbrae BART Station on April 7, while a member of the San Mateo County Terrorism Counter Assault Team provides security. ABOVE: First Lieutenant Edward Baon of the 95th CST examines a casualty for symptoms of contamination.

Frank Doyle, a retired FBI agent and explosives consultant for the "MythBusters" TV show, provided the pyrotechnics. Doyle built a simulated improvised explosive device that went off with a bang as the Terrorism Counter Assault Team came onto the train platform.

First responders on the scene included the BART Police Department, San Mateo County Sheriff's Department Office of Emergency Services, city of Belmont Hazardous Materials Team, Belmont and Millbrae fire departments and private ambulance provider American Medical Response.

Shortly after the terrorist attack, the 95th CST received a call at its armory regarding a possible chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high-yield explosive (CBRNE) event at the Millbrae Station. The team hurried out the door and was soon on its way to the scene on the opposite side of San Francisco Bay.

BART Police Lt. Kevin Franklin, the incident commander on the ground at the station, said the 95th CST would be a valuable resource for local first responders if a CBRNE incident were to occur.

"Most jurisdictions can't maintain that level of training, equipment and experience," said Franklin, who was in charge of coordinating the area's response that day, including everything from isolating the scene to eliminating the threat and providing medical treatment.

The 95th CST is composed of 22 full-time Soldiers and Airmen. It is operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Its specialty is rapid response to CBRNE threats.

The 95th CST is responsible for Northern California, while its counterpart, the 9th CST in Los Alamitos, covers the southern part of the state. The CSTs are usually the first face of the National Guard that the public sees during any situation that requires a Guard response in California, whether it's a wildfire, earthquake or WMD incident.

The 95th CST arrived at the Millbrae BART Station with a mobile science lab, a communications truck, an operations vehicle, a command vehicle, a decontamination truck, a medical response vehicle and a survey vehicle, which transported the entry team and its equipment.

Chelini and his partner, Spc. Michael Evans, immediately suited up in Level A hazmat suits and entered a contaminated BART car. They stepped over the bloodied bodies of casualties and took samples of the suspected nerve agent as a dispersal device in a dead terrorist's backpack spewed mist into the air. The samples they obtained were then taken to the mobile lab for testing.

Chelini and Evans' Level A hazmat suits offer the highest level of skin and respiratory protection against vapors, gases, mists and particles. Evans said it gets humid while working in the suit, but it is a lifesaver in his line of work.

The rest of the CST worked in a staging area with first responders, providing communications and medical support and determining if any casualties had been contaminated.

"It's always good to work with the first responder community," said 1st Lt. Edward Baon, 95th CST medical operations officer. "It builds trust and working relationships with our counterparts."

The CST was also responsible for plume-modeling to determine the possible spread of toxins.

The exercise continued two days later at Contra Costa College in San Pedro, Calif., where the CST practiced responding to the discovery of a clandestine terrorist lab that was producing sarin gas.

"The more places you train, the better-equipped you are to respond," Chelini said. "It better prepares us to mitigate casualties and property damage in a real world situation."

95th CST Commander Maj. Michael Sathers said exercise planner Staff Sgt. Joshua Gould's execution of BAYEX 2013 was flawless.

"The BAYEX series started in April of 2002 and has consistently grown in size and scope," Sathers said. "It always draws 50-plus agencies with hundreds of participants. …

"The National Guard is truly becoming the catalyst to bring multiple agencies together to exercise all response capabilities," he said.

79th IBCT troops head to Afghanistan

More than 70 Soldiers deploy to mentor Afghan National Security Forces and police

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

Applause echoed through the room as more than 70 Soldiers of the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) stood proudly in front of their friends and families April 2 at a San Diego hotel.

The service members assembled in formation to mark a historic undertaking as they prepared to deploy to Uruzgan province, Afghanistan, as one of the last groups of advisers to mentor Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan police before U.S. troops return home from the engagement that began in 2001.

"The Afghans are already taking more responsibility for security and governance in Uruzgan province," said Lt. Col. Anthony Noll, deputy commander of Combined Team Uruzgan, which mentors Afghan National Security Forces. "We are setting the final stage for them to hopefully progress and go forward on their own to do great things. The war in Afghanistan is winding down, and we will be leaving the lasting impression."

The 79th IBCT Soldiers will provide training that will empower Afghan National Security Forces to prevent terrorism and insurgency. The IBCT's mentorship will help support the transition to Afghan personnel assuming sole responsibility for their country's security.

Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

About 70 Soldiers of the San Diego-based 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team stand in formation April 2 in San Diego before departing for a yearlong deployment to advise National Security Forces and police in Afghanistan.

"The rest of the United States military is going to be working to come out," Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, adjutant general of the California Guard, said during the April 2 ceremony. "Stay focused on your mission, which is to make the Afghan National Security Forces better and to make them a stronger ally in the region.

"You are partnering with some very fierce, strong allies in the Afghan National Security Forces. And Soldiers, they are your allies," added Baldwin, who served as the senior mentor to the commanding general of the 201st Afghan Army Corps during one of his two deployments to Afghanistan. "They are going to be your friends. Treat them with dignity and respect, and you will be amazed at what they learn. Make sure you learn from them."

Eighteen Soldiers from the San Diego-based IBCT will serve as advisers to Afghan police. The remainder of the troops will serve on Combined Team Uruzgan as part of an Australian-led task force.

"Our mission will be to advise and assist Afghan National Security Forces in order to enable them to operate independently and maintain law," Lt. Col. Jon Siepmann said. "This is our last opportunity as a military, at least at this scale, to influence the way they do business. That means every day we have is precious. Every opportunity we have to teach them something or enable them through equipment or training, we've got to take it."

The next stop for the deploying IBCT Soldiers will be Camp Shelby, Miss., for predeployment training, and then a final predeployment exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La.

"Our primary role will be to help Afghans achieve levels of proficiency," said Sgt. Alejandro Santana, a senior intelligence analyst. "We are well-trained in our career fields, so that is the easy part. Leaving our families is the hard part."

Advisers from the Cal Guard's Operation Ready Families were on hand to help prepare families for the deployment and point them toward a large network of helpful resources. For more on Operation Ready Families, visit the program's webpage, www.calguard.ca.gov/readyfamilies.

Interagency workshop coordinates disaster response

By 1ST LT. JASON SWEENEY
California Military Department Public Affairs

When a large-scale disaster strikes, coordinating efforts between the various responders can be a complicated affair.

A conference held March 27 and 28 at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., brought clarity to how local, state and federal agencies would work together in the event of a major earthquake, flood, wildfire or other disaster.

"This business we're in is messy," San Francisco Deputy Director of Emergency Services Rob Dudgeon said to an audience of about 200 military and civilian emergency responders during the conference.

The overriding goal during a crisis, he said, is to help local communities in their time of need. Responders at all levels need to be able to communicate with each other and with local residents while navigating often-times complex organizational structures. In addition, leaders must be aware of local politics, which can sometimes drive operations.

The topic of the conference, which was hosted by the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, was Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) operations. Members of the California National Guard, Army, Navy, Marines, Army Corps of Engineers and various civilian agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency and municipal emergency management departments were in attendance to build relationships and discuss responses to previous disasters, including Hurricane Sandy, which hit the East Coast last fall.

"The interagency relationship here is stronger than in any other part of the United States," said Col. Robert Spano, director of the California Military Department Joint Staff. Marine Lt. Gen. John Toolan referred to the Marines as America's 911 force — able to respond to emergencies anywhere in the world. Those capabilities are also a great asset domestically, he said.

The Marines and Navy bring an array of capabilities to the table in disaster response, especially along the coasts. Both services can quickly deploy aircraft, earth-moving equipment, water-purification systems, mobile medical facilities and manpower to provide relief to affected communities.

National Guard units typically have been the primary military responders to domestic natural disasters and other emergencies. Active duty forces, however, can be called upon in times of emergency, usually after state resources have been exhausted or overwhelmed or if a specific capability is otherwise unavailable.

If active-duty assets are called into play, the state's governor would likely request approval from the secretary of defense or the president to implement a dual-status command, meaning a National Guard officer would be placed in charge of all military forces involved in the disaster response. In an emergency situation in California, Spano would be the dual-status commander.

The dual-status command structure was created in January 2009 by then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. The intent of the framework is to avoid last-minute, bureaucratic logjams between agencies.

A dual-status command was approved by the federal government for California during last year's fire season, but the fires subsided before active duty and reserve forces began working together.

The two-day conference at Camp Pendleton concluded with participants conducting a tabletop exercise using a scenario of two catastrophic earthquakes striking in Southern California and the San Francisco Bay Area.

"The fact that the Marine senior leadership invited the California National Guard's dual-status commander to the DSCA conference so they could meet and interact with the person they would fall under during a complex catastrophe was a historical paradigm shift, and it proves that when it comes to saving lives and protecting property, both active duty and National Guard forces working together, under one dual-status commander, can bring an amazing amount of capability to civilian authorities," Spano said.

Photo by 1st Lt. Jan Bender

Col. Robert Spano, who has been designated as the California National Guard's dual-status commander (DSC), describes to Navy and Marine personnel at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton on March 28 how the DSC construct will work if active duty and reserve troops are placed under his command during a joint response to a natural disaster or other crisis. Spano's discussion was part of a two-day conference to coordinate disaster response between local, state and federal agencies.

Swift action may save lives

CNG Soldiers trained personnel from all over California on swiftwater rescue techniques

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

Imagine finding yourself in distress, being swept downstream in fast-moving water during torrential flooding. This frightening situation affects many people each year, and National Guard helicopter crews are ready to respond at a moment's notice to drop in and rescue a victim.

Other than fires, floods are the most widespread natural disasters affecting American communities, with an average of more than 140 people killed each year. Cal Guard assets are frequently deployed to respond to floods, and the Guard's role expanded this year as it was called upon for the first time to provide hoist-equipped aircraft and swiftwater-trained personnel to support rescue training for swiftwater task force teams from across the state March 25-29 in Los Angeles County.

"The main goal of our exercise was to prepare to respond to California disasters and to work with California assets," said Capt. Bryan Wells of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. "We found the communication between the National Guard helicopter crews and the swiftwater task force teams to be seamless, which is very important for us to provide lifesaving operations."

First Sergeant Rob Pruitt of 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, prepares a student to be lowered from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter March 28 in Los Angeles County.

A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew from the Los Alamitos-based 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, was joined by a UH-72 Lakota helicopter crew from the Stockton-based 3-140th Aviation Security and Support Battalion in supporting the program. Their training partners included the California Emergency Management Agency, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and 12 local fire departments.

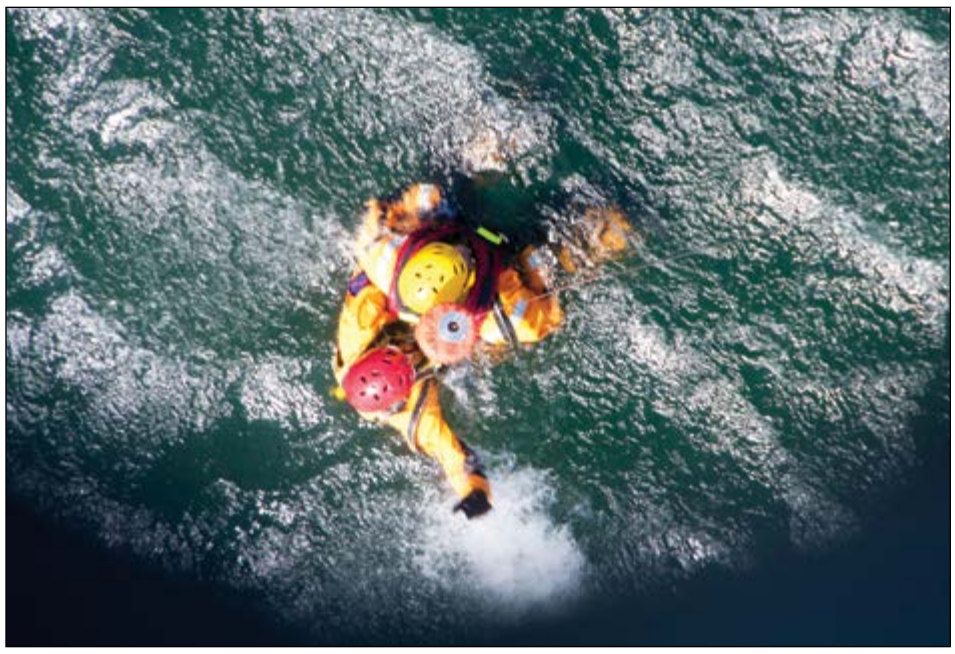
"This exercise was very important to us because it establishes our role in a disaster situation and [familiarizes us with] whom we would be working with in a real world situation," said 1st Sgt. Rob Pruitt of the 1-140th. "I think we all on both sides had a great exercise and proved how valuable a Black Hawk can be in these situations for rescue. They really were receptive of us and what we can bring to the table."

The five-day event at Castaic Lake trained 13 swiftwater rescue teams, eight of which are affiliated with state or national urban search-and-rescue task forces.

"The CNG provided invaluable training for our crews," Wells said. "Through mutual aid emergency management agreements, we often respond to large-scale disasters, and now we not only have relationships built with our California National Guard but are familiar with their aircraft to be able to carry the training we received over to the other states."

The course included lectures and hands-on exercises that trained task force members on helicopter safety and operations.

"Figuring out each other's capabilities and limitations beforehand is the key," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Christopher Good of the 1-140th Aviation Battalion. "Sometimes agencies have different techniques and equipment, so if we know this ahead of time … we can work through the needs and find solutions to become a cohesive team in order to serve our communities together."



Photos by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

The training provided guidelines and techniques for helicopter rescue operations over moving water, including securing and hoisting personnel.

"The willingness of the Black Hawk crew to continuously fly operations in order to ensure all students were trained was outstanding," Wells said. "They maybe only flew a flight distance of 200 yards, but they flew precise operations on a continuous basis."

While flying, a pilot must rely on their crew to help position the aircraft and describe the action between the victim and rescuer. Crew members practiced the "swimmer free" exercise, in which the helicopter matches speed with a person in the water.

On the first day of training, a helicopter repeatedly hovered over the water while a rescue scenario was in progress, then lowered a specially designed hook called a "capture ball." A ground-based rescuer was already in the water, where the rescuer attached both rescuer and victim to the hoist to be hauled to shore.

"Working with a real person on the hoist at any time is challenging due to the trust factor that is involved and the level of difficulty of the operation," Pruitt said.

The second exercise was the "tethered swimmer," in which a rescuer inside the aircraft was hooked to a hoist cable and lowered to the victim. Once the rescuer secured the victim, both were hauled to shore or pulled back into the cabin.

Communication often took place through hand signals both on board the aircraft and from rescuers in the water. An arching hand motion, for example, meant the rescuer was ready to be lifted.

TOP and BELOW: Rescue personnel from multiple locations throughout the state learn swiftwater hoisting techniques from California Army National Guard members on March 28 at Lake Castaic in Los Angeles County. ABOVE: Staff Sgt. Sam Knight of 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, discusses helicopter safety with rescue crews from Orange County.

Forty students completed the training and earned certification.

"I am appreciative of the National Guard and their outstanding service to our country," Scott Mitchell of the Long Beach Fire Department said March 28. "Working with them today was outstanding, and we hope to work closely in the near future on [additional] training."

Military children: Proud, Ready, Resilient

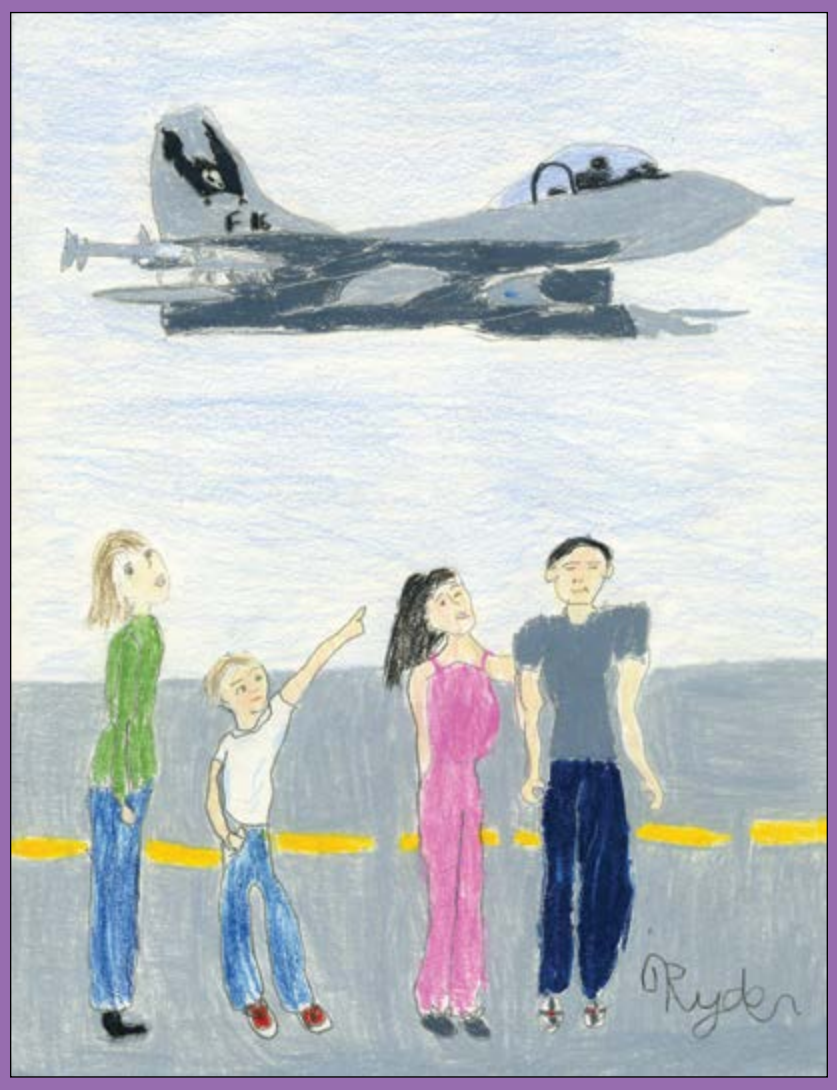
The Department of Defense has recognized April as the Month of the Military Child since 1986 to underscore the important role children play in the Armed Forces community. Military children serve along with their parents, and that's especially true since September 11, 2001, as children born after 2001 have lived continuously through a period of war.

This year's theme for April, "Proud, Ready and Resilient," highlights military children's unique lifestyle and their ability to succeed despite frequent changes such as moves, deployments, loss and the need to care for a wounded parent. In California alone, more than 158,000 military children bravely endure the effects of war.

The Month of the Military Child creates awareness of the service and sacrifices of our military's children. It is an opportunity to thank children for their support to the nation's warfighters and recognize the important role they play in the strength of the nation by contributing to the strength of the military family.

The men and women in uniform cannot focus on the missions and challenges ahead if they are concerned about their children at home. Providing a safe, nurturing environment for military children creates a stronger, more resilient force. The Month of the Military Child reinforces this concept, reminds the nation that service members' children also serve and gives communities an opportunity to share their gratitude for the service of military children.

The CNG's Operation Ready Families offers many resources for families going through a separation. For info, call 800-449-9662.



LEFT: Ryder Best, 8, won the annual Grizzly art contest in the 5-to-8 age group. Ryder's father, Lt. Col. Thomas Best, serves with the California Air National Guard's 144th Fighter Wing. ABOVE: Natalie Arachi, 10, submitted the top entry in the 9-to-12 age group. Her father, Spc. Mali Arachi, is currently deployed to Afghanistan with the California Army National Guard's 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group.

For more CNG children's artwork, turn to page 11.

Cadet Corps instills confidence, leadership skills

By SGT. 1ST CLASS JESSICA INIGO
Los Angeles Regional Public Affairs

Typical teenagers can be found sleeping in on a Saturday morning or lounging around in their pajamas entranced by the latest electronic gadget, but the teens of the California Cadet Corps are anything but typical.

Their idea of fun on a Saturday morning is waking up in the 4 o'clock hour, donning a military-style uniform and going over notes to compete in front of a board and then practicing for drill competitions.

"I know some people look at us and think we're nerds or that we have no life," said Raenalene Musni, 18, a student at the California Military Institute in Perris, Calif., who participated in the April 6 drill competition on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos. "But honestly, this is so much fun, I love it. Plus, not everyone my age can say that they have the leadership skills and professionalism that this program offers."

Musni said that just looking back at her former self prior to joining the Cadet Corps at her school six years ago is proof enough that the program is worthwhile.

"You wouldn't believe how shy I was," she explained. "I couldn't even raise my hand to answer a question. Now look at me: in command of the color guard, screaming out orders — I would have never been able to do that."

The two-part competition included the Individual Major Awards in the morning, an indoor competition in which each cadet stood before a panel of judges and answered questions, then gave a three-minute speech on a topic of their choice. In the afternoon, various levels of squads — or pads, as the squads are called — including two armed pads and two color guards, competed in a drill and ceremony event on the Los Alamitos Army Airfield flightline.

This year's competition was the last for Musni, as she is graduating from high school this year and has been accepted into the University of California, Berkeley. However, just because she's leaving the Cadet Corps doesn't means she's leaving the program.

"My sister is in the 10th grade and will still be in it, so I'll come out and support her and help out during these events. They really need it," she said of the support volunteers contribute.

Col. Larry Morden, the Cadet Corps' executive officer, which is the program's equivalent of a commander, said it "really is a cool program."

"It gives them direction [and] keeps them out of the gang element," he said. "It teaches them all those good things like patriotism and leadership."

The mission of the Cadet Corps is to provide California schools and students with a quality educational and leadership development program that prepares students for success in college and the workforce. The mission is accomplished through six core objectives: develop leadership, engender citizenship, encourage patriotism, foster academic excellence, teach basic military knowledge and promote a healthy way of life both physically and mentally.

Morden further explained that the difference between the Cadet Corps, which is located in schools throughout the state, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps, or ROTC, which is similarly offered in high schools, is that the Cadet Corps emphasizes leadership and actually gives each student the responsibility to run the program.

"They do it all — everything from [being] the squad-level platoon sergeant to the first sergeant to the commander to all the shops like S1 [personnel] and S3 [training]," he said. "It's more like on-the-job training for them, where it's not like that in the ROTC."

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jessica Inigo

Students in the California Cadet Corps compete in an April 6 drill competition on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos.

Morden, who has been with the Corps for 35 years, said many students who begin in

continued on page 19

CNG, Nigerian chaplains share expertise

Guardsmen's trip to Africa continues international partnership that began in 2006

By CNG Chaplain's Office

A team from the California National Guard Chaplain's Office traveled to Abuja, Nigeria, in March as part of the National Guard's State Partnership Program.

Two CNG chaplains and a chaplain assistant spent three days rubbing heads together with Nigerian chaplains and sharing ideas about religious support March 19-21 in the hope of building relationships and learning from their state partners. The CNG established a State Partnership with Nigeria in 2006 and also has maintained a Partnership with Ukraine since 1993.

During the March engagement, CNG Chaplain Col. Oran Roberts, CNG Deputy Chaplain Lt. Col. Mike Beyer and Chaplain Assistant Master Sgt. Desmond Knight conducted face-to-face meetings with 47 imams, chaplains and chaplain assistants from the Nigerian Army, Air Force and Navy. The conversations' main focus was on chaplains' roles in advising organizational leaders on religious affairs including morals, ethics, morale and esprit de corps, as well as on conducting religious liaison missions and providing operational tools such as estimates of the impact of religion on particular operations.

Photo by Master Sgt. Desmond Knight

Col. Oran Roberts, the California National Guard state chaplain, shares a gift and a light moment with Maj. Gen. Bamidele Ologundudu of the Nigerian Defense College during a March trip to Abuja, Nigeria, where two CNG chaplains and a chaplain assistant discussed ideas about religious support with 47 Nigerian Army, Air Force and Navy imams, chaplains and chaplain assistants.

The Nigerian service members impressed the Guardsmen with their professionalism and their presentations.

"The Nigerians are excellent leaders and obviously well-grounded in religious support to military members and their families," Roberts said. "We learned a lot from them."

The Nigerian Armed Forces have a highly trained and motivated chaplain assistant corps, with many enlisted personnel serving as chaplains.

"I was very blown away with their passion to be able to serve as a chaplain as an enlisted Soldier," Knight said of his Nigerian counterparts. "I walked away with helpful ways to empower our chaplain assistants to get more involved in Soldier care and to better themselves."

Nigeria has a highly religious population with three officially recognized religions: Islam, Protestant Christianity and Roman Catholicism. The Guard chaplains noted the eagerness of Nigerian imams and chaplains to model and advocate peaceful coexistence between faith groups.

"It was truly beautiful watching their religious leaders interacting with us and each other." Beyer said. "The Nigerian Chaplain Corps is leading the way in building unity in the military and the nation."

The Nigerian chaplains were grateful for the event and shared their desire to continue the partnership in the future.

"The great friendship and spirit of cooperation between the Nigerian and American chaplains and chaplain assistants really shows how we can help each other in the future," said Nigerian Navy chaplain Lt. Cmdr. Godshelp Osaghae. "No matter where we come from, we are here for the same reason: for God and country."

South Korean ministry honors 40th ID, veterans

Korean War vets, lifelong friends recognized by South Korean ambassador for dedicated service

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

In the late 1940s, a group of young National Guardsmen assembled at the Exposition Park Armory in Los Angeles to report for duty and serve their country. Little did the Soldiers know that they would build a lifetime bond that has lasted for more than 60 years and counting.

"Our friendships started during training and while overseas, but we really bonded after we were discharged," said Bob Gayton, president of the 40th Division Combat Teams, Korean War Veterans Division. "We had our first reunion in the 70s, and from there we kept in touch, socializing and really getting to know each other through our common experience."

The men, who were corporals in the Guard's 40th Infantry Division (ID), were activated to fight in the Korean War in 1950. Gayton was in the rifle squad, Ronald Huston and Charles Lucero were scouts, Gus Montang maintained tanks and other vehicles, and Lou Montejano was a cook. In January 1951 they arrived in Incheon, South Korea, where the cold came as a shock to the Californians.

"We were assigned a position in and around the 38th parallel," Gayton said, referring to the pre-war boundary between North Korea and South Korea. "We then had a permanent position on the front lines, where we stayed until we were sent back home.

"We went out on patrols to see if we could draw fire from the enemy," he continued. "We were lucky to be there during the truce talks, although we had one casualty."

On Feb. 20 of this year, Korean War Veterans including Gayton, Huston, Lucero, Montang and Montejano were honored during a ceremony in Buena Park, Calif., hosted by South Korean Ambassador to the U.S. Choi Young-jin, South Korean Consul General Yeon-sung Shin and U.S. Rep. Ed Royce. In addition to the 40th ID veterans, the dignitaries presented awards to veterans from the active duty 24th ID, which was deactivated in 2006.

"We want to ensure generations to come honor our Korean War veterans and the Korean War Armistice," Royce said.

"We should all be proud of the historic service these men performed on behalf of their nation and state during the Korean War," added Col. John W. Lathrop, chief of staff for the 40th ID.

The Feb. 20 ceremony also recognized the importance of the alliance between the U.S. and South Korea. The event was scheduled to coincide roughly with the 60th anniversary of the armistice that ended the fighting of the Korean War on July 27, 1953.

Choi presented a plaque to Lathrop, expressing his country's gratitude for the contributions of the 40th ID.

"The Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs gratefully acknowledges the U.S. Army 40th Infantry Division for showing its love for the Republic of Korea, contributing to a rock-solid alliance and giving a good example of love of nation for the past 60 years," the plaque states. "The U.S. Army 40th Infantry Division entered the Korean War and fought for freedom of the Republic of Korea. The Division distinguished itself on the field of battle, established Gapyeong High School during the war in 1952 and has awarded scholarships to students of the High School since 1990."

Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

Bob Gayton, a retired corporal and current president of the 40th Division Combat Teams, Korean War Veterans Division, receives a medal from South Korean Ambassador to the United States Choi Young-jin on Feb. 20 in Buena Park, Calif., in honor of Gayton's service during the Korean War as part of the California National Guard's 40th Infantry Division (ID). Choi also presented a plaque to Col. John W. Lathrop, 40th ID chief of staff, expressing South Korea's gratitude for the Division's service during the war and its continued relationship with Korea in the decades since.

Members of the 40th ID who were stationed in Korea during the war donated money to build a school for children in Gapyeong, who were then being educated in two tents, and members of the CNG's 578th Engineer Battalion pitched in with technical expertise to establish a 10-room school in 1952 that still thrives today.

Best and brightest

The Region VII Best Warrior Competition shone a light on the West's fittest, smartest Soldiers

By PFC. BRIANNE M. ROUDEBUSH
69th Public Affairs Detachment

More than 800 miles from home and 6,000 feet above sea level, two California National Guard Soldiers competed against 14 other Guardsmen from seven states and territories in April for the title of Region VII Best Warrior.

The two representatives from California — Staff Sgt. Albert Garcia of the Fresno-based 1106th Theater Aviation Support Maintenance Group (TASMG) and Spc. Ryan Ziegler of Mountain View's Company A, 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) — battled Guardsmen from Arizona, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah in 10 events, which included a physical fitness assessment, an obstacle course, a ruck march, a military operations on urban terrain event and a land navigation course. They also assembled and fired weapons, took a written test, answered questions in a mock media interview and issued a warning order. The last event of the Competition, which was held April 4-7 at Fort Carson, Colo., was an oral examination.

"It was basically a miniature mission from start to finish," said Ziegler, a trainee with the 5-19th. "This was a back-to-back-to-back series of Warrior Tasks and drills that really showed you a lot about yourself, who you were and how you thought."

Ziegler beat out seven California Soldiers for the title of the Golden State's Best Warrior in the junior enlisted category during a grueling competition in September. Garcia bested seven noncommissioned officers (NCO) during the September contest, earning him second place among NCOs, behind Staff Sgt. Jarrad Negherbon of the 235th Engineer Company, who could not attend the event in Colorado because he is preparing for a deployment.

"We stress them out," Command Sgt. Maj. Harold London, the top enlisted member of the California Army National Guard, said of California's competition. "We're trying to simulate those battlefield conditions and put them through those stressors to get the very best warrior out of this."

Both California competitors agreed the Best Warrior Competition is very challenging.

"You prepare and you train and you study, but the Competition itself will always keep you on your toes," said Garcia, a movement NCO for the TASMG. "You come out here and you expect to be challenged."

The Soldiers maintained a solid training schedule in the days, weeks and months leading up to the Colorado contest. In addition to training provided by the California National Guard, the Soldiers worked and studied hard on their own time.

"In order to be successful, you really have to sacrifice so much," Garcia said. "You have to sacrifice sleep, comfort, even watching TV and relaxing."

The physical preparation was sometimes difficult, he said, because the Soldiers still had lives at home and full-time jobs.

"Corny enough, and a little embarrassing, I used a lot of 'Rocky' theme music to motivate myself just to get up and put on my shoes and go running," Garcia said.

One of the more difficult aspects of the Competition was the altitude at Fort Carson. The California competitors and their sponsors, Staff Sgt. Francisco Serrato and Sgt. Gary Tourville, trained at a ranch in Divide, Colo., for about a week before the Competition to acclimate to the altitude. A competitor's sponsor handles the majority of their paperwork and logistics and also motivates and encourages their troop during training and practice for the Competition.

"That elevation just takes a lot out of you," said Serrato, who sponsored Garcia. "We felt like we were acclimated, but as soon as these guys started running, it was hard."

The Competition started with a physical fitness test at 4:45 Friday morning, which is when the competitors really got a feel for the effects of the altitude. The rest of the weekend was jam-packed with events that required both physical and mental stamina.

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Photos by Pfc. Brianne M. Roudebush

TOP RIGHT: Spc. Ryan Ziegler of the Cal Guard's 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), drags a stretcher through the urban terrain range at Fort Carson, Colo., on April 6 during the Region VII Best Warrior Competition. ABOVE: Staff Sgt. Albert Garcia of the CNG's 1106th Theater Aviation Support Maintenance Group calls in a medical evacuation request April 6.

No Soldier can do it alone

By PFC. BRIANNE M. ROUDEBUSH
69th Public Affairs Detachment

The successes experienced by two California National Guard Soldiers at the Region VII Best Warrior Competition in Fort Carson, Colo., in April would not have been possible without the support and hard work of their sponsors.

"My sponsor has been extremely critical," Spc. Ryan Ziegler said of Sgt. Gary Tourville, a linguist and squad leader for Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, 223rd Military Intelligence Battalion. "You can't do this without a team behind you."

The sponsors handled the majority of the paperwork and logistics that went into preparing for the Competition. Additionally, and arguably more importantly, they motivated and encouraged the Soldiers as they trained for the events.

"My sponsor has been there when I needed him, when I needed encouragement," Staff Sgt. Albert Garcia said of his sponsor, Staff Sgt. Francisco Serrato, a supply noncommissioned officer for the 1106th Theater Aviation Support Maintenance Group. "When I was not feeling motivated, he motivated me."

In the months leading up to the competition, the warriors and their sponsors dedicated several weekends to training and studying. During the Competition, the sponsors were at their Soldiers' sides, helping with equipment and cheering them on.

"My role as a sponsor is to make sure my competitor stays focused, motivated, well-fed and keeps point on the mission and task at hand," Tourville said.

Serrato said that, although Garcia is very self-sufficient, it is important to have the support of a team, as it would be hard for anyone to do it all on their own.

The competitors, who took home a total of seven awards, noted that it takes trust and solidarity to build the successful team dynamic these Soldiers had.

"Sgt. Tourville has been essential," Ziegler said. "He just seems to know what I need and when I need it."

Tourville was Ziegler's sponsor during California's Best Warrior Competition, and when Ziegler moved on to the regional contest, the team stayed together. Garcia's previous sponsor is deployed, so Serrato stepped up to fill that role.

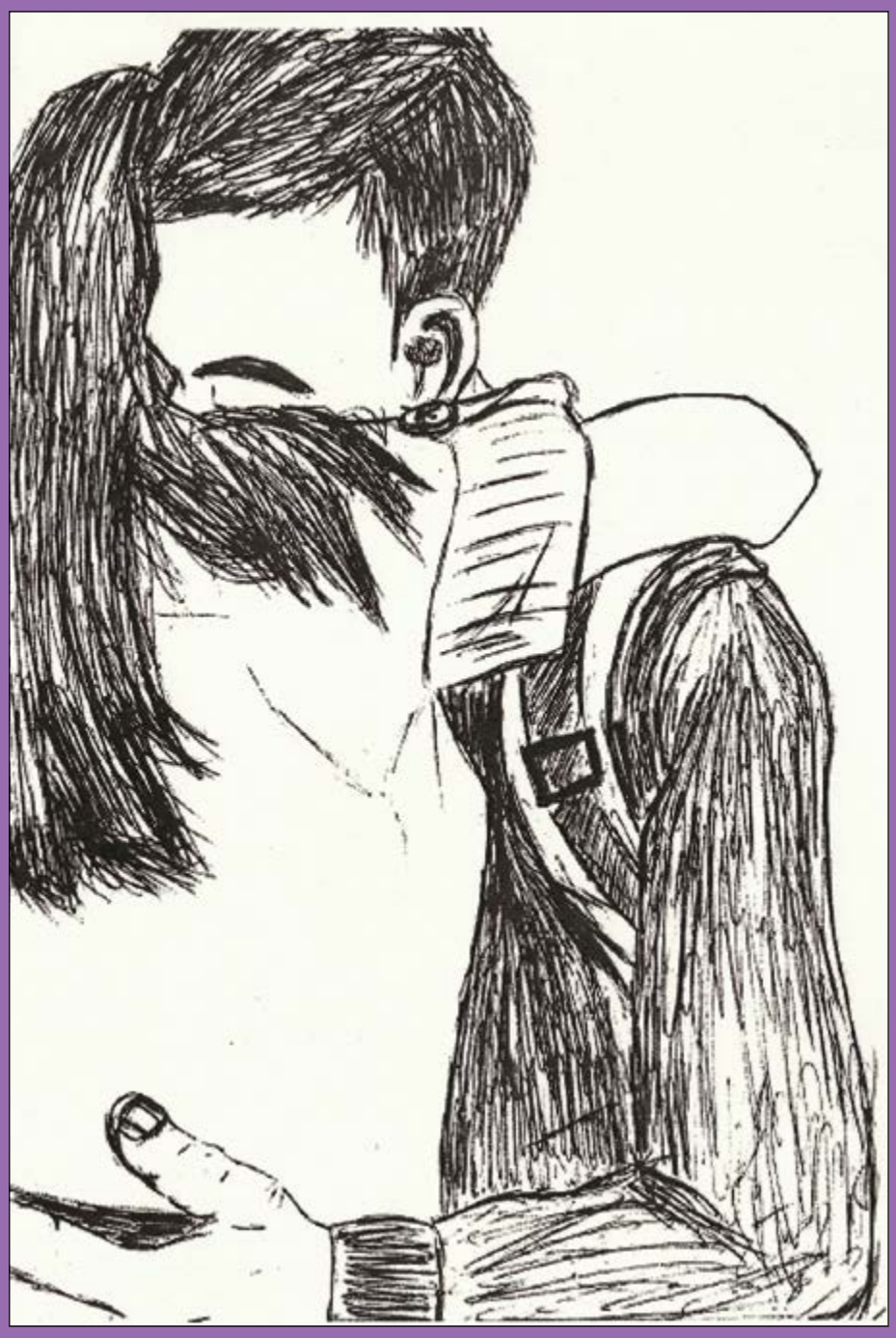
"Being a sponsor … has taught me a lot, and it's motivating to see the dedication these guys have," Serrato said..

"It makes me proud, knowing they did so well," Tourville added. "I'm so glad I was able to help them achieve this."

Best Warrior competitor Spc. Ryan Ziegler receives encouragement from his sponsor, Sgt. Gary Tourville, as he runs toward the finish line of the ruck march event April 5 on Fort Carson, Colo. Sponsors were not allowed on the march and could only run with their Soldiers the last few yards.

RIGHT: Members of the California State Military Reserve's Company A, 2nd Battalion, receive security forces training from Senior Airman Roberto Alvarez, right, and other members of the 129th Rescue Wing on March 2 at Moffett Federal Airfield, Calif. Photo by Staff Sgt. Kim E. Ramirez
BELOW: Senior Airman Kourtney Almodovar, a knowledge operations manager for the 163rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, salutes during the national anthem on the field at Petco Park during the San Diego Padres' annual military appreciation game April 14. Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

ABOVE: Pilot Maj. Jason Carranza, left, and crew chief Senior Airman Niko Wallat complete preflight checks on an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter March 7 on Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, where both members of the CNG's 129th Rescue Wing are deployed as part of the 26th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Dennis J. Henry Jr. For more on the 129th in Afghanistan, see page 13 RIGHT: Soldiers from the California National Guard's Company A, 223rd Military Intelligence Battalion, perform a combat drill Feb. 13 during training with the CNG's Task Force Warrior at Camp Roberts, Calif., where Company A was preparing for a deployment to Kosovo this spring. Photo by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer



ARTWORK BY:

FAR LEFT: Chace Oquendo, age 16

ABOVE: Ajani Cooper Nelson, age 11

LEFT: Colette St. Aubin, age 8

LEFT: Staff Sgt. Joey Bridges helps remove Staff Sgt. Yolanda Galbraith's chemical protection gear during an April 6 exercise conducted by the 146th Airlift Wing at its Port Hueneme, Calif., base. Photo by Master Sgt. Dave Buttner ABOVE: Sgt. Andy Thompson "arrests" Pfc. Bradley Edwards of the Ontario, Calif.-based 330th Military Police Company during an April exercise on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jessica Inigo

CNG Soldiers dispose of 1/2-ton bomb

217th EOD Company has safely cleared 161 ordnance items in Kosovo since September

By SGT. ANGELA PARADY
121st Public Affairs Detachment

California National Guard Soldiers serving with Kosovo Multinational Battle Group–East responded to the largest unexploded bomb in the Kosovo Security Force's recent history after receiving a report for what was thought to be two rocket launchers in the woods near Mount Goles.

Kosovo is one of the most heavily mined regions in the world, as thousands of munitions were not accounted for after the 1998-99 conflict there. The California Army National Guard's 217th Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Company, therefore, deployed nine Soldiers last July to serve for a year as part of Kosovo Force 16. Following training at Camp Atterbury, Ind., the 217th EOD team arrived in Kosovo in September and has since responded to 94 incidents, disposing of 161 ordnance items.

In March the team encountered a 1,000-pound British MK13 bomb that had been found near a site known to be a Yugoslavian stronghold during the 1998-99 conflict. Ammunition bunkers in the area were heavily bombed by NATO during the war, and the MK13 bomb was likely dropped by the British Royal Air Force in support of the NATO mission at the time, said Capt. Frank Pangelinan, commander of the 217th.

Excavators working near a small industrial facility near Mount Goles found the bomb while using a front-loader tractor to clear the earth. Thinking it was a large rock, the excavators struck the bomb twice while trying to break it apart. They then moved the bomb 250 meters behind the industrial facility before calling the authorities.

A team from the 217th quickly responded from Camp Bondsteel and met up with the Kosovo Security Forces EOD team to receive a briefing from Kosovo police, who had secured the area.

"Our time from getting the call to leaving the base is never longer than 30 minutes," said Sgt. Valeriy Didychenko of the 217th . "You don't know how what condition the [ordnance] is in is out there. It is always a danger. Especially if it is located near buildings or power lines or main water lines.

Photo by Capt. Frank Pangelinan

Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) experts prepare to dispose of a 1,000-pound British MK13 bomb that was found in the woods near Mount Goles in Kosovo in March. The California Army National Guard's 217th EOD Company worked with a Kosovo Security Forces EOD team as well as Swiss and Austrian troops to move and detonate the bomb safely.

"I mean, wind can set off some of these things," he continued. "So it is very important that we respond to these things — and do so quickly."

When the 217th troops arrived at the scene, it was already dark and nearly impossible to identify the object. With police in control of the area, the EOD teams decided to return the next day. In the morning light, they were able to clearly identify the object and begin research. Along with the Kosovo Security Forces EOD team, Swiss and Austrian troops provided additional assistance.

"We looked up the hazards associated with it, the explosives it contains, the fuse itself, how it functions, hazards associated with it," Didychenko explained. "At that point the process kicks in. We need to decide, 'What are we going to do with it?'"

The teams decided not to move the object to a distant area for disposal, as moving it too far could have caused a serious threat to other people's lives. Instead, using steel cables, armored vehicles and heavy equipment, the ordnance experts moved the bomb a short distance from the nearby building toward the base of a hill that would provide some protection from the ordnance's blast and fragmentation.

"It's a huge piece of ordnance, and that building was in danger," Didychenko said. "The bomb was on top of the hill, facing a building, so we wanted to move it into a little spot, like a ravine off to the side of the hill, so that it wouldn't be facing the building directly … to mitigate some of the risks associated with fragmentation.

> "Wind can set off some of these things. So it is very important that we respond to these things — and do so quickly."
>
> **– Sgt. Valeriy Didychenko**
> *217th EOD Company*

The Soldiers moved it into the selected spot and built a large earth berm around it, then detonated the bomb. The berm protected the building, which received only minimal cosmetic damage from the blast. There was no damage from fragmentation.

"We did everything in the safest manner possible," Didychenko said. "We had enough distance and cover, and we extensively made sure the area was clear. This area has a lot of locals in it, especially shepherds and farmers. It's a very wooded area, so there was a lot of scanning the area, driving through to make sure everyone was out. "

EOD personnel never know what their next mission is going to be like, team members said. They could get a call for small ammunition shells and instead uncover a giant bomb. They could get a call for rocket launchers but only find old bottle caps. EOD Soldiers must therefore always be ready for whatever they encounter.

Didychenko said the MK13 was the biggest munition his team has encountered so far, but the job was nothing new.

"Just another mission," he said. "You don't ever expect it to be an easy day; it's just another day in the office."

ON YOUR RADAR … service member benefits and information you should know

Accommodating new and nursing moms

Female Soldiers and Airmen are permitted six weeks of maternity leave and six months of deployment deferment following childbirth. The Army and Air Force also encourage commanders and leaders to make accommodations for nursing mothers upon their return to duty.

Air Force Instruction 44-102 and the Army's "Guide to Female Soldier Readiness" state that breastfeeding is considered the ideal form of nutrition for babies. Both documents also provide guidelines for supporting mothers who breastfeed.

"Leaders need to provide female Soldiers with social and administrative support if the decision is made to continue breastfeeding after returning to work," the "Guide" states. "Providing designated space in the workplace where mothers may express breast milk is important."

A nursing mother who exclusively breastfeeds her baby will probably need two to three 20-minute breaks during an eight-hour workday, the "Guide" recommends. The Soldier also will need soap and water during those breaks to reduce the risk of infection. In addition a nursing mother who has given birth within the past four months may receive a deferment from any Army duty that requires her to travel away from her home station.

The Air Force recommends that supervisors arrange work schedules to allow 15- to 30-minute breaks every three to four hours for nursing mothers, if possible, and provide an area that offers privacy and cleanliness. Restrooms are not considered appropriate. Commanders may also consider a 12-month deployment deferment to ensure the full medical benefits of breastfeeding, AFI 44-102 states.

"Duty requirements may not always be compatible with exclusive breastfeeding," AFI 44-102 notes. "In these cases, the [Air Force] member must decide in consultation with her medical provider whether to attempt to continue breast-feeding and/or pumping breast milk."

Nursing Airmen remain eligible for field training and mobility exercises.

129th support teams enable Afghanistan rescue mission

By STAFF SGT. ALEXANDER MARTINEZ
U.S. Air Forces Central Public Affairs

Munitions specialists vital to helicopter defense

When the 26th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron (ERS) scrambles HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters for a casualty evacuation mission at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, the environment the crews will fly into is unpredictable. Whether the environment is expected to be hostile or not, the Airmen always prepare for the worst, and that's where Senior Airman Austin Stoker comes in.

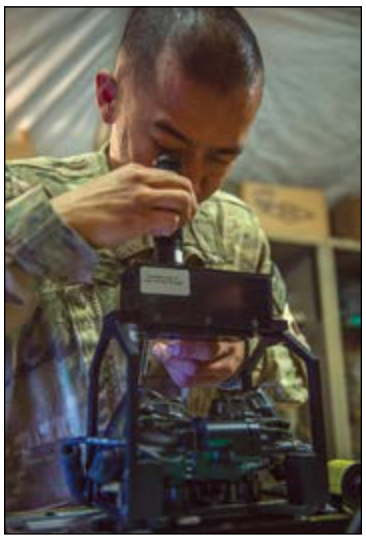
A munitions systems specialist, Stoker ensures the ERS' birds have the resources to fight.

"You have to be able to go into a combat area where people are dying and pull them out, and you need firepower to do it," he said. "Without it, there is no rescue, and the crew isn't coming back."

Deployed from the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing based at Moffett Federal Airfield, Stoker and the 26th ERS air crew, maintenance and support teams are essential to a highly important medical evacuation mission in Regional Command Southwest.

When the 26th's pararescuemen, combat rescue officers, crew chiefs and gunners are called for an evacuation, it usually means a member of the coalition forces is injured and in need of lifesaving assistance.

Without all the parts of the Squadron working, "the crews can't fly, the helicopters won't work and the guns won't shoot," said Lt. Col. George Dona, 26th ERS commander. "I need all of this to come together, and I need it to come together on a moment's notice."



So far the support teams have delivered, he said. "They have more than just met the challenge," he said. "They have far exceeded the expectations that I had for the Squadron."

Stoker's role is to ensure the crews have the ammunition they need to defend themselves.

"Our mission is to provide munitions support, from the smallest rounds to grenades, .50 [-caliber machine guns] and countermeasure flares used to keep the aircraft from being shot out of the skies," said Stoker, a Stockton, Calif., native.

Countermeasure flares deflect projectiles from hitting the aircraft and are sometimes the only thing that enables a crew to make it back from a rescue mission, Stoker said. A downed aircraft would be disastrous, he added, as it would place the rescue squadron in the position of needing rescue themselves.

Stoker's daily duties include performing maintenance on ammunition systems, executing weapons compatibility checks and taking inventory of ammunition stockpiles and expended rounds. Maintaining inventory is a large part of Stoker's job because the Air Force tracks 100 percent of its ammunition.

"Every bullet is accounted for," he said. "If you shoot a bullet, you'd better have a reason."

After transitioning from active duty service to the National Guard in 2011, Stoker joined the 129th Rescue Wing with hopes of deploying more often. He said he has a strong respect for the rescue mission and for his co-workers.

"The pararescue mission is so dynamic," he said. "The lives they save, the humanitarian missions they do, and just being a part of it all makes me feel very good about my day-to-day service."

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Dennis J. Henry Jr.

TOP: Airmen from the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing who are deployed as part of the 26th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron (ERS) run to perform their duties after receiving a rescue call during a March 11 training exercise on Camp Bastion, Afghanistan. ABOVE: Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Loser of the 129th Rescue Wing, 26th ERS, trains on a .50-caliber machine gun at an undisclosed location in Afghanistan on March 7. BOTTOM LEFT: Airman 1st Class Cris Dingle, an air crew flight equipment specialist, inspects panoramic night-vision goggles March 8 on Camp Bastion, Afghanistan. He is responsible for ensuring flight equipment such as helmets, oxygen masks, parachutes, flotation devices and survival kits are mission-ready.

Keeping all the equipment working

In a dark, dusty tent on the 26th ERS compound in Afghanistan, a team of two air crew flight equipment technicians rotate 12-hour shifts to ensure the Squadron's air crews are ready to conduct lifesaving missions. So far this year, the flight equipment duo has contributed to more than 70 rescue missions and 86 rescues.

Airman 1st Class Cris Dingle said the air crews rely on him and his flight equipment technician teammate, Senior Master Sgt. Vincent Aldama, to ensure their helicopters are always ready.

"They know they can trust that their equipment is ready when they need it," said Dingle, who along with Aldama is deployed from the 129th Rescue Wing in support of the casualty evacuation mission in Afghanistan Regional Command Southwest.

Dona said the Airmen of the 26th ERS have done a great job adjusting to the harsh demands of their mission.

"Being a Guard unit, the majority of the personnel here have not deployed to this [area of responsibility], or deployed in general," he said. "With that being said, they have really put forth their best efforts and are accomplishing some of the toughest flying conditions, alert schedules and [aircraft] maintenance that I have come across."

When Squadron members are called upon for an evacuation, it usually means someone is in need of lifesaving assistance.

"The importance of the mission is very high," Aldama said. "Their equipment is critical."

That equipment includes helmets, radios, survival vests and night-vision goggles, which are all cleaned, inspected and maintained by Aldama's team. Pre- and post-flight equipment checks are part of their daily duties, keeping their work tempo high.

"It's life-sustaining equipment," Aldama said. "Especially with their night operations, the night-vision goggles that we maintain are critical. They are the air crews' eyes at night. Without them, the mission won't happen."

The team also conducts radio communication checks and identifies any type of equipment malfunction or structural damage during preventive maintenance checks. In addition the team makes sure everything stays dust-free and serviceable for missions, as dust is a common problem in the Afghanistan theater.

"There's a lot of equipment that we have to keep up to date," Dingle said. "There's at least 20 list items in the vest alone."

The air crew flight equipment section is only a portion of the 26th's overall mission, but its importance is critical to mission success.

"We know that we're doing our job and helping save lives," Aldama said.

AF school NCO of the Year makes Guard history

Photo by Senior Airman Christopher Stoltz

Tech. Sgt. Leslie A. Cummings of the 146th Airlift Wing trains an officer candidate Feb. 13 at the Air Force Officer Training School on Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, Ala. Cummings was recently named the Air University Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, making her the first Air National Guard member to earn the award.

By CAPT. PETER SHINN
Air Force Officer Training School

The only female military training instructor (MTI) in Air National Guard history recently became the only Air National Guard member to be named the Air University Noncommissioned Officer of the Year as well.

Tech. Sgt. Leslie Cummings of Corona, Calif., a member of the 146th Airlift Wing, is serving on extended active duty as an MTI for the Academy of Military Science's Air Force Officer Training School program for National Guard members at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, Ala.

Lt. Col. Reid Rasmussen, commander of the Academy, called Cummings a top-notch professional and said he was not surprised she won the Air University NCO of the Year award for 2012.

"[We] are fortunate to have people like Leslie," Rasmussen said. "I'm constantly amazed at not only her job performance but everything she's done for Maxwell."

Cummings' contributions to the Maxwell-Gunter community include founding a chapter of Airmen Against Drunk Driving, which has virtually eliminated drinking-and-driving incidents among military personnel on the base. Cummings is also a founding member of the Base's Guard and Reserve Network, which works to enhance the skills and civilian employment opportunities of reserve component members.

"Sergeant Cummings is quite simply one of the Guard's very best leaders," said Col. Edward Vaughan, the Air National Guard adviser to the commander and president of the Air University. He called her an outstanding citizen-Airmen and a premier example of the Air Force's Total Force concept. "Her selection as AU's NCO of the Year shows that she's one of the very best leaders across the total Air Force as well."

Though Cummings is the first female Air Guard member to be an MTI and the first selected as the Air University NCO of the Year, she said she doesn't see herself as a pioneer.

"I've just been given great opportunities that I've tried to maximize as best I could," she said, "because I believe every opportunity you're given is an opportunity to set yourself apart in a positive way."

Cummings expressed appreciation for her co-workers at the Air University, the Jean M. Holm Center for Officer Accessions and Citizen Development, the Officer Training School and the Academy of Military Science.

"[The award is] awesome, and I really appreciate it, but it's really about just doing your job to the best of your ability and maximizing your contribution to the team," she said. "I'm very fortunate to work with such a great group of professionals."

Deputy SecDef thanks Guard at 129th home

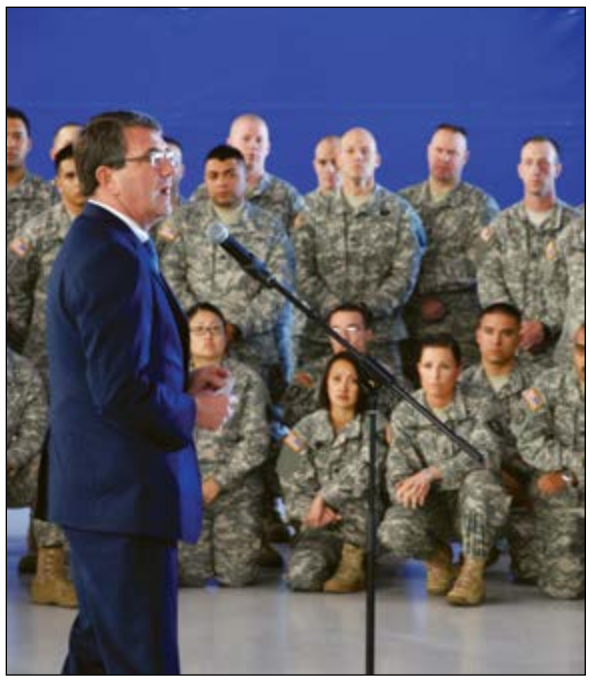


Photo by Capt. Will Martin

Members of the California Army National Guard's 49th Military Police Brigade and the Army Reserve listen to Ashton Carter, deputy secretary of defense, during an April 29 speech at a hangar belonging to the Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing on Moffett Federal Airfield, Calif.

By CAPT. WILL MARTIN
California Military Department Public Affairs

California is home to the nation's largest and most frequently deployed National Guard force. It seems fitting, then, that when the nation's second-highest-ranking Defense Department official visits the state, he would make a point of engaging California Guardsmen.

On April 19, Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter spoke to more than 100 service members at a 129th Rescue Wing hangar on Moffett Federal Airfield near Mountain View. In addition to 129th Airmen, Carter also addressed Army National Guard Soldiers from the 49th Military Police Brigade as well as Army Reserve members and active duty Sailors and Marines from the surrounding community.

Carter began his talk by reflecting on the Guard's evolving role as the conflict in Afghanistan nears its end.

"We have invested so much and have gotten so much in return from our Guard forces," Carter said. "Taking that unprecedented experience and turning it toward the future is the challenge before us."

He added that he is discussing with Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the adjutant general of the California National Guard, how to make that transition.

Carter spent the majority of his time at the microphone, however, expressing his admiration for National Guard efforts in recent overseas conflicts.

"In Iraq and Afghanistan, active duty, Reserve, National Guard … you can't tell the difference," he said. "When you go home today, I want you to tell your families that you were thanked by the leadership of this Department."

Carter's gratitude resonated with the service members present, each of whom received a challenge coin from the deputy secretary.

"It sounds cliche, but to have a high-ranking member from the Department of Defense come out to the California Guard was an honor," said Sgt. Daniel Greene of the 49th MP Brigade. "For him to genuinely thank me for my service in person — it went a long way toward validating why I wear this uniform."

146th prepares for November ORI

By SENIOR AIRMAN NICHOLAS CARZIS
146th Airlift Wing

The young Airmen at the 146th Airlift Wing had many challenges before them during their February training assembly. It was only the second month of the year, but the race to make sure all assets and personnel are properly prepared for the Wing's Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) in November had begun.

Photo by Senior Airman Nicholas Carzis

Jamil Montigue, a member of the 146th Airlift Wing's student flight, helps fill Chief Master Sgt. Ron O' Conner's mobility bag during a March 3 prepare-the-force exercise for an upcoming Operational Readiness Inspection on the 146th's base at Port Hueneme Calif.

Senior Master Sgt. Leanna Rominger, superintendent of logistics plans, and her team with the 146th Logistics Readiness Distribution and Execution Office designed a training course for Airmen involved in pallet buildup to complete during the February assembly.

"I see this as invaluable hands-on training," Rominger said. "Airmen learned fundamental techniques that will assist in the process of getting equipment to and from the ORI. For some, this was a welcome refresher course; for the junior enlisted [members], this was something entirely new."

With new Airmen preparing for their first ORI, the road ahead may seem daunting and even overwhelming at times. But with training and preparation from senior enlisted members like Master Sgt. David Buttner, who have the experience and knowledge to make sure the job is done right, the young Airmen said they feel they are in good hands.

"Tips and tricks to making the mission successful are being passed down," Buttner said, "and with it comes confidence for the next generation. …"

"We learned all about organization and team effort, and [instructors] demonstrated strategies on how to simplify the objectives in building pallets," he added. "Mission safety was highly stressed because this can be a dangerous job."

Ready for fire season

Cal Guard helicopter crews work with Cal Fire and local and federal agencies to prepare for the wildfires that strike California many summers

By 1ST LT. JASON SWEENEY,
California Military Department Public Affairs; and
MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY,
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

The bright pink paint that was visible on the sides of California National Guard helicopters this month can mean only one thing: It's fire season.

On April 13 and 14, UH-60 Black Hawks and HH-60G Pave Hawks could be seen flying over Amador and Los Angeles counties carrying "Bambi buckets" that can drop up to 660 gallons of water on a fire. UH-72A Lakota scout helicopters circled above, providing surveillance and direction.

For video, scan this QR code

All the aircraft had their call signs painted in pink on their tails with more pink paint on their sides, rotor blades and noses. The highly visible paint makes an aircraft easier to spot through smoke.

The aircraft and their crews were participating in joint exercises between the Air and Army National Guard and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire). The exercises take place every April in preparation for the summer firefighting season, when wildfires often flare up across the state.

This was the 18th year that the agencies have trained together before the fire season. The annual event gives the agencies an opportunity to train military pilots on how to effectively make water drops and how to safely integrate military and civilian efforts during firefighting operations.

"We have a relationship designed to support the needs of the state," said Maj. Daniel Anderson, California Army National Guard aviation officer. "The interagency cooperation and synergy is unparalleled."

Exercises were held simultaneously in Northern and Southern California and consisted of a full day of classroom instruction followed by two days in the field. More than 150 Soldiers and Airmen attended the training in Northern California, while about 50 Soldiers trained in Southern California.

"Our lives are in each other's hands, and in this case we have a symbiotic relationship where operational methods need to be addressed," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Niki Gayda, a Black Hawk pilot with the Los Alamitos-based 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment. "It is important to ensure we have clear and effective communication with Cal Fire."

In addition to military and Cal Fire personnel, the Northern California training sessions included members of the Kern County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Orange County Fire Authority, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S Forest Service.

At the California Fire Academy in Ione in Northern California, three Army Guard Black Hawks and one Air Guard Pave Hawk launched repeatedly from an Academy helibase. They filled their buckets in Lake Pardee in Amador County and then practiced precisely dropping the water. Two Army Guard Lakotas provided oversight and acted as helicopter coordinators from high above the other air traffic.

Three Black Hawk helicopters and crews from the Army Guard's 1-140th Aviation Battalion were included in the training near Lake Castaic in Southern California.

The aircraft in Northern California flew a combined total of 30.1 hours and made 182 water drops, dousing the region with 117,500 gallons of water during the two-day period. In Southern California the three air crews flew a total of 10.5 hours and dropped 30,000 gallons.

Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

Forty-five Cal Fire and other civilian firefighting personnel rode in the National Guard helicopters, training as military helicopter managers. Their responsibility is to coordinate and guide military pilots while communicating with Cal Fire to ensure the military aircraft are integrated safely and efficiently with other firefighting assets.

Cal Fire said it has the largest aerial firefighting fleet in the world, with more than 50 aircraft, including eleven UH-1H Super Huey helicopters. But those resources are sometimes not enough during fire season.

"We get so drawn down on resources, we have a need for Type 1 aircraft for water dropping and troop transport," said Cal Fire helibase manager Tim Stepanovich. "[Cal Fire and the Cal Guard] have been in cooperation for years, and every year it gets better and better."

During fire season, the Guard brings to the fight heavy lift Type 1 aircraft such as the Black Hawk, Pave Hawk and CH-47 Chinook, Stepanovich said.

"The long hours we train do not compare to those experiencing their houses or communities on fire," said Sgt. Raya Luis, a crew chief with the 1-140th Aviation Battalion. "My job is very rewarding as I am able to help others."

During the April training, three Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks from the Army Guard's Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, kept the aircraft in Ione fully fueled.

An Incident Commander's Command, Control and Communications Unit (IC4U) also was set up at the Ione helibase to provide streaming video and radio communications. The IC4U consists of a Humvee and a trailer containing communications equipment capable of transmitting video and audio to the Joint Operations Center or a tactical operations center. It also can provide wireless Internet in remote locations.

The IC4U was manned by three members of the California State Military Reserve and a National Guard Soldier from the Directorate of Information Management at the Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Sacramento. The CSMR members are volunteers who participated in the exercise without pay.

CSMR Staff Sgt. James Phillippe said he enjoyed the training, calling it "big kid Boy Scouts."

Spc. Jordan Sy, a crew chief with the Army Guard's Stockton-based Company A, 3rd Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, said the training with Cal Fire this year reaffirmed what he had learned last year and was good preparation for the fire season.

"This training provides multiple opportunities for varied training experiences," Cal Fire helicopter coordinator Scott Watson said. "It's an interagency operation."

For photos or video, go to flickr.com/CaGuard or YouTube.com/CaNationalGuard.

Photo by Master Sgt. David Loeffler

TOP RIGHT: Sgt. Bayardo Blandino, a crew chief with the Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, releases water from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter April 13 near Castaic Lake in Southern California as part of joint wildfire training with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire). ABOVE: An Army National Guard Black Hawk dips into Lake Pardee in Northern California during training April 13.

CNG following model to do more with less

The Lean Six Sigma process has saved the Army billions, and the CNG hopes to mirror that success

By CAPT. WILL MARTIN
California Military Department Public Affairs

When Lt. Col. Zac Delwiche discusses the Lean Six Sigma process in his Sacramento office, the California Military Department plans officer chooses his words carefully, not wanting to waste energy and words. That's fitting, because the program he's spearheading for the Department is one built on improving efficiency by trimming the fat from bloated or misdirected processes.

"As the force shrinks, the secretary of defense has emphasized a more efficient fighting force," Delwiche said. "The Army launched a five-year plan in 2006 with the goal of achieving cultural transformation. We're creating a California National Guard five-year plan that mirrors what the Army has done."

The foundation of the Lean Six Sigma, or LSS, methodology can be traced to William Deming, a U.S. statistician who began teaching Japanese managers in the 1950s how to track and analyze data to improve process efficiency. "In God we trust; all others must bring data," Deming was known to cry in encouraging managers to take a scientific approach to their manufacturing and business operations. His PDCA principle — Plan-Do-Check-Act — became a guiding force that evolved into the current LSS model.

More recently, LSS was popularized in the 1990s by General Electric CEO Jack Welch. By targeting wasteful redundancies and variations in organizational processes, corporations that adopted LSS have saved hundreds of billions of dollars during the past two decades. Those cost-saving lessons have direct applications to the federal and defense communities, says business-efficiency guru Kellen Guida.

"If we are going to get serious as a nation about addressing our largest national security threat — our debt — we must get as equally serious about reform," Guida wrote in a December article for Forbes Magazine. "The best course of action is to look at what is working in the private sector and in other areas of government. The federal government could learn a lot from Lean Six Sigma."

What Guida recommends for the wider federal government, the Army has embraced for several years with striking results. Since its implementation in 2006, LSS has saved the Army nearly $20 billion through "process improvements, including improved material flow in Iraq and Afghanistan," according to the Army Business Transformation website. In addition the Army has trained and certified more than 8,000 individuals on LSS principles, including 175 "master black belts," who serve as LSS master trainers for the rest of the force.

The implementation of those processes, Delwiche said, will soon come to the California Army National Guard.

"We're starting this year by training green belts [which marks the initial level of LSS proficiency]," Delwiche said. "[We need to identify strong candidates] from all the different pay statuses, with strong analytical skills, that aren't afraid to learn and use statistics. … We're looking to be a self-sustaining Six Sigma program in five years."

The LSS process, as it will be implemented across the Cal Guard, has two major components, Delwiche said. First, personnel trained in the LSS methodology will map processes across the force, collecting data on variances, redundancies and process strengths. Second, LSS leaders will use the data to determine whether a questionable process itself needs improvement or if the weakness might lie with the management.

"We plan to map out all our processes in the Guard; there are a lot of different factors involved," Delwiche said. "We want to identify our constraints and challenge areas to apply the right tools and methodologies to maximize our existing workforce."

> "As the force shrinks, the secretary of defense has emphasized a more efficient fighting force. … We want to identify our constraints and challenge areas to apply the right tools and methodologies to maximize our existing workforce."
>
> **– Lt. Col. Zach Delwiche**
> *Plans officer, CA Military Dept.*

The LSS methodology is now central to Armed Forces processes, and the program's rapid expansion poses a challenge unique to the Guard and Reserve: ensuring traditional, part-time reserve component members are exposed to training.

"This is being taught at the academies, and it will soon become part of the curriculum for our leadership courses," Delwiche said. "The Army has this embedded into the schoolhouse, and the California Guard is committed to … keeping in step with our active duty counterparts."

CSMR instructors teach lifesaving skills

Dozens of Guard Soldiers in the 1-140th Aviation Battalion learn from their volunteer state partners

By CAPT. RONALD ALEXANDER
California State Military Reserve

A team of instructors from the California State Military Reserve's 1st Mobilization Support Detachment, 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade (Army Support), trained 42 California Army National Guard Soldiers in combat lifesaving skills March 8-10 on Joint Forces Training Base (JFTB), Los Alamitos.

The students were all members of 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, who learned the necessary skills to obtain certification and recertification in the Army's Combat Lifesaver Course. The seven instructors were volunteer Soldiers in the state's Military Reserve.

The class began with two days of classroom lessons and skills training in Combat Lifesaver fundamentals: care under fire, care under tactical conditions, supportive care prior to evacuation, evacuating casualties to a collection point, completing a medical field card, calling in a medical evacuation (medevac) and moving a patient into a medevac vehicle.

Each Soldier successfully demonstrated their ability to use a tourniquet, treat an open chest wound, perform a needle chest decompression and insert a nasopharyngeal tube to maintain a patient's airway.

The third day of training was executed on the flightline at JFTB's Los Alamitos Army Airfield. The 1-140th flight crews and support personnel learned to treat fellow crew members inside a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and inside a Humvee.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Richard Bergquist

ABOVE: Sgt. Matthew Adair of the California Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, tends to a mock gunshot wound endured by Sgt. Evan Luster of the 1-140th during Combat Lifesaver instruction in March on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos. Pfc. Jeremy Hernandez of the California State Military Reserve (CSMR), left, was one of seven CSMR members who administered the course. LEFT: Sgt. Brandon Duffey, left, and Sgt. David Leal practice their lifesaving skills on a role player with a simulated injury.

Role players with simulated injuries were treated for bleeding and for chest wounds, and Soldiers practiced emplacing a nasopharyngeal tube. They also practiced litter deployment and movement to a helicopter.

The final piece of the training required troops to place a casualty on board a helicopter and treat the patient inside the helicopter as he or she was prepared for a medevac transport.

A Combat Lifesaver-trained Soldier is the bridge between self-aid or buddy-aid and a medic, providing lifesaving care as a secondary mission to the extent that a troop's primary mission allows. These skills will undoubtedly prove useful and provide confidence to the 1-140th Soldiers in the future.

TF Warrior trains 1113th for Afghanistan

By SGT. IAN M. KUMMER
Task Force Warrior Public Affairs

Preparing for combat is never easy. Even experienced leaders may find it challenging to build teamwork in their unit and prepare their junior Soldiers for the uncertainties of their first deployment overseas. Fortunately for the members of the 1113th Transportation Company, 340th Brigade Support Battalion, located out of San Jose, they got some help from the very best the California Army National Guard has to offer: three weeks of training with Task Force Warrior at Camp Roberts, Calif.

A total of 162 Soldiers from the 1113th, who are scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan in May, commenced training with Task Force Warrior on March 3.

"This is the best training I have ever been involved with," said Sgt. 1st Class Teddy Ayres, 1st Platoon sergeant for the 1113th. "[I have] 24 years time in service, and this was the first time I had ever been trained by [Task Force Warrior], and their training is excellent."

"The cadre here are very knowledgeable," agreed Spc. Kirsten Leach, a motor transport operator for the 1113th. "All the instructors that I've taken classes with have all been very helpful."

Every training event with Task Force Warrior adheres to the old maxim "train hard, fight easy," putting the Soldiers under pressures they may have never experienced before.

Photo by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer

Soldiers from the 1113th Transportation Company scramble up and over a wall during a March 6 drill with the CNG's Task Force Warrior on Camp Roberts, Calif., where the Company trained for a May deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"We're learning how chaotic it can be under a lot of stress, which is excellent training," Ayres said.

The 1113th's mission in Afghanistan will be to drive convoys down main supply routes, bringing critically needed logistical support to forward operating bases in the combat theater. But learning infantry skills is nonetheless vital to the safety and success of the Company.

"Being in trucks, you never know what could happen," Ayres said. "The truck is the safest spot, definitely. But let's say the road is blocked off or the truck is on fire. You're going to have to exit it. If you come under fire or an explosion or something, you never know what could get messed up."

More than half of the 1113th Soldiers hold the rank of specialist or lower and have never deployed before. The training courses with Task Force Warrior, however, were equally exciting and informative for the junior Soldiers and the more experienced Company members — even including those conducted in a classroom setting.

"The counterinsurgency class — they loved that class," Ayres said of the younger troops. "That was the first PowerPoint class that held their attention like that."

By the end of each training day, the Soldiers of the 1113th felt more prepared to take on any challenges they may encounter on deployment.

"I've never seen a company bond together this quick; it's amazing, it really is amazing," said Staff Sgt. Shelda Mairel, a squad leader for the 1113th. "I've never experienced this with any other unit."

"It's a really good unit," Leach said. "Really good people to be with."

Most importantly, the Transportation Company members are able to envision how they will employ their newly learned skills in a combat environment.

"We have to have the ability to be on the ground and secure a location; we need to be riflemen," Ayres said. "Mission first, Soldiers always."

As good as Task Force Warrior is, it is only the tip of the iceberg, only one small part of the great improvements and lessons learned by the Army and applied across its ranks in recent years.

"Since the war began 12 years ago, the Army has changed so much, and for the better," Ayres said. "There's more common-sense thinking and more common-sense training. It is so much better."

The family that fights together …

By SGT. IAN M. KUMMER
Task Force Warrior Public Affairs

Service members deploying to a combat zone depend upon not just their battle buddies serving on the mission, but the support of their families back home. For most troops, this family support is thousands of miles away. Phone calls. Emails. Letters. Care packages.

But two California Army National Guard Soldiers scheduled to deploy this year will be "military family" not just figuratively, but as husband and wife, facing the stresses and challenges of deployment together side-by-side.

Spc. Albert Mendez and Pfc. Karen Mendez, both motor transport operators who are scheduled to deploy this summer with the 1113th Transportation Company, 340th Brigade Support Battalion, began a rigorous three-week training cycle with their company at Camp Roberts, Calif., under the instruction of Task Force Warrior on March 4. The rotation gave them a taste of what to expect in a high-tempo active duty environment while working overseas.

Though their meeting was a happy coincidence, Albert and Karen seemed meant for each other from the start.

"We met at a bike trail," said Karen, a San Jose native. "We just kind of bumped into each other, and that's how it started."

"We're both into sports, working out, tennis — we're very competitive," said Albert, who has been married to Karen for two years. "We both realized right away that we had that in common."

The couple both enlisted in the California Guard in the spring of last year.

"We took the challenge together, and from the very get-go we got to be together," said Albert, a naturalized citizen born in Mexicali, Mexico. "We are both really thrilled to get to serve together."

When they enlisted, Albert and Karen had no illusions that serving in the Guard would be easy.

"Right at the beginning the recruiter asked us if we'd be willing to deploy," Albert said. "We said we were."

The Mendezes have one advantage that not all military couples have: Albert served previously in the active duty Army. As Karen has progressed in her military career, the challenges she has met were nothing new to her spouse.

"He was prior service, so all he had to do was go to job school," Karen said. "I had to go to basic training and [advanced individual training]."

Karen, who has never been overseas before, is glad she will have her husband with her.

"It's my first time deploying, so it's pretty exciting, and I'm a little scared," Karen said. "I think it's better to go together. … Not seeing him for nine months is a lot worse than not seeing him for a few hours or so on a mission."

Albert teaches Karen everything he knows about the Army and is well-qualified as a mentor. "When I got out [of the Army], I became a teacher at Hoover Middle School in San Jose," he said, "and I have a master's degree in education."

Training with Task Force Warrior was challenging, but the Mendezes enjoyed the experience and learned something new every step of the way.

"It's fun," Karen said. "We're doing something different every day, so there's no time to get bored."

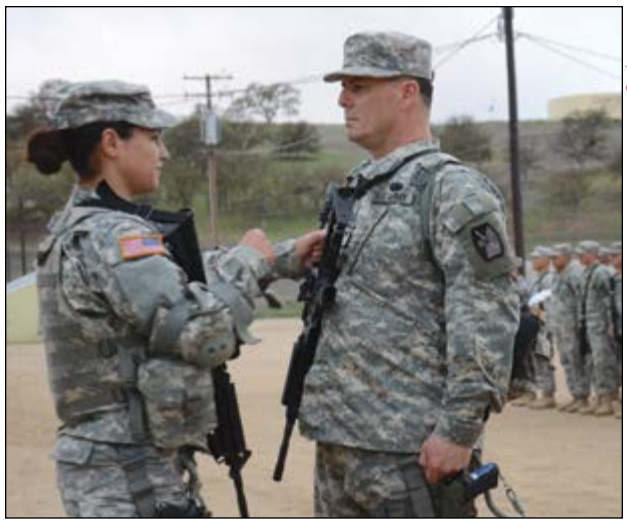


Photo by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer

Pfc. Karen Mendez pins the rank of specialist on her husband, Albert Mendez, at a promotion ceremony March 21 at Camp Roberts, Calif. Karen also was promoted that day and was pinned with her husband's previous rank tab. Both Soldiers are preparing to deploy to Afghanistan with the 1113th Transportation Company in May.

"I think being competitive helps make each other better," Albert added.

The Mendezes stand out from the crowd, and their fellow Soldiers appreciate the value of their relationship.

"The Mendezes make a good team and are very supportive of each other," said 2nd Lt. Cesar Garcia. "They share a bond that they'll have for the rest of their lives."

The Mendezes are well-prepared for the deployment and are looking forward to growing as individuals and as a team.

"We are both really thrilled to get to … serve our country and at the same time do it as family," Albert said.

Together we can stop sexual assault

By JENNIFER LUCERO
CNG Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

April is recognized nationally and by the Department of Defense as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness and promote prevention of sexual violence through special events and education.

This year's theme for the month — "We own it. … We'll solve it. … Together." — reminds us that the only way we can combat sexual assault is if we work together as a team. Each member of the military must be committed to treating one another with dignity and respect and be willing to intervene to stop inappropriate behavior.

Leaders are the key to eradicating sexual assault. The way a commander deals with a sexual assault incident and addresses the victim after the crime is reported can foster a climate of trust within the unit. To establish a climate of trust, commanders must immediately take care of the victim, ensure law enforcement authorities conduct a timely investigation and keep the victim informed throughout the process.

Leaders should be careful about how they question a victim, as the victim may experience heightened sensitivity and mistrust. For example, asking a victim why he or she took so long to come forward may be interpreted by the victim as doubting the validity of the report. Keep in mind that it could take weeks, months or years for some victims to muster enough courage to report a sexual assault.

Although leaders play a key role, it is everyone's responsibility to prevent sexual assault. We must create a more professional work environment and put a stop to behaviors that can lead to sexual assault by eliminating sexual innuendos and inappropriate sexual comments and behaviors.

This responsibility extends to off-duty conduct as well. Many sexual assaults occur after hours, when many members been drinking. Someone who is drunk cannot legally consent to sex: If you have sex with someone who is drugged, intoxicated or passed out, you are guilty of rape.

If you see someone at risk, get involved to ensure they get home safely; otherwise he or she could be the next victim. Keep in mind, someone who volunteers to take the drunk person home may not be well-intentioned.

Recently a Cal Guard member was attending victim-advocate training, and he overheard a conversation between four Guard members who were drinking at an on-base establishment. One Guardsman declared that he would give another $100 if he got a particular female Guard member drunk and raped her. Another member laughingly stated he would give him $200. The victim advocate then courageously called out the senior ranking member at the table and discussed the inappropriate comments.

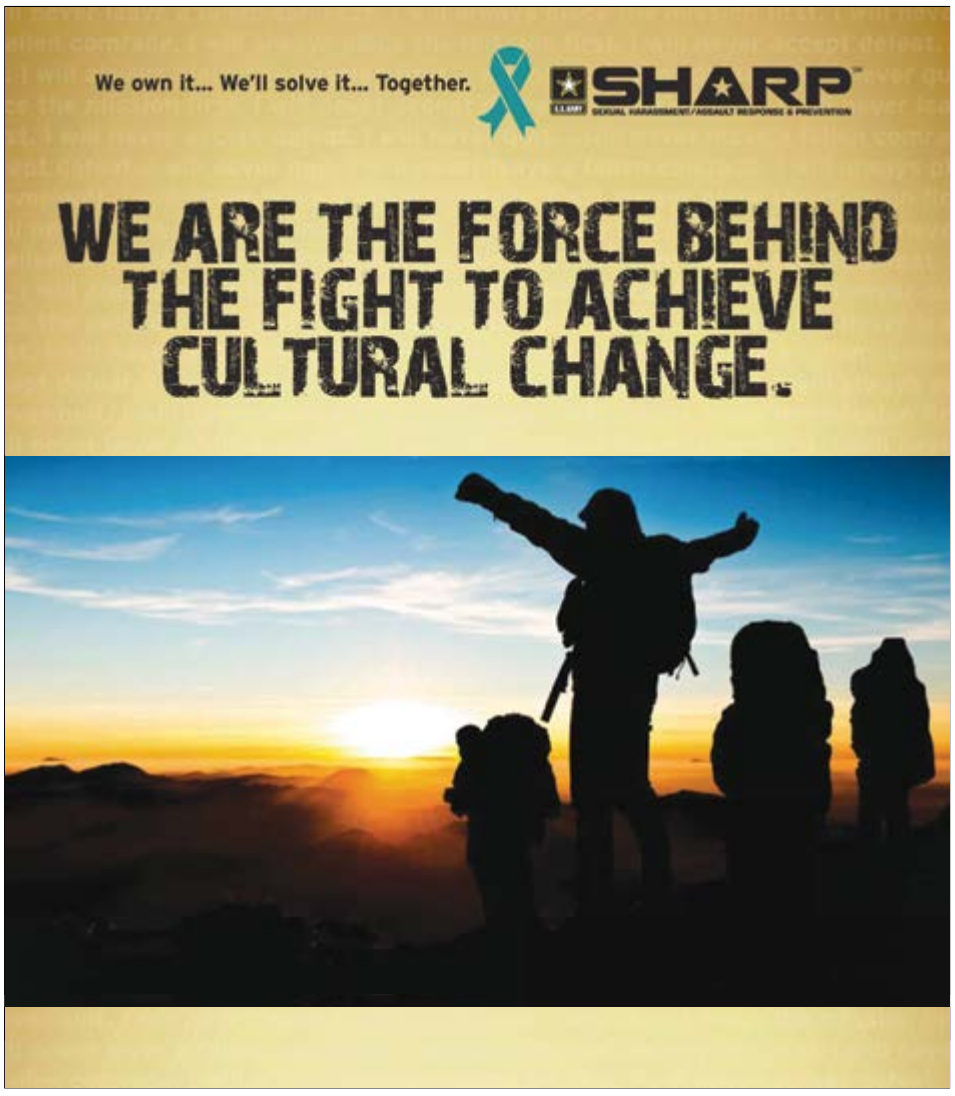
Would you be willing to do the same? Sure, these Guard members could have been joking, but rape is not a joking matter. If the victim advocate had not stepped in, who knows what might have happened.

Sexual assault is a serious crime that has a devastating impact on the order and discipline of an organization. Our goal is to increase timely reporting so that offenders are held accountable. Through increased reporting and accountability, we can establish a non-permissive climate in which potential offenders know they will be investigated and held accountable. That will reduce incidents of sexual assault.

If you have been a victim of a sexual assault, please report it to your chain of command or a victim advocate. If you know someone who is a victim, encourage them to report it and seek assistance.

Air National Guard members have two reporting options: restricted and unrestricted. The restricted reporting option allows the victim to confidentially disclose details of the assault to a victim advocate, chaplain or sexual assault response coordinator and then receive medical treatment, advocacy and counseling. However, an investigation will not be initiated and the chain of command will not be notified.

We prefer complete reporting, so we can investigate the incident and hold the perpetrator accountable, but our first priority is to ensure the victim is protected and receives medical treatment and counseling. Restricted reporting empowers victims to seek information and support to make a more informed decision about whether they will move forward with a criminal investigation: At any time, a victim may change their report to an unrestricted report, which triggers an investigation.



CNG resources:
916-854-3448
916-869-0787
www.calguard.ca.gov/j1/pages/saprp.aspx

DoD assistance:
877-995-5247
www.safehelpline.org
www.preventsexualassault.army.mil

Any report of sexual assault made through normal military reporting channels, which includes the victim's chain of command and law enforcement agencies, is an unrestricted report. This is the preferred reporting option because it triggers an investigation and provides the opportunity to hold an offender accountable.

There are several ways to report a sexual assault. One call a victim advocate or the CNG sexual assault response coordinator, who can put a victim in touch with an advocate, at 916-854-3448 or 916-869-0787. The Department of Defense Safe Helpline is also available 24 hours a day at 877-995-5247. Resources also can be found online at www.calguard.ca.gov/j1/Pages/SAPRP.aspx or www.preventsexualassault.army.mil. Members also are encouraged to report any assault to their chain of command or to law enforcement officials, and to seek medical assistance if necessary.

Working together, we can own it, and we can solve it.

'Best' from page 9

The most difficult event was the ruck march, Garcia said. The competitors wore a helmet and a flak jacket with ceramic armor plates and carried a weapon and a 45-pound ruck sack for an unknown distance. They had one hour and 45 minutes to complete the march.

"I wanted to slow down so bad and take it easy and catch my breath, but at the same time, it's a competition and you have to keep moving," Garcia said. "That not only took a lot of physical activity, strength and endurance, it also took a lot of heart."

Garcia's perseverance paid off, as he was one of the first to finish the event.

Both Garcia and Ziegler liked the military operations on urban terrain event the most. It was scheduled as a mystery event, so the competitors knew nothing about it until they got there.

In full battle gear and equipped with a radio and a paintball gun, the competitors were transported one at a time by helicopter to the urban terrain range. There they were instructed to maneuver through the town and past opposition forces to find, treat and evacuate a casualty.

Ziegler said he tried to approach each event with an open heart and an open mind, knowing that he could expertly handle anything they threw at him. It takes a "whole Soldier" to win the Competition, he said: One has to be strong overall and proficient in each tested area to achieve the title of Best Warrior.

"You see the talent out here and the knowledge and the experience, and it's a pretty amazing thing," Ziegler said. "The level of competition is extremely high."

Spc. Nathaniel Hill from Nevada and Sgt. Conlee Luke from Utah won the Best Warrior titles in the Soldier and NCO categories, respectively, and will represent Region VII at the national Best Warrior Competition. Both California Soldiers, however, had very impressive showings and took home titles for top scores in individual events.

Garcia had the highest score among NCOs in the media interview event and the oral board. Ziegler earned the highest scores among junior enlisted members for the rifle and pistol shooting event, the written examination, the media interview, the land navigation test and the weapons systems event, which tested his ability to assemble four different weapons.

"I am happy with my performance and I'm not going home empty handed," Garcia said. "I believe I have fulfilled what I would call an obligation to myself and my state and that I am going home a better Soldier and a better leader."

Tech. Sgt. Joseph Prouse of the CNG's 163rd Reconnaissance Wing poses with his M-4 carbine while leading a photography course for Afghan and coalition service members at ruins near Kabul in support of NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan. Photo by Albanian Lt. Zamir Sadikaj

Marriage Enrichment Seminar in May

Army National Guard members are invited to attend a Marriage Enrichment Seminar provided by the CNG Chaplain's Office, May 10-12 in San Diego. During the "Strong Bonds" weekend, couples will gain skills that fortify their marriages and enjoy a time of relaxation, fellowship and fun. Couples will practice communication and relationship-building skills, share intimate moments and learn practical, useful information.

Strong Bonds will provide funding for lodging on Friday and Saturday nights as well as parking and meals. Day care will be provided during the seminar hours. Strong Bonds does not provide funding for Soldiers to be placed on orders; service members must request orders from their unit. Registration is limited to 30 couples. For details or to register, contact Master Sgt. Desmond Knight at desmond.d.knight.mil@mail.mil or 916-854-3383.

Free golf, life skills instruction

Children of National Guard members can receive free golf lessons that build character, instill values and promote healthy choices through The First Tee, an organization created by the World Golf Foundation in 1997. The organization's coaches and staff work with students in a fun, safe learning environment that teaches how the positive values inherent in golf can be used at home, in school and in other areas of life.

The First Tee's 16 chapters in California offer programs at nearly 80 separate locations. For more information, visit www.thefirsttee.org.

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the program stay with it, and he has seen the Corps turn around a lot of people. "Once in it, people believe in the program because they know what it can do," he said.

Carlos Lovato, 17, from Van Nuys High School, agrees. As a junior in his fifth year in the Corps, Lovato said he feels wise beyond his years and would recommend the program to anyone.

"Most teenagers are scared to take responsibility," he said, "but someone tells me, 'Hey, we have 250 kids here that we're leaving you in charge of,' and I say, 'Awesome,' and ask where they are and how long I'm in command. Then I get the job done."

Lovato further explained that the main building block the Corps has given him is an understanding that he is part of something greater than himself.

"I feel as if I've really made an impact," he said, citing his work with the Corps as well as his experience teaching karate to younger students. "You can make a change in this world."

Lovato, who wants to study corporate law so he can help fight the "moral injustices of life," added that his mentorship within the program has given him a greater sense of community, noting that he understands that "others are more important than you."

Ball named assistant adjutant general

Col. Randall R. Ball has been appointed assistant adjutant general, Air, for the California National Guard as well as deputy commander of the California Air National Guard. He will be promoted to brigadier general in May.

Ball has served in the California Air National Guard for more than 40 years. He earned his commission as an officer in 1980 and has qualified to fly the Cessna O-2 Skymaster, F-4 Phantom fighter-bomber, KC-135R Stratotanker air refueling plane and MQ-1 Predator remotely piloted aircraft. He assumed command of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing in 2009.

"We are indeed fortunate to capitalize on Colonel Ball's experience and will undoubtedly benefit from his proven leadership," Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, adjutant general of the California National Guard, wrote in an April 3 memo announcing Ball's appointment.

Col. Kirby R. Colas is serving in Ball's former role as 163rd Reconnaissance Wing commander on an interim basis during the selection process for Ball's successor.

DID YOU KNOW...

Guard members on active duty must meet specific requirements to be granted convalescent leave?

Requests for convalescent leave of 30 days or fewer can be approved by a service member's unit commander. Requests for 31 or more days must be approved by the National Guard Bureau.

Service members must provide supporting documents from their health care provider to assist their commander in evaluating the leave request, determining the minimum amount of leave required and setting any necessary duty limitations. The commander also may need to discuss the service member's medical issue with the health care provider to assist in making the decision.

Service members should communicate with their commander regularly to update him or her on their status and the possibility of needing additional leave.

For more information, contact your unit personnel representative.

References: Department of Defense Instruction 1327.6, Army Regulation 600-8-10, and Air Force Instruction 36-3003

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A California Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew drops 660 gallons of water on a forest near Ione, Calif., during joint wildfire training with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection personnel April 13. Photo by Master Sgt. David Loeffler

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