

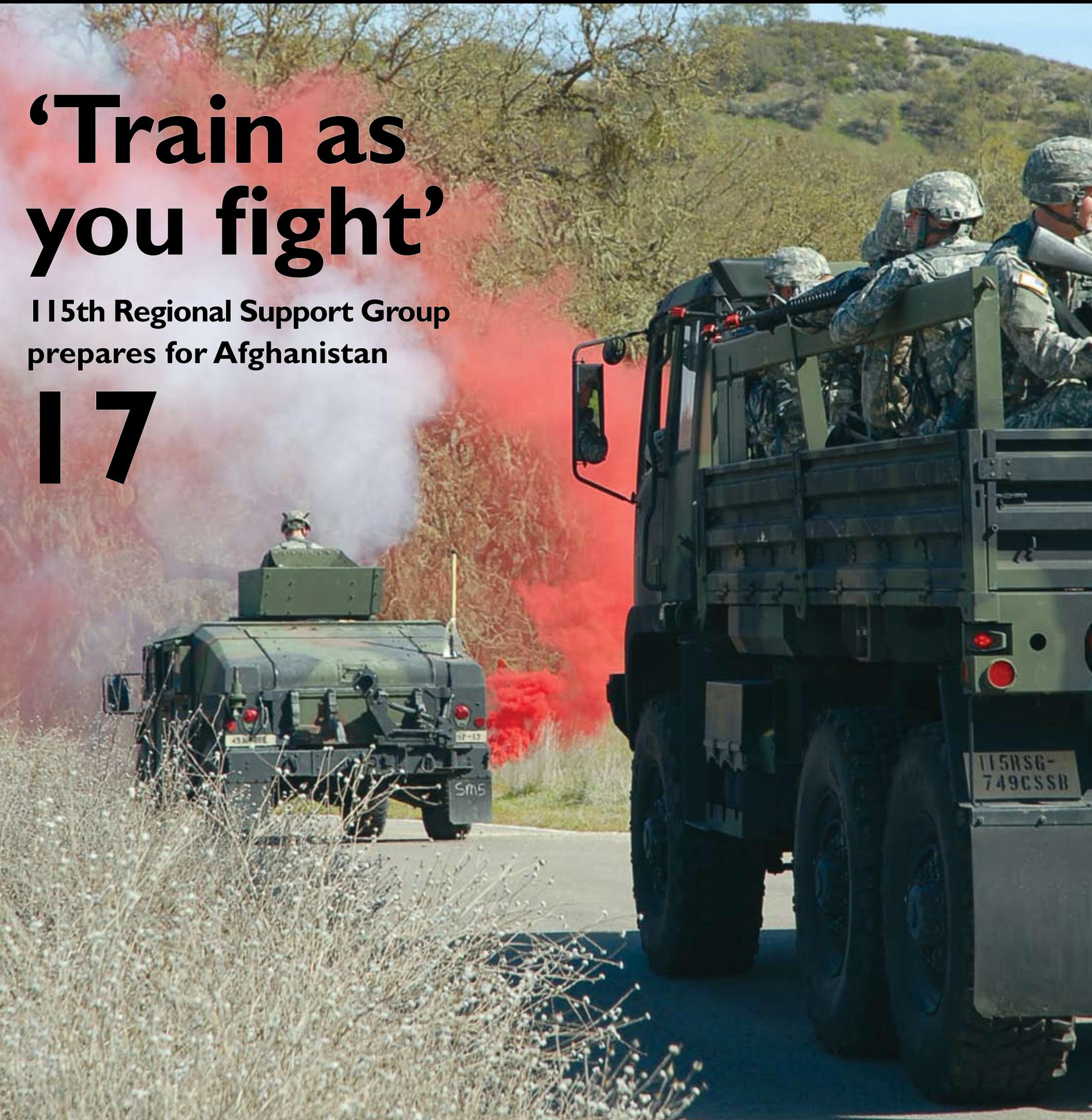
GRIZZLY

Official Newsmagazine of the California National Guard

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Leadership Corner

It's time to return our nation to its militia roots

Major General David S. Baldwin



After a decade of combat operations in which National Guardsmen fought and died alongside their active duty counterparts, the experience and readiness of our Soldiers and Airmen is at an all-time high. More than 50 percent of the nation's Guard forces are combat veterans, who stand confident, competent and equipped to meet the demands of commanders overseas and governors at home.

The completion of combat operations in Iraq, the ramp-down of operations in Afghanistan and the nation's uncertain economic climate have converged to create a rare opportunity for national policymakers to shape the future force that will defend the American homeland and protect our global security interests.

At the conclusion of previous wars in our nation's history, the Department of Defense has sought to save money by slashing the budget of the National Guard and relegating it to serving as a strategic reserve. Following this course today would be a major mistake and a failure to capitalize on Guardsmen's experience, military and civilian skills, and cost-effectiveness. Now is not the time to cut the National Guard, but to grow it.

Unfortunately the fiscal year 2013 Department of Defense budget submission indicates leaders in the Air Force do not see the value our National Guard brings to the table. The budget submission, which has not yet faced a congressional vote, calls for the elimination of 6,000 Airmen from the country's National Guard force — a reduction greater than the combined cuts proposed for the active duty Air Force and the Air Force Reserve.

This not only ignores the invaluable contributions brought to vital missions such as cyber-security by Air National Guardsmen with civilian expertise, it disregards statistically inarguable facts about the cost-effectiveness of our National Guard.

The DoD should focus on ways to meet our security challenges in the most economically feasible manner at a time when cost-efficiency is essential. ... The National Guard comprises a vast repository of combat experience, talents and expertise at an extraordinarily low price.

- Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin
The Adjutant General

The Air National Guard accounts for only 6 percent of the total Air Force budget but makes up 19 percent of its personnel and provides 30 to 40 percent of the Air Force's total fighter, tanker and airlift capacity. Likewise, the Army National Guard accounts for less than 11 percent of the Army budget but makes up 32 percent of its personnel and more than 40 percent of its operating forces.

Furthermore the Commission on the Guard and Reserves, which was created by Congress, has found that active-duty component service members are four times more expensive than reserve component members when not deployed.

The Department of Defense should focus less on minimizing active duty personnel cuts and instead home in on ways to meet our nation's security challenges in the most econom-

ically feasible manner at a time when cost-efficiency is essential in all branches of government.

The National Guard comprises a vast repository of combat experience, diverse talents and technical expertise at an extraordinarily low price. This cost-efficient model evolved from the Guard's roots in colonial militias, when Minutemen provided the sole line of defense for their communities in the wilderness of the pre-Revolutionary period.

Today's National Guard retains this community mission while serving on the international stage as well. Embedded in every community across the country, we provide a presence and invaluable support on a daily basis to local citizens and first responders. Governors routinely call up Guardsmen to suppress wildfires, mitigate flooding, perform search-and-rescue and counterdrug missions, and respond to a full spectrum of threats, both natural and man-made.

The path to a sustainable force that is able to meet our nation's long-term security interests requires policymakers to re-evaluate who should be tasked with each mission to create the most efficient, economically viable and integrated force possible. Disproportionate cuts to the Air National Guard would fail to capitalize on the operational experience gained from combat and domestic support missions over the last 10 years and set us down a path to economic waste and departmental instability.

The California Military Department is prepared to do everything in our power to care for any Airmen and families affected by the proposed cuts if they are ratified by Congress. But first we must fight to prevent this error. The National Guard is the most cost-effective and flexible weapon in the U.S. arsenal, and compromising our force would jeopardize the nation's future ability to respond to emergencies at home and contingencies abroad.

Leadership Corner

CSM program seeks high-caliber NCOs

Command Sergeant Major William Clark Jr.



The objective of the California Army National Guard command sergeant major program is to ensure that effective, high-caliber senior noncommissioned officers (NCO) fill command sergeant major positions. The adjutant general is the nominating official for the selection board. A Command Sergeant Major Advisory Council reviews the candidates and provides recommendations for a semi-annual selection board.

The aspiration to become a command sergeant major is a personal decision. This commitment requires strict adherence to Army values and the ability to hold others accountable while building a team. Additionally, strong written and oral communication skills are necessary to build and maintain

the NCO support channel. An applicant to become a command sergeant major must have demonstrated leadership skills through a variety of assignments throughout their career. Assignment as a first sergeant is not required; however, it is desired.

Army Regulation 600-8-19 and 600-200 govern the command sergeant major selection process. The following duties will provide potential command sergeants major with a guide to the expectations:

- Provide recommendations to the commander pertaining to the health and welfare of Soldiers and their families
- Monitor the organization's career development program to ensure a strong current and future California Army National Guard

- Mentor NCOs to reach their full potential
- Ensure the organization fosters an environment that enables promotion based on merit and service
- Review policies and regulations and provide recommendations for implementation to ensure they are implemented fairly and consistently; and
- Advise the commander in all unit matters that affect enlisted members' and NCOs' training and personal readiness.

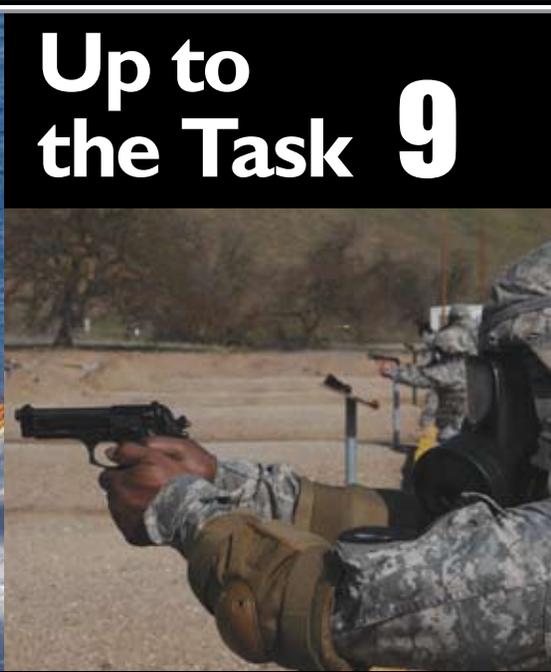
When a Soldier sets a goal to become a command sergeant major, he or she is expected to seek mentorship from senior commanders and command sergeants major, based in part on their career management field. A Soldier's first assignment as a command ser-

geant major will be aligned with their career management field.

First sergeants and command sergeants major are responsible for identifying NCOs who have demonstrated leadership qualities and for preparing them to take on positions of increasing responsibility. The NCOs share in that responsibility to pursue key leadership assignments and seek mentorship that will help them reach their goal of being selected to the command sergeant major program. See your first sergeant or command sergeant major for detailed information on preparing yourself to become a command sergeant major. Applications are available at <https://portal.ca.ngb.army.mil/sites/G1/SeniorNCOs/default.aspx>.



Rescue me 4



Up to the Task 9



Fire drill 6

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Articles:

- ★ 250-300 words for a half-page story; 600-800 words for a full-page article
- ★ Include first and last names, and verify spelling
- ★ Spell out acronyms, abbreviations and full unit designations on first reference
- ★ If there is a public affairs officer assigned to your unit, ensure he or she reviews it

Photographs:

- ★ Highest resolution possible: MB files, not KB
- ★ No retouched photos
- ★ Caption (what is happening, who is pictured and the date of the photo)
- ★ Credit (who took the photo)

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Cover Shot



Photo by Spc. Scott Johnson

The San Bruno-based 2632nd Transportation Company, 115th Regional Support Group, performs a simulated combat logistic patrol March 23 on Camp Roberts, Calif., in preparation for the Group's 2013 deployment to Afghanistan.

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California National Guard mobilizations as of April 2012



756th TC 'Road Dawgs' Soldier on

The only transportation company in the Kabul Base Cluster keeps trucking despite loss of a comrade early in its tour

By **1ST. LT. DAVE MEEK** and
SPC. DEXTER MACARIO
756th Transportation Company

More than halfway through their deployment to Kabul, Afghanistan, the Soldiers

of the California National Guard's 756th Transportation Company are approaching the benchmark of 300 successfully completed missions, and one thing the unit's Soldiers have learned is that no mission is routine.

During the past six months, the 756th has performed humanitarian missions, helped reacquire millions of dollars of stolen property belonging to the U.S. government and assisted in the recovery of remains for fallen Soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

The unit's orphanage missions have given "Road Dawg" Soldiers an opportunity to see the side effects of a country engaged in years of war. The 756th has delivered clothing, candy and school materials to various organizations to aid the city's orphans, and the unit's Soldiers hope the youths of Afghanistan will remember the generosity shown by American troops. For the Soldiers in the unit, playing soccer with or reading a story to the children has given a boost to their morale.

The unit arrived in Afghanistan in September with a mission to move personnel and cargo throughout the Kabul Base Cluster. Less than two months later, war became very real for the Soldiers of the 756th, as they lost one of their own.

While conducting a personnel-movement mission, a convoy that included an up-armed bus driven by Sgt. Carlo F. Eugenio of the 756th was struck by a vehicle-borne

improvised explosive device. The blast killed 17 people including Eugenio and three other U.S. Soldiers.

"[Eugenio] took pride in the work he did and was always a professional," said 1st Lt. Dalia Sanchez, commander of the 756th. "The one thing I remember the most about him was he always smiled. ... It has been a huge loss for all of us in the 756th."

The 756th Soldiers stationed at the unit's battle desk knew within moments that they had lost a fellow Soldier and that another member of their unit needed immediate medical attention.

With quick communication and coordination, all personnel and military assets were quickly recovered, and the 756th personnel showed they could Soldier on in the most challenging circumstances.

When the unit's Soldiers hit the ground back in California, they will be able look back with pride, knowing the significant role they played as the only transportation company in Kabul. Their successes are not the result of one Soldier's efforts but of many, and they can stand tall knowing they gave 100 percent to the mission.



Pvt. Bobby Fifer of the California National Guard's 756th Transportation Company keeps watch from a tower in Kabul, Afghanistan. The 756th, which arrived in Kabul in September, is the only transportation company in the Kabul Base Cluster.

U.S., Afghan engineers benefit each other

By **1ST. LT. ADAM CARRINGTON**
578th Engineer Battalion

"The [Afghan National Army] are a real force multiplier for us," says Capt. Robert Rogers, commander of the 1022nd Vertical Construction Company. "There have been several occasions that we would have been dead in the water without their support."

The 1022nd VCC is part of Task Force (TF) Mad Dog, which is composed of more than 1,000 Soldiers responsible for a massive construction effort in eastern Afghanistan. The Task Force is headed up by the California National Guard's 578th Engineer Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company and the 578th Forward Support Company, both from Los Angeles County.

TF Mad Dog consists of National Guard construction units and active-duty route clearance companies, a highly unusual array of forces that is further enhanced by Air Force construction elements. The Task Force also conducts joint operations with Afghan National Army (ANA) and Polish maneuver forces.

"When we were tasked with this [mission], I was initially worried about how we would maintain our partnership operations," says 1st Lt. Joe Lee of Riverside, Calif., the ANA coordinator for TF Mad Dog. "Then we realized this was a perfect training opportunity to co-locate and partner with an ANA engineer unit at a priority build site."

Until then, most U.S.-Afghan engineer partnerships had involved ANA route clearance companies: ANA horizontal and vertical construction units had not been utilized by coalition forces as construction engineers.



Afghan Soldiers operate a hydraulic excavator and a dump truck during a base-expansion project initiated by Task Force Mad Dog, which is headed up by the CNG's 578th Engineer Battalion.

Lee, however, was tasked by his higher command, the 18th Engineer Brigade, to find an ANA engineer unit to assist the 1022nd in its mammoth scope of work.

Lee identified the ANA's 203rd Engineer Corps, which was located relatively close to the 1022nd VCC's build site and was being utilized as an infantry unit rather than as engineers. Lee recognized the potential of this engineer unit, conducted key leader engagements and obtained an order from the ANA 3rd Brigade commander for a portion of the unit to relocate.

Once the ANA engineers arrived at the build site with their heavy construction equipment, they hungrily began to work. Prior to this build, the ANA Soldiers had very little experience on their equipment because of a lack of fuel and because they were conducting non-engineer missions. Now that they had both, nothing could hold back the development of the eager ANA engineers.

As time progressed, the proficiency of the ANA troops grew. Within a very short time, the ANA engineer platoon was ready to

take on their first mission: building a vehicle fighting position. Soon after completion, they were fully integrated into the coalition forces' horizontal construction effort.

"In one day, a short day — eight hours — we were able to put up 633 linear feet of HESCOs," said Sgt. 1st Class Eric Flatmoe of the South Dakota National Guard's 842nd Horizontal Engineering Company, referring to HESCO Concertainers, temporary barriers with a mesh framework that are filled with sand or other materials for force protection. "I was impressed, really impressed."

The ANA company and equipment have been essential to the 1022nd's success, VCC leaders say. For instance, the 1022nd needed to complete a tent pad for their base's dining facility but encountered drainage issues. The unit's excavator required to fix the issue was broken, so the VCC turned to its ANA partners, who were eager to help. The ANA Soldiers easily fixed the issue, having very quickly become proficient with their equipment, according to Flatmoe.

"Watching that ANA Soldier operate that [hydraulic excavator] was like watching a perfectly choreographed dance," he said. "It was smooth, with no mistakes, and perfectly executed. ... It was an amazing thing to watch."

Lt. Shafi, leader of the ANA engineer platoon, said the partnership has been very valuable for his Soldiers.

"I am so happy [for the opportunity to work with] you guys," he said. "I have learned a lot from you guys, and I have gotten good experience."



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jess D. Harvey

Sisterhood travels to the White House

Moranda Hern, who co-founded The Sisterhood of the Traveling BDUs with a fellow CNG daughter, introduced the first lady at an event honoring military family-support organizations

By **BRANDON HONIG**
CA Military Department Public Affairs

Moranda Hern and Kaylei Deakin joined forces in 2008 to tackle a daunting challenge. They had already helped each other with sisterly support and the knowledge that their difficult experiences through their parents' deployments were not unique. But that wasn't enough for these selfless, motivated young women. They wanted to make sure military daughters across the country received the support they valued so much from each other.

"When I was 14 years old, my dad deployed to Afghanistan," Hern shared during an April 11 ceremony at the White House. "I felt completely alone. I didn't know any other girls whose parents were deploying. None of my friends understood that I had to go to bed worrying if my dad was going to come home alive."

Hern's grades dropped, she stopped raising her hand in class,

and her personality changed. "I didn't know what to do," she said. "And my friends didn't understand, so they just kind of left me to figure it out. I thought I was the only one."

Only after Hern's father safely returned with the CNG's 144th Fighter Wing did she find Deakin, who had similar experiences when her father deployed with the CNG's 578th Engineer Battalion. The teens met at a National Guard Youth Symposium in St. Louis and decided to work together to help military kids through the trying times other children failed to understand.

"That's when I had my 'a-ha! moment' that we needed to do something about this," Hern said, "because we all can do something."

The idea that we all can — and should — do something was the driver behind the Joining Forces Community Challenge initiated last year by first lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, wife of

Vice President Joe Biden. The national initiative aims to educate, challenge and spark action from all sectors of society to ensure military families receive the support they deserve.

Six organizations that have taken up the mantle of supporting military families were recognized April 11 at the White House. The organization founded by Hern and Deakin, The Sisterhood of the Traveling BDUs, was among 20 finalists but did not receive the honor. Nonetheless, the Sisterhood received a great honor when Obama asked Hern to introduce her at the event.

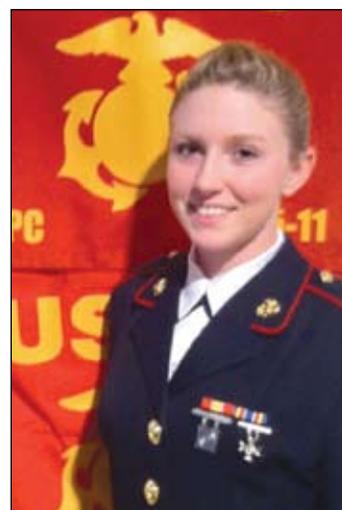
"[Hern] is the reason why we do this," Obama said. "There are thousands of amazing kids like her all over this country that need to have this light shined on them. We are so proud of you, so very proud of you and the others like you. So keep it up."

Hern had her first White House experience in 2010, when Biden invited her and Deakin to discuss The Sisterhood of the Traveling BDUs, which was raising money for its first conference for military daughters and had set up a website to connect girls in distant communities. The conference, held in March 2010, attracted more than 100 girls ages 13-17, who learned to "unite, inspire and lead" during the all-expenses-paid weekend.

"When we had an open mike [session] and the girls were sharing their stories ... they would tell us, 'Thank you for starting this. Thank you for empowering me to go out and help other girls,'" said Deakin, whose father deployed for a second tour in Afghanistan in September 2011. "It made me feel



Photo by Master Sgt. David J. Loeffler



Courtesy photo

TOP: Air Force Academy Cadet Moranda Hern introduces first lady Michelle Obama during an April 11 ceremony at the White House for winners of the Joining Forces Community Challenge, which honored organizations that support military families. They were joined on stage by Dr. Jill Biden; wife of Vice President Joe Biden; Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and journalist Tom Brokaw. **ABOVE:** Hern and Kaylei Deakin host The Sisterhood of the Traveling BDUs' first conference for military daughters in Clovis, Calif., in 2010, when both were 17. **LEFT:** Deakin is now a lance corporal in the Marine Corps.

good to know it's helping them to go out in their communities and help other military girls."

One attendee in particular had a marked impact on her. "My sister was getting ready to turn 15, and I never knew she had problems through [our dad's] deployment [in 2005-2007], and she actually opened up to all these other girls," Deakin remembered. "With my dad currently on his second deployment to Afghanistan, it makes me feel safe to know she has the Sisterhood behind her."

The Sisterhood's next conference is being planned for this fall in Pennsylvania.

Far from being deterred by their teenage struggles, both Hern and Deakin were inspired to join the military. Deakin is a lance corporal in Marine Corps Helicopter Squadron 1, which is responsible

for the transportation of the president, and Hern is a sophomore at the Air Force Academy, with plans to become a fighter pilot.

"I've always loved growing up in a military family. I haven't seen another community with more pride," Hern said at the White House event in April. "They are perseverant, proud and passionate people who are proud of those serving this country, and I know the civilian community is just as proud."

"Growing up as a military daughter, I always knew the civilian community wanted to help but didn't know how," she added. "As a military family member, I want to thank you both, Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden, for using your voice to help us find ours."

For more on the Sisterhood, visit www.sisterhoodbdus.org.

Joining Forces Community Challenge

Winning organizations

Our Family for Families First Foundation: Scholarships and grants for military children and spouses (ourfamilyforfamiliesfirst.org)

The Armed Forces Service Center: Free lounge at Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport (mnafsc.org)

Defending the Blue Line: Assistance with hockey-related costs (defendingtheblueline.org)

Give an Hour: Free mental health counseling (giveanhour.org)

Project Sanctuary: Post-deployment recreational activities and therapy in the Rocky Mountains (projectsanctuary.us)

Richfield, Utah: Utility abatement, newspaper delivery for deployed Soldiers and veterans memorial (richfieldcity.com)

WATER AWAY!

California National Guard helicopter crews work with Cal Fire to ensure a rapid, effective, coordinated response during the state's upcoming wildfire season

Photos by Master Sgt. Julie Avey



By **MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY**
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

Wildfires burn hundreds of thousands of acres in California every year, fueled by weather, wind and dry underbrush. The fires wreak havoc on communities and destroy homes.

In preparation for the annual wildfire season, California National Guard Soldiers joined forces with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) personnel April 13-15, making this their 17th year training as a team to fight forest fires.



For more, scan this QR code

"The National Guard has been a great partner with Cal Fire over the years, and when our state is faced with numerous major wildfires, their help is critical," Chief Ken Pimlott, director of Cal Fire, said during the April training.

The California National Guard and Cal Fire train together each year to ensure military helicopter pilots can effectively drop water on wildfires and to practice safely integrating the two agencies during a wildfire situation.

This year's joint training was held at Mather Field near Sacramento, Cal Fire Academy in Ione and Lake Pardee in Amador County, and included instruction on wildland fire behavior, fire shelter, communications, frequency management, dispatch, load cal-

culations and air traffic control.

More than 100 California National Guard members attended a one-day classroom course at Mather Field, followed by two days of simulated wildfire training in Ione.

"This type of interagency training improves both safety and responsiveness," said Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the adjutant general of the California National Guard. "This partnership leverages the resources of our



A California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection military helicopter manager works with a Cal Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot to fill a "Bambi bucket" with water from Lake Pardee in Amador County to drop on a simulated fire during joint training April 14.

two organizations to provide maximum capability to the fight, when and where it's needed."

A Cal Fire military helicopter manager (MHEM) accompanies the air crew on every California National Guard helicopter during fire operations. The military helicopter manager helps guide and coordinate the military pilots, while communicating with the Cal Fire air tactical supervisor to ensure the military aircraft are used safely

and efficiently while integrating with other firefighting assets.

"During a fire, you have the military air crews, who are the subject matter experts for their helicopter, and the MHEM is the subject matter expert on wildland fire operations," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Bruce Pulgencio, a pilot for 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, and a civilian fire captain in Costa Mesa.

Pulgencio said he has participated in many joint fire training events in the past, but this year's was the best yet.

"What set this year apart from previous years is the training event was conducted exactly as if there was a wildfire incident occurring," he said. "In the past, the annual training events were beneficial, but they were not set up to the extent that this year was."

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ken Martin of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment (Medevac), said he is new to the firefighting mission, and the Cal Fire training was invaluable.

"The mission is complex. Coordination and communication are critical," he said. "As a result of this training integrating all the elements of an actual fire mission, I feel so much more prepared."

California Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and UH-72A Lakota helicopters flew a total of 22.2 hours

CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD FIREFIGHTING AIRCRAFT

UH-60 Black Hawk equipped with 660-gallon "Bambi bucket"

Eight aircraft in the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade



HH-60G Pave Hawk equipped with 660-gallon "Bambi bucket"

Two aircraft in the 129th Rescue Wing



during the training and made 138 drops totaling about 58,700 gallons of water. The Black Hawks carry "Bambi buckets" that can be submerged in a lake or other water source and filled with up to 660 gallons to be dropped on a wildfire.

The Lakotas can be used for reconnaissance, emergency medical services or logistics in remote locations, and can provide real-time video images to authorities on the ground. In addition to two pilots, it can carry six troops or two patients on stretchers plus a medical attendant and a crew chief.

Helicopter coordinators flew in the Lakotas to provide aerial supervision, direct the Black Hawks to the desired drop locations and add a layer of command and control. This was the first time Lakotas had been used in California National Guard fire training.

"Operations can get complex when you have multiple aircraft flying in a defined area," said Alex Lujan, Cal Fire air operations branch director. "In training we have the opportunity to work through problems and situations in a controlled environment and learn as a team."

Sixteen Cal Guard military field liaisons (MFL) were also trained during the April event. They learned to assist a flight crew, coordinate aviation maintenance and refueling, and manage communications between Cal Fire and California National Guard personnel. Among the trainees were six Airmen from the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing, located at Moffett Federal Airfield in Santa Clara County.

"The Cal Guard MFL actively and continuously interacts with his or her Cal Fire counterpart ... with regard to managing the administrative and logistic requirements of conducting a Cal Guard fire activation," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Fred Kent, an MFL.

"The training event is run as close to operating like an actual fire as is practical: real time transportation, meals, maintenance, fuel, reports and practice," he added.

Martin said the Cal Fire trainers were thorough and professional during all aspects of the training, and safety was stressed at all times.

"Cal Fire and the California National Guard personnel worked smoothly together, crossing agency lines to achieve one goal, and seamlessly and effortlessly became one team," Pulgencio added. "We rely on each other's expertise to achieve the same goal: to save lives, property and the environment."

Fight fire with flyer

Medevac crew chief operates 660-gallon "Bambi bucket"

By **MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY**
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

In 2009, Sgt. Julian Ross went up in a helicopter to fight a fire for the first time. He was nervous but did everything he had been trained to do to the best of his ability, and bucket after bucket hit its target.

"When we went back to the helibase for fuel, a family approached me in tears, thanking me for what we had done," said Ross, who had worked as a mechanic and crew chief for an active duty Army unit before joining the CNG in 2008.

"When I explained to them I was just doing my job as a Guardsman for the state of California, they continued to tell me the fire was approaching their home, and my aircraft dropping water onto the fire slowed the fire down just enough for ground crews to contain the fire before it reached their home, saving everything they had," he added.

As a crew chief for Company F, 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment (Medevac), out of Mather Field near Sacramento, it is Ross' job to release the water from the "Bambi bucket," which can carry up to 660 gallons. This requires precise coordination with the pilots in the cockpit, so he sounds off a 3-2-1 countdown before releasing the water.

"When you are flying at 90 knots, 100 feet from the ground and with 660 gallons of water trying to pull you down, and all of a sudden your crew chief releases this big anchor, you could see where communication between the pilot and the crew chief is needed," Ross said. "The aircraft tends to climb if your pilot is not ready on the controls."

California Army National Guard units train for the upcoming fire season with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection personnel each spring, dropping thousands of gallons of water

on forests near Ione, Calif. During this year's joint training, April 13-15, Ross counted down and announced "Water away" 61 times.

As crew chief, Ross also provided additional eyes for the pilots, conducted maintenance checks, prepared the aircraft for flight and readied his crew and Cal Fire personnel for the operations ahead.

"It is not all about wearing the flight suit and just saying 'clear right and above,' but being part of a crew," he said. "Being a crew chief in a [medical evacuation] unit, you never know what you will be getting yourself into when the call comes in. It could be a lost hiker in the mountains [or] a raging fire in Southern California."

"It takes a lot of dedication from you and your family because you spend a lot of time away from them training for the unknown. ... But at the end of the day it makes you feel good."



Sgt. Julian Ross, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief for the CNG's Company F, 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment (Medevac), watches a fellow Black Hawk crew fill their "Bambi bucket" with water from Lake Pardee in Amador County to drop on a simulated fire April 14 as part of the Guard's annual training with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

UH- 72A
Lakota
equipped for
command, control
and fire mapping

Three aircraft in the
40th Combat Aviation
Brigade



C-130J
Hercules
equipped with
3,000-gallon
Modular Airborne Fire
Fighting System II

Two aircraft in the
146th Airlift Wing





Rescued!

By SENIOR AIRMAN JESSICA GREEN
California Military Department Public Affairs

Seven Airmen from the CNG's 129th Rescue Wing were honored during a state Senate session April 12 for their successful rescue of two injured fishermen 500 miles off the coast of Acapulco, Mexico.

"Thank you, good folks, for the rescue at sea," Sen. Lou Correa, chairman of the California Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, said on the Senate floor. "[This rescue] demonstrates the importance of our people in uniform and the National Guard."

The mission launched on the evening of March 9 when the 129th received a call from the U.S. Coast Guard concerning two injured fishermen aboard a fishing vessel that was then more than 800 miles west of Mexico. The men had been badly burned in a diesel fire and required medical treatment beyond the capabilities of the ship's medical staff.

"The U.S. Coast Guard does not have the capability to conduct rescue operations so far out at sea," Correa said. "They called the only organization in the world that could perform such a mission ... the California National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing."

Two MC-130P Combat Shadow cargo refueling planes, two HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopters, flight crews, aircraft maintainers and a team of pararescuemen set off

for Mexico to complete the mission. After flying more than 1,750 miles, the pararescue team parachuted from a Combat Shadow into the open ocean with supplies necessary to stabilize the patients.

The team spent about 24 hours on the vessel before being hoisted onto the Pave Hawks and flown nearly two hours to Acapulco, while providing continuous medical care to the injured. Once transitioned onto a Combat Shadow, the team flew another six hours with the patients to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego. The pararescuemen then transferred the patients into a civilian ambulance and traveled to the University of California, San Diego Medical Center for further treatment.

During the Senate session April 12, Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the adjutant general of the California National Guard, introduced each of the pararescuemen involved in the rescue — Capt. Kyle Wells, Senior Master Sgt. Eric Burke, Master Sgt. Seth Zweben, Tech. Sgt. Mark Finney and Senior Airman Jeremiah Loser — and described their personal involvement in the operation.

He then introduced two unusual assets for the mission: Staff Sgt. Hong Zhou, a supply craftsman for the 129th, and Senior Airman Yoahui Chen, a military pay technician. These two Airmen drew from their cultural heritage to provide interpreter assistance throughout the rescue mission.

"Over the course of this Wing's history, they've rescued nearly 1,000 people," the general said. "The 129th Rescue Wing is one of the most highly decorated units in the U.S. Air Force." More than 600 combat medals have been awarded to 129th Airmen for their efforts in the re-

cent conflicts overseas, including 50 Distinguished Flying Crosses with Valor Devices.

"Here in California, the 129th performs a variety of civilian search-and-rescue missions ... in support of law enforcement or fire departments every three days," the general said. "These are the people that made one of them happen."



Photos by Airman 1st Class John Pharr

TOP:Airmen with the 129th Rescue Wing carry an injured fisherman from an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter at General Juan N. Alvarez International Airport in Acapulco, Mexico, on March 12. **ABOVE:** A Pave Hawk from the 129th prepares to hoist an injured man from a Chinese fishing vessel 500 miles off the coast of Mexico on March 12. The man was transferred to one of the Wing's MC-130P Combat Shadow planes and flown to Acapulco and then San Diego for further medical treatment.

Out of the office, into the air

Two multilingual 129th Airmen join their first rescue, bringing valuable language skills to an international mission

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

Senior Airman Yoahui Chen serves the CNG's 129th Rescue Wing as a military pay technician, which means his job "is usually in a seat at a desk." But sometimes when duty calls, it takes an Airman to places they are not accustomed to.

"I received the call from my superintendent on Saturday morning, March 10, while taking my older daughter to her gymnastics class, and shortly after receiving the call I reported for duty," Chen recalled.

Soon Chen and Staff Sgt. Hong Zhou — a supply craftsman for the wing — found themselves aboard one of the wing's MC-130P Combat Shadow airplanes on their way to meet up with a fishing boat in the Pacific Ocean, 500 miles off the coast of Mexico.

Two men aboard Fu Yuan Yu #871 had been badly burned in a fire, and the U.S. Coast Guard had requested that 129th pararescue jumpers, or PJs, meet up with the boat to provide medical treatment and transport the patients to shore.

"I had never had the chance to join a rescue mission, and seeing the mission in front of me was a very special memory I will remember and will be telling my grandkids when I get old," Zhou said.

Both Zhou and Chen had passed the Defense Language Proficiency Test, so the Wing was able to find them in its computer system when searching for Airmen proficient in Mandarin and Cantonese. Zhou, who was born and lived in China for 18 years, speaks Mandarin and Cantonese. She joined the Air National Guard five years ago after serving in the active duty Air Force for 4 years. Chen lived in China until he was 14 years old, when his family moved to Mexico. He joined the Wing in November 2007.

"The rescue mission was exciting, fun and challenging at the same time," Chen said.

From the Combat Shadow, Chen communicated to the fishing boat captain that he needed to turn his boat against the wind and set it at a certain speed to enable an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter from the 129th to hoist the patients aboard.

"It was my first time operating a military radio, the captain was yelling, and depending on which part of China, the national language Mandarin is spoken with a different type of accent, so it was confusing at first," he said.

Zhou translated the rescue crew's requests, telling the captain to stop and informing him that PJs were going to jump into the ocean, board the boat with medical supplies and place the patients on a hoist to be lifted to the Pave Hawk. She continued to serve as an interpreter until the patients were transferred to a burn center in San Diego.

"I helped with translating what the PJs requested and explained to the patients where they were, what we planned on doing, where they were being transported to and relayed their physical needs," she said.

Both Zhou and Chen said they enjoyed the experience and hope to serve as interpreters again. "I did not ever imagine myself being a part of a rescue mission," Chen said, "but I feel good knowing I was able to help the PJs complete the mission, and I would volunteer if there is ever another opportunity like this."

Ready for war

The nation's largest pre-mobilization training assistance element, CNG Task Force Warrior, quickly prepares units to mobilize

By **STAFF SGT. DAVID KIMBRELL**, CNG Army Mobilization Section; and **SGT. AARON RICCA**, Task Force Warrior

Shortly after sunset, a squad of Soldiers from the California Army National Guard's 1072nd Transportation Company conducts pre-combat inspections on gear and vehicles under the view of dim red flashlights. Within a half-hour, the squad will roll out for a key leader engagement convoy operation.

Some of the Soldiers have difficulty climbing through the Humvees as M-240 and M-2 machine guns are fitted on top of the vehicles. Two Soldiers in the back of a vehicle banter back and forth while radio checks are conducted by the tactical commander up front.

Minutes go by as the squad members in the vehicles, staged and ready to roll, begin to get agitated and impatient. A buzz in the atmosphere intensifies as the radio chatter picks up. Instead of a call to move out, a different order comes over the airwaves.

"Endex, endex, endex," a voice calls over the radios, ending the exercise. The first iteration of what is to be a 24-hour training mission is brought to a halt. The time is 7:31 p.m. The convoy should have been ready to move out at 7:25 p.m. The mission has been axed because of the failure to start on time.

This convoy exercise is one of the numerous and varied training capabilities of Task Force Warrior, the California Army National Guard's pre-mobilization train-



Photos by Sgt. Aaron Ricca

ABOVE: Sgt. David Picasso of the CNG's 1072nd Transportation Company provides suppressive fire during a Feb. 29 convoy exercise led by Task Force Warrior on Camp Roberts. **BELOW RIGHT:** Task Force Warrior instructor Staff Sgt. Steven Elliot coaches Warrant Officer I Jeffery Far, top, and Command Sgt. Maj. Earnestine Judge of the CNG's 3rd Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, during a combatives exercise April 17. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Staff Sgt. Dern Chantharangma of the CNG's 1072nd Transportation Company reads a map for a night convoy operation Feb. 28.

ing assistance element. The 1072nd troops have joined the ranks of nearly 25,000 Soldiers from 16 states and three U.S. territories who have benefitted from Task Force Warrior instruction as part of their pre-deployment combat training since the element's establishment in December 2007.

"We are configured as a training battalion designed to quickly and effectively train mobilizing units in 15 Army Warrior Tasks, four battle drills and vehicle licensing if necessary," said Lt. Col. Loren Weeks, Task Force Warrior commander.

The Task Force is composed of subject matter experts — all of whom have deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan — specializing in individual movement techniques, improvised explosive device detection, reaction to direct and indirect fire, hand-to-hand combat, vehicle training, combat lifesaver and first aid skills, and individual rifle and pistol marksmanship. The instructors and staff are capable of training and validating a unit for mobilization in fewer than 20 days.

Mobilizing units also attend briefings on subjects such as cultural awareness, rules of engagement, environmental awareness, equal opportunity employment and sexual harassment. A documentation cell is on site to verify the training. "If it's not documented, it's not validated," Weeks said.

Units are trained to standard, not to time,

and "crawl, walk, run" phase training is a part of all instruction. Soldiers practice a Warrior Task numerous times at various speeds until they are familiar with how to properly execute the Task or drill. "[The trainees] go slow until they understand the standard," said battle skills instructor Sgt. 1st Class Robert Richmond. "In an ambush, speed is more critical than perfection."

As units are notified for mobilization, they face a myriad of tasks to complete to prepare for their mission. Task Force Warrior

streamlines the Warrior Task portion of the requirements for Army National Guard units such as Wisconsin's 229th Engineer Company, which trained at Camp Roberts in April. Every state has a pre-mobilization training assistance element, but California's is the largest.

"Night and day," said 1st Lt. Tom Hickey of the 229th, when comparing Task Force Warrior with the training he received for his first deployment to Iraq, in 2003. "This is 10 times better."



TASK FORCE WARRIOR

PRE-MOBILIZATION TRAINING ASSISTANCE ELEMENT

- 45:** Expert instructors with combat deployment experience
- 20:** Days or fewer to train and validate a deploying unit
- 15 & 4:** Army Warrior Tasks & battle drills taught
- 25,000:** Service members trained since December 2007
- 19:** States and territories' Soldiers trained
- 4,400:** Mobilizing troops trained in 2011



'NO SOLDIER OR UNIT DEPLOYS UNTRAINED'

RIGHT: Cpl. John Cunningham of the CNG's Troop B, 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment, competes with his 9 mm pistol during the 2012 Region VII Best Warrior Competition hosted by the California Army National Guard on Camp San Luis Obispo. Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah sent the best enlisted Soldier and best noncommissioned officer from within their Army National Guard ranks to put their skills to the test April 23-26. **Photo by Master Sgt. Paul Wade**

For more on the competition and the winners, see the upcoming June issue.

TOP CENTER: Master Sgt. Tim Malmin, cadre for the Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, Army ROTC program, provides safety clearance for spectators April 14 as Sgt. Andrew Ochwatt, a crew chief for Company B, 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, prepares to depart the Cal Poly sports field following the university's ROTC Open House. **Photo by Cadet Andrew Brown**



ABOVE: Charles Kim, an interpreter for a delegation of South Korean visitors to Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos, discusses the UH-60 Black Hawk's capabilities with Col. Myles Williams, commander of the Los Alamitos Army Airfield, on April 19. A South Korean delegation visits California each year to meet with members of the CNG's 40th Infantry Division, whose relationship with South Korea dates to the early 1950s, when CNG members fought in the Korean War and established a still-thriving high school in Gapyeong, Gyeonggi province. **Photo by Staff Sgt. Jessica Inigo**

BOTTOM CENTER: Spc. Juan Barraza of the California National Guard's 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, right, and Master Sgt. Martin Aguilera of the CNG's 147th Combat Communications Squadron are honored April 22 before the San Diego Padres' "Military Opening Day" baseball game at Petco Park, while a CNG Color Guard presents the U.S. and California flags near the pitcher's mound. **Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey**

MIDDLE CENTER: Brig. Gen. (CA) Roland Candee, commander of the California State Military Reserve (CSMR), swears in nine graduates of the CSMR Officer and Warrant Officer School on April 14 at the Okinawa Readiness Center in Sacramento: Warrant Officer 1 Suzy Shimonishi, far right, Warrant Officer 1 Richard Monetti, 2nd Lt. Mike Macey, 2nd Lt. Michael Jones, 2nd Lt. Larsen Gaetos, Warrant Officer 1 Jerry Earley, 2nd Lt. Adamo Cultraro, Warrant Officer 1 Paul Bonar and 2nd Lt. Bruce Berger. **Photo by Staff Sgt. (CA) Jessica Cooper**



At a Glance



Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy Cadet Joseph Rosales, 17, of Ontario, Calif., slips into a fireman's jacket while Cadet Carlos Ramirez, 17, of San Diego, grabs some gear during an April 17 competition to see which cadet team could apply the personal protective equipment and self-contained breathing apparatus the fastest during Job Shadowing Day at the fire station on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos. The day offered cadets experiences related to careers in fire-fighting, security and aviation.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Jessica Inigo



Soldiers with the 270th Military Police Company stand ready April 15 at the California Highway Patrol Academy in West Sacramento during an emergency deployment readiness exercise. Following notification of a simulated riot at the Capitol in Sacramento, the 270th Soldiers hurried to the Okinawa Armory in Sacramento, loaded up with batons, knee and shin guards, ammunition, gas masks and other gear, and within a few hours, 104 Soldiers and 34 vehicles had arrived at the CHP staging area, ready for duty. The 270th is part of the CNG's Tier 1 Quick Reaction Force, which is tasked to provide emergency support to civil authorities within 12 hours.

Photo by 1st Lt. Jason Sweeney

40th CAB welcomes three new commanders

Yeager takes over 40th CAB HHC from Medigovich, Hall leads I-140th AVN, Balzano commands 640th ASB

By **1ST LT. JASON SWEENEY**
40th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

Three change-of-command ceremonies for the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB)

also served as a reunion of sorts March 17, nearly four months after the three units returned from Iraq.

The 40th CAB's Headquarters and Head-

quarters Company formed up at Hangar 1 on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos, on St. Patrick's Day to welcome its new commander, Col. Laura Yeager, in a ceremony that also included changes of command for two subordinate units, the 640th Aviation Support Battalion and 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment (Assault).

It was the first time the units had been together since late last year when they left Iraq, where each unit served a yearlong tour in support of Operation New Dawn. While deployed, the CAB commanded more than 3,000 troops and 275 aircraft, including helicopters, planes and unmanned aerial systems, which completed more than 19,000 aviation missions. Five battalions fell under the CAB's command, performing full-spectrum aviation operations across the entire Iraq Joint Operations Area in the final year of the war.

The CAB was commanded by Col. Mitch Medigovich, who is now chief of the California National Guard Joint Staff. A CH-47 Chinook helicopter pilot, Medigovich said last year's deployment to Iraq was the highlight of his five-year tenure as brigade commander.

"I'm going to miss the camaraderie," he said March 17. "It was an honor to com-

mand the 40th CAB. It's been a wonderful command filled with countless challenges and amazingly rewarding experiences."

Yeager said it is a dream come true for her to lead the CAB.

"I am very proud to be taking over command from my mentor, Colonel Medigovich, whose unwavering professionalism and leadership for more than five years has been key to the success of the brigade," she said. "This is also a brigade which was once commanded by my father, so it is especially significant to me."

She added that it was tremendously satisfying to see the CAB's Soldiers perform in Iraq.

"The entire brigade performed magnificently in combat and quickly earned the trust and respect of our higher headquarters, the 18th Airborne Corps," Yeager said. "We were there at a historic time. The final drawdown of forces from Iraq depended heavily upon the mobility, [medical evacuation] and force protection we provided."

Also on March 17, Lt. Col. Dave Hall assumed command of the 1-140th, succeeding Lt. Col. Jeff Holliday, and Lt. Col. Bruce Balzano took command of the 640th from Col. Lou Carmona.



Soldiers of the 640th Aviation Support Battalion, 40th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), salute during a ceremony March 17 at Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos, in which Lt. Col. Bruce Balzano took command of the 640th from Col. Lou Carmona. The event also included changes of command for the 40th CAB Headquarters and Headquarters Company and 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment (Assault).

California Cadets compete to be 'best of the best'

More than 60 teens from high schools across California show skills they've learned in CNG leadership program

By **STAFF SGT. JESSICA INIGO**
Los Angeles Regional Public Affairs

As California Cadet Corps students vied for top place in the Individual Major Awards on Joint Forces Training Base (JFTB), Los Alamitos, on April 5, all was quiet with the cadets absorbed in thought. The butterflies in their bellies seemingly had strings attached to their legs, since the only noise heard was the movement of cadets' knees bobbing up and down and toes tapping as they sat waiting their turn to go before the board.

"You were selected for a reason; you're the best of the best," Cadet Corps 7th Brigade cadre member Maj. Kevin Baxtor said to the waiting cadets, trying to quell their nerves.

Much like military promotion boards or competitive boards for the Soldier or Airman of the year competitions, high-school-aged students in the Cadet Corps donned their uniforms and strutted their stuff — including military knowledge and personal speeches — to judges in separate rooms at the JFTB theater.

More than 60 cadets from high schools across California participated in the annual event, including many who have competed multiple times in their young lives. Though the Cadet Corps is not a live-in program, cadets said just having it at their local high school has inspired a change for the better.

"This has given me a different perspective



Cadet Mariah Anne Lofgran from San Geronio High School in San Bernardino listens for the call to enter and present to the board April 5 during the California Cadet Corps' annual State Individual Major Awards Competition on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos. Cadet Victor Martinez of North Hollywood High School also awaits his turn before the board.

entirely," said Victor Martinez of North Hollywood High School, who was competing for the third time. "It made me actually want to give back to the community. I've had a great time with my fellow cadets."

Previously, Martinez didn't think much about his future, he said. Now he's keeping an eye on the long term. "I want to get

my Ph.D. in electrical or mechanical engineering. ... I was looking in to the military too — the Navy. They seem to have a good program in that field."

Though the Cadet Corps does not stress joining the armed forces, it does employ a military structure, offering stringent guidelines for children who, in many cas-

es, have never experienced that type of environment before.

"I was always interested in military-type things. Plus, I didn't like [physical education] and thought this would be a better elective to choose," said Mariah Anne Lofgran, a senior at San Geronio High School in San Bernardino.

Her decision to go into the Cadet program six years ago, when she was in middle school, may have set in motion a life-long ambition for the teen. "I'm planning on working toward becoming part of the cadre once I graduate," Lofgran said after appearing before the board and discussing issues in the Middle East for her personal speech. "They're not going to get rid of me for at least a couple more years."

The Cadet Corps is part of the California National Guard's Youth and Community Programs Task Force, which also includes the Grizzly and Sunburst Youth Challenge academies, the Oakland Military Institute and the STARBASE math and science program, which currently serves Sacramento-area students with future expansion slated for Los Alamitos and Monterey.

"All Youth Programs keep an eye toward at-risk students, but specifically at the California Cadet Corps, the goal 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," said Task Force Commander Brig. Gen. (CA) James L. Gabrielli.

CNG, Panther Racing team up to find vets jobs

By **STAFF SGT. JESSICA INIGO**
Los Angeles Regional Public Affairs

With the high-pitched whizzing sounds of IndyCars rounding the turns of the Long Beach racetrack in the background, a group of like-minded business executives and veterans advocates had their wheels spinning on how to solve a problem — unemployment.

Officials for Panther Racing, which is partnered with the National Guard, used the hours just before the start of the 38th Annual Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach on April 15 to host dignitaries in the Panther VIP tent and discuss hiring veterans. Maj. Gen. Scott Johnson, commander of the CNG's 40th Infantry Division, was one of several veterans advocates at the event along with Dave McIntyre of Tri-West Healthcare Alliance; Maraely Leary of Hiring Our Heroes, a program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and Medal of Honor recipient retired Army Maj. Drew Dix.

"There's a lot of reasons to hire a veteran, and one of those is that it's the right thing to do," Dix said, adding that he has often thought of the men he fought beside in Vietnam and wondered who hired them, or if they could get a job at all upon their return home.

To round out the message, Johnson introduced the crowd to the California National



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Guard's new employment initiative, Work for Warriors, which has already signed up many businesses to partner with the Guard in an effort to reduce unemployment and underemployment in the CNG by 25 percent during the next 12 months.

Johnson added that he had recently spoken with local police chiefs who said they are proud of the veterans they have on their forces and hope to hire more. He said the unemployment rate in the California National Guard is about 5 to 10 percent higher than in the general community.

"If you hire just one National Guard Soldier or spouse, you will greatly improve your business," Johnson said, noting that service members bring with them life experience, discipline, duty and honor — traits that are needed in a good workforce.

He added that when Guard members don't



CNG and Panther Racing crew members join in a prayer April 15 before the start of the Long Beach Grand Prix. Panther is partnering with the Guard to encourage businesses to hire unemployed and underemployed veterans and Guard members.

have jobs or enough money, it negatively affects their readiness and ability to support the state or nation when called upon.

"Unemployment and underemployment is an issue with being ready," he said. "This has been persistent. Part of their readiness is fixing that."

In a final plea to rev the engines of local employers in the Long Beach crowd, Dix added that many veterans, by virtue of their past experiences, can see the big picture better than other employees: "They know what an objective is and know there are intermediate goals and objectives to get to the top."

Sunburst cadets receive VIP treatment at Grand Prix

By **STAFF SGT. JESSICA INIGO**
Los Angeles Regional Public Affairs

With eyes full of wonder, 14 hand-selected Sunburst Youth ChalleNGe Academy cadets took in the sights and sounds of the IndyCar qualifying races at the 38th Annual Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach on April 14.

For some, it was their first time in the city

of Long Beach as well as their first venture out into the world as a changed man or woman. One of two National Guard Youth ChalleNGe academies in California, Sunburst provides a live-in, military-style educational program to foster academic excellence and instill values in teens who have dropped out of high school or are at risk of dropping out.

The cadets chosen for the Grand Prix event

were selected because of their roles in student government and their motivation to use the Sunburst program to succeed, according to Academy cadre.

The outing first took the cadets through the gates of the racetrack, where they were ushered into the VIP area.

"Have you ever been to something like this before?" Class 9 Student Body President Luis Miguel Mata, 16, asked other cadets as they walked through the festival-like grounds of the venue. "I haven't. I wonder what it's going to be like."

Panther Racing, which fielded a National Guard-sponsored car in the event, gave the group VIP treatment for their outing, providing lunch, refreshments and a break from the sunny day in a restricted tent area complete with live-feed flat-screen TV coverage of the qualifying races. Cadets were also provided bleacher seats to watch the races and allowed garage access to get close-ups of car #4 and its driver, J.R. Hildebrand.

Hildebrand took a moment to connect with the youths and explain the importance of setting goals and maintaining the right path to reach them, as this is something he has to do as a second-year IndyCar driver. Hildebrand achieved two top five finishes and five top 10 finishes in his rookie year, including second place at the Indianapolis 500.

"We're not out here promoting a product," Hildebrand said of the National Guard logo on his #4 car. "I'm really proud."

Former NBA basketball player Rick Dar-

nell and country/pop singer Laura Bryna also met up with the youth group at the Panther Racing tent to help inspire the cadets to maintain the course after leaving the Academy.

To help promote the Academy, some of the cadets spoke publicly in the IZOD tent, sharing where they found themselves in life and how they chose to attend Sunburst. Most of their stories included broken homes, drug use and truancy.

"When we arrived, we were an empty toolbox — useless," Mata said to the crowd. "As soon as [Sunburst] started throwing in tools, they started throwing in supplies, and with those supplies we started building a foundation. Right now I want to say I think we're standing on a pretty solid foundation."

With one event topping the next throughout the day for the cadets, the icing on the cake was that it was the first time they were able to have sweets since arriving at the academy. In fact, the brownies Panther Racing provided were so good, some cadets decided to take seconds, even though they were only authorized one and knew they would have to pay for it with push-ups later.

"We needed to have these brownies," said Cadet Alex Bennett, 16, who got busted with his second brownie in hand and paid for it later with what is called "corrective action, physical exercise," or CAPE, at Sunburst.

Luckily, the others who snuck seconds didn't get caught.



Sunburst Youth ChalleNGe Academy Cadet Markel Kidd enjoys an IndyCar simulator April 14 during a trip to the qualifying races at the Long Beach Grand Prix. Kidd and 13 other cadets were selected for a special outing hosted by Panther Racing because of the cadets' roles in student government and their motivation to use the Sunburst program to succeed.

Bilingual team aims to keep kids off drugs

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

A community off the beaten path partnered with the CNG to keep kids healthy during "Kick Butts Day," organized by the Calipatria Unified School District and the Imperial County Public Health Department on March 21.

Members of the Southern California Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) Team, part of the CNG's Joint Task Force Domestic Support-Counterdrug, drew from their cultural heritage to provide information to parents and children in a predominantly Spanish-speaking community during a bilingual substance abuse prevention program in Niland, Calif.

"Our goal is to work with the community coalitions to mentor the next generation," said Sgt. 1st Class Leo Castillo, a prevention specialist for the DDR Team. "Tobacco is the most addictive legal substance out there and seen as a stepping stone to other drugs. As we work together, we hope to start changing minds and teaching healthy lifestyles."

The Public Health Department asked DDR representatives to attend as a resource to educate students on the dangers of smoking, alcohol and other drugs. The DDR Team brought a Low Rugged Outdoor Physical Experience System, or ROPES course, to demonstrate lessons on teamwork. Part of the course required a group of students to rearrange themselves on a balance beam, working together to achieve a common goal.

"The fun activity sets the message into motion," said Staff Sgt. Alfredo Bello of the DDR Team. "I want to communicate to the students the importance of a community, and through the course of working with the other coalitions I am able to show the students firsthand the fun we can bring to their neighborhood. ... I feel a real sense of being a citizen-Soldier when giving to my community through the DDR program."

Maria Nava-Froelich, principal of Grace Smith Elementary School, which hosted the event, said it was helpful to have bilingual speakers reach out to family members in their native language.

"The Counterdrug Program conveys anti-drug messages through a dynamic mentoring program and provides a new approach to delivering information to the children," she said. "The program adds great benefits to our community."

DDR Team members provided bilingual brochures on substance abuse prevention and conducted interactive lessons in Spanish. They incorporated lessons on the negative consequences of using drugs, their effects on the body and the inherent dangers. The importance of choosing a positive lifestyle was stressed to empower the youths in attendance, Team members said.

"The DDR activities provided in the Imperial County area provide vital messages for the community through a team effort with various coalitions in their substance abuse prevention efforts," said Maria Castillo, a member of the local Tobacco Education Coalition. "The DDR Team provides a lot of support in helping to grow healthy kids."

The annual event included several drug abuse prevention organizations and hosted more than 300 elementary school students and their parents.

Staff Sgt. Juan Salinas of the DDR Team taught students about the risks and health problems associated with illicit drugs, while emphasizing the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

"When we are out in the community, I feel as though I can make positive changes and have a real impact on lives," he said. "I can share my military experiences, Counterdrug skills as well as my family heritage when involved with the DDR program. I like communicating with the students in Spanish and English to give them a sense of pride for their heritage."

Sgt. 1st Class April Lake taught students about the dangers of alcohol abuse by using vision-impairment goggles that simulate the effects of being intoxicated.

"In some areas [of the state], there are less activities, and this can allow for too much down time," Lake said. "I feel



A student at Grace Smith Elementary School in Niland, Calif., uses vision-impairment goggles loaned to her by Sgt. 1st Class April Lake to simulate the effects of alcohol March 21 at "Kick Butts Day," a substance abuse prevention program supported by the CNG's Joint Task Force Domestic Support-Counterdrug.

our program makes a difference, as our involvement in the communities enriches the students' lives. It is rewarding to mentor in our communities and empower the next generation."

Sgt. Castillo added, "Giving back to our communities is not just a job but a benefit to our families. We live in the communities we serve and take to heart building the community."

CNG teaches high schoolers budgeting, career skills

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

CNG recruiters facilitated career guidance and life skills courses for high school students at Samuel F.B. Morse High School in San Diego, Mar. 13-14.

The Career Direction 2 program presented by members of Team Baja, Company C, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, helps high school juniors and seniors plan for their future education, careers and life goals. "The program allows me to give back to my community," said Sgt. 1st Class Lane Stack. "Providing resources to help the youth of the future is the most rewarding part of my job."

During the two-day seminar, more than 300 seniors participated in the 50-minute Career Direction 2 workshop plus a 50-minute Budgeting Basics module facilitated by CNG Soldiers. Each student received their own Career Direction 2 workbook free of charge. In addition more than 150 juniors took part in Budgeting Basics.

The Army National Guard makes this program available to students throughout the United States each year.

"Our goal is to provide life skills such as



High school juniors and seniors get ready to race pedal carts under the direction of CNG recruiter Staff Sgt. Joaquin Cuenca on March 14 during a two-day career-guidance and life-skills training event at Samuel F.B. Morse High School in San Diego.

budgeting tools, interviewing techniques, resume writing and decision making," said Sgt. 1st Class Charles East, the event's noncommissioned officer in charge. "We

are able to share key career components through the curriculum — such as interests, priorities and abilities — as it relates to the student's career choices."

Through the program, students receive help identifying jobs they will enjoy based on their personality traits and are provided tools to investigate potential careers. The curriculum includes information on how to write an effective resume, cover letter and thank you letter utilizing resources from online resume tool www.careertrain.com.

Students also learn how to research jobs and how to contact local businesspeople to broaden their professional networks. Throughout the workshop, students are guided toward realistic and productive decision-making outcomes.

"The course has a strong 'stay in school' message, helping students become more career-conscious and goal-oriented," Staff Sgt. Joaquin Cuenca of Team Baja said.

During the two-day event, the recruiters also participated in a career fair in the gymnasium and brought National Guard pedal carts for the students to race and have some fun.

"Students walk[ed] away with some new insight regarding their interests, potential careers, the education required and how to market themselves to gain employment," said Troy Goodenough, education liaison for the California Army National Guard.

Mob. Section gets Soldiers on the move

Combination of G-1, G-3 Soldiers keeps deploying troops informed, focused on their mission

By **STAFF SGT. DAVID KIMBRELL**
CNG Army Mobilization Section

When Spc. Pedro Tejada learned in January 2011 that his unit had been scheduled for deployment, many concerns ran through his mind. First and foremost were questions about his family. "I didn't know what this meant for our health care, child care, bills, et cetera," Tejada said.

When he went to the Soldier readiness processing site at Camp Roberts, Calif., he came in contact with 1st Sgt. Michael Mahoney of the California Army National Guard Mobilization Section, who explained his health care benefits, including that he was entitled to Tricare health insurance for up to six months before his mobilization and six months after the mobilization.

Tejada also learned about his pay benefits during the mobilization, including hardship duty pay, imminent danger pay, tax-free benefits and the housing allowance for his area. A lawyer and paralegals from the Judge Advocate General's Office were also available to educate him about power of attorney and wills and answer his legal questions related to the mobilization. A friendly civilian was even on site to inform him about his unit's Family Readiness Group, the helpful website Military OneSource and other family care resources.

"What a relief," Tejada said. "There was really a lot of information in one place, and it really made things incredibly easier." Having all the information provided to him in black and white months ahead of the deployment enabled Tejada to plan things out with his wife, and it gave him much less to worry about during the deployment.

As a member of the 649 Engineer Company, Tejada's mission was to set up a forward operating base, or FOB, in Afghanistan, and conduct force-protection missions. The company also dismantled a FOB. The deployment came with a large range of emotions, including excitement, anxiety and tension. The job was made easier, though, by the information he'd received from the Mobilization Section.

"I now know that my overseas experience would have been extremely more difficult and stressful if it wasn't for the hard work the Mobilization Section does," he said. "The information they put out and the work they did in the background allowed me to concentrate on my job down range."

Now back from deployment, Tejada has found full-time employment in the Mobilization Section at California Military Department headquarters in Sacramento, which is a combination of workers from the Army Personnel Directorate, or G-1, and the Organization, Training and

California Army National Guard deployments since 9/11



Iraq: 10,027



U.S.: 5,006



Kosovo: 2,955



Afghanistan: 2,880



Kuwait: 2,207



Cuba: 468



Egypt: 451

Total
23,994

Mobilization Directorate, or G-3. The Mobilization Section manages California Army National Guard units and individual Soldiers deploying all over the world, including Afghanistan, Kosovo and Kuwait, as well as deployments within the United States.

Tejada is part of the G-3 and deals primarily with individuals who volunteer to deploy with a National Guard unit from another state or with an active-duty unit. He also assists in managing CNG units that are deploying or returning home. Among other tasks, Tejada cuts mobilization orders, which Soldiers provide to their employers so their jobs will be held for them while on deployment. Soldiers also provide the orders to financial institutions, cell phone providers and other vendors to request their interest rates be lowered or their bills deferred.

"Having a part in the mobilization process really feels good," Tejada said. "Knowing I am making a difference in Soldiers' lives, making their deployments go as smoothly as possible, really makes me happy."

On the G-1 side, Mobilization Section members guide units through the deployment process from beginning to end. Managing early eligibility for medical benefits and ensuring Soldiers receive Tricare coverage alone is a huge responsibility that the G-1 handles for the entire state. Struggling to get a medical bill paid is just one more headache a deploying Soldier and his or her family do not need to deal with, and the G-1 mobilization team can take that problem out of the family's hands, allowing them to concentrate on the more important business of family support and preparation.

The G-1 also creates and manages battle rosters for deploying units and provides guidance to Soldiers on what is expected at each stage of mobilization. The G-1 mobilization team's job is to make the process as efficient as possible for the unit and the individual Soldier. This takes a burden off the unit commander and their staff and enables them to concentrate on mission-readiness and Soldier care.

Spc. Pedro Tejada updates deployment numbers on a map in the Army Mobilization Section at California Military Department headquarters in Sacramento. The Section handles administrative tasks associated with deploying Army troops and counsels Soldiers on their rights and benefits.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Joseph Prouse

140th Chemical Company assumes Kuwait mission

CNG company takes over Camp Arifjan Zone 6 Camp Command Cell from Minnesota National Guard unit



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shelia Sledge

The command team of the 140th Chemical Company, California Army National Guard, unfurls its colors April 19 in Kuwait during a transfer-of-authority ceremony in which the company received responsibility for the Camp Arifjan Zone 6 Camp Command Cell from Brigade Special Troops Battalion (BSTB), 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Division, Minnesota Army National Guard. The 1-34th BSTB took command in August of last year with a mission to maintain and improve the living conditions for Soldiers who transitioned from Iraq through the Zone 6 living quarters.

By **STAFF SGT. SHELIA SLEDGE**
13th Public Affairs Detachment

The California Army National Guard's 140th Chemical Company assumed responsibility for the Camp Arifjan Zone 6 Camp Command Cell on April 19 in Kuwait, succeeding Brigade Special Troops Battalion (BSTB), 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Division, a unit of the Minnesota Army National Guard.

The 1-34th BSTB took command in August of last year with a mission of maintaining and improving the living conditions for Soldiers who transitioned from Iraq through the Zone 6 living quarters. During their tour, the Soldiers of the 1-34th BSTB performed more than 1,200 minor repairs and provided billeting for more than 11,000 Soldiers.

"We were responsible for keeping Zone 6 operational and safe," said Lt. Col. Gary Mundfrom, commander of the 1-34th BSTB. "We processed thousands of work orders."

He added that his unit ran a good race and all Soldiers must continue to do the things that made them successful during the deployment.

Mundfrom then turned the floor over to the incoming commander, Maj. Orlando A. Cobos of the 140th Chemical Company, who said the 1-34th BSTB left enormous shoes to fill.

"You have done amazing things here to support the troops," he told the Soldiers of the 1-34th BSTB. "As we look around Zone 6, we see it well-maintained and well-managed, which is a direct result of the hard work, dedication and professionalism of the 1-34th BSTB."

The 1-34th BSTB then cased its colors and the 140th Chemical Company Soldiers unfurled theirs, symbolizing the official transfer of authority.

"Today we assumed the mission," Cobos said. "Let's fill the shoes."

Los Alamitos Airfield vital to Patriot Hook

By **STAFF SGT. JESSICA INIGO**
Los Angeles Regional Public Affairs

The Army Airfield on Joint Forces Training Base (JFTB), Los Alamitos, once again proved itself essential as a disaster-support platform for Southern California during a joint disaster-preparedness exercise March 15-18 between the Air Force Reserve and the Coast Guard.

The emergency-response training mission, Patriot Hook, brought various military aircraft and cargo onto the JFTB Airfield, proving that not only is location important, but access is vital as well.

"In the event of a natural disaster, they would be using us. We have the runways, we have the support, we have the space and we have the know-how," said CNG Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jacinto Gonzalez Jr., duty officer for the Airfield. "Los Alamitos Army Airfield has and will play an integral role during any kind of natural disaster, as we are the largest military airfield in Southern California."

Patriot Hook is an annual Air Force Reserve Tanker Airlift Control Element exercise simulating a joint response to a natural disaster. The Reserve uses the exercise as



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jessica Inigo

An Air Force Reserve crew chief guides a driver unloading a Coast Guard response boat from an Air Force Reserve C-5 Galaxy, the largest airlifter in the Air Force, on March 18, the final day of the Patriot Hook exercise on the CNG's Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos.

an opportunity to load non-standard cargo, which this year included boats and supplies from the Coast Guard's Deployable Opera-

tions Group out of Arlington, Va.

Though Patriot Hook wasn't an exercise for

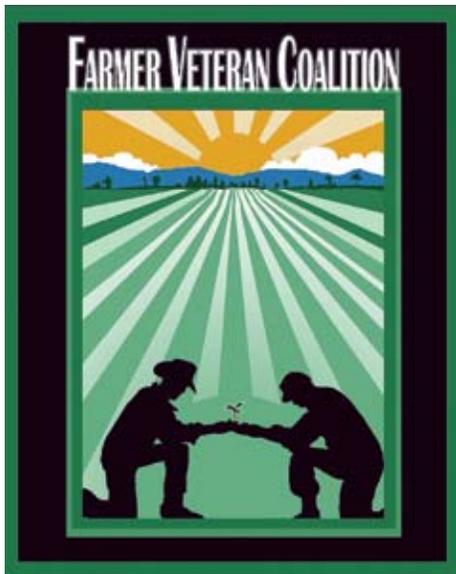
California National Guard personnel specifically, it did serve as a real-world mission in support of multiple agencies and prepared everyone involved for worst-case scenarios. The Army Airfield was responsible for refueling and air traffic control for the various types of aircraft in the exercise and provided security and access to the Airfield Weather Office.

Large cargo aircraft including the C-5 Galaxy, C-17 Globemaster, C-130 Hercules and KC-135 Stratotanker flew in support of the mission. Normal air operations also continued on the Army Airfield outside of the exercise, including UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flights. "The control tower was an integral part in making sure the aircraft coming in were managed in a safe manner," Gonzalez said.

The JFTB Fire Department was also on hand with an Oshkosh TI-3000 crash truck, in case of an emergency during the exercise.

"We were advised of the heightened amount of traffic on the Airfield, so as a supervisor, I kept in the back of my mind the risk and potential to the area because of that," said Steve Jensen, C-shift fire captain. "We would be more on a state of readiness during an exercise like this."

Nonprofit coalition benefits veterans, farming industry



The Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) helps military personnel and veterans start careers in food and farming, providing viable employment and helping revive the declining U.S. agriculture industry.

Michael O'Gorman founded FVC, a nonprofit based in Davis, Calif., in 2009. He became involved with the military when his son signed up for the Coast Guard after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. "Farming creates a unique opportunity for veterans to find peace and quiet, feed their communities as well as their families and provide agricultural security for this country," he said

The Coalition provides active duty, Guard and Reserve troops and veterans with informational resources on beginning farming operations, educational retreats, conferences and small grants. FVC also links military personnel with employers in the industry who are seeking to hire veterans. The Coalition is in contact with more than 500 veterans in 47 states, and that number is steadily increasing.

FVC supports veterans through many

channels, including its Fellowship Fund, an in-house grants program that assists veterans who are beginning agricultural careers. One recent grantee is Justen Garrity, an Army veteran and National Guardsman in Maryland who received the Newman's Own Innovators in Agriculture Grant.

Garrity is using the grant to expand his business, Veteran Compost, which is the only permitted facility in Maryland for composting food waste and is the state's only producer of vermicompost and compost worms. As his business grows, Garrity hopes to establish additional facilities across the East Coast and hire veterans to run them.

Justen is only one example among many farming veterans in the FVC who are not only progressing in their careers but supporting other veterans along the way. FVC hopes Justen's story will help additional members of the Guard recognize the resources available to them. FVC looks forward to hearing from veterans each day and helping ease their transition into civilian life and the agricultural industry.

40th BSB unit supports IBCT's mental fitness

By **SGT. 1ST CLASS ALAN LAMBERT**
40th Brigade Support Battalion

The 40th Brigade Support Battalion's (BSB) primary role is to fix, fuel, arm, man and sustain the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, the largest maneuver formation in the California Army National Guard. An intrinsic asset to support that mission is the Behavioral Health Section of Company C (Medical), 40th BSB.

The Behavioral Health Section comprises credentialed behavioral science officers and mental health specialists who tend to the mental fitness and readiness of the formation, specifically relating to the psychological effects of warfare and the biological, psychological and social needs of California National Guard Soldiers.

In addition to providing behavioral health services, members of the Behavioral Health Section train alongside the BSB's other Soldiers. "This consequently builds the necessary rapport and cohesiveness to strengthen the Soldier," said 1st Lt. Dustin Harris, officer in charge of the Behavioral Health Section

Military leaders have recognized the impact of the demands and responsibilities that accompany being a Soldier in the National Guard and have thus increased the presence of frontline mental health providers in recent years.

"I see our behavioral health assets as an important part of the formation," said Lt. Col. Julian Bond, 40th BSB commander. "The services they provide include evaluating Soldiers' behavioral health and fitness for duty, analyzing behavioral health trends and identifying potential risk factors that could impact unit readiness. They are truly combat multipliers."



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alan Lambert

Behavioral science officers 2nd Lt. Jason Black, far left, 2nd Lt. Cassandra Rush, 1st Lt. Dustin Harris and 2nd Lt. Chrystal Crawford of Company C, 40th Brigade Support Battalion, care for the biological, psychological and social needs of Soldiers in the California Army National Guard's largest maneuver formation, the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

115th RSG prepares for Afghanistan mission

By **SPC. SCOTT JOHNSON**
Camp Roberts Heavy Maneuver Training Center

"You train as you fight." That was a constant theme among instructors March 22-25 during the "re-greening" of the 115th Regional Support Group (RSG) on Camp Roberts, Calif. Nearly 800 Soldiers of the 115th RSG kept that refrain in mind as they practiced tactics, techniques and procedures in preparation for their 2013 deployment to Afghanistan.

The San Jose-based 1113th Transportation Company, a component of the 115th RSG, conducted combat logistic patrols, while the Vallejo-based 349th Quartermaster Company maintained an entry control point. In addition, hundreds of RSG Soldiers completed individual weapons qualification.

"Re-greening is a term that means getting back to the basics," said Lt. Col. K. Max Velte, executive officer for the 115th RSG. "We need to improve our shooting, communication on the radio, driving, everything."

In Afghanistan, in addition to combat-support Soldiers' primary jobs, they also have to perform tasks such as working an entry control point. The March training on Camp Roberts provided some Soldiers their first opportunity to encounter this challenge.

"It is an initial introduction to an entry control point," said Capt. Sonya Moore, 349th Quartermaster Company commander. "This effort is the crawl and walk phase. They won't get to the run phase until [later in the year]." More than 100 Soldiers from the 349th received this training.

The 1113th Transportation Company practiced truck maneuvers, including backing and turning semi-trailers to provide civil support in cases of emergency in California.

A large component of the weekend's training included identifying improvised explosive devices and properly calling them in to notify the command section.

"This is a great reintroduction," said Pfc. Jeff T. Motichka of the 1113th. "This will help us put what we have to do in the back of our minds. Then when we experience it in Afghanistan, we can regurgitate it and do what we have to do."

Sgt. 1st Class Richard Palmer, the first sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 115th RSG, said the training was intended to provide the Soldiers with real-life situations since Velte has made a push to get the units out of their armories and into broad-ranging training areas like Camp Roberts.

"Here the companies can do actual patrols and get out and

do Army training," Palmer said. "We are teaching them how to fight, how to react to enemy contact and evacuate a vehicle."

Due to congestion in highly populated urban areas, transportation companies typically face challenges in finding areas to perform complex driving efforts. The 2632nd Transportation Company from San Bruno was able to create a wide array of simulations on Camp Roberts, with the Merced-based 1040th Quartermaster Company playing the role of an oppositional force on a secluded stretch of Camp Roberts road.

Under the direction of 115th RSG trainers, the enemy role-players fired a simulated .50-caliber machine gun, rocket-propelled-grenade launcher and sniper rifles along with other assorted small arms. The cadre added flash bangs and smoke grenades to heighten the realism.

"This has been one of the best atmospheres I have ever been a part of," said Col. Keith Tresh, commander of the 115th RSG.

The oppositional force also simulated a hostage situation, which challenged the 2632nd. It was the first time combat-logistic-patrol training of this nature had taken place at Camp Roberts, Palmer said.

Another focal point of the training was to qualify with various weapons. A point of emphasis was to enable graduates of the Small Arms Master Gunner training class to instruct other Soldiers.



ABOVE RIGHT: Members of the 159th Quartermaster Team simulate an attack on the 2632nd Transportation Company during a convoy exercise March 23 on Camp Roberts, Calif. Both units are components of the 115th Regional Support Group. **ABOVE LEFT:** Pvt. David W. Streetman, a rear gunner for the 2632nd, simulates a combat logistics patrol March 23.

A pool of more than 20 enlisted troops who had completed the nine-day course at Camp Roberts in early February were the primary coaches, and a significant increase in performance was the result.

"What we did this weekend at the ranges was huge," Velte said. "The coaches are there for problem shooters. In the past, they would become frustrated and struggle. With this approach, we found that 90 percent qualified. ... We are having a much higher rate of expert shooters."

With the Small Arms Master Gunner instruction, Velte anticipates the 115th will be the top marksmanship brigade in the state by July.

The March sessions encompassed the "crawl" and "walk" phases of their training. In May, the units will return to Camp Roberts for the "run."



Photos by SPC. Scott Johnson

Photo by Capt. Cody Gallo



Col. Keith Tresh receives the 115th Regional Support Group guidon from Brig. Gen. Donald J. Currier, commander of the California Army National Guard, signifying Tresh's assumption of command of the RSG on April 14.

Col. Keith Tresh assumes command of 115th Regional Support Group

Tresh succeeds Col. Rene Horton, who commanded for 18 months and said the 115th RSG 'has the best Soldiers in the world'

By **CAPT. CODY GALLO**
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

The 115th Regional Support Group conducted a change of command ceremony April 14 at the Readiness Center in Roseville, Calif., as Col. Keith Tresh succeeded Col. Rene Horton.

"This unit has a very proud heritage, and we will continue that heritage and do great things together," Tresh said. "This means the world to me because this was my very first unit in the Guard as an enlisted Soldier, and it's like a dream come true for me to command."

Horton had served as the RSG commander for approximately 18 months.

"There is nothing better than being in command, and the 115th has the best Soldiers in the world," she said. "It has been my honor and privilege to serve with them."

The RSG's mission is to manage facilities, administration, logistical support, Soldier services and security on a base camp or forward operating base.

"As the wars wind down, it's going to be important that we turn our attention to being able to respond to fires and floods and earthquakes," Horton said. "We were validated and stamped approved on our [emergency deployment readiness exercise in January]. That was certainly a highlight of my command, because it demonstrated to [the adjutant general] that we are ready to fulfill his top priority — the civil support mission."

Nonstop service

San Diego firefighter and CNG cavalry scout Rob Fox is ready for all kinds of danger

By **CHRISTIAN ANDERSON**
GX Magazine

Spc. Rob Fox knows what it's like to be busy. A Soldier in the California Army National Guard's 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and a firefighter with the San Diego Fire Department, Fox is "always on the clock." But he loves both jobs and wouldn't want it any other way.

"It's tough dividing my time between the Fire Department, the Guard and my family," says Fox, who is a husband and father. "It's a feeling of constantly being needed somewhere, but it's gratifying to know that I will be ready for any situation that pops up."

Growing up in New Jersey, Fox always knew he wasn't destined to work an office job and sit behind a desk. Inspired by his father's service as a volunteer firefighter, he looked into becoming a firefighter not long after his move to San Diego in the late 1990s. After being accepted to the fire academy, he tackled the training aggressively and graduated near the top of his class.

Fox's first day on the job was a bit overwhelming, but he enjoyed the camaraderie of the firehouse and felt a sense of accomplishment every time he helped people out of a dangerous situation. Looking back on his career, in which he has fought thousands of fires, Fox says his decision to become a firefighter is reaffirmed especially when he helps kids.



Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

"Any time there's a situation that involves children, it really reminds me that I made the right choice," Fox says. "Having a young daughter at home doesn't make me second-guess anything. I still feel the same way about helping others, I still take the same risks, and it won't keep me from doing my job."

Fox, however, felt he could offer even more to society than he was providing as a firefighter, so he decided to enlist in the California Army National Guard as a cavalry scout. "One of my proudest days as a Soldier is when I raised my hand and took the oath, swearing to defend my country," he says.

Much like his experience at the fire academy, Fox breezed

through basic combat training and welcomed the challenge of being a Soldier. When he reported back for duty at Fire Station 11 after his Army basic training and advanced individual training, his fellow firefighters were proud of him for joining the military. "Quite a few guys I work with are either prior service or are currently in the Guard and Reserve, [so] they understood the challenge I had accepted in becoming a Soldier," he says.

Contemplating the training it took to be able to work in two different service careers, Fox says he feels like a better person. "Some of the character traits that I've learned are how to work in a team, and personal responsibility and pride in what you are doing," he shares. "Looking back on it all, I don't regret a thing."

VFW opens 'home' to vet families, organizations

By **2ND LT. JAN BENDER**
California Military Department Public Affairs

The cry of bagpipes resonated, a sea of American flags waved and exuberant greetings from hundreds of friends and relatives filled the air at Stockton Army Aviation Support Facility in December 2011. The scene was alive with energy and emotion as Sgt. 1st Class Rich Ballard and others climbed off an airplane to a frenzied crowd following their deployment to Iraq.

"Between the emotions of reuniting with friends and family and the outpouring of support from the community, it was hard to take it all in," said Ballard, who served as a platoon sergeant and quality assurance non-commissioned officer for the 640th Aviation Support Battalion (ASB) while deployed.

This was his second deployment to Iraq, and he was humbled by the hero's welcome he received from his wife and family. Yet he felt the members of his support network at home weren't given the credit they deserved for the hardships they endured during the years he was away.

Ballard's desire to honor military families and organizations that support them culminated April 7 at Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 6158 in Fair Oaks, Calif., when nearly 500 people attended an event he organized called "Welcome Home Troops."

"Our main goal was to create an opportu-



Photo by 2nd Lt. Jan Bender

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6158 in Fair Oaks, Calif., hosts veterans' families and veteran-support organizations for a "Welcome Home Troops" event April 7 that was initiated and organized by Cal Guardsman Sgt. 1st Class Rich Ballard of the 640th Aviation Support Battalion.

nity to invite veterans' families and other groups like the Patriot Guard Riders out to show our appreciation for their support," said Ballard, a member of the VFW. "I brought up the idea, and from there, support from the community started flowing in. We had more than a dozen local businesses donate to make it happen."

The Patriot Guard Riders assemble en masse to show their support at events like

the return of fallen service members, deployment ceremonies and homecomings around the country. They arrived in full force April 7, parading up to the event with nearly 100 rumbling motorcycles.

"Today we're focusing on the service and sacrifice of our family members, the ones who sacrifice the most when we're called up," the CNG's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, said at the VFW event.

"I want make sure that everyone takes time today to turn and thank the family members that made your service possible."

The day included a live band, catered food, a raffle, information booths from veterans groups and a crafts table and bounce house for the kids. "There was something here today for the whole family," said Spc. Christopher Van Wart, a mechanic for the 640th ASB, who brought his wife and four children to the event.

For Guard spouses who don't live in a military community and don't have the full-time support network that many active duty military families enjoy, organizations like the VFW can play a critical role. "Having a group of people you can relate to is helpful," said Van Wart's wife, Heather. "Just being with other families who've been through it and know what it's like, that can make all the difference."

The April 7 event served to welcome some new veterans and their families to the VFW. "This was a way for us to open our doors and say, 'This is your home,' to these young troops and their families," said Alex Briones, Post 6158 commander.

Spc. Van Wart added that he could feel the bond of service at the VFW: "Everybody here has been through something similar. It might have been a different time or a different place, but in the end it's a similar experience. It really seems like a brotherhood."



Pvt. Nicolas Sanchez, left, and Spc. Roberto Gonzalez of 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment, adjust the position of a 120 mm mortar tube while practicing sight drills April 14 at the Kearny Mesa Readiness Center in San Diego. Photo by Sgt. Aaron Ricca

Defer loan payments when on orders

Everyone leaving for overseas deployment has heard about their right to defer payments on their mortgage, car loan or credit card for up to six months. Unfortunately many Soldiers don't fully understand their rights.

Soldiers who deploy in support of Operation Enduring Freedom can defer their payments for home loans, credit cards, revolving installment accounts and up to two car loans for up to six months. Those benefits are also extended to spouses. The Soldier simply needs to send a letter of request and a copy of their orders to the lender. However, mistakes commonly lead to problems that can be difficult to correct.

The most common mistake is to stop making payments once the letter goes out. You must wait for the lender to acknowledge the request in writing. There is often a time lag before the lender recognizes the deferment, and if you stop making payments immediately after sending the letter, it may show as delinquent on your credit report.

Another mistake is to stop payments to an impound account during the deferred period. The law requires you to make these payments — typically for taxes and/or insurance — during the deferment period.

Furthermore, you may not request deferment of a loan that you took out while on orders. To defer a debt, it must have been incurred before you received orders for military service.

Any of those three mistakes could lead to a delinquent account and negative credit report.

Another type of loan deferment can be used for any type of military service, including domestic orders. Obtaining this type of deferment, however, is a bit trickier. You cannot simply write a letter, but must obtain a court order instead. However, if you obtain this deferment, it is not limited in duration and can be maintained throughout the entire period of your military orders.

This deferment requires you to show that the orders to military service have affected you materially — for instance if your military income is less than your civilian income; your spouse needs to quit work or reduce working hours to take care of your children; you need to hire someone to care for an elderly or disabled family member whom you typically care for; or you need to hire someone to take care of your small business while away. These are just a few examples, and material impact is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Official court forms for deferments are available at www.courts.ca.gov/forms.htm?filter=MIL to help you apply for a deferment without a lawyer. No filing fee is required. Officers and paralegals in the CNG Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Office cannot file the forms for you, but they can counsel and prepare you to request a deferment.

Laws are in place to punish lenders who attempt to deny service members these rights. If you have doubts at any point in the process, seek the advice of JAG counsel at 916-854-3505. It is much easier to do it right at the beginning than to unravel a mess created by doing it wrong.

3-day teen adventure camp in June

Teens from military and non-military families are invited to attend the Adventures in Leadership camp June 26-28 on Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif. In a fun and energized setting, attendees will develop leadership skills needed to work together to better their communities. The camp costs \$50, and teens should bring a sleeping bag, pillow, towel, toiletries, flashlight, sturdy shoes, clothes for warm days and cool nights, a padlock and plenty of enthusiasm. To fill out an application and preview other child and youth events, go to www.calguard.ca.gov/ReadyFamilies, and click the CNG Child and Youth Program link.

DID YOU KNOW...

preparation and follow-up are critical to clearing a medically non-deployable status?

Service members notified of a non-deployable status due to a medical condition can set the conditions for timely resolution through preparation and follow-up. The most effective preparation is to gain a clear understanding of all medical information required from the State Surgeon's Office or Medical Support Group. Service members must also follow up on submitted documents to ensure all initial requirements are satisfied and determine any additional requirements.

Upon notification of non-deployable status, service members should identify all questions and concerns about their medical status and the resolution process. Before visiting a civilian medical provider, the service member should contact their brigade medical liaison or unit health technician to address any questions or concerns. For specific medical questions, contact the State Surgeon's Office case manager or unit medical provider. Members should also provide their civilian medical provider with contact information for their brigade medical liaison, case manager and unit health technician so the provider can address any questions about documentation requirements.

Service members should follow up with their brigade medical liaison or unit health technician on a monthly basis to determine the status of their case, and should inform their chain of command about their case status on a monthly basis.

For more information, see Air Force Instruction 48-123 or the California Army National Guard Personnel Directorate, or G-1, medically non-deployable policy.



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The Grizzly Newsmagazine

Published by the Directorate of Communications, California National Guard
Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army.

the Department of the Air Force or the California Military Department.

The Grizzly is an official publication authorized by Army Regulation 360-1 and Air Force Instruction 35-101.

Submissions: GrizzlyMag.ngca@ng.army.mil

Feedback: brandon.honig@us.army.mil

Address/subscription: CNG members must make changes through their unit.
Retired members, email GrizzlyMag.ngca@ng.army.mil.



Sgt. Julian Ross of the Cal Guard's Company F, 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment (Medevac), watches 660 gallons of water drop from a "Bambi bucket" he controlled aboard a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter April 15 during joint wildfire training with members of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection near Lone, Calif. **Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey**

THE GRIZZLY NEWSMAGAZINE 2012

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