

# GRIZZLY

Official Newsmagazine of the California National Guard

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# Leadership Corner

## Operational force, exceptional value

**Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin**



Today's National Guard is the strongest it has ever been. We have transformed from a strategic reserve to an operational force, and after a decade of conflict, the majority of our troops are combat veterans. Our Soldiers and Airmen are skilled, confident and capable of meeting the demands of combatant commanders overseas and governors at home — at a fraction of the overall cost of our active duty counterparts.

Our Guard force leverages its unique hybrid design to keep a low economic profile while maintaining readiness and training for specialized mission sets. Until activated, our members incur minimal cost to the Department of Defense. The Guard's citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen work full-time as mechanics, nurses, police officers, technology experts and many other occupations in the civilian sector. Their military service is part-time and therefore requires fewer paid days per year, lower medical and retirement expenditures, and reduced training, housing and base-related costs as compared with full-time service members.

In 2010, for example, the Army National Guard accounted for 32 percent of all U.S. Army personnel and maintained nearly 40 percent of the operating force. The National Guard, however, accounted for less than 11 percent of that year's Army budget.

In the Air National Guard, the numbers were similar. The National Guard incurred less than 7 percent of the Air Force budget in 2010, while providing 19 percent of the personnel and maintaining 30 to 40 percent of the Air Force's airlift, fighter and tanker capacity.

The men and women of the National Guard have repeatedly proven themselves in combat as well as humanitarian and domestic response missions, consistently performing at the professional level our nation expects. Adding another level of value, the National Guard brings a broad array of civilian expertise to "smart power" missions that improve infrastructure, living conditions, security and economic viability in spots around the globe.

Smart power missions enable the United States to act as a global leader by developing relationships with other countries through diplomacy and engagement, as well as military might. The National Guard has been conducting these types of missions in Eastern Europe, South America and Central America for more than two decades, and today the Guard is

heavily involved in smart power operations in Afghanistan. The Guard's State Partnership Program, agribusiness development teams and training and reconstruction teams are examples of Guard troops using non-combat skills to support combatant commanders' campaign plans, expand American influence and establish the legitimacy of American action.

Guard members who hone their skills for these missions by performing similar tasks each day in a civilian capacity have proven exceptionally effective. National Guard troops' unique civilian-military temperament also helps them communicate and interact with local nationals uncommonly well.

The National Guard provides a wide range of capabilities to support overseas operations and domestic response. In addition, the Guard's dual-missioned structure has created a highly flexible force that is able to adapt quickly to changing threat environments, further enhancing its value.

However, it is our ability to perform both foreign and domestic missions effectively at a reduced cost to taxpayers that sets us apart, making the National Guard a vital and unique benefit to the Department of Defense and each state around the country.

Lawmakers across the United States, like many citizens in their homes, are struggling with budgets and striving to maximize the return on their investments. I am proud that our force not only performs admirably in foreign and domestic missions, but also provides a solution to some of the financial challenges facing our country. We are truly a 21st century force, built to perform an impressive variety of tasks in a trying economic environment.

The Department of Defense has been ordered to cut \$450 billion from its budget projection for the next 10 years. As the nation discusses how best to maintain national security under these difficult financial circumstances, you can add to the discussion with your knowledge of the skill, integrity and efficiency of the National Guard. As citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen, we are called upon not only to protect our neighbors but inform them. Our country should know that the National Guard is always ready, always there, and always a great value for America.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suh



Soldiers of the 578th Engineer Battalion salute during a departure ceremony Sept. 17 in Riverside, Calif. About 175 Soldiers from the battalion deployed two days later for a yearlong mission in Afghanistan, where they will conduct route clearance and build roads and buildings — just one example of CNG troops bringing civilian skills to the fight. [For more on the 578th, see Page 5.](#)

# Grizzly

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## November

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**Publisher**  
Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin  
The Adjutant General

**Director of Communications**  
Maj. Thomas Keegan

**Editor**  
Brandon Honig

**Editorial Staff**  
1st Lt. Will Martin  
2nd Lt. Jan Bender  
Staff Sgt. (CA) Jessica Cooper  
Senior Airman Jessica Green

## Submissions

### 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)

E-mail submissions by the 15th  
of the month to:  
GrizzlyMag.ngca@ng.army.mil

Feedback:  
brandon.honig@us.army.mil

## Cover Shot



Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr

Army Staff Sgt. Sergio Pereyra, an engineer with the California National Guard's Joint Task Force Domestic Support-Counterdrug, lays concrete in support of ongoing construction projects for U.S. Customs and Border Patrol. The task force and Border Patrol have worked together on construction and environmental projects since 1991.



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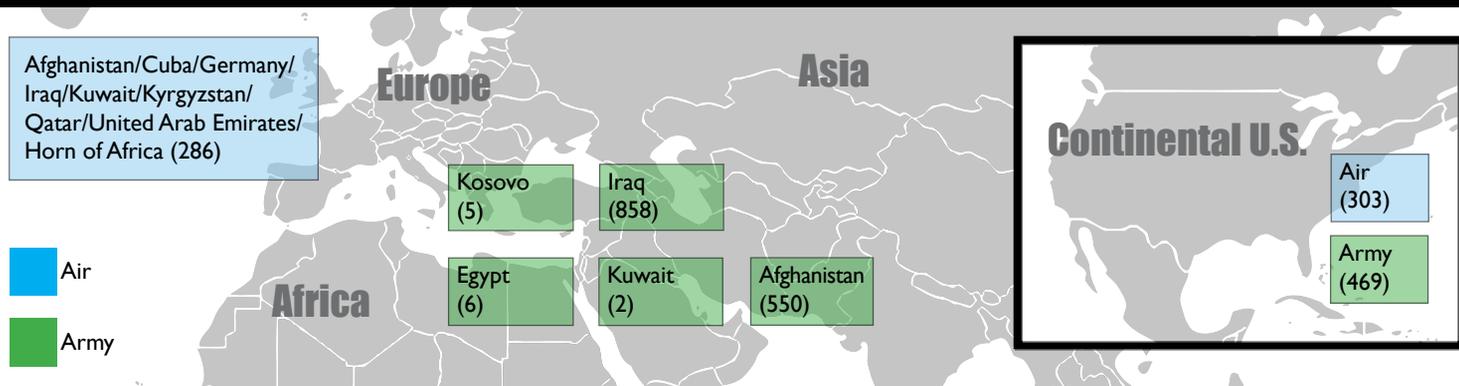
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## California National Guard mobilizations as of October 2011



# 640th ASB wrapping up Iraq tour

Aviation support battalion spent a year overseas supporting the largest CAB ever assembled

By **SPC. MATTHEW A. WRIGHT**  
640th Aviation Support Battalion

The 640th Aviation Support Battalion, a CNG unit deployed to Camp Taji, Iraq, in support of Operation New Dawn, is preparing to split its operations between Iraq and Kuwait before finally heading home. The 640th ASB, the only ASB remaining in Iraq, has provided aviation support to all Army aviation units assigned to the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) for the last nine months.

"We are responsible for all logistics, communications and scheduled aircraft maintenance for the brigade," said Lt. Col. Lou Carmona, 640th ASB commander.

The battalion is based in several cities in Southern California, including Torrance, El Cajon, Fresno, Stockton and Los Alamitos. The battalion falls under the 40th CAB and is headquartered in Long Beach. The 40th CAB arrived in Iraq in February and is now preparing to head home after successfully completing its mission in Iraq.

The 640th ASB played an essential role during the deployment. The battalion's main base of operations has been Camp Taji, with detachments in Balad and Kirkuk and at Baghdad International Airport. Several hundred Soldiers were assigned to four companies in the battalion, performing four different support jobs.

The 640th ASB Headquarters and Support Company consists of wheeled-vehicle mechanics, medics, cooks and the battalion's command staff. It contains the largest group of medics and cooks in the brigade, and its wheeled-vehicle and generator mechanics are responsible for working on the vehicles and generators operated by other companies in the brigade.

Company A operated forward arming and refueling points at Camp Taji and Baghdad International Airport and provided security for the brigade. At Camp Taji, Company A fueled all aircraft that flew missions throughout central Iraq. Its fuelers also provided fuel for Iraqi Army aircraft.

Early on in the deployment, the 640th Personnel Security Detail (PSD) provided security for supply and personnel convoys in the Baghdad area, and later, security for Camp Taji airfield. It also rehearsed missions outside the base to maintain proficiency in case it was called on to recover a helicopter or transport brigade leadership outside the base.



**ABOVE:** Two Soldiers with the 640th Aviation Support Battalion work on an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter on Camp Taji, Iraq. **RIGHT:** Staff Sgt. Zachery Babb of Company B, 640th ASB, works on the tail of a helicopter on Camp Taji. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Spc. Robert Paduano of Company C, 640th ASB sets up a line-of-sight satellite dish on Camp Taji.

Company B, 640th ASB, is the largest company in the battalion with more than 300 Soldiers assigned. The company's aviation maintenance personnel ordered, tracked, warehoused and issued parts in theater and made sheet metal repairs to the helicopters. The company's mechanics and electricians also completed phase maintenance inspections on all aircraft to ensure they could perform their missions. Company B maintenance test pilots put the helicopters through flight checks after maintenance to make sure that they were mission ready.

Company C maintained and operated tactical communications and provided tactical or mobile communications for brigade units at Camp Taji and Contingency Operating Base Speicher and in Kirkuk.

"The 640th ASB played a crucial role during [Operation New Dawn in 2010 and 2011]," said Maj. Noland Flores, 640th ASB executive officer. "It is the only aviation support battalion in Iraq, providing all classes of supply to the largest aviation brigade ever assembled — the 40th CAB."

"We currently support seven aviation battalions," 640th Command Sgt. Maj. Bryon Robinson said. "Our Soldiers have pumped almost 2 million gallons of JP-8 jet fuel, completed 144 aircraft phases, and in the month of September, 14 CH-47D [Chinook helicopters] broke a record by flying more hours per airframe than ever before in the Army. They were able to do this because the 640th completed scheduled maintenance and inspections quicker than the Department of the Army standard timeline."

Soldiers of the 640th also trained members of the Iraqi Army in preparation for American military sites to transition to Iraqi control after the U.S. military departs. Soldiers from Company A recently conducted a weeklong class training Iraqi personnel to operate Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks in anticipation of the upcoming assumption of operations by Iraqi Security Forces at the Camp Taji airfield. From July through August, the 640th ASB and the U.S. Air Force Base Transition Team trained Iraqi Army personnel on the maintenance and operation of backup generators for the airfield on Camp Taji.

"We do whatever needs to get done so the aviation brigade can accomplish its mission," Carmona said.

The battalion and the 549th Quartermaster Company worked in conjunction with a mobility redistribution team



during Operation Clean Sweep to locate and turn in more than \$12 million of excess non-property book equipment at Camp Taji, Flores said. The battalion collected and itemized unused or misplaced military equipment that had accumulated over the eight years the U.S. Army has been there.

The equipment found on the post that was serviceable included automotive parts such as tires, Gator utility vehicle parts, mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicle parts and other items the military can use, said Capt. Joseph Adams, a planning officer with the 640th.

With the deployment coming to a close, the 640th's job is far from over. To prepare for the drawdown of U.S. troops from Iraq, the ASB has started to split operations. Company B is in Kuwait, setting up maintenance support for the anticipated end of mission in Iraq. The remainder of the ASB is still at Camp Taji continuing its support operations.

"In Taji, we are continuing to manage various classes of supply," such as food, water, fuel and ammunition, Carmona said. "We support the brigade with numerous sustainment missions, like fuel, airfield security, Chinook and Apache [helicopter] aviation maintenance, computer, signal and the Taji transportation control team."

"As units roll out, we need to ensure the logistic train follows them," Robinson said.

The 1204th Aviation Support Battalion from Kentucky will assume the mission next, allowing the 640th Soldiers to travel home and celebrate their success with family and friends over the holidays.

"This is a historic time, and the responsibility on everyone, from me to the newest private, was immense," Carmona said.

# 578th Engineers deploy to Afghanistan

By **STAFF SGT. EMILY SUHR**  
224th Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

Nearly 175 Soldiers from the 578th Engineer Battalion, 224th Sustainment Brigade, left California on Sept. 19 to begin pre-mobilization training at Fort Bliss, Texas, in advance of their deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

During their yearlong mission, Soldiers from the 578th Headquarters and Headquarters Company based out of Manhattan Beach, Calif., and the Forward Support Company (FSC) based out of Pomona, Calif., will conduct route clearance and construction projects such as building roads and schools. Maj. Gen. Scott Johnson, commander of the 40th Infantry Division, spoke highly of the mission, calling it "a real engineer mission."

"The combatant commanders, the folks wearing the four stars and three stars over in Afghanistan, have been asking for more engineers," he said. "Whether it's road work, repair work or building facilities — all those infrastructure things — there is just an absolute critical need."

During their departure ceremony Sept. 17, Johnson gave the Soldiers, many of whom were deploying for the first time, a few tips on how to stay out of harm's way. He also addressed their families and reminded them to stay strong for their Soldier and to use support systems like the 578th Family Readiness Group and Rear Detachment if needed.

"I feel more stable with the support of friends and family and church," said Germana Goodloe, the fiancée of Spc. Joseph Soberano of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. "They've been helping me get through this and helping me stay strong, because it's going to be hard for me when he goes."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr  
**Khloee Ortiz smiles at her dad, Staff Sgt. Cesar Ortiz of Forward Support Company, 578th Engineer Battalion, during a departure ceremony Sept. 17 in Riverside, Calif. Staff Sgt. Ortiz and about 175 fellow Soldiers deployed two days later for a yearlong mission in Afghanistan.**

Lt. Col. Richard A. Rabe, the commander of the 578th Engineer Battalion, also recognized the families' sacrifices.

"We're proud to go serve our nation and be engineers, but we're more proud of all of you who stay home and hold down the home front and do that hard stuff of getting the kids to school and fixing the air conditioner when it's bad or getting the mechanic out there," he said during the ceremony. "We truly could not do our mission without you."

Rabe, who has been the battalion commander for two years, said he is honored to serve alongside his Soldiers, saying the unit is "very proud, very capable and, in

my opinion, the very best engineering battalion within the state of California. They have never let me down."

The unit has been preparing for this deployment for a year and a half.

Pfc. Andrew Pollick of Victorville, Calif., an 18-year-old fire support specialist with the FSC who was beginning his first deployment, said he was "getting excited, getting nervous and kind of feeling a lot of emotions at one time."

Having served only a year and a half in the Army, Pollick said he felt more secure knowing his fellow comrades and noncommissioned officers have done this before.

"A lot of the guys in my unit have been," he said. "They're on fifth deployments, fourth, third. All of our squad leaders have been there more than two or three times. We have a couple guys who have been to the exact same [forward operating base] we're going to. They already know what to look out for, so they can keep an eye on me, make sure I'm doing everything right."

Spc. Bradley Hambelton, a 22-year-old all-wheel mechanic with the FSC who is also on his first deployment, said he felt prepared for the mission.

"I'm ready to go. I'm well trained. We're all ready to go," he said. "That's all I can say; I know my squad is ready to go. We should go out there and have a good time. For some reason I honestly think we're going to have fun out there."

Hundreds of friends, relatives and community members came out for the mid-morning departure ceremony at Moreno Valley Readiness Center in Riverside, Calif., to support the 578th Soldiers. Girl Scouts were on hand with cookies, members of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars offered words of encouragement, and the 578th Family Readiness Group gave out care packages and information, reminding the Soldiers that they are not alone.

"While you're out there covering the backs of your fellow Soldiers in Afghanistan, we'll be covering your backs right here at home," Col. Peter Kim, commander of the 224th Sustainment Brigade, said to his troops during the ceremony. "We stand ready to support you as you go off and defend our great nation. Let me leave you with these words: Do great things, do the right things, watch out for each other and come home to your families and communities. We need your drive, your leadership and your many abilities. Be safe, be strong and be back soon."

## Two maintenance shops earn national award

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

When Soldiers report for duty, they usually expect Army equipment to function properly. Some California National Guard Soldiers, however, would be disappointed if they found no items in need of repair.

Top-notch field maintenance technicians are a part of what makes the California Army National Guard successful, and Soldiers in the San Diego and Red Bluff Field Maintenance Shops (FMS) are leading the maintenance mission. Responsible for repair and maintenance of vehicles, weapon systems and other ground equipment, both shops were recognized with the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence in 2011.

"I am extremely proud of the hard work and dedication the San Diego and Red Bluff Field Maintenance Shops bring to our California National Guard mission," said Brig. Gen. Lawrence A. Haskins, deputy commander of the California Army National Guard, who presented the award to the San Diego Field Maintenance Shop

on Oct. 19. "San Diego and Red Bluff FMS maintenance technicians display an expertise and professionalism in performing their tasks. These Soldiers earned the award through dedication, and without them we couldn't do our mission."

The two CNG shops vied for the award against National Guard shops in the other fifty-three states and territories, while active duty and Army Reserve shops competed for separate awards.

"Field Maintenance Shops San Diego and Red Bluff provide high-quality, low-cost repairs on all surface equipment for their customers," Lt. Col. William H. Poppler, CNG surface maintenance manager, said during the Oct. 19 award presentation. "FMS San Diego and Red Bluff supervisors and technicians always stay focused on the mission: achieving the best operational readiness rate of their customers while being good stewards of the taxpayers' money."

The San Diego Field Maintenance Shop won the award back-to-back in 2010 and 2011 despite challenges presented by over-

seas deployments. The 25-person shop currently has 10 Soldiers deployed, but the technicians have continued to take care of their stateside mission.

"We are a team who fosters innovative growth and we support each other, allowing us to be a competent maintenance unit," said Staff Sgt. Norwin Moscoso, San Diego Field Maintenance Shop foreman. "We depend on each other to bring our best to work every day."

The Army Award for Maintenance Excellence is a national competition that evaluates readiness, maintenance management, maintenance training, leadership and innovative execution.

"Overall my goal is to utilize the competition as a training and development tool — I don't really care if we win anything," Poppler said.

"My maintainers are very competitive and we all would love to win, but the real goal is to build competence, confidence and improve our current operation while competing at the same time."



Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey  
**Spc. Bony Rosales of the CNG's San Diego Field Maintenance Shop (FMS) replaces a cable leading to a Humvee fuel filter Oct. 19 in San Diego. Both Rosales' shop and the Red Bluff FMS earned the 2011 Army Award for Maintenance Excellence.**

# 146th AW performs airdrops in Afghanistan

Five aircraft and 250 Airmen from the airlift wing are working to supply forward operating bases

By **STAFF SGT. JOHN WRIGHT**  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

Almost two dozen C-130J aircraft and a full complement of air crew and maintenance personnel from the California Air National Guard's 146th Airlift Wing and the Rhode Island Air National Guard's 143rd Airlift Wing have arrived at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan. They replaced C-130H-model Guard units from Alaska and New York and filled the ranks of the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron.

"Our mission is airlift and airdrop to all the forward operating bases within country," said Lt. Col. Bill Willson, the 774th EAS commander and a C-130J pilot from the 146th Airlift Wing. "The primary way the forward operating bases get supplies is by airlift or airdrop. We are their lifeline of sustainment."

The Guard units previously assigned to that mission consistently performed at a high level, Willson said, but the newly arrived Airmen are ready to tackle the challenge and set the bar even higher since the C-130J is the most advanced model.

In its first month alone, the 774th EAS flew more than 900 sorties with a 99.9 percent sortie effectiveness rate, completing approximately 40 airdrops and delivering more than 3,100 tons of cargo.

The C-130J incorporates state-of-the-art technology to reduce manpower requirements as well as operating and support costs. The aircraft's improved engines enable the J-model plane to climb faster and higher, fly farther at a higher cruise speed, and take off and land in a shorter distance. It also has 15 extra feet in the fuselage, increasing useable space in



Photo by Staff Sgt. John Wright

The sun sets behind a C-130J Hercules aircraft from the 146th Airlift Wing on Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, where California National Guard Airmen and aircraft have joined with Rhode Island's 143rd Airlift Wing to form the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron. The 774th EAS will provide airlift and airdrop capabilities to forward operating bases for three months.

the cargo compartment.

"These airplanes are considerably more capable than the H-model," Willson said. "It's the equivalent of adding an additional engine and two pallet positions. It can carry approximately 40 percent more load, giving us a much higher fully mission capable rate. We can actually do the same job with 10 [J-models] that it takes 15 [H-models] to do."

One of the more significant aircraft improvements is the ability to more accurately airdrop from high altitudes, which makes missions safer for the air crews, Willson said. The C-130J is equipped with a sonde — a device attached to a parachute that takes wind readings every 500 feet and transmits the information back to the

aircraft. The plane's computers then determine the optimal release point, which is accurate to within one meter.

The automated systems make the job smoother for 774th EAS loadmasters like Master Sgt. Jessica Barry of Rhode Island.

"The J makes my job much easier," she said. "We have a computer that controls our load plan. We also have electric locks as opposed to ratchet locks. It's a very efficient 'push button' system."

As a loadmaster, Barry is responsible for configuring and overseeing the loading of people and cargo on the aircraft. However, even though the J-model makes the job easier, there are unique challenges in Afghanistan.

Ordinarily the cargo and airdrop bundles are planned well in advance, and a computer determines how the items should be loaded onto the aircraft. "In this deployed environment, we get a lot of last-minute requests to add cargo," Barry said. "So we have to manually figure out how to accommodate the additional weight."

"We don't mind though," she said. "It's very rewarding knowing we're getting the troops on the ground what they need."

While the 774th EAS is composed of National Guard Airmen from different units and varying walks of life, they have deployed together since 2004 and consider themselves one big family. The continuity that comes with working

with the same people for so long is something the loadmasters tout as a reason they operate like a well-oiled machine.

"There is a great chemistry here," Barry said. "These guys are great to work with."

Master Sgt. Jason Sturtevant, a C-130J maintainer and crew chief from Rhode Island, echoed Barry's sentiment.

"We maintainers mesh very well," he said. "They are very easy to work with. I noticed as soon as we got here, everybody just wanted to work together."

Maintainers service the aircraft and perform preflight, postflight and through-flight inspections.

"We do everything from servicing hydraulic fluid to liquid oxygen," Sturtevant said. "Basically, we look at the entire aircraft and its systems."

The 20-year veteran said he finds the job highly rewarding.

"I love watching these planes fly, knowing I'm helping the guys on the ground," he said. "I feel like I'm directly contributing to the fight. I also take pride in keeping my air crews safe."

Willson also noted the sense of pride and dedication among the Airmen of his unit.

"We all recognize the importance of coming here to do this mission," Willson said. "We have a tremendous sense of patriotism. Most of these people have very well-paying jobs on the outside, yet they still come here. They do this because they want to. The love of wearing the uniform and doing the job outweighs everything else."

## 40th MPs test skills in national competition

By **S.L. STANDIFIRD**  
Joint Hometown News Service

More than 100 of the best Soldiers from throughout the Army's military police (MP) community battled intense rain, high winds, heat, bugs, fatigue and each other to determine the best three-person team during the MP Warfighter Competition in September on Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

Thirty-eight teams competed, including a group from the California National Guard's 40th MP Company, 49th MP Brigade, based at Joint Forces Training Base-Los Alamitos.

The focus of the competition was to bring the top MP forces from the active duty, National Guard and Reserve ranks to determine the "best of the best," according to the competition's noncommissioned officer in charge, Sgt. 1st Class Shon Dodson. The four-day event was a series of mental, physical, technical and, at times, gut-wrenching challenges

that took Soldiers to the edge, he said.

"Warfighter began early Sunday morning with a 50-question written exam that covered military police history and general MP knowledge," Dodson said. "Without much of a break, the teams moved on to a physical endurance test that included push-ups, alternating pull-ups, ankle-lock pull-ups and ended with an unknown distance run with weighted ammo cans. The first day ended with a night land navigation course."

On its second day, the competition included marching, Warrior Tasks, battle drills, an active-shooter scenario and a double-elimination combatives contest. As the competition stretched into its third day, the Soldiers rappelled, tested marksmanship and faced rain and heat on long ruck marches. The final event took them on a 15-mile road march.

This year's winners represented the 93rd MP Battalion from Fort Bliss, Texas.



Military police (MP) Soldiers compete in the annual MP Warfighter Competition on Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., in September.

Photo courtesy of Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs

# 'Silent Guardians' watch from above

By **SGT. AARON RICCA**  
Task Force Warrior Public Affairs

Two weapon range control workers at Camp Roberts, Calif., make their way to a truck in a parking lot, probably heading out for maintenance or to check in on marksmanship qualifications. They talk while loading equipment into the back of a pickup truck. No one else is around, and the workers don't realize they're being watched very carefully from 3,000 feet above.

There's a buzzing in the air that sounds like a loud leaf blower engine. But if the range workers look up, chances are high that they won't be able to see what is making the noise.

A few miles away, two Soldiers sit in the back of a modified Humvee attached to a tent, monitoring multiple readouts and watching the activity at the range unfold on a small computer screen. Using small joysticks, they pilot a 368-pound Shadow 200 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) over the camp's barren back country, surveying the action on the ground.

If you happened to be at Camp Roberts during the first two weeks of September, you likely wound up in the eye of a UAV at some point. "Silent Guardians" from the California National Guard's Company B, 79th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, spent their annual training there in September, launching, flying and recovering the Shadow 200 on the outskirts of the training facility near McMillan Airfield.

"This is new technology, the thing of the future," said UAV operator Spc. Rudy Rangel while prepping the Shadow 200 for an afternoon launch.

The Shadow 200 is mainly used for surveillance, reconnaissance and general monitoring of battlefield activities. It can also be equipped with weapon systems, but those kinds of missions are usually handled by larger UAVs. The Shadow 200 is a go-kart sized plane with a 14-foot wingspan that can be pushed around like a shopping cart.

For launch, the Shadow 200 is strapped to a hydraulic catapult and slung into the air in the same fashion as a jet from an aircraft carrier. Unlike an aircraft carrier, the catapult of the Shadow can be dismantled and towed behind a truck in a matter of minutes.

"About 90 seconds after liftoff, nobody knows we're here," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Daniel Shemenski, platoon officer in charge, referring to both the diminishing noise of the aircraft after takeoff and the mobility of his team.

The Shadow 200 has a range of roughly 77 miles, a cruising speed of 60 knots and a maximum speed of 105 knots. It can go as high as 14,000 feet and fly for nearly 6 hours.

When it's time to land, operators gently set the UAV down on the runway. Once the craft touches the pavement, the engine automatically shuts off and a hook attached to the bottom of the craft is snagged by arrester cables, bringing it to a complete stop.

Staff Sgt. Daniel Ibarra, a 19-year California National Guard Soldier and former combat engineer, has been a UAV operator for almost seven years. Possessing a long-term interest in aviation, he enjoys his job, but the anticipation of a launch has diminished over the years.

"This is normal to me," he said. "But the young guys get stoked."

When Spc. Derec Zifko joined the Army, his entry scores were high enough that he had his pick of military occupational specialties. "My recruiter threw the book at me and said, 'Pick one,'" Zifko said.

He picked UAV operator and has been doing it for nearly 5 1/2 years with the California National Guard. Of all the tasks he performs on the job, he likes teaching other Soldiers the most. "One of the perks is when you get the 'a-ha' moment," Zifko said.

For the most part, the UAV team is a noncommissioned officer-run organization. A warrant officer leads the platoon and conducts flight operations alongside sergeants and specialists. The platoon is small enough that each operator receives appropriate flight time and each mechanic performs hands-on maintenance.

As the Shadow 200 buzzes above the McMillan airstrip and eventually into the horizon, the "Silent Guardians" go to work flying one aircraft while preparing another for launch — which can replace the craft in the air during a concurrent operation — as well as logging information from the craft in the air and waiting for upcoming landing operations.

During the few hours the Shadow 200 is in the air, the Company B Soldiers perform flight checks on another craft, monitor the weather and wait to land the craft in the air.

When the time comes for another launch and the propeller gets going, the anticipation grows. A countdown goes out over handheld radios. The noise of the propeller gets significantly louder, and a few seconds later the Shadow 200 is flung off the launcher at 60 mph. All the preparation is worth it.



**Spc. Derec Zifko, a member of the tactical unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) system team for the CNG's Company B, 79th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, performs preflight maintenance on a Shadow 200 UAV at Camp Roberts, Calif., on Sept. 15.**

Photo by SGT. Aaron Ricca

## DoD program helps spouses find jobs, careers

By **IAN GRAHAM**, Defense Media Activity; and  
**TERRI MOON CRONK**, American Forces Press Service

Balancing a civilian career with a military spouse's career can be tough, and when a service member has a permanent change of station it can leave spouses stuck hoping to find a new job in a new area.

Robert L. Gordon III, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy, said it doesn't have to be that way. He joined a Department of Defense "bloggers roundtable" Sept. 29 to explain how the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) is giving spouses more career and education options.

Gordon said the program has been growing. The partnership's website currently lists more than 50,000 jobs. Since June 29, when the program began, more than 5,600 military spouses have found jobs. This success has attracted more companies to the program, he said.

"We have about 50 companies now who are expressing interest in becoming MSEP partners, and that is in addition to the 146 companies who have already submitted applications to become a part of MSEP," Gordon said. "We are currently in the process of vetting those 146 companies. So that makes a total of 210 companies who we're either vetting or who have an interest in joining."

Just some of the companies involved in the partnership include Microsoft, Home Depot, Starbucks and the Navy Federal Credit Union.

Gordon added that the jobs listed through the program aren't only entry-level jobs one might find in the classifieds. He said 42 percent of the jobs on the website require a college degree.

"When we looked at job category ... of the 54,000 jobs, over 10,000 of those jobs are in computer and mathematical fields," he said. "We've got jobs for education,

for health care, for installation management and repair, 800 jobs in information and technology, jobs in legal, in life, physical and social science, in management, in office and administrative support, 150 jobs in architecture and engineering, building grounds and cleaning maintenance."

Another plus for the military spouse on the move: Nearly one-third of the jobs on the MSEP website are overseas.

Military spouses have been hit hard by the job market, Gordon said, noting that they face an unemployment rate of 28 percent. Of the military's 1.2 million spouses, he said, 80 percent want to work but have been held back by multiple moves and deployments. Additionally, a 25 percent wage gap divides military spouses and their civilian counterparts, he added.

For more information and to search for jobs, visit the program website, [www.msepjobs.com](http://www.msepjobs.com).

# United command, united response

## CNG, active duty troops test quake response

By **SPC. GRANT LARSON**  
69th Public Affairs Detachment

You sense your balance is off. You've felt it before, but it always catches you by surprise. It's not your body that's doing the shaking, but the ground beneath your feet. All you can do is drop, cover, hold on and hope it passes quickly. In a worst-case scenario, the citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen of the California National Guard know this is their moment to put on the uniform and come to the aid of those in need. This is the leading reason the National Guard exists.

The CNG tested its responsiveness to a simulated disaster — a 7.8-magnitude earthquake in Southern California — during Exercise United Response at California Military Department headquarters in Sacramento, Oct. 21-27.

United Response evaluated the construct of a National Guard dual-status commander (DSC), who has authority to simultaneously direct both Title 32 National Guard troops and Title 10 active duty service members. The exercise was the first large-scale test of the DSC model in the Golden State. California joined Wisconsin in being the first National Guard organizations to implement the concept in full-scale disaster simulations. Wisconsin tested the DSC construct during a mock seismic event in May.

"The National Guard has always stood ready in California to protect its citizens and provide military forces to civilian responders," said Col. Robert Spano, director of the California National Guard Joint Staff, who served as the exercise's DSC. "But now our capability has increased with [the DSC] construct, so we'll be able to respond faster."

In the past, National Guard and active duty forces have served separate chains of command, ending with either the governor or the president. The inefficiency of that division became most apparent during the gaps and delays in responding to Hurricane Katrina.

"By blending both Title 32 National Guard and Title 10 active duty Army, Army Reserve, Air Force, Navy and Marine forces under one DSC, we've achieved cohesion of command and efficiencies in the military response to a state emergency," said Spano, who directed the military's response to the simulated disaster in support of California's governor and civilian authorities.

In order to be able to lead both forces, a DSC must be nomi-

nated by the governor and appointed by the secretary of defense. U.S. Northern Command began training leaders in the National Guard last year to command both Title 32 and Title 10 forces so they can call on each other's capabilities to swiftly send relief where it's needed most.

The DSC construct has been implemented before, typically for planned events such as international summits of leaders and diplomats. This year's Hurricane Irene was the first time a DSC was appointed during an actual natural disaster.

"The training we're conducting in this exercise has really brought forth attention to how this [plan] can successfully work," Spano said. "We're creating a model that not only will be good for the entire National Guard, but will also be very beneficial for U.S. Northern Command."

During United Response, the stage was set to build the DSC structure from the ground up and follow it to a strong foundation of proper military response, support and recovery. With highways, railways and utilities affected across Southern California, the simulated quake called for the mock activation of the entire 22,000-member CNG force. About 8,000 CNG Soldiers and Airmen were mobilized to the affected area along with 10,000 civilian emergency-response personnel from California and other states.

CNG and civilian responders immediately began working together to save lives. Meanwhile the human needs for water and food were creating shortages that led to civil disturbances in the Los Angeles region, which forces were called upon to secure. To add to the realism, agencies involved in the exercise included U.S. Northern Command, the California Department of Water Resources and the California Emergency Management Agency.

As the week of training drew to an end and all the game pieces were being analyzed, there was a great deal to take in. The exercise planners and leaders continued to consider areas that could be improved, but they praised the benefits of preparing for a catastrophic event.

"We still have a lot of work to do," Spano said. "The main thing we've achieved is we've taken capabilities from both National Guard and Title 10 forces and assessed those strengths and weaknesses so that, should we be called into a dual-status command during an actual emergency, we'll have already worked through this and smoothed over a lot of the challenges."



Photo by Sgt. (CA) Robert Davison

Lt. Col. Stanley Zezotarski, United Response exercise director, said the CNG's proactive stance could blaze the trail for other states to minimize the loss of life after disasters.

"We will be ready for a state emergency by establishing a system [of a DSC] that we can continually train and improve for future generations of the National Guard," said Zezotarski, the CNG's chief of joint training, exercises and validation and of strategic plans, policies and interagency interoperability.

"We are the people's National Guard," said Lt. Col. Anthony Noll, deputy joint operations officer for the California Military Department and joint operations evaluator for United Response. "We are always moving forward, always getting better to make sure we're there and ready to support our citizens."

With more than 200 fault lines in California and a 63 percent chance that a large earthquake (magnitude 6.7 or greater) will hit the San Francisco Bay Area between now and 2036, according to the Berkeley Seismological Laboratory, the importance of this exercise was evident.

"Our No. 1 priority is to support our state civil authorities and the governor," said Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, CNG adjutant general. "This exercise validated our capability to do just that. My confidence in our abilities to perform the [Defense Support to Civil Authorities] mission and this dual-status commander construct ... in response to a large-scale emergency is high.

"The citizens of California can rest assured that should we face a disaster unlike anyone has ever seen, the California National Guard, in partnership with our active duty and reserve counterparts from across the state and nation, are ready to respond."



**TOP RIGHT:** Col. Robert Spano, director of the California National Guard Joint Staff, answers questions from a mock reporter in his role as dual-status commander for the CNG's response to a simulated 7.8-magnitude earthquake in Southern California during Exercise United Response. **RIGHT:** Maj. Darrin Bender, CNG director of government affairs, left, and Command Sgt. Maj. William Clark Jr., the CNG's top enlisted leader, discuss the CNG's recovery efforts following the mock quake. **ABOVE:** Active duty and reserve Soldiers, Airmen and Marines participate in an update brief during United Response.



Photos by Master Sgt. David J. Loeffler

# Civil support teams collaborate in Arizona

The CNG's 9th Civil Support Team joined other states' CSTs for a simulated hazmat incident

By **SGT. LAUREN DEVITA**

Arizona National Guard Public Affairs

The California National Guard's 9th Civil Support Team participated in a multi-agency exercise hosted by the Center for National Response in Flagstaff, Ariz., from Sept. 26 through Sept. 30.

The 9th CST teamed up with Arizona's 91st CST and other states' CSTs as well as other

agencies from across the state and nation to conduct the training, which focused on responding to an incident involving hazardous materials.

"This is a collaborative hazardous material multi-CST exercise and gives us a chance to all work together with first responders and other CSTs," said Capt. Ryan Morrissey, medical operations officer for the 91st CST. "We only get a chance to do this once

or twice a year, so it's always a great opportunity when we have these events."

The practical exercise began with local first responders reacting to a call regarding some suspicious activity involving unusual odors coming from a few of the cabins in the Fort Tuthill/Luke Air Force Base Recreation Area and the Coconino County Fairgrounds near Flagstaff.

"The local fire department responded to the call, and the citizens who called 911 were transported to a local hospital for medical treatment from reactions to the odors," said Staff Sgt. Keith Hapenny, a survey team chief with California's 9th CST. "At this point, the fire department has determined that they cannot support this safely and require more assistance, so the CSTs are called in."

Once the command center for the CSTs was set, observers from state and federal agencies surveyed the operations while members of the Center for National Response maintained the training operations.

"We don't just sit and watch — it's always good to have an extra set of eyes on someone in a suit," said Staff Sgt. Richard Villalobos, an exercise observer who is a member of the 85th CST, a unit of the Utah National Guard. "It's easy to become complacent while wearing all of that equipment. During an after action review, the observers give guidance to the CST members regarding what could have been done differently and provide suggested improvements."

Since the training was a rare moment for all of the agencies to be able to work together, the team members and leaders took advantage of the opportunity to observe each other as they executed their procedures and protocols.

"This training gives us a chance to mingle with other CSTs," said Tech. Sgt. Patrick Conway, a survey team chief with Arizona's 91st CST. "We get to know the other CSTs and their members and see how other teams operate with their equipment availability. This is also a great opportunity for trainees to gain more experience."

Some of the equipment used during the exercise helped CST survey team members detect hazardous materials that may not be seen with the naked eye. They also used a communication system that goes beyond just using a radio.

"We use still and video images that can transmit a live feed to the command center," Conway said. "This way pictures and video can be reviewed right away, and if there is something a surveyor may not be able to see with his suit on, someone from command looking at the images will see it and radio it to the surveyor."

This type of training is imperative to ensuring mission readiness, Morrissey said.

"The training is great, this scenario was really good, and I give kudos to all the agencies that came out today to help organize and make this happen," he said.



Staff Sgt. Keith Hapenny and other members of the California National Guard's 9th Civil Support Team prepare their equipment for an inspection of buildings suspected of containing hazardous materials during an exercise near Flagstaff, Ariz., in September.

# Vital Connection ensures communications

40-agency exercise prepares participants for Vigilant Guard training in November

By **SGT. LAUREN DEVITA**

Arizona National Guard Public Affairs

Agencies from across the country, including the California National Guard, attended the Vital Connection exercise Sept. 12-15 in Phoenix.

A U.S. Northern Command-endorsed interoperability communications exercise, Vital Connection involved local, tribal, state and federal agencies in an effort to eliminate communication interferences in times of widespread emergency.

"We are providing two satellite uplinks and several types of communications — pretty much everything a commander could need in an emergency management situation," said Sgt. Nicholas Emmerling, a communications and signal support specialist with the California National Guard's 49th Military Police Brigade.

As a precursor to the statewide Vigilant Guard exercise in November, the September exercise was devoted to working out the flaws in communication equipment and establishing a working protocol of communication among the participating agencies.

"So far it's been going good — we've al-



Soldiers with the California National Guard's 49th Military Police Brigade conduct communications operations Sept. 13 during the Vital Connection exercise in Phoenix. More than 40 agencies and 260 people participated in the event, which helped assess communications capabilities among the different agencies. The weeklong event, sponsored by U.S. Northern Command, prepared units for the Vigilant Guard exercise Nov. 3-7 in Arizona.

ready had some lessons learned and obstacles overcome," Emmerling said. "It's absolutely necessary that we have this training. All this different technology is great, but if

we can't actually use it to its fullest extent, it's just wasted money."

More than 40 agencies and 260 people par-

ticipated in the exercise, making it the largest training event yet hosted by the Arizona National Guard.

"This is an assembly of all communications — local, tribal, Air Force, Army, Northern Command and many others," said Army Lt. Col. Robert Kimberlin, manager of communications systems operations for the Arizona National Guard, who helped manage the planning and set-up of the Vital Connection exercise. "This training will help us later with having a more organized system when we really need to communicate in the event of an emergency."

The exercise handbook provided to participants explained that all the agencies practicing communications would be evaluated and assessed by a command center in order to gauge how the different agencies can better work together in the event of an emergency.

"This gives us a chance to gather a visual of assets so we know what we have in the future, and when an emergency does happen, you've already met the guys on the other end of that line; the relationship has already been established, which goes a long way to solving problems quickly," Kimberlin said.



**TOP:** A skydiver floats over the crowd Oct. 23 at the annual Wings, Wheels and Rotors Expo on Joint Forces Training Base-Los Alamitos, carrying the names of the two winners of the Best Warrior Competition, who were honored that day. **ABOVE:** Spc. Dennis Yi of Troop B, 1st Battalion, 144th Field Artillery Regiment, right, pulls the lanyard on a retired cannon Oct. 23 during the Wings, Wheels and Rotors Expo. Four cannons shot a total of 13 rounds to signify the arrival of Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin the adjutant general of the California National Guard. For more on the Best Warriors, see page 14. Photos by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr



The CNG's 40th Infantry Division Band performs Oct. 23 at the annual Wings Wheels and Rotors Expo in Los Alamitos. Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr



Spc. Joseph Telles of 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment, takes a position to fire at on Battle Course (ISBC) at Camp Roberts, Calif., on Aug. 20. The recently renovated ISBC realistic training experience in preparation for possible deployments. For more on the IS

# At a Glance



Idy Brambila, son of Staff Sgt. Jairo Brambila, checks his uniform next to Soldiers of the 578th Engineer Battalion, 224th Sustainment Brigade, during a departure ceremony Sept. 17, in Riverside, Calif. Sgt. Brambila is one of 175 Soldiers of the 578th who departed for Afghanistan Sept. 19. For more on the 578th deployment, see page 5. Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr



one of the multiple targets on the Infantry Squad is designed to give Soldiers a challenging and SBC, see page 15. Photo by Sgt. Aaron Ricca



Spc. Lisa Burroughs of Joint Force Headquarters prepares for weapons qualification Sept. 6 at the California Highway Patrol Academy in West Sacramento. Photo by Master Sgt. David J. Loeffler

# CNG engineers support Border Patrol

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

Boots and hard hats are on the job site as the sun rises at the Pine Valley Border Patrol Station in Campo, Calif. An eight-Soldier crew receives a load of 36 yards of concrete and begins to get their boots dirty smoothly laying concrete. In the following weeks the Soldiers will pour 100 more yards of concrete.

These engineers with the California National Guard's Joint Task Force Domestic Support-Counterdrug are working to help U.S. Border Patrol implement a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP), which will help prevent erosion

during the rainy season.

"The concrete being poured at the Pine Valley Station has a two-fold purpose," said Army Sgt. 1st Class Frank Guizar. "We built a loading dock for the ongoing mobility support of the program, and the concrete will eliminate the sludge created by equipment movement during the rainy season, thus protecting the adjacent wetlands."

The Clean Water Act requires a stormwater pollution prevention plan for construction sites with soil disturbances of one acre or more. Stormwater runoff from construction sites can cause significant harm to rivers, lakes and coastal waters.

"Prevention and management of erosion is a critical task that prevents re-work, reduces harm to the sensitive environmental habitat and ensures the California National Guard is complying with federal law and the expectations of an environmentally aware public," said Air Force Lt. Col. Timothy Kelley, director of the CNG Environmental Programs Directorate. "Aggressively implementing stormwater plans is good business practice and a key to mission success."

Although sediment- and erosion-control measures are required year-round by California law, the highest risk is during the rainy season, defined by the state as Oct. 1 through April 30. Taking preventive measures to maintain and improve the infrastructure at the border will drastically reduce the likelihood of roads being washed away and of extensive repairs being needed for the border fence.

"SWPPP and erosion control are important to U.S. Customs and Border Protection agent mobility by preserving the integrity of the border road system and border tactical infrastructure," said Army Capt. John Goulart, Counterdrug operations officer for Southern California.

A total of 23 CNG Soldiers are preparing for the rainy season in Tecate and Tierra Del Sol and at the Pine Valley Station. They are redirecting stormwater to avoid erosion at the foot of the border fence, and they are filling rock bags and placing silt fencing and fiber rolls to prevent soil from washing into creeks.

The SWPPP partnership between CNG engineers and Border Patrol has been ongoing since 1991 to maintain the dirt roads patrolled by agents. The organizations also continuously implement a plan to prevent erosion on construction sites.

"The engineers are resourceful in coming up with new ways to prevent the erosion from occurring," said Justin Wells of Border Patrol. "They maintain erosion control by knowing where the drainage areas are [and where] potential sources of pollution are located, and they know how to address the pollutant issues."

The program is also important to the engineers, who use it to train and maintain skills in their field, such as welding, pouring concrete and operating heavy equipment, Army Staff Sgt. James Yax said.

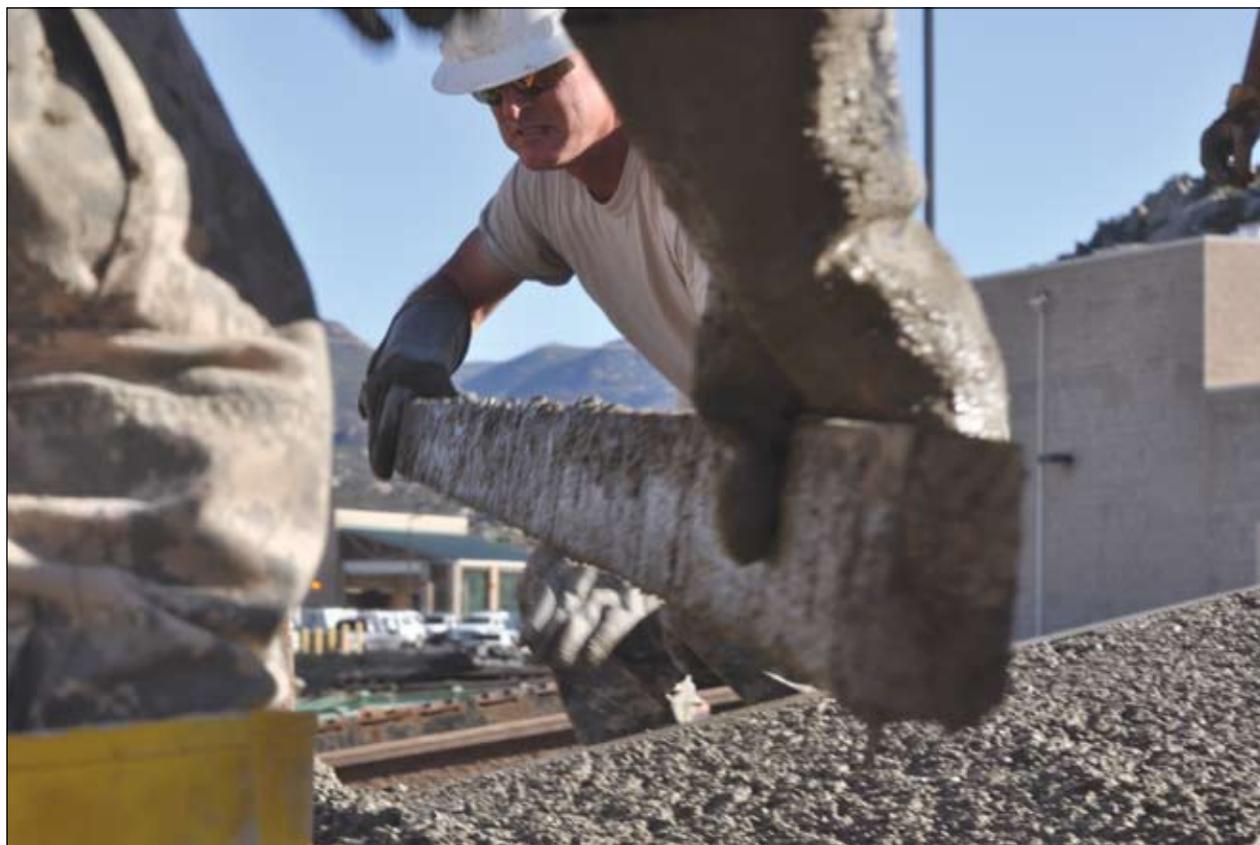


Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

Army Staff Sgt. James Yax of the CNG's Joint Task Force Domestic Support-Counterdrug smooths concrete Sept. 21 as it is poured onto a loading dock being built at the Pine Valley Border Patrol Station. The task force and U.S. Customs and Border Patrol have worked together on construction and environmental projects since 1991.

## Keep those shields up: 144th practices riot control

By **MASTER SGT. DAVID J. LOEFFLER**  
144th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

People are panicking as protesters and rioters crowd parks and streets. Power is intermittent, supplies and food are running low and access to utilities, services and financial institutions are severely limited.

A situation that could easily appear in future headlines was presented to the 144th Security Forces Squadron, 144th Fighter Wing, during a riot-control training exercise in October. The Security Forces members received detailed training in crowd control, tactical formations, riot-control shield use and riot-suppression techniques.

"We are seeing more and more activity within the civilian population, and rather than using a more severe weapon tactic, we are training in non-lethal capabilities," said Staff Sgt. Raul Amezcua of the Security Forces Squadron. "Our training today focuses on proper use of shields to maintain the integrity of our Security Forces team and to best protect our team members from assaults with bricks, bottles and rocks.

The Airmen assembled into pre-planned

tactical formations, which were dependent on the situation they were faced with. With interlocked shields the teams moved forward toward the role-playing protesters and violent rioters.

When the situation called for quelling an agitator, the wall of team members split and a specialized team quickly advanced to suppress the agitator and bring him into the formation, behind the front line of Airmen, for detention.

"At first it was a little intimidating, seeing all of the rioters, but when our team got in line and set up like we practiced, it was strong and I felt that we were prepared," said Senior Airman Leticia Holguin of the 144th Security Forces Squadron. "I feel secure in the unit and I know they have my back."

Many of the Security Forces team members, who have either practiced riot control in deployed environments or in law enforcement scenarios, brought real-world experience to the training.

"The training that the team received today was in riot control and crowd control,

which is a mission we carry stateside and overseas," said Master Sgt. Jimmy Schiotis, the 144th Security Forces Squadron training manager. "It got the team into the mindset

of what we might actually do if there was a state emergency or civil unrest and our forces we're called in to deploy, defend and help state civil authorities."



Photo by Master Sgt. David J. Loeffler

Airmen with the 144th Security Forces Squadron, 144th Fighter Wing, practice riot control Oct. 2 at the wing's base in Fresno.

# The West Point of public schools

The Oakland Military Institute uses a military model to point inner-city youths toward success

By **1ST LT. WILL MARTIN**

California Military Department Public Affairs

When Edmund G. Brown took office as mayor of Oakland in 1999, he inherited a school district that was among the state's worst in academic performance. More than improvement, it needed resurrection. It screamed out for a prototype or model to inspire achievement. So Brown called on the National Guard.

"He wanted to give disadvantaged youth an opportunity to go to college, where they might not have had that chance otherwise," said Brig. Gen. James L. Gabrielli, director of Community and Youth Programs for the California National Guard. "From the beginning, he wanted to make it the West Point of public schools."

Brown joined forces with the California National Guard in 2001 to found the Oakland Military Institute (OMI), a first-of-its-kind public charter school based in a military environment for students in grades 6-12. Like West Point, OMI stands atop three pillars—academics, leadership and athletics. But its success, argue its supporters, lies in its military structure.

## SETTING A STANDARD

"This is a powerful model," said Dr. Mark Ryan, a veteran educator and the superintendent at OMI. "[Brown] wanted to create a place where a military framework could serve as a suit of armor, to guard the students and provide a framework for academic and social success."

The OMI model is rooted in a warrior ethos, an expectation of high moral conduct and academic excellence that permeates everything at the school. It falls to several CNG instructors to ensure the students understand and meet those expectations.

"The stated goal is to make this the West Point of college prep academies," said Maj. Francisco Flores, commandant at OMI. "My mission in leading our Guard staff is to make that vision a reality."

Flores was among several new California Guardsmen brought on to serve at OMI this year, part of CNG Adjutant General Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin's increased emphasis on the CNG's Community and Youth Programs. When the



Maj. Francisco Flores, a California National Guard military police officer and commandant for the Oakland Military Institute, speaks with a cadet at the inner-city charter public school Sept. 2 in Oakland.

new Guard leadership arrived at OMI, they brought with them a renewed commitment to high standards.

"We work alongside the rest of the staff to ensure we're all enforcing the standard," Flores said. "Today you can't find a single girl with her hair not right or a male student whose uniform isn't squared away. The kids are recognizing the challenge and they're raising their performance to meet the expectations put before them."

"OMI had already developed a reputation for excellence," Gabrielli said, "but in essence, we raised the bar a notch this year."

## COLLEGE BOUND

"Our 100 percent, overarching mission is to prepare inner-city youth for college," Gabrielli said. "It's the reason for establishing the academy."

According to the numbers, OMI is clearly on mission.

More than 90 percent of OMI graduates go on to pursue higher education, most at four-year colleges and universities. Only about 40 percent of their California public school peers follow suit. In Oakland the number is about 20 percent.

"We are establishing a culture of success," Ryan said. "Almost without exception, parents are blown away when they walk across our campus. It's a clean and inviting environment where success is celebrated."

OMI graduates have gone on to study at some of the nation's most prestigious institutes of higher education. At present, OMI grads are enrolled at Yale, West Point, the University of California at Berkeley and almost all the other University of California and California State universities.

But more than simply getting into good schools, OMI grads are succeeding once on campus.

"Our youth don't wash out," Ryan said.

Of the OMI graduates who attend college, about 60 percent graduate on time, Ryan said, compared to about 10 percent for the rest of the nation.

"The discipline needed to succeed in college, our students

are finding that it's engrained in them by the time they arrive on campus," Ryan said. "[Professors] have commented on how different they are than their peers. At many schools, kids who are successful are ridiculed. Here, we celebrate geeks; we celebrate success."

## A HAVEN FOR TEACHERS

The military structure and discipline at OMI not only benefit its students, but teachers find themselves freed to focus on what has become a luxury in most inner-city public schools: teaching.

"It's nice to work at a school where there is a passion for teaching and student success," said Johnna Grell, OMI teacher and a veteran in urban education. "I've always wanted to serve this demographic. My passion lies in urban mission."

With California Guardsmen emulating and enforcing high standards of conduct among its students, OMI administrators have created an environment attractive to its idealistic and mission-oriented body of educators.

"Once the students are faced with a challenge, it's amazing to see how much they can accomplish in a school day," said Staff Sgt. (CA) Edward Crittendon, part of the CNG cadre at OMI. "It is essential to recognize students when they are doing the right thing, and not just point out their failures. A lot of positive recognition is built into our system."

"Our teachers have a passion for this type of culture," Ryan said. "It allows them to focus on teaching, rather than constantly disciplining unruly students. It's also a lot more work; like the students, they are held to a much higher standard."

"The teacher accountability here is high," added Sean Moler, athletic director at OMI. "There's just a higher caliber of teacher here than you find in other schools. ... It's not your typical education bureaucracy."

But in the end, the greatest testimony to the OMI model comes from the students and the paths to success they typically trod.

"I like it better than my old elementary school. The teachers pay a lot more attention," said James Davis, a 10-year-old student at OMI. "I have a feeling I'll be at this school until I go to college."



Students at the Oakland Military Institute line up in response to a fire drill at the inner-city charter public school Sept. 2.

# Cal Guard honors its Best Warriors

The CNG's top noncommissioned officer and Soldier receive awards at annual Wings, Wheels and Rotors Expo

**BY SGT. GLEN BAKER**

224th Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

It had been 37 days since the California National Guard Best Warrior Competition finalists were able to take a break and think about their September performance at Camp San Luis Obispo. Now the wait is over, and the winners have been rewarded for their efforts.

An estimated 30,000 spectators watched Oct. 23 as two pilots who had recently returned from a yearlong Iraq deployment with the CNG's 1st Battalion (Assault), 140th Aviation Regiment, landed their UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters on the flight line at Joint Forces Training Base-Los Alamitos and this year's Best Warrior Competition finalists stepped out. While the CNG's 40th Infantry Division Band played, the Best Warrior competitors marched to a stage and awaited skydivers who would drop from a World War II-era plane with the names of the winners: Staff Sgt. Demetrius McCowan and Spc. John Cunningham.

This year's top noncommissioned officer (NCO) and Soldier in the California Army National Guard, respectively, were presented their awards during the Wings, Wheels and Rotors Expo, a family event that brings a large crowd to the base each year. McCowan and Cunningham were the first Best Warrior winners to be recognized during the annual expo.

"I feel like I did my best," said McCowan, a sheet metal aircraft structural mechanic for the 1106th Theater Aviation Support Maintenance Group who has been in the military for 11 years. "I trained as hard as I could. I pushed myself to my physical limit and pulled out every trick I had."

After proving themselves during Best Warrior competitions at the company, battalion and brigade levels, nine competitors struggled and sweated through seven days of contests on Camp San Luis Obispo from Sept. 11 through Sept. 17. The events included an obstacle course, combatives tournament, 10-kilometer ruck march, Army Combat Readiness Test, rock-wall climb, weapons qualification, Army Warrior Tasks, essay writing and land navigation.

"All three of us who were competing on the lower enlisted level had some events that we were the best at," said Cunningham, a scout with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment, who has been in the Guard for five years and is working on a degree in aerospace engineering at Cal Poly Pomona. "So [the winner] really could have been any of us."

McCowan said his ultimate goal as a Soldier and in the



Photo by Sgt. Sallie Curchin

**ABOVE:** Staff Sgt. Demetrius McCowan of the 1106th Theater Aviation Support Maintenance Group leaps over a beam in an obstacle course Sept. 15 during the Best Warrior Competition at Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif. McCowan took top honors in the noncommissioned officer portion of the competition. **RIGHT:** Spc. John Cunningham of 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment, nears the finish of a 5.2-mile ruck march carrying a 35-pound pack Sept. 14 during the Best Warrior Competition. Cunningham was recognized as the top Soldier in the competition.

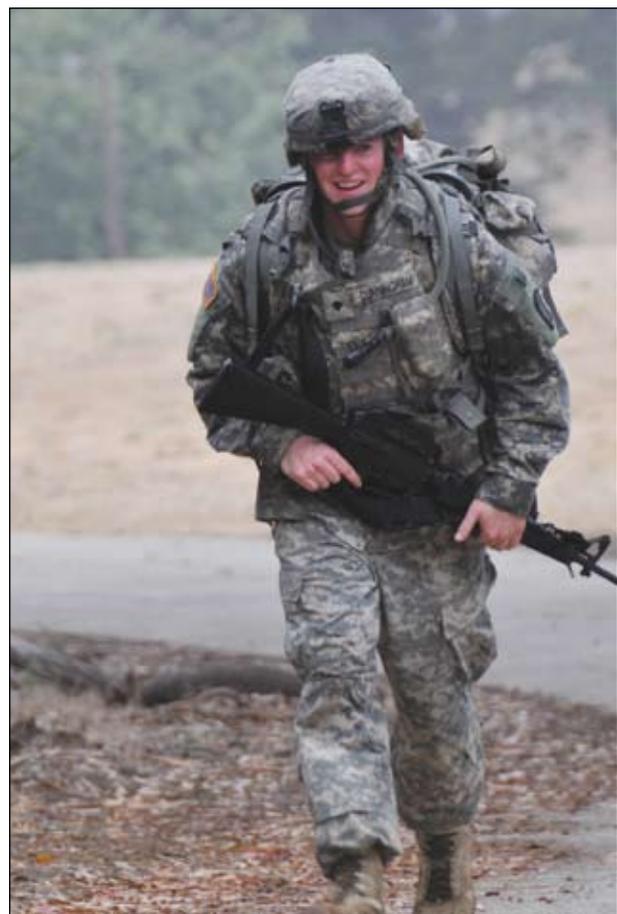


Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr

Best Warrior Competition is to lead by example.

"I want to spark motivation in the junior enlisted and the junior NCOs in my own unit," he said. "Maybe they'll follow and try to do the same."

McCowan and Cunningham will now have an opportunity to compete against Best Warrior winners from the rest of National Guard Region 7: Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Guam. The winners of that competition will move on to compete for the honor of national Best Warrior.

McCowan said he thinks he has a great chance to win Region 7.

"I had really short notice showing up to this competition, and all the guys that I've competed with feel that I've been

a solid competitor," he said. "So if I can win [this] competition with this little training, then I think at the next level I'll probably do a lot of damage."

Spc. Brian Quinonez, a competitor from Signal Company, 224th Sustainment Brigade, said he is confident in his abilities but still felt nervous, even during the company-level competition, because there were so many top-notch Soldiers vying for the title. Though Quinonez placed first in the weapons course and combatives events, he said he plans to perform better next year.

"I'm going to study and work on the skills that made me weak in some of the competition," he said. "I didn't know what to expect coming into this competition ... but nobody had an 'I'm better than you' kind of attitude. I've learned a great deal from all these NCOs. I'm glad I got to compete with them."



**ABOVE:** Spc. John Cunningham, far left, and Staff Sgt. Demetrius McCowan, far right, receive their awards as the top Soldier and noncommissioned officer, respectively, in the CNG's Best Warrior Competition from Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the adjutant general of the California National Guard. They are joined on stage by U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher. **RIGHT:** A Soldier with the California National Guard's 1st Battalion (Assault), 140th Aviation Regiment, which returned from an Iraq deployment this summer, waves to the crowd of 30,000 at the annual Wings, Wheels and Rotors Expo on Joint Forces Training Base-Los Alamitos. Two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from the 1-140th flew McCowan, Cunningham and the other Best Warrior Competition finalists to the event, which also featured skydivers delivering the names of the winners.



Photos by Sgt. Glen Baker

# 640th ASB trains Iraqis on HEMTT fuel trucks

Aviation Support Battalion-led class prepares Iraqi personnel to run Camp Taji airfield after U.S. withdrawal

By **SPC. MATTHEW A. WRIGHT**  
640th Aviation Support Battalion Public Affairs

Soldiers from Company A, 640th Aviation Support Battalion, conducted a weeklong class in September on Camp Taji, Iraq, to train Iraqi Soldiers to operate Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks, or HEMTTs, in preparation for Iraqi Security Forces to take over operations at the Camp Taji airfield.

Soldiers from the 640th trained Iraqi Soldiers to operate and maintain the M978M HEMTT Fuel Truck and to conduct training on the HEMTT for other Iraqi personnel. The M878M is a 10-ton, eight-wheeled, fuel-servicing vehicle that holds up to 2,500 gallons of fuel.

"They will be receiving four to six [HEMTTs], brand new," said Staff Sgt. Rory Huerta, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the training program. "We need to make sure that they understand how to not just drive them, but conduct preventive maintenance and services on the vehicles as well as fuel their vehicles and aircraft."

The 80-hour block of HEMTT training was condensed to 40 hours. The training started with 640th personnel familiarizing the students on HEMTT basic preventive maintenance. As it continued through the week, the training covered driving the vehicles and operating the fueling system,

including the fueling of other vehicles and aircraft.

As the training progressed further, 640th Soldiers taught Iraqi personnel instructional techniques for training other Iraqi troops on the HEMTT. Capt. Ali, the senior Iraqi officer in the class, was impressed with the training and its usefulness for Iraqi personnel.

"The class is providing very good information for us," he said. "This experience will be good for the warrant officers and the fueling specialists that I have worked with for 25 years."

"At the end of the day, my Soldiers were able to connect with the Iraqis," Lt. Col. Lou Carmona, commander of the 640th ASB, said during a graduation ceremony speech at the conclusion of the training. "This equipment is an important capability for the Iraqi Army — it represents the ability to project aviation into parts of the country where little or no infrastructure exists."

The 640th is a National Guard unit based in Southern California. For the past seven months, the battalion has provided aviation operations support for the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade at a number of bases throughout Iraq. That support includes repairing helicopters, providing security and fuel for the brigade and supporting tactical communications at three locations in Iraq.



Sgt. Gilbert Britto, a San Diego native with Company A, 640th Aviation Support Battalion, shows a class of Iraqi Soldiers how to connect a fueling nozzle to the fueling module of a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck at Camp Taji, Iraq, on Sep. 13.

Photo by SPC. Matthew A. Wright

# Infantry Squad Battle Course tests I-160th troops

New Camp Roberts range provides virtual, real-world training opportunities

By **SGT. AARON RICCA**  
Task Force Warrior Public Affairs

Sounds of Adhan, the Islamic call to prayer, echo off the canyon walls as Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment, approach a bunker dug into a hillside. The hot, arid wind brings with it dust and feelings of nervous anticipation.

The cracking of an AK-47 machine gun breaks the silence. Nearly 100 meters from where the California Army National Guard infantrymen are advancing, a man in a gun-mounted truck facing the troops also opens fire. The Soldiers take cover, return fire and begin a coordinated counterattack. Within minutes, the opposing threat is eliminated.

In preparation for future deployments to areas like Iraq and Afghanistan, the 1-160th, whose headquarters is in Inglewood, Calif., spent part of its two-week annual training in August as well as a weekend drill in October becoming the first Golden State National Guard unit to roll through the newly constructed Infantry Squad Battle Course on Camp Roberts, Calif.

One of the primary features of the fully automated, 80-meter-wide, 1,300-meter-deep range is a visual battle simulator, a computer-based simulation program that takes place in a building before Soldiers step out on the lanes.

Multiple types of targets populate the small canyon where the course is laid out. Twenty green, plastic, human-shaped "echo" silhouette pop-up stationary infantry targets scatter the course. If those are too easy to shoot, six mobile infantry targets slide back and forth on a rail system. Additionally six truck-silhouette stationary armor targets — which include a picture of a scowl-



Sgt. Frank Panza of Company C, 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment, takes a security position Aug. 20 during an exercise on the Infantry Squad Battle Course at Camp Roberts, Calif.

Photo by Sgt. Aaron Ricca

ing, bearded human figure — might pop up from a dirt mound at any given time. There is even a mobile armor target, a truck-silhouette target that moves on a rail system. To top it all off, there are also five machine gun and observation bunkers and two trench obstacles that infantrymen must slither through to get to the next objective.

"[This course is] setting them up for success so subordinates have faith in their

squad leaders' and team leaders' abilities," said Master Sgt. William Black, non-commissioned officer in charge of the Camp Roberts range branch.

Construction started on the range in 2007 and was completed in 2009. Other elements such as the variety of targets, electrical wiring and solar panels that power the targets have been added since then. The range previously functioned as a non-automated

course dating back to the Vietnam War era. Back then, Soldiers sitting under a concrete bunker would tape a paper target to a staff, raise it above the cement barrier and hold on as it was riddled with bullets.

Today's range encompasses a whole new world of technology. The first module of training involves an aspect of life interwoven in the fabric of the new generation of Soldiers: virtual missions tailored by the company commander.

The virtual battle takes place in two rooms full of computers, where squads face off against each other while squad and platoon leaders view a 3-D overview of the battlefield on a large screen in a central area. The simulation helps Soldiers practice squad tactics in a virtual world before venturing into the real one. Following the virtual exercise, the Soldiers make their way through the physical course.

Rigged in full battle-rattle — body armor, helmets, weapons and ammunition — the Company C team made its trek through the nearly one-mile-long course. Along the way they encountered numerous obstacles, all of which were activated by range observer/controllers using a mobile laptop computer system while walking alongside the squads on the lane.

"I was blown away," said Company C Executive Officer 1st Lt. Cameron Larsuel. "This course is one of the most advanced lanes I've seen in my six years in the military."

Over the course of a day, Soldiers benefit from a realistic experience that prepares them for pre-mobilization combat training. "We're actually here to learn from our own mistakes and learn from other people," said 22 year-old Pfc. Christopher Lopez.

# 129th tests personnel recovery at Bold Quest

By **MICHAEL MADDOX**  
Camp Atterbury Public Affairs

It has been said that the sum of a whole may be greater than its individual parts. One example of this is when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, was formed to check Soviet expansion after World War II. And while the Cold War is over, the alliance continues to be relevant.

NATO troops serve in Afghanistan, alliance member states participated in the invasion of Iraq, and NATO air power was recently employed over Libya. This year's

Bold Quest exercise, Sept. 8-23 at Camp Atterbury, Ind., was yet another example of NATO countries coming together.

Driven by the need to make warfighters more effective in engaging targets while minimizing the risk of fratricide, the exercise was designed to test nations' interoperability of command and control, communications and computer systems with a focus on combat identification. The more than 700 participants included troops from Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The CNG's 129th Rescue Wing was among the American contingent. The 129th Airmen flew night and day to test systems used for digitally aided personnel recovery in challenging conditions and environments.

"Specifically, our focus was on helping to validate systems which respond to an isolating event — such as an aircraft crash or shutdown — by enabling command elements to receive notification that the event has occurred, track available recovery assets in the area, task an asset to perform the recovery, transmit precise information about the event to the recovery asset and maintain near-real-time control of the recovery asset to update taskings as needed," said Capt. Benjamin Copley, an HH-60G helicopter co-pilot for the 129th. "The technologies we were testing allow us to do all of this ... in just a few minutes, enabling immediate response and greatly increasing our chances of a successful recovery."

The multinational aspect of the exercise enabled the various militaries to see how their systems will work with other nation's systems.

"Work in this kind of exercise makes our system more efficient," said French Air Force Sgt. Jerome Fromentin. "It increases our compatibility."

The interoperability of the systems also extend to a human level as the personnel from NATO states work together.

"Sharing of all information with other nations is the goal," said French Air Force Maj. Laurent Pourtalet. "Communication is everything."

Technological training and testing is a major part of Bold Quest, according to Norwegian Maj. Tommy Myrvoll, who said there has been great progress in recent years.

"We first participated in 2009, and we saw that our systems had some challenges, especially talking to other systems," Myrvoll said. "Now we have done some work on our systems and they are working very well."

Being able to work on systems and communications in a coalition training environment is beneficial for everyone, ensuring operations will run smoothly during real-world missions, said Australian Maj. Antoni Furman.

"It's good to be part of a coalition team where we are all working for the same outcomes — everyone is getting the same feedback and developing the system as a coalition team," Furman said. "We look forward to coming to these events to participate and continue to learn in a coalition setting."

Maj. Gen. Cliff Tooley, assistant adjutant general for the Indiana National Guard, said the exercise was very beneficial for real-world operations.

"Very seldom will we deploy upon our own; we'll always engage with our partners in coalition efforts," he said. "When we respond to the emergencies of the world, we'll do it with our partner nations. All of those emergencies require that you come together as a team quickly, and you can only do that if you practice and rehearse before the event."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Wang

An Airman with the CNG's 129th Rescue Wing participates in Bold Quest 2011, a 12-nation exercise designed to make warfighters more effective in engaging targets while minimizing the risk of fratricide, in September at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

## CSMR troops train for search and rescue

By **COL. (CA) SCOTT LEFAVER**  
California State Military Reserve

More than 80 California State Military Reserve (CSMR) Soldiers joined Soldiers of the California National Guard's 2632nd Transportation Company for a two-day exercise Oct. 1-2 on Camp Parks, Calif., that included training in urban search-and-rescue techniques, first aid in urban settings, and incident command structure and implementation.

The CSMR members were part of Regional Support Command-North (RSC-North), which was completing its third year of training in search-and-rescue operations.

The CSMR and 2632nd Transportation Company troops were trained by certified search-and-rescue personnel including Chris Suter, chief of the San Ramon Fire Protection District, and Ron Seitz, Chief of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Unit.

Suter's instruction focused on using the incident command system and working with local government agencies within that system. He emphasized that during a Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) mission, the CSMR may report to an incident commander who is a civilian — and who is the most qualified person to run a local incident command post.



Photo by Maj. (CA) Jon Wells

Sgt. (CA) David Pfaff, left, and Spc. (CA) Ryan Micheletti prepare a mock casualty for medical evacuation after extracting the wounded survivor from a building strewn with obstacles and debris during search-and-rescue training with the California National Guard's 2632nd Transportation Company, the San Ramon Fire Protection District and the Alameda County Sheriff's Office in October at Camp Parks, Calif.

Suter also reviewed responsibilities within each section of the command structure and emphasized areas in which the CSMR

could play an important role, including communications, operations, logistics and medical care.

Seitz and his deputy chief, Rick Covar, led their search-and-rescue team trainers in setting up training stations that covered how to lift and move objects, search buildings for survivors, assess a building for hazardous conditions and carry wounded personnel out of buildings with obstacles and debris blocking passage. RSC-North also exercised its capabilities in communications and command post procedures.

After the exercise, Brig. Gen. (CA) Roland Candee, the CSMR commander, awarded the California Achievement Medal to both Suter and Seitz for their volunteer service to the CSMR during the past several years.

Search-and-rescue training is part of a program that prepares RSC-North Soldiers to assist the National Guard in its DSCA missions when called up by the governor to support civil authorities. Other preparation for this role includes advanced first aid and combat lifesaving training as well as instruction in security.

RSC-North is currently working with the CNG's 49th Military Police Brigade in its Homeland Response Force mission. RSC-North also provides training to Guard units in combat lifesaving, small arms training, communications, driver training and Warrior skills, and it acts as the opposing force in annual training exercises.



# Chief's Corner

## Gearing up for WOC School

By **CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 5 ARTAVIA M. EDWARDS**  
California Army National Guard Command Chief Warrant Officer

Congratulations to those applicants who have received predetermination for appointment as warrant officers! This is a big first step in the process of becoming a warrant officer. Since warrant officers are experts and trainers in their respective fields, a predetermination must be made as to whether they possess demonstrated knowledge, expertise and training in a warrant officer feeder military occupational specialty, or MOS. This predetermination is made by the respective school that exercises supervisory management of all training and development in the specialty. A successful predetermination means the applicant is technically qualified to serve in the designated MOS.

Having been found technically qualified, the applicant must appear before the Federal Recognition Board, which will further determine the applicant's qualifications and abilities as a potential leader in the California Army National Guard. If the applicant successfully satisfies the board's scrutiny, the applicant is immediately appointed a warrant officer candidate (WOC). The newly pinned WOCs are sent on their way with the charge and expectation that they will successfully complete Warrant Officer Candidate School.

The California Army National Guard's 223rd Regional Training Institute on Camp San Luis Obispo is gearing up to educate and train WOCs during its fourth year of running Warrant Officer Candidate School. While the Warrant Officer Career College on Fort Rucker, Ala., remains the executive agent for all warrant officer training missions, California is one of 25 states that teach Phase II of Warrant Officer Candidate School. WOCs in the California Army National Guard will complete the Phase I non-resident course no later than two weeks prior to attending Phase II.

Phase II will begin in February and continue over a series of five training weekends. Candidates should be prepared both mentally and physically for a demanding leadership development course. The training will emphasize learning methods that will engage WOCs under increasing levels of physical and academic stress. Make no mistake about it: The Fort Rucker cadre will be on site to ensure the training is being conducted to their established doctrine. This is not meant to scare WOCs. Rather, it is to ensure the candidates are prepared both mentally and physically for the road ahead.

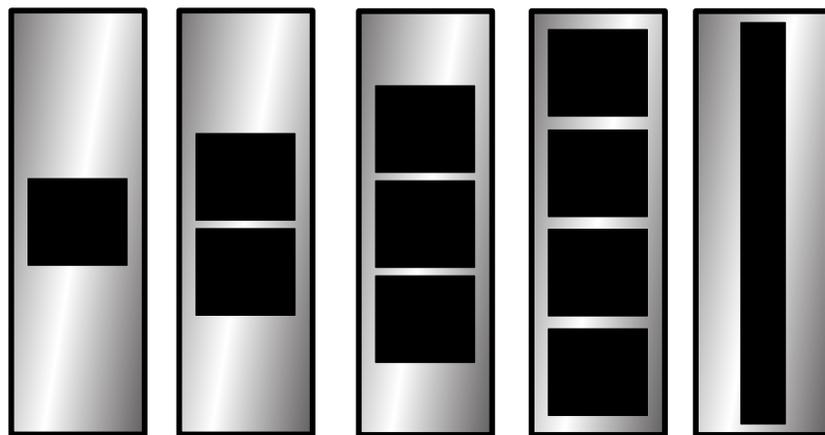
Phase III begins in July 2012 and consists of a two-week active duty training period at Camp Atterbury, Ind. Upon graduation, WOCs are appointed warrant officer 1. Hooah!

### Do you have what it takes?

To join the California Army National Guard's ready, relevant, operational warrant officer force, contact:

**Northern California:** Chief Warrant Officer 2 Helen Nunez, 916-854-1331 or [helen.nunez.cruz@us.army.mil](mailto:helen.nunez.cruz@us.army.mil)

**Aviation and Southern California:** Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tammy Henry, 916-710-2230 or [tammy.henry@us.army.mil](mailto:tammy.henry@us.army.mil), and Capt. Charles Hill, 916-206-8127 or [charles.hill7@us.army.mil](mailto:charles.hill7@us.army.mil)



## Panetta: Services must work jointly on budget 'storms'

Photo by Tech Sgt. Jacob N. Bailey



**Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta delivers remarks Oct. 12 at the Association of the U.S. Army's annual meeting and exposition in Washington, D.C.**

By **CHERYL PELLERIN**  
American Forces Press Service

U.S. military services must work together to face mounting budget pressures and determine the nation's future needs, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said Oct. 12 at the annual meeting of the Association of the U.S. Army in Washington, D.C.

The services need to weather the present budget storms as a team, he said, putting the needs of all before the needs of one. Tough decisions lie ahead, he added.

Today's Army is unmatched by any in the world, the secretary said, and yet the military services, and the Army in particular, have reached an important inflection point. The United States is bringing the war in Iraq to a responsible end, Panetta said, and Afghanistan is still a tough fight, but conditions are being set for a responsible transition to Afghan security by the end of 2014.

"As we draw down in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army will gain finally some much-needed strategic breathing space," he said. "Already, combat deployments are being shortened from 12 months to nine months."

"We must use this time well and wisely," Panetta added, "because as welcome as it is, it comes as we face an extraordinary fiscal pressure on the military, on the Defense [Department] and, for that matter, on the country. This department faces the imperative of cutting more than \$450 billion over the next 10 years."

The Defense Department is willing to do its part, he said, but "there are some who continue to propose even deeper cuts in defense, arguing that the draconian cuts that are

part of this crazy doomsday mechanism called sequester — a \$1 trillion cut if it takes effect — somehow won't impact on our national security."

Sequestration would force across-the-board cuts of the worst kind, he said.

"It would hollow out the force," he said. "It would leave our military deficient in people, in training and [in] equipment, and unable to adapt when the next security challenge comes along."

The same mistake was made after World War I, after World War II, after Korea, after Vietnam and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he said.

"We must never make that mistake again," Panetta added. "And it will not happen under my watch."

The international security environment is growing in complexity and uncertainty, he said, and the nation and the world must continue to deal with terrorism and the threat of violent extremism.

"My job is to make sure we're ready for that role across a complex group of missions," Panetta said, "to ensure that our armed forces remain the very best in the world and that our Army remains the finest strategic land force in the world."

The nation's future military will be smaller, but it must be able to address such future challenges, which likely will come from "state and non-state actors arming with high-tech weaponry that is easier both to buy and to operate — weapons that frustrate our traditional advantage and freedom of movement," Panetta said.

# Airman's fate highlights need for prevention

Senior Airman Andy Piche's tragic suicide shocks friends, relatives and co-workers

By **STAFF SGT. JESSICA INIGO**  
Joint Task Force Sierra Public Affairs

Suicide Prevention Month was just a couple of months ago in the National Guard, but sometimes months can feel like years and all the training in the world can simply fall to the wayside.

Joint Task Force Sierra members working along the Southwest border heard startling news upon returning to work one Monday morning: A former member of their ranks had taken his own life over the weekend on Oct. 23.

Senior Airman Andy Piche had been an entry identification team (EIT) member out of Chula Vista Station and worked alongside Border Patrol, acting as additional eyes and ears in one of the busiest corridors in San Diego.

"We were torn up," said Spc. John Rotner, who worked with Piche out of the Chula Vista Station for about a year. "A lot of us didn't even believe it. He was just too proud to do something like that, so we didn't believe it until we finally got confirmation from the family."

About a dozen members of the task force carpooled to Piche's funeral in Colton, Calif., and the grave site committal at Riverside National Cemetery with full military honors Nov. 1.

Piche left the border mission in June of this year.

"He was a great friend who actu-

ally cared about us very much," said Spc. Danny Martinez, a current coastal EIT member who worked with Piche out of Chula Vista Station and often had him stay over at his house. "Everybody in the Chula Vista Station was really close; Andy would do anything to help us out without asking anything in return."

Rotner said Piche's death caught everyone by surprise.

"He was supposed to have come to town for my birthday last weekend," Rotner said two weeks after Piche took his own life. Rotner hadn't seen his friend for two months. "It's hard, when you don't see someone for a while, to know what they're going through."

The two first met upon the start of the Southwest border mission during training at Camp Roberts, Calif. "When we first met at Roberts," Rotner said, "we clicked instantly." He added that the two would often imitate former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's voice. "I don't think we ever talked normal at work."

As the two continued to work together on the task force, a bond grew not just between the friends, but with the entire station. "We worked swing [shifts] at Chula Vista Station," Rotner said. "All of us there were more than co-workers; we were brothers and sisters."

However, the family bond wasn't enough to keep the peace if there was a challenge placed on Piche,

Rotner said. "It was impossible. He was so proud, he'd never back down from a challenge."

After work Rotner and Piche would often get together with their privately owned vehicles. "He loved his car," Rotner said. "It was a BMW he named Yesenia. I would take my car, Linda, and we would have some late nights out after work."

Questions remain as to why the 22-year-old Moreno Valley native committed suicide.

Soldiers and Airmen are taught to see warning signs and seek help when necessary. Sometimes, though, all the training in the world cannot help a battle buddy see inside the mind of another person.

"You never really know what someone may be thinking or what they might be going through," said Air Force Lt. Col. Mike Beyer, Joint Task Force Sierra chaplain. "That's why our ACE training encourages us to ask." ACE means Ask, Care, Escort; the acronym is given out on training cards to all service members during suicide prevention guidance.

Beyer also emphasized the importance of self-reflecting and reaching out if having suicidal thoughts.

"Life is just plain hard sometimes," he said. "So this just reinforces the need we all have to know our resources and to reach out for the help we need when we

need it most."

Piche joined the Guard a couple of years after high school in 2008 as a security forces Airman. After training he went to March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, Calif., to serve the California National Guard's 163rd Reconnaissance Wing.

According to his family, Piche loved working out and had been involved in bodybuilding since age 13. More recently he was using these skills as a physical trainer, according to friends. Piche's high level of physical fitness may have been his saving grace from one vice that task force members remember about their teammate.

"For being such a little guy and so in shape, he ate like a monster, and it was always junk food," Sgt. 1st Class Rich Ittner said with a laugh. Ittner said he knew Piche mainly on a professional level, as he was Piche's platoon sergeant. "He was fantastic. The main thing he did, he brought us in as family; he drew us in. He was the mortar of the unit."

Maribel Martinez, Piche's sister, said family was always at the forefront of her brother's priorities.

"He really loved being outdoors, going to Big Bear or just having a barbecue. Mainly, though, he really wanted all the family together. He loved just hanging out with the family," she said. Piche's family will always remember his love of fitness, his creativity through photography and the way he re-



Photo courtesy of the Piche family

Senior Airman Andy Piche took his own life Oct. 23.

ally loved to live life through outdoor activities, Martinez said.

In honor of Piche, Joint Task Force Sierra is also marking November as Suicide Prevention Month, and the Soldiers and Airmen will refresh their awareness as well as look at new material and observe a moment of silence for the friend and co-worker who is no longer with them.

Rotner offered a message of advice and hope for any other Soldier or Airman who may be contemplating the worst.

"You're not alone. If you're feeling depressed or in pain, tell your friends, tell your family," he stressed. "A lot more people care about you than you think."

## Former NG IndyCar driver Wheldon dies in 15-car crash

By **SGT. MAJ. CHRISTOPHER J. CURTIS**  
National Guard Bureau

The National Guard lost a true friend and champion Oct. 16, 2011, when Dan Whel-

don, 33, driver of the Guard's No. 4 IndyCar in 2009 and 2010, died from injuries sustained during a tragic 15-car crash.

J.R. Hildebrand, the National Guard's cur-

rent IndyCar driver, was one of three other drivers injured in the crash at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. He suffered a concussion and other injuries and was released from University Medical Center in Las Vegas a day later.

Officials decided to cancel the race, but the drivers who were not involved in the crash drove a five-lap tribute to Wheldon. NASCAR drivers racing in Talladega, Ala., the following weekend honored Wheldon by placing on their cars a "Lionheart Knight" image, which Wheldon wore on his helmet.

IndyCar drivers and fans alike admired Wheldon, a two-time Indianapolis 500 winner and the 2005 IndyCar Series champion, but his popularity among service members went well beyond what he accomplished on the track.

When not racing, Wheldon frequently visited military members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Maryland and at veterans hospitals around the country. Visiting troops and spending time with them remained important to Wheldon even after

he stopped driving for the National Guard following the 2010 season.

Wheldon also served as the national spokesman for the National Guard Youth Challenge Program, which supports at-risk teenagers and young adults around the country.

With Wheldon at the wheel of the Guard's IndyCar, the National Guard brand gained nationwide exposure that was amplified because of his belief in the organization and its members. More importantly, his interaction with troops increased organizational pride throughout the Guard.

Wheldon's support of the Guard was apparent through much more than a logo on his car or uniform, or his willingness to sign autographs for service members. Wheldon was an advocate for those serving their country, those recovering from combat injuries and those striving to join the Guard.

His wife, Susie; his sons, Sebastian and Oliver; and his entire family remain in the thoughts and prayers of the members of the National Guard.



Late IndyCar driver Dan Wheldon (far right) speaks to Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy cadets April 16, 2009, on the CNG's Joint Forces Training Base-Los Alamitos.

Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CA) Rob Karleskint



Staff Sgt. Jarrad Negherbon of the CNG's 235th Engineer Company emerges from a freshly cut hole in a concrete wall after extracting a injured victim following a simulated nuclear detonation Nov. 5 during the Vigilant Guard exercise in Phoenix. Photo by Spc. Eddie Siguenza

## Your school may no longer be eligible for Federal Tuition Assistance

Federal Tuition Assistance will be available in 2012 only at schools that sign a Defense Department memorandum of understanding by Dec. 31.

If your school does not plan to sign the memorandum, you may want to contact your school's administration and urge it to sign the memorandum or consider transferring to a different institution. If your school chooses not to sign the memorandum, you may be eligible to pay your tuition using benefits from the G.I. Bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment VetSuccess Program, Pell Grants, Cal Grants and the California National Guard Education Assistance Award Program.

For more information and a list of institutions that have signed the memorandum, visit [www.dodmou.com](http://www.dodmou.com) or contact the National Guard Education, Incentives and Employment Education Support Center at 866-628-5999. Students can apply for Federal Tuition Assistance online 60 days before courses start at [www.goarmyed.com](http://www.goarmyed.com).

## Free tutoring for all Guard members

National Guard members and their families can now receive free tutoring from the website [www.tutor.com](http://www.tutor.com) regardless of their duty status. The free services were previously available only to Guard members on Title 10 active duty.

Through a collaborative effort of the Department of Defense Morale, Welfare and Recreation Library Program and the DoD's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, adult students and children in grades K-12 can now receive free help with homework, exam preparation, college coursework and more.

The website's tutors comprise more than 2,500 carefully screened experts, including certified teachers, college professors, graduate students, select undergraduates from accredited universities and other professionals.

## Military Museum turns 20

The California State Military Museum in Sacramento will celebrate its 20th anniversary on Veterans Day, Nov. 11. Admission is free Nov. 8-11, and the California Department of Veterans Affairs will open a new Veterans Outreach Center at the museum Nov. 11. The center will be staffed by interns and enable veterans to begin the process of obtaining state and federal benefits and services. For more info, visit [www.militarymuseum.org](http://www.militarymuseum.org).

## NRD launches Veterans Job Bank

The National Resource Directory (NRD) has launched a new Veterans Job Bank, accessible at [www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/jobSearch/index](http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/jobSearch/index).

The Job Bank provides a central resource for veterans to locate job opportunities without visiting multiple sites. The Job Bank is unique in that it provides users with the ability to define their search criteria by keyword, military occupational code and location. The NRD jobs search engine then pulls a selection of global job opportunities that have been posted or specifically tagged for veterans on job boards such as Simply Hired and corporate websites.

The NRD is a partnership of the federal Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs departments.

## DID YOU KNOW...

**the enlisted promotion systems for the Air and Army National Guard are different, but the key actions a service member should take are the same?**

To be successful, a service member should:

1. Prepare yourself to assume new duties and leadership opportunities at a moment's notice;
2. Vigilantly review personnel records to ensure all documents are up to date and on file;
3. Review performance reports to ensure they are complete and accurate;
4. Actively pursue opportunities for military and civilian education courses; and
5. Maintain your physical fitness and weight.

Remember, no one is more concerned about your promotion opportunity and your ability to advance than you are. Your career is in your own hands.



Public Affairs Directorate, California National Guard

9800 Goethe Road, Sacramento, CA 95827-3561



An HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter from the CNG's 129th Rescue Wing flies near Albuquerque, N.M., on its way to the multinational Bold Quest exercise on Camp Atterbury, Ind., in September. During the exercise, the 129th tested systems used for digitally aided personnel recovery. For more on Bold Quest, see page 16.  
Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Wang

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**Submissions:** GrizzlyMag.ngca@ng.army.mil

**Feedback:** brandon.honig@us.army.mil

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