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GRIZZLY

Official Newsmagazine of the California National Guard

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Leadership Corner

Our mission starts on the homefront

Major General David S. Baldwin

The National Guard has always been a citizen force, one rooted in the communities in which it serves. It should come as little surprise, then, that as our role in the wars abroad begins to wind down, our focus should increasingly turn to matters closer to home.

Our civil mission, known formally as Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA), is central to the way ahead for the California National Guard. More than any other state, California is ripe with potential for natural and man-made emergencies. It is only by centering our training, resources and personnel on the DSCA effort that we can expect to respond rapidly and effectively to incidents at home.

As it is in combat, readiness is central to the DSCA mission. The effort to prepare for disasters and civil unrest is no less a fight than combating terror and tyranny abroad. Leaders at all levels need to integrate civil-response instruction into their weekend training plans, without exception. Our domestic skills — whether providing security for special events, responding to natural disasters or quelling civil unrest — must be sharp, continually honed during weekend drills and annual training at Camp Roberts and Camp San Luis Obispo.

Our leaders must clearly understand — and detail to their Soldiers and Airmen — how their units integrate into the larger civil mission of the California Guard. This understanding should drive and guide their training, ensuring their units' preparedness for whatever California and the nation might throw our way.

It is only by centering our training, resources and personnel on the Defense Support of Civil Authorities effort that we can expect to respond rapidly and effectively to incidents at home. ... The effort to prepare for disasters and civil unrest is no less a fight than combating terror and tyranny abroad.

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

It is essential that our commanders ensure their units have the manning, resources and support needed to fulfill their DSCA mission. I expect our officers and noncommissioned officers to monitor closely the material and personnel readiness within their units, noting and correcting deficiencies in a timely manner. "Amber" and "red" are unacceptable statuses in terms of our readiness; the California Guard is a "green" force, one that is always at the ready.

The DSCA mission is also vital to the CNG's future. As we plan for the growth of our force and set the conditions for success, we need to remember that our civil mission sets us apart within the Armed Forces as an essential component on the homefront. The federal government is increasingly leaning on the National Guard to shore up the nation's civil responsiveness and capabilities, and we must embrace those opportunities for domestic missions as our country moves toward times of peace.

Amid this transition to a greater domestic role, we must remember that our support of civil authorities cannot hinder our combat readiness. We are Soldiers and Airmen first, and the past decade of conflict has proven our mettle in the fields of combat. As the nation's most frequently deployed National Guard force, we have set the standard for other states in operations overseas; it is imperative we do the same in the communities we call home.

Army Sgt. Kris Quinones of the CNG's 9th Civil Support Team arrives at an incident site April 24 during a hazardous material training scenario on Coconut Island in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. The scenario was part of Kai Malu O Hawaii, a training event that tested several agencies' maritime response to a threat involving a weapon of mass destruction. Photo by Sgt. Brendan Mackie

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Articles:

- ★ 300-450 words for a half-page story; 700-1,000 words for a full-page article
- ★ Include first and last names, and verify spelling
- ★ Spell out acronyms, abbreviations and full unit designations on first reference
- ★ If there is a public affairs officer assigned to your unit, ensure he or she reviews it

Photographs:

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

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Cover Shot

Photo by Spc. Grant Larson

Spc. Chance Ogawa, a machine gunner for Company C, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, uses blank rounds to provide supporting fire against opposition forces in a field training exercise May 14 during annual training at the National Training Center on Fort Irwin, Calif.

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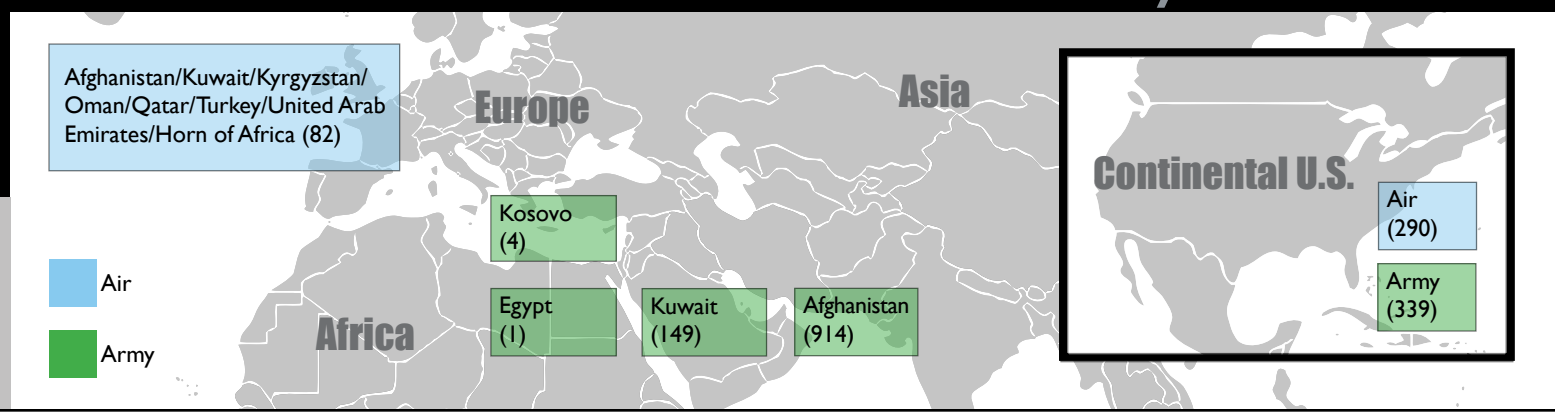


A job only a woman can do

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

A year ago, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command began building all-women cultural support teams that are specially trained in the cultural nuances of interacting with women in theater. The teams were designed to accompany Army Special Operations units and Ranger task forces on missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, where it is culturally inappropriate for a man to approach a woman to whom he is not related. The women in cultural support teams provide the ability to engage women in those countries and discuss their needs.

Photos courtesy of 1st Special Forces Group Cultural Support Team

First Lieutenant Gladys Balderas of the CNG's 100th Troop Command, back row, second from left, gets to know children in Baghlan province, Afghanistan, while serving as a member of a cultural support team deployed with 1st Special Forces Group. The team's mission was to support village stability operations and local police through engagements with Afghan women and girls.

ABOVE: Sgt. Shirley Wu of the 40th Military Police Company teaches children to write their names in a village in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan. LEFT: First Lieutenant Gladys Balderas of the 100th Troop Command eats a traditional Afghan meal with police officers and their wives in Baghlan province.

Four groundbreaking women in the California Army National Guard recently returned from Afghanistan, where they spent seven months operating in a cultural support team alongside Soldiers from 1st Special Forces Group out of Fort Lewis, Wash.

While ad hoc groups similar to cultural support teams had been formed in the past for particular situations or missions, the cultural support team initiative set a new standard of excellence.

After the first-ever group of active duty Soldiers completed eight weeks of cultural support team instruction last year, they were followed by a class of 37 National Guard and Reserve Soldiers, four of whom were members of the California National Guard. The CNG's Capt. Serena Seddio, 1st Lt. Gladys Balderas, Sgt. Shirley Wu and Spc. Barbara Kizer were among the first women to deploy with Special Forces, making a strong contribution to the historic initiative.

"Meeting and building rapport with the female power brokers within the provinces was key to our mission," said Balderas, a member of the CNG's 100th Troop Command. "As well as connecting with Afghan local police commanders and their wives in order to continue building rapport and gaining trust from the local populace, the mission of the women's teams is to support the more kinetic Special Operations activity."

Cultural support teams also connect with Afghan families to build community resilience and support village stability operations.

"As we engaged the female populace, creating income-generating programs was a highlight of the mission," said Balderas, who has a master's of education degree in cross-cultural teaching. "[We were] able to gain trust and have a rapport with the female power brokers, who would support us throughout all of Baghlan province and speak highly of us to the local female nationals and children.

"We saw the male nationals begin to gain much respect towards us … and we were able to seamlessly conduct support operations," she said.

On a daily basis the women were involved in presence patrols, key leader engagements, formal meetings and medical engagements. Promoting Afghan police programs and literacy initiatives was also an important part of their mission.

> **"It felt great knowing we were supporting a worthwhile mission which will help stabilize Afghanistan so that eventually we can draw down [our forces]."**
>
> **- Sgt. Shirley Wu**
> 40th Military Police Company

"We tried to tailor ourselves to each Special Forces team we supported by adding the female component to their approach to village stability operations in a way the teams felt was most appropriate for the region," said Wu, who has served in the Cal Guard for seven years and is a member of the 40th Military Police Company.

She added that providing medical treatment to 200 local nationals was the highlight of her deployment.

"Some of the patients or families provided valuable insight for us in terms of understanding the dynamics of the area," Wu said. "Treating little kids for minor ailments and hanging out and giving them candy afterwards made me feel good about our mission. …

"It felt great knowing we were supporting a worthwhile mission which will help stabilize Afghanistan so that eventually we can draw down [our forces]."

Balderas also said she was proud of the team's influence.

"Through interpersonal meetings, enabling trust, confidence and rapport between the host-nation communities, we were able to make an impact on the villages," she said. "We completely integrated within the teams in the village-support platforms and began conducting missions immediately. We were able to assist the Special Forces in all tasks."

163rd tests Predator for search and rescue

By CAPT. PERRY COVINGTON
163rd Reconnaissance Wing Public Affairs

On May 7, the Cal Guard's 163rd Reconnaissance Wing took part in the U.S. Northern Command exercise Ardent Sentry, which focused on Department of Defense support to civil entities using remotely piloted aircraft to obtain still images and live video feeds.

The object of the exercise was for the Texas National Guard's 147th Reconnaissance Wing to launch an MQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial vehicle from Fort Polk, La., then transfer control of the aircraft to a 163rd Reconnaissance Wing crew in California to execute a mission off the Louisiana coast. Ardent Sentry marked the first time a remotely piloted aircraft was flown in the National Airspace System for a large-scale search-and-rescue exercise.

Air National Guard units, U.S. Northern Command and the Office of the Secretary of Defense worked with agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation and Federal Emergency Management Agency to validate that remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) are powerful assets during a domestic emergency.

File photo

Photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Duquette

"This is a new air operation era in which RPA are becoming more common," said Maj. Dawn Junk, chief of domestic operations and special missions for Air Forces Northern. "One of the purposes of this exercise was to figure out the processes and procedures to incorporate RPA into the National Airspace System safely and effectively."

If the Defense Department shows its civilian counterparts that it can repeat the successes of Ardent Sentry, Junk added, when a real crisis occurs, the interagency relationships already will be in place to carry out real world missions in the National Airspace System.

From March Air Reserve Base in California, 163rd members Maj. Brandon Powell and Master Sgt. Matt Rose flew the MQ-1 over an area that had been stricken by a hurricane, according to the exercise, to find survivors and locate obstacles to civilian rescue personnel on the ground.

"This is one of the first times we have flown in the National Airspace System on this scale," Powell said. "What made this exercise a success was the fact that all entities, both civilian and military, were willing to help and to be flexible."

Maj. Todd Linton, director of operations for the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing Formal Training Unit, said his unit achieved its top goal for the exercise. "One of the things we wanted to prove was that we could fly flawlessly in the National Airspace System and that the live video feed we provide could be made available to all the players involved," he said. "We bring to the table the capability to provide live full-motion video to first responders on the ground. … We can loiter for extensive amounts of time, continually providing situational awareness."

The experience the 163rd has gained from years of supporting overseas contingencies is now being put to good use at home. Additional exercises incorporating remotely piloted aircraft are expected to provide further proof of their value in domestic response and incorporate valuable lessons learned for safe integration into the National Airspace System.

"What this exercise helped us establish was the melding of capabilities from the Department of Defense with those of civilian agencies in times of a natural disaster or crisis," said Lt. Col. Matthew "Duck" Dutkiewicz, commander of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing Formal Training Unit. "MQ-1 capabilities provide first responders instant ability to identify and sort the needs of those they are trying to help."

Green technology good for more than camouflage

By SGT. AARON RICCA
Task Force Warrior Public Affairs

The California Army National Guard has embraced alternative energy. Camp Roberts, a 43,000-acre training base north of Paso Robles, officially opened a 5-acre, 1-megawatt solar energy farm May 17 after 32 months of planning and nearly four months of construction.

The 1-megawatt plant is expected to power the entire base, at least during non-peak power-usage hours, for up to 25 years. The installation will greatly increase the post's cost-efficiency and lessen the environmental impact on communities across California's Central Coast.

"When the troop load is down, the meter will spin backwards," said project manager retired Col. Walter Goodwater. "You can literally see the electricity go back into [Pacific Gas & Electric's] grid to be used by somebody else."

In addition to reducing its environmental footprint, Camp Roberts improved its ability to respond to a major emergency: If the region's power goes down, independence from a failed power grid will make the post self-sustainable. Camp Roberts, located between San Francisco and Los Angeles, is a likely staging area for relief efforts in case of a natural disaster or other catastrophe.

Photo by Sgt. Aaron Ricca

Ron Neighbors, supervisor of building trades for Camp Roberts, turns on the generator that uses solar energy to power the base May 17.

The more than $3 million solar project was funded by the Department of Defense Environmental Security Technology Certification Program, which partnered with Belectric Inc. for engineering, procurement and construction. The plant showcases a low-cost and secure renewable-energy alternative to fossil-fired power generation.

Much of the experimentation for the plant was conducted through the Navy. In addition numerous environmental and archeological studies needed to be completed before construction began in January.

Nonetheless the project was completed on time, on schedule and on budget, said Eugenia Corrales, chief executive officer of Nanosolar Inc., a San Jose-based solar cell manufacturer that provided the solar panels and the design.

During the May 17 ribbon-cutting ceremony, State Assemblyman Louis A. Alejo's office presented a Certificate of Recognition to Camp Roberts Commander Col. Barbara Nuismer in honor of the base's commitment to environmental-improvement efforts.

DoD opens 14,000 new jobs to women

Women are now eligible for jobs that require co-location with ground combat units

By KAREN PARRISH
American Forces Press Service

Two Armed Forces policy changes took effect May 14, opening more than 14,000 new assignments to women in uniform, including jobs that take place near combat units such as tank mechanic and field artillery radar operator. The biggest change, first announced Feb. 9, lifted the restriction on Army jobs near combat units, making 13,000 new jobs available.

"Through their courage, sacrifice, patriotism and great skill, women have proven their ability to serve in an expanding number of roles on and off the battlefield," Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said in a Feb. 9 press release. "We will continue to open as many positions as possible to women so that anyone qualified to serve can have the opportunity to do so."

The second policy change enables the Army, Navy and Marines to open certain positions at the battalion level. The previous policy barred women in fields such as intelligence, communications and logistics from assignment at any unit smaller than a brigade. This change will open nearly 1,200 assignments to female Soldiers, Sailors and Marines.

Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. John Kirby said service leaders will update Panetta in November about their progress in implementing the new policies and may also suggest new policies to increase opportunities for women.

"The secretary was very clear ... that he wants to remove as many barriers as possible to service in the military for female service members," Kirby said. "He's very committed to that and wants to continue to look at other ways we can lower those barriers."

Photo by Master Sgt. David Loeffler

Second Lieutenant Cindy Gonzalez of the CNG's 250th Military Intelligence Battalion participates in a combatives course Feb. 23 in Roseville, Calif. Under regulations enacted in May, female Soldiers like Gonzalez have more occupational opportunities than ever before.

79th IBCT faces down 'Donovians'

Brigade is Guard's first to take on Ft. Irwin's Decisive Action Training Environment

By SGT. 1ST CLASS BENJAMIN COSSEL
79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

The San Diego-based 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) got back to the basics of warfighting with a nearly month-long training exercise at Fort Irwin's National Training Center in the Mojave Desert in May.

With the successful rotation during the month of May, the IBCT became the National Guard's first infantry brigade to complete the Army's Decisive Action Training Environment exercise – a new program designed to refocus the Army's training efforts.

"We're going to go back and make sure we're well-grounded in the basics and fundamentals of warfighting," Brig. Gen. Clarence K.K. Chinn, commander of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, La., told independent newspaper the Army Times in April. "We've been focused and training on fighting out of [combat outposts] and [forward operating bases] because that's really what we needed to do. We needed to replicate as closely as we can the operational environment that we're asking these brigade combat teams to go in and operate."

At Fort Irwin, instead of the counterinsurgency operations used in the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters, about 3,400 Soldiers from the IBCT mounted tanks, took to ridgelines, assaulted villages with artillery cover fire and worked against a simulated enemy every bit as capable and outfitted as themselves.

"NTC is the Super Bowl of Army training," said Sgt. Maj. Sean Robinson, the brigade's operations sergeant major.

In the training scenario, the county of Atropia was fighting back escalating hostilities against neighboring nation Donovia. Atropia was a strategic ally of the United States and asked for assistance in repelling its neighbor.

Enter the 79th IBCT.

In addition to the Donovian forces, the scenario forced the IBCT to consider massive throngs of displaced individuals in overflowing refugee camps along the route to the front line. Further complicating their planning, the 79th Soldiers had to deal with a militant minority group in Atropia that was sympathetic to Donovian land-grab desires.

"We are operating in modern conditions in opposing another nation's armies, government-backed paramilitary organizations, local militias and even criminal elements in a complex human environment," said 79th IBCT Executive Officer Lt. Col. Peter Szczepanski.

The complex human environment was provided by a breathtaking number of role-players playing a wide variety of parts, such as a deceptive Atropian minister of information, enemy spies trying to pass as journalists, all levels of foreign military commanders and citizens in towns punctuating the battlefield.

Photo by Spc. Grant Larson

A Soldier with Company A, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, works to clear a simulated town at the National Training Center on Fort Irwin, Calif., in May.

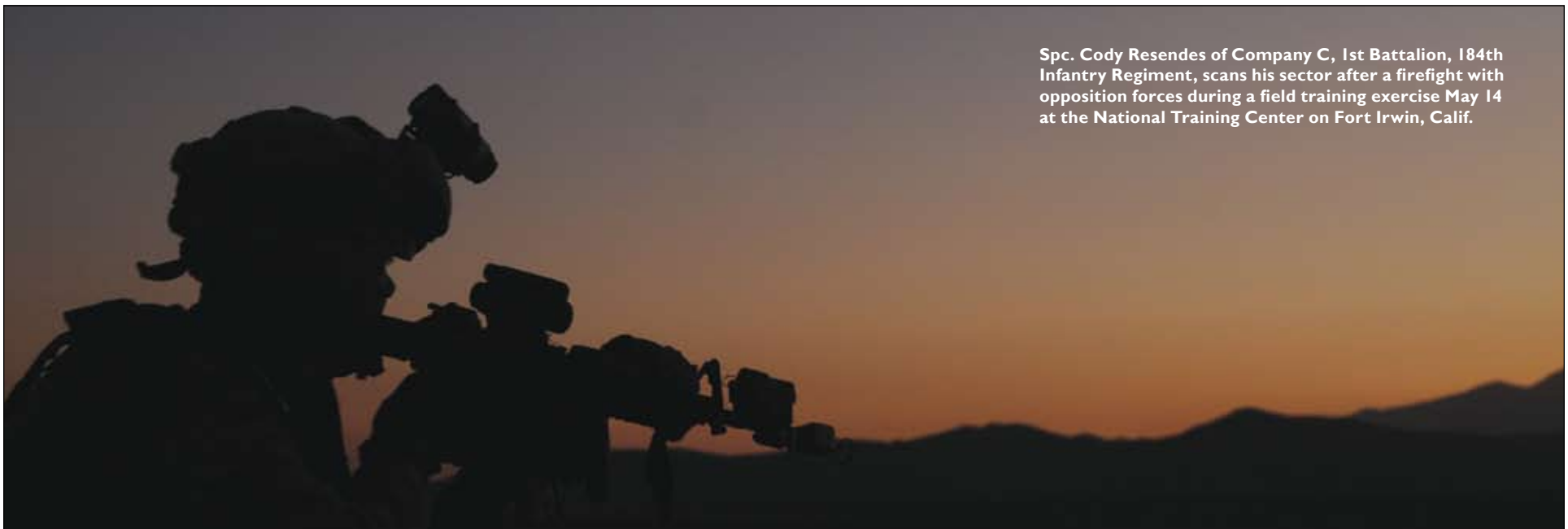


Photo by Spc. Grant Larson

Spc. Cody Resendes of Company C, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, scans his sector after a firefight with opposition forces during a field training exercise May 14 at the National Training Center on Fort Irwin, Calif.

'Nightstalkers'

1-184th Infantry troops live up to their name

By SPC. GRANT LARSON
69th Public Affairs Detachment

About 400 Soldiers with the CNG's 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, participated in a National Training Center (NTC) rotation May 6-25 at Fort Irwin, Calif.

The field training exercise at NTC featured a hybrid threat reflective of the complexities of potential adversaries the U.S. could face in the 21st century, including guerrilla, insurgent, criminal and near-peer conventional forces woven into one dynamic environment.

In this environment, the 1-184th "Nightstalkers" encountered opposition forces known as "Donovians" played by Soldiers of the Fort Irwin-based 11th Armored Cavalry "Black Horse" Regiment, who donned solid-colored sandy-hued uniforms that provided camouflage in the fictional nation of Atropia, which borders Donovia.

The Nightstalkers were just one of several units from the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team that trained at NTC in May. In addition the 1-184th was supported by the 2632nd Transportation Company, which is part of the CNG's 115th Regional Support Group, as well as the Army Reserve's 320th Military Police Company.

Observer-controllers acted as mentors and evaluators to the 1-184th Soldiers, ensuring the training improved their understanding of this complex type of warfare and was conducted in a safe manner.

Being fairly new to the Army, with just two years of service, Pvt. Norberto Morales of Company A, 1-184th, said the NTC exercise made him a better Soldier beginning with day one of the field exercise.

The culminating event for Company A was a night raid on opposition forces in an Atropian town. To gain an advantage, the company scaled rocky, mountainous terrain in the hot afternoon. Once the sun set, Company A enforced noise and light discipline as the Soldiers carefully traversed the sheer mountain face to close in on the opposing force and overtake the enemy's position.

"This training kept me motivated by preparing me for a future deployment and returning home to my family," Morales said.

Robinson was generally pleased with the brigade's performance, but more importantly, he said, the fieldcraft learned by less-experienced Soldiers was key.

"Knowledge at all levels increases survivability," he said. "We really haven't had to sustain ourselves as a brigade in the field since 2001. Doing those [pre-combat inspections and pre-combat checks] first thing in the morning, making sure your Soldiers had water, had their sunblock — those are survival skills, that's developing fieldcraft."

The grueling environment tested the mettle of every Soldier taking part in the operation, and Robinson said he could read the discomfort on people's faces near the end of the exercise. "I saw a lot of pain in people's eyes," the sergeant major said. "This was a tough training environment."

During the exercise, the brigade established multiple firsts for the NTC: It was the first brigade to successfully set up a forward tactical command post during force-on-force operations and was the first reserve component brigade to complete the scenario.

Noting the increased role of the National Guard in augmenting active duty forces, Robinson said training events such as the NTC rotation will be critical as the Army moves forward. "Fort Irwin learned as much from us as we did from them," he said. "The only way we can be one Army is by training together in environments such as what we did."

The exercise is likely to improve as more rotations cycle through NTC, and Robinson said he hopes this will not be the last time the 79th spends a month in "The Box."

"I hope every other year we do a rotation out there," he said. "With training events like this, the Army will be more prepared to take on the next enemy. We are preparing the next generation of leaders and Soldiers to take on the fight."

Photo by Spc. Grant Larson

Spc. Julian Tapia of Company A, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, throws an RQ-11 Raven during an exercise May 17 at the National Training Center on Fort Irwin, Calif. The remote-controlled plane gives troops a birds-eye view of their environment and the battlefield.

Photo by Spc. Grant Larson

NTC exercise combines multiple threats

Soldiers with Company A, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, engage Company C, 1-184th, in a force-on-force training exercise May 20 at the National Training Center on Fort Irwin, Calif.

By KRIS OSBORN
Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, ALT

The Army's National Training Center (NTC) in March implemented a new Decisive Action methodology — a training approach designed to rigorously prepare Soldiers for current and potential future conflict scenarios.

For more about NTC, scan this QR code

The thrust of Decisive Action is to accurately and with painstaking authenticity and detail replicate the threats, tactics, techniques, procedures and combat scenarios currently being experienced in the Afghan theater — while at the same time preparing forces for the possible contingency of facing hybrid-type adversaries.

This hybrid threat, represented at the NTC on Fort Irwin, Calif., as a fictional "Donovian" force, encompasses a range of potential scenarios involving conventional forces often blended with or fortified by insurgent, guerilla and even criminal elements.

"I am impressed with the amount of accuracy and detail with which threats are replicated here at the NTC," said Heidi Shyu, acting assistant secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics and technology, during a visit to Fort Irwin in May. "In particular, I am also pleased that the NTC is incorporating future, next-generation threats into their training cycle."

Shyu often talks about the importance of factoring current- and future-threat capabilities into the acquisition cycle. She emphasizes the need to blend the two in a way that serves Soldiers in the current fight and also prepares them for the anticipated challenges of tomorrow. "The [Decisive Action] training is designed to look past how we fight today and help examine and identify the technologies and investments we need to protect and pursue for the future," Shyu said.

The NTC comprises more than 1,000 buildings, 1,800 role-players, seven forward operating bases and seven to nine towns, some complete with Afghan-style provincial governments and reconstruction teams. Role-players in the mock villages dress, look, eat, live and cook just like people in actual Afghan villages.

The villages, constructed in the years following the start of the Afghan and Iraq wars, are designed to replicate the Afghan theater in great detail, complete with street markets, villagers, insurgents and host-nation security forces. Many of the village inhabitants speak multiple languages including Pashto, Dari and Arabic.

Shyu toured one such village during her visit while a California National Guard unit patrolled and cleared an area. The CNG Soldiers were coming under fire from well-prepared opposition forces and simultaneously being swarmed by civilian inhabitants of the village. The opposition, played by the Fort Irwin-based 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, was made up of troops embracing key roles such as a man planting improvised explosive devices, a police chief, a town mayor and insurgents.

The Decisive Action exercise is firmly grounded in two larger concepts currently informing Army strategy: combined arms maneuver, or CAM, and wide area security, known as WAS.

CAM encompasses the entire spectrum of conventional threats, from near-peer adversaries engaged in fully mechanized tank-on-tank engagements to missiles and air defense, as well as guerilla-style forces armed with advanced weapons such as guided anti-tank missiles. WAS, which also incorporates guerilla and insurgent-type attacks, is primarily geared toward counterinsurgency, or COIN, scenarios.

"As we find the center and balance our forces after 10 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, our Decisive Action approach addresses COIN, hybrid, conventional, guerilla and insurgent forces, even adding criminal elements," said Brig. Gen. Terry Ferrell, NTC commander.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Cossel

Capt. Patrick Bagley, commander of Company D, 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment, reviews his Soldiers' tactics as they prepare to assault a village during a live-fire training exercise at Fort Irwin's National Training Center.

Warriors battle for multi-state title

By SPC. GRANT LARSON
69th Public Affairs Detachment

Photo by Spc. Grant Larson

ABOVE: Cpl. John Cunningham, a cavalry scout with the Cal Guard's 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, pulls a dummy through an obstacle course during the Region VII Best Warrior Competition at Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif., on April 25. BELOW: Staff Sgt. Demetrius McCowan, a sheet metal mechanic for the CNG's 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group, maintains a hold on his opponent from the Nevada National Guard during their April 25 combatives bout.

Fifteen Army-camouflaged gladiators converged on Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif., in April to compete for the titles of Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) of the Year and Soldier of the Year in the Army National Guard Region VII Best Warrior Competition.

The California Army National Guard hosted seven enlisted Soldiers and eight NCOs who had advanced to the April 22-26 tournament by winning their home state or territory's Best Warrior Competition in Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah or Guam. Most of the competitors earned their state or territory's top spot in October or earlier and had been training ever since to condition themselves for Camp SLO's terrain, climate and possible events.

For more, scan this QR code

"The most important way I started preparing was getting on a 60-pound ruck[sack] and doing laps around my neighborhood," said Staff Sgt. Brian Bower of the Arizona National Guard. "If you can [move] with a 60-pound ruck and do a 3-mile run, then you're strengthening up all the body parts you need for a run, for pushups, for sit-ups."

For five days on Camp SLO, the competitors endured 16-hour days with minimum rest. After traveling as much as 6,000 miles on Day 1, the troops received a brief orientation and were told to get their last good night's sleep for the week.

The action began the next morning with the new Army Physical Readiness Test and Combat Readiness Test. The rest of the week's tests flowed almost non-stop with events in day and night land navigation, water survival, combatives, a foot march of unknown distance, a move-and-shoot combat scenario, a multi-stage obstacle course and several other challenges.

"One of the primary ways to set competitors apart is through increasing the [operational tempo]," said Cpl. John Cunningham, a cavalry scout with the Cal Guard's Escondido-based Troop B, 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment.

The most unusual test of the tourney, which was a mystery to the Soldiers leading up to its 6 a.m. start, was the water survival event. On only the second day of the competition, water survival pushed the competitors' conditioning to the brink and separated them into either the sink or swim category. The event required Soldiers to retrieve canteens from the pool, tread water for five minutes and travel the length of the pool with a 30-pound rucksack and rubber rifle.

"This is hard work. Hard but fun," said Spc. John Sanchez of the New Mexico National Guard, who, at 47, was the oldest of the competitors. "I'm so excited to be here competing at this level and with these Soldiers."

The Military Operations on Urban Terrain event followed, with Soldiers throwing hand grenades filled with chalk to mark their impact; breaching and clearing a building to rescue a simulated casualty; calling in a request for a medical evacuation; and firing paint rounds at targets with an M320 grenade launcher.

With the pace of the match moving at lightning speed, it was critical for the warriors to have a support team to keep them going. Each Soldier and NCO brought a sponsor, or battle buddy, from his state to inspire and motivate him. Much like the Tour de France, a support vehicle was always nearby with a change of uniform, food and drink, a quick-fix injury station and a place to power-nap.

"I always make sure he's taken care of physically, has enough water, enough food," said Staff Sgt. Guy Mellor, the sponsor for Spc. Joshua Vazquez of the Utah National Guard. Mellor won the Region VII competition last year and went on to win national recognition as NCO of the Year for the Department of the Army.

"I also make sure I keep him motivated and stay positive," Mellor added. "The mind controls the body, and if you start thinking negative, then you're going to perform in a bad way."

One area the sponsors didn't have much control over was sleep. "I've been running on six hours of sleep every night. It's just enough," Bower said. "If you're running on four hours of sleep, then you're in a little trouble there."

Some events left the contestants alone to their thoughts, like the foot march, which immediately followed the water survival test. Carrying a 35-pound rucksack and rifle, the troops put rubber to pavement and dirt and hiked a then-unknown distance toward the finish line. Each second counted as Utah's Staff Sgt. Craig Pace came from behind to complete the 6-mile route in 1 hour, 24 minutes, only a minute ahead of Nevada's Spc. Julian Batz.

"When you do get tired, you're just trying to push yourself without getting hurt," Vazquez said. "With the ruck march, I was saying to myself, 'I just have to get over this hill, and then just go around this corner, and maybe this corner.'"

Another action highlight came on the morning of the third day: the obstacle course. The bruised and battered competitors had to weave through a tiered cross-beam structure, reach the 10-foot pinnacle and descend to a sandpit. After this grueling mental and physical exertion, the troops had a brief moment to catch their breath. The obstacle course then began again with a climb over a wall. Troops then crawled under a chain-link fence, dragged a 135-pound dummy through sand, went under barbed wire again, climbed a 20-foot rope and pulled a 175-pound stretcher load 50 yards.

"If you can endure that physically … then you're mentally strong," Mellor said.

To help separate the leaders from the pack, each event was timed, and competitors were not allowed to watch their rivals during individual events.

Many warriors remarked that the level of competition was much higher at the Region VII championship than it was at the state level and that each Region VII competitor was clearly passionate about doing their best while wearing the uniform.

"My favorite part of this competition is meeting the other

continued on page 18

Photo by Master Sgt. Paul Wade

Chief's Corner

Find that diamond in the rough

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

Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the CNG adjutant general, recently sent a charge to California Army National Guard commanders to take note of their warrant officer vacancies and get those positions filled. Now, who better to seek out, pursue, uncover, dig out and identify a potential warrant officer than a warrant officer?

The most valuable tool that commanders have at their disposal to accomplish Maj. Gen. Baldwin's task is the Warrant Officer Corps. This game of hide-and-seek is one that warrant officers are well-equipped to win because they have a unique advantage: They have experienced the transformation.

The metamorphosis of a warrant officer is challenging because the change from noncommissioned officer (NCO) to warrant officer requires skillful handling like that of discovering and polishing a diamond in the rough. These special NCOs possess exceptional characteristics and potential but lack the guidance, wisdom, feedback and mentorship that only a warrant officer with greater reciprocal experience can provide.

Mentorship is crucial. It is imperative that warrant officers identify those NCOs who possess sound levels of technical and tactical competence and have the potential to serve as highly specialized experts and trainers while fulfilling the mission of the California Army National Guard.

I am appealing to the Warrant Officer Corps — both senior and junior warrant officers — to take the time to provide mentorship for prospective warrant officer candidates. I believe every warrant officer can reflect upon their career path and identify at least one warrant officer who provided counseling that was essential to their growth, development and success.

Like a natural diamond that appears ordinary at first glance, counseling a prospective warrant officer applicant may result in the development of one who will realize their goal of becoming a warrant officer, just as a diamond's true beauty is realized through the cutting and polishing process.

I am certain that if the Warrant Officer Corps of the California Army National Guard will accept this challenge to step up, seek out and mentor those NCOs who have what it takes to serve as warrant officers, we can help the commanders answer the charge to fill their warrant officer vacancies.

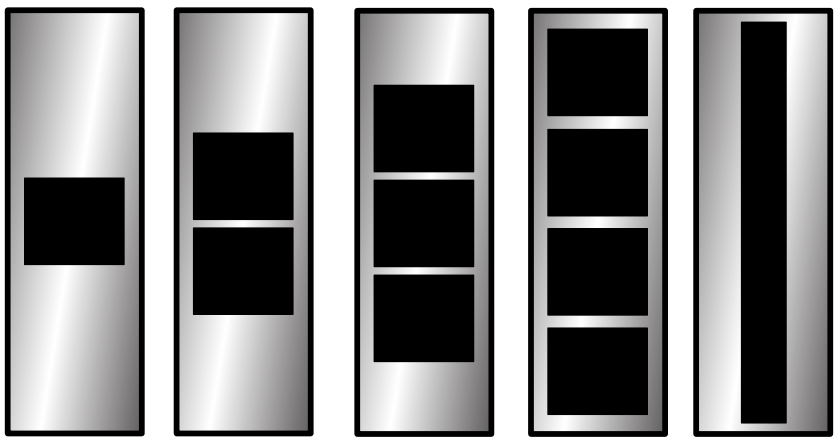
I'm reminded of a quote from famed educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune: "Invest in the human soul. Who knows, it might be a diamond in the rough."

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

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



MPs train for Quick Reaction Force mission

The 270th Military Police Company responds to a simulated riot at the Capitol Mall in Sacramento

By 1ST LT. JASON SWEENEY
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

The scenario: "Black Flag" anarchists have infiltrated a large student demonstration at the Capitol Mall in Sacramento, leading to a full-scale riot, and the California Highway Patrol has credible intelligence that more attacks are planned.

The objective: The 270th Military Police Company must secure the Mall area, prevent arson and looting, and detain individuals who instigate violence.

That scenario was part of an April 15 emergency deployment readiness exercise that tested the response time of the Sacramento-based 270th MPs. The unit is part of the California Army National Guard Tier 1 Quick Reaction Force, which is tasked to provide emergency support to civil authorities within a 12-hour window.

Maj. Keith Haviland, who oversaw the design and implementation of the exercise, said supporting civilian authorities and state agencies such as the California Highway Patrol, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and California Department of Transportation is the No. 1 priority for the California National Guard's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin.

Photo by 1st Lt. Jason Sweeney

Spc. Michael Rupe participates in an emergency deployment readiness exercise April 15 in which the 270th Military Police Company, one of the Cal Guard's Tier 1 Quick Reaction Forces, responded to a simulated riot at the Capitol Mall in Sacramento.

At 6 a.m. on April 15, Soldiers of the 270th received an alert to assemble at the California Highway Patrol Academy in West Sacramento.

"The purpose of this is to check our readiness and ability to meet our requirements for the [Quick Reaction Force] mission," said Sgt. 1st Class Toby Corder, operations noncommissioned officer for the 270th MP Company.

Soon after receiving the alert, Soldiers from the 270th arrived at the Okinawa Readiness Center in Sacramento and loaded up their Humvees with batons, knee and shin guards, ammunition, chemical suits, gas masks and respirator systems.

At the same time, an advance team from the 270th headed to the CHP Academy and linked up with the exercise's incident commander, Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Ames, who briefed the team on the scenario.

Within a few hours from the time of the alert, three platoons consisting of 104 Soldiers and 34 vehicles were on the ground, prepared to provide support for a large riot scenario.

"We sent a platoon out in under three hours, which was good," said Capt. Sean Kelly, the 270th commander.

"The good thing about this [emergency deployment readiness exercise] is it brings to attention things that need to be fixed," he continued. "We can identify weaknesses and areas that need refinement. This definitely gives you the building blocks to succeed and execute Tier 1 response."

ABOVE: Chief Warrant Officer 5 Brian Peterson, senior legal adviser for the California National Guard, competes in the Lincoln National Guard Marathon on May 6 in Lincoln, Neb. Peterson has run in all 29 Lincoln National Guard Marathons. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David Lipp

TOP LEFT: Soldiers with the California National Guard's 132nd Multi-Role Bridge Company drive bridge erection boats while looking to identify a fording site on the Helmand River in Afghanistan. For more on the 132nd, see page 16. Photo by 1st Lt. Charlie Fralick

TOP CENTER: Pararescuemen with the 131st Rescue Squadron, 129th Rescue Wing, re-pack their parachutes May 6 at Moffett Federal Airfield, Calif., after jumping from an HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopter. The pararescuemen jumped from various altitudes and performed static line, freefall, and tandem jumps with personnel and medical equipment. Photo by Senior Airman Jessica Green

Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the adjutant general of the California National Guard, and Chief Ken Pimlott, Director of t
Marine Corps helicopter at Camp Pendleton displays its ability to battle back wildfires. The Marines signed an agreem
Photo by Staff Sgt. Jessica Inigo

the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, watch as a
ent in 2008 to help fight fires in the region surrounding the base.

LEFT: Senior Airman Ryan Calzada, left, and 2nd Lt. Severin Koerner of the 144th Fighter Wing crawl through an obstacle course April 14 at the Wing's base in Fresno during a "combat dining-in," an event designed to build camaraderie and esprit de corps. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Chris Drudge

TOP RIGHT: Two F-16C Fighting Falcons from the California Air National Guard's 144th Fighter Wing come in for a landing at the Fresno Air National Guard Base following a morning training mission April 15. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Chris Drudge

The 40th Infantry Division Band performs May 28 under the direction of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Eric Suganuma during a Memorial Day observance at the Los Angeles National Cemetery. For more on the CNG's Memorial Day activities, see page 12. Photo by Staff Sgt. John Cordeta

HONORING OUR HEROES WHO MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

Memorial Day 2012

By SPC. (CA) JANET BARBIERI
California State Military Reserve

Veterans, family members and grateful citizens across the country observed Memorial Day at the end of last month in solemn remembrance of military men and women who gave their lives in service to their country.

For many years, the California National Guard has supported Memorial Day events across the state by providing color guards, firing parties, bands, guest speakers, flyovers and aircraft and vehicles for display.

With California being home to the nation's largest and most frequently deployed National Guard force, the CNG knows well the sacrifice observed by the nation on Memorial Day. Participating in Memorial Day events is a way for the CNG to directly engage with veterans and military families in honoring the nation's war dead.

This year was no different, with the CNG supporting events and parades at locations across the state, including Canoga Park, Carson, Fair Oaks, Glendale, Los Angeles, North Highlands, Rancho Palos Verdes, Sacramento, Walnut Creek and the popular "A Grateful Nation Remembers" observance in Yuba City, to name just a few.

Col. Laura Yeager, commander of the CNG's 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, was the keynote speaker for the sixth annual Memorial Day ceremony at the Sacramento Veterans Affairs Medical Center Memorial Plaza.

Noting the thousands who have lost their lives in the Middle East, Yeager said they had "rendered a sacrifice that we can never repay," and added that "these days [of observance and appreciation] are so meaningful to those who serve; it shows immense support."

Yeager encouraged those in attendance to not only remember and honor the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice, but to show appreciation beyond Memorial Day. She suggested donating to organizations that support families of the fallen; hiring veterans; visiting military cemeteries; joining the military; and exercising the rights secured and protected by the military, particularly the right to vote.

Marking the day is a poignant way to remember the fallen and show appreciation to military families. For many it is also a way to remind their countrymen about the price of freedom.

"It's very important to remember the sacrifices — so many lives lost," said Floyd Clark, an Air Force veteran who attended the event at the Sacramento Veterans Affairs Medical Center. "People don't understand the freedom they have and that there is a cost."

Originally called "Decoration Day," Memorial Day was first observed May 30, 1868, when flowers were placed on Soldiers' graves at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. Although Memorial Day represents to many the merriment that comes with the beginning of summer, others would like to rekindle a more traditional observance.

The National Moment of Remembrance resolution was passed by Congress in December 2000, calling for all Americans, at 3 p.m. local time, "to voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a moment of remembrance and respect, pausing from whatever they are doing for a moment of silence or listening to taps."

There are also groups on a mission to restore the tradition of wearing poppies. The practice, which was derived from the well-known poem "In Flanders Fields," was once a popular and visible remembrance of those who died in our nation's service during World War I.

Some see the tide turning in favor of a traditional remembrance. "Believe it or not, people are becoming more patriotic," said Dick Wilson, an Air Force veteran who attended the ceremony at the Sacramento Veterans Affairs Medical Center. "These events really help with that."

Although Memorial Day is a solemn day, some event participants noted reasons for optimism and thankfulness. Rep. Dan Lungren of California's 3rd District said Memorial Day is "not only a remembrance, but also a positive influence on people today, because they know the sacrifices of those who came before." Because of that understanding and inspiration, he said, "we should not worry that this country is not in good hands."

Photo courtesy of Savannah Hall

Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

ABOVE LEFT: Members of the CNG Veterans Honors Program prepare to fire three volleys as part of the Memorial Day observance at Mount Vernon Memorial Park in Orangevale, Calif., on May 28.
ABOVE RIGHT: Airman 1st Class Donald Edmiston of the 147th Combat Communications Squadron places a flag at a veteran's grave at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego on Memorial Day.

Children of deployed troops enjoy family day

By SGT. GLEN BAKER
224th Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

Several Soldiers of the California National Guard's 578th Engineer Battalion and more than 50 Battalion family members gathered at the McCoy Equestrian and Recreation Center in Chino Hills, Calif., for a picnic April 22 to celebrate the Month of the Military Child.

The Battalion's Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) and its Forward Support Company (FSC) are currently deployed to Afghanistan, and the event gave relatives of the deployed Soldiers an opportunity to meet up with others who are experiencing similar struggles while a family member is away. The event included arts and crafts, games and a tug-of-war.

"Since April is the Month of the Military Child, and especially since our two units, the FSC and HHC, are deployed, I wanted to do something to honor the kids, because I believe they serve too," said Lisa Romero, volunteer leader of the 578th FSC Family Readiness Group. "For my kids, this is their third deployment."

Photo by Sgt. Glen Baker

Children of Soldiers serving with the CNG's 578th Engineer Battalion pal around during a family day April 22 at the McCoy Equestrian and Recreation Center in Chino Hills, Calif., in celebration of the Month of the Military Child, an Armed Forces tradition since 1986.

The Family Readiness Group is a liaison between the unit and its Soldiers' families. The Family Readiness Group organizes events to get the unit's families together, especially during deployments, and it informs families about available benefits and resources.

"I think that deployment affects the whole family," Romero said. "We love our Soldiers wholeheartedly, but we serve too. The spouses at home are like a single parent, so you end up having to do the jobs of both parents."

The Month of the Military Child was established in 1986 by then-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger to emphasize the important role children play in the Armed Forces community. April events ranging from picnics and parades to fairs and festivals recognize and celebrate children and families for the daily sacrifices they make while supporting the U.S. military.

"I'm excited that our Family Support Group put together such an awesome event for our families," said Maj. Ted Arlauskas, officer in charge of the HHC's rear detachment. "It's a great opportunity for families to bond and talk about their loved ones forward in Afghanistan."

The Manhattan Beach-based HHC and the Pomona-based FSC command or control seven engineer companies in Afghanistan, which are conducting construction and route clearance missions. The HHC and FSC are scheduled to return to California in September.

ESGR getting heroes hired; Disney on board

Multi-faceted approach includes job fairs, resume counseling and statements of support

By STAFF SGT. JESSICA INIGO
Los Angeles Regional Public Affairs

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is actively trying to make hiring service members and veterans easier for both the troops and their civilian employers.

The ESGR Hero 2 Hired job placement databank is on tour and traveling across southern states in the H2H Mobile Job Store. It will tour California in August and September. The tour is not ESGR's only push, however. Within the past year, the Department of Defense agency has organized 600 events, including employment summits, job fairs and award ceremonies that honor civilian employers who retain service members despite their sometimes-strained schedules. The employment summits feature job booths, resume-building tips, interviewing instruction and other career-related training.

"In the last year we have been seeing a tremendous amount of outpouring from a lot of employers who are asking what they can do," said Andrew Wiktorowicz, the ESGR California chairman. "And we're not shy about telling them."

Part of this mission is to get employers on board with hiring veterans by signing statements of support. Last fiscal year alone, California employers signed 3,246 agreements.

This year has been successful already, with the most recent statement signed May 22 by Walt Disney Co. at its Burbank Studios. Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs David L. McGinnis joined Disney CEO Robert Iger at the signing ceremony, which also included a CNG color guard from Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Jessica Inigo

Walt Disney Co. CEO Robert Iger signs a statement of support for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve's Hero 2 Hired program May 22 at Disney's Burbank, Calif., studios. The company set a goal of hiring 1,000 veterans during the next three years.

"When a company like Disney recognizes the value of military training and experience, it really reinforces the fact that service members are worth hiring," McGinnis said. "There are certain businesses … that represent a certain type of character – one of quality and commitment. Now other businesses will see this and say 'If they're good enough for Disney, then they're good enough for me.'"

Wiktorowicz, who also attended the signing, said it was a tremendous boon and a powerful tool for the mission of reducing unemployment for National Guard and Reserve warriors. "If we don't spend the efforts now in fixing this problem with service members' and veterans' employment, then we'll pay for it later in spades," he said.

Wiktorowicz added a message for returning war veterans: "In coming back, you want to take some time to wind down and get in time with the family. You've earned that, you're entitled to that. But understand the job market. If you're out of it for more than two years, it could be hard to jump back into. … Don't sacrifice your future."

ESGR supports more than 63,000 Guard members and Reservists in California and provides support to more than 15,000 employers across the state as well.

Sacramento earns ESGR honors

The California Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), an agency of the Department of Defense, honored the Sacramento City Council with an Above and Beyond Award in May in recognition of its extraordinary support for city employees who serve in the California National Guard and Reserve.

Patriot Awards were also presented to Mayor Kevin Johnson, City Manager John Shirey and Fire Chief Ray Jones. The Patriot Award recognizes individual supervisors who were nominated by a Guardsman or Reservist employee for support provided directly to the service member. The Patriot Award honors the efforts of supervisors nationwide to support citizen-Soldiers through a wide range of measures such as flexible schedules, time off before and after a deployment, caring for families and granting leaves of absence when needed.

"The Above and Beyond and Patriot awards were created by ESGR to publicly recognize organizations and individuals who provide outstanding patriotic support and cooperation to their employees, who, like the citizen warriors before them, have answered their nation's call to serve," said Andy Wiktorowicz, ESGR California chair. "Supportive supervisors are critical to maintaining the strength and readiness of the nation's National Guard and Reserve units."

ESGR provides education, consultation and mediation, when necessary, for employers of Guard members and Reservists. For information on ESGR employer outreach programs and volunteer opportunities, visit www.esgr.mil.

CNG, South Korean friendship still thrives

By SGT. AARON RICCA
Task Force Warrior Public Affairs

In 2005 anti-U.S. protestors gathered at Freedom Park in Inchon, South Korea, four days before the 55th anniversary of the Inchon Landing on Sept. 15, 1955. The protestors were armed with bamboo poles, metal pipes and rocks, ready to face off against riot police. Their message: The U.S. is responsible for the division of the Korean Peninsula. A 15-foot-tall statue of Gen. Douglas MacArthur in Inchon is a symbol of American Imperialism and must come down.

Korean War veterans from around the world were paying attention. Many of them were offended both at the violence and that the young, leftist Koreans would have the gall to destroy something many older Korean and American war veterans alike see as a symbol of freedom. Had it not been for the interference of the U.S. and many other countries from the United Nations in the 1950s, the entire Korean peninsula would likely be under communist rule today.

After the protests, Homyung Shim was one of many Korean citizens who felt something had to be done for the Korean War veterans. He wanted to find a way to thank them for their service and let them know they had not been forgotten. Shim, who was not a member of the military during the Korean War, founded Friends of Korean War Veterans (FKWV).

"By visiting 16 member countries of United Nations Joint Forces, [Shim] wanted to fulfill his personal commitment of expressing the appreciation of the Korean people," said Charles Kim, a U.S.-based FKWV member and coordinator, via email.

FKWV plans an annual visit to the United States, which usually starts in San Francisco. The delegation then travels down the coast, stopping at veterans homes and hospitals in an effort to visit as many Korean War veterans as possible. "We're running out of time," said Shim, 67, in reference to the aging veteran population.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Jessica Inigo

Homyung Shim, president of Friends of Korean War Veterans, enjoys a tour of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos, on April 19. The CNG base was one of many stops on Shim's annual tour of California to meet with veterans of the war and of the CNG's 40th Infantry Division, whose relationship with South Korea dates to the early 1950s.

The trip concludes most years with a stop at the 40th Infantry Division headquarters on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos.

This year's visit included a stop at Camp Roberts in central California, where Shim and FKWV Secretary and Korean Navy veteran Jung Yun Kim met with senior Post Commander Brig. Gen. Keith Jones and Garrison Commander Col. Barbara Nuismer. The Korean visitors were accompanied by Charles Kim and Don Kim, another U.S.-based FKWV member and coordinator.

Jones and Shim met in 2010 on Camp Roberts and again in January of this year, when Jones attended a graduation ceremony at Kapyong Comprehensive High School in Kapyong, South Korea, which shares a special history with the CNG's 40th Infantry Division. Kapyong's school was destroyed during battle in the Korean War, but it was rebuilt through donations from 40th ID Soldiers stationed in the area as well as construction work from some CNG troops.

For many years, the school was named Kenneth Kaiser High School in honor of a sergeant first class who was the first 40th ID Solder killed in combat during the Korean War. Representatives from the 40th ID have attended graduation ceremonies in Kapyong many times in recent years in recognition of the countries' long-standing bond.

Shim's relationship with Jones was the impetus for the stop at Camp Roberts this year. During a brief chat over coffee, Jones stressed that although the U.S. kept South Korea from falling to communism, the South Korean people have made that country the political and economic player it is today. "It's an incredible success story," he said.

Though the country remains in a constant standoff with North Korea, Shim said South Korea's citizens have learned to cope. "People are used to the tensions," he said. "They learn how to survive."

The FKWV contingent also received a tour of the 43,000-acre training post, which "looks more like a national park than a military base," according to Jung Yun Kim.

Shim concluded the visit by saying that one of his main missions in life is to visit the few remaining Korean War veterans from all sides of the conflict. "If I feel good about what we have done, the mission is accomplished," he said.

UH-72 Lakotas add to CNG repertoire

Eight state-of-the-art helicopters bring new capabilities to Guard's domestic response mission

By SENIOR AIRMAN JESSICA GREEN
California Military Department Public Affairs

The California National Guard (CNG) hosted an aviation open house April 5 to showcase the latest addition to its fleet of civil support aircraft to local, state and federal agencies and elected officials at Mather Army Aviation Support Facility near Sacramento.

The UH-72 Lakota, a state-of-the art light utility helicopter built by Eurocopter, replaces the OH-58 Kiowa, a helicopter that had been critical to Cal Guard civil support missions since 1988.

"It's almost like going from the stone age to the space age," CNG pilot and Stockton Police officer Daniel Lowry said.

Lakota features include an electro-optical/infrared sensor, enhanced cockpit screens, high-power illuminator system, analog-digital data downlink capability, GPS-enhanced moving map displays, multiple-band radio capability and real-time data-sharing with personnel on the ground.

Representatives from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, multiple county sheriff's departments and other agencies attended the open house event to learn about the Lakota and its capabilities.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Rick Lynn, one of the last Vietnam-era pilots still flying helicopters in the CNG, conducted the final flight of a Cal Guard Kiowa on April 5 before the CNG introduced its newest aircraft. Kiowas flew more than 10,000 missions in support of CNG Counterdrug, firefighting and search-and-rescue missions across the region.

The Guard's eight new Lakotas will support the same missions as they replace Kiowas in aviation units across the state in a one-for-one upgrade.

"Transitioning from the legacy Kiowa to the new modernized Lakota helicopters will require a whole new technical knowledge base and skill set," said Capt. Robert Mariotti, commander of Company A, 3-140th Aviation Security and Support Battalion. "This new aircraft allows our pilots and maintainers a better way to train and conduct our mission for the communities and government agencies we support."

The Lakota helicopter is built mostly with commercial off-the-shelf technologies by the North American operation of the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company. Unlike typical military aircraft, the Lakota is maintained by the Federal Aviation Administration, said Staff Sgt. Doug King, a flight engineer and lead mechanic trainer with the 3-140th.

"Being a commercial aircraft, there is no armor or countermeasures on the helicopter that would normally be found on military aircraft to defeat threats," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Rathe, a pilot and training officer with the 3-140th S&S Battalion. "For that reason it isn't deployable to combat theaters of operation."

Photo by Senior Airman Jessica Green

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Walters of the 3-140th Aviation Security and Support Battalion explains some of the potentially lifesaving features of the UH-72 Lakota helicopter to law enforcement personnel April 5 at Mather Army Aviation Support Facility near Sacramento. The Cal Guard recently added eight Lakotas to its fleet to replace its aging OH-58 Kiowa aircraft.

Kicking the habit

By CAPT. AMANDA ELLISON
Joint Task Force Domestic Support–Counterdrug Public Affairs

Photo by Capt. Amanda Ellison

Senior Airman Elizabeth Cunningham, left, Staff Sgt. Roy Gaylord and Tech. Sgt. Lisa Ling proudly stand outside the Joint Task Force Domestic Support–Counterdrug office at Mather Field near Sacramento enjoying some fresh, non-smoke-filled air three months after the trio and other Task Force members stubbed out their last cigarettes.

"I can taste food again."

"I have more energy."

"I'm saving about $50 a week."

"Smells and tastes are intensified."

Words from a recovering drug addict? In a sense, yes. The powerful combination of nicotine and engrained habits can leave many "jonesing" for a cigarette fix. But as one resolute Command, Control, Communications and Computers Directorate, or J-6 shop, would prove, working together toward a goal makes all the difference.

It all began six months ago when Air Force Master Sgt. Timothy Theodoroff, senior network systems administrator for the CNG's Joint Task Force Domestic Support–Counterdrug, reached a turning point in his life. Theodoroff, known as T.J., knew something had change.

"I smoked about a pack a day and felt lousy," he said. "I have a family and another child on the way, and I want to be around to see them grow up. One day I took an objective look at myself and it gave me a new perspective — this time I was determined to quit."

He heard about a smoking cessation program offered at McClellan Air Park near Sacramento through the American Cancer Society. While the four-week program was offered once a week during the lunch hour, the commute and class time would take nearly three hours out of his day.

The McClellan class was not going to work for Theodoroff, but he didn't give up. He asked the Task Force medical officer to find out if she could arrange a satellite class at Mather Field, on the opposite side of Sacramento from McClellan, where Theodoroff works.

"When T.J. came to me to ask for help, I wasn't sure if there was anything like that out there. But I did the research, and together with the McClellan staff, we made it happen," said 1st Lt. Roxana Matthews. "We extended the invitation to other shops in the [Counterdrug] headquarters and to [CNG Joint Force Headquarters]. We needed five [students] to have the satellite class and ended up with 11."

With that obstacle out of the way, there was one more hurdle to cross: getting Theodoroff's co-workers to commit to quitting smoking. Four of his six colleagues in the J-6 shop smoked several cigarettes a day. Smoking together outside was a part of everyday life and a way to de-stress. He knew if he didn't get them on board, his attempt to quit would be much more difficult.

They all had tried to quit on their own at different times, but working in close quarters made it harder when the others would go out for smoke breaks. Before long, they would all end up at the outside smoking area.

"If you sit in a barber shop long enough, eventually you're going to get a haircut," said network system administrator Tech. Sgt. Lisa Ling.

Each had their reasons for quitting: a family history of cancer, for their children and spouses, to break the addiction, but mostly for themselves. They knew quitting would be easier if they were all working together.

Capt. Patricia Morton, Air Force nurse manager at McClellan Family Health Clinic, who co-taught the class with registered nurse Tonya Steininger, said it takes nine serious attempts to be able to quit, and a 20-30 percent success rate is typical. But some classes at McClellan have had an 80 percent success rate.

The program works because of the way it is structured: The classes are conversational and interactive rather than lectures. People can relate to each other because they are united by a common goal, and they feel less like a patient and more like a person in control of their own choices, Morton said.

"On the first day, the instructor had us write down a list of pros and cons, and the pro list far outweighed the cons, said Staff Sgt. Roy Gaylord, J-6 messaging administrator.

"I was surprised by how much longer the pro list was, actually seeing it in writing," he said. "I smoked for 22 years and I loved to smoke. I really enjoyed it, but quitting has been easier than I thought it would be."

According to the J-6 team, it's been easier to quit this time because of the network of support they have with each other, the medical officer's help and available resources such as follow-on classes offered 30 days, 60 days and one year after their initial meeting. Prescriptions to help quell the physical urges also made a significant difference.

"The class gave us practical tools and a sense of empowerment to help us quit," Ling said. "We were offered 90-day prescriptions to help us cope with cravings. The cravings come in waves, like when I smell cigarette smoke, but with the medication, the waves aren't tidal."

Morton suggested some tips to help manage cravings while quitting: drink a lot of water, exercise, practice deep breathing, eat celery sticks or sunflower seeds to keep your hands busy, and avoid triggers like the smoking area.

The J-6 team and Sgt. 1st Class Albert Kennedy, noncommissioned officer in charge of the Counterdrug Manpower and Personnel Directorate, have been off cigarettes for about three months and already feel the improvement in their health and well-being.

"I'm overjoyed that I've quit," Kennedy said. "It took about two weeks to get over the mental habit of wanting to smoke, but the prescription worked right away and I didn't really feel the physical need to smoke. And my breathing has improved."

Having a positive attitude and knowing you have the power to quit is key. Some people feel defeated and think they can't, so they don't even try. If you relapse, you have to get back up and try again, Morton said.

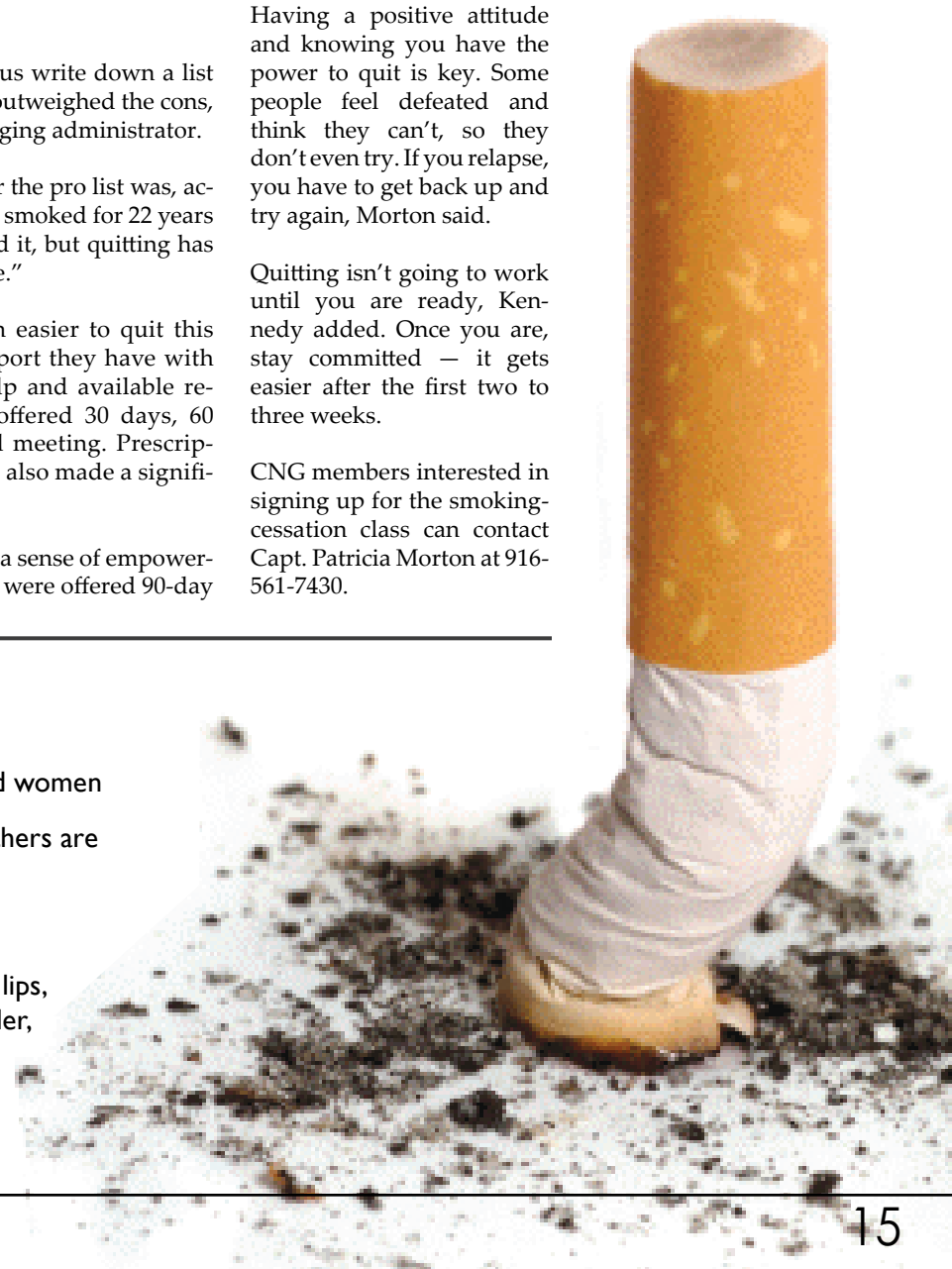
Quitting isn't going to work until you are ready, Kennedy added. Once you are, stay committed — it gets easier after the first two to three weeks.

CNG members interested in signing up for the smoking-cessation class can contact Capt. Patricia Morton at 916-561-7430.

The hazards of smoking

- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S. for both men and women
- Almost 80 percent of lung cancer deaths are caused directly by smoking, and many others are caused by exposure to secondhand smoke
- Lung cancer is the most preventable form of cancer death in our society
- Aside from lung cancer, tobacco use also increases the risk for cancers of the mouth, lips, nasal cavity and sinuses, larynx, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, kidney, bladder, uterus, cervix, colon/rectum and ovary (mucinous) as well as acute myeloid leukemia

Source: American Cancer Society



CNG prepares Guam for historic deployment

By SPC. EDDIE SIGUENZA
69th Public Affairs Detachment

The Guam Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 294th Infantry Regiment, made a key step in May as about 600 Soldiers completed annual training in California and began the trip back to their Pacific island home.

The Soldiers underwent a training regimen taught by the California Army National Guard's Task Force Warrior, completing requirements such as weapons qualification, driver training and individual self-defense as well as learning about the natural elements Soldiers face.

"So many positives came out of this mission, so many pluses," said Command Sgt. Maj. Mel Hennegan, the 1-294th's top enlisted Soldier. "Not everything went perfect, but there were so many lessons learned from the mistakes that happened. If we're going to make mistakes, this is the place to do them and correct them before we head out."

This was a critical mission as Guam's 1-294th "Chamorri" Soldiers prepare for a possible Afghanistan deployment next year, which would mark the largest mobilization in Guam National Guard history. At Camp Roberts, where Task Force Warrior is based, the Guam Soldiers were able to conduct training they could not do at home. They brought out the "bigger guns" – such as mortars, 50-caliber weapons and rocket launchers – and had ample firing opportunities.

"There are 210,000 acres here and at Fort Hunter Liggett. They got plenty of land, and plenty of rounds to fire," said Lt. Col. Loren A. Weeks, the commander of Task Force Warrior. The Army Reserve training center Fort Hunter Liggett is about a one-hour drive west of Camp Roberts, which is midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. "The issue with Guam is its lack of training resources. They don't have the capability to fire these kinds of weapons.

Photo by Spc. Eddie Siguenza

A Soldier with the Guam National Guard's 1st Battalion, 294th Infantry Regiment, crawls to a grenade bunker May 20 during training with the CNG's Task Force Warrior on Camp Roberts, Calif.

"We understand how important their upcoming mission is," Weeks added. "That would be equivalent to a California division or [infantry brigade combat team] mobilizing. That's almost half the force structure on Guam going out on one shot."

Upon arriving in the Golden State, the Guam Soldiers immediately faced an issue. Some equipment didn't arrive with them, so they had to improvise. "That's one of the things that makes this battalion special. We just continued driving on," Hennegan said. "We didn't let that stop us."

Possibly the most popular training among the Soldiers was combatives. The Soldiers engaged in a grappling, mixed-martial-arts type of training similar to the sport that has ignited Guam in recent years. "Oh man, Guam Soldiers just love to fight. I feel sorry for anyone who goes up against them," said Spc. Jaycei Miller, Task Force Warrior instructor. "This is the most motivated group I've seen come through combatives. … They're soaking up a lot of knowledge."

During a break, the trainees organized their own combatives tournament. About 60 entered, representing 10 percent of Guam's force, including the 1-294th commander, Lt. Col. Michael Tougher.

"There are no limits to what the battalion can accomplish," Tougher said. "I believe we are a stronger team and more focused than we have ever been in our history."

The Guam Soldiers are scheduled to return to Camp Roberts in November to continue the pre-mobilization process.

"Everything here is all part of their preparation for something bigger," Weeks said. "Camp Roberts is very [similar] to eastern Afghanistan, with its terrain, weather and general elements. The goal is to get them acclimated to a combat environment.

"They need to be aware of things like time and distance," he added. "They're getting into an environment that will challenge them."

Other training segments the Guam Soldiers completed included combat lifesaver, rifle marksmanship, Humvee Escape Assistance Trainer and evacuating a casualty. But there's still so much to learn, so much preparation to be done as the troops gear up for a historic event.

"We all understand that the mission approaching us is important for this battalion, the Guam Army National Guard and the people of Guam," Tougher said. "We understand that failure in this endeavor is not an option."

Bridge company shares expertise in Afghanistan

By SGT. JOSEPH KOKTAN
980th Engineer Battalion

The CNG's 132nd Multi-Role Bridging Company arrived in Afghanistan in late March and is currently the only U.S. unit in theater that has mastered Mabey Panel Bridge construction.

The bridges, manufactured by Mabey Bridge and Shore, are the primary bridging structures used throughout Afghanistan by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The steel structures assembled from pre-fabricated sections give coalition troops and Afghan civilians greater freedom of movement across the diverse Afghan terrain. The Redding-based 132nd is the only U.S. Army bridging company in Afghanistan that builds and maintains all of the Mabey Bridges.

According to Macedonian Army Capt. Igor Manasovski, ISAF training coordinator, one unit is not enough. To increase the bridge-building capabilities in theater, Manasovski and members of ISAF Joint Command coordinated an 11-day course in May and June at Camp Ghazi near Kabul to teach coalition forces how to assemble bridges.

Photo by Spc. Steven Ostrowski

Soldiers from the Redding, Calif.-based 1st Platoon, 132nd Multi-Role Bridge Company, inspect and repair a line-of-communication bridge in Afghanistan. The company's troops recently assisted in training Afghan and coalition Soldiers to assemble bridges.

Steve Morgan, a civilian contractor for Mabey Bridge and Shore, taught the 11-day course. In addition, five engineers from the 132nd were on hand to assist in training the five ISAF Soldiers and 20 Afghan troops in the class.

While the main priority for ISAF Joint Command is to train ISAF troops, Manasovski said the Afghan National Army is beginning to build bridging companies and will soon be supplied with Mabey Bridges. The Afghan Soldiers who attended the course are expected to become the core of Afghan National Army bridging companies.

Morgan, who served 23 years with the British Army, said the Afghan troops who completed the course were able to handle the basic concepts of building a bridge despite having little experience with bridge construction. He added that the 132nd Soldiers brought with them skills that helped train the coalition forces and Afghan troops.

"All went according to plan," Manasovski said. "They all left with sufficient skills to spread basic [bridging] knowledge around theater."

He is planning another bridge course for later this year.

African Lion unites U.S., Moroccan forces

By SGT. GLEN BAKER
224th Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

The roar of the trucks is gone and the dust has finally settled after about 30 Soldiers from the Riverside, Calif.-based 1498th Transportation Company, 224th Special Troops Battalion, 224th Sustainment Brigade, returned April 24 from their monthlong deployment to Morocco for Exercise African Lion.

Nearly 2,000 U.S. service members participate in African Lion each year along with more than 900 members of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces. It is the largest exercise within U.S. Africa Command's area of responsibility, fostering a working relationship between the countries and developing a mutual understanding of each nation's military tactics, techniques and procedures.

Sgt. Peter Mavropoulos, assistant truck master with the 1498th, said that despite some changes to the training plan, the 1498th Soldiers were successful in their mission to teach Moroccan Soldiers the basics of heavy equipment transporter (HET) vehicles. "The Moroccans … were familiar with the Oshkosh M1070 tractor, but they were unfamiliar with the M1000 trailer," he said. "Two of them were able to back it up through a serpentine without knocking over a cone. They all pretty much got it."

The 27 Moroccan Soldiers who Mavropoulos trained were truck drivers and mechanics, including two lieutenants.

Photo by Spc. Cindy Franco

Sgt. Peter Mavropoulos, assistant truck master and heavy equipment transporter instructor for the CNG's Riverside-based 1498th Transportation Company, discusses heavy equipment transporter coupling operations with Moroccan Soldiers during Exercise African Lion on April 28 at Camp Draa in Tan-Tan, Morocco.

"We only had two translators for the whole group," he said. "That was enough. The Moroccans like to discuss things. They enjoyed our instruction, so they brought us gifts of bread and sardines."

Sgt. 1st Class Amy Flanagan, 3rd platoon sergeant for the 1498th, said that despite differences between Moroccan HETs and American HETs, the Moroccan troops were able to learn to operate the American vehicles. "They have their own version. It's a smaller version of our vehicle," she said. "We have a unique trailer that accompanies our system. … They learned how to maintain the trailer and the basic operation of it."

Flanagan said the training was successful despite the language barrier. "They could actually touch and feel the vehicle and see how it operates and drive it as well," she said. "We had the vehicles there instead of doing PowerPoint or classroom presentations all the time. It was a nice balance between classroom instruction and hands-on training."

She added that the U.S. and Moroccan Soldiers were able to work together successfully. "I think that the effectiveness of the training has a lot to do with Soldiers on both sides," she said. "The U.S. Soldiers were qualified to give the training and the Moroccan Army was open and willing to receive the instruction. There was 100 percent participation on every level."

Aside from the HET instruction, African Lion included many diverse training activities. "They were firing the M-777 howitzers every morning at 0500. That was the wake up call," Mavropoulos said. "There were sea maneuvers. They were using touch-and-go landings with the [V-22 Osprey helicopter]. They were dropping off 24-packs of Marines. … There was a medical unit from the Utah National Guard … giving shots to the Moroccan children. There was military police training and combatives training [and] they were firing the tanks at a zone."

Flanagan said her African Lion experience was unique and enjoyable. "We don't get to train with other countries' military forces very often and see how they operate," she said. I enjoyed training with another country's army."

147th CCS team runs second Ragnar relay

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

A group of Airmen in the 147th Combat Communications Squadron have joined together to support each other in their goal of being fit to fight. Ten Airmen and two relatives of 147th Airmen linked their skills together and ran through the night, up hills, over tough terrain and in scorching temperatures for 203.5 miles during one of the nation's largest overnight foot races, part of the Ragnar Relay Series. This was the unit's second straight year fielding a team.

"After training for the overnight relay race, and with the help of my team, I became a runner," Staff Sgt. Rose Schweizerhof said after crossing the finish line April 21. "We supported each other with positive motivation, and the beautiful sights of Southern California might've helped as well."

The race began on the Huntington Beach boardwalk with temperatures reaching 95 degrees throughout the first day. The team finished slightly more than 36 hours later on the beach in Coronado, near San Diego.

"A mile out from the exchange point during my second run of the race, I could see my teammate running toward me to run the last mile with me," Schweizerhof said. "This is what having a wingman is all about."

Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

The 147th Combat Communications Squadron's relay team, dubbed Aim High, Run Far, crosses the finish line for the Ragnar overnight relay race April 21 in Coronado, Calif. The 12-person team completed the 203.5-mile race in about 36 hours.

Master Sgt. Michelle Roberts said the enthusiasm generated in her unit from pulling together a 12-person Ragnar Relay team has inspired others to enter organized running events as well.

"I certainly didn't consider myself a runner a few short years ago when I started trying to improve my run times for our fitness test," Roberts said. "But with the help and encouragement of other Airmen here at the 147th who were accomplished runners, I was able to improve my fitness and discover a love for running to the point where I was able to complete a marathon earlier this year. … I am gratified to see that my example has served to motivate others, many of whom are much younger than me."

During the relay, each team member ran three legs and was responsible for 13.2 to 21.6 miles. Only one runner pounded the road at a time, while their teammates drove ahead cheering in vans.

"Although the terrain and temperatures were rough, we stuck together as a team with plenty of high fives at the finish line," Schweizerhof said. "I can now check an overnight relay race off my 'bucket list,' but I plan to continue setting running goals."

The team, which calls itself Aim High, Run Far, trained by conducting regular fitness sessions and entering local 5-kilometer races and half-marathons on weekends.

"I've run on the 147th Aim High, Run Far relay team two years in a row now and have seen my fitness test scores improve tremendously," Staff Sgt. Priscilla Estrada said. "I now see myself as a runner."

Airman scores big with on-field proposal

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

As the sun was setting over Dodger Stadium before the team's May 14 game against the Arizona Diamondbacks, the sound of bats meeting baseballs echoed through the stadium, sending souvenirs flying to excited fans watching batting practice. The grounds crew was busily preparing the lush green field, and Senior Airman Richard Sauceda was anxiously preparing to take the field in his Air Force blues for a surprise proposal to his girlfriend as the Dodgers welcomed him as their "Veteran of the Game."

"I wanted to make it really special for her," said Sauceda, a member of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing Security Forces. "The night beforehand she saw I was really excited, but she thought I was excited because I was going on the Dodger field."

Sauceda was recognized for his military service before the game, and with the help of the stadium staff, he was able to surprise his girlfriend, Stephanie O'Hara, with a proposal as well. The two Dodger fans have been dating for three years.

"When I met Stephanie, she was already a Dodger fan," Sauceda said. "But when she found out I was a Dodger fan, she said she was an Angel fan, and she still says 'Go Angels' jokingly."

Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

Senior Airman Richard Sauceda of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing, who was recognized as the Los Angeles Dodgers' Veteran of the Game on May 14, takes full advantage of the situation by proposing to his girlfriend and fellow Dodger fan Stephanie O'Hara on the infield at Dodger Stadium.

Sauceda and O'Hara's families and friends took their seats in the crowd as the couple made their way to the first baseline. "Veteran of the Game" appeared below a picture of Sauceda on the Jumbotron big screen, and O'Hara stood by Sauceda, smiling as the crowd cheered for him, not realizing she had also been asked onto the field for another reason.

Once Sauceda finished waving to the crowd, he turned to his girlfriend and opened a ring box. Stephanie let out a gasp as he took a knee to propose. "Stephanie, will you marry me?" he asked.

The answer must have been yes, because the crowd erupted and the couple kissed for all to see on the big screen. Sauceda stood proudly on the field and saluted the flag during the National Anthem before the happy couple left the field.

"The Dodgers helped me out making it special," Sauceda said. "She loved it."

Sauceda joined the Guard in February 2008 and has served full-time with the CNG's Joint Task Force Domestic Support–Counterdrug for two years in addition to his role as a traditional, part-time Guardsman for the 163rd. He is preparing to deploy to Kyrgyzstan with the Wing.

"I have family in the military who I have always looked up to, so I enlisted," Sauceda said. "Since then I have had amazing opportunities."

NCO looks back on 26 years

By 1ST LT. WILL MARTIN
49th MP Brigade Public Affairs

Bernedette La Rosa was attending high school in Hawaii when a friend approached her in desperate need of a "buddy." Her classmate was joining the National Guard, and her partner in the recruiter's "buddy system" had backed out.

"My initial reaction was 'Are you crazy?'" La Rosa said. Her friend, however, was a "very persuasive recruiter" and convinced La Rosa to enlist in the Hawaii Army National Guard. Twenty-six years later Master Sgt. La Rosa joined family and friends June 2 to celebrate nearly three decades of service during a retirement ceremony in Fairfield, Calif., alongside members of the CNG's 49th Military Police Brigade, the last unit with which she served.

By all accounts, La Rosa's career as an administrative and mobilization noncommissioned officer was marked by consistent selflessness and professionalism, and it took her to California and units across the state. La Rosa spent her most critical years in the wake of 9/11 preparing Soldiers for deployments.

"It was a scary time as I was part of preparing thousands of Soldiers for mobilizations who were still in shock from the realization that we were at war," La Rosa said. "9/11 made me want to work harder to ensure Soldiers were ready for war — technically, tactically and, at times, emotionally. I had many Soldiers who shared with me their emotions and frustrations with everything that was going on. … The least I could do was ensure they were paid, promoted, equipped and trained."

Despite the close of this chapter in La Rosa's professional life, her connection to the Guard remains close to home — literally. "My husband joined the Guard in 2012 as a flight medic after over 10 years of break in service," La Rosa said. "It is now my turn to fully support him on his military aspirations. Since we are still a Guard family, we will be there together to support the Guard."

Photo courtesy of Bernadette La Rosa

Retired Master Sgt. Bernadette La Rosa, front row, center, is joined by friends from the 49th Military Police Brigade at her retirement ceremony June 2 in Fairfield, Calif., following 26 years of dedicated service to the National Guard.

'Warriors' from page 8

Soldiers, meeting guys that are that motivated to do a competition like this," Cunningham said.

The bonds of friendship they formed gritting it out together were put to one final test when the warriors faced each other on the padded mats of the Camp SLO "Fight House" in a round-robin combatives tournament.

Blood was drawn more than once in the tournament as the Cal Guard's Staff Sgt. Demetrius McCowan advanced to the title. A sheet metal worker with Company A, 1106th Theater Aviation Support Maintenance Group, the 28-year-old was the top NCO in combatives, while Nevada's Batz earned king-of-the-ring honors in the Soldier category.

The physical aspect of the Best Warrior Competition can easily be gauged. However, throughout the contest, mental aptitude was weighed as well, sometimes at the height of exhaustion. Doing well in tests like a written exam on a specific topic, interacting with media and appearing in front of a board of sergeants major can shift the balance in favor of intellectually gifted troops.

At the beginning, 15 gladiators entered the arena, but only two could move on to the next level as Region VII champions. Staff Sgt. Eugene Patton, 37, of Colorado earned the title of Best Warrior NCO, while Batz, 29, of Nevada was named the best Soldier.

"Throughout the entire competition, I had no idea where I placed in the pack. When my name was finally called, I was very surprised," Patton said. "It was very humbling and gratifying in the fact that all the hard work paid off."

He also gave high praise to his sponsor, Sgt. 1st Class David Garduque, who helped him work a game plan and seek out training opportunities. One of the great unseen accomplishments associated with the Best Warrior Competition is the connection grown between a warrior and their sponsor through the hours spent as a competitor's coach, friend, mentor, cheerleader, medic and battle buddy.

"As a sponsor, you get an opportunity to take a Soldier to a different pinnacle in their career," Garduque said.

Patton and Batz will compete in the nationwide Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition on Fort Benning, Ga., this summer. The winners of that contest will represent the entire National Guard in the Department of the Army competition later this year.

Photo by Master Sgt. Paul Wade

Cpl. John Cunningham of the CNG's 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team carries his pack on a ruck march April 24 during the Region VII Best Warrior Competition on Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif. The competitors did not know the distance of the 6-mile march until after they had finished.

A landing security officer aboard the Coast Guard cutter Bertholf signals the crew of an HH-60G Pave Hawk from the 129th Rescue Wing to remain in a holding position while a tie-down team secures the helicopter to the deck June 20. The CNG crew was conducting landing qualification with the Coast Guard about 25 nautical miles off the coast of Northern California.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Kim E. Ramirez

CNG lifesavers inspire National Guard pilot program for flight medic training

The Army National Guard has launched a pilot program that provides enhanced training for flight medics, partly because of a study of the California Army National Guard's Company C, 1-168th General Support Aviation Battalion (Air Ambulance), which deployed to Afghanistan with full-fledged paramedics from December 2008 through October 2009.

"[The study found that with] flight paramedics in the back of an aircraft, there was a 66 percent higher survivability rate than with a straight [combat medic]," said Master Sgt. Kym Ricketts, chief medical noncommissioned officer for the Army National Guard. "A paramedic provides a higher level of care. It's advanced, pre-hospital medical care."

Currently to be a flight medic, a Soldier must be a qualified combat medic. But since flight medics operate under different conditions, the pilot program suggests changing those requirements. Trainees in the program, based at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, go through three phases. "The first one is the flight medic phase," Ricketts said. "Phase two is the nationally registered paramedic [course], which is the longest phase. And phase three is the critical care transport piece." Graduates of the program walk away with national certification as paramedics, which provides additional benefits such as greater flexibility when integrating with local and state agencies in a disaster situation, she said.

The pilot program wraps up later this year and will then go through a review process.

CNG Peer-to-Peer Support training

Any California National Guard unit can schedule a two-day training event with the CNG's Peer-to-Peer Support Program at the unit's desired location. The goal of the program is to teach CNG members to provide effective support through times of personal or professional crisis and to help anticipate and address potential difficulties.

The program stresses a "first-line treatment" approach, which is proven to help minimize the effects of combat stress. The training covers topics such as personality profiles, military-related stress, deployment issues, overcoming depression, listening skills, substance abuse, suicide intervention and sexual assault prevention. For more information, call 916-854-3409, email NGCAJ1@ng.army.mil or visit the Peer-to-Peer Support Program's web page, www.calguard.ca.gov/j1/pages/peer_support.aspx.

Audiobooks sent to you free of charge

National Guard members can access hundreds of audiobooks on compact disc or cassette for free through the National Guard Multimedia Learning Center. The Center mails audiobooks to service members two at a time with postage-paid, self-addressed mailers for return shipping. There are no rental charges or late fees. To sign up, visit www.ngb.3leafgroup.com.

Free one-year pass to national parks

Service members and their families are now eligible for an annual pass to enter all U.S. national parks free of charge. The pass, which normally costs $80, gains the holder and passengers in a private vehicle access to 2,000 sites that charge admission per vehicle. At sites where entrance fees are charged per person, it covers the pass owner and three adults.

The passes can be obtained at any national park or wildlife refuge that charges an entrance fee by showing a military ID. Family members are also able to obtain a pass, even if the service member is deployed or if they are traveling separately. The pass will be accepted at National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and Army Corps sites that charge entrance or amenity fees.

The initiative is part of the "Joining Forces" campaign launched last year by first lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, to rally support for service members and their families. For more info, visit www.store.usgs.gov/pass/military.html.

DID YOU KNOW...

there is a time limit for a service member to submit an Inspector General Action Request?

Soldiers must submit complaints to an inspector general within one year after learning of an alleged problem or wrongdoing, or within three years since the date of the problem or wrongdoing. National Guard Bureau-Army and Department of the Army inspectors general may accept complaints submitted three to five years after the alleged problem or wrongdoing if extraordinary circumstances justify the complainant's delay in reporting the allegation or issue, or in cases of special Army interest. Pursuing a complaint that is more than five years old requires the approval of the inspector general of the Army.

Airmen must submit complaints within 60 days of learning of the alleged problem or wrongdoing. Inspectors general may accept and refer complaints that exceed that time requirement if the complaint is of special Air Force interest, or if the complainant is able to demonstrate he or she was unable to meet the time standard because of unforeseen or extraordinary circumstances that justify the delay.

For more info, see Army Regulation 20-1, 6-1, or Air Force Instruction 90-301, 2.5.

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Staff Sgt. Demetrius McCowan, a sheet metal mechanic for the CNG's 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group, pulls his rucksack and rifle the length of an Olympic-size pool April 24 during the Region VII Best Warrior Competition on Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif. The contest attracted the best Soldiers and noncommissioned officers from eight states and territories for a five-day test of Soldier skills.
Photo by Master Sgt. Paul Wade

The Grizzly Newsmagazine

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