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Photo by Capt. Matt Nowak, Virginia Army National Guard

Gov. Bob McDonnell shakes hands with Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, after signing a bill allowing him to position Virginia National Guard personnel prior to the declaration of a state of emergency along with other bills related to the Virginia National Guard and public safety in a ceremony held May 2 at the Henrico County Public Safety Building. See the story on page 24.



Virginia
GuardPost
SERVING THE ARMY & AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF VIRGINIA

*Special Virginia Guard
response forces train
with partner agencies
in Hampton Roads*

APRIL - JUNE 2011



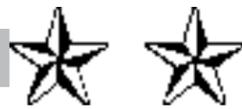
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join 67th
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prepare
Afghan forces
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FROM THE TOP



Everyone should feel a sense of pride with the significant accomplishments of the Virginia Guard

By Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr.
The Adjutant General of Virginia



Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr.

As I approach the one-year mark serving as the Adjutant General of Virginia, it is important to look back at some of the significant accomplishments in the Virginia National Guard.

One of my biggest goals when I became the Adjutant General was to improve our facilities, to include critical armory repairs as well as initiatives to make our facilities more energy efficient. With the help of the Virginia General Assembly, Governor Bob McDonnell included additional funding in the budget allowing us to begin needed improvements on roofs and HVAC systems. We have also requested and obtained federal matching funds that will allow us to initiate more repairs and improvements. I want everyone working in a Virginia National Guard facility to be proud of their work place, and this funding is a critical step in making that a reality.

We continue to balance our state mission with the requirements of federal active duty missions. The Virginia National Guard has more than 1,600 Soldiers and Airmen mobilized and deployed on federal active duty to support operations outside the United States. By year's end, approximately 14,000 will have deployed since September 11, 2001.

It is incredibly important that we remember the ultimate sacrifice made by members of our ranks. The names of five Virginia Army National Guard combat engineers lost during combat operations in the Global War on Terror were among the more than 330 names etched on the Memorial Wall for Fallen Engineers unveiled April 7 at Fort Leonard Wood, Miss. The Virginia National Guard has lost 10 Soldiers in combat actions in Iraq and Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001. These Soldiers are also remembered each year at the Wall of Honor Ceremony held by the Virginia Attorney General's Office.

We continue to assess our ability and

level of preparedness to support emergency response operations across Virginia. We have participated in numerous training events and exercises with local, state and federal partner agencies.

In June, we conducted a successful rehearsal with other state agencies with a scenario focused on a natural disaster in anticipation of this year's hurricane season. This ongoing process includes adjusting and modifying plans, force packages and capabilities should the citizens of the Commonwealth need us.

Virginia currently has two qualified Dual Status Commanders, and an additional senior Virginia National Guard officer will complete requirements before the end of this year. The DSC ensures the Governor has qualified and trained officers to command and control responding forces to include National Guard and active duty forces during a catastrophic event. Federal forces may be required at the discretion of the Governor to provide support and respond only at the Governor's request through the Adjutant General and are commanded by the DSC. Support is provided only when needed and only for duration needed. Governors and Adjutants

General across the nation have worked for some time to coordinate this DSC arrangement.

We have a number of special programs that positively impact the lives of the citizens of Virginia in their own unique way. The Military Funeral Honors Program performed more than 2,000 funerals at cemeteries throughout the state in 2010 and well represents the Virginia National Guard with each service they perform. The Counterdrug Program helped state and federal law enforcement agencies confiscate more than 34,000 marijuana plants, make more than 580 arrests and seize more than \$125 million of narcotics, currency and weapons in 2010. Two classes from the Virginia's Youth ChalleNGe Program at Camp Pendleton concluded in December and June, graduating 228 young men and women. More than 3,500 Virginia teens have graduated from the program since it started in 1994.

Units in both the Virginia Army and Air Guard continue to distinguish themselves and meet the highest standards of excellence. The Virginia Air National Guard's 192nd Fighter Wing earned an overall grade of "Excellent" alongside the 633rd Air Base Wing and 1st Fighter Wing for the recent Phase 1 Operational Readiness Inspection conducted in April at Joint Base Langley-Eustis. The Army Guard's Gate City-based 1030th Transportation Battalion was recognized last October as the most ready battalion in the entire nation with the Reckord Trophy and Kerwin Award.

While our accomplishments have been significant, we still have much work to do. I want to see the Virginia National Guard recognized as one of the top performing National Guard's in the entire nation. That goal is within our reach, and it will take the commitment of every Soldier, Airman, member of the Virginia Defense Force as well as our civilian work force and the critical support of our families and employers.

News Briefs

183rd RTI receives logistics excellence award

The 2010 Army Award for Maintenance Excellence runner-up for a medium-sized National Guard Table of Distributions and Allowances was presented to the Virginia Army National Guard's 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute Maintenance and Supply Shop May 12 by the U.S. Army G4, Logistics Deputy Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Mitchell H. Stevenson, and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III during the 2011 Combined Logistics Excellence Awards Ceremony at the Richmond Convention Center.

Accepting the award on behalf of the RTI was Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Pinchefsky, the unit's full-time maintenance noncommissioned officer in charge, who, according to Master Sgt. Craig Jewell, 183rd supply NCOIC, put in a lot of extra hours to earn the award for the unit.

"He brought all of our

equipment up to the Army standards," said Jewell. "He made sure when the students were training on the equipment, it was in standards, and he made sure it was to standard when the units got it back."

In 2007 and 2008 the RTI won the state and regional level AAME.

Quick action secures Pulaski armory after tornado damage

Quick action by Virginia Guard Soldiers in the wake of two tornadoes that struck in Pulaski County April 8 helped secure the local armory after the front doors were sucked out of their frames. Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Brigade Combat Team quickly moved to secure the armory while at the same time the unit had personnel ready to respond if needed by local emergency response organizations.

Two tornadoes struck Pulaski County April 8 and caused more than \$9 million in damage.

There was no structural damage to the Pulaski armory, but the front door glass and frames were sucked out onto the front steps leading into the armory, according to Lt. Col. Allan Carter, commander of the 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment.

"The roll up door on the rear of the drill floor was ripped off the tracks and left laying on the rear of the drill floor, and there was a significant amount of debris around the armory including trees on the state road leading to and from the armory," Carter said.

As soon as the storm winds allowed for safe travel to the armory, personnel were stationed to secure the facility and start to work on clean up.

"Even with the armory taking damage, the unit remained ready to respond to the local community and worked with the local civilian emergency operations center in case the National Guard was needed," Carter said. "We remained 100% operational with 24-hour security to protect not only our armory but others as well."

Three candidates from OCS Class 54A commissioned as lieutenants

Three officer candidates from Virginia National Guard Officer Candidate School Class 54A received their commissions as second lieutenants during a graduation and commissioning ceremony held April 9 at Fort Pickett.

Officer Candidates Andrew L. Jackson, Erin K. Sutton and Joseph T. Weeren each took the oath of office and had their new rank pinned on during the event.

Weeren also received both the Physical Fitness Award and the Leadership Award.

All three officers completed the accelerated OCS program which lasts two consecutive months at Fort McClellan, Ala.

The Virginia Guard OCS is part of 3rd Battalion, 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute.

Jackson branched Infantry, Sutton Adjutant General Corps and Weeren branched Military Intelligence.

For more on these stories, visit <http://vko.va.ngb.army.mil/VirginiaGuard/news/newsindex.html>

Virginia National Guard Federal Deployments

# *	Unit	Where Deployed	Home Town
175	116th Brigade Combat Team Headquarters	Afghanistan	Staunton
435	2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment	Iraq	Portsmouth, Norfolk, Suffolk, Virginia Beach
260	Co. A, 116th Brigade STB/ Co. D, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment	Iraq	Fredericksburg
130	Co. C, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment	Iraq	Christiansburg
125	203rd RED HORSE Squadron	Saudi Arabia	Virginia Beach
40	Provincial Reconstruction Team Security Force	Afghanistan	Various Locations
75	Various Virginia Army Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OND/OEF	Various Locations
10	Various Virginia Air Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OND/OEF	Various Locations

* All listings for numbers of Soldiers/Airmen are approximate as of July 1, 2011

Fort Pickett celebrates Earth Day with local Blackstone community

By Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia Army National Guard and the Fort Pickett Maneuver Training Center invited the public and employees at Fort Pickett to celebrate Earth Day April 22 to help educate the community on the many ways the agencies on and around Fort Pickett are acting to protect the environment.

“We offered the Earth Day program here at Fort Pickett to provide information to our employees, our staff and our community about some of the things we do here at Fort Pickett to promote environmental stewardship, as well as general Earth Day information,” said Donna Martin, Fort Pickett Department of Public Works.

The annual Earth Day event drew more than 80 students from Blackstone Primary School to view the 18 display areas at the event, some of which included interactive displays. Visiting students were greeted by Smokey Bear and McGruff the Crime Dog and visitors were each given a white pine seedling to plant in their yards.

They also learned to make bricks out of compressed dirt and



The Virginia Army National Guard and employees of the Maneuver Training Center welcome over 80 students from Nottoway Primary School to the MTC's annual Earth Day celebration April 22 on Fort Pickett. At the various displays the children were taught the importance of being good stewards of the environment and the important role the National Guard plays in maintaining the ecosystems surrounding their many bases and facilities across the country.



Photos Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Capt. Jaycee Shaver (left), Virginia Army National Guard environmental officer, speaks with Col. Tom Wilkinson, the Maneuver Training Center commander, during the Maneuver Training Center's annual Earth Day celebration April 22 on Fort Pickett.

how to make their own earth-friendly charcoal. They were able to touch real local wildlife brought in by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and a local animal enthusiast. Other displays taught students and visitors the importance of composting, recycling, energy conservation, sustaining our renewable natural resources, and counter-drug education.

“The kids are our future,” said Martin. “If we can pass on the importance of sustaining our environment to these younger generations, by the time they reach our age, hopefully, they will leave a better world.”

The Fort Pickett Environmental team had a display explaining the importance of Fort Pickett's role in protecting its land and the wildlife that inhabit the area. According to Capt. Jaycee Shaver, Virginia Army National Guard environmental officer, the Environmental Team spends a lot of time and resources to protect the air and water quality in the area to make sure Fort Pickett and all the facilities in Virginia are safe to train on.

“Earth Day is every day,” said Shaver. “Today is our one day to celebrate. Not everyone can take time out of their busy schedule to do stuff like this all the time, but this is our one day to get everyone together to think about the environment.

“You can always buy green; you can always do something; you can always educate somebody; you can always tell your story. It really is every day.”



On the Cover



Soldiers and Airmen from the Virginia National Guard's Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear High Yield Explosive Emergency Response Force Package conduct search and rescue, mass decontamination, medical triage and treatment and fatality search and recovery operations May 17 at Fort Eustis. (Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs)

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Task Force 183 begins federal mobilization

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Dept. of Military Affairs

The largest single unit mobilization in the Virginia Army National Guard since World War II officially began June 1 with departure events held in Fredericksburg, Christiansburg, Portsmouth, Norfolk, Suffolk and Virginia Beach. Across the commonwealth, family, friends and community members bid farewell to approximately 825 Soldiers bound for federal active duty in Iraq where they will conduct convoy security and base defense operations in support of Operation New Dawn.

The units being mobilized are all part of the 116th Brigade Combat Team, and they come together to form Task Force 183 under the command and control of the Portsmouth-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment. The task force will spend approximately 45 to 60 days training at Camp Atterbury, Ind., before heading to Iraq, and their mobilization is scheduled to last for one year.

The task force held a consolidated departure ceremony May 26 in Richmond in concert with information briefings that are part of the Yellow Ribbon Program, then conducted formal and informal departure events June 1 at each unit's home readiness center.

"It is an honor for me to be there today," said Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, at the Richmond departure ceremony. "It is an honor for me to stand here in front of you and tell you how proud I am of these men and women who are getting ready to deploy. They are well trained and well led."

Lt. Col. Bill Korsen will command Task Force 183, and he told the large crowd of Soldiers and family members gathered in Richmond that after a year of hard work and preparation, the unit



Photo by Staff Sgt. Terra C. Gatti, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Family, friends and members of the community bid farewell to Soldiers from the Portsmouth-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment as the unit began its tour of federal active duty June 1.

was "just ready to go."

Korsen also acknowledged the important role families and employers play in making sure Soldiers can focus on accomplishing their mission.

"I am extremely proud of every person in this formation," Korsen said. "It has been a long year, with a lot of training and a lot of changes, and there is a lot of uncertainty. Because we have adaptive and resilient leaders and Soldiers, we are prepared for the upcoming challenges."

The breakdown by unit and home readiness center is as follows:

- o Approximately 435 Soldiers from the Portsmouth-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment with units in Norfolk, Suffolk and Virginia Beach

- o Approximately 260 Soldiers from the Fredericksburg-based Company A, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion and Company D, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment

- o Approximately 130 Soldiers from the Christiansburg-based Company C, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment

With approximately 825 Soldiers, Task Force 183 is the largest single unit mobilization in the Virginia Army National Guard since World War II. The second largest deployment was approximately 775 Soldiers from the Winchester-based 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment that deployed to Iraq from September 2007 to April 2008.

The 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment last deployed overseas from September 2007 to May 2008 where they conducted security operations in Kuwait and Southern Iraq.

The squadron consists of the Norfolk-based A Troop, the Suffolk-based B Troop, the Virginia Beach-based C Troop and the Portsmouth-based Company D, 429th Brigade Support Battalion.

For more on TF 183, please see page 16.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Family, friends and members of the community bid farewell to Soldiers from the Fredericksburg-based Company D, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment and Company A, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion as the units began their tour of federal active duty June 1 on the campus of Mary Washington University.

529th CSSB Soldiers honored at Norfolk Tides opener

By Sgt. 1st Class A.J. Coyne
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Norfolk Tides honored the Soldiers of the Virginia Beach based- 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion at the baseball team's home opener April 17 at Harbor Park in Norfolk. Nearly 50 Soldiers and their family members were on hand for the game, which featured a 529th CSSB color guard and Maj. Matt Lutz, the 529th executive officer, throwing out the ceremonial first pitch. In addition, dozens of photos from the unit's recent deployment to Afghanistan were shown on the stadium video screen during the seventh inning stretch.

Before the game, Sgt. Jason C. Bell and Spc. Cristal M. Castillo brought the Virginia and United States flags on the field for the national anthem.

Following that, Lutz threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

"Throwing out the first pitch was an awesome feeling," said Lutz, a Portsmouth resident. "Playing professional baseball was a childhood dream. My second childhood dream was wearing the uniform of the United States Army. Wow, I did both on the same day and was proud to represent the accomplishments of the 529th CSSB Soldiers at the same time.

"What an honor to perform that symbolic gesture of throwing out the first pitch to start the season for the Norfolk Tides," Lutz added. "Two greatest reasons to love my country- baseball and the Army. You could not ask for a better life."

The 529th returned to Virginia over the course of several days from March 21-24 after having served on federal active duty in Afghanistan since May 2010.

The 529th operated from the remote forward operating base at Shindand Air Base, Regional Command - West in Afghanistan where they pioneered logistical support operations as the first U.S. combat support battalion to locate in the area and conduct operations. The battalion was responsible for building an expeditionary life support complex and infrastructure for the entire airbase while providing seamless sustainment operations for supported units as well as helping improve quality of life and promoting economic development in local Afghan

communities.

Working directly with Italian, Spanish, Slovenian and Afghan forces, the unit's mission was to provide supply, maintenance and transportation support to U.S. and coalition warfighters throughout the region that covers the four large western provinces of Herat, Farah, Badghis and Ghor.

Some of the significant accomplishments of the battalion include:

- Coordinated the use of Air Weapons Teams, Engineer Route Clearance Packages, and Close-Air Support for the nearly 1,000 convoys conducted by the battalion that covered nearly 500,000 miles traversing western and southern Afghanistan.

- Established support to 4th Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division and 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division with a transportation platoon at Herat Airfield for daily missions, supported offensive operations in Kandahar Province with Forward Logistics Elements and provided maintenance support at four different bases that included battle-loss/battle-damaged vehicle recovery; mobile refrigeration, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning maintenance; vehicle maintenance; general contracting and test, measurement, and diagnostic equipment.

- Helped improve quality of life and promoted economic development in local Afghan communities and managed more than \$700,000 of Commander's Emergency Response Program contracts for local infrastructure and humanitarian aid projects including refurbishing an old school; clearing and fixing a permanent underground canal for irrigation; drilling eight wells throughout the surrounding villages; and coordinating volunteers and donations to provide sewing machines to local widows.

- Coordinated movement of humanitarian assistance for flood victims in the region in conjunction with Special Forces and was chosen as the first battalion to implement and execute Afghan Transportation Network initiatives to influence stability of the local and regional economy.

- Built an expeditionary life support complex and infrastructure for the entire airbase of more than 2,200 personnel and completed more than 450 base support missions. The battalion provided communication support for the entire



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class A.J. Coyne, Virginia Guard PAO

Maj. Matt Lutz, executive officer of the 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, prepares to throw out the ceremonial first pitch before the Norfolk Tides home opener April 17 at Harbor Park in Norfolk. Nearly 50 Soldiers and their family members from the 529th CSSB were on hand for the game as the unit was celebrated for its recent deployment to Afghanistan.

base, purified between 45,000 and 60,000 gallons of potable water each day, oversaw the distribution of more than 3 million gallons of JP8 fuel and 20,000 gallons of motor gasoline and maintained 257 tactical vehicles, including 77 armored gun trucks, with a 96% operation readiness rate.

- Managed more than \$24.6 million in contracts for food service, water purification, fuel retail operations, Supply Support Activity, container and cargo management, and transportation operations for Shindand Air Base and managing seven construction projects worth \$4.8 million for the expansion of the base's logistical support capability and quality of life.

- Oversaw the construction of 112,500-square foot Morale, Welfare and Recreation area that included a weight and cardiovascular facility, theater, Post Exchange, USO and barbershop.

The battalion had no Virginia Soldiers killed in action or wounded in action by hostile enemy action.

Va. Guard honors volunteers at annual workshop

By Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Adjutant General of Virginia, Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., presented certificates of appreciation during the Virginia National Guard Volunteer Workshop at the Marriott Hotel in Richmond May 14 to volunteers who have supported the Virginia Army National Guard throughout the year.

The volunteers have supported the Guard through various programs including Family Readiness Groups, Family Programs, Youth Camps and numerous other programs.

"I appreciate you all for the things that you do," said Long. "The services that you all provide, the phone calls, the community involvement, and working with the Family Readiness Groups are very important because you support the Guardsmen that are deploying.

"From the Adjutant General's standpoint and from the 10,000 Guard members that I represent, we really do appreciate what you all do."

It has been said that the Guard would not be able to complete its mission without the volunteer corps that are active in



Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Adjutant General of Virginia, Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., presented certificates of appreciation during the Virginia National Guard Volunteer Workshop to volunteers who have supported the Virginia Army National Guard throughout the year.

supporting the families, so the commanders of the units can focus on taking care of the Soldiers and accomplish their missions.

"This event is to thank those volunteers, to inspire them and to encourage them to continue doing what they've been doing," said Julia Alaric, senior family readiness support assistant.

The workshop included the recognition of the volunteers, a class on social media and operational security, and classes on relieving stress through laughter and

building a portfolio.

"We have some education pieces today, so they can walk away from us today with a little bit of extra knowledge," said Alaric. "They can take this knowledge and apply it, not only in their roles as volunteer, but in their personal lives as well.

"At the end of the day, we want the volunteers to walk out of here feeling appreciated and knowing that the Virginia National Guard appreciates everything that they do for us."

Gov. signs legislation to support Virginia Public Safety

From Staff Reports

Gov. Bob McDonnell signed legislation that allows him to position Virginia National Guard personnel prior to the declaration of a state of emergency along with other bills related to public safety in a ceremony held May 2 at the Henrico County Public Safety Building.

"One of the most important factors in having the Virginia Guard ready to respond during a severe weather event is being able to position personnel and equipment at key locations before the weather hits," said Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. "The legislation Gov. McDonnell signed today makes a significant positive impact on our readiness and enhances our flexibility to more rapidly assist the citizens of the commonwealth in their time of need.

Long also acknowledged that the Virginia Guard received great support in the General Assembly session in the form of a \$6.7 million budget amendment to conduct critical repairs at Virginia

Guard facilities across the state.

"I am always inspired by the unwavering commitment demonstrated by Virginia's public safety officials to the security and safety of the citizens of the Commonwealth," McDonnell said. "We have once again witnessed that commitment over the past few weeks in the coordinated response to the devastating tornados and severe storms that affected localities throughout Virginia. It is important that we honor the service and sacrifice of the nearly 165,000 public safety officials who protect and serve us each and every day. This legislation does that."

Delegate Beverly Sherwood also remarked, "It was my pleasure to assist the Governor and the Department of Military Affairs in authorizing the flexibility needed to stage forces quickly during certain emergency circumstances without an official state of emergency being declared."

McDonnell also signed a proclamation commending the 192nd Fighter Wing of the Virginia Air National Guard on their "Excellent" rating on the ACC Operational Readiness Inspection.

116th BCT HQ departs for federal active duty

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Family, friends and members of the Staunton community gathered May 15 for a farewell ceremony for the Virginia National Guard's Staunton-based 116th Brigade Combat Team Headquarters at the Shelburne Middle School gymnasium to officially mark the start of federal active duty for approximately 175 Soldiers. The unit will serve as a command and control headquarters for counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan. Before deploying to Afghanistan, the unit will report to Camp Shelby, Miss., to conduct training for approximately 45 to 60 days.

"This unit was asked specifically to go on this mission," said Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. "There was no luck of the draw. The FORSCOM commander, a four star general, called me and said we need these people to go if they can go. It is an honor for me to say how proud I am of you and what you are about to do."

The Soldiers of the 116th BCT Headquarters prepared for the mobilization with little more than 60 days of advance notice. The Headquarters will not mobilize with its normally assigned subordinate battalions from Virginia, but will instead provide command and control for active Army and coalition units upon its arrival in Afghanistan.

"This is a sad day," said Col. Blake Ortner, commander of the 116th BCT. "But I also think this is a day for pride: pride in our unit and pride in ourselves. Less than one percent of this nation wears the uniform of the military. The few are protecting the many, and you are part of that small, elite group, and your family and friends can take pride in that as you can. We will do ourselves, the National Guard and Virginia proud.

"As Congressman Goodlatte mentioned, we do not serve alone," he said. "Our service is the simple part. It is our friends and family that face a more difficult time. I can barely describe the pride I feel for our families who are some of the most caring and dedicated individuals I have ever met. They did not sign up for this as we did, but they stay by our sides, serving us as we



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

A group of friends and family gather around a departing Soldier in a prayer circle following the farewell ceremony for the Staunton-based 116th Brigade Combat Team Headquarters held May 15 at the Shelburne Middle School.

serve this nation."

While headquartered in Staunton, the 116th BCT Headquarters is made up of Soldiers from all over the state. Approximately 35 Soldiers are from the northern Virginia area, about 25 are from the Hampton Roads area, approximately 20 are from the Richmond and Petersburg area, about 20 are from the Staunton and Harrisonburg area, approximately 15 are from the Roanoke area, about 10 are from the Lynchburg area, approximately 10 are from the Charlottesville and central Virginia area and the other Soldiers are from various locations across Virginia as well as West Virginia, South Carolina and North Carolina.

The 116th Brigade Combat Team Headquarters last mobilized for active federal duty in Iraq from June 2007 to February 2008 where it served as the Joint Area Support Group in downtown Baghdad.

Soldiers from the unit completed a week and a half of annual training at Fort Pickett and Staunton May 14 for the deployment. The roughly 200 Soldiers from across the commonwealth met collectively for the first time at annual training and are now

focused on training for the mission ahead.

"These past few days were instrumental in starting to develop teamwork and unit cohesion for the deployment," said Maj. Lesley Kipling of Springfield who serves as the brigade communications officer.

"This time together gave our section time to gel and prepare for the mission we are going to do in Afghanistan," said Sgt. Deon Matthews, a communications sergeant from Vinton.

"I enjoyed being able to build some camaraderie with the Soldiers I will be working with this next year," Staff Sgt. Christina Gedney of Woodbridge who serves as the brigade Judge Advocate non-commissioned officer in charge.

During the annual training the Soldiers qualified on their weapons, completed required pre mobilization briefings and completed load out of their personal and section equipment. The staff completed training on the Command Post of the Future in addition to the other tasks.

Additional reporting by Maj. Nevin Blankenship, 116th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

For more on the 116th BCT HQ, please see page 13

Virginia Army Guard officer honored with MacArthur Leadership Award

From Staff Reports

Gen. Martin Dempsey, the Army Chief of Staff, presented Capt. Shawn G. Talmadge of the Virginia Army National Guard with the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership award for exceptional leadership and service during a ceremony May 19 at the Pentagon.

Talmadge, who serves fulltime with the Virginia National Guard's Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear High Yield Explosive Emergency Response Force Package, was one of 28 officers selected from all active and reserve company grade personnel from throughout the Army who exhibit outstanding leadership, performance, and achievement.

"I'm extremely honored and humbled being a recipient of such a prestigious award," Talmadge said. "The CERFP had an incredible year, but it wasn't the result of my actions, but that of everyone from our interagency partners, our state leadership, the CERFP command team, the staff, and every CERFP responder on the team. No doubt, it was the teamwork that made everyone successful."

"Shawn Talmadge demonstrates 'duty, honor, country' in his service to our great

nation, and he is one of the best among his peers proven by his receipt of the MacArthur Award," said Brig. Gen. William R. Phillips, II, Virginia Army National Guard land component commander and previous MacArthur Award recipient. "His leadership style involves gathering input from his subordinates before making decision, treating people with respect, and putting trust and confidence into his NCOs to lead."

"I'm thankful for the many opportunities provided me by my leaders, and also for their trust," Talmadge added. "It was my mentors that have offered counsel and guidance that have helped me learn. And I'm so thankful for my wife and children for their confidence and sacrifices over the years. These are my heroes, they deserve great recognition."

The General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award was established by the U.S. Army and the MacArthur Foundation 24 years ago to highlight junior leaders whose actions reflect those of duty, honor, and country ideals for which General MacArthur stood.

Awardees were selected for exceptional accomplishment, a commitment to the nation, and a great understanding of



U.S. Army Photo by Darrell Hudson, AMVID Civilian
Gen. Martin Dempsey, the Army Chief of Staff, presents Capt. Shawn G. Talmadge of the Virginia Army National Guard with the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership award for exceptional leadership and service during a ceremony May 19 at the Pentagon.

leadership and values.

The award included the presentation of an engraved medallion, and a 15-pound bust of General MacArthur.

Va. Guard assists DEA National Take Back Initiative

Courtesy Virginia Guard Counterdrug Program

Four Soldiers from the 1173rd Transportation Company departed Martinsville, Va., May 10 in two 2.5 ton vehicles with trailers destined for Fairfax, Va., in support of the second Drug Enforcement Administration National Take Back Initiative.

NTBI seeks to remove excess pharmaceuticals from homes across the nation. There is a growing awareness that excess pharmaceuticals, both prescription and over the counter, are a significantly growing gateway to substance abuse, particularly for youth. In addition to the health dangers and negative societal impacts, families who attempt to remove the risk of excess pharmaceuticals often have no choice but to flush them or send them to the landfill. Neither option is good from an environmental perspective as we now have trace elements of pharmaceuticals showing up not only in waterways but also even in treated drinking water.

The vehicles stopped in Richmond overnight to pick up two additional Guardsmen and more than 9,500 pounds of excess pharmaceuticals collected from across the state by state and local

agencies in cooperation with the DEA. This was a significant increase over the 5,000 pounds collected in Virginia in 2010 at the first NTBI event.

The Soldiers and a contingent of DEA agents then travelled to an incinerator in Fairfax where they offloaded and witnessed the destruction of the drugs. The trucks returned via Richmond on May 11, completing 1,214 incident-free miles in support of this mission.

The Virginia National Guard Counterdrug program places Guardsmen in communities conducting Drug Demand Reduction classes for schools and civic organizations; supporting law enforcement agencies with criminal analysts, Ion scanning for drug residue on currency, and aviation support; providing Prevention, Treatment, and Outreach services to Guardsmen and family members; and manages the Joint Substance Abuse Program (drug testing).

One more NTBI event is tentatively scheduled for October 2011, after which time legislation facilitating the collection and disposal of excess pharmaceuticals will hopefully have created local opportunities for regular drug disposal.

29th ID troops prepare Afghan forces for future

By Lt. Col. Tim Donnellan
29th Infantry Division

Members of the 29th Infantry Division are assigned to duty as military advisors to key senior operational leaders within the Afghan National Security Forces.

Approximately one-third of the 29th Infantry Division's Soldiers serve as military advisors for key operational elements of the ANSF: Afghan National Army Ground Forces Command, the ANA National Military Command Center, and the National Police Coordination Center.

The 29th's Military Advisors to these three organizations have the responsibility for their training and development.

The military advisors also act as the link to ensure coordination and mutual support between these ANSF organizations and those 29th ID Soldiers performing ANSF development duties within the ISAF Joint Command Headquarters.

The ANA currently has more than 160,000 Soldiers and continues to grow. This surge in growth gives the 29th Infantry Division advisors the important task of assisting the ANA with all aspects of fielding and training the force. This situation is made more complex because the ANA is at war and growth and development must occur simultaneously with warfighting.

ANA Ground Forces Command is a new operational level command for



Photo by Lt. Col. Tim Donnellan, 29th Infantry Division

Maj. Gen. Murad Ali Murand congratulates John Winkler on his promotion to lieutenant colonel.

Afghanistan. When established Ground Forces Command will command the six ANA Corps and the separate Capital Division, and will have responsibility for leading the security and counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan. The Ground

Forces Command is scheduled to assume their command responsibilities in 2012.

Col. Jeff Hice leads the Ground Forces Command advisor/mentor team comprised of 14 29th Infantry Division Soldiers and civilian contracted mentors. In this role he is the advisor to the GFC Commander Lt. Gen. Murad Ali Murad, an experienced Afghan officer with over 32 years of active military service in all of Afghanistan's conflicts.

"Ground Force Advisors work to implement fully resourced plans to man, train and equip the Ground Forces Command to assume their

important future role as Command and Control of all ANA ground forces," said Hice.

Hice relates that, "The biggest challenge has been getting beyond our conceptions of what should work and learning what will work here. Afghanistan is not America and the solutions that we generate often have to be reworked to make them practical for application in Afghanistan.

"I think there are two really rewarding things about this job. First, it is a great opportunity to build a new command that will have the responsibility for the future security of Afghanistan," Hice added. "This is an important project and the 29th Infantry Division Security Partnering military advisors have the opportunity to contribute to something concrete that will make a difference. Second, it has been rewarding to work daily, shoulder to shoulder, with the Afghan Army. This has been a unique and rewarding opportunity."

The members of the 29th Infantry Division have been in Kabul since December 2010 and will return this fall.



Courtesy Photo

Col. Jeff Hice disembarks from an Afghan M-17 helicopter on his way to visit ANA soldiers. Col. Jeff Hice leads the Ground Forces Command advisor/mentor team comprised of 14 29th Infantry Division Soldiers and civilian contracted mentors.

Fort Pickett chapel dedicated in honor of fallen World War I chaplain

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Department of Military Affairs

The last chapel currently in use at the Virginia Army National Guard Maneuver Training Center at Fort Pickett was dedicated May 24, 2011 to Chaplain (1st Lt.) Thomas McNeill Bulla, who died from combat wounds in World War I.

Maj. Gen. Frank E. Batts, Sr., commander of the 29th Infantry Division, and Col. Tom Wilkinson, commander of Fort Pickett, unveiled the new sign outside the chapel as part of the dedication.

Several of Bulla's relatives also attended the event, and Soldiers from the Portsmouth-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment provided the gun salute.

"He lived the warrior ethos that we teach all of our Soldiers to never leave a fallen comrade," Batts said. "He paid for it with his life."

Bulla was born near Fayetteville, N.C., on Jan. 4, 1881. Soon after he graduated from Union Theological Seminary, he moved to Emporia where he became the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in 1911.

Bulla volunteered to become a chaplain after a request by the colonel of the 4th Virginia Infantry, an element of the Virginia National Guard, and was appointed in the rank of first lieutenant. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion of the newly organized 29th "Blue and Gray" Division.

The entire 29th Division sailed to France in June 1918 and first entered combat in the Alsace Sector in August but suffered relatively light casualties.

That changed when, starting on October 8, the division took part in the massive Allied operation known as the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

It was apparently during the opening days of this attack that Chaplain Bulla repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire by moving across "no man's land" helping wounded Soldiers to safety. This was a duty neither required nor expected of an Army chaplain.

On the morning of October 15, the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry was the lead element for yet another attack in the area known as the Molleville Farm. It was during this assault that Bulla, again helping wounded Soldiers, was struck by



Photo courtesy U.S. Army Chaplain's Museum in Fort Jackson, South Carolina

The last chapel currently in use at the Virginia National Guard Maneuver Training Center at Fort Pickett was dedicated May 24 to Chaplain (1st Lt.) Thomas McNeill Bulla who died from combat wounds in World War I. On 15 Oct. 1918, during the Battle of the Meuse, he was wounded and died two days later, the only chaplain of a Virginia regiment to lose his life in the war.

enemy fire and mortally wounded. He was evacuated to an Army hospital at Petite Mejoy, where he died of his wounds on October 17.

The chapel is currently undergoing renovations and will receive new siding, new windows and a new floor.

During the ceremony, Wilkinson explained that the new sign area is 116 square feet to represent that Bulla served in the 116th Infantry Regiment and the sign itself is 29 inches in diameter to represent the 29th Infantry Division.

In the years since his death Bulla was been honored in several venues: by his church with a stained glass window dedicated in his name; American Legion Post 46 in Emporia adopted the name "Bulla Post" in 1924; he is cited among the 23 Army chaplains who died during World War I on a monument at Arlington National Cemetery; and in 1999 the Commonwealth of Virginia erected a roadside historical marker on the grounds of his church in Emporia.

Additional reporting by Mr. John Listman, Fort Pickett historian.



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Maj. Gen. Frank E. Batts, Sr., commander of the 29th Infantry Division, and Col. Tom Wilkinson, commander of Fort Pickett, unveil a sign outside the Fort Pickett chapel as it is rededicated May 24 in honor of Chaplain (1st Lt.) Thomas McNeill Bulla who died from combat wounds in World War I.

Va. Army Guard recognizes top units for 2010

By Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The top units in the Virginia Army National Guard for 2010 were recognized April 30 at the Virginia National Guard Officers Association Conference in Alexandria.

The Portsmouth-based C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry, 116th Brigade Combat Team was awarded the Eisenhower Trophy and Superior Unit Award and recognized as the most outstanding unit in the Virginia Army National Guard during the training year.

The award is presented to the unit that ranks the highest in areas of assigned personnel strength, percentage of personnel qualified in their duty position, attendance at monthly drill weekends and annual training, individual weapons qualification scores and physical fitness test scores.

The Gate City-based 1032nd Transportation Company, 1030th Transportation Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group was recognized with the state-level Pershing Award for the highest marksmanship scores in the Virginia Army National Guard in annual qualification with assigned individual weapons.



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, presents the Eisenhower Trophy to Capt. Adam McLaurin, commander of C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment, 116th Brigade Combat Team.

The Adjutant General's Cup was presented to the Suffolk-based B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry, 116th Brigade Combat Team. The cup is awarded

to the unit achieving the highest overall average in the areas of overall assigned personnel strength, attendance at monthly drill weekends and attendance at annual training.

The Virginia Army National Guard Excellence in Training Award was presented to C Troop, 1032nd Transportation Company and the Gate City-based 1030th Transportation Battalion for meeting the Adjutant General's standards for training for the previous training year.

The Eisenhower Trophy is named in honor of General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower and is awarded by the Chief of National Guard Bureau to the most outstanding Army National Guard unit in each state.

To earn the Superior Unit Award, the unit must maintain an assigned strength of 95 percent authorized each month of the training year for which being nominated, maintain monthly drill attendance of 95 percent, attain annual training attendance of 95 percent, have 95 percent of all assigned personnel qualify with their assigned weapon and have 90 percent of all assigned personnel pass the Army Physical Fitness Test.



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, presents the Adjutant General's Cup to Capt. Joshua DeKeyser, commander of the Suffolk-based B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry, 116th Brigade Combat Team.

192nd Fighter Wing earns "Excellent" inspection rating

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Department of Military Affairs

The Virginia Air National Guard's 192nd Fighter Wing earned an overall grade of "Excellent" alongside the 633rd Air Base Wing and 1st Fighter Wing for the recent Phase 1 Operational Readiness Inspection conducted April 8-13, 2011, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis.

The units were evaluated on major mission areas including command and control, deployment processing, employment readiness, information operations and force protection.

The inspection was the first of its kind for a joint base, as well as the first for an Air Combat Command combat-ready F-22 unit. Collectively, the three wings "deployed" more than 470 Airmen, prepared 260 short tons of cargo and processed 120 personnel records checks with no errors.

Col. Bryan Turner, 192nd Fighter Wing commander, congratulated Virginia Air National Guard Airmen for their efforts and for participating in the total force initiative.

"I can't say enough about how proud I am of the 192nd Fighter Wing members for their efforts and tremendous attitude over the last 20 months as we worked our way to and through the inspection," Turner said. "The key takeaway was that the IG team was blown away by the attitudes and professionalism that the three wings exhibited throughout the inspection. The TFI integration between all areas was praised, and we truly are one seamless team."

The Virginia Air National Guard has been a part of the last two Operational Readiness Inspections at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, and both inspections resulted in an overall grade of "Excellent," Turner explained. He said that when you look back at the last grades of all the other Air Combat Command wings, the total number of "Outstanding" and "Excellent" grades in sub-areas is the highest they have seen to date. The areas where the Virginia Air Guard personnel were working jointly alongside the 1st Fighter Wing and 633rd Air Base Wing had no sub-areas graded below a grade of "Excellent."

The evaluation was combined for all three squadrons, and members of the 192nd Fighter Wing were integrated into all areas of operations, maintenance, personnel readiness and deployment. Forty percent of the generation team was made up of Virginia Air Guard maintainers as well as 15 percent of the regeneration team, and both received a rating of "Outstanding", the highest rating possible. The command and control of the wings also received an "Outstanding" rating.

The 192nd Maintenance Group along with the 1st Fighter Wing were able to launch 17 of 18 primary aircraft into operation with eight spares, deployed 18 of 18 tasked aircraft and successfully regenerated all 18 for possible future missions within eight and a



U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Bradley Camara

A 192nd Fighter Wing maintainer reviews F-22 Raptor forms on a computer upon return to base during an Operational Readiness Inspection April 10 at Langley Air Force Base.

half hours.

"I am very proud to serve with the men and women in the 192nd Maintenance Group" said Maintenance Group Chief Mike Bouley. "They continuously rise to any task before them and perform in an outstanding manner. The 192nd Maintenance Group Virginia Air National Guardsman can be counted on by both our state as well as federal government in defense of our country."

Both individuals and teams were recognized for outstanding performance:

OUTSTANDING TEAM AWARDS:

Generation Production Section: 1st & 192d Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Group Intelligence Team: 1st & 192d Operations Group

In-Flight Refuel Team: 1st & 192d Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Mobility Team: 27th & 149th Fighter Squadron

INDIVIDUAL OUTSTANDING PERFORMERS:

Maj. Matthew R. Hummel, 192nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Capt. Sarah M. Beck, 192nd Maintenance Operations Flight

Master Sgt. Roy A. Perkins, 192nd Maintenance Group

Master Sgt. Lakeisha N. Sistrunk, 192nd Operations Group

Staff Sgt. Jesse A. Brown, 192nd Operations Group

Staff Sgt. Michael P. Geoghegan, 192nd Maintenance Squadron

Staff Sgt. Shawn L. Phillips, 192nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Staff Sgt. Chad A. Provo, 192nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Staff Sgt. Megan A. Winesett, 192nd Maintenance Operations Flight

Senior Airman Joseph J. Hayes III, 192nd Maintenance Squadron

Senior Airman Jeffery E. Koontz, 192nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Airman 1st Class Christopher A. Raines, 192nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Additional reporting by Airman 1st Class Jason J. Brown, 633rd Air Base Wing Public Affairs

Fallen Va. Guard combat engineers remembered at Fort Leonard Wood memorial ceremony

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Dept. of Military Affairs

The names of five Virginia Army National Guard combat engineers lost during combat operations in the Global War on Terror were among the more than 330 names etched on the Memorial Wall for Fallen Engineers unveiled April 7 at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Fort Leonard Wood is home to the U. S. Army Engineer School and Regiment.

"To family and friends, your sacrifice is great, and we did not come here tonight to open deep wounds," said Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp, Chief of Engineers of the United States Army, before the unveiling. "We did come here tonight to say that you are not alone, and you will never be forgotten. Your Soldiers will never be forgotten."

The unveiling took place after the Fallen Sapper Tribute at the Fort Leonard Wood Memorial Chapel, a ceremony designed to pay humble and respectful homage to the 33 engineer Soldiers who died in combat from April 2010 to April 2011. Directly outside the chapel in the Engineer Memorial Grove, the wall made of Missouri red granite engraved with the names of engineers who made the ultimate sacrifice was unveiled in front of family members and fellow engineers from across the country. After the unveiling, family members and fellow engineers were invited to trace the names on the wall.

"We have terrible losses, but at the same time their memory will be forever engrained in this granite," said Capt. Beau Mason, former commander of the West Point-based 237th Engineer Company. "I am glad these guys are etched in these walls for other engineers and everyone else to see their sacrifices and that all these guys loved what they did."

Mason served with all five fallen Soldiers, and was commander of the 237th when three of the Soldiers were lost. He said he felt it was particularly important to have the memorial at Fort Leonard Wood and the Engineer School.

"This is a fitting tribute to these fine young men, and it is important that we

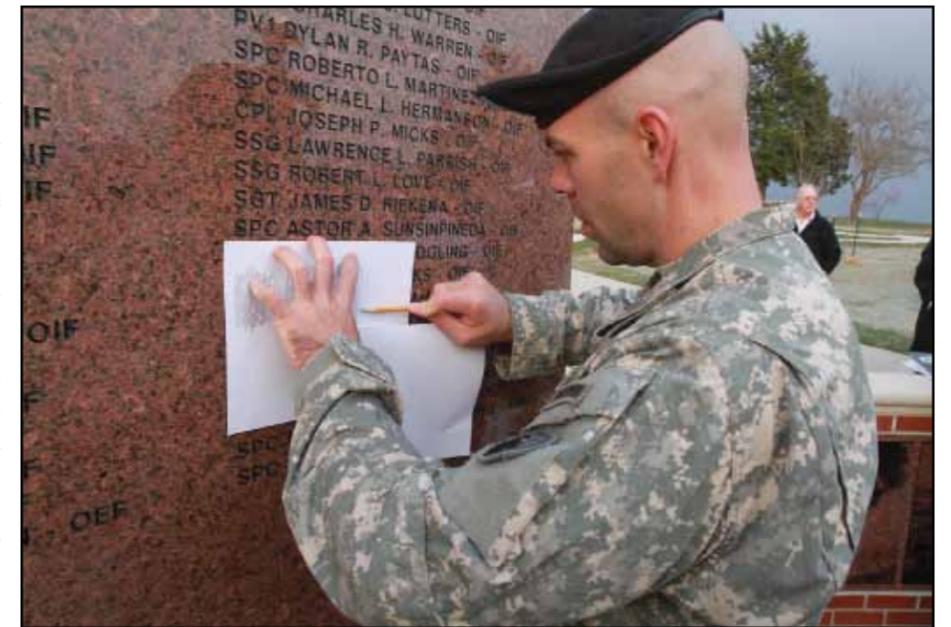


Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Capt. Beau Mason traces the name of one of the five Virginia Army National Guard combat engineers lost during combat operations in Global War on Terror that were among the more than 330 names etched on the Memorial Wall for Fallen Engineers unveiled April 7, 2011, at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

remember their sacrifice," said Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. "Every day, all over the world, men and women in uniform put themselves in harms way to defend the ideals of freedom that are so important to all of us, and we must never forget how dangerous that can be. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of these Soldiers."

The following Virginia Army National Guard combat engineers have been lost in combat action in Iraq:

Sgt. Nicholas C. Mason, 20, of King George, Va., and Sgt. David A. Ruhren, 20, of Stafford, Va., died of wounds Dec. 21, 2004 in Mosul, Iraq, after their dining facility was attacked. Both were assigned to the West Point-based Company C, 276th Engineer Battalion, 91st Troop Command.

Sgt. David E. Lambert, 39, of Cedar Bluff, Va., died of wounds Oct. 26, 2007 in Baghdad, Iraq, after the vehicle he was in struck an improvised explosive device.

Sgt. Derek R. Banks, 24, of Newport News, Va., was also in the vehicle and died of wounds Nov. 14, 2007 in San Antonio, Texas. Both were assigned to the West

Point-based 237th Engineer Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, 91st Troop Command.

Staff Sgt. Jeremiah E. McNeal, 23, of Norfolk, Va., died of wounds April 6, 2008 in Baghdad, Iraq, after his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the West Point-based 237th Engineer Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, 91st Troop Command.

The Virginia National Guard has lost 10 Soldiers in combat actions in Iraq and Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001.

"The biggest thing to me is that it honors specifically engineers," said Command Sgt. Maj. Darryl Plude, command sergeant major of the Petersburg-based 276th Engineer Battalion. "It is paying tribute to guys that are out on the battlefield doing one of the most dangerous jobs."

Plude said he thinks the memorial symbolizes sacrifice and sends the message that these Soldiers won't be forgotten.

"Their names are etched in that granite wall, and it will be here forever," he said. "Many of us will come and go, but those guys will always be right here."

Military kids enjoy Teen Wilderness Adventure Camp

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Approximately 50 children of Virginia National Guard and active duty military parents took part in the Teen Wilderness Adventure Camp held at Wilderness Adventure at Eagle Landing in New Castle June 26-30. Activities at the camp included kayaking, mountain biking, hiking and outdoor activities for building confidence and teamwork.

"The goal of the camp is to bring the kids together and build camaraderie, especially during times of deployment," said Dana Ivory, director of youth programs for the Virginia National Guard. The camp has team building activities that have the kids working together as well as giving them opportunities to grow as individuals, build confidence and overcome fears, she said.

The camp was organized by the Virginia National Guard Youth Program in partnership with Operation: Military Kids and offered an opportunity for teens to grow together in a non-traditional learning environment with activities that develop leadership and effective communication.

Of the almost 50 kids taking part in the camp, about 40 are children of Army and Air National Guard and the others are from active duty families, Ivory said. More than half of the campers have taken part in this camp or the youth camp conducted the last five years at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach. The camp at SMR is for ages eight to 12 and the wilderness camp is for ages 13 to 17.

Ivory said that kids at the camp develop a connection that continues to grow through the year through texting, Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites.

One of the camp's counselors was a veteran of both the teen camp and the SMR youth camp. Ben Billmyer, age 18, attended the camp for three years and was serving as a counselor for the first time. He said he particularly enjoyed the activities where campers work both on team building skills as well as confidence.

"I know what to do in these different activities because I have done them before, but it is so awesome to watch other kids figure out what to do and build leadership skills through these activities," he said.

"At these camps everyone has a common denominator because they are all military youth," Billmyer said. "I have made a lot of friends, and that is the best thing about this camp."



Photos by Cotton Puryear, Va. Dept. of Military Affairs

Approximately 50 children of Virginia National Guard and active duty military parents took part in the Teen Wilderness Adventure Camp held at Wilderness Adventure at Eagle Landing in New Castle June 26 to 30.

Fallen Virginians honored in capitol ceremony

By Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

State officials formally recognized the sacrifice of 237 Virginians who lost their lives in the Global War on Terror, including 10 Virginia Guard Soldiers, during the fifth annual Virginia Wall of Honor Ceremony held May 26 on the south portico of the Virginia Capitol. The pre-Memorial Day ceremony saw 25 new names added to the memorial this year.

"We do this every year because we understand that freedom is not free, and that for centuries it has been purchased with the cause and the price of American blood," said Governor Bob McDonnell.

The governor assured the families of the fallen Virginians the state's commitment to remembering their loved ones who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country and commonwealth would continue. He noted the importance of gathering at the memorial every year to honor the brave men and women of Virginia.

"Five years ago when I was attorney general, I worked together with leaders of the commonwealth to start this Wall of Honor," said McDonnell. "We did it because we felt it was only appropriate that the governor, the lieutenant governor and the attorney general should gather at least once a year before Memorial Day to be sure that those who made the ultimate sacrifice were properly honored."

A total of 10 Virginia Guard Soldiers have lost their lives to hostile enemy action since September 11, 2001.

Since the beginning of the Global War on Terror, nearly 10 years ago, the Virginia National Guard has deployed more than 12,000 Soldiers and Airmen in support of the many operations involved in the conflict, according to Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., Adjutant General of Virginia. Long also mentioned the



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard Funeral Honors Team acted as escorts for family members attending the 2011 Wall of Honor Ceremony held May 26 in Richmond.

ceremony was about the service members of all branches of the armed forces, and the families of the brave warriors who gave their lives for the ideas of their country.

"These men and women represent the best of this great commonwealth and of this nation. They are the essence of peace and the idea of democracy and freedom," said Long. "Their service and sacrifice, and that of their families, have helped build a better America and a better Virginia.

"We will not let their sacrifices pass in vain."

Representatives from the active, reserve and National Guard components of the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard, including Lt. Col. James Ring of the Army National Guard, took turns reading all the names of the fallen Virginians. Chaplain (Col.) John Weatherly, the Virginia National Guard state chaplain, gave the opening prayer.

Following the remembrance on Capitol Square, the families of the fallen were invited to walk across the street to the bottom floor of the attorney general's office to view the Wall of Honor and to pay tribute to their lost loved ones. At the Wall of Honor, the families were given a chance to talk with the governor, the lieutenant governor, the attorney general, and the adjutant general.

"This grateful nation must always show its support and its eternal gratitude to those with the courage and the fortitude to swear an oath to the constitution, to don the uniform of the country, and to in fact, sacrifice their lives for the country," said McDonnell.

Soldiers from the Virginia Guard Funeral Honors Team also provided escorts for family members attending the event.



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers killed in the Global War on Terror were among the 237 Virginians remembered at the 2011 Wall of Honor Ceremony held May 26 in Richmond.

Virginia Guard Warriors reflect on Holocaust

By Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard Equal Opportunity Office held its annual "Holocaust: Days of Remembrance" program at the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond April 20 and welcomed Soldiers of the Virginia Army Guard to take an educational tour of the museum and learn about the atrocities that took place in Nazi-occupied Europe during the 1930s and 40s.

Following the self-guided tours, the Soldiers were given refreshments in the way of Jewish cuisine, and sat down for a question and answer session with Jay Ipson, the president and director of the museum, who survived Nazi persecution during the Holocaust in Lithuania as a young boy.

"We brought the team out from the Joint Forces Headquarters Detachment, so that we can learn, and be educated about different experiences that the Jewish people went through," said Capt. Sheryl Lloyd, JFHQ Detachment officer-in-charge. "This was very enlightening, and



Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Jay Ipson, a Holocaust survivor, speaks to Soldiers of the Virginia Army National Guard during the Virginia National Guard Equal Opportunity Office's Holocaust: Days of Remembrance program at the Virginia Holocaust Museum April 20.

I think these events are a good process to become a well-rounded Soldier by learning the experiences of all people."

"The EO team is excellent and they take a lot of time to put these activities on. I know we are all busy," said Lloyd. "We always have work to do, but it's important to show that support and get that education because the Army's all about diversity."

According to Spc. Lori Adkins, Virginia EO specialist, taking time out of a Soldier's day to focus on each other's differences will help facilitate a more effective work

environment in the Virginia National Guard by fostering a diverse workplace.

"What a lot of the Soldiers and employees get from the program is they can learn things about their co-worker's cultures, which can help them not discriminate against one another," said Adkins. "As we learn about each other, we tend to grow a little bit bigger as a family."

"The more that we know about each other, the better we can work together. It's about teaching tolerance through education."

DMA recognizes state employee service

By Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Senior leaders of the Virginia Department of Military Affairs recognized state employees for their commitment to the Virginia National Guard during luncheons at Fort Pickett June 2, the Army Aviation Support Facility in Sandston June 10 and the State Military Reservation at Camp Pendleton June 15. Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., Adjutant General of Virginia, awarded certificates of appreciation to the employees for their continued service.

The employees at each event enjoyed chicken, hot dogs and hamburgers and all the fixings served during the cookout-style appreciation luncheon.

Employees with specific years of state service were presented with the certificates from the adjutant general and also received gifts based on their amount of time in service presented by Brig. Gen. Wayne A. Wright, the Deputy Adjutant General of Virginia.

"I appreciate all that you all do. There's a lot of great work

going on and a lot of folks that are doing amazing things," said Long. "I think we are making good progress in my vision to make Virginia one of the top National Guard organizations in the United States and you are all a part of that."

Civilian state employees work in many support roles to help in the daily duties of the Virginia National Guard, whether it be in a state active duty situation, or day to day operations around the commonwealth. They provide support at nearly every armory, training site and the headquarters in the Virginia Department of Military Affairs.

"Being able to recognize the employees of the state in some way is really important, said Brig. Gen. (ret.) Stephen L. Huxtable, director of personnel and administration. "For the Department of Military Affairs to appropriately run all of its missions the state employees are critical because they play a very strong support role."

"Our state employees are shoulder to shoulder with the military leadership everyday and without that we wouldn't be able to complete our mission."

Commonwealth ChalleNGe graduates 99 from Class 34

By Sgt. 1st Class A.J. Coyne
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard Commonwealth ChalleNGe program graduated 99 cadets from Class 34 June 18 at the Naval Air Station Oceana theater in Virginia Beach. Virginia Sen. Frank Wagner and Brig Gen. Wayne A. Wright, the Deputy Adjutant General of Virginia, were among those on hand to congratulate the graduates. The ceremony also marked a farewell for retired Marine Corps Col. T.M. Early, who is retiring as director of the ChalleNGe program after leading it since 2005.

"On behalf of the governor, the Secretary of Public Safety and the Adjutant General, I want to send you a very big congratulations," Wright said. "You started out with 140 and now there are 99 of you left. Congratulations."

"This is your day to celebrate," Early told the graduates. "Congratulations and don't look back."

Wright also recognized the ChalleNGe staff and commended them for all the hard work they put into the program.

"There's a lot of hard work that goes into this," Wright said to the staff members. "It's your hard work that has helped these cadets to be here today."

Commonwealth ChalleNGe is the Virginia component of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, a five and a half month program which focuses on



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class A.J. Coyne, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia Sen. Frank Wagner presents a diploma to one of the 99 graduates from Class 34 of the Virginia Commonwealth ChalleNGe program June 18 in Virginia Beach.

preparing at-risk teens and high school dropouts for the General Educational Development test and future employment, military or higher education opportunities.

During the ceremony, Andrew Taylor was recognized as valedictorian of Class 34, Jelani Ellis received the Leadership Award, Qua'Shawn Derry was honored for top Overall Physical Fitness and Ja'Quan Turner received the Most Improved Physical Fitness award.

In addition, Early presented the Distinguished Cadet award to Jimmy Outlaw.

"He's done everything first," Early said of Outlaw. "He's been our number one man since the day he got here."

The cadets of Class 34 were honored during the ceremony for the many hours of service to the community during their time at Commonwealth

ChalleNGe. This included assisting at the Virginia Beach Convention Center, the Virginia Beach school bus garage, the Commonwealth Attorney's office, the NAS Oceana commissary, the NAS Oceana fitness center and at Seatack Elementary School.

Offered free to at-risk teens ages 16 to 18 in Virginia, Commonwealth ChalleNGe is a statewide co-educational program with two components: a 22-week quasi-military residential phase followed by a 12-month post-residential phase.

During the 22-week residential phase, cadet studies are centered on the eight components of the program - academics, life-coping skills, work skills, citizenship, leadership, health education, physical fitness and community service. Cadets have the opportunity to take the GED test and establish a life plan - continued education, employment or military service - during this phase.

In the 12-month post - residential phase - a stage Class 34 now has reached - a mentor guides each of the cadets as they follow through with the life plan established during the residential phase.

More than 3,500 Virginia teens have graduated from Commonwealth ChalleNGe since it started in 1994.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class A.J. Coyne, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Cadet Rocco Kasmark celebrates following the graduation of Class 34 of the Virginia Commonwealth ChalleNGe program June 18 in Virginia Beach.

Military Funeral Honors Program Soldiers honored with new state ribbon

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers who have successfully performed more than 50 funerals as part of the Virginia National Guard Military Funeral Honors Program were presented with a special state award June 5 in Petersburg. Brig. Gen. Wayne A. Wright, the Deputy Adjutant General of Virginia, presented the Virginia Military Funeral Honors Ribbon to 24 Soldiers from the approximately 70 Soldiers who have met the standards, and it was the first time the award has been presented.

The award was designed by members of the Funeral Honors Team and was recently approved after more than two years of working through the design and approval process, explained retired Command Sgt. Maj. Bob Huffman, state coordinator of the program. The Virginia Military Funeral Honors Team on average provides funeral honors to more than 200 veterans' families each month, and more than 8,000 people attended funerals in the month of May 2011 where Virginia Soldiers provided honors.

"The fact that we have this program is very important," Wright said. "We have a couple of designated days that we recognize all veterans, but when you go out and render honors to someone, to a fellow service member, that is an honor that you are giving that service member and their family on that day, at that time, for that



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Brig. Gen. Wayne A. Wright, the Deputy Adjutant General of Virginia, presents the Virginia Military Funeral Honors Ribbon to Spc. Sarah Smith from the 29th Army Band June 5 in Petersburg. The ribbon recognizes Soldiers who have successfully performed more than 50 funerals as part of the Virginia Funeral Honors Team, and Smith has completed more than 500.

person. That is really important, and it takes pride, dedication and hard work to get it right. It is something that family members will remember for a long time."

Among those receiving the award were Spc. Sarah Smith from the 29th Army Band who has performed 519 funerals, Staff Sgt. Troy Sisson from the 29th Army Band with 426 funerals and Spc. Thomas Mogush from the 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery Regiment who has performed 417 services.

The Virginia National Guard Military Funeral Honors Program provided its first military funeral honors service in January 2007. At that time there were only two teams performing funerals, and team members from Gate City and Fort Pickett performed 157 funerals in the fiscal year.

In 2008, the program expanded with additional Soldiers and they performed 433 funerals. The program expanded even more by performing 1,263 funerals in 2009, and expanded by establishing new regional offices in Suffolk, Fort A. P. Hill and Petersburg. In 2010, Soldiers performed 2,015 services.

In Fiscal Year 2011, the program averages more than 200 funerals each month. The full time staff has grown to 19 and more than 80 Soldiers are part of the program in a traditional Guard status.

The ribbon is blue on the ends in honor of the Virginia state flag with a border of white to represent the purity and honor of the fallen comrade. The purple bordering the white represents the jointness of the Army and Air Guard, and the red white and blue in the center represents the flag of the United States of America.

Huffman said the program needs more traditional Soldiers in order to keep pace with the increase in honors request. To inquire about joining the program you can contact Huffman at 434-292-9051 or by email at bob.huffman@us.army.mil.



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Dept. of Military Affairs

A total of 24 Soldiers received the Virginia Military Funeral Honors Ribbon June 5 in Petersburg. The award was presented for the first time after a two year design and approval process. The ribbon is blue on the ends in honor of the Virginia state flag with a border of white to represent the purity and honor of the fallen comrade. The purple bordering the white represents the jointness of the Army and Air Guard, and the red white and blue in the center represents the flag of the United States of America.

Va. Soldiers join D-Day ceremony in Bedford on 67th anniversary of Normandy invasion

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard's Lynchburg-based 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry, 116th Brigade Combat Team provided a color guard and other support, and the Petersburg-based 29th Infantry Division Band provided live music at the commemoration event held June 6, 2011 at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford to mark the 67th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy.

"The Soldiers were very excited and supportive of the event and felt like they were doing their part to honor the sacrifices of those who came before them and continuing the tradition of service," said Lt. Col. Allan Carter, commander of 1st Battalion. "They enjoyed meeting, visiting and supporting the veterans by assisting them to their seats if they needed help and making sure they had water on a hot day."

Carter said that some of the Soldiers were able to exchange brief stories about their current experiences and were awestruck by some of the stories the veterans had.

"Being from 1-116, they were all aware of symbolism and why the memorial is in Bedford," Carter said. "More than half of the Soldiers that participated in the ceremony were from Company A and they are proud to call themselves the current day Bedford Boys."

Despite the high temperatures the day of the ceremony, the Soldiers kept things in perspective.

"We have to stand in the sun at parade rest for an hour, they stormed a beach riddled with bullets and people trying to kill them," said Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Tomkinson. "It's the least we can do today."

Like 11 other Virginia communities, Bedford provided a company of Soldiers, Company A, to the 29th Infantry Division when the National Guard's 116th Infantry Regiment was activated on Feb. 3, 1941, and 19 of the "Bedford Boys" died during the assault on Omaha Beach. Bedford's population in 1944 was about 3,200, and proportionally the Bedford community suffered the nation's most severe D-Day losses.

Recognizing Bedford as emblematic of all communities, large and small, whose citizen-Soldiers served on D-Day, Congress warranted the establishment of the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, and this year's event marked the 10th anniversary of the historic site's dedication.

"It's very important that Soldiers from the 116th are present at this or any ceremony where we honor those that came before us," Carter said. "It teaches young Soldiers history, sometimes by firsthand accounts, it develops pride in their unit and in a small way gives back to the people that gave us so much. Since Bedford is in our backyard, it's our duty to represent not only the 1-116 and the 29th Division but all of the units and services that participated in D-Day that could not be represented."

Dedicated by the President of the United States on June 6,



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard's Lynchburg-based 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry, 116th Brigade Combat Team provided a color guard and other support at the commemoration event held June 6, 2011 at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford to mark the 67th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy.

2001, the National D-Day Memorial exists in tribute to the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of the Allied Forces on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The National D-Day Memorial Foundation operates and maintains the Memorial, and its educational mission is to preserve the lessons and legacy of D-Day.

Operation Overlord was the largest air, land, and sea operation undertaken before or since June 6, 1944. Many of the first young men, most not yet 20 years old, entered the surf carrying eighty pounds of equipment. They faced over 200 yards of beach before reaching the first natural feature offering any protection.

The Memorial has four major components that represent the sweep of D-Day from the early planning and preparation for it, through the Channel crossing and landing in France, on to the Allied victory and consolidation on the beaches, and beyond Normandy into the landscape's of postwar Europe. Within those components, visitors encounter a moving array of small memorials and tributes. Many of those are brought to life by the figurative sculpture emplaced throughout the Memorial.

"It was great to do our part in supporting the ceremony to show those who gave so much on June 6, 1944 that they would always have a place in our hearts, that their sacrifice would never be forgotten and that the torch has been passed to the next generation," Carter said. "The entire 1-116 is proud of the lineage provided by the great Americans that came before us. I don't think Soldiers currently serving realize yet that they are doing their part to pass along to the next generation what was inherited by these great veterans honored at the ceremony. They are passing on the spirit of 9/11, Iraq, Kosovo, Afghanistan, the War on Terror and service to citizens of the Commonwealth in time of need."

Virginia rolls out JISCC for major state, national exercises

By Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Communications experts from the Virginia National Guard conducted their annual training supporting two major exercises to test their capabilities and validate their expertise.

A five person team from the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability, or JISCC, team provided communication assets to the Hampton Roads Full Scale Exercise May 17-19 and two JISCC packages manned by 13 Soldiers and Airmen supported the 2011 Joint Users Interoperability Communications Exercise at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., June 13-24.

The Virginia Soldiers implemented the JISCC packages seamlessly into the exercises to provide unique communication capabilities by providing satellite reach back using iDirect modems to make DSN, commercial internet, wireless local area network, NIPRnet and SIPRnet connectivity available at both locations.

"Communications is the most essential part of any exercise," said Sgt. Markus Turner, JISCC sergeant. "If you can't

talk or communicate, you can't get things accomplished."

According to 1st Lt. Jessica Sims, JISCC team officer in charge, the Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen were able to do what they do best during the exercises; they trained to react to a real world incident in a controlled setting and gained experience in their highly technical career fields at both exercises.

"We were able to focus on domestic operations and accomplish our daily objectives," said Sims. "Soldiers participating in the event were able to cross-train on the JISCC equipment and become more familiar with set-up as well as initiate the JISCC system to be fully mission capable."

JUICE was planned as a team building event where different federal and local emergency services and agencies could interface, communicate and interoperate in a real world tactical network, and the Virginia Guard personnel seized the opportunity to hone their communications skills in preparation for the upcoming hurricane season.

"They had plenty of time to hone their skills and work in a real world environment," said Chief Warrant Officer Chris Johnson, deputy J6 and knowledge management officer. "This could not have been a better timed exercise for us because it helped us develop our skills with current hands on training to respond to an emergency if there is a major hurricane this season."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia Soldiers implemented the JISCC packages seamlessly into the exercises to provide unique communication capabilities by providing satellite reach back using iDirect modems to make DSN, commercial internet, wireless local area network, NIPRnet and SIPRnet connectivity available at both locations.

According to Johnson, the different agencies that come together in the wake of a natural disaster will use different



Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

A team from the Virginia Army National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters along with Soldiers from Company C, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion set up the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability to provide Internet access and telephone support to provide communication to the 34th Civil Support Team and the Virginia National Guard CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package during the Hampton Roads Full-Scale Exercise on Joint Base Langley-Eustis May 15.

communications platforms at an incident site. After a major event, the different agencies can all plug in their different radios and communicate with other first responders from different agencies due to the interoperability the JISCC can create on site.

"Think about it, we are like a first responder, we go to a specific incident site and we help with their radio interoperability," said Johnson. "Different agencies can bring different radios. The Sheriff's department, the emergency rescue department, FEMA, the Army, the Air Force, they can plug their radios in to our system and they can all communicate with each other like they were on the same radio system."

In 2011, JUICE celebrated its 18th consecutive year, focusing on expeditionary communications and coalition operations with six or more nations participating.

Air Guard NCO selected as best aviation resource manager in Air Guard, Reserves

By Staff Sgt. Meaghan E. M. Selki
192nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

After 32 years of dedicated service, the chief host aviation manager for the 149th Fighter Squadron was recognized as the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer, Aviation Resource Management Professional of the Year, and subsequently received the Meritorious Service Medal Sunday, June 12.

Master Sgt. Mary I. Meyer was submitted by her leadership team, where she competed against nominees from 88 flying wings across the Air National Guard.

In addition to the Air National Guard award, Meyer was automatically submitted to compete in the Air Force Reserve Management Annual Awards where she was selected by Maj Gen Brett T. Williams, AF Director of Operations, as the Air Reserve Component, Aviation Resource Management Senior NCO of the year.

"It only took 30 years," she laughed. "It feels good that your superiors and peers think of you in that capacity to nominate you. It just means a lot to me," said Meyer.

Moments later, Meyer was also recognized with a Meritorious Service Medal for her accomplishments and contributions since 2009. Her cited successes included deployment time to Kadena Air Base, Japan, in support of Pacific Command theatre operations, as well as her dedicated support to the pilots of the 149th FS, ensuring they are always trained, medically qualified and mission-ready.

Meyer will begin terminal leave in July before her retirement, scheduled for October 1. She's already got extensive plans scheduled during her leave.

"I'll be taking a trip to Africa in August, visiting Kenya, Tanzania and the Island of Zanzibar for the chance to scuba dive in the Indian Ocean," said Meyer. "After that,



Photo courtesy of 192nd Fighter Squadron

Master Sgt. Mary I. Meyer, the chief host aviation manager for the 149th Fighter Squadron, was recognized as the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer, Aviation Resource Management Professional of the Year, and subsequently received the Meritorious Service Medal June 12.

I don't know what I'm going to do, but I'm happy."

Virginia, N.C. WOCs conduct community service project

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Warrant officer candidates from the Virginia and North Carolina Army National Guard conducted a community service project in Blackstone June 25 as part of their five-week Phase II coursework to earn their warrant officer commissions.

Nine officer candidates spent the day refurbishing 40 drainage grates surrounding trees on the street in downtown Blackstone in coordination with Downtown Blackstone, Inc. The community service project is part of the official curriculum established by Fort Rucker for all warrant officer candidates with an emphasis on project development, logistical planning and interaction with community leaders.

Besides the obvious benefit to the local community, the service project has real world training value, explained Chief Warrant Officer Brian A. Temple, course manager for the Warrant Office Candidate School. The candidates have to plan every aspect of the project, including the logistical resupply, he said. The project also gives candidates experience working with community leaders.

"We have so many projects that need attention, we are really glad to have them help us," said Lafayette Dickens, program manager for Downtown Blackstone, Inc.

The warrant officer candidate course begins with a distance learning phase, followed by course work conducted at Fort



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

Warrant Officer Candidates from the Virginia and North Carolina Army National Guard conduct a community service project in Blackstone June 25, 2011, as part of their five-week Phase II coursework to earn their warrant officer commissions.

Pickett over five drill weekends, and then the candidates conduct a two-week annual training at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

The two-week annual training period begins July 14 and candidates are scheduled to graduate July 30. Newly commissioned warrant officers will be recognized in Virginia in October.

Employers get first hand look at Iraq training

By Cotton Puryear
Virginia Department of Military Affairs

The Virginia State Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve organized a "Boss Lift" that brought 12 employers to visit Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard's Task Force 183 training at Camp Atterbury, Ind., June 17. The employers travelled by military aircraft to Columbus, Ind., then moved by bus to Camp Atterbury. Once they arrived, senior leadership from the installation and the task force's higher headquarters greeted them along with Lt. Col. Bill Korsen, commander of Task Force 183.

"We see this as an opportunity for you to see what your Soldier does when they go away," Korsen said. "The intent of this is to get you out here to see what they are doing and spend some time with them. You will get to see some of the training that we do and some of the equipment that we use."

The employers were able to observe Soldiers training on base defense



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

A group of 12 employers of Virginia National Guard Soldiers experienced mobilization training first hand June 17 at Camp Atterbury during the "Boss Lift" organized by the Virginia State Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

operations, static equipment displays, security operations and a simulated engagement between coalition forces and Iraqi nationals. They also had the chance to sample Meals, Ready to Eat for their lunch meal.

Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, hosted the trip. Approximately 825 Soldiers from across the commonwealth are on federal active duty as part of Task Force 183 and are preparing for duty in Iraq where they are scheduled to conduct convoy security and base defense operations.

"This has been a really great experience," said Richie Morrill, a screening manager at Norfolk International Airport for the Transportation Security Administration who has two Soldiers serving in Task Force 183. He said he was impressed by the level of commitment demonstrated by the Soldiers and the quality of the equipment they have for their mission.

"We know these guys have a dual function, and we have to extend every courtesy we can as

employers and make sure they have a job when they come back," he said. "We want to make their transition when they come back as easy as possible."

The Virginia ESGR Committee volunteers registered each employer in the ESGR national database as supportive employers, Stephen said. The nationwide listing of supportive employers can be found by visiting <http://www.esgr.mil>. Guardsmen and Reservists and their families who are looking for employment in each state or U.S. territory who have a reputation of employing members of the Guard and Reserve.

"As the employers returned to Virginia, all 12 of them signed ESGR Statements of Support indicating that their civilian business organizations agree to support their dual role employees, honor and enforce the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act," said Thomas M. Stephen, program support manager for the Virginia State Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. "They also agree to provide their managers and supervisors with the tools they need to effectively manage those employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve. Each employer agreed to continually recognize and support our country's service members and their families in peace, crisis and in war."



Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs

A group of 12 employers of Virginia National Guard Soldiers were able to experience mobilization training first hand June 17 at Camp Atterbury during the ESGR-organized "Boss Lift."

Senior leaders visit 116th BCT HQs at Fort Polk



Photo courtesy of 116th BCT Public Affairs

Virginia Secretary of Public Safety Marla Graff Decker meets with Soldiers from the 116th Brigade Combat Team Headquarters during a senior leader visit to Fort Polk, La., June 26.

By Staff Reports

Virginia Secretary of Public Safety Marla Graff Decker, Deputy Secretary John Buckovich, Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, and Virginia Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major Carl Holcomb visited Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard's Staunton-based 116th Brigade Combat Team Headquarters June 26 at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, La.

Lt. Gen. Howard B. Bromberg, acting commander of U.S. Army Forces Command and Brig. Gen. Clarence Chinn, commanding general of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general also visited.

"We've all been impressed with the job you've been doing," said Bromberg. "Your

unit should be proud of their accomplishments."

The Soldiers were at Fort Polk conducting training in preparation for duty in Afghanistan. The visit was incorporated as a scenario in a multi-day exercise.

"Our visit on Sunday was an opportunity to thank these fine Virginians for their service and see first-hand the hard work our Virginia Soldiers are putting into being fully prepared for their federal active duty mission," Decker said. "I could not be more proud of the men and women of the 116th BCT Headquarters, and I am confident they will represent the commonwealth of Virginia well with their service in Afghanistan. Their level of commitment, professionalism, love of country, and experience enabled them to prepare for deployment on very short notice."

Approximately 175 Soldiers assigned to

the unit began federal active duty May 15 with a farewell ceremony held in Staunton, and the unit conducted training for several weeks at Camp Shelby, Miss., prior to their training at Fort Polk.

"Command Sergeant Major Holcomb and I were extremely pleased to visit 116th Brigade Combat Team Soldiers at Fort Polk with Secretary Decker and Deputy Secretary Buckovich," Long said. "The 116th BCT Headquarters from Virginia continues to perform to the highest standards with exceptional marks in all areas. Morale was excellent; all Soldiers are anxious to do their part for the nation. This is a superb team of professionals with many experienced leaders and skilled Soldiers. I could not be more satisfied. I know that Governor McDonnell and all of Virginia are very proud of its sons and daughters."

Special Virginia Guard response forces train with local, state and federal partner agencies

By Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers and Airmen of the Virginia Guard's 34th Civil Support Team and Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear High Yield Explosive Emergency Response Force Package trained side by side with local, state and federal emergency response organizations May 17 to 19 in the Hampton Roads Full Scale Exercise. The training event brought together many different agencies to improve their interoperability in the event of a catastrophic event within the commonwealth, whether from a terrorist attack, a natural disaster or any other emergency.

The exercise was designed to strengthen the commonwealth's anti-terrorism capabilities and test response efforts in maritime, hostage and mass casualty scenarios.

"We have been doing a lot of exercises for many years where we've been practicing for terrorism events in Virginia, and this is just one of the many series that we have been doing," said Bob Spieldenner, Virginia Department of Emergency Management



Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers and Airmen from the Virginia National Guard's 34th Civil Support Team prepare to search for possible chemical or biological threats May 17 on board a ship in the James River near Fort Eustis during the Hampton Roads Full Scale Exercise.

public information officer. "We want to make sure that we are prepared no matter what, and we want to make sure that folks in Virginia know that we take any threat seriously. No matter what happens, we'll be able to help out in times of need."

At the same time of the HRFSE, the Virginia National Guard conducted a four-day command and control exercise to train on existing emergency response plans, policies and procedures to ensure it can rapidly respond to the needs of the citizens of the commonwealth in their time of need. The exercise kicked off May 16 with more than 200 Soldiers, Airmen and members of the Virginia Defense Force operating out of the Guard's Joint Operations Center in Sandston.

In the Virginia Guard's exercise scenario, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks lead to the Governor mobilizing the entire Virginia Guard to assist with the response. Command and control elements in the JOC simulated the employment of Guard forces across the state assisting with security and recovery operations, as well as working through the logistics issues to support those forces. With the exception of the Guard's two special response forces in the Hampton Roads area, all personnel outside of the JOC were simulated.

"Our primary focus is on decontamination, medical response and some search and extraction," said Command Sgt. Maj. Daryl Plude, senior enlisted Soldier of the CERFP. "This exercises our abilities. We need to come here fully ready and prepared to save lives."

"All of these exercises build our capacity and our capability. It is our practice, to make sure that when we actually show up at a real incident we are ready to go and we're going to save lives."

The three-day HRFSE simulated different response scenarios across the Hampton Roads area. The first day at Fort Eustis simulated a maritime terrorist threat where members of the 34th CST Hazard Material Team boarded a ship in the James River to search a terrorist chemical lab while the CERFP conducted decontamination and medical triage on a pier.

On the second day of the exercise, the CERFP provide support after a building barricaded by a hostile group had taken hostages and were using chemical agents on the victims.

The third day included a mass casualty event that required conduct of victim extraction operations, triage and treatment by the Soldiers of the CERFP. Approximately 75 actors played wounded hostages, while

local, state, and military agencies responded accordingly.

"The exercise was very well planned out, and there are over 25 entities from local, state and federal agencies involved in the exercise with us," said Lt. Col. William Patton, commander of the 34th CST. "This looks good for the Virginia National Guard, and it looks good because the other agencies know that they can count on us as a resource from the local community."

Based at Fort Pickett, the mission of the 34th CST is to support civil authorities at a domestic CBRNE incident site with identification and assessment of hazards, advice to civil authorities, and facilitating the arrival of follow-on military forces during emergencies and incidents of weapons of mass destruction terrorism. The unit complements and enhances, but does not duplicate, state CBRNE response capabilities.

It is comprised of 22 full-time Army and Air National Guard personnel. The unit is divided into six sections: command, operations, communications, administration/logistics, medical/analytical, and survey.

The 34th can deploy within 3 hours of notification to an incident site using its organic assigned vehicles which includes a command vehicle, operations trailer, a communications platform called the Unified Command Suite which provides a broad spectrum of secure communications capabilities, an Analytical Laboratory System vehicle that contains a full suite of analysis equipment to support the characterization of the hazard and several general purpose vehicles. The unit can also be moved by air, rail, commercial line haul or ship.

The CERFP (pronounced "surf-p") can conduct tasks associated with incident management, search and rescue, mass decontamination, medical triage and treatment and fatality search and recovery. The force is made up of Soldiers and Airmen from units based in Petersburg, West Point, Rocky Mount and Langley Air Force Base as well as the D.C. National Guard.

Virginia's CERFP was authorized in June 2006 and is made up of approximately 250 Virginia Guard Soldiers and Airmen. The units making up Virginia's CERFP include:

The command and control and incident management team from the Petersburg-based 276th Engineer Battalion.

The mass casualty decontamination element from the Rocky Mount-based 229th Chemical Company.

The search and extraction element from the West Point-based 237th Engineer Company.

The mass casualty medical triage and treatment element from the 192d Medical Group, Virginia Air National Guard stationed at Langley Air Force Base.

The fatality search and remains recovery element from the 113th Service Squadron from the DC National Guard.

The concept is that when an incident occurs, Guard personnel of the CERFP are alerted through the Joint Force Headquarters - Virginia and mobilized on state active duty. If the incident is located within Virginia they would proceed to the incident when directed by the Joint Force Headquarters. If the incident is located outside of Virginia, the Joint Force Headquarters - Virginia would coordinate with the receiving state under the terms agreed to in the Emergency Mutual Aid Compact. After arriving at the incident site, the incident management team and element commanders coordinate with and support the local incident commander.

Additional reporting by Cotton Puryear,
Virginia Department of Military Affairs

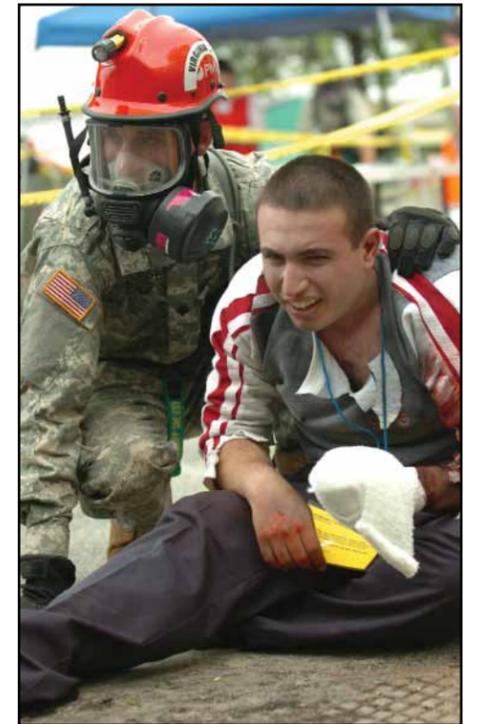


Photo by Sgt. 1st Class A.J. Coyne, Va. Guard PAO

A Soldier from the 237th Engineer Company evacuates an simulated injured civilian from Harbor Park in Norfolk May 19 during during the Hampton Roads Full Scale Exercise.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard PAO

Tech Sgt. Kristie Revera and Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Smith from the D.C. Air National Guard's 113th Service Squadron Fatality Search and Remains Recovery Element, a detachment of the Virginia National Guard's CERFP, search a building in Suffolk May 18.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers from the 229th Chemical Company conduct mass decontamination of simulated casualties May 18 in Suffolk during the Hampton Roads Full Scale Exercise.