



Photo by by Maj. Joseph Albrecht, First Army HQ, CMD GRP

Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré (left), commander of First Army, discussed Improvised Explosive Device (IED) training with members of the 183rd Cavalry of Virginia National Guard. Honoré was observing IED training with U.S. Congressman Gene Taylor, of Mississippi, recently at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center near Hattiesburg, Miss. The 183rd is participating in Theater Immersion training before deploying to Iraq.

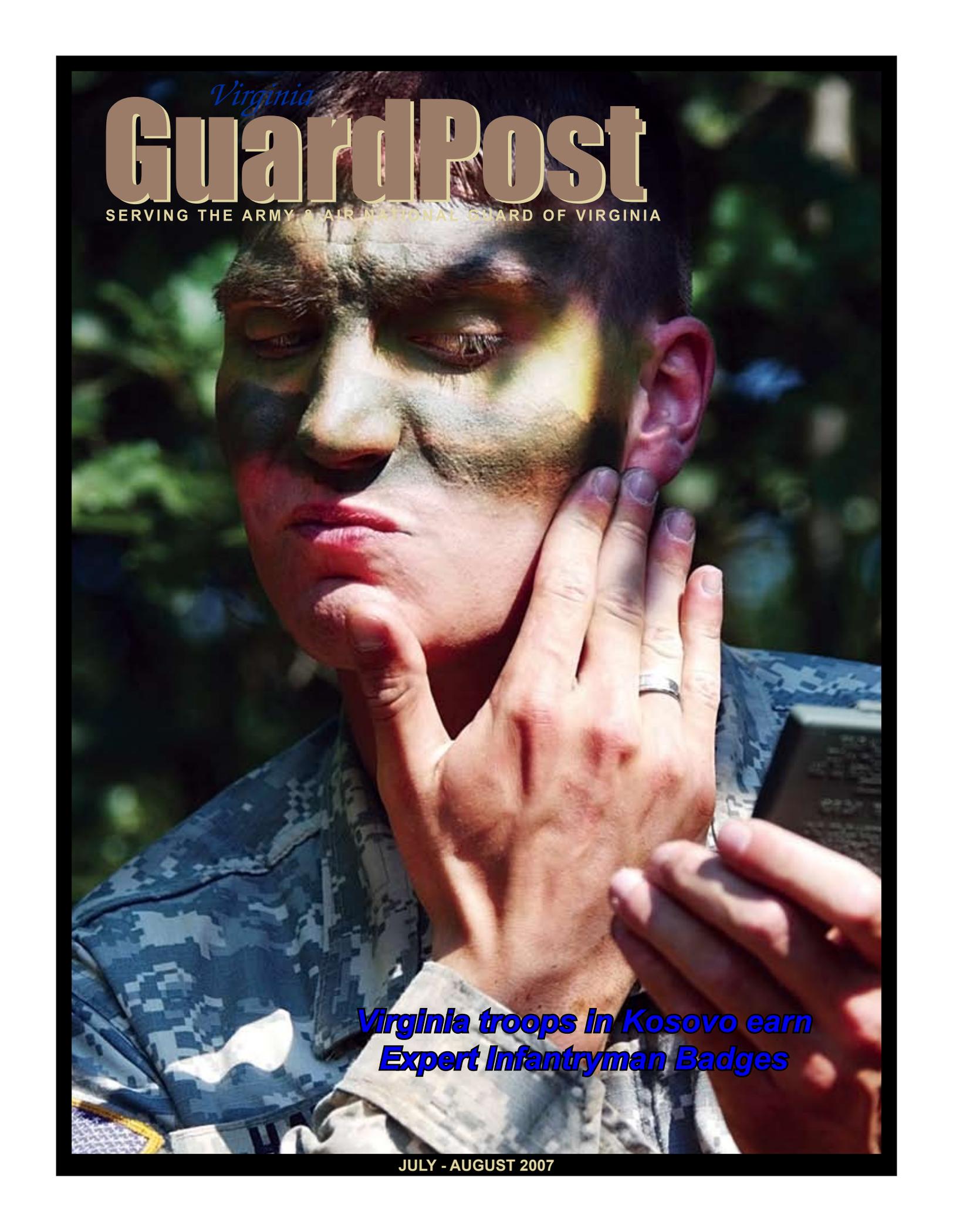
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***Virginia troops in Kosovo earn  
Expert Infantryman Badges***

JULY - AUGUST 2007



## FROM THE TOP



# Virginia Guardsmen demonstrate their commitment daily

By Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr.  
Adjutant General of Virginia

*We fight not to enslave, but to set a country free, and to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in.*

This quote from Thomas Paine, Anglo-American political theorist and writer, explains very succinctly why Virginia Guardsmen are serving their Commonwealth and are deployed around the world today. Members of the Virginia National Guard demonstrate daily their commitment to assuring that our country and its people have the ability to continue to enjoy the freedom and liberty the founding fathers envisioned for the United States.

Our Virginia Guardsmen continue to work in support of the NATO peace keeping mission in Kosovo. They have accomplished tremendous things as they maintained peace in the Balkans. Their mission is a testament to what people and countries can achieve when they elect peace over war. We look forward to the return of Task Force Falcon and Task Force Red Dragon later this year.

We have Virginia Guardsmen in harm's way truly working to "set a country free." The men and women of A Co., 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion and the 429th Brigade Support Battalion are on the ground in Iraq supporting that effort now. Their efforts are vital to the accomplishment



Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr.

of the mission as they provide security and transportation support.

Soldiers of HHC, 116th IBCT have a mission that is as unique as it is challenging – they comprise the Joint Area Support Group. This is a group of Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen who manage the day to day functions of the International Zone in downtown Baghdad. The International Zone encompasses a fortified zone roughly five square miles in area. The area contains a fluctuating number of workers and residents that can occupy the IZ with as many as 50,000 people. You can well imagine the wide array of requirements our Guardsmen face, yet they are proving to be well suited for and up to the job.

Guardsmen from the 116th BSTB,

429th BSB, and HHC, 116th IBCT were recently joined by Virginians from 3rd Bn., 116th Infantry and 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry. The 237th Engineer Sapper Co. was the most recent unit to join their fellow Virginians in theater upon their recent completion of mobilization training at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

By mid-October there will be over 2,000 Virginia Guardsmen serving in an active federal status. But that is not the whole story. When I was appointed as Adjutant General, Gov. Kaine charged me with improving the Virginia National Guard's ability to respond to our state mission and enhance our homeland security capabilities. We have made great strides in these areas. The most recent evidence of this progress is our participation in "Vigilant Guard." Vigilant Guard, which was conducted in early September, is a National Guard Bureau sponsored exercise that evaluated and examined our capability to deploy multiple Joint Task Forces and work with various governmental agencies in response to a catastrophic event. Much was learned from the exercise and we are working to incorporate those lessons into our future endeavors.

As you can see, Virginia Guardsmen are putting actions and deeds to Thomas Paine's words. Thank you for all that you and your families are doing for our communities, our Commonwealth, and our country.

## Virginia National Guard Federal Deployments

# *	Unit	Where Deployed	Home Town
160	A Co., 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion	Iraq	Fredericksburg
24	E Company, 429th Brigade Support Battalion	Kosovo	Roanoke
294	1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment	Kosovo	Various Locations
120	HHC, 29th Infantry Division	Kosovo	Fort Belvoir
139	HHC, 116th IBCT	Iraq	Staunton
172	A Co., E Co., 429th Brigade Support Battalion	Iraq	South Boston and Roanoke
420	2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry	Camp Shelby, Mississippi	Vaious Locations
750	3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment	Camp Shelby, Mississippi	Various Locations
110	237th Engineer Company	Fort McCoy, Wisconsin	West Point

\* All listings for numbers of Soldiers/Airmen are approximate as of August 28, 2007

## 2nd annual Youth Camp offers youngsters fun-filled week

By Capt. Pamela Garner  
192nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

More than 80 excited campers and 12 teen leaders belonging to Virginia National Guard families arrived at Camp Pendleton's State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach to participate in the second annual Virginia National Guard Summer Youth Camp beginning June 24.

"This weeklong camp, staffed by 45 members of Guard volunteers, family program staff and the Virginia Defense Force, was designed to provide campers with resources that will help them cope with deployment as well as giving them a network of friends dealing with the same kind of issues," said Kay Baber, director of the youth summer camp.

During the weeklong camp, they participated in everything from team building exercises and youth sports to responsibility and leadership training. The campers also learned about creatures on the beach presented by the Virginia Science Museum.

Shonte' Holcomb, a camp counselor, admitted that "Beach Creatures" was her favorite activity because she enjoyed watching the children share their ideas, thoughts and experiences.

One common denominator that many of the campers shared was that at least one of their parents had been deployed at one time or another.

To help the campers learn about community support resources available to them, they participated in a mid-week activity called "The Deployment Dash." Some of the support services represented included- Kids Serve 2, American Veterans, Our Military Kids, Drug Demand Reduction, Operation Military Kids, the Family Assistance Center, the Military YMCA and 4-H.

The campers rotated visits between each resource table for about six minutes and then on a musical signal, moved to another table to gather as much information as possible about their resources for youth.

The campers received a surprise visit on June 25 by their parents' top boss, Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, the Adjutant General of Virginia. He spoke to the campers as he stopped by classes in session which included the Drug Maze, Arts and Crafts, the "How Electricity Works" class and "Drama Kids." The campers were very relaxed around him and some of them even requested his autograph.

The campers also had some fun in the sun during the week with trips to Ocean



Photo by Capt. Pamela Garner, 192nd Fighter Wing  
PAO

**Campers enjoyed trips to both Ocean Breeze Water Park and Busch Gardens during the week-long Virginia National Guard Youth Camp.**

Breeze Water Park in Virginia Beach and Busch Gardens in Williamsburg.

"This was the second year for the National Guard Summer Youth Program," Baber said, "and we would like to see it expand to other areas throughout Virginia. We appreciate having the support from all the volunteers, the community and especially the parents for allowing their children to participate. This program would not have been as successful without the volunteers."

## 29th Army Band caps busy season with more performances

By 1st Lt. Jennifer McGhee  
91st Troop Command Public Affairs

It has been a busy year for the 29th Army Band. It has been performing regularly for both military and community events throughout the commonwealth and the nation.

The band, based out of Roanoke, has less than 50 Soldiers. Sgt. 1st Class Richard Carr, the readiness NCO for the band, estimates that it has already performed for over 180,000 people this year.

The band can perform as a whole or it can be organized into smaller elements to meet mission requirements. The band has, like the rest of the Army, transformed to a more modular force.

Modular elements of the band are referred to as musical support teams. These teams are the Brass Band, Concert Band, Marching Band, Ceremonial Bands, Jazz Trio, Small Brass Group, and the newly-formed Rock Group.

The performances normally last about an hour, but the

Soldiers can spend up to seven hours traveling to an event. When they are not traveling or performing they are rehearsing and maintaining the unit's readiness through training.

They have the same annual requirements for training that other units have, including weapons qualification, physical fitness tests and warrior core task training.

This year the band has performed at a variety of military functions to include graduation, departure and homecoming ceremonies as well as many Freedom Salute Award ceremonies.

Most notable were performances at a naval captain's change of command ceremony in Norfolk, Va., and the post change of command ceremony for Fort Sill, Okla.

During annual training the band developed the musical programs for their upcoming Holiday Tour. The tour, aimed at bringing the National Guard together with the community, is scheduled to begin in late November. Concerts are tentatively scheduled for Abingdon, Staunton, Danville and Richmond.

# New TRICARE Reserve Select plan to take effect Oct. 1

By Sgt. Von Ferreira  
State TRICARE Verifying Officer

The John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 enhanced the TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) health plan.

Under this new TRS health plan, effective Oct. 1, 2007, certain members of the Selected Reserve may qualify for health care coverage under TRS at 28 percent of the total premium cost.

Only Selected Reserve members who are enrolled or eligible to enroll in a health benefit plan under chapter 89 of title 5 U.S.C. (Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP)) are excluded from purchasing TRS.

As part of the transition to this new TRS health plan, all enrollments in the current three-tiered TRS will be terminated on Sept. 30, 2007.

Depending upon your current circumstance, to continue in a health care program you will have to take one of the following actions:

**1.** If you are a qualified Selected Reservist, not enrolled in or eligible to enroll in FEHBP, currently participating in TRS, and wish to participate in the new TRS plan effective October 1, 2007, with no interruption in your health care coverage, you must complete the following steps by Sept. 30, 2007:

- Download the TRS Request Form, DD Form 2896-1 found on the Guard-Reserve TRICARE Reserve Select Portal, at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/tsa/index.jsp>.
- Sign the document certifying your non-eligibility or enrollment in FEHBP.
- Mail or fax the document to your TRICARE Managed Care Support Contractor no later than Sept. 30, 2007.
- No premium payment is necessary at this time. The TRICARE Managed Care Support Contractor will adjust all current premium structures to the 28 percent rate as of Oct. 1, 2007.

**2.** If you are enrolled in the tiered TRS program as of Sept. 30, 2007, and are covered under a non-premium TRICARE plan (i.e., members on active duty for greater than 30 days, receiving health care under the Transitional Assistance Management Program (TAMP), or in an Early Identified Deployers (EID) status) tiered TRS will be terminated on Sept. 30, 2007.

Your non-premium coverage will not be affected by this action.

When the non-premium coverage ends, as a qualified Selected Reserve member, you will have the option to purchase TRICARE health care coverage under the new TRS plan with an effective

date immediately following termination of your coverage under the non-premium TRICARE plan.

- To purchase health care coverage, effective on or after October 1, 2007, qualified Selected Reserve members, those not enrolled in or eligible to enroll in FEHBP, may download the new TRS request form (DD Form 2896-1) found on the Guard-Reserve TRICARE Reserve Select Portal, at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/tsa/index.jsp>

- Sign the TRS request form certifying you are not eligible for or enrolled in FEHBP. Mail the form and the correct premium payment to your TRICARE Managed Care Support Contractor to arrive no earlier than 60 days prior to and no later than 60 days after the termination of the other TRICARE coverage.



**3.** If you are eligible for the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, or currently covered under FEHBP (either under your own eligibility or through a family member), you are no longer eligible to purchase TRS and you will lose your TRS health care coverage on September 30, 2007. To reinstate, or to enroll for health care coverage under FEHBP you must complete the following steps:

- See the Office of Personnel Management's webpage at <http://www.opm.gov/asd/hm/2006/06-207.asp> for explicit directions or contact your local personnel benefits administrator.

- To avoid any break in health insurance coverage, reinstatement or enrollment in FEHBP must be accomplished no later than 60 days after TRS coverage ends.

- Upon termination of the three-tiered TRS, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) will provide you a Certificate of Credible Coverage as verification of your loss of TRS coverage.

Further information about this new TRICARE Reserve Select health plan pertaining to periods of active service, additional program requirements, and Qualifying Life Event (QLE), is available on the TRICARE web site [www.tricare.mil/reserve/reserveselect](http://www.tricare.mil/reserve/reserveselect), or, by contacting your Sate TRICARE Verifying Officer at (434) 298-6326.

TRICARE Managed Care Support Contractors are available by calling:

TRICARE South:	(800) 444-5445
TRICARE North:	(877) 874-2273
TRICARE West:	(888) 874-9378

There have been many significant improvements to the pay and benefits available to members of the Selected Reserve.

The TRS health plan is clearly one of the best new benefits now available to you.



# Virginia GuardPost



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JULY - AUGUST 2007

## On the Cover



Sgt. Johnathon Hawes of 1st Bn., 116th Inf. applies camo face paint during an Expert Infantryman Badge task familiarization day at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo July 18. (Photo by Sgt. Stephen Proctor, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)

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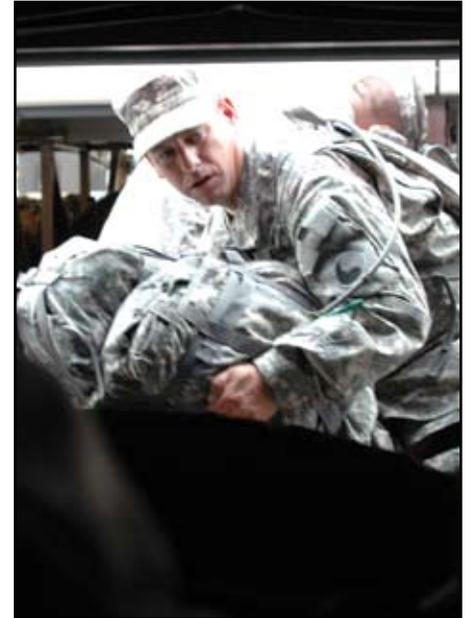
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## Virginia GuardPost

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## Virginia Guard confirms death of Guardsman

Va. National Guard News Release

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, confirmed that Virginia Guardsman Sgt. Jonathan M. Forde, 26, of Vienna, Va., died on Aug. 13 while training at Fort McCoy, Wis.

Forde mobilized with the 237th Engineer Company, located in West Point, Va., on July 19 and traveled to Fort McCoy where he was preparing for overseas deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Newman said the cause of Sgt. Forde's death was a form of meningitis.

"We are all saddened by the death of Sgt. Jonathan Forde," Newman said. "This is a tragic loss to his family, his friends, and the Virginia National Guard. I know that I speak for all citizens of the Commonwealth when I say that Sgt. Forde will surely be missed."

He went on to say that Forde's family and loved ones will be the first priority for the Virginia National Guard.

Newman said the Virginia National Guard will stand with and support those who are affected by this tragic loss.

Newman asked that Virginia Guardsmen and the citizens of the Commonwealth keep Forde's loved ones in their prayers.



Sgt. Jonathan M. Forde

## 237th Engineers depart West Point for Fort McCoy, deserts of Iraq



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hampton, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Soldiers from the 237th Engineer Company stand in formation during their mobilization ceremony July 22 in West Point, Va.**

**By 1st Lt. Jennifer McGhee  
91st Troop Command Public Affairs**

July 22 was a day full of mixed emotions as the town of West Point said farewell to the Soldiers of the 237th Engineer Company. The troops departed from the rural town on the first leg of a journey that would take them through extensive training at Fort McCoy to the deserts of Iraq. This deployment is the second deployment to Iraq for many of the Soldiers. The unit was previously activated to federal service in December 2003 and deployed to Mosul, Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Speakers at the departure ceremony included Maj. Gen. Robert Newman, the Adjutant General of Virginia, and the mayor of West Point.

Newman stressed to the Soldiers that they not forget that what

they are sent to do in Iraq is of far greater importance than we'll ever see in our day-to-day lives. He gave special thanks to the families of the two Soldiers who were killed in Iraq during the unit's first deployment.

Both Newman and the mayor praised the Soldiers and their families for their dedication and service to our great nation. The mayor offered the families support from

**See West Point Soldiers  
on Page 5**



**Family members, friends and local citizens were on hand to bid farewell to the troops at West Point High School.**

# 1-111th Field Artillery brings out the 'big guns'

Sgt. Jesse L. Houk  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The trees swayed back and forth according to the breeze that pushed them. The endless fields danced left and right. The songs of birds echoed throughout the rolling hills and cloud-spotted sky.

But the serene scene was quickly broken by the blast of a 105 millimeter howitzer gun and the smell of gun powder that soon followed. This was, after all, not the description of a vacation resort, but it was, in fact a look at Fort Pickett during annual training.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery went to the field July 21 to conduct live fire missions as a part of their annual training and were accompanied by G Company of the 429th Support Battalion.

Annual training is usually a 15-day exercise that allows units sharpen their skills and knowledge they already have through repeated practice. It also provided a chance for the Soldiers of these units to come together and build a sense of teamwork.

"AT definitely helped us hone our skills and helped us verify what we knew we could do," said 2nd Lt. Jonathan J. Fair, A

Battery fire direction officer. "The drills leading up to AT really provided a chance to improve team building."

It is team building that leads to communication and that leads not only to the success of the mission, but also the safety of the Soldiers. Teamwork is also important when it comes to the gun lines laying their howitzers in the standard amount of time. The guns must be laid (or set) within eight minutes and must be ready to fire within 15 minutes.

"The guns were set up within three and a half minutes," said 2nd Lt. Steven R. Tarrell, A Company platoon leader. "They did the steps and didn't rush though things. It's more important to do it the way you're supposed to do it and then the time standards will come."

Also contributing to the success of the mission is the leadership that the NCO's



Photo by Sgt. Jesse L. Houk, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Spc. William D. Lamountin, the first gun spotter for gun team one of A Battery, 1st Bn., 111th Field Artillery, spots and checks measurements as the rest of the team set the howitzer.**

provided and their experience they have gained over the years.

"The NCO's have done an excellent job," said Fair. "If it wasn't for them we wouldn't be able to do this. Our senior NCO's have been doing this for 15-20 years. They're really great at what they do."

"I pretty much try to bring these guys under my wing," said Sgt. Samuel B. Beasley. Beasley has been a section chief for seven of his 17-year career in the National Guard.

"I try to show them to the best of my knowledge how to do things and how to be safe while doing it," said Beasley. "For the ones that have never been trained to do this I have to take a little more time to get them up to where they need to be at so we can get the bullets down range. This AT was really vital."

The training and knowledge that was passed on helped them complete their mission during this annual training.

"Our Soldiers are some of the most professional in the National Guard because they have been doing it for so long," said Fair. "Field artillery Soldiers are a thinking-mans warrior."

And so the sound of howitzers blasting will cease and the ranges of Fort Pickett will be peaceful once again. But the silence will be interrupted when the 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery returns to the field for future exercises to continue to build on the success of this annual training.



Photo by Sgt. Jesse L. Houk, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Soldiers from gun team two, A Battery, 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery fire a round from their 105 millimeter howitzer with the intention of hearing that they received "steel on steel" contact.**

## 29th troops spend day at the range

By Spc. John Wood  
29th Infantry Division Public Affairs

The air was moist with the humidity of summer and the heat oppressive but it was not enough to halt the 29th Infantry Division's training at Fort A.P. Hill. On Aug. 4.

Many different parts of the 29th ID came together to qualify with M16 rifles and 9mm pistols and to receive warrior training on Nuclear Biological and Chemical reactions, heat casualties, family support groups, and risk management.

With every mission there is an advance party that arrives long before the main body of the unit. If not for the advance party, the rest of the division might not have gotten to the range at all.

The advance party was plagued by a huge problem right from the start. The M16 qualification range the 29th was scheduled to use had to be shut down because a recent storm destroyed the system that controls the pop-up targets.

The advance party worked out a new plan with Fort A.P. Hill range control to follow another unit on a different range after their training. Capt. Mitchell Bierl, the officer-in-charge of the qualification range and one of the driving forces who helped overcome the range issue, said he would "make it work one way or another."

Sgt. 1st Class Laronda Williams, another advance party member, helped set up a command point so that when the rest of the 29th arrived the commander and key personnel would have a place to coordinate their efforts so the drill could run as smooth as possible. Staff Sgt. Jonathan Brown, non-commissioned officer in charge of the emergency operation center, helped in "setting up the EOC before units got on the road because no one is at home and that means if they need something they have no one to call."

Once the rest of the 29th arrived everyone went to their respective barracks and prepared for the next day. With the coming of the dawn the 29th was up and about getting their Meals Ready-to-Eat and drawing weapons. By 7:30 a.m, the blue and gray was out to the ranges to zero



*Photos by Pfc. John Wood, 29th ID Public Affairs*

**Top- A Special Troops Battalion, 29th Infantry Division Soldier checks the results of his skill at zeroing his weapon at the M16 rifle zero range on Fort A.P. Hill during weapons qualification August 4. Bottom- A 29th ID STB Soldier takes careful aim as he zeros his weapon during the 29th ID weapons qualification.**

their weapons and begin warrior training classes.

After a few hours of zeroing and going from class site to class site groups of Soldiers began to move towards the qualification site.

With only a few hours of daylight left, the 29th ID Soldiers methodically marched through the qualification lanes and by the end of the long, hot day everyone could see the exhaustion in the eyes of every soldier.

The after action review highlighted the

challenges that plagued the 29th Infantry Division training in August. There were some heat casualties, but none severe and all were treated and recovered in the field. There were a good number of Soldiers who met the qualification standards however the AAR indicated that all need to work on fundamentals.

Despite the challenges, or perhaps because of them, the August drill was a good wake up call for everyone that you need to stay fit, hydrated and practice, practice, practice.

## 'Troops to Teachers' offers many benefits, opportunities

By Sgt. Jesse L. Houk  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers and Airmen in the National Guard have been given many titles throughout the years. Among the numerous names that are given, citizen-Soldier and citizen-Airmen accurately describe the composition of people who decide to don the uniform. A piece of the individual is tied to their community and the other part of them is committed to defending the freedom of the commonwealth and country.

The Virginia National Guard understands this and tries to support members of Team Virginia as they try to improve themselves as a citizen. Among the bonuses and educational benefits offered, there are two programs that, for the most part, have been overlooked.

"Troops to Teachers" and "Spouses to Teachers," two programs that offer financial assistance to Guardsmen and their spouses, have been flying under the radar for quite some time.

"The awareness of this program always concerns me because we do a lot of briefings, but then get a lot of calls from people who were surprised that we even existed," said Joe Wargo, director of Virginia "Troops to Teachers."

In fact, there are only 14 troops in all of the Virginia National Guard that are participating in the program.

Staff Sgt. Dale Mullin, supply sergeant of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry in Lynchburg, is one of the 14 guardsmen enrolled in "Troops to Teachers." He is pursuing a Masters of Education degree at Liberty University.

"Troops to Teachers" was the catalyst for me working to become a teacher," said Mullin. "I totally endorse it."

There are a total of 37 colleges or universities in the state of Virginia that are approved to run a teacher preparation program with the state headquarters located at Old Dominion University.

Not all guardsmen are eligible for the program. Those eligible include troops who have retired or will soon retire from the National Guard, possess or are eligible for an honorable discharge, were separated not earlier than Oct. 1, 1990 with six or more years of service, or are currently serving and have 10 or more years of total service.

Although "Troops to Teachers" was created in 1994 as a Department of Defense program, it was refocused to accommodate

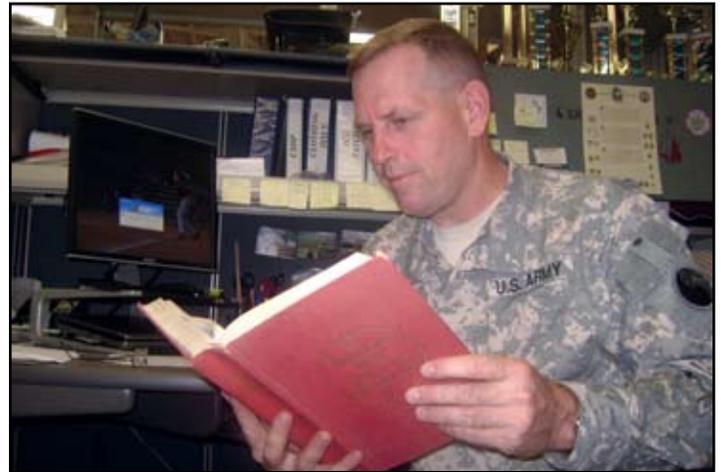


Photo by Sgt. Jesse L. Houk, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Staff Sgt. Dale A. Mullin studies teaching material that will help in completing his Master of Education degree at Liberty University. The supply sergeant from HHC, 1st Bn., 116th Inf., who is enrolled in the Troops to Teachers program, received a \$5000 stipend to assist him in becoming certified.**

the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The primary purpose of "Troops to Teachers" is to help recruit quality teachers for schools that serve low-income families. The areas that are being focused on are math, science, special education and other high-need subject areas.

"Troops to Teachers" is a program that allows guardsmen to make a difference and get rewarded at the same time.

"There is a financial incentive for joining troops to teachers," said Wargo. "It could pay \$5,000 toward getting your license and an additional \$5,000 for what we call a 'bonus school' so the total package could be worth \$10,000. Far more rewarding, I think, is the ability to work with kids and have the opportunity to shape their lives for the future."

"I hope to display leadership and an ability to mentor the youth," said Mullin. "I want to be a good male influence and to add solid ethics. There aren't a lot of male role-models for children in schools today and I hope to change that."

For more information on "Troops to Teachers" or "Spouses to Teachers," contact them at <http://www.odu.edu/troopstoteachers> or call 1-800-560-4317.



**A Soldier from the 237th Eng. Co. says goodbye to his family.**

### West Point Soldiers continued from Page 4

town hall should they need any assistance during their loved ones' deployment.

The unit's commander, Capt. Beau Mason, motivated both the crowd of over 600 friends and family members as well as the 103 men in uniform standing before him ready to go.

"We will either find a way or we will make one," Mason said. The departure ceremony began with the Soldiers running

into the football field with the crowd rallying in the stands with flags flying high.

Family and friends gathered with their Soldiers in the West Point High School auditorium after the ceremony to say their goodbyes with hugs and tears. The Soldiers took their seats on the buses and their families clung to each other for strength. The Virginia State Police escorted these hometown heroes to the Richmond International Airport for their flight to Fort McCoy.



Photo by Sgt. John Slosser, 116th IBCT Public Affairs

Soldiers from Virginia's 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team cross a runway in order to board a flight to Kuwait on June 12. The unit received orders assigning them to duties within Baghdad's International Zone.

## 116th IBCT troops move into downtown Baghdad

By Sgt. John Slosser  
116th IBCT Public Affairs

For many U.S. Soldiers, a deployment to the arid deserts of the Middle East involves dusty tents, searing heat, and limited contact with other American civilians. When the 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Headquarters and Headquarters Company entered federal active service in May 2007, they received special orders for a very unique mission.

Approximately 135 Virginia National Guard Soldiers moved into an area of downtown Baghdad known as the International Zone (IZ) and assumed the duties of the Joint Area Support Group (JASG) in late June. A group of Sailors and Airmen were also assigned to the JASG to help round out the needs and capabilities of the unit.

The JASG manages the day to day functions within the IZ, a fortified zone roughly five square miles in area. The area contains a fluctuating number of workers and residents that can occupy the IZ with as many as 50,000 people.

"We basically do everything and anything within the International Zone," said Col. William R. Phillips, II, JASG Commander. "If you compare the IZ to a city back home, (our mission) would be considered mayoral duties. We have people in charge of security, real property, and the building or tearing down of structures within the IZ. Other JASG members are responsible for water, electricity and transportation. It is equivalent to managing and running a city (in the United States)."

The IZ contains many of the official ministries and palaces that housed Saddam Hussein's regime and family. It is also the site

of several prominent monuments and structures that have come to signify Iraq and its history. The IZ also currently encompasses such prominent places as the Japanese, Australian, and British embassies. Department of State employees, foreign contractors and local Iraqi personnel working and living inside the area add to the international feel of the International Zone.

One prominent palace, the largest Saddam Hussein built, has become the United States Embassy, which also serves as the base of operations for the JASG.

"We literally work in a palace," said Phillips. "It's the old Republican Guard Palace, built on the banks of the Tigris River."

One Soldier commented that the difference between this deployment and his previous deployment was striking.

"We have marble floors, and endless chandeliers. Some people call this place Club Med," said Spc. Tyree Carr, Embassy Annex Property Manager. "I eat better here than I ever did back in the States."

"We have internet in our rooms, phones in our rooms, and bathrooms in our trailers. On my last deployment that kind of stuff was unheard of. Look at this evening, its 'Salsa Night' out by the pool tonight," said Carr.

The JASG servicemembers simply work to support the Multi-National Forces Iraq mission. Managing and maintaining the IZ is one way the JASG endeavors to provide the Iraqi leadership with a relatively safe and secure place to work.

"The overall intent is to set the conditions to hand over the governance of Iraq to the Government of Iraq. That is the objective," Phillips said. "Our goal is to work with the Iraqi government and help stand them up and govern themselves."

all lined up, and the odds are with you, the Soldier, the American Soldier meeting the enemy Soldier on the battlefield has to be more proficient with his weapon, has to be more proficient at his individual tasks, the individual movement techniques and small unit tactics, in order to gain victory.

“Otherwise, all the complex planning, the superior logistics, it all goes to waste if you don’t win at that level. So the EIB is that one thing at the individual task level that allows us to check the standards of a Soldier.”

Over the decades, the infantrymen who have earned the EIB have only helped to increase the prestige of the award, while proving the caliber of generation after generation of Soldiers. But creating new EIB awardees requires EIB holders; EIB graders must have already earned their EIB.

“[The EIB] teaches our noncommissioned officers how to train others those tasks and pass on a certain mentality required in order to get that kind of perfection at those tasks,” says Pitts.

“We’re all out here, we’re all graders,” says Pitts. “And we’re running the EIB so there’s a certain level of camaraderie there. [The candidates] understand that we had to achieve that standard and we’re here to help [them] train and get others to pass the standard so that they enter our brotherhood.”



*Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, KFOR 8 Public Affairs*

**Twenty-nine Soldiers from the 29th Infantry Division (Forward) earned the Expert Infantry Badge in Kosovo on Aug. 29. First Row: Staff Sgt. James Myers, 1st Lt. Thomas Baldwin, 1st Lt. Joshua Bandy and Sgt. Mark Carter. Second Row: Spc. Louis Pendleton, Sgt. 1st Class Robert Hanger, Cpl. Chad Whitmer, Sgt. Adam Frye, Spc. Eric Schroeder and Spc. Sean Brady.**

When the testing was complete, a few infantrymen had achieved perfection and entered that brotherhood.

“I feel worn out,” says Sgt. Matthew Jurecki after finishing his final station, earning his EIB. “[Earning the EIB] means that I can pay attention to detail and I can react under pressure,” says Jurecki. “Those are two things that I think every Soldier

should have. And to get your EIB, wearing it on your chest proves it.”

Sgt. Mark Carter, of C Co., 1-116, VANG, was on leave for the first EIB, but earned it during the second iteration of testing.

“It’s the most fulfilling thing I’ve done in the military so far,” says Carter. “All of the hard training paid off.”

Qualifying to take the EIB test is difficult, but even more difficult is earning the badge.

“There is a high attrition rate,” says Pitts. “It’s not uncommon for a brigade to send an entire brigade’s worth of infantrymen through, and you get about a dozen who graduate.”

Late Sunday morning, the American EIB candidates formed up again; 11 stood front-and-center to receive the honor they worked so hard for. The second round of testing began with more than 80 infantrymen, of which 29 earned the award.

“The average success rate is no higher than 10 percent,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Jenks, Multi National Task Force (East) command sergeant major, in his address at the EIB pinning ceremony.

But knowing the odds only makes Soldiers want to try that much harder. And time and again, they prove they have what it takes to be called an expert infantryman.



*Photo by Sgt. Stephen Proctor, 17th PAD*

**Sgt. Mark Carter of C. Co., 1-116th Infantry practices tossing a grenade during EIB training at Camp Bondsteel Aug. 28.**

## Hard work, sweat earn Virginia KFOR Soldiers Expert Infantryman Badge

By Sgt. Stephen Proctor  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP BONDSTEEL, Kosovo- At 7:30 Wednesday morning, 77 Infantrymen, including 30 multinational Soldiers from throughout Kosovo, stood in formation ready to undertake the Expert Infantryman Badge test at Camp Bondsteel July 19-21 (a second iteration was held Aug. 27-29).

They had passed all of the prerequisites – day and night land navigation, a timed 12-mile ruck march, qualified expert on their M-16, and attained at least 75 on each event of the Army Physical Fitness Test – 37 tasks and subtasks were all that stood between those Infantrymen and their coveted badge.

The sun beat down at nearly 100 degrees, without a cloud in sight, baking the mixture of camouflage face paint, sweat and dust onto their faces while the intermittent patterns of camo netting merely provided the illusion of shade.

The Soldiers trudged up and down the hills of Camp Bondsteel wearing their Advanced Combat Helmets and Load Bearing Vests, carrying a full battle load of ammunition in the blistering heat for three

days of familiarization and three days of testing.

Earning the EIB was definitely no simple task. It required hours upon hours of training, day after day to become perfect at a multitude of tasks, to include map reading, first aid, individual movement techniques, donning a protective mask and working with several weapon systems.

The infantrymen who were serious about earning the award worked tirelessly, even after the hours of training and testing to ensure perfection.

“You’d hear at night going to bed, the action of the weapons out between the barracks, because they’re out there practicing and rehearsing,” says 1st Sgt. Kenneth Pitts, an EIB board member.

“I checked out weapons and practiced day after day and night after night to get rid of bad habits and get everything down to muscle memory,” says 1st Lt. Joshua Bandy, of Charlie Co. 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry, Virginia Army National Guard.

Earning the EIB is an important milestone in an infantryman’s career.

“You know that when you see someone with an EIB, that person met that standard, which is extremely difficult for people to

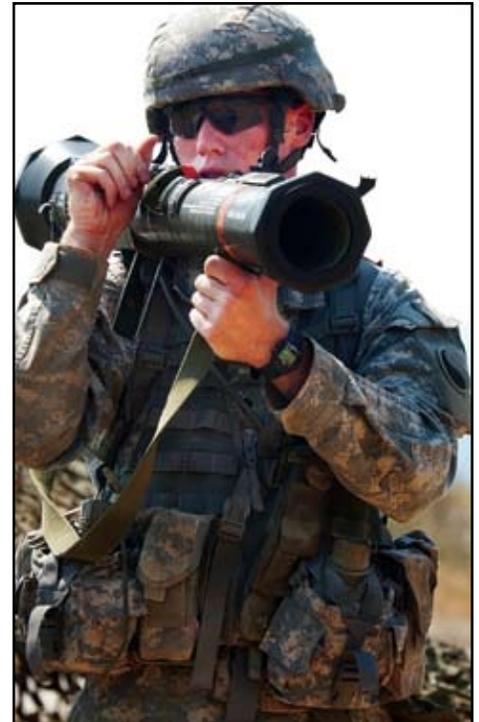


Photo by Sgt. Stephen Proctor, 17th PAD

**Spc. Dean Wilson, of the 1-116th Infantry goes through the procedures of the AT-4 anti-tank weapon during EIB testing at Camp Bondstel, Kosovo July 19.**

achieve,” says Pitts.

With a long history behind it, the EIB has changed, the tasks have changed, the standards have changed.

“However, what has not changed,” says Pitts, “is that those things that are done are to be done to 100 percent standard. If you get a 99 percent on these tests, you’re a ‘no go.’ You have to earn it many times in a row; it’s very unforgiving. That has not changed.”

In general, Army training is focused on working cohesively as a team, but earning the EIB is one opportunity for infantrymen to prove their skills on a basic, individual level.

“I’ve also been to ranger school,” says Pitts, “a lot of your success in ranger school depends on the team you’re with... whereas the Expert Infantryman’s Badge is completely on you and your attention to detail and your ability to rehearse and train for the exam.”

The individual Soldier’s abilities are a crucial element on the battlefield, and EIB testing is a good gauge for measuring a unit’s ability.

“No matter how the odds are stacked up for or against you,” says Pitts, “if you have a lot of firepower, the logistics are



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, KFOR 8 Public Affairs

**Soldiers from Task Force Red Dragon who earned their EIB July 22. Front Row- Spc. Dean Wilson, Cpl. William Larsen and Spc. Luis Ahorrio. Back Row- Spc. G.W. Hoke, Staff Sgt. Jacob Marshall, Staff Sgt. John Grimaldi and Spc. James Brown.**

## Tabletop Exercise prepares key leaders for Vigilant Guard

From Staff Sources

Representatives from more than six Virginia agencies joined Gov. Tim Kaine, Secretary of Public Safety John Marshall, Maj. Gen. Robert Newman and representatives from both Maryland and the District of Columbia for a Leader's Table Top Exercise (TTX) Aug. 3 in Richmond in preparation for the Virginia National Guard Vigilant Guard 2007 exercise.

In September, Virginia will host Vigilant Guard 07, a multimillion dollar annual exercise to assess the National Guard preparedness for homeland security and defense.

A series of planning conferences and rehearsals have been used to prepare for the exercise including the TTX, which is the most

critical one for setting the condition that will initiate exercise play.

The TTX took place at the Virginia Emergency Operations Center and included video teleconferencing with the Maryland and D.C. Emergency Operations Centers.

The objective of the event was to establish priorities for National Guard and civilian staffs during the Sept. 5-7 Vigilant Guard exercise.

In addition to senior Virginia National Guard leadership, participants at the TTX included U.S. Northern Command, Joint Task Force- Civil Support, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, the Virginia State Police and Fairfax County.

## Powhatan troops train while giving back to the community

By Staff Sgt. A.J. Coyne  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

During this year's annual training, the 180th Horizontal Construction Company had the opportunity to not only train its Soldiers, but to also give back to the local community.

The unit conducted earth moving operations June 11-23 at Fighting Creek Park, located just a few hundred feet from the unit's armory.

While the training provided Soldiers with valuable experience operating engineer equipment, it also cleared the land for the city of Powhatan to eventually construct four softball fields at the park.

The unit's annual training mission was to remove all growth from the land and then level the area into flat ground. This saved the county at least \$400,000 and helped strengthen the bond between the local community and local citizen Soldiers.

"This is a great opportunity," said Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Timberlake. "The training value is unbelievable."

The unit conducted operations around the clock, with four shifts a day. Each Soldier conducted two shifts a day on the heavy equipment, which gave them valuable experience during both daylight hours and at night.

A tactical operations center was set up near the site with communications capability and status reports on the mission.

"We tried to make it as close to theater as possible," said Capt. Eddie Lewis, commander of the 180th. "The location allowed us to use the armory as a combat outpost and simulate conditions close to what we experienced during Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Soldiers had the opportunity to practice different earth moving techniques using a large portion of their equipment, which included eight dozers, three graders, two scoop loaders, two 20-ton dump trucks, three rollers and two hydraulic excavator.



Photo by Staff Sgt. A.J. Coyne, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**A Soldier from the 180th Horizontal Construction Company conducts earth moving operations in Powhatan, Va., as part of annual training this summer.**

Not only did the Soldiers get a workout, so did the equipment.

"This is a great opportunity to use the equipment and identify any problems with it," Lewis said. "Throughout this exercise we've been able to identify many strengths and weaknesses with all of our equipment."

The training was great because it not only gives something back to the community but it also fully supports the unit's mission essential task list, according to Lewis.

It was the second phase of a three-phase operation involving the park and the 180th HCC. In 2001, the unit helped level ground so that soccer fields could be constructed. In 2010, the plan is for the Soldiers to help lay the groundwork for a future football field.

"The community has always been receptive and supportive of the Guard," Lewis explained. "We're only going to get out of the community what we put into it."

# Va. communities h

By Sgt. Jesse L. Houk  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Five deployment ceremonies were held throughout Virginia on June 26 to honor the six Virginia Army National Guard units that were recently ordered to active federal duty for a 13-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Soldiers from Companies A, B, C, D, and Headquarters Company of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment and Company F of the 429th Brigade Support Battalion were scattered throughout the five locations of Charlottesville, Woodstock, Leesville, Fredericksburg, and Winchester and recognized at their respective ceremony.

“The reason we had five ceremonies is for the families,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Alan M. Ferris, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment command sergeant major. “We had a different ceremony for each company. That way the families get a chance to be with the Soldiers before they’re deployed. If we had one ceremony we would have



*Photo by Sgt. Jesse L. Houk, Virginia Guard Public Affairs*

**A Soldier of Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment stands with supporters during their deployment ceremony at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Va. The ceremony was one of five deployment ceremonies on June 26 that sent off Guardsmen from five different locations for 13 months in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.**



*Photo by Sgt. Jesse L. Houk, Virginia Guard Public Affairs*

**Soldiers from A Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment and those who support them assemble at the Piedmont Virginia Community College Theater in Charlottesville, Va., for their deployment ceremony.**

# Honor Iraq-bound Soldiers of 3-116th Infantry

to centralize it and you would leave a lot of families out.”

Although there were five different ceremonies, a recurring theme seemed to be at each location- support. The Soldiers were not only encouraged by their families, but also strongly supported by those in their community.

“I think in all the locations there had been a lot of family support and a lot of community support,” said Ferris. “For instance we have seen support from the colleges, police officers, firemen. We have had great family and community support.”

Strong encouragement was also seen through the numerous veterans who served in years past and continue to rally around current Soldiers.

“I’m here to wish the gentlemen well; the Soldiers and their entire families well,” said Floyd R. Wood, a retired Army command sergeant major and current American Legion member. “I know it’s a hardship for them, but it’s something they’re doing for their country. I know they should, I did, and everyone should do something for their country. This is a sacrifice. Make no mistake about that, but it’s something everybody should do.”

Along with the idea of support, the definition of heroism also came up at each ceremony.

In a country that values “Dancing with the Stars” and “American Idol” it is good to see people that care about the true heroes of this great country and these are the people we should be imitating, said



Photo by Sgt. Jesse L. Houk, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**A Soldier from Headquarters Company of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Division loads equipment on the storage compartment of a bus prior to troops’ deployment ceremony June 26 in Winchester.**

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. Many mayors and prominent figures within the communities and throughout the state also came to show their support for the guardsmen. Many had words of encouragement and admiration for the Soldiers.

“This is something not many countries ask their sons to do,” said Kristen R. Umstatt, mayor of Leesburg. “But you are American Soldiers and we know you will be able to do this and bring us pride and honor back home. The sacrifices that you and your families are making today and for the next year are not lost on those of us who are fortunate enough to stay home.”

Although there may be a lot of questions for both the Soldier and loved ones, there are opportunities to get help in a stressful time. Modern-day communication can also make it much easier to relieve the anxiety of not knowing.

“One thing I think the Virginia Guard does better is family support,” said Ferris. “Family support groups are much better than they used to be. Plus the communication from overseas to home is a lot better. Soldiers have email and they have DSN phone service, so they’ve got a lot closer contact now than they did before. And that means a lot to communicate with your family. Your family is going to feel better, plus you’re going to feel better. So I think across the board we are doing much better.”

As each company filed on the buses, they left behind teary-eyed loved ones who will be excited to welcome them home roughly 13 months from now.

“If it wasn’t for guys like them we wouldn’t be the United States of America like we are right now,” said Donald W. Spring, father of Spc. Donald W. Spring, Jr. of C Co. “My hat is off to every one of them.”



Photo by Sgt. Jesse L. Houk, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Former officer of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Division Bill E. Germelman directs a band comprised of parts of four different Scottish bands with the bass drum during a deployment ceremony at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia.**