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

Performers from the Ebizu Muntu African Dance Company entertain guests of the Virginia Guard with a drum performance during the African-American celebration at the Holocaust Museum in Richmond Feb. 27. Many Soldiers and Airmen boarded a bus from Fort Pickett to enjoy the celebration hosted by Virginia's Equal Employment Office.

*Virginia
Guard troops
on patrol for
Presidential
Inauguration*



Virginia
GuardPost

SERVING THE ARMY & AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF VIRGINIA

JANUARY- FEBRUARY 2009



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FROM THE TOP



Virginia Guard Soldiers work side by side with active duty personnel in Global War on Terror

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

Virginia Army Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Carl Holcomb and I were able to see first hand the great work our Virginia National Guard Soldiers are doing in Iraq and Kuwait during our visit at the end of February. I am glad to report our Virginians serving overseas are doing great things and making a significant contribution to the U.S. efforts in the Global War on Terror.

What impressed me the most is how much our Soldiers have been accepted by the active component organizations they serve with, and what an integral part of the operation they have become. The National Guard is truly a combat-proven force and is absolutely indispensable in the war effort.

During our trip we visited the Powhatan-based 180th Engineer Company, the Manassas-based 266th Military Police Company and the Manassas-based Computer Emergency Response Team. Each organization is making an impact in their own way.

When we visited a unit, Sgt. Maj. Holcomb and I received a briefing from the unit's leaders to explain their mission, and then we were able to meet with Soldiers in small groups and get their perspectives about what they were doing.

I was struck by how excited the Soldiers were about their missions, and their high level of morale amazed me. Some of the Soldiers had living conditions with many creature comforts, while others lived in more austere environments. No matter what the conditions, the Soldiers were making the most of the situation and were focused on making a difference.

The 180th Engineers have been hard at work building forward operating bases in record time. Their operations are truly joint



Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr.

in nature as they work with Air Force and Navy engineers to build roads and prepare building sites. In just over a month's time, the 180th helped build three separate bases and had just begun work on a fourth.

What impressed me the most is how much our Soldiers have been accepted by the active component organizations they serve with, and what an integral part of the operation they have become. The National Guard is truly a combat-proven force and is absolutely indispensable in the war effort.

The 266th Military Police Company is engaged in a mission of mentoring and training Iraqi police, and I think this is the kind of mission we will see more of as the focus in Iraqi changes over the coming

months. The MPs of the 266th have been out in the towns and communities working side by side with Iraqi police and helping them improve their ability to maintain security on their own.

While the 180th and 266th have made a visible difference in Iraq, the Soldiers of the Computer Emergency Response Team have been working quietly behind the scenes to help maintain computer network security and integrity. These cyber-warriors have been working throughout the entire Central Command area of operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait and their efforts have helped make sure computer network capacity meets the demands of a data-driven force.

While these three units have very different missions, there is a common thread among them, and that is the civilian experience Soldiers bring with them when they are called on federal active duty.

One of the things that sets a National Guard unit apart from an active duty unit is the tremendous experience our Soldiers have above and beyond the Army's standard military training.

When a National Guard unit gets called on active duty, not only does the active component get all the military skills and abilities, but years of civilian experience that increases a unit's effectiveness in countless ways. Not only do these units have experienced civilian engineers, law enforcement officers and computer specialists, but Soldiers also bring experience with them from career fields outside of their military jobs that help make them more effective.

Our Citizen-Soldiers continue to prove themselves every day in tough combat situations, and their efforts will help the United States further its goals of promoting the ideals of freedom and democracy.

News Briefs

29th ID commander promoted to major general

Brig. Gen. Grant L. Hayden, commander of the 29th Infantry Division, was promoted to major general Saturday, Feb. 7 at Fort A.P. Hill.

Hayden took command of the 29th Infantry Division from Maj. Gen. Arthur Wyman Sept. 9 2007 in a ceremony officiated by then-First U.S. Army Commander Lt. Gen. Russell Honoré.

While this permanent promotion was pending federal recognition, in January Hayden was frocked to major general by Secretary of the Army Pete Geren for Operation Valiant Shepherd. The reason being the commander's rank should be commensurate with his responsibilities for an event of this magnitude and visibility.

GI Bill has new eligibility, benefits for Guard

A series of educational assistance programs administered by the Veterans

Affairs Department, commonly called the GI Bill, have helped servicemembers pursue post-secondary learning for decades.

Soon, another program will be added to the mix: The Post-9/11 Veterans Education Bill will be available to qualified individuals Aug. 1.

The new GI Bill provides three separate types of benefit payments to those who entered the military on or after Sept. 10, 2001, and have at least 90 days of active service.

The first type of payment covers tuition and fees equal to what each state's most expensive state-run school charges for in-state, undergraduate study.

In addition, an allowance based on the Defense Department's basic housing allowance for an E-5 with dependents is available as a benefit paid monthly, Wilson said. The housing allowance's dollar amount depends on the location of the school the servicemember or veteran is attending, he added.

The third benefit is a stipend of up to \$1,000 a year for books and supplies.

For those who incur out-of-state tuition, attend a private school, or want to pursue graduate studies but find their tuition and fees above the cap set by the VA, there's the Yellow Ribbon program.

More information on the Post-9/11 GI Bill, eligibility, and how this new bill could affect those with service prior to Sept. 10, 2001, is available on the Veterans Affairs GI Bill site or by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 toll-free. Along with answers to frequently asked questions, visitors to the site will find a link that will allow them to receive updates on the new GI Bill via e-mail as they become available.

Virginia Defense Force strength reaches 900

For the first time since its inception in 1985, the Virginia Defense Force personnel strength exceeded 900 members trained and ready to respond to the call of the Governor and to support the Virginia National Guard during state emergencies. The milestone was reached by the VDF drill

weekend conducted Jan. 10.

In 2008, the VDF volunteered more than 85,000 hours in support of Virginia National Guard operations. The value of those volunteer hours is estimated to have saved the Commonwealth of Virginia nearly \$1.6 million.

The Virginia Defense Force is an all-volunteer force authorized by the Code of Virginia and organized under the Virginia Department of Military Affairs.

VDF units are located in over 38 Virginia Army National Guard installations throughout the Commonwealth. The division headquarters is located in Richmond and there are three operational brigades: Lafayette in the Tidewater area, Black Horse in Northern Virginia and Highland in Roanoke.

Further information about the VDF may be found on its website: www.vdf.virginia.gov, or by contacting division headquarters at the Virginia National Guard armory, 500 Dove Street, Richmond, Virginia 23222; local: 804-228-7018; Toll free: 866-791-9164.

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
170	266th Military Police Company	Iraq	Manassas
160	180th Engineer Company	Iraq	Powhatan
200	276th Engineer Battalion	Afghanistan	Richmond
16	Brigade Embedded Training Team	Afghanistan	Various Locations
16	Battalion Embedded Training Team	Afghanistan	Various Locations
30	Data Processing Unit	Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan	Manassas
40	Various Virginia Army Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Various Locations
50	Various Virginia Air Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Various Locations

* All listings for numbers of Soldiers/Airmen are approximate as of **March 4, 2009**

Virginia Guard breaks ground for new 183rd RTI

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard conducted a ceremony to break ground on a new headquarters building and training center for the Fort Pickett-based 183rd Regional Training Institute Jan. 22.

The ceremony marks the first phase of a two-phase construction project for the RTI, the Virginia Guard's primary training unit.

The first phase of construction is contracted for approximately \$25 million through Norfolk District, Army Corps of Engineers with Barton Malow Company of Charlottesville, Va. Phase 1 has a 22-month design-build schedule and is expected to be complete in August 2010.

"Today we dedicate a building that is long overdue," said Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. "This project will bring modernization to the education of our Soldiers and other service members. We will have a modern, state of the art facility that will embrace the education of the Soldiers for the many missions that await them."

Newman said that when you couple the RTI with the already modern range facilities at Fort Pickett like the Multi-Purpose Range Complex, the urban training site, the convoy fire course and other facilities, Fort Pickett will be one of the premier training sites on the East Coast.

"It is a great day for Fort Pickett, the Virginia National Guard and the town of Blackstone," said Lt. Col. Walt Mercer, commander of the 183rd RTI.

"The Virginia RTI consistently gets feedback from Guard Bureau and Department of the Army and most importantly our students that our training and trainers is truly outstanding, but the one consistent issue we hear is that our classroom and billeting facilities are lacking and antiquated," Mercer said. "This new modern facility will resolve this and allow RTI to take our training to the next level of professionalism."

Mercer also said this project reflects



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard conducted a formal ceremony Jan. 22 to break ground on the new 183rd Regional Training Institute Headquarters at Fort Pickett. Phase 1 has a 22-month design-build schedule and is expected to be complete in August 2010. The RTI expects to see a trend of training more active component Soldiers in addition to Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers.

the Guard's focus on investing in Fort Pickett with a long term goal of increasing the unit's ability to train more Soldiers.

The RTI expects to see a trend of training more active component Soldiers in addition to the primarily Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers the organization mostly trained in the past, he said.

The 183rd RTI is made up of three battalions that teach a variety of military skills courses.

The 1st Battalion focuses on basic infantry training, as well as training non-commissioned officers, Army Combatives and Rappel Master.

This mission for the 2nd Battalion is basic transportation training.

The 3rd Battalion teaches basic military police skills and other general studies courses. It also has responsibility for the Virginia National Guard Officer Candidate School and Warrant Officer Candidate School.

Approximately 1,200 Soldiers trained at RTI in 2008.

The key features of Phase 1 construction are:

- An approximately 8,000 square foot regimental headquarters building that will house offices, administrative work space

and a conference room for the command group, operations and staff sections and the headquarters company.

- An approximately 61,500 square foot education building with administrative and office space for the RTI's three training battalions, classrooms, a library, learning center, maintenance classroom, medical aid station, supply area and fitness center.

- An approximately 9,700 square foot Officer Candidate School Building with offices, administrative work space, conference room, classrooms and counseling areas.

- An approximately 4,900 square foot 250-seat auditorium with stage

"We are under contract for Phase 1 right now, and hoping to receive congressional appropriation for Phase 2 in Fiscal Year 2010," said Maj. Christopher S. Dunn, the construction project manager for the Virginia National Guard.

Dunn said that funding for Phase 2 has not been appropriated by Congress yet, but it is planned to include a regimental dining hall and three barracks buildings.

The estimated cost of Phase 2 is approximately \$30 million, and if funding is approved, Phase 2 could be completed by October 2012.



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On the Cover



Capt. Heath Phillips (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Robert Allen (right) pause on Pennsylvania Avenue to communicate with their Soldiers assisting the Secret Service with security operations along the Inauguration Parade route. (Photo by Sgt. John Slosser, Virginia Guard Public Affairs)

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TAG, Command Sergeant Major visit Virginia Guard troops in Iraq, Kuwait

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers serving on federal active duty in Iraq and Kuwait are seamlessly working side by side with their active duty counterparts, and Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, and Command Sgt. Maj. Carl Holcomb, the Virginia Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major, got to see first hand just how well they are doing during a trip to Iraq and Kuwait conducted Feb. 16 to 21.

"During our trip I spoke with the leaders of the active duty units commanding our Virginia National Guard Soldiers in Iraq and Kuwait, and they had nothing but praise for how our Soldiers are doing," Holcomb said. "The operations there are seamless. When you walk into a work area, you can't tell who is active duty and who is National Guard. Our Soldiers are doing remarkable things."

Newman and Holcomb were able to visit the Powhatan-based 180th Engineer Company, the Manassas-based 266th Military Police Company and the Manassas-based Computer Emergency Response Team during their trip.

"It was good to see first hand what our Soldiers are doing," Holcomb said. "Across the board, morale was high in all the units. I can't say enough about what a great job they are doing and how proud I am of them."

The 180th Engineers have a horizontal construction mission and have been busy working with Air Force and Navy engineers



Photo by Sgt. Charles C. Jones, 180th Engineer Company

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, visits with the Soldiers from the Powhatan-based 180th Engineer Company Feb. 26. Newman and Virginia Army National Guard Command Sgt. Major Carl Holcomb visited Virginia National Guard Soldiers on federal active duty in Iraq a week-long trip from Feb. 16 to 22.

building logistics bases. With the horizontal construction mission, the Virginia Guard engineers have been building roads and preparing build sites, and then the Air Force and Navy engineers construct and refurbish buildings. Holcomb said that since their arrival in January, the 180th has helped build three separate logistics bases and are hard at work on a fourth.

The 266th Military Police Company has the mission of mentoring and training the Iraqi police. Holcomb said the Soldiers from the unit have been working outside of their operation base and in the towns and communities working with Iraqi police. While some Soldiers in Iraq are living in built up areas with many "creature comforts," Holcomb said the 266th MPs are operating in a more austere environment.

"They are doing a great job and making the most of what they have," Holcomb said.

The Computer Emergency Response Team is assisting with network security throughout the entire Central Command area of operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait, Holcomb said.

"The Soldiers in the CERF are helping make sure there is no interruption in network capacity through the entire area of operations," Holcomb said.

With each unit visit, Newman and Holcomb received a mission briefing from the unit's leadership and then had a chance to meet with Soldiers in small groups and spend time with them at meals, Holcomb said. He additionally met with Soldiers one-on-one if they needed to address a particular issue.

Holcomb said he was able to identify some finance and administrative issues, and now that he is back in Virginia, he is working to find solutions for the issues.

For Holcomb, the trip to Iraq and Kuwait came just a year after his return from serving as the command sergeant major for the 116th Brigade Combat Team.

"The trip brought back a lot of memories," Holcomb said. "Sometimes it felt like I had never even left."



Photo courtesy Computer Emergency Response Team

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, and Virginia Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major Carl Holcomb visit with Soldiers from the Manassas-based Computer Emergency Response Team during their trip to Iraq and Kuwait.

Course introduces Guard Soldiers to logistics systems

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

More than 35 National Guard Soldiers from various states gathered at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach Feb. 18-22 for a five-day Logistics Enablers Course.

The course is designed to introduce Guard Soldiers to various Army logistics systems that can be used by Army Guard units either during state scenarios or on overseas deployments, according to Capt. Eric Hopkins, a logistics staff officer from the National Guard Bureau, and one of the instructors for the course.

This was the first time the training was held in Virginia and the majority of the class participants were from the commonwealth. But Guard Soldiers from Alabama, Ohio and Pennsylvania also attended, said 1st Lt. Eric Quinn, a logistics readiness officer with the Virginia Army National Guard. The attendees ranged from sergeants to colonels and all of them received hands-on instructions in the various systems.

The systems introduced during the training were Battle Command Sustainment Support Systems; Movement Tracking System; Combat Service Support Automated Information Systems Interface; Transportation Coordinators' Automated Information for Movements System II; 3e Technology International; Portable Deployment Kit; and Combat Service Support Very Small Aperture Terminal.

"For this we are focusing on getting the equipment out of storage, getting hands on, and getting them excited about these systems," Hopkins said. "We want to exercise a seamless

transition- if they make it part of their normal duties, they are familiar with it during state scenarios or overseas missions."

The first few days of the course are used to introduce Soldiers to the different systems. The last couple of days are then used to demonstrate how the systems can be used in domestic missions for the National Guard. For this the Soldiers are put through an exercise where they can react to some sort of domestic emergency, such as a hurricane, tornadoes or flooding. During this final exercise the Soldiers learn just how much these systems can interact with each other and how they can all be used together.

"This all came about after Hurricane Katrina to improve tracking of personnel and equipment," explained Hopkins. "But Guard units can also use this overseas on missions as well."

There's a high demand for this training, according to Quinn, because a lot of units will see these systems during their deployments.

In addition to equipping and training units to accomplish their warfighting requirement, the systems also enable them to track logistics actions during state emergencies, homeland defense missions, and other Defense Support to Civilian Authorities events at home in Virginia.

The goal, according to Hopkins, is to get to the point where NGB doesn't have to provide trainers. There will be enough experienced Soldiers that the states will have personnel to train their own troops on the systems.

"The big point is, the students can take their knowledge, implement this into their own unit and then provide training on these systems to other Soldiers," Quinn said.

Single Soldiers learn valuable relationship skills

By Sgt. Jesse L. Houk
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Thirteen Soldiers from around the commonwealth converged in Arlington, Va., Feb. 7 and 8 to participate in the "Singles Enrichment Retreat."

"The Army, as a whole, has been pushing a number of programs and retreats to support Soldiers as human beings to make them stronger Soldiers in all aspects of their lives," said Capt. Ben J. Sprouse, 116th Brigade Combat Team Chaplain. "As a part of that they have been introducing a number of curriculums for both married Soldiers and single Soldiers that can be implemented into regular training and weekend retreats."

The single Soldier's retreat is an Adjutant General program that came together with help from the chaplain's corps and Military Family Life Consultants from the Joint Family Support Assistance Program.

"Weekends like this are extremely important for Soldiers because the

information presented is excellent," said Cindy J. Blevins, Military Family Life Consultant. "I think it's a really good time for Soldiers to get together with other Soldiers and talk about things that are affecting them; positively or negatively. I think that the demands on Soldiers and their family are ever-increasing and the support for those Soldiers should be increasing as well."

The curriculum that helped to equip the Soldiers with relationship skills centered on information that is presented in the book "How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk; The Foolproof Way to Follow Your Heart Without Losing Your Mind" by John Van Epp, Ph. D.

The teaching centered on the idea there are five categories in the development of a relationship that include knowing, trusting, relying, committing, and touching. According to Van Epp, a relationship develops best when each category grows at a gradual pace and never exceeds the growth rate of the previous category. This

information is written with marriage in mind, but is applicable to any relationship.

"Soldiers in the Guard are citizen-Soldiers," said Sprouse. "If our Soldiers have unhealthy relationships on their citizen side it will reflect on their ability to be who they are on the Soldier side. You take care of the citizen and you take care of the Soldier; you have to take care of the whole person."

"I definitely feel that this is a great way for commanders to invest in their Soldiers," said Sgt. Brian G. James, a logistics specialist with 429th Brigade Support Battalion. "Just showing that they care enough about the Soldier's welfare to send them and say 'Hey, don't worry about the weekend. We hope they are going to give you the foundation to build better relationships in your unit and your life.' It shows that they value their Soldiers and know that we are here."

For more information on single Soldier retreats or marriage seminars, please contact the state chaplain's office.

U.S. Navy trains Va. Guard on underwater skills

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
29th Infantry Division Public Affairs

Pilots and aircrew of the Virginia Army National Guard participated in an underwater egress training course at the Norfolk Naval Station to prepare themselves in the event of an aircraft going down over a body of water.

More than 20 Virginia Guardsmen of the Sandston-based 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, 29th Infantry Division began training in a classroom at the Aviation Survival Training Center in Norfolk at around 8:30 a.m. Feb. 7 for a brief overview of the day-long class. During the instruction the Soldiers were given instruction on how to remain calm and stay aware of their surroundings in the event of a water landing.

With over 3,315 miles of tidal shoreline in Virginia, the risk of a water landing is a very real possibility for Virginia aviators, so they must be trained to survive such a circumstance.

"As Army aviators, we often fly over large bodies of water that are beyond 'power-off' gliding distance to the shore," said Chief Warrant Officer Virgil Hill, a helicopter pilot with the 2-224th. "An aircrew could ditch in the water, the aircraft could roll over, and they would need to know the fundamental of how to get out of that aircraft and survive."

Following the classroom instruction, the aviators and crewmen were ushered poolside where they were administered a test of their swimming capabilities. The test gauged the individual's basic swimming skills by forcing them to demonstrate their ability to swim from one side of the pool to the other, tread water and immerse their faces under the water.

Once deemed sea-worthy by the U.S. Navy instructors, the aviators proceeded to their first station; Shallow Water Egress Training. During the SWET, the participant is placed in a chair that rests on the surface of the water. An instructor stands waist deep on either side of the chair and dunks the individual in to the water. While



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

Sgt. 1st Class Gary McKee demonstrates his swimming abilities during the swim test portion of the underwater egress training at Norfolk Naval Air Station Feb. 7. McKee is a helicopter crew chief in the Virginia National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment.

inverted underwater, the trainees had to free themselves from the chair's harness and then find the best path out of the notional aircraft to safety.

To move on to the next phase of the course the students completed SWET during both day and night operations while wearing a flight suit, a vest and their boots. To simulate a nighttime environment the instructors issued goggles that are blacked out with paint.

Upon completion of SWET the class moved to the Modular Egress Training System, often referred to as "the dunker." METS is designed to simulate a helicopter entering the water.

The Soldiers strapped into the seats of the METS and were then lowered into the deep end of the water.

Commonly during a waterborne landing, the aircraft will flip over underwater, so once in the water the device inverted itself and the pilots and crew were forced to free themselves from the aircraft. Certified divers were under the water to assist in case a Soldier could not free themselves in time.

As with the SWET, the Soldiers also had to complete the METS in both day and night scenarios. The class was again provided with "blackout" goggles to create a nighttime effect.

Finally, after several hours of training

with only their lungs to provide them oxygen while submerged, the instructors trained the students with a supplemental emergency breathing device.

The SEBD, which looks like a miniature SCUBA tank that can fit into a pocket, is equipment adapted by the military to increase the chances of survival for aircrew trapped in an aircraft which has crashed into a body of water.

Being citizen-Soldiers, the National Guard is often placed in situations that are far from predictable. "Being this close to the ocean, to the rivers, we may be called to pull someone out of the water sometime, hurricanes things like that," said Sgt. William Hatch, a crew chief in the 2-224th. "Its real good training for us because you never know what you're gonna do."

ASTC Norfolk is a directorate of the Naval Survival Training Institute. Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla. serving as the Training Agent for Aviation Survival Training and the subject matter experts on all military operational medicine. ASTC Norfolk provides and meets the aviation survival and safety requirements of all Naval Aviation and Department of Defense activities through didactic classroom or squadron lectures, simulator devices and a curriculum that emphasizes hands-on exposure.

1710th Transportation Company returns from Iraq

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

After almost a year in Iraq, nearly 200 Soldiers from the Richmond-based 1710th Transportation Company returned to Virginia Feb. 27 and were greeted by the cheers and hugs of loved ones.

"It's awesome being home," said Sgt. Lemuel Mathias of Suffolk. "I'm really looking forward to relaxing."

The 1710th headquarters is in Richmond, and the unit also has elements from Emporia and Gate City. Detachment 2 of the 1173rd Transportation Company from Onancock also deployed as part of the 1710th.

In addition, U.S. Army Individual Ready Reserve Soldiers from all over the United States were also assigned to the unit.

The unit returned to the U.S. on Feb. 22 and spent several days at Camp Atterbury, Ind., before flying to Richmond on Feb. 27.

The entire company was bused to Emporia, where a 'welcome home' ceremony was held with flag-waving family and friends. After one final formation, the Soldiers were released to their families. Members of the Det. 2, 1173rd Trans. Co., were then bused to Onancock for another ceremony featuring friends and family.

Capt. Brett Layton, commander of the 1710th, acknowledged it had been a long



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Capt. Brett Layton, commander of the Virginia National Guard's 1710th Transportation Company, receives a welcome home from a fellow Virginia National Guard Soldier at the Richmond International Airport when the unit arrived back in Virginia Feb. 27.



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

Family members and friends welcome the Virginia National Guard's 1710th Transportation Company home Feb. 27 in Emporia, Va.

year and thanked family and friends for their support at the Emporia ceremony.

"I'm proudest of all the troops," Layton said. "It was a huge success and we came back with all of our Soldiers."

It was the second deployment for Mathias and he said he could see the change in Iraq.

"It was really quiet on this deployment,"

he said. "You can see how the U.S. Army is making a change for the good there."

While in Iraq, the 1710th was assigned to the 142nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion from Fort Polk, La. The 142nd was part of the Fort Eustis-based 7th Support Brigade.

The unit provided medium lift transportation that moved critical supplies from logistical support areas out to different forward operating bases, traveling supply routes all through Iraq.

The unit conducted more than 75 missions, traveled more than 900,000 miles and was evaluated as the best of nine companies in the battalion. The unit had no Soldiers wounded or killed in action.

The unit was organized with about 180 Soldiers in a headquarters section that provided administrative, maintenance and logistical support, and three truck platoons each equipped with 20 M915A3 tractor trucks and 40 flatbed trailers. The trailers are 40 feet long and can haul up to 64,000 pounds of cargo.

The 1710th conducted a departure ceremony in Emporia March 11, 2008 to recognize the start of their federal mobilization for duty in Iraq. They spent about six weeks training at Camp Atterbury before deploying to Iraq.

VDF establishes new Division Troop Command

By 2nd Lt. Henry C. Howells, IV
Virginia Defense Force Public Affairs

The Virginia Defense Force, as part of the Virginia Department of Military Affairs and aligning itself more with the Virginia National Guard command structure, changed the nomenclature and purpose of the "Division Training Command" to the Division Troop Command in a command ceremony Feb. 7 at the Dove Street Armory.

The DTC will be temporarily headquartered in the Petersburg Armory and will assume command and control responsibility for the Aviation Battalion, Signal Battalion, Riverine Detachment, Training and Evaluation Battalion, and MP/Security Battalion.

The reconfiguration of the DTC will enable it to better support the brigades in the field and will allow the line brigades a broader exposure across a range of capabilities that were previously not available.

Col. Dennis Mroczkowski, the DTC commander, states that the DTC will



Photo by 2nd Lt. Henry C. Howells, IV, Virginia Defense Force Public Affairs

Maj. Gen. John D. Taylor, commander of the Virginia Defense Force, unfurls the unit colors for the new Defense Force Division Troop Command.

"facilitate deployment in training exercises and State active duty; integrate with brigade planning and operations allowing them to recognize the support assets available through the DTC; and enable brigades to gain familiarity with the DTC's personnel."

Mroczkowski has established an aggressive goal to bring the Division Troop Command to brigade strength to support

the VDF's missions from Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, the Adjutant General of the Virginia National Guard.

Moreover, this command will be built upon people with specialized skills and prior military experience for a rapid contribution to the force and enhance the VDF's ability to fulfill its taskings as a component of the Virginia Department of Military Affairs.

Virginia Guard shatters 2008 CFC goal

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

When the Virginia National Guard set out to beat last year's Combined Federal Campaign donation goals of \$45,411 in the Central Virginia Region, it ended up with the largest percentage increase in the region and brought in more than \$57,000.

The CFC campaign ran from Oct. 1 through Nov. 18, and this year's increased dollar amount was 23 percent, the largest percentage increase in the region, said Maj. Kent Doane, the CFC coordinator for the Virginia National Guard. The region includes all federal activities in Richmond, Fort Lee, the Defense General Supply Center and others, Doane said.

Accreditation for this year's success can be attributed to a number of factors, including forward planning.

"We got the word out early," said Doane. "We got people involved in the subordinate commands."

Another reason Doane thinks more people may have donated more this year is people realize federal jobs are a little more secure right now, with the state of the economy he feels people who can

afford to give may be more willing to do so.

Though this year's campaign was a great success it was not done without aggressive coordination.

"There is some effort involved," said Doane. "Part of that effort is educating the command on why this is important."

The 2008 increase came in part from the 360 donors who participated in the program. The number of donors was also increased this year by a remarkable 36 percent.

According to official sources, the CFC is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign, with more than 300 CFC campaigns throughout the country and internationally to help to raise millions of dollars each year.

Pledges made by federal civilian, postal and military donors during the campaign season support eligible non-profit organizations that provide health and human service benefits throughout the world.

The CFC promotes and supports philanthropy through a program that is employee focused, cost-efficient, and effective in providing federal employees with opportunities to improve the quality of life for others.

Fort Pickett firefighters support Southbound Trooper

By Sgt. 1st Class Anne B. Burnley
MTC Public Affairs

The Virginia Army National Guard Maneuver Training Center firefighters served as the six-member Crash Fire Rescue Team during Exercise Southbound Trooper IX conducted on both Fort Pickett and the Blackstone Army Air Field from Feb. 13-22, 2009.

The scope of the MTC firefighter training is vast and the responsibilities varied. "The desire to serve, the ability to perform and the courage to act is the Department of Defense, Fire Service Motto that we follow," said Spc. Donald R. Blake, a medical technician with the team.

This was the first year that the MTC firefighters were asked to provide their expertise during Exercise Southbound Trooper. The team, consisting of five emergency medical technicians basic and one EMT intermediate, provides year-round support for MTC, Joint Force Headquarters and the entire post. During EST IX, the MTC firefighters served as the Crash Fire Rescue Team for coalition forces training on post.

"Gary Watts proposed to us that we assume the Exercise Southbound Trooper IX Crash Fire Rescue mission," said Sgt. Todd H. Pridgen, EMT Intermediate and rescue team section leader. "He needed crash fire rescue support and we got the green light from our chain of command. EST IX gave us a chance to hone our firefighting and emergency rescue skills



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Tracy Hohman

Firefighters Sgt. Albert Culanding and Sgt. Todd Pridgen are engulfed in smoke as they battle a blaze in a construction dumpster Feb. 15 at Fort Pickett. They serve with the Fort Pickett Fire Department and as National Guard military firefighters.

together for a nine day stretch."

EST IX also gave the MTC firefighters an opportunity to work in a combined services environment. Hoist rescue missions involved the firefighters coordinating missions with flight crews for both the United States Army Black Hawk and U.S. Navy Sea Hawk helicopters. Embedded Soldiers with the U.S. Army 55th Signal Company photographed and videotaped numerous missions. Airfield familiarization and maintaining contact with

the Blackstone Army Air Field Tower were additional elements of the firefighters training.

"This was my first hoist operation and I learned a lot," said Sgt. Albert A. Culanding, MTC Directorate of Public Works firefighter and EMT B. "I didn't know the Army or Navy side of hoist rescue. Now I know what to expect."

Originally awarded the firefighter occupational specialty at Goodfellow Air Force Base in Texas, each Soldier in the MTC

firefighter team now holds the 21M MOS. The firefighters have been stationed on post since Fort Pickett became the Army National Guard Maneuver Training Center in 1997.

"We do standbys on both sides of the house, civilian and military," said Pridgen. "This team is ready to provide fire protection, rescue, and life-saving support at a moment's notice for missions ranging from Soldiers taking the Army Physical Fitness Test, to crash fire rescues on the Blackstone Army Air Field."

Missions can also include manning the Fort Pickett Fire Station, assisting civilian firefighters, performing both light and heavy vehicle extractions, running and staffing ambulances, and providing advanced life support as needed. The firefighters can also dispatch calls for the post 911 dispatcher or handle after-hours calls for the MTC Directorate of Public Works.

"When the power goes off, or a building has no heat, we can take the call," Pridgen said. "If we can fix it, we do. If not, the team can put in the call for civilian support. Here on post, EST IX gave us a chance to combine our fire fighting and emergency rescue skills in a unique international mission."



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Teddy Wade

Virginia National Guard firefighters from Fort Pickett and medics from 2nd Battalion, 104th Aviation Brigade, perform a simulated aerial medical evacuation during Southbound Trooper IX at Fort Pickett, Va., Feb. 16.

Canadians conduct exercise at Fort Pickett

By Sgt. 1st Class Anne B. Burnley
MTC Public Affairs

Soldiers from the Canadian Army Reserve conducted their ninth major field training exercise at the Virginia Army National Guard Maneuver Training Center at Fort Pickett Feb. 13-22. Exercise Southbound Trooper IX, commanded by Lt. Col. Rob Knapp, commanding officer of the Princess Louise Fusiliers, involved 450 Soldiers from the 36 Canadian Brigade Group from across Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

The purpose of Southbound Trooper IX is to prepare Canadian Army Reserve Soldiers for possible mobilization and deployment to Afghanistan, said Capt. Colette Brake, 36 CBG public affairs officer. The 36 CBG consists of light infantry Soldiers, engineers, military intelligence, signal, military police and civil affairs personnel.

The scenario-based exercise replicates an environment similar to conditions in the Kandahar Province, Brake said. Missions involve a peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan with approximately 300 Soldiers conducting cordon and search operations near a simulated village.

The mission to find and cease the operation of a bomb maker who has been targeting friendly forces near the village



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Raymond L. Patterson

Canadian Army Soldiers from The 1st Battalion, Nova Scotia Highlanders (North) simulate realistic combat scenarios during Exercise Southbound Trooper IX Feb. 18 at Fort Pickett.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Devin Kornaus

Canadian Soldiers from 84th Independent Field Battery, 1st Field Artillery Regiment, 36 Canadian Brigade Group fire a C3 105mm howitzer during Exercise Southbound Trooper IX Feb. 16 at Fort Pickett

requires Soldiers to hone their military training, she said.

All movements are conducted tactically to replicate actual operations in theater. Canadian Soldiers have the chance to confirm individual and collective training undertaken over the past year and to practice these skills within a larger group context. Soldiers conduct patrols, establish aircraft landing zones, construct bridges, perform medical evacuations and hone basic soldiering skills during the exercise.

"The tangible military reasons that we have been coming to Fort Pickett for nine years are straight forward," said Maj. Vic Grandy, the deputy commander of Task

Force 36. "This installation offers excellent urban training facilities, a superb range complex, and access to aviation and air assets. We conduct joint international operations with our allied partners with whom we stand shoulder to shoulder in Afghanistan. Fort Pickett is the place where we initiate our training for deployment."

Fort Pickett also offers Canadian Soldiers the unique opportunity to train in a coalition environment. Here they can conduct operations in the United States with international forces.

The Southbound Trooper multi-national task force includes units from the United States Army, the United States Navy, the Army National Guard, the United States Air Force, the United States Marine Corps, and a contingent of Royal Marines from Great Britain.

Soldiers from both the New Hampshire National Guard and Virginia National Guard were also involved in the training.

Conducted annually in the United States since 2000, Southbound Trooper has grown in size. Initially conducted at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., the exercise moved to Fort Pickett in 2001.

"We began Exercise Southbound Trooper with 100 Soldiers and now bring 700. In 30 years of military experience, from the Far East to Afghanistan and the North, I have never encountered a more supportive, flexible, and above all, mission-oriented staff," Grandy said.

"We are extremely honored to have the Canadians conduct this exercise at Fort Pickett," said Col. Tom Wilkinson, the commander of Fort Pickett.

"Each year the exercise gets better and better and has a special purpose this year in preparing the Canadian force for their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. Fort Pickett is turning the corner as a premiere pre-deployment training center, and we look forward to leading the charge to that end."

Virginia Air National Guard names top enlisted members

By Capt. Dianna Lebedev
Virginia Air Guard Public Affairs

Top candidates from across the Virginia Air National Guard sat before a rigorous review board during the December 2008 drill weekend. After discussion of each candidate's exceptional qualities and accomplishments, the board announced the winners of the 2009 Virginia Air National Guard Outstanding Airmen of the Year awards.

A staff sergeant from the 192nd Fighter Wing's Intelligence Squadron was named the Outstanding Virginia Air National Guardsman for 2009. Staff Sgt. Kelly Childress, 192nd Intel. Squadron, earned the top Virginia Air Guard honor in addition to being named the Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

In the Airman category, Senior Airman Jesse Brown, 192nd Operations Support Flight, received Outstanding Airman of the Year honors. The 192nd Fighter Wing commander, Col. Mark McCauley, commended Brown as a model Airman who has quickly become the "go-to guy" for intelligence support for both the Guard and active duty.

This past year, Brown analyzed 24,000 intelligence reports, as an intelligence operations analyst. He also created an interactive, multimedia study guide for the annual F-22 pilot threat exam which resulted in scores above 90 percent.

Brown was a two-time recipient of "Superior Performer" accolades during inspections held during February and March. McCauley described Brown's performance as "habitually excellent."

Among the noncommissioned officer candidates, Childress, 192nd Intel. Squadron, earned the Outstanding NCO of the Year title and the lead title of Outstanding Virginia Air National Guardsman for

2009. Childress led the way in her section with over 1,000 mission hours as a multi-source analyst. She completed multi-source analyst requalification earning an Exceptionally Qualified rating which is limited to the top two percent of all analysts. Childress is an Instructor Rated Operator and has trained 15 multi-source analysts. McCauley commended Childress as, "a model Airman and a superb example of what the ANG brings to the total force."



Staff Sgt. Kelly Childress



Senior Airman Jesse Brown

The Airman of the Year Review Board was impressed with several standout qualities that lead to Childress' selection as the Outstanding Guardsman of the Year for the Virginia Air National Guard. The board was very impressed by her exceptional job performance as noted on her AF Form 1206.

In addition, the board observed her high degree of professionalism during her interview, her dedication to the Virginia Air National Guard and her positive energy. Equally impressive was her willingness to be a mentor to those in her Squadron.

Receiving the Outstanding Senior NCO of the Year award is Master Sgt. Christopher Plath, the 192nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron supervisor. Plath manages over 400 training needs for the 27th Aircraft Maintenance Section. He executed eight F-22A Operation Noble Eagle missions which occurred during a 192nd Unit Training Assembly at Langley Air Force Base.

Plath recently completed NCO Academy and is already enrolled in the Senior NCO Academy. Maj. Jeffrey Ryan, 192nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron commander, noted that, "Sgt. Plath is without a doubt a winner and team player who promotes unity and integrity for others to emulate."

Outstanding First Sergeant of the Year honors were awarded to Master Sgt. James Profita, representing the 192nd Security Forces Squadron. Profita volunteered off-duty time to support deploying personnel prepare for their time away from family and civilian careers. He acts as the cornerstone for the Security Forces Squadron, keeping pay records straight, making sure everyone has billeting, and maintaining a morale fund to keep morale high within the unit. The 192nd Security Forces Squadron Commander, 1st Lt. John Griffin, remarked that Profita, "leads by setting an excellent example and genuinely enjoys serving others."

"These outstanding Airmen all displayed the exceptional qualities that make the Virginia Air National Guard such an exemplary organization. I'm proud to serve with each and every one of them. They truly are the best of the best," said Chief Master Sgt. Barry Coleman, Virginia Air National Guard Command Chief.



Master Sgt. James Profita



Master Sgt. Christopher Plath

429th BSB Soldiers certify as combat lifesavers

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Nearly 100 Soldiers assigned to the Danville-based 429th Brigade Support Battalion certified as combat lifesavers during training conducted Jan. 10 and 11 at Fort Pickett.

"Combat lifesaver is a warfighting skill that every warrior needs to have in their arsenal of tools," said Lt. Col. Michael Swanson, commander of the 429th.

During combat lifesaver training, Soldiers are trained and evaluated on first aid skills like applying bandages to control bleeding, proper use of a tourniquet, moving a casualty using an improvised litter and administering an IV, said Sgt. Colleen Brown of Portsmouth, one of the combat medics serving as an instructor for the training. Brown has been conducting combat lifesaver training since 2003.

In addition to receiving a "go" on the hands-on training, Soldiers must also pass a 40-question written test to be a certified combat lifesaver, Brown said.

According to Army field training manuals, the role of the combat lifesaver is to provide immediate far-forward first aid to prevent soldiers from dying of wounds.

A combat lifesaver is a nonmedical soldier trained to provide advanced first aid and lifesaving procedures beyond the level of self-aid or buddy aide, and is not intended to take the place of medical personnel.

Swanson said the battalion tries to conduct the combat lifesaver training two to three times a year. In addition to training the battalion, Soldiers from the Charlottesville-based C Company, 429th Brigade Support Battalion also conduct the training for Soldiers throughout the entire 116th Brigade Combat Team.

The Army has placed greater emphasis on combat lifesaver



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Staff Sgt. Richard Emery instructs Soldiers taking part in the Combat Lifesaver Course on the proper way to administer an IV.

training in recent years, Swanson said. Every Soldier going through basic training received combat lifesaver training, and it is also required for every Soldier prior to mobilizing for overseas federal duty.

"Having these guys trained as combat lifesavers takes a lot of pressure off me, and I can depend on them to handle getting a guy triaged and giving me the information I need to provide care," said Sgt. Jeffrey A. McDaniel of Roanoke. McDaniel is currently assigned to A Company, 429th BSB as a combat medic and assisted with the training. He previously served as a combat medic on supply convoys in Iraq with E Company, 429th BSB.

In addition to being a critical skill in combat, Swanson said the training has been helpful in non-combat situations. "Soldiers can and have used their combat lifesaver skills in their civilians lives, coming to the aid of their family, friends or fellow employees where advanced first aid skills were needed," Swanson said.

Combat lifesavers can provide immediate care to an injured Soldier until medical personnel arrive on the scene.

Brown deployed with D Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team, and she recalled how a combat lifesaver rendered the first treatment care to a fellow Soldier injured in the unit motor pool before medical personnel arrived on the scene.

Many of the Soldiers had no prior experience with administering an IV, but by the end of the training felt confident they could effectively respond and perform the skill if they needed to.

"I have seen this done on TV, but I have never really known how to do it," said Pfc. Jessica Dawn Archer of Danville, a supply specialist assigned to the Headquarters Company, 429th BSB. "If anyone needed an IV, I feel like I could do it. We learn how to do this in the field and help save a life. I go to college and work in a coffee shop, but I can stick an IV in someone and never been to college for that. I think that is a pretty amazing thing I have learned."



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Administering an IV is one of the most challenging elements of the Combat Lifesaver Course.

Honor Guard Soldiers educate General Assembly



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

Spc. Philip Reddick meets with a passer-by at the General Assembly Building in Richmond, Va., Jan. 23. Reddick is a full-time member of the Virginia National Guard Funeral Honors Program.

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
VirginiaGuard Public Affairs

The Virginia Army National Guard Funeral Honors Program set up a booth in the hallway of the General Assembly Building Jan. 23 to educate and inform veterans and members of the General Assembly on the services and honors they render.

Spc. Philip Reddick wore his ceremonial uniform to help draw attention to the booth. Once lured in by the fancy threads, passers-by were encouraged to ask questions and read about the program, which currently provides honors to about 70 funerals a month across the commonwealth.

The Funeral Honors Program, which consists of 11 full-time Virginia National Guard Soldiers and 60 traditional Guardsmen, performs the funerals at two Virginia Veterans Cemeteries in Amelia

County and Suffolk, with a third one on the way in Dublin. In addition to the Veterans cemeteries, the Soldiers also service funerals throughout the state at family cemeteries, private cemeteries and even Quantico National Cemetery.

When the cemetery in Dublin opens in 2010, the Funeral Honors Program has already been asked to do all Army funerals there, according to Bob Huffman, state program coordinator for Military Funeral Honors Program.

Although the funerals are performed by National Guard Soldiers, the funerals are held for all Army veterans. "We service all veterans, not just National Guard," said Huffman.

To become a member of the Virginia Funeral Honors Program, a Soldier must possess a high degree of professionalism and discipline. The Soldiers must pass a background check, an interview process and conform

to Army height and weight requirements.

"We only select the best Soldiers. We think we have the most elite of what Virginia has to offer," Huffman said.

After a Soldier has passed the initial requirements they are placed in an intense training program that teaches the proper drill and ceremony skills required to perform a full military honors funeral. According to Huffman, many Soldiers do not make the cut.

The Virginia Funeral Honors Program teams, which consist of a casket team, a color guard, a bugler, and a firing team, are located at several locations across the commonwealth. They train out of Gate City, Roanoke and Forts Pickett and A.P. Hill.

For more information on joining the Virginia National Guard's Honor Guard contact Bob Huffman at (434)-292-9051, or by email at bob.huffman@us.army.mil.

22nd MEU lands at Fort Pickett for training

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

More than 2,200 Marines of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina arrived at Fort Pickett Maneuver Training Center Jan. 9 to begin training in preparation for an upcoming overseas deployment this spring.

The MTC opened its facilities to train the Marines in an as close to a realistic battlefield environment as possible.

Utilizing the modern facilities of the Military Operations in Urban Terrain lanes Jan. 13 the Marines got a hands-on feel of what life will be like while deployed to Southwest Asia.

Marines patrolling the MOUT site were met by professional role-players, improvised explosive devices, and rocket-propelled grenades. The Marines patrolled the streets and reacted to attacks just as they would in real life while still trying to communicate and keep professionalism while dealing with local nationals.

Staying in the good graces of the local population while deployed and keeping up good rapport with the locals is vital to operations overseas and the Marines reflected that in their training as well.

“You can simulate all the IEDs you want, do all the MOUT you want,” said Sgt. Christopher Kellner, a squad leader in the 22nd MEU. “But you don’t actually get time to sit down with the role players, so it was a big help with the role players helping us out.”

While training at a unit’s home station is effective sometimes their facilities cannot always accommodate such large-scale training events.

“The Marines chose Fort Pickett because of the training areas, the MOUT site and it would accommodate the whole



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

Two Marines pull security and search the area amidst the smoke of an IED blast in the MOUT site of Fort Pickett, Va.



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

A Marine with the 22nd MEU pulls security with his M249 squad automatic weapon after an IED attack. The 22nd MEU spent two weeks training at Fort Pickett to prepare for an upcoming overseas deployment.

Expeditionary Unit, Marine Expeditionary Unit and their train up towards their upcoming deployment,” said Jim Weaver, operations manager for International Charter Inc., which works for Defense Training Systems to train Soldiers and Marines.

In addition to the MOUT site, the Marines took advantage of many of the other diverse training venues available at Fort Pickett, including live-fire convoy courses, urban villages, tank ranges, artillery firing positions and several small-arms ranges.

While the majority of the 22nd MEU participated in the training events hosted by the MTC, small contingents of 80-100 Marines conducted three coordinated exercises off base.

The exercises, known as Rural Urban Training, are designed to enhance the 22nd MEU’s capability to conduct operations in a realistic urban environment.

Incorporated in this training are four scenario-driven Situational Training Exercises conducted in a variety of settings in central Virginia. The sites chosen for training replicate areas the 22nd MEU might operate in while deployed. These areas include “downtown,” “industrial” and “village” characteristics

The RUT program, mandated by the Secretary of Defense, has been in existence for over 20 years and is closely coordinated with and approved by city, county, state and federal agencies.

Coordination within the USMC includes approvals and oversight from the commanding general II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C., and the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps worked closely with many City of Richmond departments and city officials from outlying communities while planning and executing this training.

The 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit is a scalable, multipurpose force of more than 2,200 Marines and sailors. Commanded by Col. Gareth F. Brandl, it consists of its Ground Combat Element, Battalion Landing Team 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment; Aviation Combat Element, Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 263 (Reinforced); Logistics Combat Element, Combat Logistics Battalion 22; and its Command Element.

Virginia Commonwealth ChalleNGe Program recognized for excellence at 2008 conference

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

The Virginia Commonwealth ChalleNGe Program received the “Excellence in Responsible Citizenship Award” Jan. 9 at the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program Conference in Dallas.

“This is a combination of teamwork between teachers, field trip coordinators and counselors,” said Thomas Early, director of the Virginia Commonwealth ChalleNGe Program. “This is a result of everyone pitching in together.”

According to the award citation, the winner in this category facilitated an active student government model and used actual voting machines for elections and citizenship classes.

The program also provided insightful opportunities for its cadets to gain knowledge and experience regarding U.S. Government structure and processes, along with individual rights and responsibilities at the local, state and national levels.

The winning program provides exposure to the U.S., state and local government structure. It exercises a viable student government model and provides field trips to the state and our national capitol. Cadets from the local area who are eligible to vote are transported to local polling locations to cast their official ballots during local elections after discussion of local issues.

The Commonwealth ChalleNGe Program works with 16-19 year old “at-risk” youth to develop values, skills, education and self-discipline in their lives. The program is located at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach and serves youth

from the entire state of Virginia. The program is based on eight core components that enable youth to focus and make positive improvements during their five and half month residential journey toward graduation. This program also gives cadets the opportunity to attain the GED.

The mission of Commonwealth ChalleNGe is to intervene in the life of at-risk youth by providing the values, skills, education and self-discipline needed to produce responsible, productive citizens, and to do so in a highly disciplined atmosphere.

More than 3,000 students have graduated from the Commonwealth ChalleNGe since 1994, according to Early. After graduation, cadets enter a 12 month post-residential phase. During this time graduates meet regularly with a mentor from their community and strive toward goals they developed while in residence. Successful graduates of Commonwealth ChalleNGe are expected to enter employment, continue their education, or enter the military.

The cadets perform service to the community in many organizations, for example: Virginia Beach Convention Center, SPCA, NAS Oceana Commissary and the Virginia Aquarium. They are also called upon to assist with local events such as Marathons, Adopt a Highway, and parades.

Commonwealth ChalleNGe has two classes a year, one in January and one in June. If you would like to learn more information about the program or would like to visit please contact the admission counselors at 757-491-5932-ext. 231/235 or visit their website at www.ngycp.org/state/va.

Va. Guard senior officer assignments announced

From Staff Reports

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia announced on Feb. 6 several senior officer assignments for the Virginia Army National Guard. “Each of these officers brings a wealth of knowledge to their new assignment and I am confident that each one of these officers will continue to excel in their new assignment,” Newman said.

Officer	Position	Date
Col. Stephen L. Huxtable	Assistant Adjutant General (Army)	April 15, 2009
Col. Robert L. Tucker Jr.	Joint Task Force Commander	Feb. 1, 2009
Col. Fred C. Bolton	Fire Support Coordinator, 29th Infantry Division	May 1, 2009
Col. Marie M. Mahoney	Commander, 183rd Regional Training Institute	July 1, 2009
Col. John K. McGrew	Commander, Information Operations Support Command	May 1, 2009
Lt. Col. Walter L. Mercer	Resident, U.S. Army War College	July 1, 2009
Col. Edward R. Morgan	Director of Strategic Plans & Initiatives, Joint Force Headquarters- Virginia	July 1, 2009
Col. William J. O’Neill	Officer in Charge, Joint Reserve Unit, U.S. Joint Forces Command	July 1, 2009
Col. Blake C. Ortner	Commander, 116th Brigade Combat Team	June 27, 2009
Col. William R. Phillips II	Special Project Officer, Joint Force Headquarters- Virginia	June 27, 2009
Lt. Col. William J. Coffin Deputy	Commander, 116th Brigade Combat Team	June 27, 2009

Virginia National Guard supports 56th inauguration

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

More than 1,400 Virginia Guard personnel were on duty to support the 56th Presidential Inauguration Jan. 20, with some being very visible and others working behind the scenes and ready to respond. While there were no serious incidents that required a response from Virginia Army Guard, Air Guard and Virginia Defense Force, the mission helped the Guard improve their ability to respond to possible support requests in the future.

Virginia Guard forces took part in three different support missions in Washington D.C and Virginia. Approximately 500 Soldiers and Airmen were attached to the D.C. National Guard to assist with security operations and provide specialized units for possible response to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high explosive incidents. Approximately 200 Soldiers and Airmen were on duty as Joint Task Force 29, a headquarters element prepared to command further emergency response forces if such forces had been necessary to assist with responding to any major event in the National Capitol Region outside the scope of planned Inauguration activities. Approximately 730 Soldiers and Airmen and members of the Virginia Defense Force were on duty in Virginia and prepared to assist the Virginia Department of Emergency Management respond if there was an event in the DC area that required additional forces or evacuation.

“Our mission execution went very well,” said Col. Rob McMillin, operations officer for the Virginia National Guard. “These missions



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the Lynchburg-based 1st Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team are sworn in as District of Columbia special police Jan. 18 at the National Guard Armory in Washington D.C.

gave us the chance to exercise several contingency plans and helped us find problems we wouldn't have identified unless we had responded to a medium or large scale event. From here we will modify our existing plans based on our lessons learned, and we will exercise them again during training events we have planned later this year.”

The most visible Virginia Guard presence was augmenting security along the Inauguration parade route. As spectators attending



Photo by 2nd Lt. Scott E. Campbell, 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment

Soldiers of the 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment mount up and move out from Portsmouth Jan. 19 in support of the Presidential Inauguration.

the parade entered security checkpoints, the first people they saw were Soldiers from the Virginia Guard. Soldiers from the Lynchburg-based 1st Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team assisted the Secret Service with the operation of security checkpoints by beginning the initial screening process and helping keep count of people as they entered the parade route area. Additional Soldiers were on standby as a quick reaction force.

After those Soldiers in plain sight, hundreds of Soldiers were on standby in the event of any sort of attack or other incident.

The Virginia Guard deployed over 200 Soldiers and Airmen of the CERF to Fort Belvoir to stand by during the inauguration.

The CERF, which stands for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, high yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force, is a specialized unit made up of Army and Air Guard units. The CERF is trained, staffed and equipped to support hasty decontamination, urban search and extraction and hasty medical evaluation.

The Virginia Guard's Fort Pickett-based 34th Civil Support Team deployed to the nation's capital in support of the approximately 100-person Task Force CBRN. During the four-day operation, the 16 Soldiers and two Airmen of the 34th CST accompanied CSTs from D.C. and Maryland to provide high-tech sensor and analysis support in case of a chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear or high yield explosive attack to the inauguration and events around the city.

In Virginia, approximately 400 Soldiers from the Winchester-based 3rd Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team staffed preplanned evacuation points that would have been put into operation in the event citizens needed to be evacuated from the National Capitol Region. At Fort A.P. Hill, approximately 160 Soldiers from the Virginia Beach-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment were on standby as a rapid response force.

The Virginia Guard also had helicopter



Photo by Sgt. John Slosser, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the 116th Brigade Combat Team man a checkpoint in Washington, D.C., during the 2009 Presidential Inauguration.

crews from the Sandston-based 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation on standby with the capability to provide aviation support with hoist and aerial medical evacuation capabilities. Soldiers from the Fort Pickett-based 183rd Regional Training Institute were ready to receive additional forces if they

were called to duty, and approximately 130 Soldiers and Airmen providing command and control and logistics support were on duty in Staunton, Richmond, Sandston and Fort Pickett. Virginia Defense Force personnel were also on prepared and ready to provide bus escort security if needed.



Photo by Sgt. Johnathan Hoggatt, 3rd Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team

A Soldiers from D Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team get positioned in the Washington metro area the morning of Jan. 20. Soldiers from the battalion were staged at various locations throughout the region to support a possible evacuation.