

The Office of the Adjutant General
State of Virginia
ATTN: Public Affairs Office
Bldg. 316 - Fort Pickett
Blackstone, Virginia, 23824

Mail to:

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Photo by Spc. Eddie Siguenza, 49th Military Police Brigade Public Affairs

Spc. Derek Schreiner monitors a traffic control point in Baghdad with the help of Iraqi Police and other members of the Virginia Guard's 229th Military Police Company. Schreiner and the 229th were positioned near a voting site to help Iraqi Police for the March 7 general election.



Virginia
GuardPost

SERVING THE ARMY & AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF VIRGINIA

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overseas
training**

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FROM THE TOP



Visit to Iraq offers up first hand view of Virginia National Guard's positive impact

In April I was able to visit Iraq with Command Sgt. Maj. Carl Holcomb, our state command sergeant major, and see first hand the great work our Virginia Army National Guard Soldiers are doing in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While the three organizations we visited have different missions, all of them are making a positive impact in providing security to United States and Coalition Forces and in helping promote the ideals of freedom and democracy to the people of Iraq.

Our first stop was in Kuwait where we were able to meet with the Soldiers from the 134th Chaplain Support Team as they prepared to return to Virginia. The two chaplains and two chaplain assistants spent almost a year providing religious services counseling and other chaplain support in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Of particular interest to me was the story of Chaplain Assistant Spc. Lennie Dunlop. She told me about the look of hope she saw on the faces of young girls when she visited a school in Afghanistan to deliver donated supplies. These young girls were not used to seeing a woman in a position of strength and responsibility, and her professionalism and strong military bearing set a positive example for the girls that will last far longer than the pens and pencils she handed out.

Our next stop was in Baghdad to visit the 229th Military Police Company. The Soldiers of the 229th have been making great strides in training local police and are seeing the Iraqis step up more and more each day. In addition to the training mission, the Soldiers of the 229th are also providing protective service details, and they most recently provided route security during Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Iraq.

After visiting with the senior leaders of the unit, I was able to capture some of their



Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr.

issues and concerns and then share those with senior general officers in the theatre to help address them and find solutions.

I could not be more proud of the great work these Soldiers are doing as they make history by changing a country and giving the people of Iraq a chance to live free instead of living under fear and oppression.

The final stop on the tour was Talil to visit the 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment. We had the great fortune to attend the unit's transfer of authority ceremony and also see the combat patch ceremony where the Soldiers of the battalion placed the patch of the historic 29th Infantry Division on the right shoulders.

Living conditions in Talil are

challenging, but the morale of the unit is high. Gone are the days of Soldiers who just joined the Guard for the college money and were hesitant about answering our nation's call to duty.

The Soldiers of 1st Battalion were able to prepare for their mission in less than 70 days, and the unit had very few Soldiers assigned to the unit that weren't able to step up when the battalion received its mobilization order. That is a significant accomplishment that shows the kind of dedication that we find throughout not just Virginia, but in National Guard units across the country.

The battalion is tasked with providing convoy security, and their grueling trips that sometimes last up to eight hours are still very dangerous. But I am confident that the great training these Soldiers received and their outstanding officer and NCO leadership will help ensure the unit's success.

The Louisiana Guard's 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team is the higher headquarters for the battalion, and they are treating Virginia Soldiers as their own. This example of cross-leveling units with other states is something we will continue to do whether it is for federal duty in Iraq or Afghanistan or during disaster relief or other emergency response operations in the United States.

Because we all train to the same standards, the Guard is able to task organize quickly and effectively to accomplish the mission. We are able to do this almost seamlessly, and it will continue to be the way we do business in the future.

I could not be more proud of the great work these Soldiers are doing as they make history by changing a country and giving the people of Iraq a chance to live free instead of living under fear and oppression.

News Briefs

VDF hosts annual Commanders Conference

The Virginia Defense Force held its annual Commanders Conference on March 6-7 at Fort Pickett. About 150 senior officers and noncommissioned officers attended as division and brigade commanders detailed the direction of the VDF for the upcoming year.

Maj. Gen. John D. Taylor, VDF Commander, reflected on the gains made in 2009 in recruitment and emphasized the need for continued leadership to "set the standard" for the upcoming year. He challenged those present to raise, even further, the professionalism of the VDF through National Incident Management Systems training and Military Emergency Management Specialist qualification.

Brig. Gen., Stephen L. Huxtable, Assistant Adjutant General of Virginia, cited the increased role the VDF plays in the commonwealth given

the continued mobilizations of the Virginia National Guard in support of the War on Terror. He also recognized the VDF for its increased professionalism in its alignment of promotion standards with that of the VNG and expressed his appreciation for the VDF support of the VNG during the recent snow storms in the Commonwealth.

Col. Thomas A. Smith, VDF G-3, outlined the resource and skill requirements needed by the VDF in support of its emergency response mission. Specifically, he noted the need to develop three Incident Management Assistance Teams per brigade, as well as two Armory Coordinating Teams. Further, he outlined the communication mission of the VDF between JOC and field teams. Smith reiterated the NIMS training requirements to fulfill the mission.

Brigade commanders presented their plans for achieving the 2010 recruiting goals which include obtaining a yearend force of 1,200 personnel with 60% sourced from prior

service personnel and 40% sourced from civilian personnel. Other topics covered during the conference included workers compensation processes, emergency operations personnel requirements and training initiatives.

Warrant Officer Candidate School dedicates new building

The 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute dedicated a new home for its Warrant Officer Candidate School April 17 at Fort Pickett.

Building 1694 was recently renovated to fit the school's needs for phase II of WOCS. Since the renovation, the facility is used primarily to house offices for the Warrant Officer Candidate's cadre, student classrooms and overnight quarters for 20 male and six female WOCs.

In addition, overnight facilities are provided for

a male or female overnight Training, Advising, and Counseling officer to supervise the WOCs. The renovation also included updating the heating and cooling systems.

Representatives from the Army's Warrant Officer Candidate School at Fort Rucker attended the ceremony to perform an accreditation of the Virginia WOCS and facilities.

The facility is also used for the Pre-WOC course taught at Fort Pickett. Virginia is one of two states in the country to run a quarterly formal PWOCs to screen prospective applicants interested in becoming warrant officers.

During non-WOCS/PWOC cycles, the classrooms are available for other uses for the RTI.

The building will also be used as a reserve component WOCS and PWOC training venue. The future vision is to host a satellite Warrant Officer Staff Course and possibly a Warrant Officer Senior Staff Course.

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
80	529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion	Fort Hood, Texas	Virginia Beach
400	1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment	Iraq	Lynchburg
150	229th Military Police Company	Iraq	Virginia Beach
5	134th Chaplain Support Team	Southwest Asia	Fort Pickett
18	Det. 2, Co B, 777th Aviation Support Battalion	Kosovo	Sandston
17	Det. 26, Operational Support Airlift Command	Southwest Asia	Sandston
20	192nd Maintenance Group	Saudi Arabia	Langley Air Force Base
25	192nd Intelligence Squadron	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Langley Air Force Base
75	Various Virginia Army Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Various Locations
10	Various Virginia Air Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Various Locations

* All listings for numbers of Soldiers/Airmen are approximate as of *May 5, 2010*

Freedom Salute honors 276th Engineer Battalion

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Nearly 200 Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the Petersburg-based 276th Engineer Battalion gathered April 18 at the Richmond Marriott Hotel to conduct a Freedom Salute in honor of the unit's service in Afghanistan from February to November 2009.

"Because of your training, your leadership and most importantly, due to the commitment you showed during this yearlong deployment, you accomplished the mission, you set great standards for future units to follow," said Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. "This weekend is important for Soldiers and their families. Not only do we recognize the Soldiers for their service, but we recognize the families for the service they rendered to the commonwealth by keeping the home fires burning and allowing their Soldiers to do the job they are trained to do."

During the deployment, the 276th provided command and control, logistics and maintenance support for three National Guard and an active Army engineer company. The battalion, also known as Task Force Pirate, conducted a variety of missions to include route clearance patrols, route security, route reconnaissance, combat logistics patrols, area clearance and recovery operations as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The battalion was awarded a Valorous Unit Award for its actions in combat, the second time the unit has earned the award. The unit also earned the VUA and a Meritorious Unit Commendation for its service in Iraq in 2004-2005, and it is the only Virginia Guard battalion to have two VUAs.

It is the most decorated battalion in the Virginia Guard since the end of World War II.

"On behalf of Governor Bob McDonnell, thank you," said Secretary of Public Safety Marla Decker. "Thank you for your commitment to the nation and your commonwealth, to your family and friends and thank you for your service. We can't be any prouder of our citizen Soldiers than we are today."

Both the Headquarters Support Company and Forward Support Company will receive the Combat Action Company Streamer for having more than 65% of their assigned personnel receive the Combat Action Badge.

The battalion will also receive the Combat Action Battalion Streamer for more than 65% of the assigned personnel receiving their Combat Action Badge. The Combat Action Badge provides special recognition to Soldiers who personally engage the enemy or are engaged by the enemy during combat operations.

The Freedom Salute Campaign is one of the largest Army National Guard recognition endeavors in history, designed to publicly acknowledge Army Guard Soldiers and those who



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Spc. Betsy Lawrie shakes hands with Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., at the Freedom Salute April 18 in Richmond while her husband Staff Sgt. Zachary Lawrie looks on. Both Soldiers deployed with the 276th Engineer Battalion.

supported them during the President's call to duty for Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

The Freedom Salute recognized the Soldiers, their families, employers and organizations that contributed significantly to supporting the unit during its deployment.

During the deployment, the 276th Engineer Battalion was comprised of two companies from Virginia: the Headquarters Support Company and Forward Support Company. Both Virginia companies were made up of Soldiers from all over the state, including Richmond/Petersburg, the Hampton Roads area and Northern Virginia. Approximately 20 Soldiers from Southwest Virginia deployed with the 276th Engineers.

While mobilized, route clearance platoons from the Task Force Pirate cleared more than 70,000 kilometers of roads while conducting more than 1,070 missions. They were responsible for removing over 15,000 pounds of explosive hazards from Afghanistan.

Soldiers from the battalion also trained French soldiers and members of the Afghan National Army Corps on route clearance operations and provided support to the second-ever Afghan National Elections. Route clearance platoons provided safe routes for the transport of election officials, election security forces, election materials and completed ballots.

Three Virginia Guard Soldiers were wounded in action, but their injuries did not require medical evacuation outside of Afghanistan and they were returned to duty.

No Virginia Guard Soldiers assigned to the unit were killed in action.

The battalion headquarters provided command and control, logistics and maintenance support for five engineer companies: the 951st Engineer Company from the Wisconsin National Guard, the 1431st Engineer Company from the Michigan National Guard, the 235th Engineer Company from the California National Guard, the 541st Engineer Company, an active duty unit from Germany. The 41st Route Clearance Company from Fort Reilly, Kan., replaced the 541st Engineer Company in August 2009.



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On the Cover



The Virginia National Guard's Virginia Beach-based 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group conducted a departure ceremony March 23 at the Sands Armory in Virginia Beach to mark the official start of the unit's federal active duty service. (Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs)

The Adjutant General

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr.

Chief of Public Affairs

Maj. Cotton Puryear
cotton.puryear@us.army.mil

Army Guard Public Affairs Officer

Capt. Matt Nowak
matthew.nowak@us.army.mil

Air Guard Public Affairs Officer

Lt. Col. Debbie Magaldi
deborah.magaldi@ang.af.mil

GuardPost Editor

Sgt. 1st Class A.J. Coyne
andrew.coyne@us.army.mil

Public Affairs Staff

Sgt. Terra Gatti
Sgt. Andrew H. Owen

Joint Staff Public Affairs Office

1100 Bank Street, 3rd Floor
Richmond, VA 23219
1-888-483-2682 ext. 8

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529th CSSB departs for overseas training

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard's Virginia Beach-based 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group conducted a departure ceremony March 23 at the Sands Armory in Virginia Beach to mark the official start of the unit's federal active duty service. Approximately 80 Soldiers will operate as a command and control headquarters with the mission of planning and executing combat sustainment support for U.S. and coalition forces. The U. S. Army uses the term "sustainment" to describe a wide range of logistics support such as maintenance, food service, fueling, personnel and cargo transportation and medical support.

"We will be doing traditional command and control sustainment operations to support the warfighters in Afghanistan, but we will also be thinking outside the box," said Lt. Col. Michelle Rose, commander of the 529th. She stressed that Soldiers in the unit will have to stay flexible in order to accomplish their mission in the tough terrain and current support infrastructure in Afghanistan.

"We are so proud of our citizen Soldiers and the job you are about to do and the time you are about to spend away from your family and friends, your jobs and leaving your lives here at home to go over and do a very important job in Afghanistan," said Virginia Secretary of Public Safety Marla Decker.

"You have chosen to take a different path," said Maj. Gen. Robert. B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. "Others in our society say they will let the world take them by the hand and walk them down the road, but the Soldiers of the 529th have said they want to make a difference in the world. It is a terrific honor for me to stand with each one of you today and say thank you."

Rose will be the first female officer in the Virginia Army National Guard to command a battalion in a combat zone. Capt. Lindsey Hodgkins will be the first female to command a company in a combat zone when she deploys as the commander of the 529th's headquarters company.

"I am humbled and honored to be recognized as the first female officer in the Virginia National Guard to command a battalion in combat," Rose said. "But I can assure you that I am not the one who makes this unit tick. It is the Soldiers ... they are the ones who make things happen, and they are the ones who bring motivation and experience to the table. They will drive this battalion to be successful in whatever challenges come our way."

This is the first mobilization for the 529th because it is a new unit for the Virginia National Guard, and a combat sustainment support battalion is a new organization for



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

Spc. John Butler of the 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion hugs his daughters following the unit's departure ceremony March 23 in Virginia Beach.

the U. S. Army. The unit was formed in December 2006 and is under the command of the Virginia Beach-based 329th Regional Support Group.

"This deployment and this ceremony is not just about those of us that wear this uniform," Rose said. "It is about the moms and dads, the husbands and the wives, the sons, the daughters, the cousins and coworkers out in the audience today who support those fine troops. You have brought us to this point of being as prepared as we can to successfully complete our mission, and our success not only depends on the expertise of the of the leaders of this battalion but on the family and community support we have right here in the commonwealth of Virginia."



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Family members cheer for Soldiers of the 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion as they board the bus to the airport for their flight to Fort Hood.

183rd RTI teaches Army Combatives

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

National Guard Soldiers and Reservists from across the country completed the Modern Army Combatives, skill level one certification course at the Blackstone Armory April 16. The 39 Soldiers were taught the basics of hand-to-hand combat by the instructors from the Fort Pickett-based 1st Battalion, 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute.

The five-day class is designed to teach the Soldiers the basics of army combat. The course focused on styles of mixed martial-arts with many of the moves based on Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, which highlights grappling and especially ground-fighting techniques with the goal of gaining a dominant position using joint locks and choke holds to force an opponent to submit or be forced unconscious.

"Level one combatives is the basics, the building blocks," said Staff Sgt. Matthew Stemmler, an instructor with the 183rd who recently took home the first-place title for the lightweight division in the 2010 Army National Guard Combatives Tournament at Fort Benning, Ga. "We teach them three fundamental drills. Stuff that if they were ever in a situation in Iraq, or Afghanistan or wherever, that they can utilize to get to a better position and either get away, hold the enemy there until their battle buddies can arrive, or just finish the

fight themselves."

Soldiers in the field are often put into situations in Iraq and Afghanistan where they may not be able to use their rifles or are unable to reach their sidearm in time to stop an enemy. This is one of the many reasons the Chief of Staff of the Army has placed special emphasis on this kind of instruction and has made it a common warrior task.

"It is a skill that every Soldier needs," emphasized Stemmler, a veteran of multiple combat tours. "In Iraq or Afghanistan when you clear a room everyone thinks they can draw their weapon, when the reality is you're not always going to have that time."

"Before you know it, your hands are going to be on the enemy, or their hands are going to be on you and you need to know how to react. That's why level one teaches the basics, so if I clear a room and he tackles me, and he's on top of me, now I know how to get out of that."

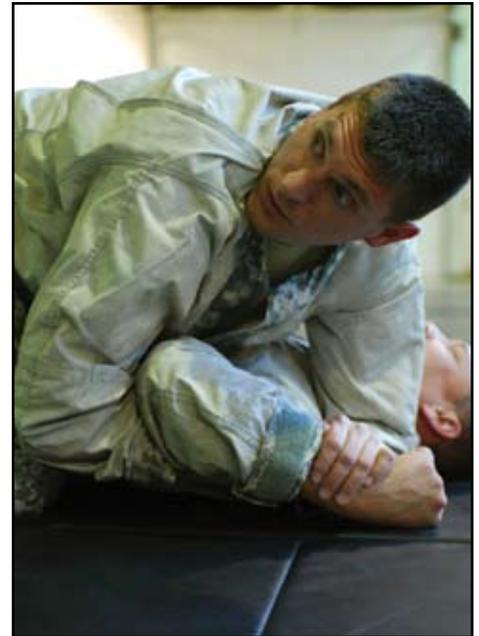
The students, many from the Virginia Guard's 116th Brigade Combat Team, learned that the size of the fighter and how strong the opponent is does not always guarantee success. They learned that correct form and proper techniques are just as important as size and strength.

"It teaches you to learn the technique as opposed to strength," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert J. Homer, course manager. "Strength doesn't always win fights. It's technique...

Through the program it shows if you have good technique, strength won't always win."

Several Soldiers who have been trying to get started in the rapidly growing popular sport of MMA on the civilian side were given an edge on their competitors by learning skills they may have had trouble acquiring in the civilian sector.

"I'd been trying to learn how to



Spc. Jim Rhodes, a Michigan National Guard Soldier, looks to his instructor for assurance that he is properly executing the arm bar he is applying to Staff Sgt. Osbardo Hecha, an Ohio Guardsman, during the final testing of Army Combatives level one training.

grapple for several months now and the gym I go to, the guys have been doing it for several years, so they don't really remember how to explain it anymore," said Spc. Bryan Mullins, a student from the Gate City-based 1030th Transportation Company who attended the course with his father. "Coming to this class helped me a lot to learn the steps and the fundamentals of the moves."

This class was a good representation of a common theme reflected in today's National Guard and that is the concept of family involvement. In addition to the father and son, there was also a husband and wife enrolled in the course together and a brother of one of the instructor's, Spc. Josh Stemmler, was also a student in the course.

"A lot of time the only thing people hear is the bad stuff and then when they see a husband and a wife or father and son in the same unit, they'll say, 'there's got to be something good'," said Master Sgt. Robert Mullins, 1030th Transportation Company. "His brother joined and no one twisted his arm."

Except in the case of Modern Army Combatives, where someone probably did.



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

Master Sgt. Robert Mullins applies a choke hold to his son, Spc. Bryan Mullins during the final testing at the Modern Army Combatives Program certification level one training at the Blackstone Armory in Blackstone, Va., April 16.

Virginia Soldier wins championship at Guard Combatives Tournament

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

In a fight that lasted barely a minute, Staff Sgt. Matt Stemmler of the Virginia National Guard defeated Staff Sgt. Justin Gottke of the Ohio National Guard March 28 to win the lightweight class championship at the 2010 Army National Guard Combatives Tournament at Fort Benning, Ga.

Gottke rushed in to try to catch Stemmler off guard and take him out quickly, but to no avail. The Virginian had been studying his opponent all morning and had him pegged dead to rights, and finished off his competitor with a devastating guillotine choke at 1:03 in the first round of the match.

"I pretty much knew exactly what he was going to do," said Stemmler. "I could tell by his stance and even by watching his brother compete that he was probably a wrestler and was going to shoot down at me, and sure enough he did right away. I just capitalized."

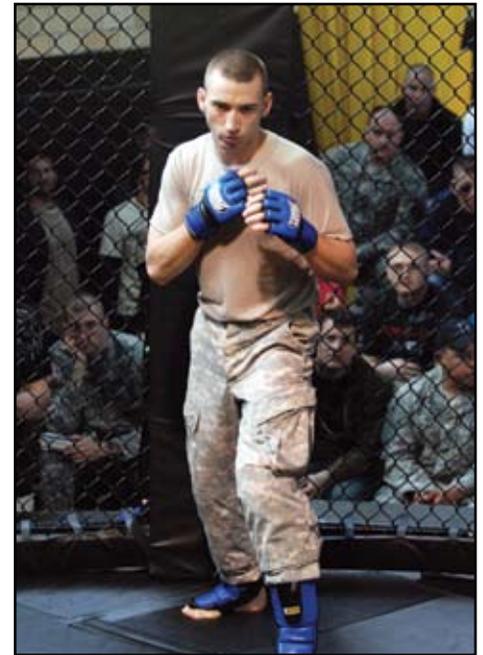
Following several attempts to gain position by both competitors, Stemmler

hoisted his opponent off the ground and slammed him to the mat of the cage. He was then able to lock Gottke into the guillotine from the guard position and force the Ohio Soldier to tap out within six seconds of executing the finishing move.

Stemmler, a Stafford resident and an instructor at the Blackstone-based 1st Battalion, 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute, advanced to the finals by defeating three other National Guard Soldiers in the tournament the day prior and had spent the tournament focusing on grappling techniques to secure his victories.

During the first two matches the Soldiers were limited to strictly grappling, progressing to body blows and open-hand strikes to the face during the semi-finals. The finals, which were held in the cage, allowed the Soldiers to utilize all the tools in their repertoire including closed-fist strikes to the face and kicks to the body.

Although the majority of the brief match was spent on the floor grappling, Stemmler had hoped to dominate the bout on his toes in a match of fists with the new rules brought on by the final match.



Staff Sgt. Matthew Stemmler, a Virginia Guardsman, awaits the bell to mark the beginning of the lightweight division championship match.

"Today I definitely was trying to work on my stand up a lot because I actually wanted to stand up and try and knock him out," he said. "The game plan was totally different than yesterday. Yesterday was all grappling."

Stemmler returned to Virginia as an undefeated fighter in the world of competitive Army Combatives with a flawless 4-0 record.

Stemmler hopes to generate more interest in the program in his home state to be able to return to Georgia next year with a larger team to compete in the tournament, but is quick to remind prospective fighters that it takes a lot of training and perseverance to be proficient.

"Definitely try to constantly train, and try to advance, but also try to find someplace outside of the Army where you can train and apply your skills and learn new skills because a lot of times, especially with combatives level one, it just teaches the basics and it builds on the higher levels you get," according to the lightweight champ.

More than 90 Soldiers from 25 states showed up at the third annual event to try to be the best mixed-martial arts fighter in the Army Guard. The event allows both male and female Soldiers to compete against each other vying for the top spot in their respective weight classes.



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

Sgt. 1st Class Austin Randolph holds up the arm of Staff Sgt. Matthew Stemmler after winning the lightweight championship at the Army National Guard Combatives Tournament at Fort Benning, Ga. March 28. Stemmler was undefeated through all four matches he fought in the tournament.

Lynchburg Soldiers ready for deployment to Iraq

By Capt. Matt Nowak
Virginia Army Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers from the Lynchburg-based 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Brigade Combat Team were declared ready for combat operations during "Tiger Day" festivities held March 5 at Camp Shelby, Miss. The battalion will deploy to Iraq with the Louisiana National Guard's 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team for a yearlong security force mission.

"Tiger Day" included a casing ceremony

to signify the units' readiness to shift into conducting combat operations in Iraq. The battalion will join the Louisiana National Guard's 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which will deploy to Iraq for a yearlong security force mission.

"The 1st Battalion was called on late to mobilize with the 256th Brigade. Through their leadership, hard work and determination of all of the soldiers and families, they were able to get fully prepared for the mission ahead," said Assistant Adjutant General for the Army,

Brig. Gen. Stephen Huxtable, who made the trip to Mississippi with State Command Sgt. Maj. Carl Holcomb.

"The 256th had almost a year to train for this deployment. We were alerted only a couple months before we reported to Camp Shelby," said Lt. Col. Scott Smith, commander of the 1-116th. "However, we caught up to the required training and were able to meet all the pre-deployment standards. This shows the high quality of our Soldiers and the state of readiness they were in prior to the mobilization."

Gov. McDonnell signs military, veterans-related legislation

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell signed 27 pieces of military and veterans-related legislation April 29, including several that impact the Virginia National Guard. Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, joined the governor on the South Portico of the Virginia Capitol along with Paul Galanti, Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services, Delegate Kirk Cox (R-Colonial Heights), along with other bill patrons and veterans

"We are very appreciative of the efforts Governor McDonnell has made to support the military and veterans in Virginia," Newman said. "Along with the legislation passed by the General Assembly signed by the governor, we are also very thankful for the support the Virginia Guard received for the Tuition Assistance Program and Commonwealth ChalleNGe."

The General Assembly voted to fund the Virginia Guard Tuition Assistance Program at a cost of \$3.1 million for each year for the next two years. While the General Assembly cut funding for the ChalleNGe program during the regular session, McDonnell proposed an amendment to the biennial budget to restore the funding that was passed by the General Assembly in special session.

Also on hand for the signing event were State Senator Mark Herring and Delegate John Cosgrove, co-chairs of the Guard Caucus in the General Assembly. "I want to thank the leaders of the caucus committees, Senator Mark Herring and Delegate John Cosgrove for their continued support," Newman said. "The members of the Caucus and other key leaders have worked tirelessly in very visible ways as well as behind the scenes to move forward legislation supporting the Virginia Guard."

The governor signed the following bills that have direct impact on the Virginia National Guard:

- Virginia Military Family Relief Fund (HB 1118/SB 619) (Stolle/Herring) - allows individuals who receive payments from the Virginia Military Family Relief Fund to subtract them from their federal adjustable gross income when calculating their Virginia taxable income, for taxable years beginning on and after



Photos by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Gov. Bob McDonnell highlighted 27 pieces of legislation, signaling his commitment to make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in America in a signing ceremony April 29, 2010.

January 1, 2010.

- Reemployment rights of members Virginia National Guard, State Defense Force, or naval militia (SB349) (Hanger)- extends the period in which a member of the Virginia National Guard, Virginia State Defense Force, or naval militia is required to apply for reinstatement in his former job to 90 days following his release from duty or from hospitalization following release, if the length of the member's absence by reason of service in the uniformed services exceeds 180 days. If the duration of his absence does not exceed 180 days, such notice must be given within 14 days, which is the current period allowed in all instances regardless of the duration of the absence.

- Insurance of Virginia National Guard if called to active duty by Governor (HB1233 / SB613) (Miller, Paula/Wampler)- allows a member of the Virginia National Guard called to state active duty by the Governor to continue his health care coverage, life insurance and long-term care insurance, at the member's expense.

203d RED HORSE, family members honor lives lost in March 2001

By Lt. Col. Deb Magaldi
Virginia Air Guard Public Affairs

Current and former 203d RED HORSE Squadron Airmen, family members and Virginia Air Guard leaders gathered for a memorial service recently to remember the 18 Virginia Air Guardsmen and three Florida Army Guardsmen who died in a military aviation crash on March 3, 2001.

On that day, 18 members of the 203d, based in Virginia Beach, and three Florida aviators from Detachment 1 of the 171st Aviation Battalion, died in a tragic plane crash, as the 203d members were returning home after completing a two-week, military construction project at Hurlburt Field, Fla. All 21 lives on board the C-23 Sherpa, a military transport aircraft, were lost when the aircraft crashed in a field near Unadilla, Ga.

The March 21 memorial service started

with current and former unit members moving onto the memorial or reflection garden that many of the 203d members helped to build during the year following the tragedy. The RED HORSEMEN and guests formed a horseshoe-shaped column around the large granite boulder that bears the names of those that perished.

A group of about three dozen family members and relatives of those who died were then escorted to the center of the memorial garden where they were flanked by unit members.

The ceremony began with 203d RHS Commander, Lt Col Pete Garner, welcoming the family members and guests. He noted that this tribute marked nine years since that day “forever etched into our memories when the nation lost 21 skilled warriors” and the 203d community lost 18 sons, fathers, husbands, fellow HORSEMEN and friends.

“The C-23 crash was and still is the worst peacetime aviation disaster in the history of the National Guard, and the worst loss of life in the Virginia National Guard since World War II,” Garner continued. “But we are not here to mourn the past, we are here to honor and recognize the men for which this memorial was built – for those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.”

“We take time each year to honor these fallen heroes, and what it means to be citizen Airmen and Soldiers,” he stated. “We do not take this commitment lightly, because we know that there is a price to pay for the freedoms that we enjoy in this great Nation – freedoms that we often take for granted. May we never forget the sacrifice of those that went before us.”

As a unit with many new, young faces in its ranks, Garner took a moment to address the importance of holding the memorial service during drill weekend “so old and new members can share the memorial and reflect on the meaning of the garden and its many individual components. The trees, concrete,



A bugler plays “Taps” March 21 in honor of the 21 Virginia and Florida Airmen killed nine years earlier.

horses, Minuteman statue – all you see around us – were placed in this field. It is part of our proud history and our rich heritage. It is a part of who we are.”

He ended asking those gathered to keep the 203d RHS in their thoughts and prayers as the unit prepares for its third deployment to Southwest Asia.

Following the colonel’s tribute, the RED HORSE Honor Guard laid a wreath at the foot of the granite monument and the bugler played Taps. The Invocation was said by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Tom Kirles, 192d Fighter Wing.

The memorial service culminated a four-day drill period for the 203d and members of its sister unit, the 202nd RHS, Florida Air National Guard, during which the units completed the first phase of a two-part Operational Readiness Inspection. The second half of the inspection will take place during the latter half of April.

On March 3, the unit observed a moment of silence to honor and remember the lives of those, who perished nine years ago.

RED HORSE units are a rapid-response, Air Force heavy civil engineering force capable of doing airfield runway repair, performing the full range of construction activities, and setting up operational military bases in undeveloped areas.



Photos by Lt. Col. Deb Magaldi Virginia Air Guard Public Affairs

At the center of the memorial garden sits a 7,000-pound, black granite boulder, with the names of the 21 National Guard men etched into its one polished surface.

183rd RTI helps Soldiers to keep on truckin'

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers from across the nation graduated from the 88M10 Reclassification Course March 20 at Fort Pickett taught by the Soldier-instructors from the Virginia Guard's 2nd Battalion, 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute.

The 18 students completed the two-week second phase of the Army course designed to transform Soldiers who have already completed their basic training and advanced individual training and held other duty positions. With the completion of the course, the Soldiers are awarded the military occupational specialty of 88M, or motor transport operator.

"What we do is take Soldiers who have already been through AIT, and we're reclassifying them as [truck drivers]," said Sgt. 1st Class Charles Flynn, a senior instructor at the RTI. "So then when they go back to their unit they can have them go through driver's training and license them on whatever trucks they have in their unit."

During the first phase of the course students focus on accident avoidance and basic driving courses leading up to driving 5-ton trucks on the roads and through an improvised explosive device reaction lane.

"We take them through an IED range; we teach them some combat maneuvers

that you would do in a convoy," said Flynn. "We do take them out on a 120-mile convoy. We take them out to the ranges and show them what the trucks are capable of doing. We do inclines; we take them through the mud, all kinds of different scenarios."

After the Soldiers graduate the first phase, many students enter the second phase consecutively to lessen time away from their units and civilian jobs throughout the year, according to Flynn.

Phase two begins with several days of classroom time where Soldiers focus on the fundamentals before moving to the training area at the Fort Pickett flight line where they practice driving the M915-A3 semi-truck and trailer.

"We let them drive a little bit and back up [the trucks] before they take them out on the roads," said Staff Sgt. James Chalmers, an 88M instructor.

In the two weeks the Soldiers spend in phase two, they learn how to drive the M915s, focus on long-haul driving (the students log around 500 miles driving around post and on I-95 and I-85). The students are also trained to drive and operate the heavy expanded mobility tactical truck palletized loading systems.

"We teach them how to load and unload the flat-rack on to the truck and on to the trailer," noted Flynn. "We take the 915s on a 200-mile convoy and it gets them used

to [moving] in and out of traffic with a 40-foot trailer. You name it; we do it with these trucks."

With some artillery units in recent history being restructured into transportation units, many Soldiers are becoming reclassified to truck drivers to ensure they still have a role in the Army.

"When we restructured, they reclassified me as an 88M," said Spc. Thurman



A student in the 88M10 reclassification course adjusts the mirror on a M915 Tractor Trailer before taking the final road test March 18. The Students drive a 200-mile convoy along interstates 85 and 95 as part of their final test.

Rhineheart, a student from the Emporia-based 1710th Transportation Company. "But I love it, it's fun. I ain't walking, I'm riding and that's a big bonus and I enjoy that."

The graduates will take valuable skills back to their units. In an Army engaged in two concurrent wars, the role of the Army truck driver proves invaluable in bringing the supplies and personnel required to sustain the Soldiers deployed around the world.

"I feel like we give them one of the best classes in the nation. We give them more time on the road," boasted Flynn. "We get them out there on the road and actually do a convoy."

"We actually show them what an IED looks like and what it's going to be like when it goes off," he added. "We give some realistic training. It's pretty high-speed stuff!"

"They know what to expect. We feel like they are better trained Soldiers based on what training we give them to sustain the fight."



Photos by Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Va. Guard Public Affairs

Instructors at the 2nd Battalion, 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute make sure the students in the 88M10 reclassification course conduct their pre-convoy checks and services before conducting their final test March 18 at Fort Pickett, Va.

Virginia reinforces Tajik partnership

By Capt. Matt Nowak
Virginia Army Guard Public Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers completed a three-week visit to Tajikistan March 12 where they took part in high-level discussions about the country's security and military objectives as well as trained and mentored junior leaders in the Tajik military. The trip was the latest in a series of activities designed to strengthen the state partnership program between the Virginia Guard and Tajikistan.

Tajikistan, once part of the Soviet Union, is located in Central Asia, directly north of Afghanistan, and has a land mass slightly smaller than Wisconsin. The Virginia Guard has become a trusted mentor and partner for Tajikistan's military since they became partners in 2004.

Lt. Col. Bill Mahoney, Virginia State Partnership Program coordinator, recently attended an Action Officer Working Group in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, to discuss numerous big picture topics. Attendees included representatives from United States Central Command, U.S. Army Central, the U.S. State Department, and officials from Tajikistan's Ministry of Defense, border guards, National Guard and Committee of Emergency Situation. Most of the discussions revolved around security and the group also reviewed Tajikistan's strategic military to military objectives. It finished with planning events and meetings during the 2011 calendar year to ensure the partnership stays active.

"Virginia's involvement in the State Partnership Program directly fits into CENTCOM's and the State Department's long term strategic plan for Tajikistan," Mahoney stated. "Virginia has a strong partnership with Tajikistan and we look forward to continue building relationships with their junior leaders and



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Sammy Jones, 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute
Lt. Col. Bill Mahoney, Virginia State Partnership Program coordinator, gives senior members of the Tajikistan Army a 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute coin and patch.

staff officers and continue mentoring on topics regarding peace keeping operations."

Virginia's involvement in the partnership program included military to military objectives. A significant topic was Tajikistan's future role in potentially sending a unit to take part in United Nations peacekeeping operations, similar to what units from Virginia did in Kosovo in 2007.

"Since the partnership began, Tajikistan soldiers have learned more English and have improved their leadership skills and professional development," Mahoney said. "They have been making a consistent effort to learn from us."

Other than the Action Officer Working Group, the non-commissioned officers were given the opportunity to meet with some of Tajikistan's junior leaders.

In early March, a group of non-commissioned officers from the Virginia Guard's 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute visited some of Tajikistan's best junior leaders to conduct a seminar equal to what is included in a U.S. Army basic non-commissioned officer course.

The Guardsmen mentored about 21 Tajik soldiers from their emergency services, cadet corps and Ministry of Defense. Their main point reinforced how non-commissioned officers play a role in the army, since their structure is very different from the American military rank structure. The RTI Soldiers led exercises in counseling, risk management, troop leading procedures and tactics with the focus on having the Tajikistan soldiers putting their own spin on the exercises.

"Since it started in 2004 the soldiers are much more open and not as tight lipped," Master Sgt. Matt Webster noted. "They were very engaging and very open. They seemed to enjoy the instruction. The program has really been a benefit for them."

This was the fifth trip for Webster, who has seen a noticeable difference in the knowledge and professional growth of the Tajikistan soldiers.

"The Tajiks are looking at us to help mentor and develop their junior leadership," Webster said. "You can see a significant difference in the students since 2004."



Photo by Master Sgt. Matt Webster, 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute
Sgt. 1st Class Sammy Jones of the Virginia National Guard's 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute conducts a class to a group of junior leaders from Tajikistan during a trip to Tajikistan Feb. 27 to March 12.

House of Delegates celebrates accomplishments of Virginia Guard, Virginia Defense Force

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia House of Delegates recognized the Virginia National Guard and Virginia Defense Force March 8 with center-aisle presentation of Joint Resolution No. 305 on the House floor. Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, received the resolution on behalf of the more than 10,000 Virginia Guard Soldiers, Airmen and VDF members. In addition to Newman, six members of the Virginia Army National Guard, Virginia Air National Guard and Virginia Defense Force who have served overseas and on state active duty were on hand for the presentation.

"Members of the Virginia National Guard and Virginia Defense Force are indeed quiet sentinels of all Virginians," said Del. John Cosgrove, R-Chesapeake. "They are called to duty on a moment's notice and leave their families, their jobs and their communities to serve at the direction of the governor and the president of the United States. We need to thank these patriots and their families for their sacrifice on our behalf."

Cosgrove asked the members of the House of Delegates, their staff and guests in the gallery to stand and recognize "the brave men and women" of the Virginia Guard and VDF, and his request was followed by a loud applause throughout the chamber.

"On behalf of the entire House of Delegates, we thank you from the bottoms of our hearts for all that you and your men and women have done for so many years for our commonwealth and country," said House Speaker William J. Howell. "We cannot begin to thank you for all the sacrifices that you have made."

The resolution leads off with the statement "the courageous Soldiers and Airmen of the Virginia National Guard have made outstanding and valuable contributions to the defense of the United States and the security of the Commonwealth and have advanced the cause of freedom around the world" and also states "the Virginia Defense Force continues to be integrated



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Members of the Virginia House of Delegates give a standing ovation in appreciation of the Virginia National Guard and Virginia Defense Force March 8 in Richmond. Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, received the resolution on behalf of the more than 10,000 Virginia Guard Soldiers, Airmen and VDF members.

into every major operation conducted by the Virginia National Guard and the highly decorated, all-volunteer force has added to its capabilities, allowing the Virginia Defense Force to successfully respond to the needs of the citizens of the Commonwealth on the land, in the air, and on the water."

"It is an honor for me to receive this recognition of the significant accomplishments of our Soldiers, Airmen and members of the Virginia Defense Force, and I want to thank the House of Delegates for passing this resolution in their honor," Newman said. "Whether here in Virginia or overseas, members of the Virginia Guard and VDF are committed to protecting the ideals of freedom and safeguarding the citizens of the commonwealth when in need."

The Virginia Senate also passed Senate Joint Resolution No. 196.

Spc. Daisy Hill and Sgt Christopher Neal of Farmville represented the Virginia Army National Guard, Staff Sgt. Kevin Singleton of Chesapeake and Staff Sgt. Ira

Jones of Rockville represented the Virginia Air National Guard and 1st Sgt. Charles E. Brown of Richmond and Sgt. Margie E. Stetson of Richmond represented the Virginia Defense Force.

Hill supported numerous state active duty missions including both the president's and governor's inauguration and winter storms in late 2009 and early 2010. Neal served two tours in Iraq as well as duty on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Singleton served in Iraq while on active duty with the Air Force and returned again as a member of the Virginia Air National Guard. Jones served as an engineer with the Virginia Army National Guard in Iraq in 2005, switched to the Air Guard and served in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Brown, a retired Richmond police officer, has served in the VDF for five years and has supported more than a dozen missions including the governor's inauguration. Stetson helped provide communications support for the Guard's Irish Rain exercise in 2009 as well as the governor's inauguration.

Virginia Guard names top Soldier, NCO

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Sgt. Lionel Blair was selected the Virginia National Guard Noncommissioned Officer of the Year and Spc. George Arvan was selected as the Virginia National Guard Soldier of the Year after a two-day competition held March 27-28 at Fort Pickett.

Blair, a resident of Chesapeake, is a human resource sergeant assigned to 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery Regiment, 116th Brigade Combat Team, and Arvan, a Spotsylvania resident, is a fire support specialist assigned to Headquarters Company, 29th Infantry Division.

“Each of the competitors in both categories were evenly matched going into the Sunday morning appearance board,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Carl Holcomb, the Virginia Army National Guard state sergeant major. “Sgt. Blair distinguished himself from the rest of his peers during the appearance boards by demonstrating knowledge on a variety of military subjects some of which were well above his skill level,



Photos by Staff Sgt. Lauren Martin, Joint Force Headquarters - Virginia

Sgt. Lionel Blair was selected the Virginia Army National Guard Noncommissioned Officer of the Year after a two-day competition held March 27-28 at Fort Pickett.

and Spc. Arvan showed consistency throughout the weekend scoring ahead of his competition in each event and maintaining a 90% average overall.”

The competitors competed in the Army Physical Fitness Test, M16 weapons qualification and Army Warrior Tasks on March 27, then were evaluated on a personal appearance board in front of command sergeants major from across the state.

The two winners received recognition by Brig. Gen. Stephen Huxtable, assistant adjutant general of Virginia – Army, and they were also recognized by GEICO and USAA, two of the sponsors of the event.

Blair and Arvan will represent Virginia at the regional Soldier and NCO of the Year competitions scheduled for May 13-16 at Camp Dawson, W.Va. They will compete against Soldiers from West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware. The winners of the regional competition will compete in the Sergeant Major of the Army-level competition later this year.

“I was very pleased with the selection and performance of this year’s competitors,” Holcomb said. “Each year they seem to get better and better.”

Holcomb said that all of the Soldiers and NCO’s who competed were winners.

“Each of them demonstrated superb abilities and the highest degree of professionalism which is a tribute to their unit’s leadership, training and the Soldiers of the Virginia Army National Guard who always stand ready to answer the call,” Holcomb said.



Spc. George Arvan was selected as the Virginia Army National Guard Soldier of the Year after a two-day competition held March 27-28 at Fort Pickett.

Engineers work with MI Co. in combined exercise

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia Guard Engineers from the Fredericksburg-based Company A, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion joined forces with Military Intelligence Soldiers from the Fort Belvoir-based Company B, 116th BSTB in a 24 hour exercise at Fort A.P. Hill's Combined Arms Collective Training Facility April 10.

The exercise gave the Soldiers from both companies the chance to improve their specific job skills for their individual military occupational specialties, or MOS. The engineers were able to focus on their secondary infantry roles by clearing rooms and patrolling village streets, while the MI Soldiers were able to build their intelligence gathering abilities, by embedding with the engineers in the scenario.

"They're conducting full spectrum operations, a cordon and search operations, and we are providing intelligence support to that mission. We are basically trying to accomplish some collective training in our individual MOS's. In this specific case we are going to utilize our human intelligence collectors. We plan to actually have situations where intelligence is obtained from an objective, a detainee is detained, moved to a holding area and we will actually run through our some interrogations with them. Our Soldiers evaluated on that to meet their MOS requirements and maintain their proficiency," said Capt. Sean Hoover, commander of Company B.

"We also have other personnel within our company that will be providing support to the mission by being civilians on the battlefield, locally employed persons. As closely attempting to mimic what Soldiers may see downrange—we try to incorporate some cultural awareness training for the Soldiers," added Hoover.

The original plan for the engineer company only included the Company A Soldiers, but their commander saw this as an opportunity to incorporate other companies in the battalion and give the Soldiers of both companies a feel for working with Soldiers of other occupational areas and give everyone involved more realistic training.



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

Soldiers from Company A, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team escort Military Intelligence Soldiers from Company B during a 24-hour exercise at Fort A.P. Hill, Va. The exercise provided an opportunity for the engineers of Company A to focus on military operations in urban terrain while providing the intelligence Soldiers a chance to improve their intelligence gathering techniques in a realistic setting.

"The original scenario was to do a MOUT exercise, military operations in urban terrain for the Alpha Company engineers. In discussions with other companies within the battalion, it evolved into a combined arms exercise involving the Alpha Company engineers as a dismounted, patrolling force as well as Bravo Company, MI personnel as embedded HUMINT collection teams," said Capt. Josh Wells, commander of Company A.

"The scenario was a friendly village with criminal and terrorist activity in the Iraq theater," said Wells.

The Soldiers entered the mock village and interacted with the local population as they would overseas. The engineers provided security and room clearing abilities combined with breaching using small explosives while the HUMINT teams collected and analyzed intelligence from the locals. The civilians in the exercise were played by Soldiers from the MI Company and were fully integrated in o the scenario.

"A lot of my Soldiers put together a pretty detailed scenario. Most of the civilians you will come across will have

identification cards that we've created; they all have scripts, routines to follow. The entire scenario, including the area, targets, and associated enemy material has been developed based off of the work the Soldiers put together," said Hoover.

The Soldiers worked together as a team by attacking objectives, gathering intelligence and analyzing it to discover where the teams would move next. They would then move to the next objective, attack, gather, analyze and repeat, according to Wells.

"It allowed my Alpha Company engineers to actually patrol with another element," said Wells. "We don't do a lot of combined arms training. This allowed us to have elements from another company that have a specific mission embedded within our patrol. My guys have to work with them, secure them and utilize them to gain that actionable intelligence."

"We've certainly learned a lot," he said. "I think we've learned a lot of good lessons. We're going to use it as a foundation to do future combined arms training, not only within the battalion, but hopefully within the brigade."

Virginia EO office presents Holocaust program

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers and Airmen of the Virginia National Guard gathered approximately 150 local middle school students at the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond April 15 to remember those who suffered during the Holocaust. They paid tribute through prayer, silent reflection and a play commissioned by the North Carolina Council on the Holocaust.

They were there as guests of the Virginia Guard Equal Opportunity Office to share in the "Holocaust: Days of Remembrance" program and were presented the play "Let Your Children Tell," performed by the Touring Theater of North Carolina.

"Let Your Children Tell" is a theater documentary about the Holocaust that follows the lives of young people from across Europe and how Nazis of Germany's Third Reich affected their lives, according to the producers of the play.

"We would like to thank the Equal Opportunity Office of the Virginia National Guard for making this possible and providing the funding so that we could see this production," said Leigh Weedon, assistant to the executive director and founder of the museum.

The program showed the students the connection between the Holocaust and Virginians, especially Virginians who served in the Guard during World War II. The 29th Infantry Division, a



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

The Touring Theater of North Carolina performs "Let Your Children Tell" at the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond April 15. The play presents a timely topic that explores racism, discrimination and prejudice as it existed in a modern society.

mostly Virginia unit, was a large contributor to the storming of the Beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944 and the subsequent movement across Europe.

"This is a part of our history," said Army Col. Thomas L. Morgan, III, director of manpower and personnel. "The 29th Division, which included many Virginia National Guard units, proceeded across Europe and enabled the liberation of the concentration camps we were talking about this morning."

"In particular, one of our units with the 191st Tank Battalion out of Danville was part of the liberation of Dachau."

Virginia Army Guard recognizes top units

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The top units in the Virginia Army National Guard were recognized April 24 at the Virginia National Guard Officers Association Conference in Williamsburg.

The Emporia-based 1710th Transportation Company was awarded the Eisenhower Trophy and recognized as the most outstanding unit in the Virginia Army National Guard during the training year. The award is presented to the unit that ranks the highest in areas of assigned personnel strength, percentage of personnel qualified in their duty position, attendance at monthly drill weekends and annual training, individual weapons qualification scores and physical fitness test scores.

The 1710th was also recognized with the state-level Pershing Award for the highest marksmanship scores in the Virginia Army National Guard in annual qualification with assigned individual weapons.

The Adjutant General's Cup was presented to the Hampton-based Headquarters Company, 429th Brigade Support Battalion. The cup is awarded to the unit achieving the highest overall average in the areas of overall assigned personnel strength, attendance at monthly drill weekends and attendance at annual training.

"It is a real honor and privilege to present the awards to recognize this outstanding achievement, because earning these awards is no easy task," said Brig. Gen. Stephen Huxtable, Assistant Adjutant General of Virginia for Army. "These awards are a clear indication that these units are more than ready to conduct their mission at either the state or federal level, and they are an outward sign of the hard work of the Soldiers and great leadership of the officers and NCOs in the unit."

To be nominated for the Eisenhower Award, a unit must meet the criteria for the Superior Unit Award. To earn the

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

Units that earn the Superior Unit Award are also presented with the Excellence in Training Award. The Gate City-based Headquarters Detachment, 1030th Transportation Battalion also earned the Superior Unit Award and Excellence in Training Award.

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

116th BCT fields high-tech command, control systems

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard's Staunton-based 116th Brigade Combat Team conducted a training exercise at Fort Pickett March 20-23 that is the second of three events to complete the fielding of the U. S. Army's Command Post of the Future command and control system. CPOF is part of the Army's Battle Command System and gives commanders and their staffs the ability to plan, prepare, rehearse, execute and assess operations using tactical digital networks over long distances using satellite communications. CPOF is in use in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the 116th is fielding the state-of-the-art system at the same time as active duty Army units.

"When I used this system in Iraq, I never thought I would see it again," said Lt. Col. Allan Carter, the operations officer for the 116th. "Now I have seen it again, and we have it in the Virginia Guard."

Carter said he remembered years ago how the Guard was a low priority for equipment fielding and was operating with outdated equipment, but that is no longer the case. The digital information systems used by 116th personnel during their tour of duty in Iraq in 2007 are the same systems they are now using in Virginia.

"This equipment puts us on an even footing with our active duty counterparts," said Lt. Col. Bill Zana, commander of the Winchester-based 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Brigade Combat Team. "If we get deployed, the fact that we have this equipment in advance saves us time at the mobilization station and makes us more proficient when we go."

The final event for the fielding will take place in June at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., and will be the culmination of more than 18 months of fielding different pieces of equipment and smaller information systems that now operate in concert under CPOF. The system is used at the division, brigade and battalion level and enables commanders and their staffs to easily collaborate and share ideas, and even conduct "virtual" meetings where attendees can easily share maps, data and unit positions to create a common operating picture in real time.

The CPOF is a "system of systems,"

Carter explained. Different warfighting functions like intelligence, fires, sustainment and command and control have sub-systems for tracking information, and CPOF ties them all together to give the commander and the staff a crystal-clear picture of what is going on in an operation.

One of the challenges has been making sure that the equipment the brigade received a year ago is functioning properly and integrates into the CPOF, Carter said. The fielding has included new vehicles, power generators, satellite communication systems and even the tents used to set the system up in a field environment.

Approximately 300 Soldiers took part in the training event. Along with personnel from the brigade headquarters, Soldiers from the Fredericksburg-based 116th Brigade Support Battalion's military intelligence company and signal company were on hand to establish the full brigade tactical operations center. In addition, command and control elements from the brigade's battalions based in Winchester, Lynchburg, Danville, Hampton and Portsmouth were operating the battalion-level systems.

Along with the equipment fielding, the

brigade has been conducting staff training at both the brigade and battalion level with the goal of having battalion-level staffs validated for possible combat operations at the end of the exercise in June.

"Trained battle staffs can plug into any operation at the division, brigade or battalion level to command and control any operation, whether it be a federal mission overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan or a stateside mission to support of civil authorities," Carter said.

The fielding of such high tech equipment is also a morale booster for younger Virginia Guard Soldiers used to having the latest and greatest technology around them, Carter said. Soldiers are also getting trained on the equipment at Army schools, then coming back and putting their skills to use for Virginia.

"We had a private set up the power supply layout for our generators based on the training he just received," Carter said.

"Some of my hard hitters here are specialists and young sergeants who 'get it' and there is an appeal for them in dealing with the systems and the architecture because they are able to develop and take initiative to expand the unit's capability," Zana said. "It is exciting to see that."



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

New satellite systems enable the 116th Brigade Combat Team to communicate and share data with units all over Virginia and all over the world.

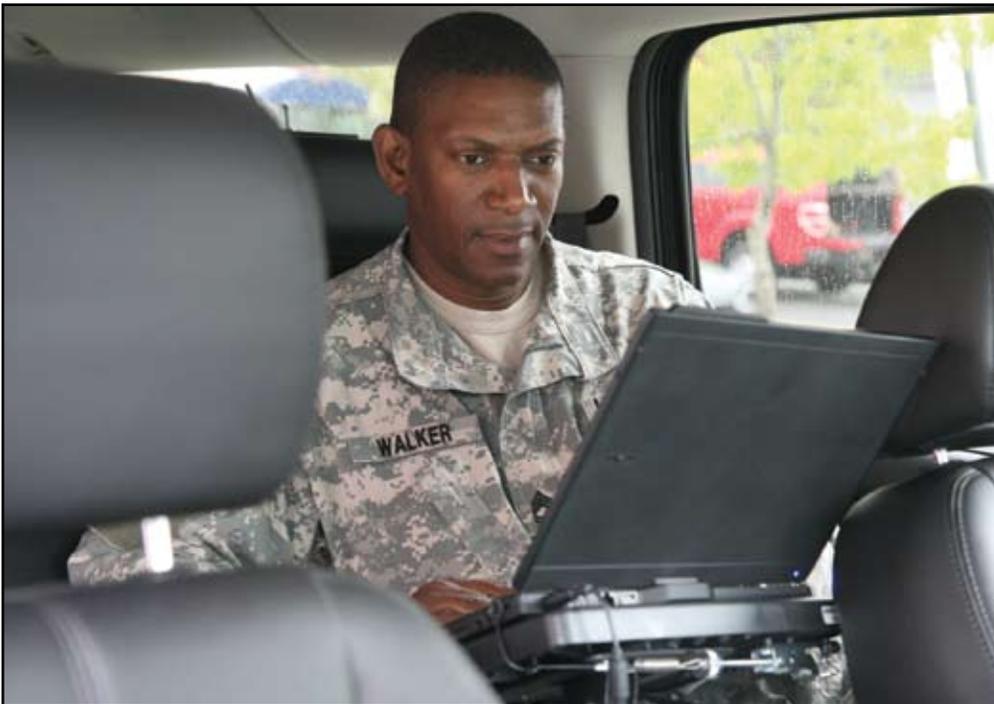


Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Sgt. 1st Class William Walker of the Virginia National Guard's 29th Infantry Division, tests computer connectivity in the mobile command post vehicle that is part of the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability April 13 in Washington, D.C. Soldiers and Airmen from the Maryland, D.C. and Virginia Guard were on duty to assist civilian authorities with security operations for the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit.

**By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs**

A team from the Virginia Army National Guard's Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division along with Soldiers from the Hampton-based Company C, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion provided communications support April 10-13 to the D.C. National Guard's task force assisting civilian authorities with security operations for the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C.

Nine Virginia Soldiers were in the nation's capital using the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability to provide Internet access and telephone support to command and control elements for the approximately 170 Soldiers and Airmen of the Joint Task Force 74. Task force personnel from the D.C. and Maryland Guard assisted with perimeter security as well as provided Civil Support Teams capable of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosives detection.

President Barack Obama hosted 43 heads of state and three heads of international organizations April 12-13 for the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit, the largest domestic summit since the founding of the United Nations.

The JISCC team from Virginia arrived April 10 and quickly began setting up their equipment which includes generators, servers, radios, laptops and a wide array of telephonic equipment. With the JISCC equipment they were able to rapidly provide the D.C. task force the ability to engage in inter-agency communication in a building provided to the Guard by the Department of Parks and Recreation to provide command and control of the operation, according to Maj. Derek Demby, Task Force 74 operations officer.

Va. Guard provides

Without the JISCC onsite the task force would have been without communications and would have been forced to use the limited internet connections, and phone lines provided by the building which would have severely hampered the command and control of the operation. With the capabilities package provided by the Virginians, the task force was able to continue their daily operations from a remote location, according to Demby.

"The JISCC has the capability to provide interoperability between agencies" said Maj. Tim Wine, 29th ID communications officer. "That's the primary function of the radio side. We also provide the network support for this operation."

"What we are doing, right here, right now, is providing a data link for their (JTF 74) computers and voice phones," said Wine. "That's our primary mission for the Joint Task 74's headquarters." The JISCC team also provided redundant radio communications for the task force.

The Task Force commander was very pleased with how quickly the Virginia Guard was able to set up their equipment and begin providing email access and

telephone service to the men and women working out of their operations center.

"We were really pleased with their setup and we were really appreciative of their efforts," said Lt. Col. Anthony Jackson, Task Force 74 Commander. "They've been extremely helpful because they bring us connectivity to our remote location."

Thanks to the JISCC, the mission was able to continue along as



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Spc. Kenneth Parker of Company C, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, configures the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability April 13 in Washington, D.C.

commo capability to Nuclear Summit security task force

scheduled. The Soldiers and Airmen were able to perform their duties as required due to the capabilities the Virginia team afforded the task force.

“The mission has been real fast-paced. We’ve been constantly moving and we’re doing really good,” said Demby. “Everyone looks at this as their duty, but they also look at this as a part of history.”

The system is unique in that it is only manned and operated by the Air and Army National Guard. The Guard is the only agency with the JISCC, according to Spc. Kenneth Parker, a Virginia Guard Soldier who has been working with the system since 2006.

Each JISCC is a mobile set of commercial hardware and associated peripheral equipment designed to provide on-site and reach-back communications capabilities for enhanced command and control and share situational awareness among first responders, and with state and federal command authorities and centers.

Not only did the JISCC come equipped with the equipment to provide the information technology to the building, but they also came equipped with a full-size sport utility vehicle that has almost all the same capabilities as the stationary package.

The advance mobile command vehicle comes equipped with many of the same radios and phone configurations and is also able to gain access to the internet, according to Sgt. 1st Class William Walker, 29th ID communications noncommissioned officer in charge. The truck is designed to be able to respond to any incident in a moment’s notice and have connectivity available at the site within minutes of arrival.

“It’s a great piece of equipment,” said Walker. “It’s very reliable.”



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Maj. Tim Wine of the Virginia National Guard's Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division, briefs senior leaders of the D.C. Guard on the operation of the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability.



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the 29th Infantry Division and Company C, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion provide communications support to the D.C. National Guard's Joint Task Force 74 April 13 in Washington, D.C.

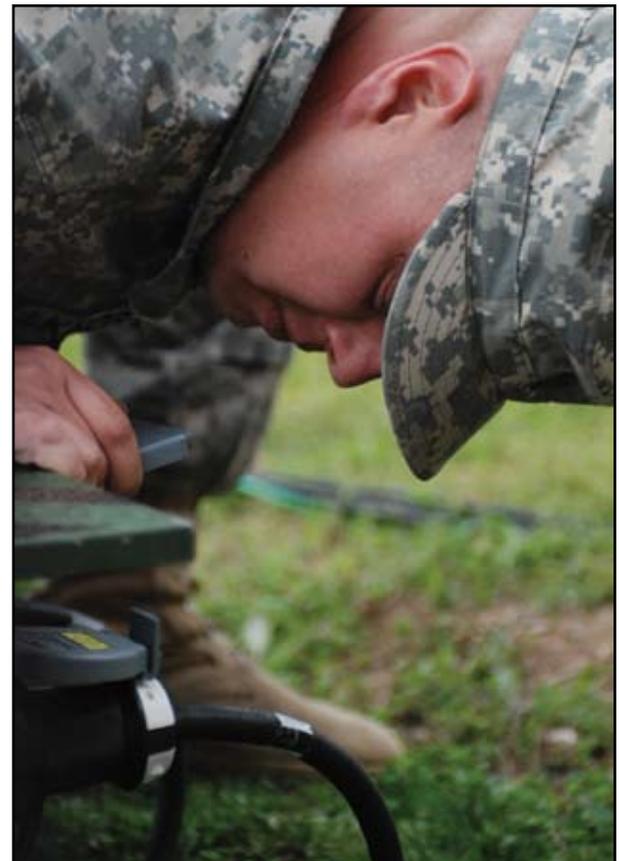


Photo by Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Spc. Aaron Falknor of the Virginia National Guard's Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division tests the circuit breakers on the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability.