



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Sgt. Christina Phillips, a human resources specialist from Staunton, Va., receives the Governor's National Service Medal from Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. Soldiers from the Virginia Army National Guard's Staunton-based Headquarters, 116th Brigade Combat Team (Stonewall Brigade) gathered June 8 at Robert E. Lee High School to conduct a Freedom Salute in honor of the unit's service in Iraq from June 2007 to February 2008.

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MAY - JUNE 2008



FROM THE TOP



Family Readiness is vital to the success of Virginia Guard's state and federal missions

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

The Soldiers and Airmen of the Virginia National Guard would not be able to perform their duties here at home and overseas without the tremendous support they receive from their families.

Family Readiness Groups are a vital part of making sure that families have all the information and resources they need to support their loved ones serving in the Virginia National Guard.

As my wife and I travel Virginia to visit with Soldiers and Airmen, we are amazed by the dedication and hard work of our FRGs.

By the end of a deployment, our FRGs experience a mixture of emotions and feelings: relief at the return of their loved ones coupled with the fatigue of months of hard work.

I am concerned, however, that we not lose the tremendous work of our FRGs after a unit has returned from overseas deployment. Upon release from active duty, many FRG leaders and members feel their job is done, and they simply want to enjoy a much-needed and well-deserved break from their responsibilities.

There is nothing wrong with taking a break to enjoy time with the reunited family, but it is important that we maintain the cohesion and momentum of the FRG after the unit has returned home to a traditional Guard status.

I don't want our FRG volunteers serving extended tours of duty, so it is my hope that new volunteers will step up in order to take over and keep our FRGs vibrant and active.

Experienced FRG leaders and members need to "pass the torch" to new leaders and make sure critical information is shared so the new leaders will not be starting from scratch.

FRGs also play an important role in making sure our Soldiers, Airmen and their families are getting the support and



Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr.

assistance they need after the deployment.

The Virginia National Guard, as well as other state and federal agencies, have a number of resources available to assist during the reintegration process. The challenge we face is in making sure our families are aware of those resources and can get the help if they need it.

We need our FRGs when we are serving in our traditional National Guard capacity almost as much as we need them when we are deployed. The network of support and information sharing is vital to our Soldiers and Airmen as they train and prepare to be able to respond to the Commonwealth's call when needed.

For example, Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team conducted their first drill in February after returning home from Kosovo in November 2007, and on Monday after drill, many of them had volunteered to assist with fire fighting duties in the Roanoke area.

In a situation like this, information flow from the unit chain of command is important, and we need the support of our FRGs for our state mission just like we do for our missions overseas. When we get the

call as we did to assist fire-fighting duties, our FRGs can help make sure everyone is aware of the unit's activities and provide support to family members when it is needed.

As we focus on our role as the Commonwealth's Guardian, we can readily see where our FRGs are vital to the success of our mission.

In the event of a natural disaster or terrorist attack, our Soldiers and Airmen will be called upon to support civil authorities where they are needed in Virginia. Having active and effective FRGs will help make sure our families are getting the help they need while our Soldiers and Airmen are out helping others.

A big part of the Virginia Guard's readiness is ensuring our families are ready. Whether we are called to state active duty for a week or federal active duty for a year, meeting the responsibilities to our families is a shared responsibility.

We should all prepare and exercise a family readiness plan for both state and federal call ups. These plans will more than likely be different, but both are important to make sure our families are cared for while we as Guardsmen perform our duties.

For example, if a major hurricane were to strike the Hampton Roads area, there is no doubt the Virginia Guard would be called in to assist with recovery operations. For our Soldiers and Airmen who live in the Hampton Roads area, a family readiness plan needs to be in place to make sure the family knows what to do and what actions to take in that situation. Waiting until the hurricane actually makes landfall is too late to put that plan together, so we all need to be thinking about it now.

It will take a team effort to make sure our families are ready. It starts with each individual and their family, but senior leaders need to also stress the importance of having a plan and our FRGs can help make sure our families are getting the resources they need to be ready if and when the time comes.

Virginia aviators patrol the border

By Spc. John Wood
29th Infantry Division Public Affairs

Soldiers from the 29th Infantry Division's 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment were busy this summer helping to secure the U.S./ Mexico border in Arizona as Task Force Raven and Task Force Diamondback for Operation Jump Start.

Operation Jump Start is the National Guard mission to assist the United States Customs and Border Protection to secure the U.S. southern border.

The Soldiers from the 2nd Bn., 224th Aviation cover both air and land using multiple strategies with air support as the main effort. Since the battalion began its operation it has seen a drastic decrease in the amount of narcotics entering the U. S. as well as a large increase in the number of illegal immigrants detained, registered, and returned to Mexico.

The Soldiers have also saved the lives of many illegal immigrants that became stranded in the desert without any water or medical aid.

Task Force Raven, the air patrol portion of OJS, alone has stopped more than 200 vehicles from entering the U. S. illegally and most of them were carrying narcotics and weapons.

The air-support provided by Task Force Raven Soldiers has also helped turn back over 20,000 illegal immigrants who decided it would be better to turn back than be detained.

"It is something different to deal with. The training and experience we are getting out here is something that we could use in the places where we are fighting," said Sgt. Darryl E. Ingram, crew chief and aircraft mechanic with C Company. Ingram has been part of Task Force Raven since June 9. "If you can work out here, you can work anywhere."

"I enjoy flying around and seeing the sights," said Sgt. Charles Byrd of A Company, a crew chief and aircraft mechanic. "We will fly over rock formations and check to see if there are any caves the illegal immigrants could hide in."

The flights are also great training for



Photo by Spc. John Wood, 29th Infantry Division Public Affairs

Lt. Col. Jim Ring, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, discusses the route of flight with Brig. Gen. Grant Hayden, 29th Infantry Division commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Price, 29th Infantry Division command sergeant major, prior to an orientation flight of the area patrolled by the 2/224th.

the Soldiers.

"These flights are increasing my ability to perform as a crew chief," said Byrd.

Soldiers also look for abandoned vehicles that might have been used to transport illegal immigrants, narcotics, or weapons into the United States.

With all of the flying, there is a crucial need to perform frequent maintenance on the aircraft. That is the domain of Spc. Ryan Dutema. Dutema, also a crew chief with A Company, is one of the mechanics who helps to make sure that the aircraft are ready to fly.

"My job is more maintenance than anything," said Dutema.

With the flights going into extremely hot temperatures and flying in the desert where there is a high possibility of sand getting into the equipment, it is up to mechanics like Dutema to make sure that everything works properly.

Nothing is accomplished without team work and cooperation. There is a strong feeling of teamwork and brotherhood within the group of mechanics in charge of maintaining the multiple aircraft.

"I love the comradeship. It's just really cool working with people where everyone is on an equal level," said Dutema.

Task Force Diamondback, the ground element of OJS, also consists of Virginia and Maryland National Guard Soldiers of

the battalion, whose main responsibility is to drill wells and build roads and barriers that aid in the securing of the national border. They have built over 66 miles of vehicle barriers, 19 miles of fencing, and 10 miles of high-intensity lighting.

The vehicle barriers help to stop illegal immigrants from entering the country's border using vehicles. The drug-runners will try to enter through a part of the desert where they think there will not be any barriers or patrols. With the new vehicle barriers in place they now can no longer just drive over the border.

The fencing the National Guard has been putting in place comes in two stages. The first stage is the primary fencing, which is mainly a thick solid metal sheet that can not be seen through. The primary fencing has concrete based at the bottom to help hold it in place as well as to stop illegal immigrants from digging under the fencing. The second stage of fencing consists of a taller, sturdier, wire-mesh fence.

Homeland Security is just one of the missions of the 29th Infantry Division. The air and ground support the Soldiers of the 2nd Bn., 224th Aviation Regiment are providing in Arizona are making an impact on border security. Their efforts will help maintain the integrity of the southern national border.

News Briefs

Virginia Guard Marathon Team competes at National Guard Trials



The seven-person Virginia National Guard Marathon Team competed in the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon May 4 in Lincoln, Neb.

Capt. John Zimmerman of the Virginia Guard finished with a time of 2:59:36. He was the 19th National Guard finisher and earned a spot on the Elite All-Guard Team male open category.

Lt. Col. Colleen Chipper, the team captain, placed 14th among the women competitors and qualified as a member of the All-Guard Team for the fifth time.

Pfc. William Domedion, the youngest team member, had a time of 3:20, and won a second place trophy in his age category.

Chief Warrant Officer Gregg Whisler finished with a time of 3:36.

Chief Warrant Officer Thomas French and Chief Warrant Officer Todd Tassell

both finished the marathon with respectable times under four hours

Chief Warrant Officer Art Dechent finished his sixth Lincoln Marathon.

General Assembly passes Iraq Veterans license plate

On Memorial Day a group of Iraqi Freedom Veterans announced that they are working together to establish an Iraq Freedom Veteran license plate in the Commonwealth of Virginia, today they announce the passing of legislation from the General Assembly of Virginia during the Transportation Special Session. HB 6022 passed unanimously on the last day of the special session in the early morning hours. The bill passed 98 – 0 in the house and 34 – 0 in the Senate and it now moves to the Governor for his signature.

“When we started this project on Memorial Day we had no idea it would happen so soon. The swift action of our Legislature is an honor to all of our veterans that have served in harms way” said Chairman, Rusty McGuire. HB 6022 now heads to the Governor for his signature and once enacted Veterans can go straight to DMV to get their plates.

The group of Iraq veterans heading the drive include: James McGuire, Rusty McGuire and Brian Pearce. (James was wounded on his second tour in Iraq in 2007 losing his leg when his patrol was hit by an IED. Pearce served in Iraq where he was injured by a roadside bomb. Rusty McGuire returned from Iraq in 2005 after serving with his cousin James McGuire in

Baghdad.)

Del. Bill Janis, R-Glen Allen, a veteran of the Persian Gulf War, sponsored HB 6022.

The group is now asking veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom with vehicles registered in Virginia to go to their website www.myspace.com/ifvplate to obtain more information on when the plates are available.

Virginia Guard Soldiers assist with “Transformers 2” filming

Soldiers from the North Carolina and Virginia National Guard began assisting the producers of the hit movie “Transformers” in the filming of a sequel June 2 in Bethlehem, Pa. Guard Soldiers from both states are assisting the producers with equipment and personnel through a joint agreement between the Department of Defense and DreamWorks Pictures.

The United States military was portrayed in the first film and will have a roll in the second. A release date for the sequel is not available.

Filming for the sequel began recently and the Department of Defense identified experienced National Guard units in North Carolina and Virginia for assistance.

The mission provided an opportunity for Soldiers of the North Carolina and Virginia National Guard to work collaboratively in the planning of this mission. Additionally, Soldiers from both states were able to receive valuable training on essential equipment.

Virginia National Guard Federal Deployments

# *	Unit	Where Deployed	Home Town
170	1710th Transportation Company	Iraq	Emporia
110	237th Engineer Company	Iraq	West Point
1	192nd Fighter Wing	Guam	Langley Air Force Base
1	JFHQ Virginia Air	Iraq	Sandston
1	203rd RED HORSE Squadron	Kuwait	Langley Air Force Base
47	Various Va. Air Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OIF/OER Support	Various Locations

* All listings for numbers of Soldiers/Airmen are approximate as of July 5, 2008



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On the Cover



A Soldier with the Virginia CERF treats a simulated casualty during a training exercise June 26 at Fort Pickett. (Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs)

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Hampton Roads-area Soldiers return to Virginia from Iraq

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia National Guard Public Affairs

Approximately 400 Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard's 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry returned home to the State Military Reservation May 8 and 10.

Soldiers from the Norfolk-based A Troop were welcomed home May 8. Two days later, Soldiers from the Portsmouth-based Headquarters Troop, the Suffolk-based Troop B and the Virginia Beach-based C Troop returned.

Soldiers from 2nd Squadron arrived in Kuwait in early September 2007 with the mission of acting as a security force in their area of operations. The squadron was one of a very few units that operated daily on both sides of the border in both northern Kuwait and southern Iraq.

As part of their security force mission, the squadron provided an area response force, a quick reaction force for coalition base camps, conducted convoy vehicle searches and route security and reconnaissance in Southern Iraq to prevent interdiction of

convoy routes.

Soldiers from 2nd Squadron conducted route reconnaissance and route security in southern Iraq and conducted over 900 combat patrols to ensure passage of over 2,000 coalition convoys conducting resupply for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The unit logged 102,000 miles on Humvees while ensuring route security.

No Virginia Soldiers from the squadron were wounded in action. Two Soldiers from the Colorado National Guard's 140th Signal Company were wounded and returned to duty within 24 hours. The company was assigned to the squadron for the duration of the mission.

Soldiers from 2nd Squadron conducted several civil-military operations in Iraq and Kuwait- conducting medical capabilities programs, delivering humanitarian items and gifting sheep to local nomads.

The squadron also coordinated with adjacent units in southern Iraq to establish joint battle drills for coalition forces in southern Iraq.

They also conducted joint patrols



Photo by Staff Sgt. A.J. Coyne, Virginia Guard PAO

Capt. Richard Harrison of Burke, Va., gets a warm welcome home hug during the welcome home ceremony at Camp Pendleton in Virginia Beach May 10.

with Iraqi Customs Police and Iraqi security forces, conducted joint training with Kuwaiti commando units to teach rappelling and sniper training.

“Wall of Honor” ceremony honors fallen Virginians

By Capt. Dayna Rowden
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia Attorney General Bob McDonnell, Lieutenant Governor Bill Bolling, Virginia's Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., and hundreds of family members of Virginia's fallen, honored the Virginians who have died in the Global War on Terrorism at the second annual Wall of Honor Ceremony held in Richmond May 22.

The ceremony, held on the South Portico of the Virginia Capitol, honored the 170 Active, Guard and Reserve Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Coast Guard personnel, Marines and Central Intelligence Officers who have been killed in action since 2001.

“The names inscribed on this wall were ordinary Virginians who made extraordinary sacrifices for our Commonwealth and our country,” said Newman in his speech. “The men and women who wear the uniform of our nation do so freely. Each willingly takes an oath with the full knowledge that the fulfillment of that oath might well cost them their lives. I thank God for such men and women.”

Over 100 Servicemen and women representing all branches of the military were present at the ceremony to serve as escorts and honor guards and to show their support for the fallen.

As an act of remembrance to honor the fallen heroes their

names were read aloud.

As the names were read, four UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters from the Virginia National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation conducted a fly over.

Master Sgt. Peter J. Marshall, from the Air Force Reserve 710th Combat Operations Squadron, had served with the Virginia National Guard in the 276th Engineer Battalion. He volunteered to be a reader of the names of the fallen heroes. Three Soldiers from that unit were on that list.

“It is important to carry on those names in our memories,” said Marshall. “For me personally it was important to hear those names of my fallen friends. When I hear their names, I think about the sacrifices the families have had to make.”

The Wall of Honor was inspired by Virginia State Police Master Trooper Darrell Bowling. His son, United State Marine Corps Corporal Jonathan Bowling, was killed in Al-Anbar Province, Iraq on January 26, 2005. The Office of the Attorney dedicated the Hall of Honor in the Main Street Lobby of the Pocahontas Building in 2007.

“Today, citizens of a grateful Virginia extend their personal appreciation to the families of the Virginians who have not returned from the mission upon which they were sent. We mourn their loss, but at the same time we celebrate their heroism and their duty to Commonwealth and country,” said McDonnell.

1030th Trans. Bn. holds first-ever JRSOI at Fort Pickett

By Sgt. Jesse L. Houk
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers from the Gate City-based 1030th Transportation Battalion worked in cooperation with Headquarters, 329th Regional Support Group to conduct the Virginia Guard's first-ever Reception, Staging, Onward movement and Integration exercise May 4 - 6 at Fort Pickett.

The exercise was designed to simulate the arrival of forces from outside of the state responding to a large scale event.

RSOI is a complex, multi-phase exercise conducted to train, test and demonstrate force projection and deployment capability. It is a medium scale, war-fighting Command Post Exercise with focus on the process of strategic deployment.

In the case of Virginia, it is a preparation for the force projection of both public agencies within and outside the Commonwealth in response to either natural or manmade originated disasters.

It provides a single projection platform for the receipt and preparation of individuals arriving in response to a disaster in order to prepare them to execute an integrated and seamless response.

During the three-day exercise in May, Soldiers of the HHC, 1030th Trans. Bn., assisted roughly 325 Soldiers.

Each Soldier filed through the building as they were assisted at eight different stations.

The stations included Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, records check, pay, medical, legal, identification cards, supply, and quality control.

An RSOI exercise also provides the Virginia Army National Guard additional benefits beyond force projection.

"It's also an excellent opportunity to take care of soldiers," said Maj. Geoffrey R. O'Neill, executive officer of 1030th Trans. Bn. "What better time to mass all the Soldiers and cover down on every potential issue that might negatively impact the units."

"The training is being done to prevent problems that may have occurred in the past," Sgt. 1st Class Carol A. Masters, senior human resources sergeant said. "It's advantageous to us because RSOI allows us to have our records up to date."

"RSOI is about getting an assessment on where you stand with the Army," said



Photo by Sgt. Jesse L. Houk, Virginia Guard PAO
Sgt. 1st Class Reginald Dyckman of the 1030th Transportation Battalion assists a Soldier update his records as he participates in the JRSOI training May 4- 6 at Fort Pickett.

1st Lt. Jezmon A. Lewis, commander of 3647th Maintenance Company from Blackstone, as he and his Soldiers went through the training. "This will streamline the process of being deployed because it identifies the problem before an actual SRP (Soldier readiness processing)."

One might expect a first-time training event to be plagued with complications or certain issues that need to be ironed out.

But the thorough preparation through the Vigilant Guard training, the leadership provided by senior NCO's and officers, and the professionalism of the Soldiers in HHD, in the words of Masters, "kept them operating like a greased wheel."

189th MRBC, 276th Engineers fine tune Soldier skills

By Capt. Dayna Rowden
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

After a large number of Soldiers from the 189th Multi-Role Bridge Company were cross leveled and deployed to fill vacancies in the 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry and the 237th Engineer Company, a handful of Soldiers were left behind.

These Soldiers combined with non-deploying Soldiers from the 276th Engineer Battalion to conduct annual training at Fort Pickett in early June.

Though the primary mission of the 189th MRBC is conduct river-crossing operations, Capt. LaTonya N. Martin, the company's commander, said the Soldiers would be primarily working on common-core training tasks.

"We're trying to conduct tasks that all the Soldiers in the battalion would have to do if they would deploy," said Martin. "We don't have enough qualified or experienced personnel to put a bridge in the water."

The 63 Soldiers conducted convoy operations and individual weapons qualifications, established traffic check points, and acted as casualties for the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Explosive Enhanced Response Force exercise.

Junior Soldiers had the opportunity to serve in key leadership positions during the training. Specialists and privates acted as platoon leaders and platoon sergeants.

Throughout the week non-commissioned officers conducted crawl-walk-run training that culminated in the junior Soldiers planning operations, issuing operational orders and supervising tasks.

"They're really motivated," said Sgt. 1st Class Frank Cross. "They're learning that communication is key to successful leadership."

Martin said that though she was uncertain how the Soldiers from so many different units would come together during the training, the Soldiers came together and impressed her with their cohesion.

"I was concerned at first, because many of the Soldiers were used to operating one way with another unit," said Martin. "The Soldiers seem to really enjoy the training."

"They came together in three days to make a really tight unit," said Cross. "The Army is the same way. People come from all across the country, and they learn to work well together."

"After this training, I think these Soldiers can be inserted into any unit and be an effective combat multiplier," said Cross.

Two 116th BCT Soldiers earn prestigious Expert Infantry Badge

By Sgt. John Slosser
116th BCT Public Affairs

Spc. Stephen Macurdy and Pfc. William Garman were the only two Virginia National Guard Soldiers out of 150 eligible to try that proudly wore the Expert Infantryman Badge at the end of the Lynchburg-based 1st Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team's annual training June 28.

It's a simple decoration, a rifle against a field of 'Infantry Blue.' While it denotes a certain level of expertise, it also invokes the blood, sweat and tears usually involved in earning it. It is widely recognized as one of the most prestigious awards in the United States Army.

"I've been studying and practicing for a while now. It hasn't really hit me yet," said Garman. "It was a lot more attention to detail than I expected it would be."

"I was one of those people who didn't feel like I had to have it," said Macurdy. "I wanted it. I wanted to see if I could do it, but I didn't want to do it to prove it to other people."

The course, which must be sanctioned by the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga., consists of 37 skills tests.

Thirty of these skills are also Army

Warrior Tasks but the EIB standards may be higher. For their first half of AT, the unit completed several prerequisites for the testing: a 12-mile road march with a 35-lb. rucksack in less than three hours, a physical fitness test with at least 75 points in every category, use accurate land navigation skills in day and night conditions, and qualify as an expert with their individual weapon.

"We came to AT with about 200 Soldiers, 150 were eligible to try," said Maj. Scott Smith, 1st Battalion commander. "After we finished all the prerequisites, we only had nine Soldiers left in the running."

The commander also noted that even if an infantryman fails the EIB prerequisites, preparing for the testing and going through all the stations gives them valuable training.

The tasks and tests were broken down over three days. Day one saw two officers, six enlisted men and one Reserve Officer Training Corps cadet enter into the gauntlet. One of the sources of pride in earning the EIB is that pass rates for the course usually average at less than 10 percent.

"My first company commander said, 'I have a CIB (Combat Infantry Badge) and an EIB, but I wear my EIB because I really



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

Stephen Macurdy, an Expert Infantryman Badge candidate with B. Co., 1st Bn., 116th BCT, successfully completes his final skills test during annual training at Fort Pickett, Va.

had to work hard for that one,' said Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Whaley, an EIB board member. "This sort of thing takes a lot of command emphasis. It is perfect for our unit's reset."

During the three days of EIB testing, the participants faced myriad of stations. Those included applying first aid; using a Global Positioning System; arming and throwing a hand grenade; protecting against nuclear, biological and chemical attack; range finding; assembling and disassembling an M-240 machine gun; and loading and firing a .50-caliber machine gun.

Every station is graded by an infantry Soldier who have already earned their EIB. Situations often occur where an EIB holding private 1st class must give an EIB candidate a no-go regardless of his rank or position in the unit.

"This is all about how good we are as individuals. When you are being tested you have so many eyes on you," said Pfc. Robert Hamilton, a current EIB holder. "I believe that Soldiers who may not have been motivated to get it before, are now because they know the standards and what has to be done. They see other Soldiers getting through the stations that they may have failed."



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

Pfc. William Garman fires a .50-caliber machine gun for an Expert Infantry Badge test during his annual training with C Co., 1st Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team June 24 at Fort Pickett, Va.

Va. Guard receives Afghan Army training mission orders

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, announced June 3 that the Virginia National Guard has received mobilization orders to form two units with the mission of training the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The orders call for the Virginia Guard to form two embedded training teams, each consisting of 16 Soldiers.

One team will work with an Afghan National Army brigade of approximately 1,500 Afghan soldiers, the other will work with a battalion of approximately 500 soldiers.

"The mission to train and mentor the Afghan National Army is an important one," Newman said. "Our Soldiers will be able to share their experience in a

variety of areas to help make the Afghan Army a more professional and competent organization. The efforts of our Virginia Guard Soldiers will help contribute to greater stability in the region."

The units will train in Virginia for the next several months, then mobilize on Federal active duty orders and travel to Fort Riley, Kan. to conduct their final train up before heading to Afghanistan. The two units are expected to begin their period of active duty in late August to early September.

"The Brigade and Battalion ETTs will provide training and mentoring to the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police in order to continue to stabilize the police and military forces in Afghanistan," said Maj. Mike Martin of Afton, the senior mentor of the battalion team. "Soldiers will provide mentoring to their Afghan counterparts in logistics, tactics, strategic planning, military

decision-making process, and battalion and brigade level staff operations. The trainers will be embedded with Afghan counterparts and will live, train and fight alongside them."

Soldiers from all over Virginia have been selected for the mission, said Col. Mike Harris, the senior mentor for the brigade team. Most of the positions on the two teams have been filled, and the few remaining vacancies should be filled before the two teams drill together for the first time in early July at Fort Pickett.

"We have selected Soldiers with a great deal of military experience," Harris said. "But we were also looking for Soldiers with the leadership and diplomatic skills to operate in this environment."

The mobilization orders call for an active duty period not to exceed 400 days, but the Secretary of Defense can extend tours for operational needs not to exceed 24 months or 730 days.

276th Engineers ordered to federal active duty

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia Army National Guard's Richmond-based 276th Engineer Battalion Headquarters has been ordered to federal active duty in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, according to an announcement made June 16 by Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia.

Approximately 190 Soldiers will enter active federal service in November 2008 and conduct training at Camp Shelby, Miss., prior to deploying to Afghanistan.

"Once again, Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard will answer our nation's call to do their part in Global War on Terror," Newman said. "Engineers have a critical mission in Afghanistan, and I am confident in the abilities of the leaders and Soldiers of the 276th to execute their assigned missions effectively."

A large number of mobilizing Soldiers are from the Richmond area, but approximately 20 Soldiers are from the Northern Virginia area, 20 are from the Hampton Roads area, 10 are from the Fredericksburg area, five are from the Lynchburg area and five are from the Charlottesville-Staunton area.

The 276th Engineer Battalion last deployed from March 2004 to March 2005 when the entire battalion served in Iraq.

With this deployment, the battalion headquarters and the forward support company of the 276th Engineer Battalion will mobilize.

The battalion headquarters will provide command and control for the FSC and three engineer companies from other states. Engineer companies from California, Michigan and Wisconsin

will join the battalion headquarters at Camp Shelby for the final train up prior to heading to Afghanistan.

The West Point-based 237th Engineer Company of the 276th Engineer Battalion is currently serving in Iraq, and the Powhatan-based 180th Engineer Company of the 276th is scheduled to deploy later this year.

Soldiers from the 276th will begin an extended period of active duty training at Fort Pickett starting in September, and they will train there until they move to Camp Shelby to continue their pre-mobilization training.

The unit's specific mission has not been released at this time, but in general terms, engineers in Afghanistan are tasked to perform a variety of mobility and counter-mobility missions for combat operations and logistical resupply. Mobility missions include breaching obstacles and ensuring supply routes are clear and able to support traffic, and counter-mobility missions include developing and emplacing obstacles that would limit the mobility of hostile forces.

Soldiers in the battalion headquarters will provide logistical and administrative support like maintenance, mail and medical services and food service operations for the three assigned engineer companies.

The headquarters can also deploy two command posts to exercise battle command in dispersed locations to support combat operations.

The three assigned engineer companies are known as "sapper" companies. In addition to being able to conduct engineer missions like demolitions, sapper companies are also trained to fight as light infantry Soldiers.

Legislators tour Fort Pickett, meet with Guard Soldiers

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

Five members of the Virginia General Assembly's Guard Caucus toured Fort Pickett May 13 and saw first hand many of the capabilities of the Maneuver Training Center. Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, and Brig. Gen. Eugene Stockton, Assistant Adjutant General, Army, were on hand to escort the group.

The purpose of the Guard Caucus is to give members of the General Assembly a better understanding about the mission and capabilities of the Virginia National Guard.

Approximately 45 state senators and delegates of the Virginia Assembly serve on the Guard Caucus.

The Caucus is co-chaired by Del. John Cosgrove from the 78th District in Richmond and Sen. Mark Herring from the 33rd District in Loudon and Fairfax Counties.

Cosgrove was part of the group visiting Pickett, as well as Delegates Jeffrey Frederick of District 52, Vivian Watts of District 39, Joe Morrissey of District 74 and Franklin Hall of District 69. Paul Van Lenten, a staff analyst for the House Appropriations Committee and Reginald Thompson, a budget analyst for Department of Military Affairs, also took part in the visit.

During the trip, the legislators were able to meet Soldiers training at Fort Pickett and tour a motor pool, small arms range, the urban terrain training site and the Multi-Purpose Range



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

Del. Franklin Hall and Del. Vivian Watts check out the inside of a Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicle while Staff Sgt. Jack Bolan of the Fort Pickett Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site offers information about the vehicle. Members of the General Assembly's Guard Caucus toured Fort Pickett May 13.

Complex.

"The most important thing to me is the number of people who come through and get training here," Morrissey said. "There's a level of preparedness here that I see that makes me feel very comfortable and confident that if there's a disaster, the Virginia Guard is equipped and ready."

"I'm very impressed with the full utilization of the installation," Watts said. "By sharing resources, they make full use of the facilities here."

29th Inf. Div. prepares to support civil authorities

By Spc. John Wood
29th Infantry Division Public Affairs

Improving its ability to provide assistance to local civil authorities was one of the main training objectives of the 29th Infantry Division Headquarters during annual training at Fort A.P. Hill from June 14-28.

The senior staff of the division headquarters conducted a command post exercise focused on a Defense Support to Civil Authorities mission June 23-25.

During DSCA operations Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard would be aiding civil authorities such as a local sheriff or fire fighters to protect the citizens of Virginia as well as the National Capital Region.

The scenario for the training put an emphasis on preparedness. Soldiers participating in a DSCA exercise had to react and respond appropriately when

a series of terrorist incidents struck the D.C. metropolitan area. In the scenario, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management asked for the support of the Virginia National Guard.

According to Col. Steven Scott, the division operations officer, the main purpose of the DSCA exercise is to learn to provide support in a time of civil unrest and to provide military support in a time of emergency.

"Those emergencies can be either natural or man-made, either weather-related or terrorist related," said Scott.

The three main goals of the exercise were to improve staff practices, improve the staff's ability to communicate with higher headquarters and to improve standard operating procedures, Scott said.

"In the event of a real-world disaster, we can refer to our SOPs and react quickly and appropriately," he said.

Scott said that in future exercises the

senior leaders would like to see even more local support so that both the Soldiers and the civil response teams can be fully trained and prepared for those crucial moments when Americans are in need.

Senior leaders were very impressed with the amount of communication between the different sections.

"Interpersonal communications prevailed overall and was the main factor for the success of this operation," said Col. Jeffrey A. Connelly, the division chief of staff.

He indicated the division would like to continue with communications training so that the next time the unit is needed it would be in an even better state of readiness.

"These Soldiers are some of the finest Americans I have ever served with," Connelly said. "We should never be satisfied with what we've achieved because there is always more to be done."

229th MPs march, rappel through annual training at Fort Pickett

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

Soldiers from the 229th Military Police Company tackled a number of missions and tasks during annual training June 14-28 at Fort Pickett.

"It's been a great AT," said Capt. David Sutton, commander of the 229th MP Co. "We've been concentrating on a lot of Warrior Tasks and the Soldiers have been highly motivated."

The training included taking the Army Physical Fitness test, Army combatives training, individual weapons qualification and rappelling.

The unit also conducted three separate road marches with tactical gear. They held four-mile, eight-mile and 12-mile road marches.

This year's annual training also included collective training for the unit's mission

essential task list. This includes conducting cordon and search, reacting to improvised explosive devices, and conducting military operations in urban terrain.

"It's stuff we've been training all year for," Sutton said. "Now we put it all together."

About 30 percent of the company deployed previously, Sutton estimated.

Sgt. Alyce Clark, who has been in the unit for more than 10 years and deployed to Iraq with the company, said she notices how the less experienced troops look to the more experienced ones for insight.

Clark, a team leader in 1st Platoon, said the highlight of the training was serving as the opposing force during training at Beasley Village.

"We really worked together as a platoon and used our experience to test the other Soldiers," she said. "Everyone should have that experience."



Photo by Spc. Geoff Dudley, Virginia Guard PAO
Sgt. Alyce Clark of the 229th Military Police Company, and native of Norfolk, Va., takes instructions from the rappel master during a rappelling exercise at Fort Pickett, Va., June 24.

529th CSSB participates in lane-reversal exercise

By Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hampton
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

More than 140 Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the Virginia Beach-based 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion partnered May 11 with the Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the Virginia State Police to conduct a two-hour emergency preparedness exercise to test state agencies' ability to reverse interstate traffic on I-64 between Richmond and Hampton Roads.

The lane reversal plan is a contingency option for evacuating the Hampton Roads area in the event of a hurricane or other emergency.

Virginia Guardsman assisted VDOT crews and State Troopers at various locations that included 36 interchanges along the 72-mile stretch. The exercise involved closing I-64 east between I-295 near Richmond to just east of the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel.

In addition to elements of the 529th's headquarters company, the Richmond-based 1710th Transportation, the Blackstone-based 3647th Maintenance Company and the Richmond-based 183rd Personnel Services Detachment took part in the exercise which ran from 5 to 7 a.m.

This is the second time in as many years that the agencies got together to test the plan.

In the event of a hurricane or other disaster, the governor can order a lane reversal, which will speed the evacuation of the Hampton Roads region.

"One of the most important missions of the Virginia National

Guard is providing assistance to civil authorities during times of crisis in the commonwealth," said Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., Adjutant General of Virginia. "Taking part in this exercise is an important opportunity for us to work with VDOT, VDEM and the State Police to ensure we are well prepared to respond to a severe weather event in the Tidewater region."

The exercise implemented the Commonwealth's lane-reversal plan and will allow the agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of communications tools, inter-agency procedures and the incident-command structure. It also provided real-world experience for the crews that will have to quickly close 36 interchanges and safely reverse the direction of travel on the interstate if an evacuation is ordered.

The agencies rehearsed all of the steps needed to place westbound traffic in both the westbound and the eastbound lanes of I-64, but no actual westbound traffic was routed onto the eastbound lanes during the exercise.

"The Soldiers, NCO's and officers all came together to make this mission a success," said Lt. Col. Byron R. Marshall, the commander of the 529th. "Everyone knew how important it was to the citizens of the Commonwealth to know that the Guard will be prepared in the event we are needed to assist in the evacuation Hampton Roads."

Col. Janice G. Igou, commander of the 329th Regional Support Group, echoed Marshall's assessment of the exercise.

"The Soldiers of the 529th spent many hours preparing and exercising drills and inspections for the event," she said. "Their efforts paid off and they performed in a flawless manner, and I am very proud of their success."

237th Engineer Soldier gets battlefield promotion

By 1st Lt. Jonathan York
237th Engineer Company

BAGHDAD — While most Soldiers have to wait a specified time in rank or have a selected number of years in service to be promoted, the 237th Engineer Company's Frederic Newton is the exception to the rule. Newton received a battlefield promotion from Private First Class to Specialist on May 17.

By regulation, promotion to the rank of specialist is reserved for Soldiers who have 24 months time in service and six months in the grade of Private First Class. However, during combat operations, commanders can waive promotion requirements based on a Soldier's performance and exceptional accomplishments during combat.

Newton was selected as one of the first National Guardsman to benefit from a new Army experimental program reintroducing battlefield promotions for the first time since World War II. He was selected for promotion with just over a year of time in service by order of Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commander of Multi-National Division Baghdad.

Newton was the only Soldier from the more than 600 in the 35th Engineer Brigade to be selected and one of only five National Guard Soldiers across Iraq to receive a battlefield promotion.

"I'm excited and happy," Newton said when asked what his thoughts were about being the only Soldier in the brigade



Photo by Spc. Bryan Rearick, 237th Engineer Company

From left to right: Sgt. 1st Class Harvey Blow, platoon sergeant; Sgt. T.J. Richey, team leader; Capt. Beau Mason, commander; Spc. Frederic Newton; Sgt. Maj. D.L. Westbrooks, first sergeant; Staff Sgt. Daniel McCann, squad leader.

to be selected for a battlefield promotion. "I'm proud of my accomplishments and I think this can be greatly attributed to the excellent leadership I have had here in Third Platoon, Comanche Company."

The 237th Engineer Company has been deployed to Baghdad since September 2007. Its primary mission is route clearance, where Soldiers clear main and alternate supply routes of roadside bombs.

"The accomplishments of Spc. Newton attest to the quality of Soldiers we have," said Capt. Beau Mason, commander of the 237th Engineer Company.

Virginia Guard Blackhawk rescues State Police helicopter in Roanoke

From Staff Reports

A Virginia National Guard Blackhawk helicopter came to rescue a disabled Virginia State Police helicopter from the roof of Roanoke Memorial Hospital June 28.

The mission required careful planning and cooperation between the Virginia Guard, Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and State Police. Using the Virginia Guard helicopter for the mission required approval from Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine.

The helicopter and crew are assigned to the Sandston-based 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment.

On Wednesday a transmission problem left the police helicopter on Carilion's rooftop helipad. From there, they had several options to get it down.

"We couldn't get a crane in here because there wasn't enough room around the base

of the hospital for the size crane they would need to remove it," said Lt. R.N. Possumato with Virginia State Police.

The National Guard chopper lifted the disabled chopper and carried it to a nearby ground landing pad. Officials estimate it will require about three to four days to repair the helicopter and getting it flying again.

Clearing the disabled helicopter off the roof enabled the hospital to get back to normal operations.

"We certainly do prefer to land on the roof, I mean, that's ideal," said Paul Davenport of Carilion Patient Transportation. "When the hospital was under construction for about three years, we landed on the ground pad and had a short transport over to the hospital. So it creates a slight delay for the patients to be moved over to the hospital by ambulance. But not something that's significant or could potentially impact their health."



Photo courtesy of Darrell Rayfield

A Virginia Guard Blackhawk helicopter transports a Virginia State Police helicopter June 28 in Roanoke.

The successful mission was a new experience for the pilots involved.

"What made it unique is it's a unique load. We really didn't have a full understanding of how it would behave when we lifted it off the ground," Chief Warrant Officer Shane Leipertz said.

192nd first Guard unit to fly F-22 for Noble Eagle

By David Hopper

Air Combat Command Public Affairs

The Virginia Air National Guard's 192nd Fighter Wing is the first Air Guard unit to fly the F-22 Raptor in support of Operation Noble Eagle.

Operation Noble Eagle was established by President George W. Bush to protect the American homeland following the terrorist attacks in September 2001.

Aircrews from the wing's 149th Fighter Squadron fly the Raptor.

"The mission for the protection of the homeland has not changed for us since the inception of Operation Noble Eagle," said Lt. Col. James Cox, 149th FS commander.

The capability of the 149th to carry out the mission has been greatly increased because of the abilities of the F-22.

The Raptor performs both air-to-air and air-to-ground missions providing a diverse

aerial combat capability for operational concepts.

One concept the F-22 has become involved with here is Total Force Integration.

An example of TFI is the combination of two force components -- active duty and Air Guard in this case -- sharing the responsibility of one mission -- Operation Noble Eagle.

Under the TFI construct, the active duty 1st FW and the 192nd FW provide combat forces in a more cost-effective manner to support the defense of the nation, said Lt. Col. David Nardi, 149th Fighter Squadron operations officer.

This is the first time the Air Guard has operated with a front-line fighter soon after it reached full operational capability.

The 1st FW and 192nd FW combined in October 2007 under TFI. That move made the 192nd the first Air Guard unit to

operate the F-22.

"The integration of the two wings provides the combat capabilities we need to execute the Operation Noble Eagle mission," said Nardi.

The TFI construct adds a tremendous amount of ability from all critical areas required in protecting the nation and fulfilling the Air Force mission around the world.

The F-22 flew its first active-duty flight in support of Operation Noble Eagle in January 2007.

The 1st FW's 27th FS was the first unit to conduct an operational flight with live ordnance loaded in the Raptor.

"We do the same thing for Operation Noble Eagle as we would do in theater, in support of the troops," said Cox.

"The F-22 has performed brilliantly and we have seen our best response times to date."

Raptor pilots take to the skies during drill weekend

By Tech. Sgt. James R Orbin

192nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

There is a new warrior defending the Virginia skies at Langley Air Force Base, especially on weekends. Pilots from the Virginia Guard's 192nd Fighter Wing took to the sky in state-of-the-art F-22 Raptors for the first time during a drill weekend, May 17.

Pilots from the 192nd have been training in and flying the F-22s for some time, but this was the first time they flew as part of their normal drill weekend operations.

Across a backdrop of blue skies, Lt. Col. William J. Butz, took the first F-22 wheels off the ground, making history for the 192nd. A total of four F-22s and an F-16 took to the air for dissimilar combat tactics training.

After an hour, the aircraft returned to base. Disembarking from his aircraft, Butz' smile stretched from ear to ear, "It was a great feeling," he said. "Three years of training on the F-22, and the move from Richmond was long, but worth it. We have closed another chapter and we are moving on to better and brighter things, and I am happy to be a part of it."

Richmond became home for Virginia's air defense in 1947. Throughout the years, many things changed, to include unit names, commanders, and even aircraft. In 2004, the 192nd was directed to relocate to Langley Air Force base and work alongside the 1st Fighter Wing. The F-16 Fighting Falcons flown by the 192nd were transferred to other units.

Total Force Integration (TFI) is the newest model of defending the nation and Virginia. The 192nd and the First Fighter Wing at



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

An F-22 Raptor from the Virginia National Guard's 192nd Fighter Wing takes off from Langley Air Force Base May 17. It was the first time Airmen from the 192nd FW took the skies in the state-of-the-art F-22 during a drill weekend.

Langley are among the first to join active duty and guardsmen in an associate capacity. The rest of the Air Force and especially Air Combat Command is observing the change. "It is a new way of doing business here and throughout the Air Force," Butz said.

So if you hear the roar of a Raptor scraping the sky above on a weekend, rest assure that the 192nd Fighter Wing of the Virginia Air National Guard is back in business, protecting and defending its citizens of the Commonwealth, just as in 1607 the English colonists defended Jamestown. The unit continues its rich legacy as it begins writing a new chapter in its history.

Specialized Virginia National Guard Response



Photos by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The CERF extraction team works to rescue a simulated casualty from the rubble pile at the Fort Pickett urban training site.

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

A special response force of the Virginia National Guard has been validated to provide support to first responders and civil authorities if the Commonwealth of Virginia was attacked with a high-explosive, chemical, radiological or nuclear weapon of mass destruction.

The unit conducted an external evaluation at Fort Pickett June 26, and the evaluation team announced the results of the evaluation June 27.

The special response force, known as the CERF (pronounced "surf"), trained for months to prepare for the evaluation by the Joint Interagency Training Center. CERF stands for Chemical, Biological, Radiological/Nuclear and Explosive - Enhanced Response Force. Soldiers and Airmen from units based in Richmond, Hampton, Norfolk, Danville, Virginia Beach, Bowling Green and Langley Air Force Base took part in the exercise.

The mission of the CERF is to provide immediate response capability to the Governor. The specially trained and equipped elements of the CERF are capable of searching an incident site that includes damaged and collapsed buildings, rescuing any casualties from rubble piles, decontaminating citizens injured in the attack and performing medical triage and initial treatment to stabilize them for transport to a medical facility.

"The lead evaluator was very complimentary of our performance," said Lt. Col. Todd Hubbard, commander of the CERF. Hubbard explained there were 16 major tasks the unit had to accomplish, and the CERF was rated fully trained on 15 and needed to practice further on one.

"We also exceeded the required total throughput of casualties during the exercise," he said. "The lead evaluator said that we are ready and he would deploy with us anywhere. I am very proud of the efforts of the CERF team."

With the validation, the CERF is ready to respond in the event of a crisis.

"There is no doubt the CERF is ready to respond," said Col. Rob McMillin, director of joint operations for the Virginia National Guard. "The evaluators were very complimentary of the outstanding morale and professionalism of our Soldiers and Airmen. More importantly, they said they are fully confident that our CERF is fully capable of responding to a crisis, and they would be proud to serve beside them."

Virginia's CERF was authorized in June 2006. Since that time the Soldiers and Airmen of the CERF have undergone training and equipping to prepare them for their mission.

The CERF, which is made up of approximately 250 Virginia Soldiers and Airmen, is unique in that it includes elements from several different units from across the state rather than one specific unit.



Medical personnel from casualty in order to evaluate



Members of the Virginia Defense Force were on hand for the exercise to assist with expertise in communications, structural engineering, fixed wing flight, triage, critical incident stress management and security.

Response Force validated



Members of the Virginia Air Guard's 192nd Medical Group work to stabilize the casualties and prepare them for further medical care.

Each element of the CERF has a specific mission: search and extraction, mass casualty decontamination, mass casualty triage and command and control.

The CERF command and control team directs the overall activities of the CERF and coordinates with the Joint Task Force and the incident commander.

The units making up Virginia's CERF include:

- Command and control element from the Hampton-based Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery and Richmond-based 276th Engineer Battalion
- Mass casualty decontamination element from Richmond and Norfolk-based Alpha and Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery; and the Roanoke and Danville-based 229th Chemical Company;
- Search and extraction element from Virginia Beach-based 203rd Red Horse Squadron with the Bowling Green-based 189th Engineer Company
- Mass casualty triage element from the 192nd Medical Group, Virginia Air National Guard stationed at Langley Air Force Base.

The Virginia Defense Force was also an integral part of the CERF evaluation with over 100 volunteers supporting the unit with expertise in communications, structural engineering, fixed wing flight, triage, critical incident stress management and security.

In the scenario for the external evaluation, the CERF responded to a chemical attack during a presidential inauguration. The extraction team simulated rescuing casualties from the Fort Pickett urban training site, and the command and control, decontamination and medical triage element set up their operations at the Blackstone Airfield.

More than 200 role players were on hand for the



After rescuing casualties from the rubble pile, members of the extraction team conducted aerial medical evacuation to get the casualties to the treatment and decontamination site.

evaluation. To add to the realism, the role players were outfitted with Hollywood style make up to realistically present injuries the CERF might see in real life.

In the event of an attack with a weapon of mass destruction, the state would make a request to the Virginia Guard's Joint Operations Center. From there, Soldiers and Airmen of the CERF would be put on state active duty and move to incident site and fall under control of the incident commander.

In most situations, local authorities would have established some sort of decontamination site immediately after the attack, so the CERF would augment the existing site or establish a new site to increase the number of casualties that can be treated.

The CERF can also respond to incidents outside of Virginia under the terms agreed to in the Emergency Mutual Aid Compact or EMAC. After arriving at the incident site, the command and control team and element commanders coordinate with the incident commander and Joint Task Force commander to determine how to most effectively employ the CERF.



Casualties move through the decontamination line before they can be fully evaluated and treated by medical personnel. Once they have been decontaminated, they will be stabilized by medical personnel and evacuated from the site for further treatment.