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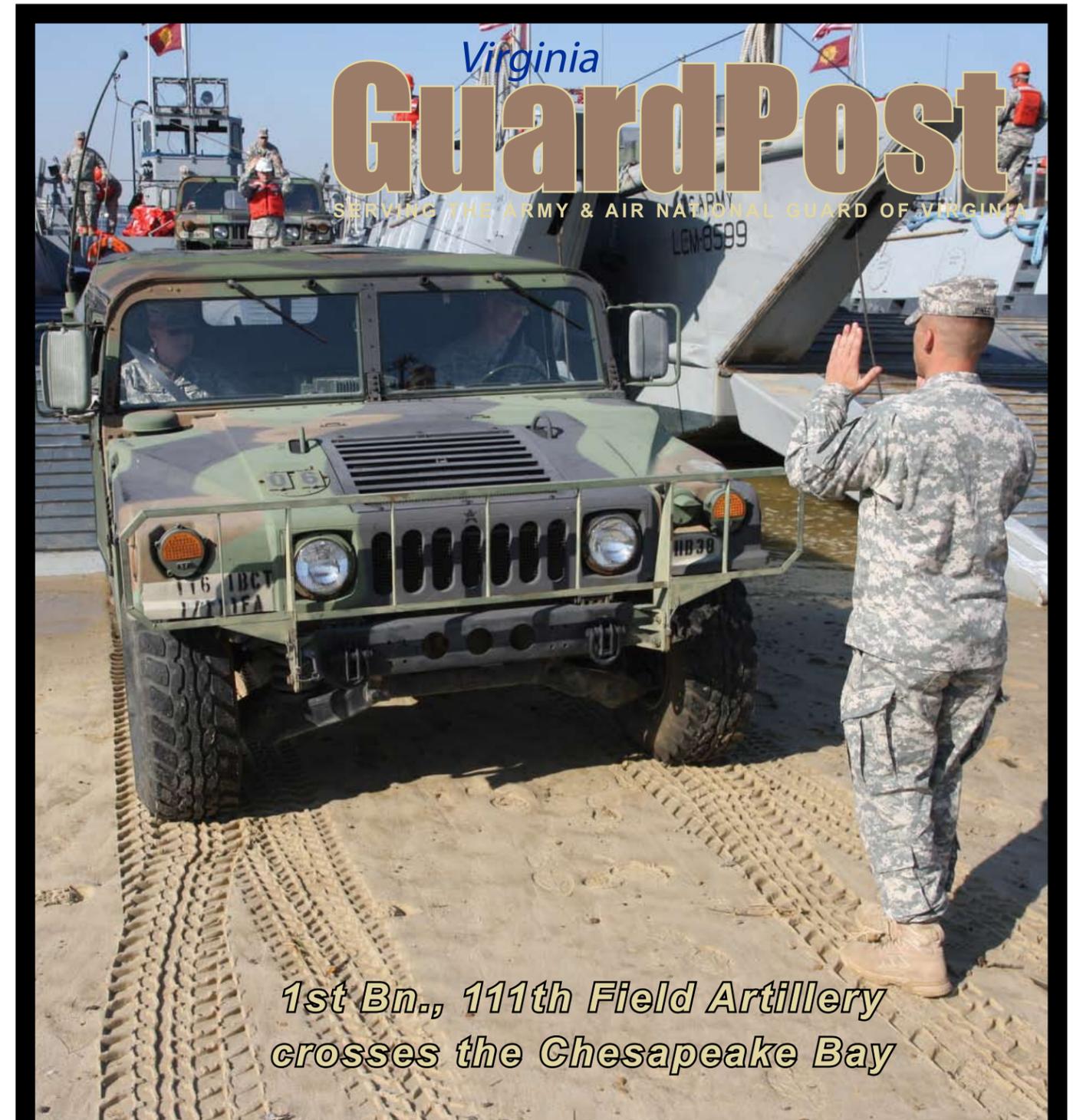
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Photo by Sgt. Michael Williams, CSJFTC Public Affairs

Staff Sgt. Brenton Boone and other Soldiers of the Richmond-based 276th Engineer Battalion prepare to conduct Military Operations on Urban Terrain training at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center in Mississippi in December. The unit is training at Camp Shelby in preparation for an upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. See story on page 6.



*1st Bn., 111th Field Artillery
crosses the Chesapeake Bay*

NOVEMBER- DECEMBER 2008



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Reservists
train to lead at
ANCOC**

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FROM THE TOP



Virginia Guard continues to balance state and federal missions

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

As 2008 draws to a close, the members of the Virginia National Guard can look back with tremendous pride at the significant accomplishments of our Soldiers and Airmen both overseas and here in Virginia. We continue to effectively balance our federal mission of supporting the Global War on Terror with our critical mission of protecting the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Our first call to support our partner agencies in Virginia came early in the year. More than 120 Virginia National Guard Soldiers went on state active duty Feb. 11 to join in the Commonwealth's battle against wild fires raging throughout the state. Many of these Soldiers took part in their Freedom Salute honoring their service in Kosovo on Sunday and reported for firefighting training on Monday morning. The actions of the Soldiers helped save lives and property and was invaluable in the state effort to contain the fires.

In April and May, we welcomed home more than 1,500 Virginia National Guard Soldiers who had been serving overseas in Iraq and Kuwait. It is truly remarkable how quickly these Soldiers were able to mobilize as part of the troop "surge," with many of them having only returned from Afghanistan duty 19 months before mobilizing again for duty in Iraq.

Our accomplishments overseas in support of the Global War on Terror have been significant, but we also should take heart in the difference Virginia Guardsmen are making in the lives of the people in countries where they serve. A perfect example of this came when medical care provided by a Virginia Army National Guard Soldier in Iraq was a major factor in a preventing an infection that could have cost a young girl her arm.

Our recruiting and retention efforts have been paying off as we continue to grow our ranks. The Virginia Guard ended the month of April with more than 8,000 members for the first time since 1994.

The Air Guard's integration at Langley



Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr.

Air Force Base continues to be a major success. On May 17, pilots from the 192nd Fighter Wing took to the sky in F-22 Raptors for the first time during a drill weekend. These pilots have been flying the state-of-the-art aircraft for some time, but conducting flight operations on a drill weekend was a sign that these flights were becoming part of the unit's routine operations.

In June, a special response force of the Virginia Guard was validated to provide support to first responders and civil authorities if Virginia was attacked with a high-explosive, chemical, radiological or nuclear weapon of mass destruction during an external evaluation at Fort Pickett.

The special response force, known as the CERF (Chemical, Biological, Radiological/ Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) - Enhanced Response Force), trained for months to prepare for the evaluation. The unit is a true joint, state-wide effort with Soldiers and Airmen from units based in Richmond, Hampton, Norfolk, Danville, Virginia Beach, Bowling Green and Langley Air Force Base taking part in the exercise.

In early September, we once again answered the state's call to duty as the Virginia Department of Military Affairs carefully managed the response to

Hurricane Gustav to ensure the necessary resources would be available in case Tropical Storm Hanna created situations where DMA support would be needed.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the important role of the Virginia Defense Force in our operations. The VDF conducted a field training exercise at Fort Pickett Oct. 4 and 5 that had the largest participation ever of any training exercise at the division level.

These dedicated volunteers truly embody the spirit of selfless service, and they bring additional personnel, communication resources and experience to the overall response capability of the Virginia National Guard. As the VDF continues gaining new members, they will continue to be an invaluable member of our team.

As we look ahead into 2009, we can already see where our services are once again needed at home. The Virginia National Guard's Joint Operation Center is hard at work developing a plan to assist with security operations for the Inauguration of President-Elect Barack Obama, and the Virginia Guard will play a major role.

Our plan to support operations in the National Capital Region is something we have been working on for three years. I believe very strongly that we must have a solid plan in place for how we would respond to an attack on the National Capital Region, and we must be prepared to work hand in hand with our partner agencies in Virginia, as well as in Washington, D.C. and Maryland.

The lessons we will learn in assisting with the Inauguration will help us better understand the capabilities of these other agencies, and increase our chances for success in operating in this challenging multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional environment.

I could not be more proud of the efforts of our Soldiers, Airmen and members of the Defense Force and their dedicated service to Commonwealth and Country. My thanks to your families, employers and communities for the support they provide so we may all continue our service in the Virginia National Guard.

News Briefs

29th Infantry Division welcomes new CSM

Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis A. Green joined the 29th Infantry Division Headquarters, Headquarters Company Nov. 1 to succeed Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony D. Price as the division command sergeant major.

The Virginia native, who was promoted to command sergeant major in 2004, has served as an infantryman in the Virginia National Guard for over 23 years. Most recently he served as the post command sergeant major of Fort Pickett Maneuver Training Center.

The division appointment is "humbling," said Green. "With the transformation, everything's changed. We're going in new directions," he added.

Cav squadron pins new command sergeant major

Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Gibbs was promoted and named the command sergeant major of the 2nd Squadron, 183rd

Loudoun County shows appreciation for Virginia National Guard

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors presented a resolution of appreciation for the "Welcome Home National Guard" campaign spearheaded by the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce and Loudoun Cares at its public input session Dec. 1.



The two organizations worked to engage the financial support of 120 Loudoun businesses and residents to show Loudoun's appreciation of the service of the Virginia National Guard, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry, following the unit's one-year deployment in Iraq.

The effort resulted in more than \$200,000

in cash and in-kind contributions, including donations of \$25,000 or more from M.C. Dean, Tarara Winery and Telos.

The funds were distributed to the 180 infantry members to help offset the financial strains of their deployment and facilitate the redeployment process as they return to their families.

Cavalry Regiment Oct. 1 at the State Military Reservation at Camp Pendleton.

Lt. Col. William Korsen and Command Sgt. Maj. Carl Holcomb welcomed Gibbs as he accepted the promotion with his wife and their three

daughters at his side. Gibbs previously served as the first sergeant of the squadron's A Troop during a recent deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I am very excited about Command Sgt. Maj. Gibbs

joining the squadron command team," Korsen said.

"He is a proven leader, respected throughout the organization, and is committed to ensuring our Soldiers are prepared to support the Commonwealth."

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

Virginia National Guard Federal Deployments

# *	Unit	Where Deployed	Home Town
170	266th Military Police Company	Fort Dix, N.J.	Manassas
160	180th Engineer Company	Fort McCoy, Wisc.	Powhatan
170	1710th Transportation Company	Kuwait/ Iraq	Emporia
15	192nd Security Forces Squadron	Kyrgyzstan	Langley Air Force Base
16	Brigade Embedded Training Team	Fort Riley, Kan.	Various Locations
16	Battalion Embedded Training Team	Fort Riley, Kan.	Various Locations
30	Data Processing Unit	Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan	Manassas
40	Various Virginia Army Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Various Locations
50	Various Virginia Air Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Various Locations

* All listings for numbers of Soldiers/Airmen are approximate as of Jan. 4, 2008

Virginia Soldiers begin Afghan training, mentoring mission

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers serving in Afghanistan to train and mentor members of Southern Afghanistan police officially began their mission Dec. 24 with a change of command ceremony in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

American forces from the Regional Police Advisory Command - South gathered at Forward Operating Base Walton to take part in the change of command ceremony where Col. James M. Harris of the Virginia National Guard assumed command of all police mentors in Southern Afghanistan. Also in attendance were Afghan Police officers from throughout southern Afghanistan and the Commanding General and staff of the southern Regional Afghan Police headquarters. Harris assumed the command from Col. John F. Cuddy of the New Hampshire National Guard.

The mission of the RPAC-S is to mentor the more than 14,000 members of Southern Afghanistan's police officers and train, equip and prepare them for a lasting peace in southern Afghanistan. Harris and the other members of the Virginia National Guard Brigade Embedded Training Team work hand in hand with their Afghan counterparts to mentor them at the headquarters and company level. The team is scheduled to return to Virginia in late August 2009. In addition to the 16-Soldier Brigade Team, Virginia also has a 16-Soldier team serving at the battalion level.

"I think the Soldiers from the two Virginia teams recognize the importance of this mission," Harris said. "When you see and sense the threats that the Afghanistan population face, you quickly develop an urge to want to help protect them and help them rebuild their nation. It's quite rewarding to see small successes."

Harris said those successes could be as simple as learning a new Pashtu phrase or as significant as meeting with the Regional Police leadership, providing security for a food distribution convoy, or winning a gunfight against the Taliban.

The two Virginia Guard teams are working at different levels and scattered across the terrain of Afghanistan, but the common theme is that the Virginia Guard



Photo by Maj. Michael Booker, Virginia National Guard Brigade Embedded Training Team

Capt. Jacob Goodine and Maj. Jim Contreras of the Virginia National Guard Brigade Embedded Training Team complete a tabletop exercise with their Afghan counterparts.

Soldiers are there to mentor, Harris said. "The spectrum lies somewhere between teaching and soldiers to conduct small unit tactics to battalion and brigade staffs interacting with the Afghanistan police staff to help them become more effective in their respective functional and operational areas to with the end state of them Afghans being able to operate independently."

With the official start of the mission taking place the day before Christmas, the holiday was just another workday according to Maj. Michael Booker, a personnel officer mentor for the brigade team.

"The teams continued to do missions and we worked at the headquarters like it was a regular day," Booker said. "We cut out a little early and had Christmas dinner, with the commander and sergeant major serving the troops. Our base doesn't have a dining facility, so we cook for ourselves. The guys did a great job creating a typical Christmas meal."

Booker said that gaining the trust of the Afghans they work with is key. "So far we have formed strong bonds with them," he said. "With a National Guard rotation of 9-10 months, it is difficult to maintain consistency with police, but if we do the job right then the next teams coming in will pick up on our successes."

The Afghan Police is not 100% trusted

yet by the people, Booker said, so the efforts of the Virginia Guard Soldiers are to help the police gain that trust. "We are very cautious in convoys because there are still IED dangers all over Afghanistan, but the key is to mentor the police so that they can manage themselves and protect the people without assistance."

Day-to-day life presents a challenge due to the harsh living conditions in the unit's area of operations. "We spend a lot of time just taking care of our life support issues," said Capt. Jacob Goodine. "There are just a few people on this forward operating base and we take turns cooking and cleaning and maintaining all of our equipment. The desert environment just destroys equipment very quickly, and almost every day some important piece of equipment breaks and we've had to find a way to get it fixed. This is everything from washers and dryers to our generator to various parts on our vehicles."

Despite mission requirements, Soldiers have made time for humanitarian assistance operations. "We try to do something of each month," said Maj. Tim Crider. "Our first HA effort was to give coats for kids that a lady back in the U.S. had sent. There weren't a lot of coats but for one person sending it seemed to make a big difference."



On the Cover



Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery unload Humvees at Fort Monroe after crossing the Chesapeake Bay in LMC 8 landing crafts. (Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs)

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Virginia GuardPost

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Holcomb named new Army Guard command sergeant major

From Staff Reports

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, announced Nov. 10 that he selected Command Sgt. Maj. Carl Holcomb to replace Command Sgt. Maj. James D. Rogers as the Virginia Army National Guard command sergeant major.

Holcomb will officially assume those duties on Jan. 1, 2009.

“Command Sgt. Maj. Holcomb brings a great deal of experience to the position having served at every level of NCO leadership. Most recently, he served as the command sergeant major of the 116th Brigade Combat Team and Joint Area Support Group- Baghdad while deployed to Iraq. I am confident that Command Sgt. Maj. Holcomb will serve the Virginia Army National Guard in a superb manner,”

Newman said.

Rogers assumed his duties as state command sergeant major Nov 1, 2007. He will end his AGR tour but continue his service as a traditional Soldier in the Virginia Army National Guard until his retirement in a role not yet determined.

“I appreciate and will greatly miss Command Sgt. Maj. Rogers’ counsel and tireless work on behalf of the command,” Newman said. “Command Sgt. Maj. Rogers, executing his duties with great distinction during a period of high operational tempo, served as a tremendous advocate for Guardsmen and their families. His efforts have had a lasting impact on the Soldiers, families, and civilians of the Virginia Army National Guard and he will be sorely missed.”

Holcomb, a resident of Mechanicsville, Va., has held a variety of leadership and



Command Sgt. Maj. Carl Holcomb

staff positions since joining the Virginia Army National Guard in April 1982.

He has previously served as command sergeant major of 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion in Fredericksburg, 116th Brigade Combat Team in Staunton and Joint Area Support Group- Baghdad, Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Commonwealth aids Virginia veterans following combat

By 2nd Lt. Scott Campbell
2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment

Gov. Tim M. Kaine and the Virginia General Assembly unanimously approved legislation effective July 1, 2008 directing the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, in cooperation with the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services and the Department of Rehabilitative Services, to establish the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program.

The program was created to address the needs of state veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and related hardships, regardless of branch or time of service. The state-wide program will coordinate support services for veterans with PTSD and TBI resulting from deployment to a combat area. The goal is to ensure that these veterans and their families receive timely assessment, treatment and support.

“Mental health issues can cause a ripple effect,” said retired Navy Capt. Catherine A. Wilson, the program’s executive director. “In some instances, left untreated PTSD and TBI can lead to substance abuse, domestic violence, alcoholism, unemployment and homelessness.”

This program, the newest within the DVS, will help to coordinate care and rehabilitation using existing federal, state and local providers. Other services, such as financial assistance, housing and transportation may also become more available through partnership with organizations assisting veterans and through private donors.

The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program does not replace the care or service provided by the Veterans Administration. The program will work in cooperation with the VA to ensure that

veterans and their family members receive the help they need.

“We want to be known as a safety net for veterans and their families,” said Wilson. “We are a link between the veteran, the caregiver and other resources.”

The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program will also partner with Virginia Community Services Boards and brain injury service providers to ensure that there is adequate access to assist qualifying veterans and their families.

“The stigma associated with those that have the courage to seek help for mental health or behavioral issues is a real challenge. Stigma has prevented many civilians and veterans with PTSD from obtaining the help they need. In our military there is a fear of appearing weak and that getting help will damage a servicemember’s career,” said Wilson. “In the Commonwealth of Virginia, we are fortunate to have the highest level of support. Shining light on this subject and having senior leadership behind us is a powerful combination.”

The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program is expected to be fully functional in 2009.

“Our goal is to be a model state in how we treat and serve our veterans and their family members,” said Wilson.

The General Assembly appropriated \$4.5 million, with \$100K specifically earmarked for TurboVet - a claims processing system, over the next two years for this program.

If you or someone you know is a Virginia veteran – or the family member of a Virginia veteran – who may have suffered from PTSD or TBI as the result of service, please visit www.virginiaforveterans.com or contact the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program central office at 804-371-4675 or 8431 for further information.

Mercer takes command of 183rd Regional Training Institute

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Lt. Col. Walt Mercer assumed command of the Virginia National Guard’s Fort Pickett-based 183rd Regional Training Institute from Col. Ken McGrew in a ceremony held at Fort Pickett Nov. 23. The change of command ceremony marked the end of a three-year command tour for McGrew. Mercer just recently relinquished command of the Portsmouth-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry, a unit that he commanded during its federal tour of duty in Iraq and Kuwait from September 2007 to May 2008.

“Under the guidance and leadership of Col. McGrew, this regiment has lived up to a standard of excellence,” said Brig. Gen. Eugene A. Stockton, Assistant Adjutant General for Army. He recognized the RTI for the many awards they have received, all centered around the word ‘excellence.’



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs
Brig. Gen. Eugene Stockton hands the 183rd RTI colors to Lt. Col. Walt Mercer to signify his assumption of command.

“This regiment received an honor that is very difficult to get. I am not surprised because the Soldiers, the NCOs and officers have the middle name of excellence.”

“Without this regiment and its commitment to training excellence, I don’t know where the Virginia Guard would be,” Stockton said. “It has stood up to the challenge of getting our Soldiers ready for the numerous deployments taking place in the Virginia Guard.”

Stockton commended Mercer for his leadership of the 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry during the unit’s combat deployment, and he said he knew he was up to the task of commanding the RTI.

“These past three years have not only been a great opportunity for me, but it has allowed me to mentor, coach and share my experiences and knowledge not only with members of the 183rd, but with the many Soldiers that have passed through

the doors of this great school house,” McGrew said.

“I have learned throughout my career that no one person or command becomes successful without the support and help of many people,” he said. “I have been blessed to work for and with many great officers and enlisted personnel.” McGrew gave credit to the professionalism and quality of the RTI’s Noncommissioned Officer Corps as a large part of the many successes the unit achieved over the last three years.

In his remarks as outgoing commander, he highlighted some of the most significant achievements.

The RTI’s 1st Battalion received the “Center of Excellence” award, the highest award that any “school house” training unit can receive. RTI’s 2nd Battalion completed the stand up transition to a transportation training battalion one year ahead of schedule and earned



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard PAO
Col. Ken McGrew hands the 183rd RTI colors to Brig. Gen. Eugene Stockton to signify his relinquishing of command to Lt. Col. Walt Mercer.

accreditation on the first time it was evaluated. The 3rd Battalion completed the “stand up” of the military police training company a year ahead of schedule, passed their accreditation on the first time it was evaluated, and the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course received the “Center of Excellence” award.

The Virginia National Guard Office Candidate School Company also received the “Center of Excellence” award, and assisted the Maryland OCS Battalion they align with in their accreditation and helped the battalion secure “Center of Excellence” honors. McGrew said it was the first time that both a company and a battalion received “Center of Excellence” honors by any other state.

The battalions of the RTI increased their throughput by more than 1,400 Soldiers for critical infantry, military police and transportation specialties during the state’s largest mobilization push since World War II, McGrew said.

“Today I have the honor of assuming command of the 183rd RTI,” Mercer said. “The great success that RTI has had during his three years of command speaks for itself, and I am honored to have the opportunity to continue the great work that he and the staff here at RTI have done.”

Guardsmen, Reservists train to lead at ANCOC

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Infantry staff sergeants and sergeants first class from across the National Guard and Reserves executed a raid on a notional missile-site at Fort Pickett Maneuver Training Center Nov. 20 as part of their final field training exercise of the Advanced Non-Commissioned Officer Course taught by the instructors of the 183rd Regional Training Institute.

During the exercise, the 19 infantrymen worked together at the company-level just as they had learned during the two-week course.

For many this was a first chance to operate at a level above a platoon-sized element, according to Staff Sgt. Laszlo Melan of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, and a student in the class.

"It brought a lot of good training value to people who were stuck in their comfort zone," said Melan. "I've never been so logistically challenged; I've never had to write a company OPORDER (operational order)."

Moving through the woods as a unit to seize and destroy the objective gave the men an opportunity to recognize the importance of their individual roles on the battlefield, and they all learned to see all the moving pieces of a large movement to contact, from the planning all the way to the execution.



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

Spc. John Dethdy, a combat medic, rushes his patient Sgt. 1st Class Allen Hale to an ambulance during the Advanced Non-commissioned Officer Course field training exercise. Hale works in the recruiting & retention command for the Washington National Guard.

"Everybody learned a little about themselves (and their role), whether they were squad leader, platoon sergeant, or platoon leader," said Sgt. First Class Elden Dasilva, RTI instructor and ANCOC Course Manager.

Of the 19 warriors that began ANCOC 09-002, all 19 graduated on Nov. 22.

Guard celebrates American Indian Heritage Month

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters Equal Opportunity office kicked off American Indian Heritage Month Nov. 6 at the Camp Pickett Officers Club at Fort Pickett.

The celebration began with opening remarks by Lt. Col. Jeffrey Stewart, State Safety Officer and American Indian Special Emphasis Program Manager.

During his opening statement Stewart emphasized the great contributions the Native Americans have made to the United States Military.

"American Indians have served with distinction in the military dating back to the War of 1812. During World War II these brave patriots used their native languages to create an unbreakable oral code," said Stewart.

Following the invocation, Chief Red Hawk, an award-winning recording artist and master storyteller, was introduced.

Red Hawk kept the crowd entertained with stories of his life growing up as a Cherokee Indian with his family in a modern-world and a demonstration on Native American drums and a flute.

Red Hawk, a former military serviceman himself, understands the importance of teaching cultural diversity to Soldiers.

"Every time you learn about someone else's culture, you benefit your culture," said Red Hawk.

Following the musical presentation, attendees were welcomed to taste authentic American Indian cuisine. The food available for sample, provided by a local caterer who researched and prepared the authentic dishes, was turkey, succotash, beans and rice, Indian fry bread (hoe cakes), pumpkin bread, and mint tea.

Those in attendance were able to experience life as seen through the eyes of a culture different from their own and see what makes this country truly diverse.

"This year's program was educational, it was fun, interactive, and it gave a great



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

Chief Red Hawk performs at the American Indian Heritage Celebration Nov. 6 at Fort Pickett.

illustration of this country's diversity," said Capt. Antoinette Allen, State Equal Employment Manager.

29th Army Band salutes the holiday season

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

The Virginia National Guard's 29th Army Band treated Guardsmen, their families and members of the local community to the sounds of the season with three free holiday concerts Dec. 5-7 in Weber City, Centreville and Virginia Beach.

First Baptist Church in Weber City, Centreville United Methodist Church in Centreville and Thalia Lynn Baptist Church in Virginia Beach hosted the events.

The concerts were a chance for the Soldiers and Airmen of the Virginia National Guard to express their appreciation for their families' and friends' support during the past year, according to Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia.

"Your care and concern for our Guardsmen and their families have been instrumental in the accomplishment of the Virginia National Guard mission both here in the Commonwealth and overseas," said Newman. "As a token of our appreciation, it is our pleasure to celebrate the holiday season with the performance featuring the Virginia National Guard's 29th Army Band."

The band performed a variety of holiday songs such as "Sleigh Ride," "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," "Jingle Bell Rock," and "O Holy Night," as well as a medley of other Christmas favorites. Vocalists Melissa Carter, Tina Harrison and Chelsey Helms joined the band for the



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The 29th Army Band and vocalist Melissa Carter perform Dec. 6 in Centreville, during the second of three free holiday concerts the Virginia Guard presented throughout the state.

performances.

Near the end of each show, Santa Claus made a surprise appearance and the audience joined the band and vocalists for a sing-a-long.

Following the concerts, guests and band members gathered for refreshments and visits with Santa.

"It was great that the community and families

came out and supported the concerts," said Dana Ivory, Family Program State Youth Coordinator. "I'm definitely looking forward to doing it again next year."



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

Vocalists (l-r) Sgt. Jason Hale, Tina Harrison, Melissa Carter and Chelsey Helms joined the band for the performances.



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Sgt. Jason Hale of the 29th Army Band was one of four vocalists who performed with the band during the concerts. The concerts took place at churches in Weber City, Centreville and Virginia Beach.

276th Engineers mobilize for Afghanistan

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Hundreds of people braved the cold November rain to visit the Landmark Theater Sunday to see their loved ones of the Virginia National Guard one more time before the Soldiers headed off to their mobilization training in preparation for their upcoming overseas deployment.

Family and friends packed the theater to say farewell to the Richmond-based 276th Engineer Battalion Nov. 30 prior to their departure to Camp Shelby, Miss., where the roughly 200 Soldiers will finish up their training before deploying to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The battalion, which is comprised of two companies, the headquarters Support Company and Forward Support Company, has been conducting pre-mobilization training for the past several months at Fort Pickett, Va.

During the training at Fort Pickett the Soldiers focused on weapons firing, medical tasks, communication skills and driver training. The training they received will allow unit members to focus on their collective mission of improvised explosive device defeat and route clearance during their time at Camp Shelby.

"We spent about 90 days down at Fort Pickett trying to hone our skills," said Lt. Col. James Zollar, battalion commander. "I would like to let every family member know that you are preparing to deploy a professional, respectful, and vigilant Soldier. They've honed their skills and they're ready. They've improved their abilities to shoot, their ability to move across the battlefield, and to communicate across the battlefield. They can take care of themselves and they can take care of business."

The Soldiers will spend several months away from their families while they provide coalition support to the people of Afghanistan. The Adjutant General of Virginia, Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr. promised, "Your leadership is well-trained,

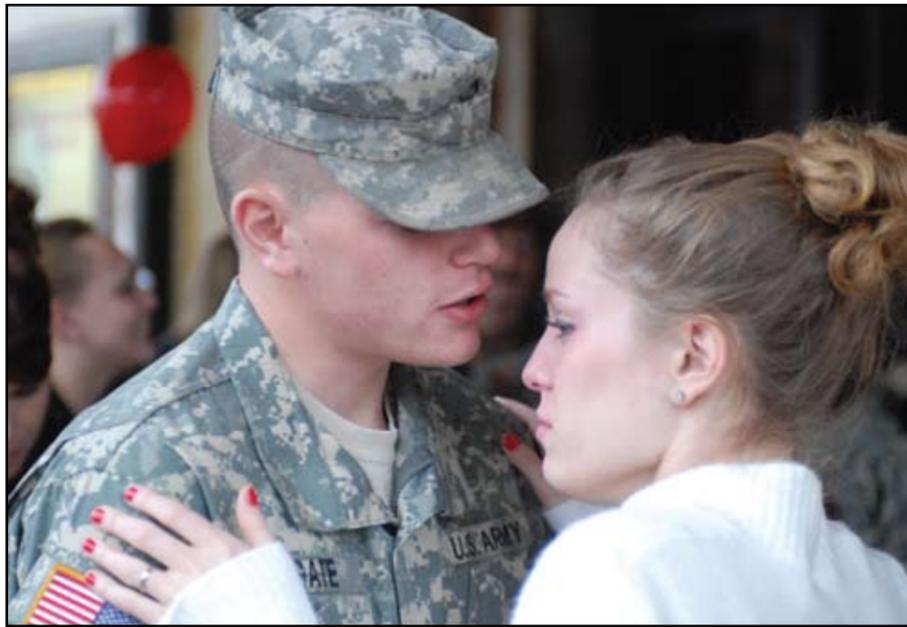


Photo by Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Lauren Martinez embraces her fiancé Pfc. Kris Fugate before he departs to Camp Shelby, Miss., on Nov. 30. Fugate is a Soldier in the Headquarters Support Company, 276th Engineer Battalion.

and they will train you well at Shelby to do the mission overseas. We will do all we can to protect and defend your families back here at home, and we will do all we can to support you in your mission overseas."

The primary mission of the unit is projected to be providing command and control for one active Army combat engineer company based out of Germany and three National Guard combat engineer companies from Michigan, California, and Wisconsin that will be providing route clearance and IED defeat to coalition forces in Afghanistan.

"I assure you that while difficult and challenging, the mission you are going to be a part of in Afghanistan is a critically important one and the Afghan people appreciate it," said Virginia Governor Tim Kaine.

Of the roughly 200 Soldiers deploying with the unit, three of them have a special, unbreakable bond. They are family. Sgt. 1st Class Felton J. Screen, Staff Sgt. Randy L. Screen, and their sister 1st Lt. Demetra J. Screen are all deploying together with the 276th Engineers.

The Screens are deploying with almost 30 years experience between them, and both Felton and Randy have deployed in the past.

Although this is Demetra's first combat deployment, she feels at ease knowing

that she will have her brothers there for support.

Felton, the senior personnel sergeant for the battalion, served with the battalion in Iraq from October 2004 until March 2004 and understands the job carries a lot of responsibility, but said, "Knowing the family is here, that's very comforting. When there is some rough times I have two counselors on my left and my right I can go to."

When Randy was looking for a deployment to volunteer for and discovered he could deploy with his siblings it was not a tough decision. He said he could have gone with the embedded training team, but would much rather deploy with his family.

As the executive officer for the FSC, Demetra, who left Friday for Camp Shelby as part of the advance party to prepare for the unit's arrival, was a little nervous about her first deployment but said, "I'm kind of excited now that I have my family going with me."

While the Screens will find themselves separated from most of their family, they will have a unique opportunity to have their siblings close while doing an important service to the people of Afghanistan. For most Soldiers it will be months before they see their families again, the Screens will hopefully not go more than few days at a time.

Soldiers lay the smack down at Fort Pickett

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

It could be said that learning to defend one's self is an important skill for anyone to learn, but for Soldiers it can mean the difference between life and death. That's why some Soldiers are being given the chance to learn or improve those skills in a controlled environment.

Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard, alongside Army reservists and Guardsmen from Idaho, came to Fort Pickett, Va. to learn Modern Army Combatives skill level one certification from instructors from the 1st Battalion, 183rd Regimental Training Institute through the commissioning authority at Fort Benning, Ga.

The 40-hour course, which began Dec. 8 and ran through Dec. 12, is aimed at teaching Soldiers the basics of modern army combatives. The course focuses on styles of mixed martial-arts with many of the moves based on Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, or Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, a martial-art that focuses on 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 knocked out depending on what

submission method is used.

Throughout the phase the students learn 13 core movements. "The core dynamic is from Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. A lot of the things we teach, the name is changed to fit the dynamic of the Army's understanding," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert J. Homer, course manager. "The move is the same, the name is just changed."

Homer, as well as some of the students, has additional experience in MMA from civilian based training institutes. Homer, in addition to being level four trained by the Army, has been training for almost five years, and has trained in Tae Kwan Do and several other fields of MMA, but his main focus has been in BJJ. He has even been trained by individuals from the Charles Gracie Academy in California.

"I had a feeling that it was a little bit different, a little more technical than civilian MMA," said Spc. Sur Thompson, a cook from E Co., 429th Forward Support Battalion, who has been training in Roanoke for some time now. "We don't get as technical as we do here."

Many of the moves he had learned before and had been executing in his personal training, but now he has learned why he was executing the moves in the first place, said Thompson.

All Soldiers are now required to learn basic combatives at Basic Combat Training, but the level one course takes the training to the next step and builds on the Soldier's understanding of the principals learned in basic training. The level one course is also a "train-the trainer" course, meaning graduates will then be certified to go back to

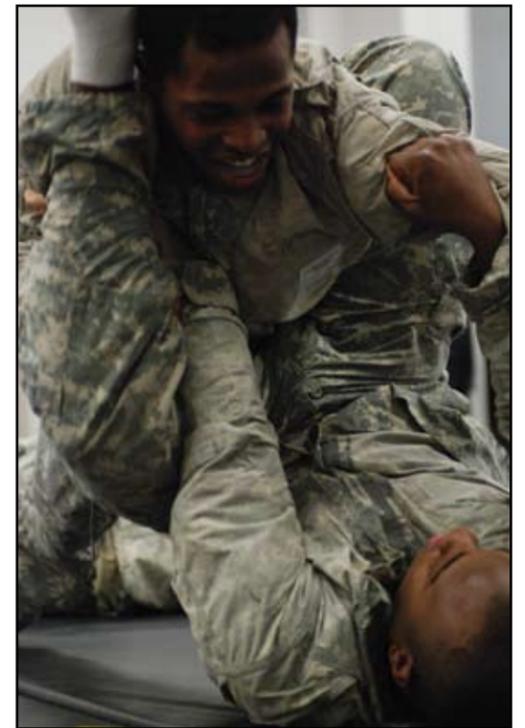


Photo by Sgt. Andrew H. Owen, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Spc. Christopher Starks of Norfolk (top) tries to mount his partner Spc. Sur Thompson of Roanoke during combatives training. The Soldiers spent five days practicing their ground-fighting skills at Fort Pickett.

their units and train Soldiers at the platoon level.

Upon completion of level one, Soldiers are then qualified to move on to level two. Skill level two is an 80-hour, two-week course that builds off of the skills introduced in the basic course. It is tailored to teach the more advanced techniques which illuminate why the basic techniques are performed, as well as the philosophy/methodology of the program.

Level two graduates are often encouraged to move onto skill level three, a 160-hour, four-week course where Soldiers build from the skills taught in the previous two courses. It is designed to take the skills that have been until now stand alone, and integrate them into mission essential task list training.

The final phase of the Modern Army Combatives course is skill level four. Skill level four is a 160-hour, four week course designed to provide Unit of Action and higher level master trainers.



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

Staff Sgt. Victor Beasley takes a defensive posture during training at the Army Modern Combatives, skill level one certification course at Fort Pickett, Va. Beasley is an Artilleryman with the Richmond-based A Co. 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery.

237th Engineer Company holds Freedom Salute

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the West Point-based 237th Engineer Company gathered in Williamsburg Nov. 16 to conduct a Freedom Salute in honor of the unit's service in Iraq. Approximately 105 Soldiers from the unit returned to Virginia July 20 after serving in Iraq since September 2007.

"I hope you realize that we know here in Virginia that whether we need you in here the Commonwealth or if your country needs you overseas in the Global War on Terrorism that we can always count on you," Virginia Secretary of Public Safety John Marshall told the Soldiers of the 237th Engineer Company. "Please know that we don't take that for granted. We have tremendous respect for each and every one of you and we are very proud of you."

Marshall also expressed appreciation for the support the Soldiers received from their families. "We are also here to take time to say thank you to your families for the important role that you play time and time again, deployment after deployment keeping things together back at home so these Soldiers can focus on their important mission," he said. "Thanks to you for your support that means so much to these Soldiers."

The Freedom Salute was a day of mixed emotions for the unit. The handing out of awards and recognition of their service was tempered by the fact that the unit lost four Soldiers over the course of the mobilization.

Cpl. Joshua Primm of Williamsburg was medically evacuated Oct. 25 after being severely injured in an IED attack that claimed the lives of Sgt. David Eugene Lambert and Sgt. Derek R. Banks. After over a year of working to recover from his wounds, Primm was seeing his fellow Soldiers from the unit for the first time since he was medically evacuated.

"These guys are awesome," Primm said. "When times are tough, these guys are at their best."



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

The Adjutant General of Virginia, Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman Jr., pins the Purple Heart Medal on Cpl. Joshua Primm at the 237th Engineer Company's Freedom Salute in Williamsburg, Va. Primm was also awarded the Army Commendation Medal with V device and the Army Combat Action Badge for his service in Iraq.

Primm said he planned to return to the unit after completing his recovery and hoped to serve as a team leader. He said he looked forward to deploying with the unit again and was "ready to go."

After the Freedom Salute, the unit conducted a change of command ceremony where Capt. Beau Mason turned over command of the unit to 1st Lt. Jonathon York.

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

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

In addition to the items presented as part of the Freedom Salute, the 237th Engineer Company presented three Purple Heart Medals, one Meritorious Service Medal, 11 Army Commendation Medals with "V" device for Valor, four Army Commendation Medals and five Combat Action Badges.

While serving in Iraq, the 237th Engineer Company was tasked to conduct

route clearance missions. During these operations, patrols search for improvised explosive devices along main and alternate supply routes for maneuver elements within their assigned areas.

"Soldiers from the 237th Engineer Company were instrumental in spearheading the shaping and isolation operations within Sadr City during its peak in violence and their efforts directly lead to the peaceful resolution of hostilities within Sadr City," said York, the operations officer for the company.

The 237th Engineer Company lost four Soldiers during the mobilization and deployment:

Staff Sgt. Jonathan M. Forde died of illness on Aug. 13, 2007, during mobilization training at Fort McCoy.

Sgt. David E. Lambert was killed on October 25, 2007 when an IED struck his vehicle.

Sgt. Derek R. Banks died of wounds suffered from the same incident on November 14, 2007 at Brooke Army Medical Center in Texas.

Staff Sgt. Jeremiah McNeal, who was on his second tour in Iraq, was killed on April 6, 2008 when his vehicle was struck by an IED.

These names were added to a monument outside the West Point Armory.

1032nd Transportation Co. wins Connelly Award

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard's Gate City-based 1032nd Transportation Company has won the Department of the Army's annual Philip A. Connelly Award For Excellence In Army Food Service in the National Guard Field Kitchen Category.

"The food service staffs of these units deserve special recognition for their contribution toward improving the Army's food service program, and for their superior efforts in enhancing the quality of food service for our Soldiers," said John Q. McNulty, Chief of the Food, Liquid Logistics, and Field Services Division, Directorate of Supply for Department of the Army, in the letter announcing the winners. "All finalists displayed high standards of excellence; were very competitive; and are congratulated for their outstanding performance." McNulty sent notifications to the winning units via email Dec. 19.

Soldiers from the unit prepared their meal for the competition at Fort Pickett in October.

They competed against National Guard units from six other regions across the country and were judged in 11 different categories that ranged from sanitation to the quality of the food.

The unit will receive the actual award during ceremonies scheduled April 2 - 5 in Atlanta.

"I am so proud of all the Soldiers in the company and want to give my thanks to



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

Staff Sgt. Joey K. Falls (left) and Spc. Seth Grove (right) of the 1032nd Transportation Company serve 1st Sgt. Ernest T. Miller out of a mobile kitchen trailer.

those involved with this year's competition that made this win possible," said Capt. Alexandre Oryschak, the commander of the 1032nd. First Sgt. Ernest T. Miller is the unit's senior noncommissioned officer and Master Sgt. Brian E. Kinkead is the food operations sergeant in charge of the winning team.

"This is the second consecutive year that the 1032nd has participated and was selected as both the State and Regional Connelly Champion," said Lt. Col. Doug Messner, commander of the 1030th Transportation

Battalion, the battalion headquarters for the 1032nd. "Winning the overall competition this year is confirmation of what we've known at the 1032nd and the battalion staff for many years: the combination of great teamwork, commitment to providing the Soldiers the best food service possible and the energy and camaraderie of the team is electrifying."

The commander of the 329th Regional Support Group, Col. Timothy Williams, echoed Messner's assessment. "Winning the Connelly Competition is a true reflection of a great unit with a history of outstanding performance in food service operations," Williams said. The 329th is the brigade headquarters for the 1032nd.

The Connelly program is named in honor of Philip A. Connelly, past president of the International Food Service Executives Association, highly regarded as the driving force behind obtaining IFSEA sponsorship for the Department of the Army's recognition of excellence in Army food service.

The program is co-sponsored by the Department of the Army and IFSEA. IFSEA representatives participate in the evaluation of finalists in five dining facility categories - Small Garrison, Large Garrison, and Field Kitchens in the Active Army, U.S. Army Reserve and Army National Guard.

U.S. Army Center of Excellence and Subsistence and IFSEA evaluators traveled around the world during the past three months to obtain first-hand knowledge of how Army food service personnel perform their jobs.

All the finalists were evaluated in a number of areas including food preparation, taste, nutrition, service and sanitation.



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

Spc. Daniel C. Elswick of the 1032nd Transportation Company supplies drinks for Soldiers during a lunch at Fort Pickett.

180th Engineers train up for Iraq at Fort McCoy

Fort McCoy News Release

Members of the 180th Engineer Company were at Fort McCoy, Wis., to prepare for a deployment to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Since their arrival at Fort McCoy in October, Soldiers from the 180th, an Army National Guard unit with its home station in Powhatan, Va., have participated in extensive training on equipment and procedures to learn skills they will need to be successful in their mission overseas. Soldiers from the 180th also come from the Richmond, Roanoke and Bristol, Va., areas.

"We welcome the training here at Fort McCoy as an effort to get us prepared for our mission overseas," says Capt. Edward Lewis, commander of the 180th. "The unit is also proud of the support it receives from the Soldiers' hometowns. They know it is just as much a burden on them to have their loved ones serve overseas and that having these hometown connections makes the deployment that much more bearable."

While at Fort McCoy, the unit planned and executed training to provide them with specific combat, survival and warrior skills.

This training is the cornerstone for priming Soldiers for deployment. Soldiers train in an environment and in situations that



U.S. Army Photo

Sgt. Andrew Gough sits in the driver's seat and studies the controls of the Heavy Equipment Transporter tractor at the Regional Training Site-Maintenance Yard at Fort McCoy, Wis. Instructor Sgt. 1st Class Jay Andrews, behind Gough, provides some of the details about the truck, one of the largest in the Army inventory.

replicate, as realistically as possible, those they will experience overseas.

Soldiers lived in tents in a field location for a portion of the time they were training at Fort McCoy. The training area was surrounded by concertina wire, entry control points and guard towers. Soldiers traveled in convoys. They encountered role players posing as civilians on the battlefield or opposing forces.

The training is repetitive, and its intensity increases with each iteration. The ultimate goal is to have Soldiers respond intuitively to threats and situations they encounter.

The list of required training is extensive. The 180th participated in training related to weapons qualification, Army warrior training, physical fitness, leadership, combat life saving, improvised explosive devices, mounted combat patrol operations, urban operations, entry control point operations, motor vehicle operations and maintenance, protective mask familiarity and confidence, detainee operations, hand-to-hand combat, reflexive fire, grenades, culture/customs/language, land navigation, and much more.

The 180th's training culminated in an Army Training and Evaluation Program, which incorporated and tested all aspects of the individual and collective training they had received.

Prior to deployment, the unit will receive additional military occupation specialty training and will be validated.

"We hope to greatly improve our mission readiness by coupling the training at Fort McCoy with the skills we already have as a combat engineer unit," Lewis said. "All the combined training brings the Soldiers together and prepares them for our mission overseas."



U.S. Army Photo

Sgt. Terry Poe and Spc. Kara Regrut of the 180th Engineer Company maintain security along with the driver and turret gunner in the Humvee guntruck while two D7 bulldozers and a front-end loader reposition dirt on a hillside on a Fort McCoy, Wis., training range.

29th ID Soldiers learn lessons of a lifetime

By Maj. John H. Alderman IV
124th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP ASAKA, Japan — A task force of the 29th Infantry Division, composed of Virginia and Maryland National Guardsmen, conducted two weeks of training near Tokyo with the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force Dec. 2-14.

The training was part of Yama Sakura 55, an annual bilateral exercise between U.S. and Japanese forces.

The Guardsmen, led by Brig. Gen. Peter C. Hinz of Maryland, are responsible for the command and control of a division of simulated soldiers in a computer-generated Command Post Exercise, or CPX, that emulates an attack on Japan by a fictitious military threat. The Guardsmen must replicate the full range of staff work and coordination necessary to move the simulated units.

The goal, explains Hinz, "is to improve relations and improve our ability to work together as military units." Reaching that goal requires building relationships on a personal, as well as an operational level, with their Japanese counterparts.

"It's been an outstanding experience working with the Japanese and learning about how they run their operations," says Sgt. 1st Class Roy White, an intelligence sergeant with the division. "I hope one day to return and do it again."

The task force is redefining how the 29th Infantry Division staff works together to accomplish its missions. Many of the Guardsmen have recently deployed, but most are new to their current duty positions. And procedures are being updated to take advantage of new technological capabilities available to the unit.

Similarities

Japan's Constitution currently constrains the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force to missions that defend the Japanese people and ensure their security. This could mean natural disasters or external military threats.

Hinz notes that this is operationally quite similar to the role that National Guard units play in the states.

"In addition to our federal mission to mobilize and defend the nation, we have state Defense Support to Civilian



Photo by Maj. John H. Alderman IV, 124th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Command Sgt. Maj. Fred Bruner of Richmond, Va., coordinates a mission with his counterparts in the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force during Yama Sakura 55.

Authorities missions," explains Hinz. "So in case of natural disasters or catastrophic events, we perform a lot of the same missions to take care of our local citizens as does the Japanese Self Defense Force."

Both the National Guard and the JSDF serve in a support role to civil governments and agencies. And both must be able to work efficiently with organizations that may have dissimilar operating habits or procedures.

The Yama Sakura 55 scenario covers the full spectrum of military operations, from civil support to traditional frontline battles. Sometimes complex coordination is required, which means lots of lessons learned that the 29th Division can apply to their state missions back home.

"We have to learn to work with our counterparts," says Hinz. "This truly is a joint, multi-government, multi-agency exercise. And when we have operations at the state level, we have to work with state governments and state agencies to do our missions."

Transformation

The 29th Infantry Division's lineage extends back to World War I, when the division was formed from units in Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia. The unit symbol — a blue and gray taijitu — symbolizes the unification of regiments that fought on both sides of the American Civil War.

The unit later led the amphibious assault on Omaha Beach on D-Day. Since then, the unit has served around the world, including in Kosovo and Bosnia.

Now once again a National Guard unit, the 29th Infantry Division has recently begun to transition to a standalone headquarters. Rather than retain its traditional war-fighting subordinate units, it will serve as a headquarters able to take over command and control of other units wherever the Army needs it.

Explains Hinz, "We're excited to be part of the Army's move to the future where we can plug and play in order to take control of different formations on the battlefield."

116th BCT keeps regimental history alive at 41st muster

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers and officers of the 116th Brigade Combat Team, also known as "The Stonewall Brigade," donned their dress green and dress blue uniforms to gather with family and friends at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center in Staunton Nov. 8 to mark the unit's 41st Annual 116th Regimental Muster. The purpose of the formal dinner was to honor the unit's service to the commonwealth, the nation, the Soldiers, and the unit's long and rich history.

This year's muster was the first time the majority of the individual units of the 116th BCT have been able to assemble together since 2006 because of the deployment of units to Iraq, Kuwait and Kosovo. Between overseas deployments, wildfires, hurricanes, tropical storms, and other homeland defense missions, the 116th has been actively engaged for the past few years.

The muster was a great opportunity for Guardsmen to reconnect with their brothers-in-arms.



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

Lt. Col. John Epperly (left) and retired Brig. Gen. Theodore G. Shuey Jr. (right) display a World War II-era helmet that 3rd Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team was presented as a gift while they served in Kuwait. The helmet will be donated to the 116th museum.

"I am very proud and thankful to stand before you and report that all the Stonewall units have returned from their deployment(s) and are in the middle of re-set operations, focusing on reintegration with families, friends, work, and their respective communities," said Col. William R. Phillips, commander of the 116th BCT.

In attendance at the Muster were Soldiers and officers of the unit both past and present. There were several veterans of the unit from World War II, some whom stormed the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944.

From the Adjutant General of Virginia, Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman Jr., to World War II re-enactors, some not even old enough to enlist in the Guard, the 116th was recognized as one of the finest units the National Guard has ever seen.

Historically a Muster was the day designated each year when all able-bodied men were assembled on the village green for a roll-call. Thus, in every community, it was known exactly how many men could be counted on in the event of an emergency. Once the nation got away from using militias, the Guard ceased to muster.

According to retired Brig. Gen. Theodore G. Shuey Jr., Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, in 1967 the veterans of WWII felt the need to again muster, so for the last 41 years they have come together to celebrate the rich heritage of the unit. They first met at the armory in Staunton, and now in the ballrooms of the Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center.

Following the presentation of the colors and the introduction of



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

Col. William R. Phillips, commander of the 116th Brigade Combat Team, affixes the Iraq Campaign Battle Streamer to the brigade colors at the 41st annual 116th Regimental Muster.

general officers in attendance, the chaplain held a memorial to honor the fallen Warriors affiliated with the regiment lost in the past year. An impromptu roll call, a moment of silence, and a bugle playing "Taps" solemnly paid tribute to the departed.

For the valorous service of the Soldiers during the ongoing war on terror there have been 1,841 individual combat awards presented to Stonewall Soldiers, said Phillips. "This encompasses 15 Purple hearts, 97 Combat Infantry Badges, 70 Combat Action Badges, one Combat Medical Badge, 108 Bronze Stars, 68 Meritorious Service Medals, two Army Commendation Medals with 'V' Device, 730 Army Commendation Medals, six Navy Commendation Medals, 595 Army Achievement Medals, 18 Navy Achievement Medals and 131 Joint Awards."

In addition to the many individual awards received by the Soldiers the unit also received multiple unit awards and citations, to include a battle streamer from Operation Iraqi Freedom awarded to the Brigade Headquarters. Phillips had the honor of affixing the streamer, the first awarded to the unit since WWII, to the Regimental Colors at the muster.

Family of fallen Virginia Guard Soldier presented with General Assembly Resolution

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia Senator Phillip Puckett and Delegate Dan Bowling presented House Joint Resolution No. 249 to the family of Sgt. David Eugene Lambert Nov. 8 as part of the Veterans Day recognition held at the Southwest Virginia Community College in Cedar Bluff. Lambert died of wounds sustained from an improvised explosive device Oct. 26, 2007, in Baghdad, Iraq.

Puckett and Bowling presented the framed resolution celebrating Lambert's life to his mother, Mary, and niece, Brittany. Lambert was assigned to the West Point-based 237th Engineer Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, 91st Troop Command of the Virginia National Guard.

In addition to the presentation of the joint resolution, Capt. Beau Mason presented

Lambert's family with a United States flag that was flown over the unit's operations center in Iraq as well as a unit coin.

"Today we are here to honor Sgt. Lambert, who is described by his fiancée as proud, lovable and ambitious, and as a man who took life seriously, but could also make others laugh and lift their spirits," said Lt. Col. Eric Barr, the executive officer for 91st Troop Command and the keynote speaker for the event.

"Perhaps most notably, he loved children, his family, and his community, where he lived in their service," Barr said. "He loved his country, and volunteered 13 years of his life to its defense and preservation. And he gave the ultimate sacrifice in that selfless service, representing the values of our nation, and epitomizing the traditions of our military through duty, honor, and country."



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard PAO

The family of fallen Virginia National Guard Soldier Sgt. David Eugene Lambert was presented with House Joint Resolution No. 249 as part of the Veterans Day recognition held at the Southwest Virginia Community College in Cedar Bluff Nov. 8. (Left to right) Lambert's niece, Brittany, his mother, Mary, Virginia Senator Phillip Puckett and Delegate Dan Bowling.

Cavalry troops gather for Yellow Ribbon Seminar

By 2nd Lt. Scott Campbell
2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment

Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the Virginia Beach-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment gathered at the Hampton Convention Center Dec. 6 to conduct a Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Seminar to follow up on the Squadron's return from Iraq in June of this year. Nearly 300 Soldiers attended the day's events.

Soldiers were able to attend briefings presented by a number of vendors. The topics covered a range of issues, which directly affect the Soldier at a personal level.

The day opened with a briefing on Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System to inform Soldiers of the coming change in the program used to track personnel records for all branches of the military. Throughout the day Soldiers were able to update their records in preparation for the implementation of the integrated database. The program is expected to go live sometime after the first of the year.

Lt. Col. Bill Korsen, the squadron commander, said, "The day pulled a lot of Soldier resources together to ensure the

troops have the opportunity to gain the full effect of those benefits."

Representatives of the Military & Family Life Consultant Program were on hand to speak with Soldiers about some techniques to aid in reintegration with their families, their friends and their communities.

Scott Fowler, a counselor with the Military & Family Life Consultant Program, estimates that "the majority of Soldiers returning from a deployment will not need counseling to assist them in reintegration."

The program is not intended to replace other programs, but to supplement them. The Guard will stand by those Soldiers who do need that assistance.

Financial consultants were also available to advise Soldiers in financial planning, Tricare, and other services that are available to them.

Bob Ponton, a professional financial consultant with the Military & Family Life Consultant Program, spoke with Soldiers about the importance of financial planning. Ponton said, "Proper financial planning is crucial to a Soldier's success and stability whether before, during or after deployment."

Pvt. Brett Witter of Bravo Troop said, "I liked the training and it helped me to see what is possible with financial planning."

Ponton addressed a number of techniques for successful financial planning. Soldiers can seek advice on financial planning, military benefits, budgets, debt liquidation, student loans and tuition assistance, veteran's benefits, and taxes to name a few. Soldiers can call (800) 646-9220 to speak with a personal financial counselor.

Another good resource for Soldiers interested in financial planning is www.militaryonesource.com

"The day was a success; the squadron is better prepared to continue meeting its goals," said Korsen.

Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Gibbs, the squadron's command sergeant major, said, "Today's Yellow Ribbon Seminar has given the troops a wealth of information to pull from. I've seen them in action as a first sergeant and I'm sure they will take that information and put it to good use!"

Soldiers of any service who need more information on the Military & Family Life Consultant Program can find it on the internet at www.mhngs.com or by calling (888) 755-9355.

Hampton-based Virginia Guard troops navigate the Chesapeake Bay during joint training event



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the Hampton-based Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery unload Humvees at Fort Monroe from an LMC 8 landing craft from the Fort Eustis-based 1098th Transportation Detachment.



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

A Virginia National Guard Soldier watches an LMC 8 Landing Craft from the Fort Eustis-based 1098th Transportation Detachment as the ships make their way across the Chesapeake Bay on their way to Fort Monroe.

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

More than a dozen Hampton-based Virginia National Guard Soldiers loaded their Humvees onto Army ships and traveled across the Chesapeake Bay during a joint training exercise Nov. 2 with Fort Eustis Soldiers.

The Guardsmen, from Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery, traveled from Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek in Norfolk to Fort Monroe in Hampton thanks to the Soldiers and Landing Craft Mechanized boats of the 1098th Transportation Detachment.

The hour-long trip was a chance to familiarize the Guard troops with the process of traveling across the water should the need arise following a natural or man-made disaster.

"Hampton Roads is surrounded by water," explained Capt. Fred Moore, commander of Headquarters Battery. "If the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel or Monitor-Merrimac Bridge-Tunnel is destroyed we would have to find

another way to get around. If we had a category five hurricane, we wouldn't have a bridge to use."

The Soldiers of the battery spent most of their regular drill weekend at the State Military Reservation at Camp Pendleton in Virginia Beach. But Sunday morning they traveled in a convoy to NAB Little Creek, where they assembled their Humvees near the water and waited for the ships to arrive.

After the LMCs pulled in, a safety briefing was given to all Soldiers and the eight Humvees were loaded on to four boats.

The convoy of ships pulled away from the shore and headed toward open water. Within minutes the Soldiers felt the wind pick up and the temperature drop as the Navy base faded from view.

Soon the Chamberlin Hotel became visible through the haze and the ships steamed toward the Fort Monroe marina. One by one the boats pulled to the shore and dropped their doors as the Humvees rolled out onto the sand. From there the Guardsmen drove the seven miles back to their home armory while the LMCs headed up the James River to return to Fort Eustis

"It's great to get out with the 1098th and train with them," Moore said. "We had a great time and the more opportunities we get to train with the active duty, the better."

"It was pretty high speed training," said Sgt. Richard Diver. "Any time I can get out on the water, it's fun. We could really use these guys and their boats in the event of an emergency."

In addition its role as a traditional field artillery unit, 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery is the command and control headquarters for a special response force known as the CERF (pronounced "surf"). CERF stands for Chemical, Biological, Radiological/Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) - Enhanced Response Force. Soldiers and Airmen from Virginia National Guard units based in Richmond, Hampton, Norfolk, Danville, Virginia Beach, Bowling Green and Langley Air Force Base make up the entire CERF.

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.



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

LMC 8 Landing Craft from the Fort Eustis-based 1098th Transportation Detachment make their way across the Chesapeake Bay on their way to Fort Monroe.



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Soldiers and their Humvees were transported to Fort Monroe. From there they drove to their armory in Hampton to complete their training mission.