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*Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs*

Virginia Guard Airmen use a front-end loader to move sand bags for a bunker project during the 203d RED HORSE field training exercise Sept. 11 at the State Military Reservation. More than 150 Airmen belonging to the Virginia Air National Guard's rapid-response engineering unit took to the field for the exercise. See page 8 for the story.

Virginia  
**GuardPost**

SERVING THE ARMY & AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF VIRGINIA



**Three Virginia  
Guard units  
return home**

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2009



**183rd RTI  
Soldiers teach  
Rappel Master  
course**

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**29th ID, 20  
countries  
partner up for  
PANAMAX '09**

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## FROM THE TOP



## Senior Virginia Guard leaders look back at the last year and look forward to the year ahead

This fall we convened the Virginia National Guard General Officer Steering Committee that brought together the senior leaders of the Virginia Army and Air Guard in order to assess where we have been in the last year and look ahead to what path we want the organization to take in the future.

There is tremendous benefit in getting senior leaders together to share the perspectives of their service components, and the meetings we conducted were informative and worthwhile. If we want our organization to be effective, we can't just look a day or two ahead, we must look ahead a year or more to be sure we are taking the organization in the direction it needs to go in order to meet the challenges of our state and federal missions.

In the last year, the Virginia National Guard has once again successfully balanced the demands of our state support to civil authorities mission with our federal active duty mobilizations in support of the Global War on Terror. We also continue to have great success in our recruiting efforts, and we are looking at ways to improve the retention of quality Virginia Guard Soldiers and Airmen for continued service to commonwealth and country.

The Irish Rain exercise we conducted in June provided us the opportunity to test our existing state response plans, and we were able to identify the seams and gaps in those plans. We will now refine our plans based on our lessons learned, and we will once again exercise our state response capabilities with an exercise scheduled for Summer 2010.

Where Irish Rain focused on our ability to support the citizens of the commonwealth during a major hurricane, our planned Irish Heat exercise will simulate a terrorist attack in the National Capital Region involving a nuclear detonation. This exercise will test our ability to provide support for evacuation as well as our ability to assist with decontamination and medical triage missions.



**Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr.**

It is also important that we improve our ability to interact with active duty military forces who will be on duty in the event of

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*Just as we have worked to develop a joint force in the Virginia National Guard, we must also work to develop a joint force with our partners in the active duty military as well as state and federal government.*

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an attack on our nation's capital. Just as we have worked to develop a joint force in the Virginia National Guard, we must also work to develop a joint force with our partners in the active duty military as well as state and federal government. None of these agencies will be alone in supporting an attack of that

magnitude, and the Virginia Guard will be a vital member of team that supports our citizens in their time of need.

A major topic of discussion during our two days of meetings was the results of the command climate survey we conducted in September and October. I commissioned that survey to get a read on how members of the Virginia National Guard feel they were being treated, and the results indicated that we can improve the level of respect that Guardsmen have for each other.

Brig. Gen. Bob Tucker, our director of interagency operations, has been tasked with heading up the task force to dig deeper into the responses we received in the survey and develop an action plan to be briefed at our commander's conference in January.

It is essential that every member of the Virginia National Guard feel valued and work as a member of a team without any regard to their gender, race, ethnic origin or religious affiliation. This is a major priority and the general officers in the Army and Air Guard will have an active role in the execution of the final action plan.

I think there are few things more essential to a unit's ability to accomplish its assigned mission than a strong sense of teamwork, and that can only come about when each member of the team feels valued and respected. Our Soldiers and Airmen should be judged on their skills, ability and experience, not by their gender or skin color.

Unit cohesion and mutual respect between Soldiers and Airmen are critical to the Virginia National Guard being able to accomplish the many important missions assigned to us.

Our standard must be that we will foster a climate where consideration of others and equal opportunity are not training sessions we conduct on an annual basis, but basic themes we live by and influence our conduct on daily business.

## News Briefs

### Virginia Air Guardsman becomes Deputy Director of Operations for First Air Force

Col. James N. Cox, a commander and command fighter pilot with the Virginia Air National Guard, has accepted an assignment as the Deputy Director of Operations at First Air Force (Air Forces Northern), headquartered at Tyndall Air Force Base, Panama City, Fla.

First Air Force is one of four numbered air forces assigned to Air Combat Command. It has the responsibility of ensuring the air sovereignty and air defense of the continental United States. As the CONUS geographical component of the binational North American Aerospace Defense Command, it provides airspace surveillance and control and directs all air sovereignty activities within the continental United States. First Air Force is also the Air Force forces provider to U.S. Northern Command. In

this role, AFNORTH has the responsibility of providing Air Force capabilities in support of civil authorities during national special security and emergency events.

As the Deputy Director of Operations for First Air Force, Cox will serve as a primary staff advisor for the direction and control of U.S. Air Force forces assigned to the NORAD and USNORTHCOM area of responsibility which includes the United States, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. He will be responsible for the implementation of Air Force policy and support for air, space and information operations within the region. He will ensure that Air and Space Expeditionary Task Forces are capable of performing assigned missions. His directorate works in concert with NORAD and USNORTHCOM Logistics, Plans and Policy, and Installation and Mission Support directorates to manage and oversee crisis action planning. He will be responsible for leading cross-functional

long-range plan development, as well as executing a range of threat-response plans.

Prior to accepting this position, Cox served as the Director of Operations on the Virginia Air National Guard Headquarters Air Staff in Sandston, Va., where he was responsible for the effective and efficient operation of Virginia's air component.

### 29th Army Band changes commander

For the first time in eight years, the 29th Army Band changed commanders in an emotional ceremony Oct. 18 at the Roanoke Armory.

In front of a packed drill floor that included the company formation surrounded by families and friends, 1st Sgt. Fred Lewis passed the guidon to Warrant Officer Donald Carlson.

After the traditional change of command ceremony, Col. Steven Scott, commander of the 91st Troop Command, praised Lewis in a speech

and then presented him with a Meritorious Service Medal for his work and dedication as commander.

Since 1984, the band has only had one warrant officer as its commander. Carlson is now the second.

During the 2009 training year, the 29th Army Band supported 48 missions for live audiences with an audience count well over 300,000 and two national television audiences for NASCAR races at the Martinsville and Richmond speedways.

The unit also performed 62 bugler missions in support of memorial services and funerals.

The 29th Army Band also performs in an annual holiday tour for military families.

Present-day missions take band members across Virginia and the region.

They perform in concert, marching band, and small ensembles for military and civilian functions alike, with a repertoire that meets the needs of all of its audiences.

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
150	229th Military Police Company	Iraq	Virginia Beach
5	134th Chaplain Support Team	Southwest Asia	Fort Pickett
18	Det. 2, Co B, 777th Aviation Support Battalion	Kosovo	Sandston
17	Det. 26, Operational Support Airlift Command	Southwest Asia	Sandston
200	276th Engineer Battalion	Afghanistan	Richmond
20	192nd Maintenance Group	Saudi Arabia	Langley Air Force Base
25	192nd Intelligence Squadron	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Langley Air Force Base
75	Various Virginia Army Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Various Locations
10	Various Virginia Air Guard Units	Homeland Defense/OIF/OEF	Various Locations

\* All listings for numbers of Soldiers/Airmen are approximate as of *October 25, 2009*

# Virginia Guardsmen gain German gold for military proficiency

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia Army National Guard Soldiers joined hundreds of other Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines Sept. 30 in Reston to participate in a 10-30 km road march in the culminating event for Das Abzeichen für Leistungen im Truppendienst, or the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge for military proficiency.

The march began at 7:30 a.m. and took the 23 Virginians around Lake Audubon as much as three times.

The Soldiers marched anywhere from 10-30 kilometers based on their age group or the badge they were competing for - gold, silver or bronze.

All 23 Virginia Guardsmen earned the Gold GAFPB, according to Capt. Rick Harrison, assistant operations officer, 116th Brigade Combat Team.

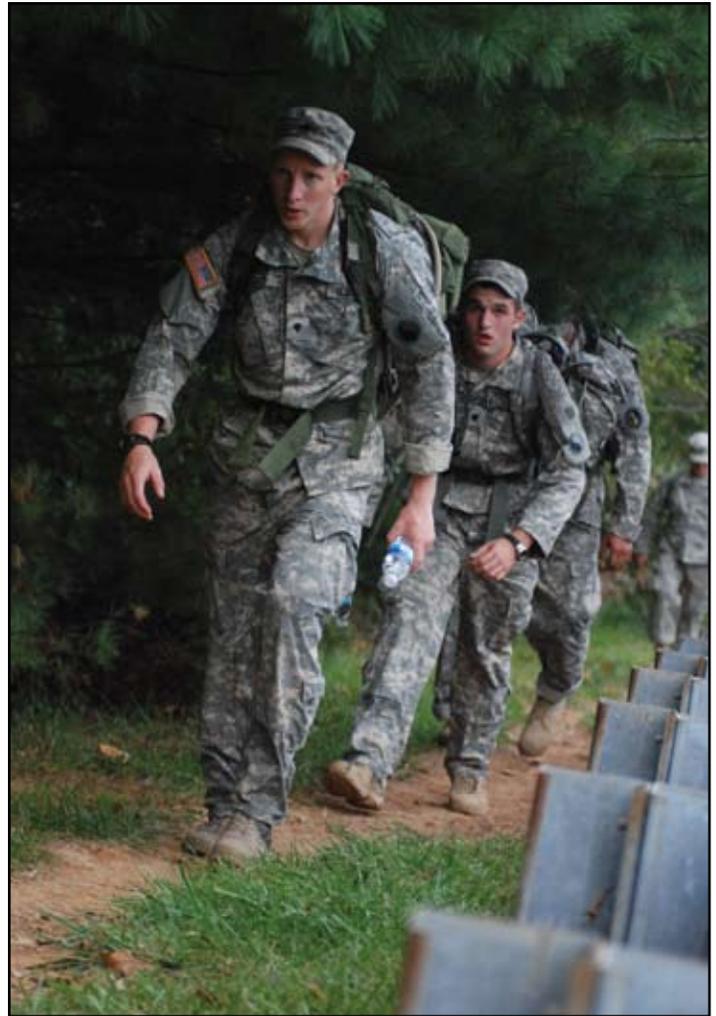
With a 25 pound rucksack on their backs and combat boots on their feet, many Soldiers felt the pain of the long distance walk/run.

"It was fun. It hurt, but it was fun," said Sgt. Wesley Hayman, a team leader in Troop C, 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment, 116th BCT. "It was a great experience."

The Soldiers of the 116th began preparing for the competition in June during their annual training at Fort Pickett, according to Hayman. To make it to the road march, the Soldiers first had to complete several track and field events, including a 3-5km run, a shot-put toss, long or high jump and a 1000m swim.

The Soldiers were also required to fire with a 9mm pistol at a twenty-five meter target.

The German Armed Forces Command of the United States and Canada sent several German Soldiers to Fort Pickett to oversee



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

**Soldiers of the Virginia Army National Guard compete in a road march event as part of the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge Sept. 30 in Reston.**



**All 23 of the Virginia participants qualified to wear the gold German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge.**

the Soldiers as they completed the prerequisite tasks to earn the badge.

While the Germans were there, they also participated in some of the American training, said Hayman.

"They went through Leaders Reaction Course with us," said Hayman. "They even came out to the sniper range with me and my team."

Following the road march, the U.S. Soldiers were invited to the German Armed Forces Command building in Reston where they were presented with the badge and a certificate authorizing them to wear the new badge on their class A and dress blue uniforms.

"All of those who will receive the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge shall take this badge as their mark of their personal achievement and wear it with pride," said Brig. Gen. Gero Shachthoefler, commander of the German Armed Forces Command of the U.S. and Canada. "But they shall wear it also as a symbol for the friendship between our two nations."

After the presentation ceremony and a brief rainstorm, the Soldiers were treated to live music performed by a German Armed Forces Band and refreshments in the way of German bratwursts, pea soup and German beer.



# Virginia GuardPost



SERVING THE ARMY AND AIR GUARD OF VIRGINIA

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2009

## On the Cover



Approximately 160 Soldiers from the Powhatan-based 180th Engineer Company returned to Virginia Oct. 6 after serving in Iraq since December 2008. (Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia National Guard)

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## Virginia GuardPost

The Virginia GuardPost is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense, and the Virginia Army and Air National Guard. It is published bimonthly and in accordance with AR 360-1, Army Public Affairs and AFI 35-101, Public Affairs Policies and Procedures. Contents of the GuardPost are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of the Army, the Department of the Air Force or the Virginia Department of Military Affairs. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Virginia National Guard Public Affairs Officer. Printed by a private firm under exclusive written contract with the Government Printing Office and the Virginia National Guard in no way connected with the U.S. Government. Printed circulation: 10,000.

# Brigade-level Afghan mentor team returns

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

A team of Virginia National Guard Soldiers responsible for training and mentoring Afghanistan police and military forces returned to Virginia and conducted a welcome home ceremony Sept. 2 at Fort Eustis.

The team of 14 Soldiers served as brigade-level mentors for the Regional Police Advisory Command – South and the Regional Corps Advisory Command – South since Dec. 24, 2008.

“These Virginia Guard Soldiers provided command and control, as well as invaluable mentoring and training to the Afghan army and police in the most volatile section of Southern Afghanistan, leaving a lasting impact on the Afghan National Security Forces for years to come,” said Col. Mike Harris, the officer in charge of the team. Harris served as the commander for all police mentors in Southern Afghanistan.

Six of the Soldiers are from the Richmond area, three are from the Williamsburg area, two are from Northern Virginia and one Soldier each is from the Danville, Lynchburg and Hampton Roads area.

Harris said the Soldiers quickly established a strong mentoring presence and began successful operations with the Afghan National Police immediately. Team members served in varying positions of responsibility, ranging from the RPAC-S command group, to team leaders in the field to individual team members.

“Over the first five months of the year, the ANP worked alongside their U.S. mentors and made significant gains against the insurgency and were able to neutralize hundreds of insurgents and captured thousands of collective tons of weapons, drugs, vehicles and other items potentially used against United States, Coalition and Afghan forces,” said Maj. Mike Booker, the executive officer for the team.

“Our teams established strong presences in the local villages and distributed thousands of pounds of humanitarian assistance in the form of food, clothes, toys, and school supplies for children and farming equipment,” Booker said.

In addition to the direct mentoring and training, the team worked in coordination with the ANP leadership to prepare a 600-page Police Common Task Manual used for training on basic tasks such as care of personal weapons, proper wear of uniform and basic drill and ceremonies.

They also helped develop a Mission Essential Task List to assist the future police mentor teams with training, almost guaranteed to raise the levels of readiness of all mentored districts.

The RPAC-S provided trainers that helped to usher in more than a thousand newly trained police into the force, Booker said.

In June, the RPAC-S spearheaded an aggressive effort to train more than 3,400 police prior to the August election, in order to provide better security and police presence.



*Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs*

**Capt. Jacob Goodine of Richmond is awarded the Combat Action Badge by Brig. Gen. Stephen Huxtable Aug. 28 at the Mullins Readiness Center in Sandston. Goodine was a member of a team of Virginia Guard Soldiers who served as mentors and trainers for Afghan military and police forces since Dec. 24, 2008 and returned to Virginia Aug. 28.**

RPAC-S personnel trained the Afghan police on tactics, operational planning, defensive planning, weapons maintenance, weapons qualifications, counter-improved explosive device training, and countless other tasks to improve operations, Booker said.

“A state-of-the-art C-IED lane was constructed at RPAC headquarters and hundreds of Afghan National Police and police mentor team members conducted training there,” he said.

Booker said team members conducted many highly successful operations alongside their ANP counterparts that took hundreds of Taliban and many high-level leaders out of the fight.

Team members also assisted with mentoring operations staff at Forward Operating Base Walton and assisted medical personnel with establishing much-needed clinics as well as improving base security for current and future units.

Several Virginia Guard Soldiers were assigned to the Regional Corps Advisory Command – South and mentored the members of the Afghan National Army’s 205th Corps, headquartered at Camp Hero near Kandahar, where they were responsible for teaching, coaching and mentoring the corps operations section, Booker said.

Virginia Guard mentors influenced the operations of the 14,000 Afghan soldiers in the 205th Corps and were involved in the fielding, training and utilization of the M-16 rifle, NATO machine guns, and up-armored Humvees, Booker said.

Other members of the team performed medical duties at FOB clinics and supervised medic placement to the field.

Two Virginia Guard Soldiers served on the Corps Logistics Support Team where they administered millions of dollars to Afghan projects for substantial improvements in infrastructure and in civic and cultural facilities as well as two regional hospitals that will benefit millions of Afghans for years to come, Booker said.

## Fort Pickett recognized for environmental excellence

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Fort Pickett was one of three Virginia military installations recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia as winners of the first Virginia Department of Defense Eagle Awards for Environmental Stewardship.

Representatives from the three military installations received the awards during a presentation ceremony at the State Capitol Building Oct. 14.

In addition to Fort Pickett, Fort A.P. Hill and the Defense Supply Center Richmond were selected for the award. Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources L. Preston Bryant, Jr. and Department of Defense Director of Environmental Management Maureen Sullivan presented the awards.

Col. Thomas P. Wilkinson, commander of Fort Pickett, accepted the award on behalf of the post. He has been in command for just over a year, and he gave credit to the staff of the Fort Pickett Environmental Office for the award.

"It was my environmental folks that kept me straight every day," he said. "We couldn't have done it without you. All my accolades go to our environmental staff. We had a great year. Let's have a better year next year."

Fort Pickett is more than 42,000 acres in size and was cited for constructing a regional training institute in 2008 that included the capability of capturing and storing rainwater for use in irrigation.

The Fort Pickett environmental team is responsible for creating Nottoway River macro-basin management zone, establishing buffer zones around streams and reducing hazardous and solid waste.

The Fort Pickett team is also actively seeking to acquire protection from development on 2,500 acres of land a year. They are also participants in Virginia's Environmental Excellence Program, according to Bryant.

Fort Pickett is one of the East Coast's premiere training facilities focused on training the Reserve Components.

In recent years, it has become a mainstay to not only Guard and Army Reserve training but also to all active duty components, U.S. Air Force Reserve, allied forces and numerous federal and state agencies.

Fort A.P. Hill Garrison Commander Lt. Col. John Haefner received the award for the Caroline County-based post and Site Director Terry D. Rodwell and Col. Thomas Laffey accepted the award for Defense Supply Center Richmond.

"These award-winning military installations have shown remarkable stewardship of the natural resources entrusted to their care," said Governor Tim Kaine in a news release. "I am confident the partnership between the Department of Defense and the Commonwealth will continue to bring environmental benefits



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

**Recipients of the 2009 Eagle Award for Environmental Stewardship stand behind the banner that each installation recognized will be able to display in their headquarters.**

to Virginians for years to come."

Last December Kaine announced the Commonwealth of Virginia and Department of Defense Environmental Partnership and the Virginia Department of Defense Eagle Award. More than 20 military installations in Virginia are eligible for recognition under this environmental partnership program. Seventeen of the eligible installations participated this year.

The Department of Defense manages more than 275,000 acres in Virginia. Each military installation can submit an Installation Environmental Scorecard annually to the state for evaluation. Those military installations that demonstrate the greatest environmental stewardship will qualify for the Virginia Department of Defense Eagle Award.

Each participating military installation was evaluated by DoD personnel and staff from Virginia's natural resource agencies on seven performance measures: biological resources, habitat protection and restoration, watershed protection and restoration, land use, environmental stewardship, conservation plans and environmental compliance.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality worked with the Department of Defense to develop this program and evaluate the results.

The first year of competition resulted in air emissions being reduced by 930 tons, hazardous waste by 268 tons and pesticide use by 564 pounds. In addition, more than 1,570 tons of materials were diverted from landfills.

"The first year's results show the department's strong commitment to environmental stewardship," said Sullivan. "The military community in Virginia is committed to continuing to implement projects that will sustain the environment."

# Virginia Guard Soldier relinquishes authority at Joint Warfighting Center

By Maj. Cotton Puryear  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Col. Edward R. Morgan of the Virginia National Guard relinquished responsibility as the Joint Warfighting Center J-7 Reserve Director to Col. Steven N. Jones in a ceremony held Oct. 3 in Suffolk. The ceremony also marked the end of Morgan's tour as the officer in charge for almost 40 members of the Virginia Army and Air National Guard assigned to U.S. Joint Forces Command.

The Joint Warfighting Center is part of U.S. Joint Forces Command and has the mission to coordinate the U.S. military's overall joint training efforts in an effort to maintain the highest state of readiness and warfighting capability.

At the ceremony, Morgan was recognized for his role in the development and establishment of the Joint Warfighting Center Reserve Component Training and Operational Plan that was "groundbreaking in providing more effective and more relevant Reserve Component support in today's constantly changing operational environment."

Morgan was selected for the J7 reserve director assignment as a separate duty position in addition to his duties as the OIC of the Virginia Guard Soldiers assigned to JFCOM. He was selected by Brig. Gen. Sanford E. Holman, the vice commander of the Joint Warfighting Center, from a pool of approximately 100 Guard and Reserve colonels assigned to JFCOM. The reserve director leads the reserve organization located at JWFC, which consists of about 130 members from the reserve components of the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard. The position is a true joint assignment and is one of a very few positions where a Virginia Guard officer is charged with the responsibility of supervising members from the various branches of service.

According to its web site, the JWFC works with a broad range of partners to support joint warfighter development, including the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the services, unified commands, as well as interagency and multinational partners. The command provides highly realistic training within a joint context, revises the content and execution of training through adoption of lessons learned and best practices, and develops advanced technologies in conjunction with operational exercises.

The Virginia Guard Soldiers and Airmen assigned to JFCOM serve in a variety of positions where they play an active role in the execution of joint training exercises. Most of the personnel assigned to JFCOM are senior officers and noncommissioned officers, and the majority serve in the JWFC. Several have served in the Joint Task Force Civil Support and two military intelligence officers currently serve at Langley Air Force Base in Air Combat Command.

After commanding 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, Lt. Col. Lapthe C. Flora spent 17 months assigned to JTF-CS where he served as a battle watch captain and joint operations center chief.



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Col. Edward R. Morgan passes the colors of the Joint Warfighting Center J-7 to Brig. Gen. Sanford E. Holman, the vice commander of the Joint Warfighting Center, during the transfer of responsibility ceremony held Oct. 3 in Suffolk. The ceremony also marked the end of Morgan's tour as the officer in charge for almost 40 members of the Virginia Army and Air National Guard assigned to U.S. Joint Forces Command.**

His duties included working in the joint operations center for four different joint training exercises including Vibrant Response and Vigilant Shield. Flora said he traveled all over the country to assist with exercises, as well as conducting certifications for the active duty brigade headquarters assigned to a civil support mission.

Flora said his experience with JTF-CS has given him a much better understanding of what federal resources are available in the event of an incident that exceeded Virginia's ability to respond.

"This has been a great learning experience, and I recommend it to anyone working in the operations arena," Flora said.

Another benefit of serving at JFCOM is networking and making contacts with subject matter experts from a wide range of disciplines. Lt. Col. David Bennett of the Virginia Air National Guard served at JFCOM, and the contacts he made there have been invaluable in his current position as the joint staff communications officer for the Virginia Guard. "When we were putting together the state incident response communication plan, I was able to reach out to contacts I made at JFCOM, and they provided crucial input for the plan we have in place now," Bennett said.

"In order to gain practical experience in joint operations, there is no better training ground than Joint Forces Command," said Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. He said that if the Virginia Guard has to respond to any major natural disaster or homeland security threat, it will do so in a joint environment with other Guard or Reserve military forces as well as active duty forces and as well as multiple state agencies.

Newman said that sending Virginia Guard Soldiers and Airmen to serve a tour of duty in JFCOM pays benefits to Virginia. "When they come back to Virginia, we will have officers and senior noncommissioned officers who are far more experienced in joint operations than when they left," he said. "That will help us better prepare for possible incidents and help us better execute our plans if we are called upon to assist the citizens of the commonwealth in their time of need."

# 266th MP Co. returns from mission in Iraq

By Maj. Cotton Puryear  
Virginia Army Guard Public Affairs

Approximately 130 Soldiers from the Manassas-based 266th Military Police Company returned to Virginia Sept. 24 after serving in Iraq since December 2008. The unit arrived in Richmond and was officially welcomed home by Virginia Governor Tim Kaine and Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. After the brief welcome home ceremony in Richmond, Soldiers boarded buses for Staunton and Manassas for welcome home ceremonies at those locations.

"We're so proud of each and every one of you," Newman said. "We're happy to have you home."

"I stood with you in Manassas in October as you deployed out and I'm honored to welcome you back as you come home and to thank you for a job well done," Kaine said. "I'm very happy also to be here with so many family members and friends. Support of the unit was so critical for the past year."

"Thank you on behalf of seven and a half million Virginians," he concluded. "We're thrilled and honored to welcome you back home."

The Soldiers of the 266th operated throughout nearly the entire country of Iraq. While deployed to Basra, the 266th served as a Police Transition Team that trained, mentored and coached more than 1,000 Iraqi Police officers and conducted more than 500 combat patrols within the city of Basra.

"A large part of our overall mission was to improve community relations while supporting stability" in the area, said 1st Lt. Michael Duggan of Woodbridge, the executive officer for the 266th.

One of the unit's significant achievements was helping the Iraqi Police officers recognize the importance of getting into the communities by conducting foot patrols and engaging in dialogue with civilians, Duggan said.

Soldiers from the 266th brought civilian law enforcement experience with them to the mission in addition to their military experience. Roughly half of the company has a civilian career in law enforcement,



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

**Soldiers from the Manassas-based 266th Military Police Company arrive in Richmond Sept. 24 after being in Iraq since December 2008.**

Duggan said.

"The civilian law enforcement experience gave our unit an advantage in conducting combat missions. In law enforcement you are trained to respond to emergencies, react under pressure, maintain situational awareness and act on suspicious activity. These are similar behaviors in combat operations," said Capt. Christopher Rivers, commander of the 266th.

In June the company moved north where its Soldiers conducted more than 80 counter indirect fire missions with no casualties or loss of combat power. Counter indirect fire missions were conducted through patrols that helped reduce the mortar and rocket attacks directed at Joint Base Balad and improved the security for more than 30,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and civilians assigned to the base. Soldiers from the 266th also conducted convoy security operations where they completed more than 30 convoy escort missions covering more than 2,500 kilometers throughout three Iraqi provinces.

In the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Joint Base Balad earned the name "Mortar-Rita-Ville," but through the efforts of units like the 266th, attacks against the camp have been greatly reduced.

"Mortar and rocket attacks present a

constant danger to personnel stationed here," said 1st Lt. John Hinton of Newport News, a platoon leader in the 266th. "Our patrols are designed to deny insurgents the ability to conduct attacks against the base, and are also an opportunity for us to interact with the area residents."

The daily missions were a combination of mounted and dismounted patrols that gave Soldiers the ability to investigate suspected launch sites and look for possible caches of mortars and rockets.

Soldiers from the 266th earned 21 Bronze Star Medals, four Soldiers received Combat Action Badges and one Soldier received a Purple Heart.

"The Soldiers you see standing before you today represent America's treasure and our Army's most precious resource, and we recognize them today for their outstanding service as Citizen-Soldiers from Manassas, Va., called to serve their nation abroad, as well as the people of Iraq," Lt. Col. Paul Huszar, commander of JTF Eagle said at the unit's end of mission ceremony. "I can report to you now, having had the privilege of commanding the Regulators in combat, that they represented the state of Virginia, the Military Police Corps, and our Army with distinction, completing every mission assigned to them."

# 180th Engineers return from Iraq deployment

By Maj. Cotton Puryear  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Approximately 160 Soldiers from the Powhatan-based 180th Engineer Company returned to Virginia Oct. 6 after serving in Iraq since December 2008. Approximately 30 Soldiers from the Southwest Virginia area arrived at Tri-Cities Regional Airport for a reunion with their families, and the remaining Soldiers returned to the Powhatan Readiness Center where they were formally welcomed home by Gov. Timothy M. Kaine, Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, their families and friends from the Powhatan area.

"We are glad to welcome you back," Kaine said. "The 180th has done a great job." He also commended the unit on their strong spirit, as well as the tremendous support they received from their families and the Powhatan community.

Newman told the Soldiers of the 180th their duty performance in Iraq had taken the mission to the next level. "What you did was not only the war fight, but also helped us nation build as well, and for that you should be proud," he said. "I am proud you wear the Virginia National Guard patch."

The Soldiers arrived safely Oct. 2 at their demobilization station at Fort McCoy, Wisc., and conducted a number of different administrative activities to transition from active duty back to traditional National Guard status prior to returning to Virginia.

While the company is headquartered in Powhatan, Soldiers from all over Virginia took part in the mission. Approximately 25 are from the Richmond area, about 20 are from the Southwest Virginia area, approximately 10 Soldiers are from Northern Virginia, about 10 are from the Hampton Roads area, approximately five are from the Shenandoah Valley area and about five are from the Lynchburg



Photos by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Spc. Christopher Langford of Tappahannock gets a warm welcome home hug from his five-year-old son at the welcome home ceremony for the 180th Engineer Company.**

area. While serving in Iraq, the 180th conducted more than 20 engineer missions, with six of them taking more than two months to complete. The missions included building or expanding small forward operating bases used for joint security patrols with Iraqi forces, unmanned aerial vehicle airstrip construction, training compound improvements for the Iraqi Special Forces, site preparation for a bridge installation and the reopening of the last stretch of Iraqi Highway 1. The unit also conducted joint missions with the Iraqi government.

During their nine months in Iraq, Soldiers from 180th traveled more than 252,000 vehicle miles, executed more than 14,000 miles of combat logistics patrols, operated engineer equipment for more than 42,000 hours, hauled more than 166,000 cubic meters of fill material, emplaced more than 12,000 concrete barriers and 50,000 HESCO barriers.

Soldiers in the 180th Engineers earned 18 Bronze Star Medals and 135 Army Commendation Medal.

The unit had no Soldiers killed or wounded in action.

"I felt that the 180th conducted themselves as both diplomats for the United States as well as for the Commonwealth of Virginia, and we exemplified what it means to be a Guard Soldier," said 1st Lt Lester J. Smith, III from Caroline County, executive officer for the 180th Engineer Company.

"These Soldiers have something to be proud of," said Capt. Edward Lewis, commander of the 180th. "They have set the standard for others to follow."



**Friends and family cheer on the Soldiers from the 180th Engineer Company returning to the Tri-Cities Regional Airport Oct. 6.**

# Virginia Guard celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

By Spc. J. Erin Jones  
116th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

It was a typical work day on post but in one building the air was not filled with the usual sounds of busy fingers typing away or the drone of voices giving briefs and having work discussions. In fact, these employees and Soldiers were not doing any work. Instead, they had gathered in a classroom to socialize, eat quesadillas and learn to salsa dance.

The break from the usual routine was thanks to the Virginia National Guard Equal Opportunity Office, which hosted an event Sept. 30, 2009 at Fort Pickett in Blackstone, Va. to celebrate Hispanic American Heritage Month.

The point of the event was to teach people about the Hispanic culture, to reduce barriers between people of different cultures and encourage them to embrace diversity, said Capt. Antoinette L. Allen, state equal employment manager, Virginia Guard Equal Opportunity Office.

The event was open to the public and featured a lecture by guest speaker Chief Warrant Officer Hector R. Rivera, Army National Guard loan repayment programs manager, National Guard Bureau, Education Division, who is a native of Puerto Rico.

During his lecture, Rivera pointed out that the percentage of Hispanics in the United States is increasing and could eventually be the largest ethnic group. "It's because we have more children than you do," said Rivera as the audience responded with laughter.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Hispanics accounted for 12.5 percent of the total U.S. population. The projected percentage of Hispanics for 2010 is 15.5 percent and based on current trends the Census Bureau is predicting that by 2050 Hispanics will make up 25.5 percent of the U.S.'s population.

Since Hispanics are such a predominant ethnic group, it is important for Americans to understand their culture and why they act the way they do instead of stereotyping them, said Rivera. A common mistake that people make is to think that all Hispanics



Photo by Spc. J. Erin Jones, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**The Virginia National Guard Equal Opportunity Office along with local restaurant, Acapulco's Mexican Grill, serves Hispanic food to participants of the Hispanic heritage event.**

are Mexican.

"There are 21 countries and every one of those countries has a different culture," said Rivera. "Understanding their culture and their lives will help us understand who is living around us and that will make us better neighbors, better friends and better co-workers."

Rivera also gave examples of how Hispanic cultures differ from that of Americans'. He said that while Americans tend to be very independent, Hispanic children will live with their families longer and will tend to their elders rather than send them to retirement homes.

As parents Hispanics are willing to sacrifice many of their dreams to make their children's lives better, said Rivera. Then when those children are older they will make sacrifices to take care of their parents.

He also spoke about the work ethics of Hispanics. Some Hispanics are serving in top positions in the government and some are cleaning restrooms and washing dishes but whatever they are doing they do it with a passion because they feel they owe it to Americans for giving them the opportunity, explained Rivera.

Following Rivera's lecture, Richmond, Va. disc jockey and dance instructor Steve Greene, known as Salsa Steve, gave a Latin dance seminar and performance in which the audience got to get out of their chairs, move to the music and learn the basic salsa steps.

"The instructions Salsa Steve gave were very clear and helpful, and he made the atmosphere very energetic and entertaining," said Sgt. Christopher I. Brooks, human resource sergeant, Virginia Army National Guard Joint Force Headquarters.

After the dance demonstration, participants had a chance to mingle while sampling Hispanic foods provided by local restaurant, Acapulco's Mexican Grill.

Everyone seemed to have a really great time, said Allen. The event was very interactive and people got to experience a touch of another culture. It was a big success, she added.



Photo by Spc. J. Erin Jones, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Employees at Fort Pickett learn how to salsa dance during a Hispanic heritage event Sept. 30, 2009 at Fort Pickett.**

# 183rd RTI Soldiers teach Rappel Master course

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Instructors of the Virginia Guard's 1st Battalion, 183rd Regimental Training Institute, headquartered at Fort Pickett, concluded an iteration of the U.S. Army Rappel Master Course Oct. 2, which started with 46 students from across the nation.

The Virginia Rappel Master instructors begin the five-day course by overwhelming the students with information and tests designed to weed out the Soldiers who may not be able to hack it toward the end of the course.

The students start with three large tasks on how to properly inspect equipment, as well as a test every day. They are placed in an attention detailed environment, where they are given sequence-driven exercises to test their ability to follow and provide directions in a very specific order.

Although the class started with 46 students from the active and reserve components of the U.S. Army, only 25 of the Soldiers made it to the final day of class, according to Staff Sgt. Matthew Stemmler, an instructor for the course.

"There is usually a 50-60 percent attrition rate for the course," said Stemmler.

The course arms the graduates with the ability to take the knowledge and skills back to their home units and are responsible for rappelling operations from UH-60s and towers, according to Stemmler.

One of the pre-requisites for this class is the Soldier must be Air Assault qualified. Another requirement is for the Soldier to be a noncommissioned officer or an officer.

"A lot of this course here is just like the sling load phase in Air Assault," said Stemmler. It's very attention to detail, and sequence driven. As long you stay in the sequence we teach, then you should be good to go."

The final phase of the course is the Aircraft Command and Control Test, where students oversee other students rappel out of UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters. They oversee two other students rappel from the aircraft while inspecting their equipment and safety harnesses, and ensure the safety of the Soldiers from the time they enter the aircraft until they reach the ground and are clear from the helicopter.

"This has increased my technical knowledge of rappelling operations," said 1st Lt. Michael Santos, a student from the 1st Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team. "As a leader it is vital to understand the technical aspects of what you are doing in order to plan and supervise the execution of those duties.

"It's very thorough and very fast-paced," said Santos.



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

**A Soldier attending Rappel Master course at Fort Pickett, Va. rappels from a UH-60 during the final phase of the course, the Aircraft Command and Control Test.**



**The 183rd Regional Training Institute teaches the U.S. Army Rappel Master Course to Soldiers from around the nation at Fort Pickett.**

## Richmond's Dove Street Armory slated to close

By Maj. Cotton Puryear  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard will close the armory located in Richmond and relocate units currently stationed at the facility to other Virginia Guard installations throughout the state, Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, announced Sept. 9.

The decision to close the Richmond facility located on Dove Street was part of Virginia Gov. Timothy M. Kaine's 2010 budget reduction plan. Closing the Richmond facility, along with closing the Roanoke armory, will result in a projected 2010 budget reduction of \$115,000.

"The Virginia National Guard, like many state agencies, has been forced to make difficult decisions in these tough economic times," Newman said. "The decision to close the facility in Richmond was not an easy one, but it made the most sense given our current location of units."

The number of Virginia Army National Guard Soldiers and units impacted by the move are:

- Headquarters, 91st Troop Command, consisting of approximately 40 Soldiers, will relocate to the Sandston Readiness Center.
- Headquarters Company, 276th Engineer Battalion and A Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, consisting of approximately 175 Soldiers, will relocate to the Bowling Green Readiness Center.
- Headquarters Company, 1710th Transportation Company, consisting of approximately 65 Soldiers, will relocate to the Petersburg Readiness Center.
- A Company, 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery Regiment, consisting of approximately 95 Soldiers, will relocate to the Sandston Readiness Center.

Newman said that any Soldier who would have to drive more than 50 miles to their new duty location would be given the option of being reassigned to a unit closer to Richmond area.

## New Winchester readiness center dedicated in honor of fallen comrades

By Sgt. Andrew H. Owen  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

A new Virginia National Guard readiness center in Winchester was officially named the Cherry-Beasley Readiness Center in a formal dedication ceremony in front of a full house of Soldiers, members of the Virginia Defense Force, friends and family members held Oct. 4. The facility was named in honor of Staff Sgt. Craig W. Cherry and Sgt. Bobby E. Beasley, two Virginia Army National Guard Soldiers killed in the line of duty while serving in Afghanistan in 2004.

The ceremony was attended by special guests Governor Timothy M. Kaine, Secretary of Public Safety John Marshall, retired U.S. Senator John Warner and Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman Jr., Adjutant General of Virginia.

"The Winchester readiness center is the Virginia Guard's newest armory and will serve as the home for the Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, a detachment from our Forward Support Company, a local field maintenance shop and our friends and comrades from the Virginia Defense Force," said Lt. Col. William L. Zana, 3rd battalion commander.

"Today we will come together to honor two of our fallen brothers who gave the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives in service of their country on August 7th, 2004, and to permanently dedicate this facility to their honor," said Zana.

Two state resolutions, including state resolution no. 444, were presented in recognition of the outstanding accomplishments of the unit's Soldiers, past and present, according to Zana.

The resolutions were presented by Virginia Senator Jill Vogel and Delegate Beverly Sherwood.

"This is a resolution we were proud to introduce in the General Assembly," said Sherwood.

It was introduced to honor the battalion's high level of readiness that also earned them the Walter T. Kerwin Jr. Readiness Award for their deployment to Iraq in 2007.

"These Citizen Soldiers have been chosen as the nation's best unit, with the



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Juanita Beasley (left) and Donna Cherry (right) unveil the new sign for the Winchester readiness center honoring their fallen husbands.**

highest level of readiness in the nation," said Sherwood.

Following the official ceremony, the governor and the adjutant general dedicated the readiness center's operations center in honor of retired Sen. John Warner. The Operations center will be known as the Senator John Warner Operations Center.

The almost 52,000 square-foot armory cost about \$10 million to build and it dwarfs the old armory that opened in 1940 and measured a little over 15,500 square feet.

## Field training prepares Air Guard engineering unit for future

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

Airmen of the 203d RED HORSE Squadron converged upon Camp Pendleton in Virginia Beach for the unit's annual Field Training Exercise, Sept. 10-13.

More than 150 Airmen belonging to the Virginia Air National Guard's rapid-response engineering unit took to the field for the exercise. They set up and protected their encampment, conducted warfare training and honed many of the skills included in their wartime taskings requirements.

"The weather slowed us down in the beginning," said 203d RHS commander, Lt.Col. Pete Garner, "but we've been gaining ground ever since. We patterned this training to help prepare us for future deployments, as well as for our next Operational Readiness Inspection scheduled for April 2010."

Over the last seven years, the unit has successfully completed two deployments to multiple locations in Southwest Asia. The unit returned from its last deployment in May 2007.

This was an important training exercise, according to Garner. For nearly 100 unit members, last year's FTX was their very first time in the field or their first training exercise with the unit. With so many new unit members, last year's exercise was dubbed a "crawl/walk" exercise and emphasized basics, like general safety practices, setting up and protecting a compound and field hygiene in addition to more specialized-skills and war-taskings training like convoy operations and airfield damage assessments and repair.

"This year's exercise, conducted at a 'walk/run' level, was a new experience for about a quarter of the unit," Garner continued. "We ramped up the intensity and developed scenarios where our Airmen responded to mission taskings and ability to survive and operate (ATSO) demands simultaneously. Unit personnel worked on a number of design and construction projects and we accomplished a lot of training in an ATSO environment.

"Everyone really stepped up to the

plate for this exercise. Morale and attitude have been outstanding," Garner added. "Our noncommissioned officers have taken on the leadership role of mentoring our younger Airmen. And our newer unit members are working hard and quickly coming up to speed. The unit is fortunate to have many eager, sharp Airmen who are willing to take on the tasks needed to get the job done."

Activities ran the gamut from setting up camp and cleaning and inspecting gear to conducting hours of ancillary and specialized field training. These activities were periodically punctuated with staged chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, high-yield explosives or equipment (CBRNE) attacks on the compound and on the convoy training runs.

Then mission-specific training got underway with surveying, making airfield damage assessments and repairs night and day, and installing the mobile aircraft arresting system, conducting transformer repairs, constructing a K-Span building, and purifying water for drinking with a reverse osmosis water purification unit.

A simulated medical air evacuation in an Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter turned into a 30 minute incentive flight for 18 lucky Airmen.

From his security post at the camp's entry control point, Senior Airman Michael Wilson commented, "This was great training. It provided good experience for newer Airmen who hadn't been through a training exercise before. This kind of training gives you a little taste of what to expect during an operational readiness exercise and the ORI as well as an actual deployment."

While firing up an excavator so he could fill in a mock bomb crater on the airfield training pad, Staff Sgt. Charles Dodge, Airfields, said, "We have a significant number of new members, so this type of training is very good."

"We had to cut short some convoy training on the first day because of the bad weather; it was practically monsoon conditions," Dodge added. "But after that things went quite smooth and days three and four went really well."



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard PAO

**Virginia Guard Airmen use a front-end loader to move sand bags for a bunker project during the 203d RED HORSE field training exercise Sept. 11 at the State Military Reservation.**

After reflecting a moment, Senior Airman Clayton Stagg said, "It was a pleasure to do, especially to be out here over Sept. 11. That puts all of this into perspective."

"This was a great learning experience," Airman First Class Jerome Padmore said, "Very little runs out here without electricity. These training exercises get better as we go along and they prepare us for the real deal."

According to Tech. Sgt. Jessica Wilson, the set up went better this year.

"We got the tents up without any problems," Wilson said. "We are prepared to deploy with this equipment now."

The 203d RED HORSE Squadron is a self-contained, equipped and trained, rapid-response engineering force capable of doing expedited damage-requirements assessments, heavy-damage repairs, bare-base development, and heavy construction operations such as constructing aircraft parking ramps and munitions pads.

RED HORSE units possess special capabilities including well drilling, explosives demolition, quarry operations, materials testing, and concrete and asphalt paving.

# Virginia National Guard hosts workshop to address needs of children of military families

By Maj. Cotton Puryear  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard hosted a workshop Oct. 28 in Richmond to address the unique challenges facing children with loved ones serving in the U.S. military.

The workshop was conducted in partnership with the Military Child Education Coalition, and brought together leaders representing Richmond and Hampton Roads area military, education, business, healthcare, faith-based, civic and social services organizations to make Virginians more aware of the challenges these children face.

Almost 80 representatives from the different community groups used the workshop to learn about the challenges military kids face and share information about what programs are currently in place, and then developed ideas for how those challenges can be addressed.

“One of the main take aways from the workshop is that we should use our family assistance centers to act as a catalyst in communities to bring leaders together to gain better awareness and to rally support to assist in that particular community to bring better awareness to our existing programs,” said Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia. “We hope to build on what we learned and be able to better support our kids.”

The faith-based community representatives also expressed an interest to better coordinate their efforts with the military chaplain support network.

Representatives from the health care community expressed an interest in developing ways to better share information within the health care community about the specific needs of military kids.

“Our goal is to have a road map for where we want to go and how we will get the resources to help kids in Guard and Reserve families better cope with the realities of being separated from loved ones on a military deployment,” Newman said. “We hope to bring a broader understanding of the challenges our kids face and work together with leaders from different areas of society to develop ideas for how those challenges can be addressed.”

Newman said the Virginia Guard has been in discussions with MCEC for the last year to help develop programs that will address the needs of kids in all branches of service, serving in the Active Duty, Guard and Reserve components.

“While children of Guard and Reserve families may not face the frequency of moving that kids of active duty families face, they have a set of unique challenges,” Newman said. “On an active duty

installation and surrounding communities, there is likely more awareness about deployments, and children can normally find others in similar situations to theirs. Teachers, counselors and school administrators are also more aware of the hardships brought on by the prolonged separation of a loved one. But in the case of the Guard and Reserve, a child could be the only one in their school who has a parent or sibling mobilized, and the community may not fully understand what that child is going through.”

The Virginia National Guard Family Programs Office conducts several summer camp programs for the children of Guard and Reserve families, but Newman said programs need to be developed on a larger scale to help address these issues.

“As our overseas rotations continue, we recognize that our Guard and Reserve forces will continue to see duty that takes them away from their families, so this is not an issue that will go away in the near future,” Newman said. “Our hope is to bring the success MCEC has had on a national and international level to Virginia.”

Newman said one of the most important things the Virginia National Guard can do to help ensure the continued success of our Soldiers and Airmen deployed overseas is to make sure their families are getting the support they need.

“Military kids have a unique set of challenges, and we owe it to them and their families to work at raising awareness of the challenges they face,” he said.

“We must also develop well- resourced programs to help them better cope with the hardship of having a loved one serving thousands of miles away, defending the ideals of freedom and democracy in a foreign land.”



Photo by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**A facilitator from the Military Child Education Coalition leads a group discussion during the workshop held Oct. 28 in Richmond.**

# Girl Scouts, Fort Pickett Environmental Program team up

By Sgt. Jesse L. Houk  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Nine girls from the Richmond-based Girl Scout Troop 138 were involved in construction on Fort Pickett Sept. 26 that will benefit all servicemembers for years to come.

The construction wasn't on a state-of-the-art barracks, nor was it an addition to the air assault course. The Girl Scouts, in association with the Virginia National Guard Environmental Program, installed rain barrels to help with water conservation while also assembling and erecting eight bat houses that will potentially become the home for hundreds of bats on post.

The projects that were planned and completed on Fort Pickett were just two among the many environmental projects that took place throughout the country in response to National Public Lands Day.

"The environment is critical for what we do here at Fort Pickett," said Col. Tom P. Wilkinson, commander of the Fort Pickett Maneuver Training Center. "We have to be good stewards of the land and the ranges to ensure that we don't create a problem that would prevent training on the post."

National Public Lands Day is sponsored by the National Environmental Education Foundation and this year there were over 2,000 sites hosting over 2,300 service projects planned on public lands across the nation.

"We were so fortunate that a local Girl Scout troop found us on the National Public Lands Day website," said Gary L. Williamson, environmental program manager and a lieutenant colonel in the Virginia National Guard. "First of all, it's getting community exposure for Fort Pickett. Secondly, it serves as an educational tool for the Girl Scouts."

The connection between Fort Pickett's Environmental Program and Girl Scout Troop 138 may not have been possible if it wasn't for the high visibility of being listed on the National Public Lands Day website.

Williamson and his team applied for a grant and was one of just 36 organizations to receive funding.

The connection was also facilitated by the fact that Wilkinson's wife and daughter are a part of Girl Scout Troop 138.

"Being the commander here at Fort Pickett and being a team as a family, it's neat to get them down here," said Wilkinson. "It's always good to be able to do things with your family."

"One of the things that Girls Scouts are all about is about learning of the environment, natural resources, and one thing I think this generation is all about and that's learning about recycling and learning about the necessity for ecosystems" said Jayne Randall, Troop Leader.

The Virginia Guard Environmental Program team, which consists of Williamson, Amy O. Haynes, Dave K. Short, and Bev A. Boyko, planned the project and assisted the Girl Scouts as they put together the bat houses.

The project was so environmentally conscious that recycled ammo boxes were used as the homes in which the bats will live.

"The bat houses were fabricated from recycled metal ammo boxes with a plywood insert that the bats use to roost on," Haynes said. "So you end up with an inverted ammo box with a metal bracket welded on the top holding it to the post. It's another way to reuse a waste stream generated through military training into bat houses."

This project was important because it was recognized by public works that bats were actually starting to roost in the barracks.

This project will help service members as they stay on Fort Pickett because the bats will be prevented from entering the barracks and given an alternative place to live far from the barracks.

The project not only serves to help Fort Pickett, but it also helps the girls to achieve their goal of obtaining badges. This project will help the girls qualify for four potential



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

**Gary L. Williamson, Dave K. Short, and Bev A. Boyko helps girls from Girl Scout Troop 138 position one of eight bat houses at Fort Pickett Sept. 26. The bat houses can accommodate up to 200 bats and are located along the Joy Nature Trail.**

badges.

"The badges are bragging rights on the vest," said Randall. "Patches are on the back and they receive one when they attend an event. When they have a lot of badges on the front of their vest they are popular because they are hard to get."

The rain barrels are located at the Hanson House and will collect rain water to irrigate shrubbery. The bat houses were installed on Joy Nature Trail, which is open to the public for recreation. The Hansen House and Joy Nature Trail are located on Dearing Road.

"The girls have been energetic in wanting to work," said Haynes. "They have drilled, hammered, used wrenches, done problem solving, team lifting, and they have just worked well together. I am happy."

Wilkinson stated that he hopes this could be a project that creates a long and lasting relationship with both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts which will lead to future projects on Fort Pickett.

# 29th ID, 20 countries partner up for PANAMAX '09

By Sgt. John Slosser  
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The 29th Infantry Division Headquarters combined forces with more than 700 U.S. and partner nation personnel at Camp Bullis, Texas for the simulated ground portion of Fuerzas Aliadas PANAMAX '09, a multinational, joint forces training scenario built around the defense of the Panama Canal.

The full spectrum training exercise involved civil and military land, air and sea forces from 20 countries. This year's PANAMAX pulled together more than 4,500 personnel, 20 maritime vessels and a dozen aircraft to form a Multi-National Force throughout the Central American region.

The training scenario centered on the protection of the Panama Canal and safe passage through it, while respecting national sovereignty. The annual multinational, multilingual event tests the coalition's ability to conduct combat operations, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance in the region.

"This is a wonderful training event. We have ships, planes, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and it really is the largest exercise of its kind being conducted anywhere," said Brig. Gen. Frank Batts, deputy commander for the 29th ID and acting commander for the PANAMAX Coalition Forces Land Component Command. "We only see one portion of it here at the land component, but we have to work with all of those other forces out there also. It really is a tremendous environment to be in."

The 29th ID Headquarters filled in as the bulk of the CFLCC for the virtual land-based training. The unit focused on command and control, stability operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief operations. Virginia National Guard Soldiers worked side by side with servicemembers from El Salvador, Chile, Peru, The Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Columbia, Guatemala, and Canada. The CFLCC's own deputy commander was from Central America and was honored with the opportunity to command the 29th Infantry Division headquarters for one day.

"It is a very interesting opportunity to



Photo by Sgt. John Slosser, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

**Col. John Epperly from the 29th Infantry Division briefs El Salvadoran Army Col. Yohalmo Figueroa Mata at the Coalition Forces Land Component Command headquarters in Camp Bullis, Texas during PANAMAX 2009.**

work in a multi-cultural environment. We can develop professionally and personally with each other," said Col. Yohalmo Figueroa Mata, an Army artillery colonel from El Salvador. "We're also learning from the troops that have come from Virginia and the United States. We still find answers to many of the same challenges but with different points of view and different cultures."

The exercise did pose some interesting environmental challenges. It has been a number of years since the 29th ID has deployed its headquarters.

"In some ways we're building the plane and flying it at the same time," said Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Green, the 29th ID command sergeant major. "Some of it has been difficult, our Soldiers have stood up and done a tremendous job in meeting those challenges, but it has been a wonderful experience."

Another unique challenge for the National Guard unit, was the multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment.

"Language does present some challenges in that in everything we do here we make an attempt to translate it into Spanish which is the native language of most of our partner nations in this exercise. Since we are all

integrated within this exercise, each one of us has had to understand what is being presented at any one of our briefings," said Batts. "Obviously if you say something in English and you wait for the Spanish translation of it, it does take longer. You have to slow down a bit so translators can catch up with you."

The number of partner nations participating in this exercise has grown significantly over the past few years. PANAMAX began in 2003 with three countries: Panama, Chile and the United States. With 20 nations contributing, this is the first time for many Servicemembers to participate in an exercise of this kind.

Figueroa also commented on an overall reason for the tremendous growth in the number of PANAMAX's partner nations.

"It indicates an increased interest in many countries willingness to work together and learn from each other. That means that we each encounter the same challenges and problems in the various regions where we work," said Figueroa. "The emerging challenges know no boundaries, therefore we should all work together to overcome them. This demonstrates an increase in interest and in trust to the problems we share."

## Fort Pickett Maneuve

By Capt. Matt Nowak  
Virginia Army Guard Public Affairs

Since being turned over from active duty to the Virginia National Guard in 1997, Fort Pickett has completed one of its most active years for both its facilities and training events. Since Sept. 1, 2008, Fort Pickett saw growth in the number of areas on the installation. Training man-days will be expected to top out at 875,000. Fort Pickett also saw a variety of new construction and the improvement.

Virginia Guard units are given priority of training, but a variety of units from around the region and services conduct training.

Along with National Guard and Army Reserve units, active Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard units from across the country train at Fort Pickett. National Guard units from North Carolina, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Connecticut have trained at the Maneuver Training Center throughout the year. The Maneuver Training



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

**U.S. Airmen and Soldiers, alongside coalition forces from around the world, mostly security forces and special operations personnel, trained at Fort Pickett in April as part of a program called Patriot Seven.**



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

**Soldiers from the Hampton-based 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery conducted live fire training April 28 at Fort Pickett.**

## er Training Center is not just for annual training anymore

Center also sponsors a yearly training exercise held each February called Southbound Trooper which includes Soldiers from Canada and Great Britain.

"We have some really awesome capabilities here and we are very customer oriented in allowing units to conduct their training as they request," said Col. Tom Wilkinson, the commander of Fort Pickett. "We always focus on safety, but we try to give units the latitude to build their own training plans. The active units like Pickett because our resources are more readily available than the ones they have to compete for at active bases."

MTC offers commanders a wide variety of training to individually and collectively train their Soldiers. It has about 41,000 acres of available training land. Included are 21 ranges for individual and crew served weapons qualification and a Multi-Purpose Range Complex.

Collective training ranges include convoy live fire, Infantry Platoon Battle Course and a Joint IED Defeat Organization lane, which is in the final stages of construction. Also included is a Military Operations in Urban Terrain site, urban assault course, and a fully instrumented shoot house. MTC has facilities to include training for aviation. It has an airfield capable of landing a C-17 and a combat assault strip. Fort Pickett offers restricted airspace to 18,000 feet, making it very desirable for UAV operations.

As a training installation with many aging facilities, MTC had a busy year with upgrading and improving buildings and training areas. Part of the President's stimulus package included \$7.5 million in funds for facilities improvement at Pickett. The money will be used to upgrade barracks, administrative buildings and dining facilities. About \$2.5 million was obligated in 2009 to improve barracks. The administrative buildings and dining facilities will begin work in the 2010 fiscal year. About \$1.7 million will be put into energy saving initiatives for some of its facilities. Funds will be used to upgrade HVAC, electrical and insulation in the 2400 block of buildings. Additional funds were secured to retrofit compressors with higher Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio rated models to make heating and cooling more efficient, reducing costs in the long run.

Morale, welfare and recreation facilities have also seen an improvement. A new leisure center was improved this year. Located at Bldg 2403, it offers pizza, drinks, games and big screen television. There is also an internet café located in the building.

Fort Pickett is coordinating with the Fort Lee Post Exchange manager to facilitate upgrades to its PX. An outdoor café as well as a "Java Café" kiosk is planned to open in the future.

"I hope to see 2010 as a banner year for Fort Pickett," said Wilkinson. "Reaching the one million man-day mark would be great. Fort Pickett is a diamond in the rough and I encourage units to use our assets to the fullest. I also look forward to continuing the great rapport and relationship we share with Nottoway County and working together to expand the opportunities and support to our great Soldiers."



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

**Canadian Army Reserve Soldiers trained at Fort Pickett along with U.S. Army Soldiers during Exercise Southbound Trooper IX in February.**



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

**Two Marines from the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit from Camp Lejeune, N.C., arrived at Fort Pickett in January to train in preparation for an upcoming overseas deployment.**