



Photo courtesy of 2-224th Aviation

Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment pose for a photo with Maj. Gen. Robert Newman, the adjutant general of Virginia, and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Huffman, the Virginia senior enlisted advisor. The Virginia National Guard's senior leaders were in Iraq to visit with Virginia Guard troops deployed to the region.

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203rd RED HORSE Squadron heads for Southwest Asia

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2006



FROM THE TOP



2006 a year of challenges, accomplishments for Virginia Guard

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

As we near the end of 2006 I want to share with you the accomplishments of the Virginia National Guard which were achieved as a result of your effort and dedication.

Although 2006 was a challenging year, our Soldiers, Airmen, and civilian employees rose to meet those challenges. We supported a demanding federal mission while renewing and expanding our militia mission in service to Virginia.

We established a new vision for the Virginia National Guard that is grounded in preparedness, caring for our Guardsmen, developing and training our leaders, and transforming our force.

As the result of innovation, thoughtful implementation, and hard work Virginia is among the first states in the nation to have built a true joint staff. This joint staff will enable us to leverage the capabilities of both the Army and the Air National Guard in responding to disasters here in the Commonwealth. Through the effort of the joint staff, plans designed to better prepare the Virginia National Guard to respond to emergencies here at home have been developed and are being exercised. We are breaking new ground with this initiative and it will pay enormous dividends in our ability to support homeland defense in the Commonwealth.

Our innovation is not limited to operations; we are also focusing with renewed enthusiasm on those carrying out the operations and their families. Our family readiness program has grown significantly with the addition of family enrichment seminars, children's programs designed to help children deal with the mobilization and deployment of a parent, and the ongoing training of our superb family readiness program volunteers.

We are working to ensure that our Soldiers and Airmen enjoy their career in the Virginia National Guard and that their career with us is much more than simply a part time job. We want an environment where Virginia National Guard service in



Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr.

support of the Commonwealth and this great nation of ours is rewarding and gives our Soldiers and Airmen a sense of accomplishment.

America's Army and Air Force are transforming themselves to meet the challenges of the 21st Century and the Virginia Army and Air National Guard are standing shoulder to shoulder with them.

The Virginia Army Guard's transformation from Cold War legacy formations to highly mobile, deadly, adaptable formations necessary to fight today's war on terror is complete in many ways. There are still issues such as equipment shortages but our unit leaders have proven that they are quite capable of successfully dealing with them to ensure our Guardsmen are properly trained.

The Virginia Air Guard's 192nd Fighter Wing has begun its migration from Sandston to Langley Air Force Base where it will integrate with the 1st Fighter Wing. This integration will see the 192nd transition from the F-16 Fighting Falcon to the F-22 Raptor.

While many issues remain to be worked through as a result of this initiative, the end result will ensure that Virginia Airmen will

pilot this country's most advanced fighter aircraft well into the 21st Century.

These achievements by our Soldiers and Airmen are remarkable in and of themselves but what makes them truly outstanding is they were accomplished during a time when the Virginia National Guard is fully engaged in the war on terror.

Despite the challenges, the men and women of the Virginia National Guard have continued to step forward in defense of our country and Commonwealth.

This past summer over 400 Soldiers and Airmen volunteered to answer President Bush's call to guard America's borders during Operation Jump Start. Members of Task Force Falcon have moved out in support of the Balkans peacekeeping effort in Kosovo and the Airmen of the 203rd RED HORSE have taken their skills to Iraq in support of the Global War on Terror. Soldiers from the 2nd of the 224th Aviation Battalion and 654th Military Police Company have been in Iraq since early this year and our Security Police Airmen from the 192nd Fighter Wing are also currently deployed in Iraq.

In summary 2006 was a year of challenges for our Soldiers and Airmen and their families yet they rose to meet the challenges. We could not have achieved these accomplishments without the exceptional dedication and patriotism of our Soldiers, Airmen, and their families. Well done!

I am looking forward to meeting the demands of 2007 with each and every one of you. As a result of your capable stewardship of our great organization I am confident that 2007 will be equally as impressive as 2006 if not more so.

In the meantime let's take the holiday season to reflect on the blessings we enjoy as Virginians and Americans. As you go about your travels during the holidays be safe. Let us commit ourselves to a renewed effort in the coming year to assure that we do all that is necessary to ensure our many blessings are passed to our children and the generations to follow

May God bless you all.

Tajikistan
Continued from Page 6

and border security, the U.S. ambassador to Tajikistan and the head of Tajikistan's own National Guard.

Newman also received a presidential invitation to attend Tajikistan's 15th independence day celebration.

"The relationships that we've developed with the ministries of Tajikistan are absolutely essential," Newman said. "I've found that in my visit with the various general officers and elected officials that they have come to rely on not only Virginia's expertise, but also their confidence in the Soldiers and Airmen that come here to help them."

Edmonds also noted the nature and

character of the people he encountered during his numerous visits to the country.

"(The people of Tajikistan) are a very hospitable people, very gracious. Although they speak a different language and are halfway around the world from the U.S., they're very much like us. They want security for their people, education for their children, economic prosperity, and they want to be able to lead a good life. That's the basis for why we do cooperation programs like this," Edmonds said.

National Guard support for SPP events range from medical programs to non-commissioned officer professional development training.

The Virginia SPP also aids in border

security issues and helps teach the Tajiks about training, management and other staff issues.

Edmonds also noted that SPP support can conceivably extend to whatever the Tajiks need as long as the National Guard has the capabilities to fulfill those needs and they fall within the guidance of the U.S. Department of Defense.

"I'm proud of the Virginia National Guardsmen that help in this program. This is not their normal duty. They take time out of their schedules, they volunteer to do this and fly halfway around the world to do these programs," Edmonds said.

"I'm very proud to be involved with the State Partnership Program and I'm proud of the support that Maj. Gen. Newman has for the program."

The Adjutant General also commented on the mutually beneficial program and the overall value in Virginia's participation as a SPP member.

"Not only is Virginia going to benefit from this partnership through training and various interactions with the Tajiks, but the country of Tajikistan is absolutely in the forefront with the global war on terror," Newman said.

"We see it with their border security issues, with their narcotics prevention programs. We see it within this partnership as the Tajik military becomes a more western military, subservient to civilian authority.

"Virginia is fortunate to have such willing partner to engage in such an important mission that will carry us well into the next decade."



Graphic by Pfc. Geoff Dudley, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Virginia National Guard Federal Deployments

# *	Unit	Where Deployed	Home Town
130	203rd RED HORSE Squadron	Southwest Asia	Virginia Beach
170	HHC, 29th Infantry Division	Hohenfels, Germany	Fort Belvoir
294	1st Battalion., 116th Infantry Regiment	Hohenfels, Germany	Various Locations
24	Company E, 429th Brigade Support Battalion	Hohenfels, Germany	Roanoke
157	Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 111th Field Artillery	Iraq	Richmond
60	192nd Fighter Wing, 200th Weather Flight and 203rd REDHORSE	Various locations	Sandston and Virginia Beach
55	Various units	Army Guard Readiness Center	
275	2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation	Iraq	Sandston

* All listings for numbers of Soldiers/Airmen are approximate.

News Briefs

DeCA accepts scholarship applications for military children

Gas prices are biting into the family budget, interest rates are rising and college tuition is outpacing inflation. But relief is in sight for military families as the 2007 Scholarships for Military Children program opens.

Applications for the \$1,500 scholarships are available at 264 commissaries worldwide, or can be downloaded at <http://www.commissaries.com/>, <http://www.militaryscholar.org/>, or <http://www.dodea.edu/>.

The \$1,500 scholarships are available for children of military active-duty, retired, and Guard and Reserve servicemembers. Most of the funds are donated by manufacturers, brokers and suppliers selling groceries in commissaries, and every dollar donated to the program by industry or the general public goes to fund the scholarships.

A significant number of scholarships, about 10 percent every year, go to high school students at DoD schools overseas.

The scholarship program has also made inroads to increasing support from the "nonmilitary" community. California high school students sponsoring golf tournaments in 2006 raised thousands of dollars to donate to the program, and already for 2007, a private foundation has made a substantial donation.

Donations can be made through the link at <http://www.militaryscholar.org/>, the official program Web site.

Applications for 2007, which include an essay on "how and why" the applicant would change an historical event, must be turned in at a commissary by close of business on Feb. 21, 2007. At least one \$1,500 scholarship will be awarded at every commissary location with qualified applicants.

The program is open to unmarried children under the age of 21 (23 if enrolled in school) of military active-duty, Reserve, Guard and retired personnel.

Eligibility will be determined using the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System database.

Applicants should ensure that they, as

well as their sponsor, are enrolled in the DEERS database and have a current ID card.

The applicant must be planning to attend, or already attending, an accredited college or university fulltime in the 2007 fall term, or enrolled in a program of studies designed to transfer directly into a four-year program.

Military Family Support Center connects families via DSN lines

The Defense Department's military phone network – the Defense Switched Network (DSN) – has been extended by the Virginia National Guard to the Military Family Support Center so that troops from around the world can dial seven digits – 438-5675 - and access through the Center attendant NTELOS' call transfer and toll-free long distance services to reach their families.

By regulation, each service member serving in a war zone is allowed two 15-minute Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) calls each week using the DSN. Until now, calls were normally restricted to the local calling radius of a military installation. Using DSN, a troop would call a military installation and ask for the operator to connect them to their family's number.

Depending on the volume of calls, operators would then transfer the call to the local number, but were restricted from making a long distance call due to long distance charges and payment issues.

Since most military members live outside the local calling areas of a diminishing number of military installations, the MWR allowance has historically gone unused.

Even though the National Guard has provided the DSN connection, members from any branch of service can use the connection to make their MWR calls.

Calls are currently limited to the Center hours – Mondays and Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Eastern time.

The Military Family Support Center is a 501(c)(3) charity established to care for the families of our deployed military who live

outside the support perimeter of a military installation.

Their web address is www.milfamily.org and toll-free phone number is 1-866-Y-Thank-U. Their local number is 540-400-8301. DSN: 438-5675.

New website informs servicemembers of legal and financial protections

The Justice Department recently launched a new website designed to safeguard the civilian employment rights, voting rights and financial security of service members and veterans.

The web site, <http://www.servicemembers.gov/>, is a partnership between the Justice Department and other federal agencies that oversee these protections.

The site offers information and resources about three laws passed specifically to protect service members.

The Uniformed Services and Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) prohibits employers from discriminating or retaliating against an employee or applicant for employment because of past, current, or future military obligation.

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) requires that states allow certain groups of citizens, including service members and their families, to register and vote absentee in a timely manner in elections for federal offices.

The Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA) provides civil protections for military personnel while on active duty.

The site serves as "one stop shopping" for service members and veterans and will provide useful information and links to services provided by the Justice Department and other federal agencies. It answers commonly asked questions involving rights and protections.

The site also provides contact information and directions to file complaints with the Justice Department and other federal agencies that investigate and prosecute possible civil rights violations.



Virginia GuardPost



SERVING THE ARMY AND AIR GUARD OF VIRGINIA

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2006

On the Cover



Staff Sgt. Terence A. Sheridan, Jr. accepts a "goodie bag" from Samantha Rhinard as he prepares to deploy to Southwest Asia with the 203rd RED HORSE Squadron. (Photo by Master Sgt. Carlos Claudio, Virginia Air National Guard)

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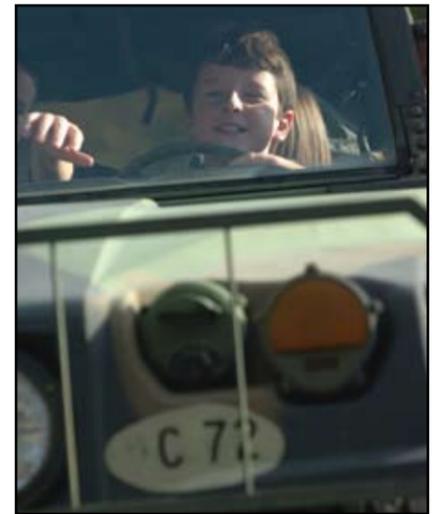
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Virginians remember 5th anniversary of 9/11



Photo by Sgt. Jesse Houk, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

The Virginia National Guard color guard stands at attention while Virginia Governor Tim Kaine addresses several hundred people gathered at the capitol bell tower to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

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

More than 300 people gathered at the capitol bell tower in Richmond on Sept. 11 to remember the nearly 3,000 people who were killed exactly five years before during terrorist attacks at the Pentagon, in New York City and in Pennsylvania.

The Joint Force Headquarters color guard and Col. Robert H. Simpson, director of the Joint Staff, represented the Virginia National Guard at the solemn, 30-minute ceremony.

Governor Tim Kaine, Attorney General Bob McDonnell, and Richmond Mayor L. Douglas Wilder paid tribute not only to the Americans who lost their lives that day but also to the military members who have taken part since then in the Global War on Terror.

"On 9/11, our world changed in a terrible way," Kaine said. "We can no longer take for granted that oceans on both sides of our nation will protect us from the turmoil that is inflicted upon most of the population of the rest of the world. In a strange and mysterious way it's brought us closer to the rest of the world and made us realize how vulnerable we are."

"One of the most difficult jobs as governor," he continued, "is

writing letters to the families of military members who were lost defending this country in Afghanistan and Iraq."

"I sign those letters virtually every week," Kaine added. "Every one is a painful reminder of the cost of freedom."

Kaine extended his appreciation not only to members of the military but to their families as well and challenged those attending the ceremony to find a way to serve their community.

"Dedicate yourself to the greater good of the commonwealth," he said.

"Americans are united against an enemy that attacked America on 9/11," Wilder said. "The heart and soul of America is as strong as ever and the Pentagon deaths shall not be in vain."

McDonnell called the terrorist attacks a sober reminder that there are enemies of freedom around the world.

"I don't think it's a secret," he said, "that in part the reason we haven't had another attack in the last five years is because the brave men and women have sought out the terrorists where they train, where they operate in foreign lands so they will not have the capacity to attack us again, here in America."

"I salute them I applaud them," McDonnell continued. "America will continue to be the land of the free because it's the home of the brave."

Stonewall Brigade assists with Special Olympics

By Capt. Tim Brooke
116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

For the second year in a row the Stonewall Brigade hosted a 5K run at Gypsy Hill Park in Staunton as part of the area five Special Olympics super bowl of fund raising events.

Special Olympics athletes train year round to be their best. Special Olympics build skills, confidence, and self-esteem not just for the athletes, but for everyone involved.

The 11th annual Fall Fest organizer is Patti Strickler. According to Strickler, the 2005 Fall Fest brought in \$9,000, part of \$20,000 worth of contributions with local businesses making up the remaining contributions for a \$40,000 annual budget.

This year Capt. Jennifer Martin, the brigade logistics officer, drew upon her considerable organization skills, with the assistance of several Headquarters Company soldiers, to host a 5K run to benefit the Special Olympics.

Not only did the Soldiers assist with the run but they also provided manpower for several game booths and a static display of a HUMVEE along with a variety of military hardware.

When asked how the Special Olympians reacted to the presence of Soldiers, Martin stated, "The athletes are so excited to see the uniforms."

She added that her goal was make the community aware of how the guard supports the community and to raise \$800 for the Special Olympics.



Photo by Capt. Tim Brooke, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

Brandon Strickler waves a checkered flag to begin the 5K race around Gypsy Park to benefit the Special Olympics.

The Fall Fest is an annual event each second weekend of September. The 5K starts at 8 a.m. on Saturday. The festival lasts until 8 p.m. on both days. The festival offers games for kids, baked goods, concession stands, live music and a variety of local crafts.

Jonathan Allen, of Robert E. Lee High School won the 5K race with Cadet Brent Barrowes, of Headquarters Company 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, finishing second. Barrowes attends Southern Virginia University.

Virginia Army National Guard announces strength figures

From staff sources

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the adjutant general of Virginia, announced the Virginia National Guard had a very successful year in the area of strength management. Newman stated, "This is the largest increase in assigned strength the Virginia National Guard has had in many years."

The Virginia Army National Guard had a net gain of 432 Soldiers during Fiscal Year 2006 which ended Sept. 30, 2006. Newman said the gain in assigned strength during Fiscal Year 2006 is a Virginia Army National Guard success story.

Newman said the assigned strength of the Virginia Army National Guard was 7,466 Soldiers as of Sept. 30, 2006 and it began Fiscal Year on Oct. 1, 2005 with 7,034.

He attributed the increase in the Virginia Army National Guard's assigned strength to enhanced recruiting incentives, an increase in the number of production recruiters working in Virginia, and most importantly, many of Virginia's Guard units having

returned from overseas deployments.

Newman pointed out that Gov. Tim Kaine and the General Assembly had been very supportive of the men and women of the Virginia National Guard and that this support was a positive influence on his Soldiers' decision to remain in the Guard. Gov. Kaine was instrumental in ensuring tuition funds were available for Guardsmen to attend summer semester this past summer.

Additionally the governor and the General Assembly supported a state funded \$2,000 reenlistment bonus and a \$500,000 appropriation for the Military Family Relief Fund.

Newman pointed out that the most effective recruiters the Guard has are its Soldiers. When Guard units are deployed, the men and women of those units are not available to recruit. Additionally, Newman suggested that the types of missions the Virginia National Guard has been involved in over the last year have had a positive impact on strength.

"Supporting the Hurricane Katrina, Southwest Border, and Ernesto missions

is a strong motivator for many people to enlist in the Guard," Newman said.

He went on to say, "Many of our men and women enlist because they want to serve not only this great nation but also our Commonwealth. The Virginia National Guard gives them the opportunity to do just that."

According to Newman, the Fiscal Year 2006 strength goal for the Virginia Army National Guard was 7,555 Soldiers. While the Virginia Army Guard fell 89 Soldiers short of the National Guard Bureau goal Newman said, "The Virginia Army Guard has made significant progress from earlier this year when it was over 300 Soldiers short of the goal. I am pleased with the progress we have made and look forward to reaching and then exceeding the 7,555 mark. I have no doubt that we will accomplish this."

He concluded by saying, "It's not where we are; it's where we are going and all of our trends are heading up. All of the Virginia Army Guard has pulled together to make this happen. I am proud of all of these guys."

Families, food & fun**192nd FW celebrates families, reunion of '61 Berlin Call-Up**

By Maj. Debbie Magaldi
Virginia Air Guard Public Affairs

Saturday, Sept. 16, was a very special day for the 192nd Fighter Wing: Family Day 2006. Along with their Air Guard men and women, more than 1,500 family members and retirees turned out for the day-long event that included military displays, activities for all ages, lunch, snacks, and a range of informational and family support materials.

Heading up the event was Angie Wade, the Wing family programs coordinator.

"The day was a huge success," she said. "It was a day for our Guard members, their families and our retirees to enjoy. No cost

or fuss for them – just good food and great fun with family and co-workers.

"We served more than 1,100 lunches; and nearly everyone left with a handful of give-a-ways and informational material," she added. "The success of this event was due to the incredible talents and efforts of the Family Day Committee and the work of both fulltime and traditional Airmen and our many volunteers, especially the Student Flight, who carried the day off in fine form. I must also thank the commanders for supporting us and this very special event.

"There were so many highlights, it's hard to pick one that shined above the rest," Wade added. "I take my hat off to the people who made it possible for the F-22 Raptor to visit Sandston for this event. It was awesome! A line extended out from the aircraft the entire day as our crew chiefs took small groups around the aircraft."

Young and old took to the rock-climbing wall, the military equipment displays, hay rides, the 1961 Berlin Call-Up displays and stories, and attempts to dunk their 'favorite' commander.

Face painting, the barnyard petting zoo, the weapons firing range and the children's play area were also a hit for the young and young-at-heart, according to Wade.

"A specialty vehicle display, coordinated by Col. Garrie Denson, 192nd FW, brought in many fascinating and beautiful entries including wing commander Col. Jay Pearsall's 1929 prize-winning Orchard truck, which he restored," she added.

Nearly 250 Virginia Air



Photo by Senior Airman Jason D. St. Peter, Virginia Air National Guard

The 192nd FW's Family Day included entertainment and activities for all ages.

National Guard retirees and their spouses enjoyed displays, mementos and photos from the unit's 1961 Berlin Call-Up to active duty.

Many of the displays were prepared by Master Sgt. Peter Martens of the 192nd FW's public affairs office.

It was a very special kind of "family" reunion, according to Virginia Air National Guard Retiree Association member Tech. Sgt. (ret.) Tom Carter, who began planning the reunion about two years ago.

"The memories and stories were incredible," he said. "I wanted to give current members a chance to blend with the retirees and learn from them. They came from all over Virginia and as far away as southern Florida."

Brig. Gen. William Busby, assistant adjutant general for air, commended Pearsall and all who had a part in the event, saying, "Well done to you and your team for a magnificent family day! ...What a team of warfighters, emergency responders and family we have. It was a superb way to show our Airmen and their families how much they mean to the Virginia Guard family.

"This visibly delivers on one of the adjutant general's key objectives of 'Guardsmen Care' by focusing on our families," Busby said. "I view this as a true national benchmark!"



Photo by Master Sgt. Glenda M. Smith, Virginia Air National Guard

Airmen had the opportunity to dunk their favorite commander at the dunk tank.

JTF Stonewall troops welcomed home from Southwest border

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

After spending more than two months living and working on the Arizona border with Mexico, where they turned away more than 400 undocumented aliens and helped seize more than 900 lbs. of marijuana, the more than 400 Soldiers and Airmen of the Virginia National Guard's Joint Task Force Stonewall were welcomed home with a ceremony at the Fort Pickett theater on Sept. 22.

"I can't tell you how proud you've made all of us," Virginia Secretary of Public Safety John Marshall told members of the task force. "I want to say thanks to all of you for your service. In particular, thank you for stepping up to the plate and serving your nation in Operation Jump Start."

"You represent the very best of Virginia and you represent the very best of what it is to be a citizen," Marshall added. "We are so very fortunate to have the service of all of you. Thank you for what you do."

"First I want to commend each of you for volunteering for this important mission," said Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, Jr., the adjutant general of Virginia. "This deployment has made Virginia and the United States a safer place and I'm very pleased to welcome you home."

Their mission began over the summer, when word went out looking for volunteers to support "Operation Jump Start," the National Guard mission supporting the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol. Within two days, more than 400 members of the Virginia Guard had volunteered for the assignment.

In July, after several days of training at Fort Pickett, the Soldiers and Airmen arrived in Arizona, where they were based in the communities of Tucson, Ajo, Sasabe and Nogales.

JTF Stonewall's mission was to man 32 Entry Identification Team (EIT) sites along 163 miles of the U.S. / Mexico border. From these EIT sites, Soldiers and Airmen monitored the border 24 hours a day, keeping their eyes open for any suspicious activity.

"We reported any activity we saw to the border patrol," explained Staff Sgt. Scott Mayhew, a Soldier with 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery. "Hopefully they'd then be able to pick the people up somewhere along the road."

In addition to turning away more than 400 undocumented aliens and helping seize more than 900 lbs. of marijuana, JTF Stonewall reported more than 1,800 undocumented alien entries which resulted in more than 500 detentions by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officials.

The Soldiers and Airmen who took part in the mission found that it provided them with a great opportunity to work together.

"I think the Army and Air Guard learned from each other,"

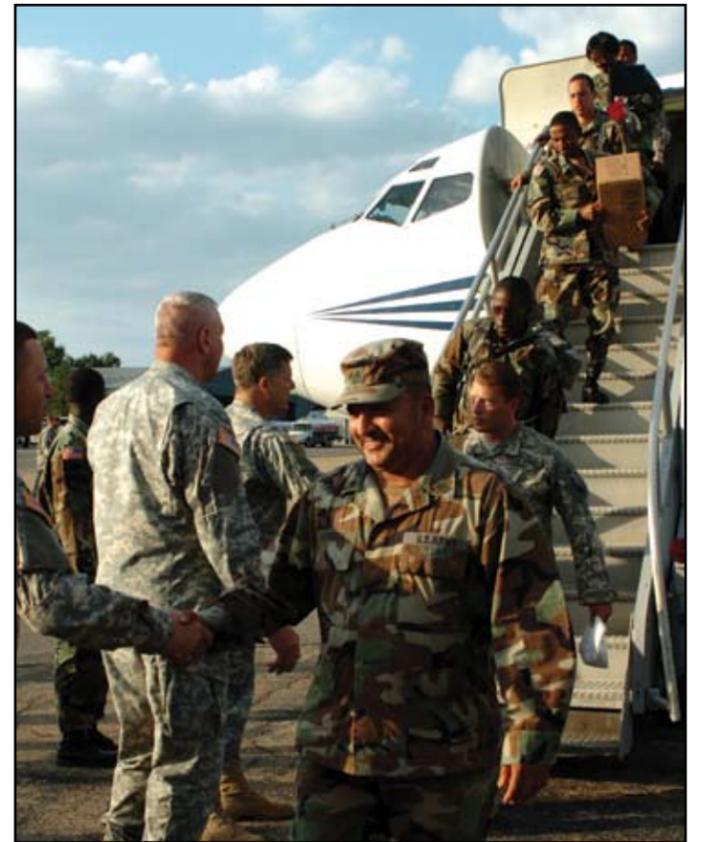


Photo by Pfc. Geoff Dudley, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers and Airmen from Joint Task Force Stonewall arrive in Richmond on Sept. 20 following more than two months on the Southwest border as part of Operation Jump Start. The task force was credited with turning away more than 400 undocumented aliens and helping seize more than 900 lbs. of marijuana.

Senior Airman Rall Elder said. "We learned Army methods, they learned Air Force methods and then we put them all together to make it work."

Overall, each of the returning Guard members felt that the mission was important and worthwhile.

"It was a great chance to protect our country," said Spc. Jessie Blanding of the 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment. "We stopped drug runners, illegal immigrants and things like that."

In fact, Blanding felt so strongly about the mission that he has volunteered to go back to

the border to continue the mission.

Elder volunteered for Operation Jump Start simply because he felt it was part of his duty as a member of the National Guard.

"Anytime you're called up by your country, it's a worthy mission," Elder said. "We had a chance to stop illegal immigrants and drugs from coming into this country."

Elder also said he thought the mission and the Guardsmen's eagerness to take part sent an important message to the rest of the state.

"It really lets Virginians know we'll do whatever it takes to defend our country and our commonwealth," he said.

"It really lets Virginians know we'll do whatever it takes to defend our country and our commonwealth"

- Senior Airman Rall Elder

TAG trip builds relationship with Tajiks

By Sgt. John Slosser
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

From battling hurricanes on the homefront to fighting insurgents overseas, the Virginia National Guard has contributed to missions and built relationships that span the globe. One program requires small teams of Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard to make regular trips to Central Asia. Their mission- to support security and civil-military cooperation between the United States and the Republic of Tajikistan, an endeavor that is part of the National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP).

According to the National Guard's Office of International Affairs, the program's goals reflect an evolving international mission for the National Guard using its' unique civil-military nature to interact with foreign countries.

The SPP includes 43 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia, which are partnered with 49 countries around the world. As one of the newer members to the SPP, Virginia was partnered with Tajikistan in 2004. The members conduct military cooperation exchanges of different varieties, usually once a month.

"The reason the National Guard got this program is because some smart people realized that National Guard soldiers have a lot to offer beyond their military skills," said Maj. Neal Edmonds, Virginia's SPP coordinator. "They have civilian skills and deep roots within their communities, which most countries can definitely relate to."

"We are not trying to tell them how to do business, we just show them that there is another way to do business and (the SPP) is one way to do that," he said.

Tajikistan is a mountainous, landlocked nation located in



Photo by Sgt. John Slosser, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

A dancer performs a traditional Tajik dance for Maj. Gen. Newman and other guests at a dinner celebrating the 15th anniversary of Tajikistan's independence.

Central Asia with a population of around seven million people. It is geographically significant to the Global War on Terror because of the 1,200 kilometer border it shares with Afghanistan.

One key note of concern for the people of Tajikistan is narcotics-trafficking, as 90 percent of the heroin produced in the opium fields of Afghanistan makes its way through Tajikistan on the way to Europe and Russia.

Edmonds, who makes regular visits to the former Soviet state, recently escorted Virginia's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Robert Newman, and Virginia's senior enlisted advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Huffman, to meet with officials in Tajikistan.

"The National Guard has a very strong interest in facilitating Tajikistan movement toward their military stability," said Newman. "Guardsmen need to be adept at a number of different missions. Obviously the military mission and the federal role, but we also need to develop better capabilities to serve our state and look to international opportunities to provide for stability peace keeping operations... things such as that. The partnership with the republic of Tajikistan helps us to do just that."

During the Newman's visit to Tajikistan, he was able to meet with a range of officials, including the Tajik ministers of defense

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Photo by Sgt. John Slosser, Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers from the Tajik military march in an independence day parade Sept. 9 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

429th BSB Soldiers set sights on 2006 Connelly award

By Sgt. John Slosser
Virginia Guard Public Affairs

Chow has a direct impact on troop moral and overall unit health. Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard's D Company, 429th Brigade Support Battalion have what it takes to feed an Army.

The food service Soldiers are competing against seven other regions for the national 2006 Phillip A. Connelly Field Kitchen Food Service award. Each of these regional teams, which are graded independently, have already won their state and regional competitions.

"...So this is pretty much the Super Bowl of the competition," said Spc. James Anderson, a field sanitation specialist for D Co., 429th BSB.

Department of the Army evaluators recently traveled to Virginia to judge the unit's food service specialists at work among the pine trees during their field kitchen operations.

"They are looking to see how well the team works together. The cooks have so much cooking duty that they pretty much don't leave the field kitchen until the meal is ready to be served," Anderson said. "Even the runners are evaluated because there are only a set number of dishes. They must be washed and returned quickly to be reused for another part of the meal preparation."

Anderson also mentioned some of the more specific points of the high-level food service competition. The unit has to prepare and serve exactly 50 meals at 12:30 p.m. They cannot have any leftover ingredients and the menu has to be followed to the "T."

The inspectors check for criteria ranging from the safety of the preparation to how well the food tastes.

"The inspectors check the food temperature, the ice chest and freezer temperatures, even the temperatures of the water in the wash line," said Anderson. "We make sure that the wash water is 110 degrees, the rinse is over 120 degrees and the sanitizing water is over 170 degrees."

At 12:30 p.m., hungry soldiers were treated to hot meals of beef stroganoff, soup, salad, sides, beverages and even pineapple upside-down cake for dessert. Virginia's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, was also present to taste the fruits of the culinary competition.

"I'm real proud of all of them, said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ronald Saylor, the senior food service advisor for Virginia. "This is what cooks live for. When the Soldiers in a unit enjoy the meal and give compliments to the cooks, it makes their day!"

Although the final judging has yet to take place, the unit is confident that they did their best. The winning unit will get to send representatives to Kansas City, Mo., where several lucky Soldiers will receive scholarships to advance their skills at a culinary arts school.

"They have worked real hard. The cooks, the kitchen patrols, the guys working the equipment have all been essential to getting to this level of success," said Saylor. "Their attitudes and approach have been great! I hope we can keep it up because this mission is important!"



Photo by Sgt. John Slosser, Va. Guard PAO

Top- Sgt. George Brooks of D Company, 429th BSB prepares food in a mobile kitchen at Fort Pickett, Va. Brooks' unit is competing for the national level of the 2006 Phillip A Connelly food service award. Bottom- Spc. Tykeisha Kellam, D Co., 429th BSB, serves Maj. Gen. Robert Newman, the Virginia adjutant general, lunch in the field.

Counterdrug urges kids to 'Stay on Track'

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

Students at Fieldale-Collinsville Middle School in Collinsville were treated to a day of helicopters, humvees, and NASCAR on Oct. 19 when the Virginia National Guard's Counterdrug Office brought the "Stay on Track" program to campus.

"Stay on Track is the National Guard's new program targeted at middle school students that uses motor sport analogies to introduce and reinforce important concepts. It's an innovative substance abuse education program that combines prevention science principles and popular motor sports appeal.

Topics of the program include effective strategies for teamwork, the value of keeping both the human body and engine running at optimal levels of performance, knowing how to cope with stressful situations appropriately, making correct split decisions, and how to set and achieve future goals.

Because of their prevalence among middle school students, a special emphasis



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

A Solider from the Virginia National Guard Counterdrug team shows students the inside of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter Oct. 19 in Collinsville.

is given throughout the program to alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other inhalant use.

The objective of the program is to reduce future substance abuse among middle school students.

More than 900 students participated in the event at near Martinsville. A Virginia National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter was flown in and classes each got to climb in and through the aircraft.

They also got the opportunity to sit in and climb behind the wheel of the humvees.

In addition each class had their photo taken with Greg Biffle's #15 National Guard car. He was in town to race in the Subway 500 at Martinsville Speedway.

Biffle had to spend the day qualifying for the race but he stopped by the school the next day to speak to the students and share the "Stay on Track" message.



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

Left- A student from Fieldale-Collinsville Middle School climbs behind the wheel of a Virginia National Guard Humvee during the National Guard's "Stay on Track" program event. Above- Chief Warrant Officer 2 Virgil Hill of the Virginia National Guard tells students from what it's like to fly a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter.

34th CST lends a hand to flooded Franklin

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

It's been over a year since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Gulf Coast, causing massive flooding, billions of dollars in damages and countless hours of recovery operations that continues today in many parts of the region.

The city of Franklin Va., got a taste of what life might be like for those affected by those storms when a slow-moving storm made its way through the city Oct. 7 and 8, dumping over 12 inches of rain in the area.

The torrential down-pour caused the Blackwater River to crest to a near-record level which led to severe flooding to the city's downtown business district and surrounding areas under as much as five feet of water.

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine surveyed the area, as well as other affected parts of the state, and declared a statewide emergency. This laid the groundwork for members of the 34th Civil Support Team (CST) to leap into action, after receiving a call from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) to assist with



Photo courtesy of 34th CST

A member of the 34th CST participates in decontamination efforts in Franklin, Va., after the Blackwater River flooded the city Oct. 7 and 8.

recovery operations.

The 34th CST, based at Fort Pickett, arrived in Franklin on Oct. 13 and wasted little time getting started. With nine highly trained personnel and four specialized vehicles, the team assumed decontamination operations in an effort to normalize services in the city, which had been closed since Oct 10.

Lt. Col. Jeffery Hice, commander of the 34th CST, said this mission was a little different from what they were used to.

"This is the first time since our

inception that we've been called to assist in a natural disaster situation. Our main focus has always been on weapons of mass destruction (WMD); nuclear, biological and chemical," he said

The 34th CST worked tirelessly for 49 hours, non-stop, decontaminating over 250 vehicles and 15 personnel, consisting mainly of emergency services workers and first responders.

Hice was pleased with the efforts of his team and praised them for their hard work.

"The team did a great job and worked very hard to help the citizens of Franklin recover from this unfortunate event," Hice said.

"Our main goal was to help facilitate restoration of essential services so that the people could return to normalcy as quickly as possible and I think we did that."

The 34th CST concluded their mission on Oct. 15 and returned to its home base where the team members reset their equipment and reassumed posture for the next incident. Residents and business owners of Franklin were then allowed to return to the city to assess the damage to their homes and businesses.

KFOR 8 conducts departure ceremony

By Maj. Cotton Puryear
KFOR 8 Public Affairs

CAMP ATTERBURY, Ind. - After successfully completing weeks of mobilization training, Soldiers from Kosovo Force 8 (KFOR 8) marked another milestone in their journey to Kosovo with a departure ceremony on Oct. 8 at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

KFOR 8 is a brigade-sized task force that will conduct peace-enforcement operations in Kosovo as part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force that has been in the province since 1999.

Five multinational brigade-sized task forces make up the KFOR, and KFOR 8 will be assuming authority for the Multinational Task Force (East) area of operations.

"I couldn't be prouder of the men and women that stand before you today,"

said Brig. Gen. Douglas B. Earhart, the commander of MNTF (E) for the KFOR 8 rotation.

"While we came here from different places and different components of the U.S. Army, we leave here united under the flag of the historic 29th Infantry Division. Our success here at Camp Atterbury is a testimony to the hard works of the Soldiers in this task force and the officers and noncommissioned officers that lead them. Each one of you should feel a great sense of accomplishment for what you have done here."

KFOR 8 is made up primarily of United States National Guard units from 22 states and Puerto Rico, as well as units from the active component of the U.S. Army and Army Reserve.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to our communities and employers for their support of our mission, but our greatest

thanks must go to the families of our Soldiers," Earhart said. "Without the support and sacrifices of our families back home, we would not be able to prepare for and conduct our mission."

Soldiers from KFOR 8 have been training at Camp Atterbury since early August and will deploy to Germany in mid-October for a final training exercise before heading to Kosovo.

"It was an honor to sign the validation letter for this unit," said Maj. Gen. John A. Yingling, deputing commanding general, First United States Army.

"They are ready to assume the duties of this mission. They are competent and confident, and I know they will successfully complete their mission of giving the people of Kosovo a chance to work and live in peace."

For more information, visit www.KFOR8.com.

203rd RED HORSE Squadron deploys to Southwest Asia



Photo by Master Sgt. Carlos Claudio, Virginia Air National Guard

Master Sgt. Scott Morrill gives an extended hug to his wife Tech Sgt. Jennifer Morrill before deploying with the 203rd Red Horse Squadron to Southwest Asia.

By Maj. Debbie Magaldi
Virginia Air Guard Public Affairs

An advance team of nearly 30 Airmen from the Virginia National Guard's 203rd RED HORSE Squadron left Virginia Beach on Oct. 16, headed for Southwest Asia.

The main body of the unit – numbering approximately 100 Airmen – left the State Military Reservation earlier in the day, headed for Fort McCoy, Wisc., and a 30-day rotation through combat skills training (CST) in preparation for the unit's deployment.

After completing CST, the Airmen will deploy directly to Southwest Asia. Both groups are scheduled to return to Virginia Beach during May 2007.

This marks the Virginia Air National Guard engineering unit's second federal mobilization in support of the war on terror. From April through October 2003, the unit carried out an array of construction projects at military installations in Southwest Asia as part of the 1st Expeditionary RED HORSE Group.

RED HORSE stands for Rapid Engineers Deployable Heavy Operations Repair Squadron, Engineers.

This time around the Virginia Airmen will deploy to air bases in Qatar, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

They will join forces with more than 500 Airmen from other Air National Guard and active Air Force RED HORSE and Prime BEEF (Base Engineer Emergency Force) units.

Airmen assigned to RED HORSE and Prime BEEF units are engineers who help build and maintain the facilities of an Air Force Base. Their capabilities include construction of shelters and air base operation facilities, and repairing runways.

"We have a great group of RED HORSE men and women here who are ready and able for the mission," said Lt. Col. Paul Julian, 203rd RHS commander. "We're ready to get started on the work assigned to us."

Dozens of family members, senior Virginia Air Guard leaders and the local news media were on hand for both of the Oct. 16 departures.

The 203rd Family Support Group – dubbed "Charlie's Club" after Charging Charlie, the RED HORSE mascot – made sure each unit member received a "goody" bag stuffed with treats before stepping onto the buses.

The advance team first left the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach on Sept. 12 for its 30 days of combat skills training.

During meetings with both the advance team and the main body, in September and October, Brig. Gen. William Busby, Virginia's assistant adjutant general for air, spoke with the troops about the importance of their mission.

He thanked them for their sacrifices and their commitment to fight for the liberties and freedoms of everyone in the United States.

He assured the unit members that the Virginia Air Guard stands ready to support them and their family members while the unit is deployed.



Photos by Master Sgt. Carlos Claudio, Virginia Air National Guard

Above- Staff Sgt. Dan Summerell, a Security Forces member, spends a tender moment with his son before boarding a bus. Right- Structures specialist Staff Sgt. Donald Jackson holds his hard hat and 40 lb. rucksack as he gets ready to depart from the State Military Reservation at Virginia Beach.

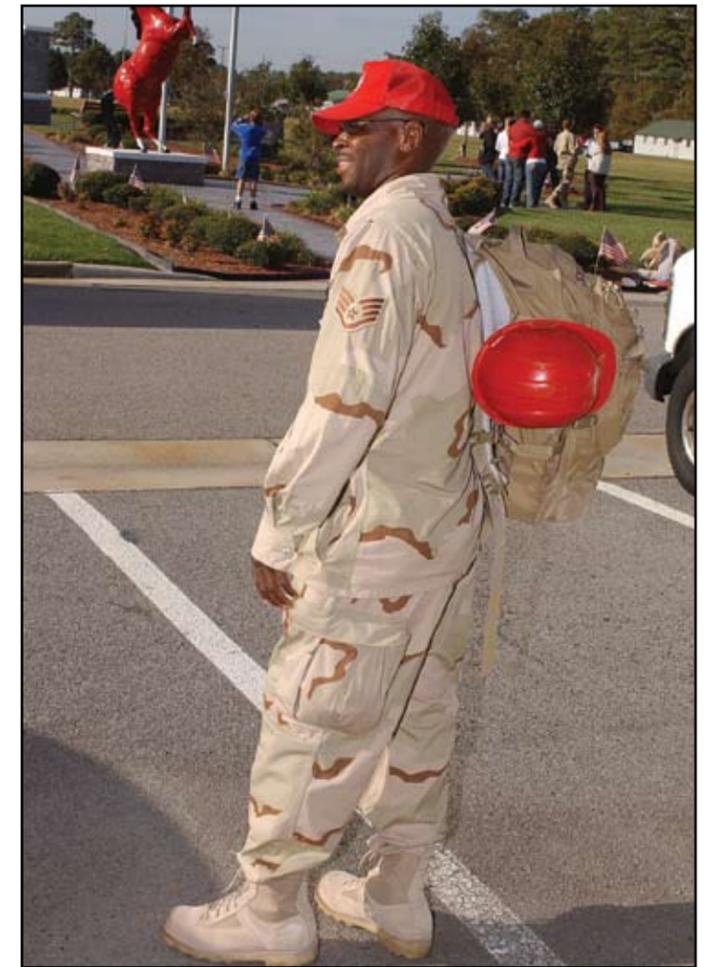


Photo by Master Sgt. Carlos Claudio, Virginia Air National Guard

Lt. Col. Paul D. Julian, 203rd Red Horse Squadron Commander, briefs his Airmen prior to their departure.