



*Contributed photo*

The Freedom Flag flies alongside flags from the United States, Great Britain and Australia. See story on Page 10.

For the latest news and information on the Virginia National Guard, visit  
[www.virginiaguard.com](http://www.virginiaguard.com)

**Important Phone Numbers:**

- Public Affairs Officer: 434 298 6107
- Judge Advocate: 434-298-6285
- Legal Assistant: 434-298-6340
- Inspector General: 434-298-6295
- Occupational Health Nurse: 434-298-6286
- Safety Officer: 434-298-6108
- Education Services Officer: 434-298-6222
- State Tuition Asst Coordinator: 434-298-6155
- Family Program Coordinator: 434-298-6336
- Family Assistance Center: 800-542-4028, Commercial: 434-298-6114
- Recruiting & Retention Mgr 434-298-6113





FROM THE TOP



# The Virginia National Guard is family

By Maj. Gen. Claude A. Williams  
Adjutant General

As the Virginia National Guard enters 2004 and our 397th year protecting life and property within our Commonwealth, we have over 2000 of our soldiers and air guard personnel deployed in support of the War on Terrorism. If we add the over 1,400 personnel who have returned from duty, we find that over 3,400 Virginia National Guard personnel have been deployed since 9/11. What has allowed us to be such a key player in the War on Terrorism? Certainly tough, realistic, well planned training is a major contributor to readiness and deployability. However, I think one of the most important factors in the ability to deploy our soldiers and air guard personnel is our emphasis on families.



Maj. Gen. Claude A. Williams

we cannot be successful. Each component has a particular part to play in our success. The question then becomes, "Is any one component more important than the other?" My answer would be that although all parts of the Team are critical to our success, it is our families that make the difference in the long run.

I know all of us can relate to specific

examples of how our spouses, moms, dads, siblings and children have supported our service in the Guard by handling some special crisis or significant event which has happened while we were away on duty. In many instances a crisis "back home" can have much more impact on a family than the absence of a spouse while away on duty.

Within "Team Virginia", we have a system that supports our families and soldiers. It is made up of volunteers from our families and is called the Family Readiness Group (FRG). These groups, coupled with our Family Assistance Center (FAC) and our Chain of Command, provide great service to all our families and soldiers. I want to personally thank all our volunteers from the FRGs and our staff from the FAC for their support of our most precious assets – our soldiers and their families. Let's never forget that our success is based on our Team and the bedrock of our team is our families. Best wishes to all of Team Virginia for a successful and safe 2004.

## Family Readiness Groups respond to deployment

By Ms. Tresea Myers  
Family Assistance Coordinator, 2-116 Infantry

Just what exactly is an FRG? For many Cold War-era soldiers, the first thing that comes to mind is the Federal Republic of Germany. While Germany tours instill fond memories, the FRG of today refers to the Family Readiness Groups of our units that are there to ensure our families are taken care of in times of need.

In November 2002, the 2nd Battalion, 116th Infantry was mobilized and deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Our FRG quickly went into action and facilitated numerous actions on behalf of the soldiers and worked with our communities to ensure the National Guard story was told.

Our communities responded with an outpouring of support that would make any soldier and his family proud. During the deployment, a local Ruritan club provided \$1,000 a month for car repairs for soldier's families. The units' leadership provided volunteer soldiers to perform yard work and assist families who

needed to move households.

Most significant was our Virginia Defense Force. They implemented a food pantry for soldier's families. The community responded so bountifully that the pantry at times overflowed with food and toiletries. The Defense Force manned this activity every weekend and provided families with needed items at no cost.

The local American Red Cross Chapter helped with administering the Army Emergency Relief funds; provided care packages for our soldiers in Guantanamo and asked for donations for the homecoming from local businesses. A local university held a "Support the Troops" Rally to raise funds to help the Battalion Family Readiness Group, while a local candle company gave the proceeds from part of their tent sales in support of the FRG. Churches, businesses and civic organizations all over the state pitched in to support throughout the deployment.

Fond memories? Probably not from the perspective of the soldiers being gone for a year, but the memories of communities that reached out to support us in times of need will always be a proud reminder that we live in a great country.



### On the Cover



Mary Ann Johnson and Thomas Royer show their colors as soldiers of the 3647th Maintenance Company begin their convoy from Ft. Pickett to Ft. Eustis, Va. (Photo by Lt. Col. Chester C. Carter, III)

This newsletter is an authorized unofficial publication for members of the Va. Army and Air National Guard. It is published quarterly and in accordance with AR 360-81, Command Information.

Contents of the GuardPost are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the Virginia Department of Military Affairs. The Virginia GuardPost is edited by the Joint Force Headquarters - Virginia Public Affairs Section. The Public Affairs Office is located at Bldg. 316, Fort Pickett, Blackstone, Virginia, 23824, phone: 434-298-6107.

E-mail: chester.carter@va.ngb.army.mil.  
Printed circulation: 9,000.

#### The Adjutant General

Maj. Gen. Claude A. Williams

#### State Public Affairs Officer

Lt. Col. Chester C. Carter, III

#### Air Guard Public Affairs Officer

Maj. Debbie Magaldi

#### Deputy Public Affairs Officer

Maj. A. A. "Cotton" Puryear

#### Public Affairs Staff

Staff Sgt. Mark Turney

Staff Sgt. Tammy Spence

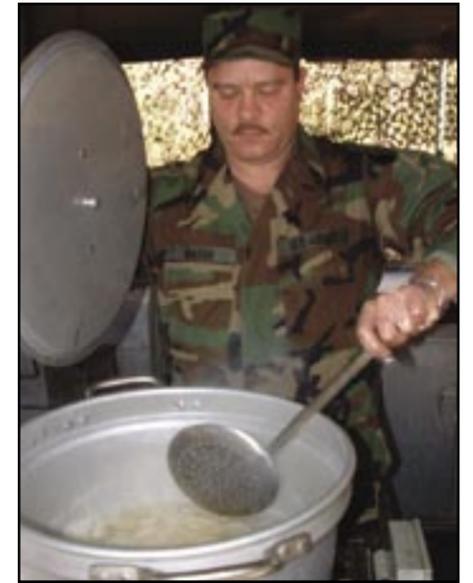
Sgt. William Fearrington

Spc. Stephanie Willer

### In this issue:



Page 4



Page 8

- From The Top..... 2
- Family Readiness Group responds to deployments ..... 2
- 276th Engineers hold Family Appreciation Day..... 4
- 3647th Maintenance Company departs ..... 5
- Ground is broken for new facility at Fort Pickett ..... 6
- Guard helps soldier earn degree..... 7
- MyPay web site offers pay info online ..... 7
- Maintenance company competes for Connelly..... 8 - 9
- Freedom flag flies in support of Iraqi Freedom ..... 10
- Va. Guard units recognized for maintenance excellence .... 10
- 203rd RED HORSE changes commanders..... 11
- Guard unit raise money for D-Day Memorial..... 12
- Guard supports "Weed and Seed" program ..... 13
- Recruiter goes from reserves to full time Guard..... 14
- Virginia Guard Federal Deployments ..... 15
- 29th Infantry Division wraps up busy year ..... 15

## Engineers hold Family Appreciation Day at Capitol

By Lt. Col. Chester Carter, III  
Public Affairs Officer

Mobilizing an Army National Guard battalion is tough any time of the year but it is especially challenging around the holidays. The families and friends of the soldiers answering the call are key to the soldiers being able to accomplish the mission. Headquarters Company, 276th Engineer Battalion took time to extend a warm thank you to those who are so very important to the soldiers mobilizing, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Virginia National Guard, Governor Mark Warner, took time from his schedule to extend his appreciation to the soldiers and their families for their sacrifice, dedication and patriotism in support of America's war on terrorism.

Headquarters Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, entered active federal service on Dec. 18. The mobilization is for an 18 month period. Before the unit traveled to its mobilization station at Ft. Dix, N. J. on Jan. 5, 2004, the unit wanted to bring family members in to briefing them on various aspects of the mobilization. Given the time of year and all of the different activities going on it was decided that it would be a good idea to not only brief family members on the many changes that will impact so many of them in the coming months but to show appreciation for all they are doing to support their soldiers.

Where to have the family appreciation day became the question. The location had to be large enough to accommodate the soldiers and their families for the required briefings. It had to be big enough for the soldiers, their families, and who knows, maybe even Santa Claus to share in a holiday meal after the briefings. And very important, it must be fitting of what these soldiers and their families are doing.



Photo by Lt. Col. Chester C. Carter, III, Virginia Guard Public Affairs Office

**Gov. Mark Warner presents Lt. Col. Edward Morgan a Virginia state flag that has been flown over the State Capitol as Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Yancey looks on. Warner asked that the flag be flown wherever the unit goes.**

Let's see, this is a Virginia Army National Guard unit stationed in Richmond, important briefings are going to be given to important people, a place to share a holiday meal together, and a location fitting of the sacrifice, dedication, and patriotism these soldiers and their families are demonstrating in America's War on Terrorism. The answer was apparent; the State Capitol would be the appropriate place.

The staff of the 276th Engineer Battalion worked with Maj. Gen. Claude Williams and his staff; Sec. John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety; and Governor Mark Warner's staff to make the idea a reality. Within five days the necessary ground work was laid and arrangements were made for the soldiers and families of Headquarters Company, 276th Engineer Battalion to use the General Assembly Building and the Old City Hall adjacent to the State Capitol complex for their briefings

and family appreciation activities.

Timothy Kaine, Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, addressed the soldiers and their families. He expressed appreciation for what they were doing for commonwealth and country. Governor Warner presented Lt. Col. Edward Morgan, commander of the 276th Engineer Battalion, with a Virginia state flag that had been flown over the Capitol. Governor Warner asked that Morgan fly the flag wherever the unit goes and then charged him to bring the soldiers back home safely. Following the remarks Governor Warner and Lieutenant Governor Kaine visited with the soldiers and their families.

The visit made by the Commander-in-Chief of Virginia National Guard will long be remembered by these soldiers and their families. The soldiers are prepared to answer freedom's call and go forward and accomplish their mission wherever that mission may take them.

## 3647th Maintenance Company departs

By Lt. Col. Chester Carter, III  
Public Affairs Officer

The soldiers of the 3647th Maintenance Company left Blackstone on Dec. 10, 2003, bound for Ft. Eustis, Va. The Virginia Army National Guard unit was ordered to 18 months active federal service on Dec. 7th. At this time word has not been received where the unit will go after it completes a short training period at Ft. Eustis.

Friends, family and other well-wishers were on hand as the unit prepared to leave Ft. Pickett. Maj. Gen. Claude Williams, the adjutant general of Virginia, was there to give words of encouragement to the soldiers and present the unit with a Virginia state flag that had been flown over the Capitol in Richmond. Williams ask the soldiers to fly the flag wherever they went as a reminder that folks back home were thinking of them and are proud of what they are accomplishing. When the soldiers of the 3647th Maintenance Co. return home the flag will be presented to the Governor as a symbol of the Virginia National Guard's and the soldiers' contribution to America's war on terrorism.

Williams also told the soldiers that they could well be returning to Ft. Pickett to complete some of their training before



Photo by Lt. Col. Chester C. Carter, III, Virginia Guard Public Affairs Office

**Soldiers of the 3647th Maintenance Company are cheered on by their comrades and friends as the unit convoy leaves Ft. Pickett.**

moving on to their next duty station after Ft. Eustis. Williams said that Ft. Pickett offers training areas and ranges the unit will need to complete some of its training requirements. He did not say when the training at Ft. Pickett would take place. Other Virginia Army National Guard units that mobilized earlier at Ft. Eustis came to Ft. Pickett to conduct training exercises.

While the unit is at Ft. Eustis it will undergo what is referred to as a validation process. Conducted by the Active Army, this validation process assures the unit is fully capable of accomplishing its mission. This includes making sure soldiers are fully

trained, qualified and physically fit for deployment, their equipment is operational, and that all administrative requirements are completed. Once these activities are accomplished the unit will begin preparing for movement to its next duty station.

The 3647th Maintenance Company last saw active federal service during World War II. At that time it was designated as the 146th Quartermaster Company. The mission of the 3647th Maintenance Company is to provide maintenance support for Army ground equipment such as wheel and track vehicles, tanks, armament, and electronic equipment.



Photos by Maj. Cotton Puryear, Virginia Guard Public Affairs Office

**The Blackstone community hosted a farewell lunch for the unit on Sunday, Dec. 7. Members of the community, as well as family members and friends, all gathered at the Blackstone Armory to recognize the unit prior to their departure on Dec. 10.**

# Ground is broken for new facility at Ft. Pickett

By Lt. Col. Chester Carter, III  
Public Affairs Officer

BLACKSTONE, Va. - Dignitaries and guests witnessed the Dec. 9 groundbreaking ceremony held at Ft. Pickett for the expansion of the Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES) maintenance facility. The Honorable John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety; Maj. Gen. Claude Williams, the Adjutant General; Mr. Cord Sterling and Mr. Luchen Niemeier of Sen. John Warner's office; and Lt. Col Tom Perkins, Superintendent of MATES turned the first shovels of dirt for the project. The \$18.5 mil construction project will increase the size of the MATES to over 153,000 square feet and eliminate the need for World War II vintage facilities where much of the maintenance on equipment supported by MATES currently takes place.

Established as the Annual Training Equipment Pool in 1961, the concept was for National Guard units using Pickett as a training site to locate some of their larger equipment at the installation rather than shipping the equipment from home station whenever training took place.

The mission of the Annual Training Equipment Pool was to store and maintain equipment such as tanks, howitzers, and other armored vehicles that visiting units could use rather than incurring the high cost of shipping their equipment between home station and Pickett.

When it was established in 1961 the Annual Training Equipment Pool had 31 full time employees and maintained approximately 100 armored vehicles including M48A1 tanks, M1059 carriers, and M84 mortar carriers and support equipment. The equipment supported in 1961 was much smaller and less complex than the equipment currently supported by MATES. Today over 100 highly-skilled



Photo by Lt. Col. Chester C. Carter, III, Virginia Guard Public Affairs Office

(Left to right) Mr. Cord Sterling; Mr. Luchen Niemeier; Maj. Gen. Claude Williams; the Hon. John Marshall, Sec. of Public Safety; and Lt. Col. Tom Perkins turn the first shovels of earth for the expansion of the MATES facility at Ft. Pickett.

MATES employees maintain over 600 items including 70 Abrams tanks, 59 self-propelled howitzers, over 160 armored carriers and 85 command carriers as well as related support equipment from over 80 Army National Guard units in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

In 1961 the Annual Training Equipment Pool was housed in old warehouses and two locomotive repair shops that were built in 1942. The facilities were adequate for the mission at that time. But the supported equipment grew in size, number, and complexity. A MATES construction project was completed in 1986. But even with that construction the maintenance facilities did not meet the demands of the mission.

Today approximately 50% of the MATES workforce works out of the original Annual Training Equipment Pool facility which is well over 60 years old.

The expansion and modernization of MATES will provide a state of the art facility designed to support the modern equipment that is maintained there. The facility will be fully compliant with safety and environmental laws and regulations. This will ensure that

MATES employees can accomplish their maintenance support mission in a safe and environmentally sensitive way.

This expansion will also ensure that Ft. Pickett continues to be a key military training site for the mid-Atlantic area. The enhancement of these facilities will allow MATES to continue to deliver professional support to the soldiers that train at Ft. Pickett as well as provide maintenance facilities for modern equipment that will enter the Army's inventory in the future. Col. Glenn Walker, who traveled from National Guard Bureau to participate in the groundbreaking, said the objective was to make Ft. Pickett a "training center of choice" for the units on the east coast including Army National Guard enhanced brigades located in the Carolinas and the Stryker Brigade that is projected to be a part of the Pennsylvania's 28th Division.

Although the name has changed over the years from Annual Training Equipment Pool to Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site or MATES, the mission has remained essentially the same. To provide professional support to the soldiers training on Ft. Pickett's 42,000 acres of maneuver area and ranges.

# MyPay web site offers pay info online

By Staff Sgt. Mark Turney  
Staff Writer

Would you like up-to-date pay information? Would you like to tell the future, plan for the future or both? The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) give you these options and more, at least where your money is concerned.

The newly created MyPay web site: <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx> gives each soldier and their family access to information about the service member's money 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world. During this time of units deploying to the farthest reaches of the earth, this type of information can be a benefit to soldiers, however, Virginia Army National Guard officer, Col. Donald Sutherland, who is the Deputy USPFO for Virginia, warns, "We should caution our soldiers to let SIDPERS know also about address changes because changes done through 'MyPay' will not show up in SIDPERS and this can lead to significant problems later on."

After signing up for a personal PIN number there will be a list of options from which to choose. There are a few to go over. The first thing is the ability of knowing in advance what pay you can expect. MyPay gives you the option of reading your LES information days in advance so there are no surprises in your bank deposits. You can also access your last three LES's in case you have questions about prior disbursements. For all soldiers, with the exception of Army National Guard, members can turn off the paper copy of their leave statement.

There is also the ability to view and make changes to your account, such as, viewing, printing and saving LES's, viewing and printing tax statements, making changes to federal and state tax withholdings, updating bank accounts, electronic fund transfer information, and certificates of eligibility. Plus there is a whole lot more information concerning retirement, savings bonds, annuity accounts and saving plans.

You can read more about MyPay at [www.viriniaguard.com](http://www.viriniaguard.com).



Photo by Sgt. William Fearington, Virginia National Guard Public Affairs Office

Master Sgt. Carl A. Holcomb reviews paper work at his desk in the Inspector General's office.

# Guard helps soldier earn degree

By Sgt. William Fearington  
Staff Writer

Higher education is a key component to better one's self in today's society. Master Sgt. Carl A. Holcomb of the Inspector General's office at Fort Pickett can attest to that. In two years he finished his master's in business administration at Averett University in Danville, Virginia, and the Virginia Army National Guard helped him get to where he is today.

"The Virginia Guard helped me pay for it all," said Holcomb. He has been in the Virginia Army National Guard for 21 years and has been working full time for the Inspector General's office for 4 years where he handles legal and/or ethical issues for Army National Guard soldiers. "As an active duty soldier for Virginia Army National Guard, I was able to take advantage of the federal tuition assistance to help me pay for some of my tuition and school fees," he said. The Virginia Guard pays up to 75% of the tuition cost not to exceed the annual cap designated each year for undergraduate and graduate studies.

"My command worked with me while I pursued my degree," said Holcomb. "I went to school one night a week from 1800 to 2200 and had a study group on weekends,"

he said. I started in November of 2001 and finished in December of 2003.

Holcomb had company on his journey to complete his degree. His wife Margie was also going to school with him to complete her master's in business administration too. "She was a little reserved since she had not gone to school in a while but she later enjoyed going back to school," said Holcomb. "I am glad she was with me while I was there," he said. He also shares with his wife three daughters' Carla 29, Essica 23, and Shonte 16 whom supported both parents pursuing their master's degrees.

With the degree and an idea, Holcomb plans to give back to the community by helping youth. "When I worked with the Department of Corrections, I worked with the youth that were locked up and saw how I made a positive impact on their lives so I want to do something," he said. "I want to help give the youth of today direction and strive to do better," said Holcomb. He would like to do some type of mentorship program with kids and young adults.

To add to Holcomb's accomplishments, he maintained a 4.0 average and received the Pinnacle Award for his high grade point average and also leadership. "If I can inspire anyone to help themselves then I will, Hooah!"

# Maintenance Company competes for Connelly Award

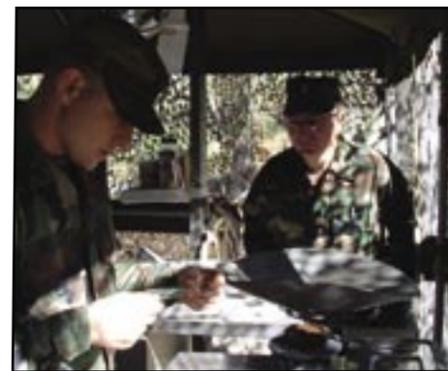
By Spc. Stephanie Willer  
Staff Writer

You may not think that there's a lot of planning that goes into preparing a noon meal for 50 soldiers, but there is - especially when you're competing for a coveted award given by the United States Army for expertise and excellence in food service operations.

On Nov. 22, 2003, the 3647th Maintenance Company competed for the Thirty-Sixth Annual Phillip A. Connelly Awards Program at the National Level for the Reserve Component Field Kitchen category. Several soldiers from the 1st Bn., 116th Infantry Regiment were also there to support kitchen patrol, which included preparation of the meal and sanitation.

The Phillip A. Connelly Award is a Department of the Army food service program. The International Food Service Executives Association (IFSEA) and the Department of the Army cosponsor the program, which is administered by the Army Center of Excellence, Subsistence (ACES). The program is intended to achieve improvements in the quality of food service.

The Connelly competition is also divided into four categories, three of which pertain to active Army forces. They are: small dining facilities (serving 200 or less), large dining facilities (serving 201 or more), and Division Field Kitchens, for Army National Guard soldiers.



Sgt. Wes E. Bullard makes sure he is closely following the Armed Forces Recipe Service TM 1-412 Card as CW5 Harold W. Jaquett watches closely.



First Cook Sgt. 1st Class Gregory R. Mason and Sgt. Wes E. Bullard work together to prepare the meal.

According to the National Guard Senior Food Service Technician, CW5 Harold W. Jaquett, "This process narrows down every state that has an organic unit. We recommend that units participate, since it is a training program."

The training program is implemented by the Army Quarter Master Center at Fort Lee, Va. All cooks who participate in the competition, at some point, have undergone some formal training at the center. It is actually a prerequisite that all team members, which consist of a team chief and two evaluators, must have a 92G30 Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) to be on the committee. In addition, Warrant officers must have competed in the Connelly program and be familiar with the Connelly procedures and requirements. The team consisted of Jaquett, Mr. Richard Paul Martinez (civilian) who was the representative of the IFSEA, and Active Army Sgt. Maj. Clinton B. Ford with the 82nd Division Food Service.

The team put in a great deal of work to get to this level of competition. The competition, which began technically on

the respective fiscal year of FY03 which would be Oct. 1, 2002, started on the state level. The unit had to first move-up the ranks and gain a place on the regional level, which was divided into seven regions within their category, before they could be considered a potential nominee for the national level. Jaquett said, "However, the number that was originally, Seven, but it dropped down to six regions due to a mobilization by the Caribou, Maine unit, who was deployed before they could compete."

The regional process has taken the judges from Mississippi to Indiana, from North Dakota to Louisiana and to their most recent stop in Blackstone, Va. "The competition will be wrapping up soon with one more region to cover," said Jaquett. Adding, "Our last stop is in Nevada."

Jaquett said, "If this setup was in the field, it would take about 6 to 10 days to have it at this level which includes; latrines, a lighting areas and sanitation. Adding, "A big part of the set-up is continuity of the area as well.

The requirements for the competition

may not always dictate that of an actual wartime setting, however, the goal is to try and accomplish as much of the requirements as possible. "The most important part of being a judge is to concentrate on the knowledge of the cooks, their knowledge of their equipment, their portion sizes, their required measurements and conversions and the quality of the meal they will be serving."

In a wartime scenario, the objective is to keep the troops moving. You also need to take into consideration the temperature of the food, which is the responsibility of all food service personnel. During the competition, the food sanitation team made sure all of the thermometer gauges were properly calibrated. "Food moves troops, bad food keeps them down!" said Jaquett.

"The soldiers have performed well during this level of competition," He said and added that it took a lot of hard work to get here. The unit, whose motto is "The best supports the rest" showed a creative edge during the competition when they decided to prepare a decorative crust for their cherry cobbler. "It was just one more

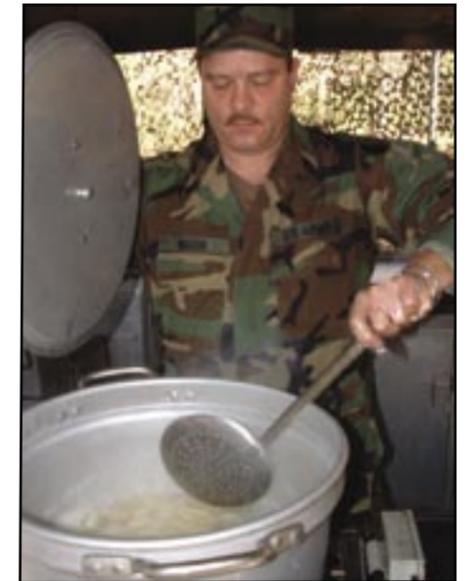
added feature that makes them stick out from the rest," said Jaquett.

The competition began first thing in the morning. At 7:00 a.m., the soldiers gathered in the designated location at Ft. Pickett, which was adjacent to the Field Kitchen Site, to review the plan for the day's event and the menu. They wanted to make sure that all the necessary components to support their mission were in place. The team was made up of ten soldiers who would be instrumental in making the meal happen. The cooks had discussed how they would utilize the allowable variations with respect to the recipes selected.

The noon meal consisted of beef rice soup, mini-meatloaf, fried cabbage with bacon bits, potatoes au gratin, a tossed vegetable salad and cherry cobbler on the side. For this competition the soldiers worked out of a Field Mobile Kitchen which didn't leave for much elbow room. Teamwork was essential for the competition to be a success. "You need to know what you are doing, or it won't work," said Jaquett.

According to First Cook Sgt. 1st Class Gregory R. Mason, the team decided to use mini-meatloaves in lieu of a regular sized meatloaf. "When you create mini-loaves, you are guaranteed that the soldiers will all be getting the exact same portion size." With a regular meatloaf there's room for shrinkage and serving sizes may vary.

By midmorning, the preparations for the noon meal were well on their way. All of the ingredients had been precisely measured and weighed. "When you are out in the field under a wartime situation, what



First Cook Sgt. 1st Class Gregory R. Mason stirs up his pot of potatoes.

you take with you to the field is all you have," said Jaquett. "You have to utilize every part of your perishables." He added that there is a criterion for the disposal and waste of food.

The Connelly competition is demanding to say the least. According to Virginia National Guard regulations, the objective of the competition is to improve the professionalism of food service personnel; provide recognition for excellence in the preparation and serving of food and to challenge soldiers to be the best among the Army food service personnel.

The soldiers knew before going into the competition that they would need to meet these challenges if they wanted to win this coveted award. Good Luck!



A soldier gets ready to enjoy his tasty meal.

Photos by Spec. Stephanie Willer, Virginia Guard Public Affairs Office

## Freedom flag flies in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom

By Maj. Cotton Puryear  
Deputy Public Affairs Officer

A flag that commemorates the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 has been making the rounds throughout Iraq and Afghanistan thanks to Lt. Col. Steven R. Swetnam, Lieutenant Colonel, Chief of Intelligence for 192nd Fighter Wing.

Swetnam deployed as part of the Virginia Air Guard's 192nd Fighter Wing Air Expeditionary Force rotation to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar from September to October 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. "While deployed, my wife sent me several flags and amongst them was the Freedom Flag," Swetnam said. "Mr. Richard Melito, Chairman of the Freedom Flag Foundation, gave my wife, Tricia and son Mercer two flags. One flag was a large flag and another was a hand-sewn flag made by a seamstress. All that was asked was to have the flag displayed some where on the base where U.S. servicemen and women could view it and be reminded of why they are deployed."

According to their web site [www.freedomflagfoundation.us](http://www.freedomflagfoundation.us), the Freedom Flag Foundation is a non-profit organization formed to establish the Freedom Flag as a national symbol of remembrance for September 11, 2001 and to support educational efforts of teaching future



Contributed photo

Lt. Col. Greg Pietrocola (left) and Lt. Col. Phillip W. Guy display the Freedom Flag.

generations about the tragic events and many lives lost on that date.

The large flag was turned over to the Protocol Office and they had it flown on Oct. 19 during a retreat Ceremony where it flew with the U.S. Flag, the Australian National Flag and the Union Jack.

"I also had the flag flown on two missions while deployed in support of Iraqi Freedom and one in support of Enduring Freedom over Afghanistan," Swetnam said. "One of the Flags was flown on an OIF missions by the 48 Fighter Wing F-15 E Strike Eagles based out of RAF Lakenheath, England. The other two were flown by Virginia Air Guardsmen once

over Afghanistan and once over Iraq."

One of Swetnam's troops, Capt. Charles A. Friend, took the flag to Kirkuk AB in Northern Iraq when he and another pilot went to brief Army and Air Force personnel on some joint operation issues.

Upon returning to the U.S., Swetnam presented Melito and Chip Harris, head of media relations for the Freedom Flag Foundation, with the original large flag and an American Flag along with the three Certifications documenting the mission's the flag flew. Swetnam was invited to attend the "Flags for Schools" kick-off fund raiser on November 22, 2003 at the Virginia Historical Society Museum.

## Va. Guard units recognized for maintenance excellence

On Nov. 25, 2003, the Regional Army Award for Maintenance Excellence (AAME) competition was held at the State Military Reservation (SMR), Camp Pendleton, Va. AAME Region 1B consists of Delaware, New Jersey, Washington DC, Maryland, Penn., West Va., and Va. Nomination packets for TDA and MTOE organizations were evaluated by representatives from New Jersey, Delaware and Virginia.

Virginia had several winners in different categories:

- In the MTOE Medium Category, the winner was A- Company, 276th Engineer Bn.
- In the TDA Small Category, the winner was Organizational

- Maintenance Shop (OMS) #6, Virginia Army National Guard
- In the TDA Medium Category, the winner was Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES), Virginia Army National Guard
- In the MTOE Small Category, A Company (Maintenance) 429th FSB was runner up to 259th Signal Company Tropo (LT) from the Delaware Army National Guard.

Col. Morris F. Adams, Jr., the J4 for the Virginia National Guard, said, "It is encouraging to see that emphasis in maintenance is still a priority throughout our region and it is outstanding to see such participation from Virginia in this years competition."

## 203rd RED HORSE changes commanders

By Maj. Debbie Magaldi  
Air Guard Public Affairs Officer

Col. Thomas J. Turlip stepped down as the second commander of the 203rd RED HORSE Flight, based in Virginia Beach, on Jan. 10, and turned the reins over to Lt. Col. Paul D. Julian, former 203rd member and most recently the 192nd Civil Engineer Squadron commander, Sandston.

During the ceremony, conducted in the 203rd Headquarters auditorium, Virginia's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Claude Williams, and Virginia's Deputy Adjutant General for Air, Brig. Gen. Dave Dornan, oversaw the passing of the unit's flag, from Turlip to Julian in a traditional, military change-of-command. The auditorium was packed with distinguished guests including Virginia Beach Mayor, Meyera Oberndorf, Air Combat Command Civil Engineer officials, and 202nd RED HORSE Squadron commander, Lt. Col. Jack Paschal, unit members, and family and friends of both the incoming and outgoing commanders.

After comments from the generals, Turlip, who is moving up to the Joint Forces Headquarters, Virginia Air Component (formerly VaANG Headquarters) in Sandston, took the opportunity to reflect on the challenges, highlights and tragedies faced by the unit since he took command from Col. Bill Prosize in March 1998.

"...[I]t has been a great honor and privilege for me to have had the opportunity to command such a dedicated and talented group of citizen airmen. This has been the greatest experience of my professional life," he said.

"We have also experienced great tragedy," Turlip continued. "In March 2001, 18 members of our unit and 3 aircrew from the Florida Army National Guard were killed in a plane crash on their trip home from a deployment in Florida. We were devastated by this loss. In the midst of great sorrow and the terrible loss of our good friends and fellow unit members, we came together for the families and the unit in an incredible and compassionate way.... The care of our men's families was our number one priority...."

"To honor the lives and service of these men, we constructed the memorial that now



Photo by Tech Sgt. Dave Buttner, 192d Multimedia Branch

Virginia's Deputy Adjutant General for Air, Brig. Gen. Dave Dornan passes the mantle of command of the 203rd RED HORSE Flight to Lt. Col. Paul D. Julian during the change of command ceremony held at the unit's headquarters.

stands in front of our headquarters building. This memorial was designed and built with RED HORSE labor and all RED HORSE units participated – active duty, reserve, and guard. This living memorial stands honoring the service of these 21 men. We will never forget our friends – fellow unit members – our lost Horsemen."

"Just 2 years later, still in the midst of recovering from this loss, we found ourselves facing our very first federal activation along with our sister unit, the 202nd, to support the war in Iraq," he said. "This was a significant challenge following the tragedy of March 2001, but everyone stood tall and met the challenge.... It was a year of uncertainty and frustration ... as we stood by ... for weeks ... not knowing when we would deploy."

Then, on April 1, 2003, after a change in deployment location, the unit headed for Southwest Asia and Turlip took command of the 1st Expeditionary RED HORSE Group, based at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. While spread out across 8 locations, the unit completed military contingency construction projects valued at more than \$20 million. They built or repaired facilities in Iraq, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan.

On the home front, he applauded the work of Charlie's Club, the family support group that had grown out of

family support needs after the March 2001 aircraft tragedy. Led by Col. Turlip's wife, Debbie, Charlie's Club provided send-offs and welcome home celebrations for the deploying unit members, and provided support and cared for families while their guard members were deployed. Group members even dealt with the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel, which struck just weeks before the unit returned home.

Turlip took the opportunity to thank many of his senior officers and enlisted members for the support they'd given him over the years, and he recognized the tremendous support each unit member receives from his or her family. "I have been especially blessed with the support of my wife, daughter, and son," he said, while listing the many ways each had buoyed and assisted him, especially over his 6 years as unit commander.

"As I turn over the reins of the 203rd to Lt. Col. Paul Julian, I can't think of a better engineer officer to lead the unit into the future. Lt. Col. Julian has the knowledge, dedication, and ability to be a superb commander and is one of the best engineer officers I know."

And in closing: "To the officers, NCOs, and airmen of the 203rd, thanks for your service to our country. You've done an outstanding job! It has been an honor and privilege to have been part of this unit."



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

Soldiers from the 116th Infantry Regiment were on hand when the D-Day Memorial was dedicated in June 2001, and they are working today to ensure the future of the memorial.

## Guard unit raises funds for D-Day Memorial

By First Sgt. Vincent May  
1st Bn., 116th Inf. Reg. UPAR

The National D-Day Memorial is located in Bedford, Virginia. It's located in this small Southwest Virginia town because at 0610 hrs on Jun. 6, 1944, Company A, 1st Bn. 116th Inf. Reg. left it's landing crafts and headed for the beaches at Normandy, France as part of the greatest military force ever assembled. Thirty minutes later all of the officers and NCO's were either dead or wounded. By days end this small town of 3,000 would lose nineteen of its young men. Per capita, this was the greatest one-day loss of any town or city in the United States. The fact that Company A still exists in Bedford, Va. is a true testament to this small town's resilience.

During the construction of this Memorial a monetary shortfall was incurred. When this shortfall was made public, the debt stood at a little over six million dollars. In the last twenty months that number has been cut in half. It is the hope of foundation to retire the debt by 6 June 2004 the 60th anniversary of this historic event.

The debt has been whittled away by not only a grass-roots effort but by restructuring

and the appointment of a new board of trustees. Aggressive action by professional fund-raisers has helped tremendously. This is where we found ourselves about 6 months ago when we started planning our event.

On Dec. 13, 2003 the 1st Bn, 116th Infantry's National D-Day Memorial Bluegrass show helped to eliminate the debt as well. By nights end the show had raised over \$2,500 for the Memorial. The threat of bad weather probably kept this show from achieving its goal of \$5,000. Raffles and an auction of the "The Bedford Boys" signed by it author, Alex Kersaw, helped increase the amount raised.

About 200 Bluegrass fans braved the weather to see "Nothin' Fancy", "The James King Band" and "The Guard" performed for about six hours. "The Guard" is a Roanoke, Virginia group made up of current and retired members of the Virginia Army National Guard. While on stage this group of performers has over 105 years of military service to our Nation. 1st Sgt. Vince May and Sgt. 1st Class Brian Greear are the only members who are still in uniform.

Lt. Col. Frederick A Doyle, Battalion Commander, was pleased with the outcome and is thinking of how to do another show in

the spring of 2004. "This memorial needs to retire its debt so the next phase can begin", Doyle said. The next phase Doyle is the establishment of the education center to be built on site. Currently a GP large tent is used to show school children how and what went into planning for the invasion. To date over 30,000 children from nine states have been to the Memorial as part of field trips established to educate them on what the D-Day Memorial is all about.

The education center will include a museum, a theater with a continuous run film documenting the events of D-Day and the actions that followed. A conference center is also planned as part of the structure. This state of the art facility is expected to cost six million dollars and will take about two years to complete.

A check presentation ceremony is planned for early 2004. Should members of Team Virginia they want to contribute to this great cause please send a check to the National D-Day Memorial, PO Box 77 Bedford, Va. 24523. Make a note on your check that this money is part of the 1-116th Infantry's fund raising effort and that amount will be added to the unit's total.

## Guard supports Weed and Seed Program

By Lt. Col. Chester Carter, III  
Public Affairs Officer

The Virginia National Guard prides itself on service to community, commonwealth, and country. One of the ways the Virginia National Guard serves the community is by supporting the "Weed and Seed" program in Richmond.

Weed & Seed is a federally funded program administered through the U.S. Department of Justice. The focus of Weed & Seed is to "weed out" violent behavior and criminal activity through law enforcement and effective community policing approaches which reduce disorder and engage citizens in preventing crime and to "seed" the community through the implementation of prevention, intervention, economic revitalization and neighborhood restoration that empower residents and transform communities.

Presently, the Seed component of Weed & Seed serves the Blackwell, Gilpin and Whitcomb communities in Richmond. The program supports various youth and adult programs, including tutorial programs for youth and adults, substance counseling, and after school programs. This year Phillip Morris sponsored the Weed and Seed Christmas program which helped to ensure a Merry Christmas for 24 families in the Whitcomb community.

At the kick off for the distribution of the Christmas gifts in the Whitcomb



Photo by Lt. Col. Chester C. Carter, III, Virginia Guard Public Affairs Office

Cargo trucks of E Battery, 111th Field Artillery are filled to overflowing with gifts for families in the Richmond, Va. area. The gifts were made available through the "Weed and Seed" program sponsored by the U. S. Justice Department and delivered courtesy of the Virginia National Guard.

community Nancy Brooks, Acting Executive Director of Weed and Seed, thanked all the program partners. During the kick off ceremony Maj. Gen. Claude Williams pointed out that the Virginia National Guard budgeted over \$2 mil to support the drug demand reduction program. The soldiers of Battery E, 111th Field Artillery were also acknowledged for their effort in support of the Weed and Seed program.

The delivery of these gifts assured that 24 Richmond families will have a brighter

holiday that what they might otherwise have had this year. These soldiers volunteered their own time and gave their own effort to help deliver gifts to 24 families. They took time out of their own busy holiday schedules and time away from their families and jobs to give back to their community. The quality of life in our communities continues to be improved through their example.

Besides serving the community, the Virginia Guard has been of service to commonwealth and country. In the last three years soldiers and airmen have served across this nation and around the World in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Air Expeditionary Forces, and in the Balkans enforcing the Dayton Peace Accord.

Soldiers and airmen of the Virginia National Guard were "on point" for the commonwealth when they answered Governor Mark Warner's call to duty in the wake of destruction left by Hurricane Isabel this past September. Over 1,110 soldiers and airmen assisted in recovery efforts that ranged from clearing over 400 miles of roads; distributing water and ice; and securing property to name just a few of their missions.



Photo by Lt. Col. Chester C. Carter, III, Virginia Guard Public Affairs Office

Santa's helpers, also known as the soldiers of E Battery, 111th Field Artillery, prepare to leave the Boys and Girls Club and make their rounds delivering gifts to families in Richmond.

## Recruiter goes from reserve to full time Guard

By Spc. Stephanie Willer  
Staff Writer

He went the barber for his usual "high and tight", his boots were shined without a fight. His uniform was perfectly starched and pressed, he wanted to make sure he looked his best -- it was a symbol, to him, of his immeasurable love, to our flag "Old Glory" that rises above. The uniform he wears shows how much he cares for his fellowmen. Even as a young Scout he had no doubt that he would help to protect and defend.

Staff Sgt. Michael J. Girardi, a local Virginia Army National Guard recruiter in Richmond, Va., loves being a soldier. So much so, that he left a very lucrative position as a medical sales representative for a company based out of Richmond, Va. to work full-time for the Guard. Girardi loved his job working in the medical sales industry however, after 9-11 he felt that he needed to do more than be on standby as a United States Marine Corps (USMC) selected reserve soldier.

During the year that followed 9-11, a lot of Girardi's friends were activated for state and federal missions. "I felt like I needed to join them," said Girardi. "I said to my wife, Cheryl, 'Honey, I just can't sit back while the whole country is being called up, post 9-11,'" he added. After some discussions and a review of their finances, they decided, "We can do this!" said Girardi. After finding out that there were no USMC full-time slots available, he then contacted his brother, who was in the National Guard, to see if he knew of any active positions.

In December 2002, Girardi joined the ranks of the active Guard. According to Girardi, because of his experience with sales and dealing with people, signing up as an army recruiter seemed like the best choice to use his skills.

His time in the military had already spanned almost twenty years, 4 years of which were active duty. After graduating from high school in 1983, Girardi signed



Photo by Spc. Stephanie Willer, Virginia Guard Public Affairs Office

**Staff Sgt. Michael J. Girardi talks to a soldier about the benefits of staying in the Guard.**

a four-year contract with the USMC, "My classmates were applying to colleges and I knew I was joining the Marines." After his initial commitment was over, Girardi remained active in a USMC reserve and worked as a crew chief for an aviation unit. He also went on to college at Virginia Commonwealth University where he majored in Administrative Justice.

Girardi recalled that from a very young age he had a love for the military. In 1973 as a member of the Boy Scouts of America, Girardi visited Quantico, Va. and saw the young Marines running through their training course. "I thought, 'What squared away soldiers. That's what I want to do with my life.'" And so the patriotic wheel began to turn.

Girardi comes from a family with a tradition of military service. All of the men in the Girardi family have served in some branch of the armed services from World War I to the present day.

It almost seemed as if Girardi was destined to hold his current position. According to Girardi, his father once said "Son, either you will be a salesman or join the ministry someday." I was a motivated kid. Nothing ever got me down. I have always tried to be positive," said Girardi, who is currently at his one-year-mark of his three-year commitment to the Guard. "It's been great. I love talking with people, especially when I see someone come in with maybe no direction or someone with

a lot of direction, but who needs help in harnessing it into a college education. That's what we are here to do," he said.

Girardi explained that the recruiting office likes to talk to area schools at least once a week to educate them on the military and what they do and what they have to offer to new recruits.

However, Girardi said that being upfront with the future candidate is important. "I have to be honest with my potential applicants and let them know that 54% of the combat arms strength of the Army is in the National Guard and that there is a 50% chance that, at some point in their career, they will be activated." He said he has lost applicants due to his honesty as a recruiter but he feels that we need to inform the applicants so that they're fully aware of what they will be tasked to do.

Girardi explained that we are competing with the media who, unfortunately, gives us less than a favorable mention in the press, "But in reality, they [media] fail to realize that our country was devastatingly attacked on September 11, of 2001 ... and we were still able to remove or put on the run, some very bad people," said Girardi. "The National Guard is doing more now than it ever has..." He added, "It is up to us as soldiers to realize that sometimes the pride and happiness in what we are doing lies within us." Girardi concluded by saying "I am proud of the uniform I wear and what it stands for."

## Virginia National Guard Federal Deployments

# *	Unit	Where Deployed	Home Town
65	192nd Fighter Wing and 200th Weather Flight	Southwest Asia	Sandston
120	229th Military Police Company	Iraq	Virginia Beach
170	1032nd Transportation Company	Iraq	Gate City and Bristol
110	1031st Engineer Company	Ft. Lee, Va	Gate City and Pennington Gap
35	Co. C, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry	Ft. Monroe	Roanoke
250	3647th Maintenance Company	Awaiting overseas deployment	Blackstone and Richmond
525	276th Engineer Battalion	Awaiting overseas deployment	Richmond, Powhatan, Richlands and West Point
60	various units	Ft. Pickett	
55	various units	Army Guard Readiness Center	

\* All listings for numbers of soldiers are approximate.

## 29th Infantry Division wraps up a busy year

Sgt. 1st Class David Moore  
29th Inf. Div. Public Affairs Office

The big picture in 2003 for the Army National Guard's only light infantry division was their completion of duties in Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle.

At Fort Dix, 253 personnel of Task Force Omaha made up of 29th Infantry Division (Light) soldiers of the Headquarters, Headquarters Battery 29th Division Artillery, 229th Engineer Battalion, and 3rd Battalion, 111th Field Artillery arrived at Fort Dix Sunday to demobilize and return home to their families after completing year-long force protection duties in the capitol beltway region.

"This was a mission we certainly had to do in light of the War on Terrorism," said Staff Sgt. Robert Sokol, C Company of the 229th Engineers.

"The mission was truly successful when you consider the thousands of people who received safe access to federal facilities," Sokol said.

About 150 soldiers of the Virginia Army National Guard task force are still on duty in the beltway working with new units on the ground carrying out the Noble Eagle mission.

The two-front War on Terrorism, both home and abroad, saw soldiers of the 29th continuing to be on point with the U.S. Army since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Starting in January 2003, it was first announced that 800 Virginia Army

National Guard members, including many 29th ID Soldiers, would be mobilized for a year of force protection duty at military installations along the East Coast.

After reporting to respective armories, most of the soldiers from Virginia, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Connecticut mobilized and trained at Fort Dix along with other locations such as Fort Eustis, Va., and Fort Bragg, N.C., for their respective missions. Soldiers of Maryland's 115th Infantry wrapped up their year-long mobilization in support of Operation Noble Eagle, providing force protection for six active duty installations while training more than 2,300 soldiers on homeland security operations.

Virginians belonging to the Stonewall Brigade, 2nd Battalion, 116 Infantry wrapped up its security force mission at Guantanamo Bay where the United States holds suspected terrorists in captivity. After the successful mission, the Massachusetts 181st Infantry, who arrived in the area in September, took over.

The Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment are a bit leaner and tanner these days from the many hours of long patrols in the mountains of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

They deployed in December 2002 to provide security for detainees and U.S. forces. The role of the infantry soldier, outside the area where detainees are held, includes security reconnaissance patrols while providing a quick reaction force for those guarding the detainees.

Patrolling is just one of the many daily

missions the soldiers performed.

Other duties include working traffic control points, manning observation points and providing security in critical areas.

Yankee Brigade Soldiers belonging to E Battery of the 101st Field Artillery, also provided soldiers to Central Command, as well as performed security protection duties stateside.

On the training front, senior leadership of the 29th Infantry Division and its subordinate brigades wrapped up a successful warfighter scenario for annual training and Soldiers of the 115th also conducted Military Operations in an Urban Terrain warfare training at Fort Bragg.

To develop more lethal force for the American military, the 2-115th of the Maryland National Guard is transitioning from a light infantry battalion to three Light Antitank companies.

The 29th Infantry Division Headquarters also bid farewell to its aviation assets in New Jersey and greeted the North Carolina Army National Guard's 1st-130th Attack Helicopter Battalion, of Raleigh, whose Soldiers now operate in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

According to 29ers, soldiers report the War on Terrorism involves not only providing a safe and secure environment for the U.S. but also includes receiving the latest in Army training.

"The learning and training is outstanding for these missions, particularly when it comes to MP taskings and missions," Spc. Robert Eastwood, C Company, 229th Engineers said.