

Served in Iraq since September 2007

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## West Point-based 237th Engineer Company returns home to Virginia



Soldiers from the 237th Engineer Company received a warm welcome home from family and friends after serving in Iraq since September 2007.

Approximately 105 Soldiers from the West Point-based 237th Engineer Company returned to Virginia July 20, after serving in Iraq since September 2007. Families, friends and members of the community of West Point packed the gym at West Point High School to welcome the unit home.

“We knew it would be a dangerous mission,” said Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, the adjutant general of Virginia. “The training was tough, the mission was tougher. But I can tell you on behalf of your fellow Guardsmen and your fellow citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia, we are truly proud in the way you conducted yourself in your combat tour.”

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine was also in West Point to welcome the Soldiers home. “Celebrations like this are some of the most memorable and powerful days in this job as Governor, and I am honored to be here with you today,” he said. “The service you provide is truly exemplary, both to our nation, but also to our state.”

While based in West Point, the 237th Engineer Company has members from various areas across the Commonwealth. The company has approximately 22 Soldiers who are from the Southwest area of Virginia, and those Soldiers held a separate welcome home ceremony in Gate City Sunday night.

Link: <http://vko.va.ngb.army.mil/VirginiaGuard/news/july2008/237threturn.html>

### Virginia National Guard News Headlines

#### Virginia Guard Airmen leave Langley for six-month mission in Kyrgyzstan

More than a dozen members of the Virginia Air National Guard’s 192nd Security Forces Squadron left Langley Air Force Base well before dawn July 27 to begin a six-month deployment to Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan. While there, the Airmen are expected to conduct security operations to protect U.S. Air Force resources and personnel.

Link: <http://vko.va.ngb.army.mil/VirginiaGuard/news/july2008/192ndSFSmob.html>

#### Defense Force trains with Virginia Guard on civil disturbance response

Members of the Virginia Defense Force’s Richmond-based military police company conducted joint civil disturbance training with the Virginia National Guard’s Virginia Beach-based 229th Military Police Company July 19 and 20 in Virginia Beach. It was the third year in a row the two units came together to share different techniques for effective crowd control.

Link: <http://vko.va.ngb.army.mil/VirginiaGuard/news/july2008/vdf-229thmp.html>

#### Virginia Guard hosts Disaster Response Information Exchange

In an effort to foster mutual interests to establish a long-term relationship that will link the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Republic of Tajikistan across all levels of society, the Virginia National Guard hosted a Disaster Response Information Exchange in Richmond, Va. on July 21-25. As part of the National Guard State Partnership program, six officers from the Ministry of Defense and Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense of the Republic of Tajikistan traveled to Virginia to observe Civil Support Team exercises.

Link: <http://vko.va.ngb.army.mil/VirginiaGuard/news/july2008/infoexchange.html>

### Mark Your Calendars!

#### Aug. 2: Freedom Ride

There is still room for cars and motorcycles to take part in the VFW “Freedom Ride” that begins at the Virginia War Memorial and ends at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford. The event begins with a wreath-laying ceremony at the War Memorial at about 9:00 a.m. The cost is \$50 and the lunch will be provided. Proceeds benefit the Family Programs Youth Camp. For more information, contact Chap. Moore at 434-292-9054.

#### Aug. 10: Freedom Salute

Soldiers from Portsmouth-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry will hold their Freedom Salute at the Ntelos Pavilion in Portsmouth at 10:00 a.m. The unit returned in May after having served in Iraq and Kuwait since September 2007.

# Civil support team trains with local first responders

The opening scenes involve a mysterious and dangerous liquid at an international airport, then there is a police raid at a secret suburban bomb factory, and then the climax comes during lap five at a massive racing sports complex. No, this is not a movie script, it is multi-agency training in action where Virginia state agencies and first responders are training for the worst.

Soldiers and Airmen from the Virginia National Guard's 34th Civil Support Team conducted a three-day training exercise called "River City Guardian 08" July 22-24 in the Richmond area. The goal of the training was to improve the Virginia Guard's ability to work with other state agencies and local first responders.

"This is part of a multi-day, multi-jurisdictional exercise," said Maj. Terry Thiem, deputy commander for the 34th CST. "The scenario we are conducting today is a simulated terrorist attack during a race here at the raceway."

Thiem explained that during the first day of the exercise at the Richmond International Airport, a package was discovered that was leaking an unknown liquid that caused a adverse reaction from one of the airport employees. Intelligence from that package led the Virginia State Police to conduct a raid on a civilian residence on day two of the exercise, where they found a clandestine laboratory for making bombs and chemical devices.

Thiem also mentioned that the exercise planners chose the RIR because it is one of the largest sports venues in the Commonwealth of Virginia, at times bringing in as many as 120,000 people for a single event. The scenario involves multiple explosions. Since the civil support team is pre-positioned at the RIR during most races, they would have to be ready to respond accordingly.

The training event gave elements from the Virginia Guard, the Virginia State Police, the Henrico County Division of Fire, Virginia Department of Emergency Management and Virginia Department of Health a chance to plan and coordinate how best to react to a range of situations. The scenario allowed the agencies to work together in addressing the possibility of high-levels of civilian casualties in chemically and radioactively contaminated environments with several mock-improvised explosive devices.

"This has been very beneficial," said Gary Stadnick, a battalion chief with the Henrico Division of Fire who was on site during the first day of the exercise at the airport. "We don't get to do large scale exercises like this very often, and it is good to interact not only with the airport personnel but also with the military personnel to see what their capabilities are. It is great to interact before we might have a real incident."

Stadnick said his personnel were "very impressed with the Guard's capabilities" and wanted to learn more about the capabilities and techniques of the Guard for decontamination and other tasks.

"Certainly the relationships developed in multi-agency, multi-echelon training will always help us should something unforgivable happen here in the commonwealth or the nation," said Lt. Col. Bill Mahoney, commander for the 34th CST. "But,



**Tech. Sgt. John Natcher from the Virginia National Guard's 34th Civil Support Team, scans a mock disaster sight for possible radiological threats during a multi-day, multi-jurisdictional training event at the Richmond International Raceway.**

more importantly we understand our capabilities so as we develop the plans to mitigate the hazards and save human lives, we know what each other can do."

After the exercise was over, Thiem identified several important lessons learned from the event. "Developing communication interoperability early in an event is key to the event being successful," he said. "Knowledge of the first responder personnel and the techniques they use is critical prior to an actual event. Exercises, like River City Guardian 08, are critical to gaining that knowledge in a training environment."

Thiem also said that maintaining flexibility and an open mind allowed all the groups taking part in the exercise to integrate in a very short period of time.

Link: <http://vko.va.ngb.army.mil/VirginiaGuard/news/july2008/cst.html>

## MORE ON THE WEB

### FAQ's: Defense Support of Civil Authorities

[http://www.defenselink.mil/policy/sections/policy\\_offices/hd/faqs/defenseSupport/index.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/policy/sections/policy_offices/hd/faqs/defenseSupport/index.html)

### Virginia Defense Force

<http://www.vdf.virginia.gov/>

### National Guard Civil Supprt Teams

<http://www.ngb.army.mil/features/HomelandDefense/cst/index.html>

### Henrico County Division of Fire

<http://www.co.henrico.va.us/fire/>

### Freedom Salute Overview

<http://www.virtualarmory.com/FreedomSalute/Overview.aspx>