

Guard Detail

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Deployments, natural disasters:
Mississippi Guardsmen face challenges head on



Soldiers of the 220th Financial Management Detachment (FMD) get together for a group photograph at their unit in Jackson, before deployment to Afghanistan in March. The 220th FMD mission in Afghanistan will involve pay and financial management operation for all troops. (Photo by Sandy Ates, JFH Public Affairs).

FEATURES

Wounded Warriors:
 Putting Lives Back Together Again 8

MS Guard Family gets extreme help 12

Mississippi Airman writes play to honor
 History 14

Mississippi Veteran receives France's
 Highest honor 15

Haiti: Miles of Compassion 18

Guard assists in tornado aftermath 22

Patch of Performance
 Earning the 2010 Soldier of the Year 26

Guard follows in tornado aftermath 35

Front Cover

A Mississippi Army National Guard HMMWV rolls past debris in Yazoo City following an FE4 tornado that slammed cities and towns north of I-20 Interstate on April 24.



Photo by Sgt. Charles Brice



Members of the Mississippi Air National Guard's 172nd Airlift Wing visit the Military Park in Vicksburg, Miss., to learn of the war tactics, leadership moves and defenses taken between the north and south during the Civil War. The staff visit was conducted by Mr. Terry Wenchel, Vicksburg Military Park Historian.

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NEWS BRIEFS4

COMMAND
 COMMENTS.....6

SOLDIERS &
 AIRMEN IN THE
 NEWS28

NOTEWORTHY32

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

Writer, Chief Warrant Two Keith Davis, takes readers on a discovery of Mississippi military past and puts to rest Soldiers of America's first major foreign war.

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Care plan to include parents with custody

■ By Elaine Wilson
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, (3/15/10) -- The Defense Department's family care plan policy will be expanded in the coming months to encompass a wider population of military parents, a defense legal expert said.

The new policy will require military parents with custody of children from a previous relationship to file a family care plan, said Army Col. Shawn Shumake, director of the Pentagon's office of legal policy. The requirement already is in place for dual military couples and single parents with custody.

Family care plans are used to ensure dependents are cared for while the servicemember is away for an extended period of time, whether it's for training, a deployment or a remote assignment, Shumake explained. The document includes everything from designation of temporary guardianship to arrangements for financial and logistical support, including relocation and medical care.

While the family care plan always has been a required and useful planning tool for dual-military couples and single parents, the lack of inclusion of "blended" families represented a "gaping hole" in the policy, Shumake said, prompting the first policy update since 1992.

"What we're trying to do is put these servicemembers in the best possible position before they leave," he said.

In recent years, Shumake said, he has seen an increase in custody disputes involving blended families that mostly arose from a lack of prior coordination. The deploying parent may designate guardianship to the step-parent, for instance, only to have the biological parent intercede while the custodial parent is gone. And the biological parent has every right to custody of that child, he explained, unless extenuating circumstances exist.

This situation can put a deployed parent in a tough, stressful spot while far from home, he noted.

"The worst possible thing is when things come to a head while the servicemember is gone," Shumake said. "The

servicemember is going to be overseas, and that biological parent is going to pop up and be able to walk away with that kid." Requiring servicemembers with a blended family to have a family care plan will lead to anticipating some of these potential problems early on, he said.

Shumake noted that although it's helpful, the family care plan isn't a legally binding document. But if it's prepared early enough, the servicemember generally would be able to take the plan to court and petition for a court order to enforce it.

Servicemembers who anticipate that they won't be able to reach an agreement with or trust the non custodial, biological parent should visit their legal assistance office so they understand the legal ramifications of not involving the biological parent, Shumake advised.

The new policy also will address issues that affect all parents required to have a care plan. For instance, if a catastrophic circumstance arises; a temporary guardian refusing to care for the child or getting into an accident and being unable to provide care, for example -- the new policy allows for a deployment deferment until the issue is resolved. Commanders also will be sensitive to those circumstances, Shumake said.

"It would shock me if there was any commander out there who would not allow a military parent the opportunity to deal with that and figure out a good response," he said. "We have no interest in ripping a servicemember away from a child and sending the servicemember to Iraq or Afghanistan. No commander is going to want that to happen."

In extreme cases, when the servicemember just can't piece together a family care plan, the commander has the option of separating the servicemember from service. "The commander needs to rely on his people and needs to know they'll be there," Shumake said.

The commanders also are tasked with advising servicemembers of the risks involved with designating a nonviable guardian or leaving a biological parent out of the equation, he explained. The new policy will outline this increased responsibility for commanders, he added.

Family care plans are extensive and can take some time to fill out, Shumake acknowledged, further underscoring

the need to start well in advance of a departure. Legal assistance offices are a valuable resource for help with a plan, as well as Military OneSource at <http://www.militaryonesource.com> or Military Homefront at <http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil>.

For parents needing more extensive assistance, such as those seeking court orders to establish guardianship, Shumake advised they first check with their legal office for advice. Local legal offices can help to point them to free legal assistance, such as that offered through the American Bar Association's Military Pro Bono Project.

Above all, the aim is to avoid problems in the first place, Shumake said. "We want to mitigate or avoid the problems before they happen," he said. "Deployments are stressful enough without the added worry of care for your children back home."

New uniform for Soldiers sent to Afghanistan

■ By The American Forces Press Service

Starting this summer, Soldiers sent to fight in Afghanistan will wear an Army Combat Uniform with the "MultiCam" pattern instead of the standard-issue universal camouflage pattern.

Secretary of the Army John McHugh made that announcement Feb. 19, after the service conducted a rigorous four-month evaluation of various uniform patterns to determine what could best protect Soldiers in Afghanistan.

The new uniforms are of the same material and cut that Soldiers are already wearing in the Army Combat Uniform or ACU. It is the camouflage printed on the fabric that will be different. The change allows commanders in Afghanistan to have more options in deciding how best to equip their Soldiers.

"As a material provider, I want to be responsive to the Soldiers I support," said Col. William E. Cole, project manager for Soldier Protection and Individual Equipment. "I want to give commanders options, I want to be responsive to Soldiers. That is what we were trying to do -- we're working to give (them) more options."



The uniforms bearing the new pattern, like the latest ACUs, are fire resistant. They are officially called the Fire Resistant Army Combat Uniform.

The decision to use the MultiCam pattern came after the Army evaluated its effectiveness at providing camouflage protection in Iraq. That was done, in part, by consulting with nearly 750 Soldiers who had deployed to Afghanistan. Those Soldiers participated in a “photo simulation” study administered by the Army.

Additionally, feedback from Soldiers who have already worn the uniform in Afghanistan was used to make the final decision. About 2,000 Soldiers were involved in tests to see how effective patterns such as MultiCam and UCP-Delta were at providing concealment in the varying terrain of Afghanistan.

Guard Vital to Northcom, Commander Says

■ By Army Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill, Special to American Forces Press Service

ARLINGTON, Va., March 12, 2010 – The National Guard is critical to U.S. Northern Command’s mission, Northcom’s commander told a congressional committee yesterday.

“National Guard and Reserve forces are critical to [Northcom’s] ability to carry out our assigned homeland defense and civil support missions,” Air Force Gen. Victor E. Renuart Jr. said in his 2010 posture statement presented to the Senate Armed Services Committee. He also commands North American Aerospace Defense Command.

“We recognize the National Guard as a

fundamental partner in the Total Force and essential to the security and defense of our nation,” Renuart said. “The Air National Guard provides the bulk of NORAD’s operational force for air sovereignty alert missions and is developing additional capabilities in support of domestic requirements.

The Army National Guard, Renuart noted, provides “all of the manning at our ground-based interceptor sites in support of missile defense requirements.

Additionally, he said, the Army National Guard provides the bulk of personnel for ground-based defense capabilities protecting the national capital region.

Stood up in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Northcom is – in Renuart’s words – “inextricably linked” with NORAD at their shared Colorado Springs, Colo., headquarters.

Northcom is responsible for homeland defense, sustaining continuous situational awareness and readiness to protect the homeland against a range of symmetric and asymmetric threats in all domains. Its area of responsibility includes the continental United States, Alaska, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Canada, Mexico, the Bahamas, French territory off the Canadian coast and three British overseas territories.

“We are focused on deterring, preventing and defeating attacks against the United States,” Renuart said. “We also stand ready to support primary agencies ... in responding quickly to natural or man-made disasters.”

Northcom’s missions are intertwined with National Guard missions. The command has personnel from every branch of the armed forces and many civilian agencies assigned to Colorado Springs. The command has the largest concentration of Title 10 National Guard officers in a joint organization outside the National Guard Bureau, and its most recent deputy commander has been Army Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, who was the chief of the National Guard Bureau until late 2007.

“Our ongoing partnerships with the National Guard have increased our ability to coordinate and integrate joint and interagency operations,” Renuart said. “I am pleased to report our collaboration ... has never been better, and the experience gained by Guard

members serving throughout [Northcom] ensures we have a strong foundation for enhancing this relationship.”

Among missions with heavy Guard involvement is Operation Noble Eagle, a post-9/11 initiative to protect U.S. and Canadian airspace that has seen Air National Guard members and reservists fly more than 80 percent of its more than 55,000 missions.

Other examples include National Guard contributions to the command’s chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosives consequence-management response forces; joint exercises; Guard contributions to the joint Haiti response; and the Guard’s role in contributing to the team effort to improve the interoperability of communications between the Defense Department, the Department of Homeland Security and numerous state and local partner agencies.

Other Northcom missions also have a National Guard nexus, including cyber security, H1N1 flu operations and inland search and rescue.

In November, Northcom used the National Guard’s Muscatatuck facility in Indiana for a field training exercise that simulated an improvised nuclear device detonation. In January, the command teamed with the National Guard Bureau for a hurricane planning workshop in Tampa, Fla., where hundreds of representatives from 30 states joined senior homeland security and Federal Emergency Management Agency leaders to plan emergency preparedness.

“Next year, we plan to expand the scope of the planning conference to include all hazards,” Renuart reported to Congress.

The hurricane workshop was the latest in a series of collaborative efforts. Renuart has met individually with 37 of the adjutants general and addressed all commanding generals collectively.

“Working with our mission partners is essential to ensuring the American people receive assistance during times of need,” Renuart said. “Our nation’s governors take very seriously their role as commanders in chief of their states, and we respect that authority. Our job is to support our nation’s governors in responding to emergency situations and threats to their states.”

COMMAND VIEWS



**Colonel
William J. Crisler**

"Leadership and management skills are normally the hallmark of great military organizations and companies."

■ Comments by Colonel William Crisler, Vice Commander, 172nd Airlift Wing

When Public Affairs requested that I write an article for the **Command Views** column, I struggled with the perfect story on command leadership that I could relate. Upon seeking further guidance, they told me what they really wanted was a personal perspective of my experiences as an Airman and commander. I could certainly write a book on all my experiences, but similar to a good sermon and for brevity sake I will limit it to three areas that I find relevant to command leadership. The Air National Guard and military service have been an integral part of my life for over 34 years and have had a profound effect to shape who I am today. I am honored to have the opportunity to reflect on my experiences, but more importantly, deeply gratified to be a member of an organization I consider to be the best in the country. Mentoring, inspiring a culture of excellence and finding your personal management styles are three of the most important aspects of command and leadership at every level.

Mentoring

As a new second lieutenant about to ship off to my first active duty assignment with the Air Force, my father gave me two bits of the best advice I would ever receive; he said, "Son, find a Master Sergeant who can teach you about the organization and learn as much from him as possible - the Sergeants run the Air Force; and take care of your troops and they will take care of you." Truer words have never been spoken. My first assignment was in large part a success, due to a very special Master Sergeant who spent countless hours mentoring and teaching me about the organization, the Air Force and what Airmen needed and deserved in a leader and commander. I have continued to use this wise Sergeant's advice throughout my career. Learning from someone who had been where I wanted to go - an absolute necessity for any Airman or organization to be successful. This teaching is not just explaining how to complete a task or ensuring the member gets on the right deployment, but is much broader. When mentoring occurs throughout a member's career, regardless of rank or position, Airmen develop personal relationships, trust, cohesion, confidence and the organization transforms into a more capable force. Airmen are able to accomplish difficult tasks by achieving better results leading to a sense of belonging that is essential to retaining great members. A force multiplier! Throughout my career, I have been blessed to have had great mentors, teachers and friends who through their actions took the time, taught me or showed me how to be a better person and Airman.

Culture of Excellence

In the Air National Guard it is not unusual (in fact it is normal) for a member to stay at the same base his or her entire career and possibly in the same organization (Operations, Maintenance, Support or Medical). This is so very different from the active duty Air Force, where a member PCS's (Permanent Change of Station) every two to four years. The active duty management theory would suggest that a member staying in the same organization for a long period of time is not productive; I have found it to be just the opposite and quite rewarding to the organization. Our culture of excellence instills ownership in everything we do. The personal pride in our aircraft appearance, our efficient processes improvements, our inspection results, and the appearance of our base are all evidence of how we project an image of excellence. A great example of this occurred to me several years ago while I was on a rotation to Germany with our 40-year old C-141 aircraft. During a maintenance meeting with the Ramstein Air Base staff, the commander said he could always tell a Jackson

aircraft on the ramp... because it shined. I explained to him that our maintainers take great pride of ownership in these aircraft and that a culture of excellence had been handed down generationally, over the years. The expectation of the crew chief was to have the best looking and flying aircraft in the fleet, nothing short of perfection. The details of doing things over and above, like shining the spinner on the nose of the engine or touching-up paint that is nicked, is what separates a good unit from an outstanding one. That is the culture of excellence we have come to enjoy in Jackson and is represented throughout the Air National Guard community. Air National Guard members dedicate their careers, develop a wealth of experience and aspire for perfection.

Leadership and Management Styles

Leadership and management skills are normally the hallmark of great military organizations and companies. A look back in history at our successful military campaigns will generally reflect a dynamic leader with a strategic vision who was focused on success. In the business world, companies such as Microsoft, Google and Apple are successful for a number of reasons; all have CEO's and leaders with keen foresight, product innovation and a drive to surpass the competition. While being a member of the Air National Guard, I have had the privilege of serving 12 wing commanders each of whom possessed their own unique style, but all keenly focused on Airmen and mission success. The well-being of Airmen, the desire to have them working at their potential in a job they enjoy while understanding that their contribution is essential to mission success is paramount to achieving outstanding performance and successful leadership. There is no template, textbook response to leadership. Simply manage the mission, listen to the people. All three of the companies mentioned above share these beliefs and have been nationally recognized among the best companies to work for with the highest productivity. Understand the heartbeat of your organization, listen.

In a time of instantaneous electronic communication, it seems a lot easier and more efficient to communicate by phone or email, in turn increasing productivity and the speed at which we can accomplish business. Nothing can take the place of one on one human interaction and communication. In a recent conversation with one of our prior wing commanders, Col Shellie Bailey described to me his normal day at the office where he spent half the day in his office and the other half on base moving around. Management by walking around, there is no better way to find the heartbeat. It will identify great challenges for you, but also reap great rewards for the organization. Ultimately, the management and leadership style you choose should reflect the character and culture of your organization. Some will need a firm hand and defined goals; others may be pre-programmed on cruise control and only need strategic direction, while others may have already over achieved your expectations. As a leader, it is your responsibility to find the heartbeat, carry on a culture of excellence while taking the time to sit with a new Airman who asks, "How," ultimately being that dynamic leader with a strategic vision who is always focused on success.



Colonel William Crisler talks up Santa on a C-17 flight to the North Pole at Christmas. The annual 172nd Airlift Wing event is a family support program aimed at the smaller children.

WOUNDED WARRIORS PUTTING LIVES BACK TOGETHER AGAIN

■ By Brig. Gen. (MS) (Ret.) Joseph B. Moss
Legal Advisor, MSNG

When one looks at the statistics of war, there is a far larger percentage of wounded and injured service members than fatalities. For the wounded and injured, recovery takes on a certain urgency -- and getting back to "life" is not instantaneous. Fortunately, many military and civilian organizations and individuals have answered the call when it comes to taking care of America's wounded and injured troops.

One of these is the Army Wounded Warrior Program or AW2. This program is an important part of the Army's mission -- established in 2004 -- and is the official U.S. program that assists and advocates for wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans and their families; wherever they are and for as long as it takes.

At the heart of the Warrior Care and Transition Program established in April 2007, is the successful establishment of 36 Warrior Transition Units (WTUs) at major Army installations worldwide -- and nine Community Based Transition Units located regionally around the United States.

The AW2 Lifecycle of Care determines and provides what the wounded service member, veteran and family needs -- all during the course of six very different phases. AW2 troops may receive support from the WTU triad of care; which includes a primary care manager (general practitioner physician), nurse case manager, specialist physician(s) and the WTU military chain of command, for the first five phases.

The Department of Veterans Affairs may also begin transitional support in the second, third or fourth phases, and completes transition by the sixth phase, depending on the severity of injury to the Warrior. These six phases include evacuation and notification, treatment, rehabilitation, evaluation, transition and management and support.

One Mississippi Army National Guard Soldier, Lt. Col. E. Barney Robinson, III, a judge advocate who deployed to Iraq with the 155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT), has witnessed first-hand what happens when service members are hurt overseas.

At the time of his injury, Robinson was serving as Command Judge Advocate for the 2nd Battalion 114th Strike at Contingency Operating Site (COS) Marez in Mosul and the 2nd Bn., 198th Combined Arms Battalion at Contingency Operating Base (COB) Qayyarah West, Iraq, having volunteered to transfer into the 155th HBCT from Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi National Guard, so he could deploy with the unit in 2009.

Evacuation and Notification

"I was on COS Marez in Mosul, Iraq. It was early in the evening of the Monday of Thanksgiving week. It was dark, and I was wearing my assault pack and carrying two bags, as I was walking to a Non-tactical Vehicle to drive to the airstrip to pick up another officer flying in from COS Qayyarah West. Unfortunately, I slipped on loose gravel and fell forward, impacting my left shin against a concrete curb in front of the Mayor's Cell building.

I knew I'd been seriously injured when I saw my left foot turned to 8 p.m. relative to my leg," explained Robinson. "This incident -- that took place in just a few seconds -- began my journey through one of the most sophisticated and well-executed op-



Lt. Col. E. Barney Robinson arrives for duty in Iraq with the 155th Brigade Combat Team.

erations I've ever seen, the Army's medevac and AW2 programs."

Robinson received his injuries -- three major fractures in his left leg and ankle, on the night of November 23, 2009. Although not life threatening, his multiple fractures were a traumatic injury that would have left him crippled, if not promptly and properly treated.

After being helped on the scene by a combat medic, Robinson was rushed to the Combat Support Hospital (CSH) at COS Diamondback; adjacent to COS Marez in Mosul. The orthopedist on duty, Capt. (Dr.) Burns, examined Robinson's injuries and gave him the bad news-- "you are going to be medivaced out of theater for surgery, we cannot set your fractures."

Two days later, Robinson was flown out of COS Diamondback on a aeromedical C-130. The plane made numerous stops across northern Iraq, picking up wounded and injured at multiple Forward Operating Bases, before finally landing at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), several hours later.

After spending the night in the CSH, Robinson was put on a C-17 aeromedical flight to Ramstein Air Base in Germany. After landing, he was placed on a litter bus for transportation to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center on Thanksgiving Day.

"When I was told I would be departing for Ramstein, I wondered if it would be one of our Mississippi Air National C-17s flying the mission (the Mississippi Air National Guard's 172nd Airlift Wing has an air evacuation mission out of Iraq, an ongoing mission)," said Robinson. "When my litter was lifted out of the ambulance on the tarmac at BIAP, I looked up and saw the Mississippi insignia on the tail of the C-17. As I was being carried onto the aircraft, I looked towards the cockpit and saw an enormous Mississippi state flag hanging from the ceiling to just above the floor at the front of the aircraft hold. I knew I was in the best of hands. I was so proud to be a Guardsman and a Mississippian."

The plane Robinson says he was transported on to Germany was essentially a flying emergency room. Flight surgeons and nurses spent the entire flight attending to the wounded and injured. "They clearly take great pride in their mission," said Robinson.

Robinson said he spent Thanksgiving Day in the hospital at Landstuhl -- in a room with three other Soldiers, also injured or wounded and who were recently evacuated from Afghanistan.

On Friday, November 27, he was again loaded on a litter bus and made the journey back to Ramstein, where he was loaded on a South Carolina Air National Guard C-17 for the long flight to Andrews Air Force Base (AAFB) in Washington, D.C.

Upon landing at Andrews late on Friday night, the colonel who commanded the medical facility came out to the tarmac and greeted each of the arriving wounded or injured as they were loaded on a litter bus for transportation to medical quarters. The next day Robinson said he boarded yet another C-17 and flew to an airbase in Illinois, transferring to a C-130 for a flight to Fort Hood and ultimately, to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

Once at Lackland, an ambulance took him directly to Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas--the Army's premier medical center for kinetic and burn injuries.

Some six days from the date of his injury, Robinson had finally arrived at BAMC. While that may seem like a long time to journey from Nineveh Province, Iraq, to

Bexar County, Texas, Robinson said military medical personnel executed the process efficiently and flawlessly.

"I was really impressed with the whole medevac process. Everything ran like a well-oiled machine," said Robinson.

According to a report by the Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates, the AW2 and WTUs are accomplished largely through the Army's commitment to robustly staff and resource the units. There are more than 3,600 permanent cadre and staff overseeing a population of 10,000 wounded, ill and injured. Each assigned Warrior in Transition (WT) receives a "triad of care," consisting of a Primary Care Manager (general practitioner physician), a Nurse Case Manager and a military chain of command, to direct and supervise the individual healing process. To date, noted the article, more than 22,000 service members have progressed through the WTU structure and assignment times are becoming shorter as enhancements and refinements are made to the program.

Treatment and Rehabilitation

Robinson is very complimentary of the medical care he received at BAMC, where the military has some of the best and most experienced orthopedic surgeons in the world.

"I had a private hospital room and an attentive nurse Case Manager while in the hospital. Not long after meeting my Case Manager, the Lieutenant Colonel Commander of the Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB), his Sergeant Major, my Platoon Sergeant and Squad Leader, all paid me personal visits in my hospital room." Both his Case Manager and WTB Squad Leader kept up with his progress daily, also making sure that LTC Robinson was receiving all the care he needed while awaiting surgery.

Soon after settling into his hospital room, Robinson met the orthopedic team that would be performing his surgery. As BAMC is both a Level 1 Trauma Center and a teaching hospital (medical school), most surgery teams have a senior physician, an intern and one or more medical students. When Robinson first met his orthopedist, Maj. (Dr.) Hsu, he learned of another connection with home. "Dr. Hsu is from Red Stick [Baton Rouge]. He is a LSU and Tulane Medical School graduate and grew up about 30 miles south from my family's roots in Wilkinson County, Mississippi, just below the state line in



Lt. Col. E. Barney Robinson recovers after surgery at the Warrior Transition Center at Brooke Army Medical Center.

Louisiana. I had great fun reminding him of the final score in last season's LSU versus Ole Miss game," said Robinson.

A week later, Robinson's swelling had gone down enough to enable surgery. The next morning, he rolled into the operations room at six a.m. and awakened several hours later with a leg and ankle full of titanium. His long road towards recovery had finally begun.

Two weeks later, the hospital discharged Robinson into the care of the WTB. He drew quarters in the Powless Guest House -- across the street from the WTB barracks and headquarters building, and then started a two week in-processing period, during which the WTB provided him briefings on matters such as VA benefits, transition to civilian life (for those leaving the service), medical boards and myriad other subjects relevant to injured and wounded service members.

After in-processing, Robinson settled into a "normal" WTB routine. A little before 7:00 every morning, he rolled himself in his wheelchair over to the Company Area for formation. After formation, he rolled to the Center for the Intrepid (CFI) (www.fallenheroesfund.org/About-IFHF/Fund-History/The-Center-for-the-Intrepid.aspx), a state of the art physical therapy and rehabilitation facility built entirely with donated funds. Robinson typically then spent three or more morning hours a day in physical therapy, with his afternoons filled with doctor's appointments, briefings or WTB unit matters.

"They repeatedly reminded all of us at BAMC that we had one and only one mission while there -- 'Get better!'," laughed Robinson.

"Admittedly, after a while, the monotony of being at BAMC did become frustrating," revealed Robinson. "After one finishes in-processing, the days seem to repeat themselves in photocopy, with little changing other than your slow but steady physical improvement and healing. On the positive side, I simply could not have received any finer medical care -- and that includes from my orthopedist on down to my physical therapist -- all of them were excellent, attentive and proud to be treating the wounded and injured.

I also was touched by the generosity of local churches and charity groups, not to mention other Veterans -- especially Vietnam Veterans. Many older veterans serve as unpaid volunteers at BAMC and several Vietnam Veterans told me they were determined to ensure that OIF and OEF Veterans got the recognition and thanks they did not receive when they returned from Vietnam in the tumultuous 1970s. I was visited by so many military-support groups and veterans while an inpatient at BAMC, at some point I started to think I could not have 30 uninterrupted minutes.

The stream of visitors bearing appreciation letters, gifts of food and other comfort items, was nearly endless," said Robinson. "Further, the Wounded Warrior Project [www.woundedwarriorproject.org] had a representative full-time at the CFI who was essentially on 'morale duty.' He coordinated 'Freedom Rides' (cycling events), free dinners off-post, target shooting, professional sports games, hunting and fishing trips, ski trips and other recreational trips meant to lift the spirits of wounded and injured who were interested in attending, if physically able."

Additionally, adjacent to the CFI and WTB at BAMC, Fort Sam Houston has a beautiful Warrior Family Support Center, www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51915, also built with donated funds. The \$4,000,000.00, 12,000 square-foot facility is a place where Wounded Warriors and their families can go to relax, watch a movie, use the computer lab or have a donated lunch.

Evaluation

In March 2008, the U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) launched the Comprehensive Transition Plan initiative for WTs. Instead of focusing solely on the injury or illness, the Comprehensive Transition Plan fosters a holistic approach to a WT's rehabilitation and transition. This is accomplished through the collaboration of a multidisciplinary team of physicians, case managers, specialty care providers and occupational therapists. Together with the Soldier, they develop individually tailored goals that emphasize the transition phase to civilian life or return to duty. Goals are set and the transition plan developed within one month of the Service member's arrival at the WTU.

The Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) and Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) processes have been streamlined and paperwork requirements reduced to more efficiently move a Soldier's disability package through the adjudication process. Additionally, collaboration between the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ensures that WTU service members have priority processing by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) 90 days prior to separating so they can receive their VA benefits and health care immediately upon discharge.

Robinson said he is still in the rehabilitative stages; but he is home, has been released from Active Duty and returned to his civilian job.

Transition

In this phase, the AW2 Advocate helps execute the plan of action for the service members and family, assisting with a successful return to the military or transition into the civilian community.

Over the past 22 months, the Army has introduced a series of Warrior Care and Transition Program (WCTP) enhancements, to include: establishing the CTP initiative; increasing behavior health services; improving the physical disability evaluation system; implementing an Ombudsman assistance program; fielding Soldier and Family Assistance Centers and garnering resources Warrior Transition Complexes (WTC). New WTU assignment criteria allow reserve component service members to heal closer to home.

Management and Support

As a judge advocate, Robinson is well-versed in a service member's rights. He notes that the AW2 Advocate effectively supports the service member or Veteran and Family, by assisting with any new issues that they may face. In the final stage of the lifecycle, the AW2 Advocate helps them to achieve their life goals and to adjust accordingly when these goals change. The Advocate maintains a relationship with the service member or veteran and family, to ensure they are receiving the support they need for as long as it takes.

"These professionals put the service member first, take care of the needs of your family, attempt to cut through Government red tape and handle all the simple details. I hope my experience can help other members of the services," said Robinson, who then chuckled, "when I first called my wife from the CSH at Mosul and told her of my injury, she said 'I'm sorry you're hurt, but at least you are coming home early.' Boy was she wrong, as most of my fellow Soldiers from 155th HBCT beat me back to Mississippi by a week."

WOUNDED WARRIOR LEGAL BILL OF RIGHTS

If you have a deployment-related physical or mental condition, you are entitled to legal rights and legal representation.

- Medical Care: You have the right to medical care at Army and Veteran Administration (VA) facilities, and, in certain cases, temporary housing for you and your family.
- Medical and Disability Boards: You may be required to attend Medical Review Boards and similar proceedings to determine your fitness for duty and your eligibility for disability benefits. You are entitled to legal counsel to assist you in understanding these procedures.
- Veterans Benefits: As a returning veteran, you are entitled to a variety of benefits, many of them administered by the VA. Judge Advocates can help you obtain these benefits.
- Reasonable Accommodation at Work: Pursuant to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are entitled to have your civilian job back when you demobilize, and you are also entitled to reasonable accommodations for your injuries.
- Assistance with Housing and Credit Issues: If your deployment and medical condition has affected your housing or credit situation, the service members Civil Relief Act provides certain legal protections to you, which Judge Advocates can help you enforce.

To learn more about your Wounded Warrior Legal Bill of Rights, see your unit's Judge Advocate or legal section.

Taking care of Wounded Warriors Best Part of Soldier's Career

■ By Sandy Ates, JFH Public Affairs

With over 30 years of service in the Mississippi Army National Guard, Sgt. 1st Class Alfreda Moody, of Jackson, said volunteering to assist in the Wounded Warrior Program at the Eisenhower Army Medical Center at Fort Gordon, Ga., was by far, the best achievement and satisfaction she has garnered during her long military service with the Mississippi Army National Guard.

"I knew very little about the beautiful peach State of Georgia when I reported for duty at the Warrior Transition Battalion at Ft. Gordon, in February 2008," said Moody. "I just knew that I was there to serve my country and to assist in fulfilling the vision for the Warrior Training Unit (WTU) in taking care of the wounded and focus on their mission to heal. I was the only cadre from the Mississippi National Guard so, this was all a new world for me."

Moody said she was humbled because she assisted the injured warriors from her home state and transition warriors from around the world who were deployed in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.



Sgt 1st Class Alfreda Moody visits one of her special Wounded Warriors.

"My Alpha Company (to which Moody was assigned) platoon sergeants, squad leaders, human resource and logistics specialists were very professional and competent in all phases of the WT and they were basically the very backbone of all actions involving the care of these warriors," explained Moody, noting the words of the commander of A Co., "...Mission Plus - Make It Happen."

She said her primary duties involved Family Readiness liaison, which really was the highlight of her deployment.

"I was required to meet the MEDEVAC (medical evacuation) flights at the Augusta, Ga., airport or greet buses and vehicles of the new arrivals and visiting the warriors and families during convalescence," said Moody, listing but a few of her round-the-clock duties. "All the while, I was training as the assistant platoon leader, which in and of itself, is a complete (major) additional duty. But I honestly believe the experience of working directly with the Warrior Transition Battalion helped me to understand the true meaning of love and life. And, I honestly owe my life to the military for giving me the opportunity to serve my country in this manner." Moody retires in September 2010.





(Above Photo) Ty Pennington, host of the popular TV reality show, Extreme Makeover, presents the Sherman Heathcock family their new home in Hattiesburg, Miss.

(Photo Right) The crew of Extreme Makeover put one last thing in place before they handed the keys over to the Sherman Heathcock family, that is the flag pole that would stand as a reminder of Heathcock's service with the Mississippi National Guard.





GUARDSMAN GETS EXTREME HELP

By Sgt. David Landrum
102nd MPAD

CAMP SHELBY, Miss.--The bus was waiting on the curb when the limousine pulled up. The doors opened and the family got out of the back of the car.

“Move That Bus! Move That Bus!” The crowd of more than 500 people yelled. Show host, Ty Pennington, huddled the family close and the bus started up and pulled away revealing a new source of hopes, dreams, and memories.

Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center and the City of Hattiesburg received a dose of Hollywood the week of Dec. 3 through Dec. 10 as the ABC television show “Extreme Makeover – Home Edition” came to town to build a house for a local family.

Staff Sgt. Sherman Heathcock and his family were selected as the recipients of the new house. Sherman was deployed to Iraq with the 155th Brigade Combat Team which is scheduled to return home in February. Because of contractual obligations, neither Sherman nor his wife, Gina were allowed to talk about selection process.

However, Faye Heathcock, Sherman’s mother said her daughter-in-law was worried. “Gina was beside herself, because they had told her that they were meeting with another family the day before,” Faye Heathcock said. “So in her mind, they were not going to be the recipient.”

Faye said she found about Extreme Makeover in the paper. She said she approached the rest of her family and asked if they wanted to nominate Sherman for the honor.

On the last day of nominations, Sherman’s bid went through.

“[Gina] wanted it so that when he came home from Iraq, he would never have to worry about looking at his watch, going to another job, making sure he’s in that job after working his regular job,” Faye said. “She wanted it so they could have time with him.”

Faye said, shortly after sending in the nomination, Gina received a phone call.

“Gina had to fill out a lot of paperwork. They did a background check on her and Sherman. They did credit reports, everything.”

Demolition on the house began early in the morning on Dec. 6. By that evening, the foundation had been laid and the framework put up. Crews worked 24-hours a day to make sure the house went up within the 106-hour timeline.

Even a round of rain, snow and freezing temperatures didn’t deter the crews from getting the house up.

Sara Peterson, a volunteer from AAA Homes, said getting a chance to work on the house was a blessing in itself. The daughter of a retired Soldier, Peterson said Extreme Makeover presented a chance she could not pass up.

“It’s an incredible opportunity,” Peterson said. “I love giving back to this country and to the men and women that serve and protect us.”

Hattiesburg Mayor Johnny Dupree said the week would show how special Hattiesburg is. The mayor said the house would make a difference in the life of the family and also make a difference in the community

“Soldiers give all the time,” Dupree said. “You couldn’t find a better family, too, than one who is making sure we are able to do what we’re doing today.”

Construction was completed on the house Dec. 10. Faye said the family was surprised and honored to have strong support from the community.

“We’ve heard things about Sherman that we didn’t know. We knew that we loved Sherman and we knew that he was a kind, caring and compassionate person but we have found out, since they were nominated, that people have come forward and told us things that he’s done that we didn’t know,” Faye said. “We’re just blessed to be able to get this.”





Mississippi Airman writes play to honor history

Master Sgt. Christal Smith, 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, Capt. Nicole Simpson, 379th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron, and Master Sgt. Khalifah Woodarrd, Combined Air and Space Operations Center, act in a play called, "A Walk Through History: The Inauguration of Barack Obama." The play was written by Staff Sgt. Jessica Green, a Mississippi Air National Guardsman serving with the 71st Expeditionary Air Control Squadron. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Kasey Zickmund)

■ By Senior Airman Spencer Gallien
379th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

SOUTHWEST ASIA -- Servicemembers deployed to a non-disclosed Southwest Asia location recently performed a play commemorating the first anniversary of the 44th U.S. Presidential Inauguration.

The play, titled 'Inauguration Ball 2010,' brought characters who've affected African Americans throughout history together for President Barack Obama's inauguration. The stage was graced by the likenesses of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Gen. David "Chappie" James Jr. and Harriet Tubman.

Through their characters, actors were able to teach history, while entertaining servicemembers.

"I wanted to put together a play that could teach youth about history," said Staff Sgt. Jessica Green, who wrote the play for her local church in Mississippi. "I say history, because it's not just meant for African Americans, it's meant for everyone, all of our histories in America are melded together as one."

Sergeant Green, 71st Expeditionary Air Control Squadron, is a Guardsman deployed from Gulfport, Miss., where she is a member of the 255th Air Control Squadron. The 255th ACS is a tenant unit located at the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center.

While participating in the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing Victory Chapel gospel choir, Sergeant Green and Master Sgt. Eric Jackson Sr., 1st Expeditionary Red Horse Group chaplain

assistant, decided it would be worthwhile to produce the play she had written for her church at home, for the base populace.

"When Sergeant Green told me about her play, we decided to put our brains together and put on a production for the base," said Sergeant Jackson. "We began finding different people on base who exuded those people from the past and present, we wanted to bring to life on stage."

Tech. Sgt. Aaron Wilson, who portrayed President Barack Obama, began preparing for his role about four weeks ago.

"It was refreshing to be part of a play here," said Sergeant Wilson. "Anything that promotes healthy morale is good, especially in a deployed environment. Theater gives us the creative license to bring audiences into the world that the director creates, which tends to be a relief from whatever may be going on outside of the play."

Although deployed responsibilities came first, the group of thespians, directors and extras worked diligently to put on a production they could feel proud of.

"A lot of research went into accurately portraying each historical figure," Sergeant Green said. "Another difficulty we ran into, was finding the time to get everyone together to practice. Sometimes it felt as if we weren't ever going to be ready. However, we pulled together and were able to produce something special the whole base could enjoy."

"We've gained so much from putting this play together," she added. "And this play's not just for African Americans. This play was for everyone, to learn and just sit back and relax as they enjoyed some live theater."

Mississippi Veteran receives France's highest honor

■ By Sandy Ates, JFH

Vernon Gibbs, an 84-year old Newton native, described his actions that earned him the Legion d'honneur or Ordre national de la Legion d'honneur (French: "National Order of the Legion of Honour"), a french order established by Napoleon Bonaparte May 19, 1802.

Through the efforts of Mississippi Congressman Gregg Harper, Larry Wert, Special Assistant for Veterans and Military Affairs for Harper's office, and Gibbs' family members, Gibbs was able to receive the highest decoration in France. Wert said the French government is now recognizing and honoring veterans of allied armies who have helped in past wars with the liberation of France. He said the National Order of the Legion of Honor medal is being bestowed upon American service members who fought in France and who have been highly decorated by the United States for their bravery and valor. Of those men who have shown utmost valor, Gibbs is one.

Recounting his World War II memories, Gibbs said there were days as a young infantryman with the 45th Infantry Division that he didn't think he'd see the next.

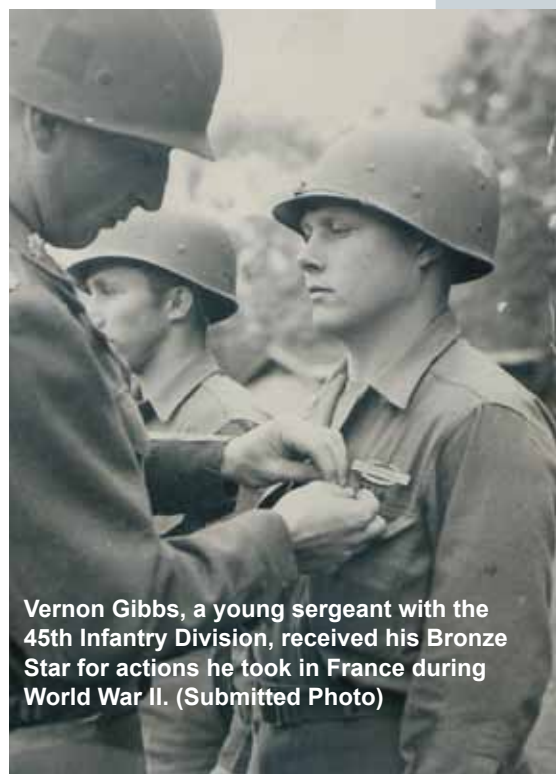
"My trial by fire was Anzio," Gibbs said gathering himself as he remembered the hellish battle on the shores of Italy during late January and February 1945. "From there we fought up Italy, across France and into Germany. I still don't know how I got through all that."

He specifically recalled Jan. 1, 1945 when during a massive, six-hour German artillery barrage in the mountains surrounding Rambervillers, France, not far from the German frontier, Gibbs and to other men first laid a communication line and then ran up and down its entire length in the shell ling to ensure battalion headquarters could talk to their company commanders on the front lines.

"It was too rocky to dig a foxhole so we dodged in between boulders and rocks," said Gibbs. For this action Gibbs was awarded the Bronze Star, an award that drew the attention of French officials as they ran their lists of WW II vets who deserved the Legion of Honour medal equivalent to America's Medal of Honor.

While the Legion of Honour was given to Gibbs through the Special Assistant for Veterans and Military Affairs, whose help along with family, friends and fellow veterans, was successful in getting the award for Gibbs, the Mississippi Army National Guard unit in Newton, make a special presentation of the award to Gibbs, so the members of the military could honor him. The award was presented in January by Col. Robert Thomas, assistant adjutant general-Army, and 1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery commander, Col. Mark Valentine.

"It is an honor for me to present this rare award to a World War II hero, we owe patronage to these Soldiers whose heroic actions kept us safe and held freedom in the hearts of all Americans. France, too, knows what our American Soldiers faced during the great war, and felt they deserved this special honor," said Thomas.



Vernon Gibbs, a young sergeant with the 45th Infantry Division, received his Bronze Star for actions he took in France during World War II. (Submitted Photo)



Vernon Gibbs, center, proudly poses with the assistant adjutant general, Col. Robert Thomas (left) and Col. Mark Valentine, commander 1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery, after being awarded France's highest award for bravery and valor. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Joel Wagner, JFH).



The 45th Infantry Division was an infantry division of the United States Army. As a major formation of the Oklahoma Army National Guard, it was headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma for most of its history. The division traces its lineage to the Oklahoma state militia activated in the late 19th century.

The 45th Infantry Division first saw action as a division in World War II fighting in the Mediterranean. Making amphibious landings at Sicily, Anzio, and Salerno, the division played a key role in the liberation of Italy before making a fourth amphibious landing in Europe to liberate France. Eventually, the division advanced into Germany itself.

After a brief deactivation, the division returned to duty in the Korean War on the UN lines against repeated attacks from Chinese forces. Fighting in numerous raids and bigger battles such as the Battle of Old Baldy, the 45th Infantry Division was decorated several times for its actions during both wars. Following its service, the division was deactivated and formed into the 45th Infantry Brigade.



Wyatt visits Mississippi Air National Guard units

Lt. Gen. Harry Wyatt III, director of the Air National Guard, is briefed by a pilot with the Mississippi Air Guard Jan. 8 aboard a Mississippi Guard C-17 Globemaster III en route to San Antonio, Texas. The flight transported more than 50 patients to the United States as part of its regular aeromedical evacuation missions from Iraq and Germany. Wyatt also visited Airmen at the 172nd in Jackson, Miss., and then at the 186th Air Refueling Wing at Key Field, Miss., Jan. 9 to gain a better understanding of their missions. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith, National Guard Bureau)

■ By Air Force Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith,
National Guard Bureau

The Air National Guard's top leader visited with Airmen at the 172nd Airlift Wing here and the 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian this weekend in formal briefings and base tours to see firsthand the missions they are performing.

Lt. Gen. Harry Wyatt III flew from Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Jan. 8 to San Antonio, Texas, during an aeromedical evacuation mission that transported wounded servicemembers from Iraq. He was accompanied by Lt. Gen. Loren Reno, deputy chief of staff for Logistics, Installations and Mission Support.

The C-17 Globemaster III aircraft was operated by the Mississippi Airmen from the 172nd, who fly regular aerovac missions from Balad Air Base, Iraq, to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, and stateside.

After they transported more than 50 patients to Andrews, the aircraft and crew transported Wyatt with a medical team and two burn victims to Brooke Army Medical Center. One patient was in critical condition.

"It was extremely important to me to be on that mission last night," Wyatt told 172nd Wing's leaders.

Wyatt was briefed the following morning at Jackson International Airport on the wing's operations.

He then presented the unit its 13th Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. "I look forward to your 14th [award]," he said, adding that outstanding achievement is "in your DNA."

The wing, the first Guard unit to operate the C-17, has flown more than 39,000 patients to lifesaving medical treatment since October 2005. Their patients range from critical to stable condition.

The general walked around the base this morning and visited with the 172nd's Airmen during their unit training weekend. He awarded coins to outstand-

ing performers and thanked many for their service.

"We enjoy him being here and seeing the actual mission being performed," said Maj. Gen. Erik Hearon, commander of the Mississippi Air Guard, who accompanied Wyatt to both units. "That's a lot better than trying to read a summary of it, and he mentioned that in his comments this morning."

A short flight later, Wyatt arrived at Key Field Air Guard Base, home of the 186th.

The general was briefed on the unit's many missions, including KC-135 aerial refueling, air traffic control, RC-26B counterdrug intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance (ISR) and MC-12 ISR aircraft mission qualification training, among others.

During a town hall-style meeting, Wyatt called the wing's MC-12 Project Liberty mission "vitaly important to the U.S. Air Force."

"It is one that this country needs," he said.

"Project Liberty is the Air Force's new ISR platform," said Lt. Col. Rick Berryhill, a program spokesperson. "It provides tactical ISR to the war fighter forward."

Berryhill said the Air Guard provides mission qualification training for the program at Key Field. It has trained and deployed more than 125 active duty Air Force crew members since training began last March.

The wing is scheduled to conduct MC-12 mission training for more than 600 active duty Airmen this fiscal year.

Wyatt also answered questions about the wing's transition from 18 years of aerial refueling and the possibility of gaining new missions, including C-27 Spartan operations, maintenance and training.

Basing for those missions, said Wyatt, has yet to be decided or announced by the Air Force's Strategic Basic Executive Steering Group.

186th Security Forces deploy to Kyrgyz Republic

■ By the 376th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron

Members of the 186th Security Forces Squadron deployed to the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyz Republic in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The Mississippi Guardsmen joined other units from Tennessee, Texas, Indiana, Wisconsin, Maryland and Kentucky to form the 376th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron. While deployed, the squadron members provided Force Protection and Law Enforcement services to U.S. forces and Coalition partners ensuring a safe operating environment. In addition to their normal duties, the deployed troops hosted several distinguished visitors but none was more meaningful than when they had the unique opportunity to host the Adjutant General of the state of Mississippi, Major General William L. Freeman, Jr. The Magnolia Defenders will complete their tour and begin to return home within weeks.



Members of the 186th Security Force Squadron pose for a quick picture at Kyrgyz Republic before redeploying back to Meridian. Shown are: Front Row Left to Right: A1C Freeman, A1C Sistrunk, SSgt Garrison, Staff Sgt Barnett. 2nd Row: Tech. Sgt Rushing, A1C Peets, Staff Sgt Bostick, SrA Crowell, TSgt Dees, SSgt Thompson, SrA Stieber, SSgt Villa, SrA White, TSgt Underwood 3rd Row: SrA Bishop, MSgt Lamoreaux, A1C Barrier, SrA Partridge, SrA Jones, SrA Easley, SrA Stewart, TSgt Davis, SSgt Whaley, TSgt Lambert, SrA Pippins, SSgt Remy, TSgt Bufkin, TSgt Martin, MSgt Farragut, A1C Payne, MSgt Goudy, and Capt McElhenney. U.S. Air Force Photo, 186 SFS.

Miles of Compassion



on



Known worldwide for their compassion and assistance to wounded and injured armed forces members, Airmen from the 172nd Airlift Wing were among the first to arrive in their C-17 Globemaster III aircraft to help victims in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake in Haiti in late January 2010. Most of their 23 missions to the Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, involved cargo and refugee transport . (Photos by 172nd Airlift Wing)



Senior Master Sgt. James Bennett, a loadmaser with the Mississippi Air National Guard's 172nd Airlift Wing, monitors Haitian evacuees traveling on a C-17 Globemaster III as part of the U.S. response to the earthquake. (Photo by Master Sgt. Alvin Johnson)

The Mississippi State University patch on Col. Tod Wall's headphones speaks of more than just collegiate affiliation; it tells the story of today's total force Air Force team.

Wall, a National Guardsman, is the Operations Group commander, 172nd Airlift Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard out of Jackson, Miss.

Onboard a 172nd AW C-17 Globemaster, Wall looks on as more than 100 passengers are swiftly off-loaded by transportation Security Administration personnel and U.S. Customs

agents to begin the process of entering the United States. "It's a total effort," he said. "You can see it by the tail flashes on the runways, Guard, Reserve, active duty; everybody wants to do whatever they can to help the people of Haiti."

For the crew, the mission began at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C. where they loaded disaster relief supplies and heavy equipment to transport to Haiti. After off-loading the cargo the aircraft took on passengers who were a mixture of American citizens and foreign nationals. "I've never seen such a large-scale operation in such

a confined area," Wall said, "there are a lot of entities working together and coordinating seamlessly. I don't think anybody can do it any better than this."

For the passengers, it was a relief to escape the aftershocks, which continue to shake the earth in Haiti along with the psyche of those remaining on the ground. "I did not know what to expect," said Museau Clausel, who had to evacuate his damaged home outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Clausel, who spoke through an interpreter said, "I was only used to commercial planes so it was

very different, but the crew was helpful and made us feel safe. I was afraid of the [aftershocks] because I thought it was another earthquake. I am glad to be in America and safe. I am glad my son is safe."

Inside the terminal at Orlando Sanford International Airport is another piece of the total force puzzle. In a room littered with laptop computers and evidence of 24-hour work cycles sits Col. Lincoln E. Larson, a state emergency preparedness liaison officer with the Air Force Reserves. He is responsible for coordinating military support of local state and feder-



Col. Tod Wall holds a small Haitian child being evacuated to the United States following the Haiti earthquake. (Photo by Master Sgt. Alvin Johnson, 172 AW)

al agencies. "My specific training is in defense support to civilian authorities," Larson said. "If what [a state or federal agency] needs is a specific military capability, I work to provide that assistance from the Air Force."

Larson, one of the most senior people in the busy Emergency Operations Center at OSI, has seen the activity increase daily. "I am extremely proud of what our Air Force has been able to do," he said. "It's a total force effort. We have National Guard crews, Air Force Reserve crews, active duty crews. Some of these crews have been working 24 hours or more because it's the right thing to do. I am proud to wear this uniform."



LEFT-- Air Force Staff Sgt. Rodgrick L. Anderson (left) and Senior Airman Christopher K. Moore, both from the 186th Civil Engineering Squadron of the Mississippi Air National Guard deployed to Joint Task Force Guantanamo with the 474th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, bury wires underground for connectivity to surrounding buildings inside Camp America, March 18. The 474th ECES supports JTF Guantanamo by maintaining the Expeditionary Legal Complex and Camp Justice facilities and infrastructure. (DVIDS photo)



Patch of Performance

Earning the 2010 Soldier of the Year

Photos and Story by Sandy Ates, JFH

JACKSON, Miss.—The weather was perfect for this year's Soldier of the Year Competition, held annually at Camp Shelby for the enlisted Soldiers of the Mississippi Army National Guard.

This year, nine Soldiers were entered into the competition by their major subordinate command's top brass, but only seven competed in the event held March 18-20.

The annual competition is the first step to find out which enlisted members in the U.S. Army are the best among the best, a lot like Miss America competitions. Soldiers compete first at the state level and winners advance to the regional level competing with 10 other states for two titles, Soldier of the Year and NCO of the Year.

Competing at the state level 2010 Soldier/NCO/AGR (Active Guard and Reserve Soldier) of the Year were (Soldier of the Year) Specialists Dewey D. Rodgers, Hattiesburg, Miss., Antonio D. Nash of Carthage Miss., and Matthew I. Cook of Aberdeen, Miss. Competing for NCO of the Year were Sgt. Raymond T. Conley of Hattiesburg, Miss., and Staff Sgt. Marcus D. Patterson of Okolona, Miss., and vying for AGR-Active Guard/Reserve Soldier of the Year were Sgt. First Class Jeffery R. Griffin of Richton, Miss., and Staff Sgt. Stanley L. Peters of Tylertown, Miss. Two other Soldiers did not compete, they were Staff Sgt. Veronica Peppers of Jackson, and Sgt. First Class Mark Rouse of Tylertown, Miss.

The three-day event consisted of a myriad of tasks to test the endurance, decision-making and warrior skills of the Soldiers. According to the Guard's top enlisted Soldier, Command Sergeant Major Don Cooley, the tasks are difficult and comparable with skills tested at the Army-wide level.

"The winner of the state's Soldier and NCO of the Year will compete in the Regional Soldiers of the Year Competition, and winners of the regional trials will compete in the Department of the Army competition. Active Army Soldiers train daily and deploy routinely, and have expert skills," said Cooley. "But our Guard Soldiers are all competitive and they are all winners because of the drive, determination, and standards met by all Guard units statewide. Mississippi is always the state to beat at the regional level match which will be held in April."

Winners of this year's competition were announced Saturday evening during a banquet held for the Soldiers.

This year's winners of the three Soldier of the Year titles were Sgt. 1st Class Griffin, as AGR Soldier of the Year 2010, Staff Sgt. Patterson, NCO of the Year 2010, and Spc. Cook, Soldier of the Year 2010.

Major General William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, attended the awards event and presented trophies to the winners, and awards to the other four competitors for their close match to the winners.

"Every year we have the opportunity to see the quality of Soldiers in the Mississippi Army National Guard," said the general. "Our Soldiers are second to none at every level and I am so very proud of our Soldiers. They get better every year."



Soldier OF THE YEAR
Spc. Matthew I. Cook
Aberdeen, MS



NCO OF THE YEAR
Staff Sgt. Marcus D. Patterson
Okolona, MS



AGR Soldier OF THE YEAR
Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery R. Griffin
Richton, MS



Team MISSISSIPPI ARMY NATIONAL GUARD wins

HT Redfish Series Tournament

Sgt. 1st Class Mark Wright of the 1108th AVCRAD, Mississippi Army National Guard, and his partner, Erik Nelson, put a stranglehold on the tournament field Sunday, March 28, 2010, down in beautiful Empire, Louisiana, while competing in the HT Redfish Series Tournament.

Due to extremely high wind, dirty and low water conditions, only a mix of 14 Pro and Semi Pro hardcore teams dared to compete in the tournament; due to the less than favorable weather conditions. All teams caught good fish; however, Wright and Nelson were just a bit better on this day.

Wright only had one day to pre-fish for the tournament and his partner drove in from Mississippi only one hour before the tournament started. Still, with limited practice, this team showed they had *"the right stuff"* at days' end.

The team caught and released multiple oversize redfish through-out the day but was able to find the two perfect fish for the win. Wright and Nelson weighed-in the required 2 live slot size redfish for an aggregate weight of 15.48 pounds and took home the top check for \$3,000.00

This is the second redfish tournament win that Wright has to his credit for the 2010 season.

Wright and Nelson are sponsored by the Mississippi Army National Guard, Yeti Coolers, Nemire Lures, Rat-L-Trap, Skeeter Boats, Gemini Sport Marketing, and Edge Fishing products, RAM-Mounts, Airport Marine, Team MOJO'S REVENGE, HYDRO-TURF, Fish-Pond and Stay-N-Charge.



Sgt. 1st Class Mark Wright (left) and partner Eric Nelson show off their trophy catch following the HT Redfish Tournament held in Empire, La. The National Guard is a sponsor for Wright's fishing team.

1108th AVCRAD Soldiers Compete in Combatives Tournament

About 100 Soldiers from 27 states participated in the March 2010 National Guard Combatives Tournament at Ft. Benning, Ga. Among them, three members of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 1108th Army Aviation Classification and Repair Depot (AVCRAD).

This year was the first time Mississippi had entered competitors. Staff Sgts. Eric Spellman and Leonard J. Conway, and Sgt. Carl Fricke, said they were nervous, not knowing what to expect.

Making it to the semi-finals, Conway said when they arrived and met other Soldiers who were on the list, many had been doing combatives a much longer time.

"I looked around and noticed that all of these guys were very young, and some appeared in very good shape," said Conway, "But, that's when the old saying, 'looks can be deceiving' comes into play. That day of the competition the nerves, blood pressure and tensions were extremely high until that first match, then you go for what you know or think you know."

The third annual tournament was open to all National Guard Soldiers regardless of combative experience. It was a modified double elimination and consisted of three separate rounds of fights.

The first round was Standard Rules, which consisted strictly of ground



Combatives Tournament participants Sgt. Carl S. Fricke (left) and Staff Sgt. Leonard J. Conway show off the results of their first National Guard Combatives Tournament held at Ft. Benning, Ga., in March. Not pictured is Staff Sgt. Eric Spellman.

fighting techniques. The second round was Intermediate Rules, which also allowed open hand strikes to the head, punches to the body, and knee strikes & kicks. The finals were Advanced Rules, which allowed full contact; ground fighting, punches, kicks, and knee strikes.

Fighters competed individually in brackets based on weight class, and team points were awarded based on individual placement.

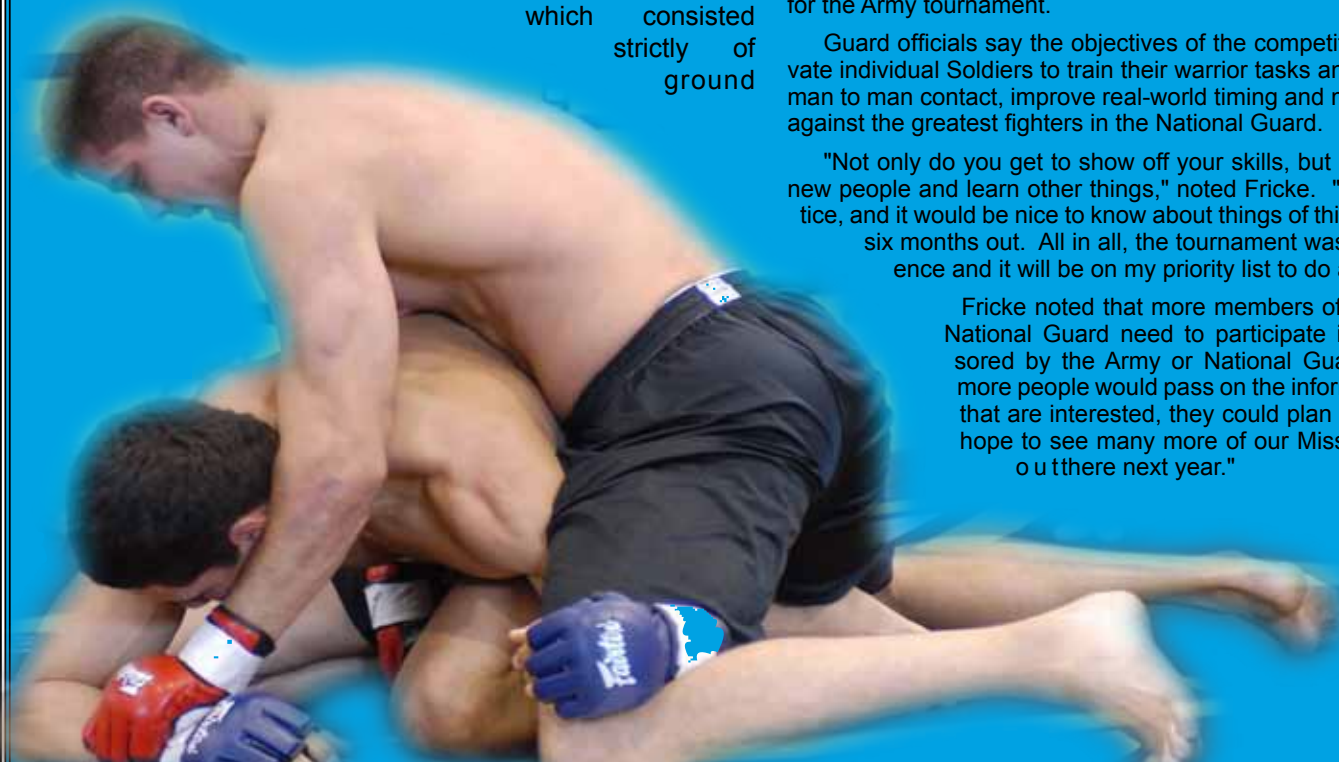
"I was not sure what to expect," said Fricke, "but I should have trained more--who hasn't said that--all in all, it turned out to be a good experience."

The tournament is not a qualifier for the All Army, but it helps our ARNG Soldiers prepare for the Army tournament," Deaton said adding that Soldiers do not have to fight in this tournament to be eligible for the Army tournament.

Guard officials say the objectives of the competition are to motivate individual Soldiers to train their warrior tasks and drills, react to man to man contact, improve real-world timing and match their skills against the greatest fighters in the National Guard.

"Not only do you get to show off your skills, but you get to meet new people and learn other things," noted Fricke. "It was short-notice, and it would be nice to know about things of this nature at least six months out. All in all, the tournament was a good experience and it will be on my priority list to do again."

Fricke noted that more members of the Mississippi National Guard need to participate in events sponsored by the Army or National Guard Bureau. "If more people would pass on the information to others that are interested, they could plan and be ready. I hope to see many more of our Mississippi Soldiers out there next year."



GUARD ASSISTS IN TORNADO AFTERMATH

(Below) Members of the Mississippi Army National Guard provide security and support during the April 24th tornado that ripped through the Yazoo City, Miss., area. (Photos by Sgt. Charles Brice, 102nd MPAD)



(YAZOO CITY, Miss.) — Rescuers spread out Sunday, April 24, to scour neighborhoods of splintered homes and twisted debris in Mississippi, a day after a devastating tornado sliced through the state and killed 10 people, including three children.

All was still Sunday morning as the sun rose amid one of the hardest hit areas of Yazoo City. About 40 National Guard Soldiers patrolled the area, some in Humvees and others in a Blackhawk helicopter. Dozens of volunteer state troopers and other law enforcement officers also came from far-flung parts of the state to help.

The high winds on Saturday ripped roofs off buildings in hard-hit Yazoo County, a county of about 28,000 people known for blues, catfish and cotton where Gov. Haley Barbour grew up. He described "utter obliteration" among the picturesque hills rising from the flat Mississippi Delta.

"This tornado was enormous," Barbour told The Associated Press as searchers resumed their work.

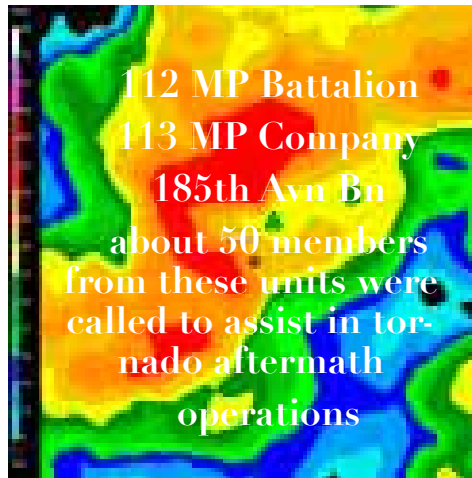
He estimated at least 100 houses in Yazoo County alone had severe damage but said his estimate could rise later.

Speaking in the parking lot of a heavily damaged restaurant, Barbour said emergency crews had gone to isolated houses in rural areas they had been unable to reach in the first chaotic hours after Saturday's storm.

The Mississippi National Guard, approximately 50 members, was called into action within minutes of the devastation, providing search and rescue and security for hard hit areas. Among the Army National Guard units was the 112th Military Police (MP) Battalion in Canton, the 113th MP unit in Brandon and aviation assets from the 185th Aviation Battalion along with some of the Joint Force Headquarters personnel.

Meteorologists said it was too soon to tell whether a single long-lasting tornado — or multiple shorter ones — caused the arc of death and damage in far-flung Mississippi communities. The same storm front spawned heavy thunderstorms that raked across the Southeast, snapping trees, damaging rooftops and scattering hail.

Yazoo County's coroner, Ricky Shivers, was in his own truck when the winds flipped the vehicle four times. Shivers went to the hospital to have bruised ribs and cuts treated, then went out to help identify bodies in his hospital gown. He told the AP by phone Sunday morning that he did not know whether any more people had died because he was back in the



hospital have his wounds tended to.

Indeed, there were many stories of unlikely survival amid the destruction.

In pine-forest filled Choctaw County, six people rode out the storm inside Sullivan's Crossroads Grocery and escaped with only cuts and bruises, said owner Ron Sullivan. The shop's wooden roof was torn off, its cinderblock walls reduced to heaps of stone on this calm and sunny Sunday morning.

Sullivan said he was on the phone with a National Weather Service meteorologist who wanted to know what the conditions were. Sullivan told him: "Something's happening, and it's happening now."

Then the phone went dead. And Sullivan was off his feet.

"I was levitated and flew 15 feet over there to the back wall," Sullivan said. "The only reason I wasn't killed was the wall was still there. After I hit it, it collapsed."

Sheriff's Deputy Johnny Ellington in Choctaw County said the storm, just in that area, left a swath of destruction about 10 miles long. He said authorities made an accu-

rate account of count on the number of homes damaged or destroyed.

He said the toll could have been much worse though there were at least five deaths.

"We lucked out because there are just not that many houses through here," Ellington said. "If it hadn't just been pine forests, it would have been really bad."

Tornadoes were also reported in Louisiana, Arkansas and Alabama, and the severe weather continued to track northeastward early Sunday as gusty winds also downed trees crossing northwest Georgia.

The severe weather began in Louisiana, just across the state line from Mississippi when a tornado destroyed 12 homes and warehouses at Complex Chemical Co., which makes antifreeze and other automotive fluids, owner Jerry Melton said.

The storm system moved east, with the twister hitting nearby Yazoo County, Miss., killing four people. In adjacent Holmes County, another person was killed. A little farther northeast, a tornado hit Choctaw County, where another five victims were reported, including children ages 3 months, 9 and 14.

With a dual role, the Mississippi National Guard is ready for any disaster, man-made or natural. The training Soldiers and Airmen receive today has amassed to include not just military career training, but also skills in homeland security and battlefield training.

On thing holds true about the National Guard, whenever they are needed, they are there.

Photos by Sgt. Charles Brice, JFH

Associated Press writers Emily Wagster Pettus in Yazoo City, Jack Elliott Jr. in Jackson, Maria Burnham in French Camp, Jackie Quinn in Washington, Janet McConaughy in New Orleans and Jacob Jordan in Atlanta contributed to this report, as well as Ms. Sandy Ates, JFH..

Operation Magnolia Relief Unites Emergency Response Efforts

■ By Staff Sgt. Ed Staton, JFH

With ambulance lights flashing and hundreds of injured patients arriving from earthquake devastated St. Louis, the 172nd Air Wing's Thompson Field served as the epicenter for Operation Magnolia Relief.

Based on a realistic scenario instead of an actual emergency, the joint training exercise was designed to test military and civilian responses and coordination capabilities of a mass casualty situation. The focus was on emergency response personnel's ability to receive air-evacuated ambulatory and non-ambulatory patients from the disaster-stricken area. This type of training is deemed essential because communities of all sizes require disaster planning.

These types of exercises are a fundamental part of ensuring preparedness for emergencies.

"We made sure we had a realistic scenario and that the agencies involved in a real event would know not only how to contact each other, but how to talk and work with each other as well," said Ron Kirkpatrick, the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) coordinator for the Veterans Administration's (VA) Region 5. "Because in a real event, whether it's an earthquake in St. Louis or a hurricane in Bay St. Louis, we would have to come together very fast. As one of the old sayings in emergency management is, you don't want to be handing out business cards at the actual event."

Once unloaded from Mississippi Air National Guard (MSANG) aircraft that included the C-17, CH-47 and UH-60, the personnel raced to quickly and accurately evaluate the victims. The patients were then transported to 17 area hospitals during the event that took place from February 24-25, 2010. More than 400 personnel from the Mississippi National Guard, the VA's Region 5, Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMC) and the American Medical Response (AMR) combined their efforts to help process

the incoming patients and initiate care based on their needs.

"We determined the patients level of illness using a military triage system and then we brought them into the MASF holding facility that was located in the hangar," said Major Christopher Powe, a 172nd Air Wing Trauma Nurse Practitioner. "We provided holding care until they could be definitively treated at some of the local hospitals."

The addition of modular field hospitals to the state's emergency preparedness arsenal is a key factor now enabling Mississippi to serve as an assisting state with the capability of handling patient outflow from a large-scale incident. These became functional during Operation Magnolia Relief when MSANG ran a Mobile Aeromedical Staging Facility (MASF) and the MSDH and UMC personnel combined to manage the MED-1 Field Hospital.

"During Hurricane Katrina, we had a unit from North Carolina called Med-1 down in Bay St. Louis," said Jim Craig, Director of Health Protection for the MS State Department of Health. "They saw 11,500 patients when we didn't have 14 hospitals working on the coast. They were the hospital for the coast. We thought was a great idea. We came back and basically bought that

same level through federal grants. None of this cost the state of Mississippi a dime."

Coordinating their actions so that civilian agencies and the military can march in step was an essential and accomplished goal of the exercise. Operation Magnolia Relief



successfully tested the integration capabilities between the National Guard's civil support, medical, aviation, security and communications teams, along with civilian first responders.

"We've had great support relying on the National Guard for not only the transportation of patients, but for all of the other logistical arrangements that were made," said Kirkpatrick. "We saw in Katrina and other catastrophic events the role that the military will play and how invaluable it is for us as civilians to interface and work with them."

The recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile serve as constant reminders that a natural disaster may strike without warning. Thanks to the successful emergency preparedness capabilities enhanced during Operation Magnolia Relief, the Mississippi National Guard and the state's relief agencies are prepared to respond together at a moment's notice.



210th FMCO WINS ARCENT AWARD

■ By: Maj. Joe H. Baugh, Jr.

“Hard work, determination, and tenacity”, said Capt. Arthur McLaurin, Deputy Disbursing Officer for the 210th Financial Management Company (FMCO). “I am so proud of the effort our team performed to achieve this honor”, said McLaurin, “they certainly spent countless hours working to improve the disbursing process.”

The 210th FMCO, based out of Jackson, Mississippi deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait in August of 2009 to take over command and control of the Financial Management (FM) Operations mission in Kuwait and Qatar. The footprint for the area of responsibility (AOR) encompassed in the mission, included two continents, four foreign countries, and seven geographically separated U. S. Army camps.

“When we first arrived in Kuwait, we had Soldiers assigned to provide FM support in Djibouti, Africa and Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan as well as Soldiers supporting the Kuwait and Qatar AOR”, said Maj. Anthony Morgan, commander of the 210th FMCO.

The 210th FMCO’s support mission provided Soldiers within the area of operations daily financial sustainment support, allowing Soldiers to cash checks, convert foreign currency, receive pay support and utilize the U. S. Treasury’s Eagle Cash Card Program.

Shortly after entering Theater, the 210th FMCO disbursing section, embarked on a process improvement project to improve the daily business process and to increase controls over the safeguarding of public funds. The project, spearheaded by Maj. Anthony Morgan, disbursing officer and Capt. Arthur

McLaurin, deputy disbursing officer, reduced the daily closing process from 72 hours to 24 hours and drastically improved internal controls over remotely located disbursing agents within the 210th FMCO’s subordinate FM Detachments.

The company’s efforts did not go unnoticed as the process improvement project was nominated for the U. S. Army Central (ARCENT) G-8 Financial Management Awards Program. The awards program encompasses all FM units in the Central Command (CENTCOM) Theater, so the competition included all FMCO’s located throughout Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan. Upon learning the unit won the award, the Soldiers morale reach new heights, as the Soldiers were proud to have competed against the best and won.

The unit received the award at an awards ceremony hosted by Maj. Gen. Phillip E. McGhee, the ARCENT G-8, Director of Resource Management. Soldiers were all smiles and filled with pride as they hoisted the heavy award made from glass and inscribed with “210th Financial Management Company Disbursing Section, For Outstanding Contributions to the Process Improvement of Theater Financial Management Operations”.

“I cannot say enough about the outstanding Soldiers in our company,” said Maj. Morgan, “It was a total team effort from the entire company to achieve this award.”

The unit has a little over three months remaining in the deployment and is excited to be able to bring this award back to Mississippi and place it in the unit’s award cabinet along with other awards from a proud legacy of unit accomplishments.

Soldiers with the 155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) convoyed to Kuwait to train incoming Soldiers with the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment before they travel to Iraq.

The 278th ACR, out of Knoxville, Tenn., trained on Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles, which they will use for their convoy security duties in Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Jon M. Morgan, an instructor with Task Force 1, 155th Infantry Regiment out of McComb, Miss., 155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), said his unit gave the incoming Soldiers a thorough rundown of their equipment.

“We’ve been showing them how to do (preventive maintenance checks and services) on a vehicle,” said Morgan, a Biloxi, Miss., native. “We’ve been showing them the weight distribution of the vehicle, how it handles, how it hits pot holes.”

He said the instructors also showed the Soldiers how to prepare their vehicles for convoy missions.

First Lt. John A. Wasik, an executive officer with Headquarter and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment out of Cookeville, Tenn., said when a unit goes into theater, the incoming and outgoing units usually do a relief in place/transfer of authority, which takes anywhere from two weeks to a month. Wasik, a Cookeville, Tenn., native, said the training the 155th provided allowed his unit to speed up that process.

“We don’t have to worry about going outside the wire in country and learning on the fly,” he said. “By doing this, it will help us establish any (standard operating procedures) here in (Kuwait) before we go up north. It’s going to help our guys tremendously.”

Sgt. Joshua W. Lively, a gunner with HHT, 2nd Sqdn., 278th ACR, said the hands-on training was excellent.

“We’ve had a lot of one-on-one training with the 155th guys,” said Lively, a Knoxville, Tenn., native.

He said the instructors answered all of the questions the Soldiers asked and, in turn, asked their trainees about their concerns and needs.

Spc. Adam D. Brown, a gunner with F Troop, 2nd Sqdn, 278th ACR out of McMinnville, Tenn., said he appreciated his trainers’ experience.

you need to know; know your weapon inside out; be able to take your stuff apart in the dark; no matter what, be prepared for anything,” he said. “That’s definitely something I’ve learned here that I want to pass on to others.”

Pfc. Brent M. Duncan, a driver with F Troop, 2nd Sqdn., 278th ACR, said he learned to use an LED (light-

A Big Thank You, 155th BCT



“It’s really good to know, especially being your first time over ... to have that reassurance that you’re going to learn something from someone that already knows what’s going on,” said Brown, a Murfreesboro, Tenn., native. “Not only does it boost our knowledge, it also boosts your confidence in the mission that you’re going to do.”

In Kuwait, there is time to train on the MRAP and its equipment but in Iraq, there is less time to focus directly on training as Soldiers perform their mission, said Brown. The convoy security mission comes first and on-the-job training comes second, but this training removes such issues.

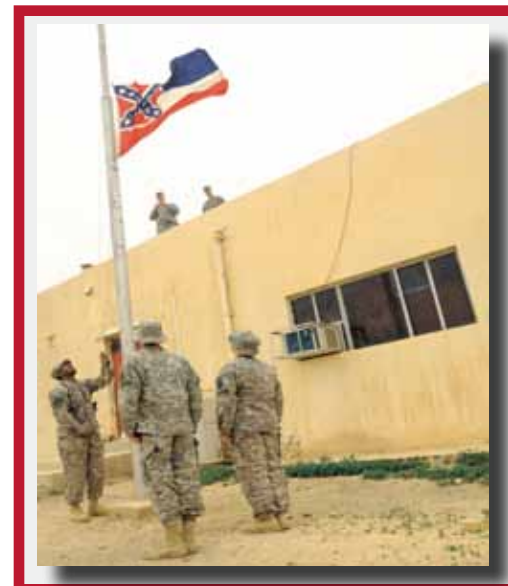
“You get to go into battle confident, ready and prepared,” he said.

Because he is a gunner, Brown said his training in Kuwait provided him with the skills necessary to succeed.

“Pass it on to other gunners what

emitting diode) light and PMCS his vehicle, information he would pass on.

Duncan, a McMinnville, Tenn., native, said the pre-deployment training helped Soldiers acclimate and prepare, something books or slide



A monument was dedicated to members of the 890th Engineer Battalion at the Army National Guard Readiness Center in Gulfport on Sunday.

Soldiers along with many others came out for the ceremony.

Speaker said, "This monument is dedicated to their courage and the bravery during Operation Iraqi Freedom."

First Sgt. Michael Weaver said, "It's a great honor to have my name placed along with them."

Sgt. E-5 Kajanuary Hodge said, "It makes me very proud everyday that I walk into the building I get to see my name and the people that I served with."

Sgt. Kajanuary Hodge said the granite monument stands tall, representing Soldiers of the 890th Engineer Battalion who served in Iraq.

"I served over-seas from '08 through '09 and we were located in Baghdad," said Sgt. Kajanuary Hodge.

Weaver said, "It's an honor to serve over their simply because you're doing something good not only for this country but you're helping people over there."

Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Joe Hargett said this permanent fixture represents the three most important things that the unit needs to be successful during combat.

"First, it represents the service of the Soldiers, secondly, it represents the loyalty and sacrifices of many family members at home and



Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., adjutant general of Mississippi, and 890th Engineer Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Joe Hargett, shake hands with the 890th's family support members and tanks them for their dedicated efforts in having a monument made for the unit.

thirdly, it represents the commitment of the community," said Hargett.

Some of the Soldiers with the 890th deployed in 2003 and once again in 2008.

Maj. Gen. William Freeman said, "They left Iraq a better place and we're just so proud of them and what the 890th means not only to this community but to the entire Gulf Coast."

Names from the Headquarters Support Company, Forward Support Company and the 231st Survey and Design are all listed on the monument. Headquarters, 890th Engineer Battalion, Unveiling ceremonies for the Sergeant Daniel Ryan Varnado National Guard Readiness Center Monument was held in March.

Varnado was one of the Soldiers in the unit who lost his life during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005. The 890th recently returned from a second tour of duty in Iraq. Preparations for the ceremony were completed by the 890th Family Readiness Group. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Joel Wagner, JFH)



The Mississippi flag is lowered at COB Speicher, Iraq, as members of the 155th Brigade Combat Team prepare to return home. Once lowered, a Tennessee unit, flew their flag, and also relieved the 155th BCT. Photo by Pfc. Adrian Muehe, 3-2 SBCT PAO/135th MPAD

shows would not have provided. He said he especially appreciated the driver's training, because MRAPs are much larger than Humvees.

"It's better that we're getting to touch the vehicles now instead of getting in country and then touching them, because going from something like a Humvee to this is a big jump," he said.

Wasik said the MRAP training was valuable to him as well.

"I think the training has been invaluable down here," he said. "You get familiarized with the vehicle, the piece of equipment, or the weapon system before you go into a combat scenario, and that's what this has allowed us to do."

The Soldiers absorbed the training well, said Wasik.

"I appreciate the 155th coming down here with a plan to get us up to speed on the (tactics, techniques and procedures) that are happening up north, and also giving us time to drive their vehicle," he said. "Some units aren't crazy about doing that, and we really appreciate it."

Noteworthy



PRO PATRIA AWARD--Gulf States Manufactures of Tupelo is winner of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves' (ESGR) 2009 Pro Patria Award. The award is presented to one company in the state each year who actions epitomize outstanding support for guardsmen, reservists, and their families. The award represents the pinnacle of employer excellence and commitment to the ideals of our great nation, life, liberty and justice for all. The company, having won Mississippi's highest ESGR award is eligible for consideration for the National Freedom Award. Accepting the award on behalf of Gulf States is Mr. Danny Coggins (3rd left), along with other employers within Gulf States Manufacturing. Presenting awards for the ESGR were (from left) Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi (2nd left), Mr. Durwood Boyles, Mississippi ESGR chairman (center left), and Congressman Gene Taylor (right).

Story and Photos by Sandy Ates, JFH



SEVEN SEALS AWARD - University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson



SEVEN SEALS AWARD - Corinthian Funeral Home, Corinth, Miss.



SEVEN SEALS AWARD - WTOK television, Meridian, Miss. Employer Tim Walker holds award.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Mississippi State University Department of Sociology, Tupelo. Dr. Greg Dunaway accepts the award.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Pearl River Resort Casino, Philadelphia. Mr. Clyde Sockey accepts the award.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Malouf Construction, LCC, of Ridgeland. Mr. John Fox accepts the award on behalf of the company.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Mississippi River Gas, LLC, Jackson. Accepting the award is Cindy Bush.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Wendy's of Hazlehurst. Melvin Jones (center) accepts the award.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARDS - Georgia Pacific Corporation of Taylorsville. Awards are received by Felicia Magee, Tarhaire Smith and Don Thornton.

Service members honor civilian employers

The Mississippi Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve hosted the 2010 Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Awards Banquet, to recognize several Mississippi employers who had given National and Reserve employees a myriad of support during 2009. Employers were nominated by their military member(s) and presented awards based on the type of support the employer provided.

Presenting the awards to employers were Mr. Durwood Boyles, chairman, Mississippi Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi and Congressman Gene Taylor.

The Pro Patria Award, the highest award presented, was received by Gulf States Manufacturing of Tupelo.

The Seven Seals Awards were presented to the University of Mississippi Medical Center of Jackson, Webster County Sheriff's Office, Eupora, Advance Auto Parts DC, of Hazelhurst, and WTOK, Meridian. This award is presented for providing support and upholding policies governing National Guard and Reserve duties.

The Above and Beyond Award(s) are given to those businesses that have gone beyond the standard policies. Recipients included: Corinthian Funeral Home, Corinth; Oxford Middle School, Oxford; Viking Range Corporation, Greenwood; Batesville Police Department, Batesville; Mississippi State University, Starkville; Pearl River Resort Casino, Philadelphia; Malouf Construction LLC, Ridgeland; Nucor Steel of Jackson, Inc., Flowood; Mississippi River Gas, LLC, Jackson; Wendy's, Hazlehurst; Georgia Pacific Cor-

poration, Taylorsville; City of Quitman, ; Jones County Sheriff's Department, Laurel; Jackson County Tax Assessor, Pascagoula and the United States Marine, Inc., Gulfport.

The final awards were the Freedom Award nominees 2008-09. They were Camp Shelby Environmental Office, Camp Shelby; East Mississippi State Hospital, Meridian; Gulfport Fire Department, Gulfport; Long Beach Police Department, Long Beach, Miss.; Mississippi Department of Transportation, Newton and Northwest MS Regional Medical Center, Clarksdale.

Freeman said our National Guard and Reserve members should take the time to recognize their employers, as they too, make many sacrifices for our country by the support they give service members.



SEVEN SEALS AWARD - Webster County Sheriff's Office, Eupora, Miss. Shown center are Sheriff Philip Smith and employee, Derrick May.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - City of Quitman. Accepting the award is ESGR member Mrs. Jackie Sharp.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Jackson County Tax Assessor, Pascagoula. Accepting the award is Mr. Luther Goff.



SEVEN SEALS AWARD - University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Viking Range Corporation Greenwood. Mr. Kenny Vance accepts the award.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Batesville Police Department, Batesville. Mrs. Laura Sossaman, represents her deployed husband, and holds the award.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Jones County Sheriff's Department, Laurel. Accepting the award is Sheriff Alex Hodge.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - Nucor Steel Jackson, Inc., Jackson. Accepting the award was employee Shane Trammel and Mr. Jim Sheble.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD - United States Marine, Inc., of Gulfport. Accepting the award is Lynette Florence along with employee Barry Dreyfus.



PURPLE HEART—Staff Sgt. (Retired) Benjie Wells (2nd left) of Poplarville, Miss. is proud to show his Purple Heart Award to many attending a ceremony in his honor March 19, at the Regimental Training Institute (RTI) at Camp Shelby, Miss. Joining him for the moment are from left Lt. Col. Mathyn Williams, Wells' former commander with the RTI-Medical Battalion, Wells' wife, Lynn, daughters Baleigh and Sarah, and RTI commander, Col. Charles Phillips. Wells received his wounds during deployment with the Mississippi National Guard in 2005 in Iraq. (Photo by Sandy Ates, JFH-Public Affairs)



Brig. Gen. Earnest L. Herrington, Jr., right, gives the new commander of the 168th Engineer Brigade, Col. Johnny M. Sellers, a confident pat on the arm during change of command ceremonies, Feb. 20, in Vicksburg. (Photo by Sandy Ates, JFH MSNG)

History and Traditions

Who Am I ?



I was a Professional Soldier and the Veteran of 5 Wars.

I was born in Georgia.

My Father served in the Revolutionary War.

I was promoted from the ranks

I was known by Poker Players of two armies.

The final years of my life was marked with controversy.

I owned a home there and made an impact along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

(Find out who I am and what I did in the next edition of the Guard Detail!)





**JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS
MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD
P. O. BOX 5027, JACKSON, MS 39296-5027**



Living Legends Visit Camp Shelby!

Four of the famed "Tuskegee Airmen" will be making a visit to the Hattiesburg Area in May. The visiting Airmen include Lt. Col.(Ret) Leo R. Gray, Lt. Col.(Ret) Alexander Jefferson, Col.(Ret) Charles McGee and Lt. Col.(Ret) Herbert E. Carter, a native of Amory, Mississippi.

LT. COL. HERBERT E. CARTER



LT. COL. LEO R. GRAY



COL. CHARLES E. MCGEE



LT. COL. ALEXANDER JEFFERSON



MAY 25th

0900-1200
Mississippi Armed Forces Museum
1001 Lee Ave, Bldg 850
Camp Shelby, MS 39407
601.558.2757
www.amedforcesmuseum.us

1800-2000
African-American Military History Museum
305 East 6th Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
601.450.1942
www.hattiesburguso.com

MAY 26th

1300-1400
Main Street Books
210 North Main Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
601.584.6960
www.visitmainstreetbooks.com

