

MAY - SEPTEMBER 2008

GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



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MAY - SEPTEMBER 2008 • VOLUME VX, NUMBER 2, A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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The Guard Detail magazine is an authorized unofficial publication produced three times a year by the Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi National Guard, Public Affairs Office, under the provision of AR 360-81. The opinions expressed in the Guard Detail are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi National Guard or the National Guard Bureau unless so indicated.

The Adjutant General of Mississippi
Maj. Gen. William L "Bill" Freeman Jr.

State Public Affairs Officer
COL (Ret) Tim Powell

PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

Capt. Christian Patterson *
1st Lt. Andy Thaggard
Staff Sgt. Billy Valentine*
Sgt. Charles Brice*
MSGT. (Ret) Sandy Ates

* These are members of the 102nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment who are now deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

If you have questions or submissions
Write or call:

JFH-MS-CM-PA
Mississippi National Guard
P. O. Box 5027
Jackson, MS 39296-5027
COMM: (601) 313-6148/6271
DSN: 293-6148/6271
FAX: (601) 313-6176

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Photo on this page: 1st Lt. William Austin gives the command to stand at parade rest after he brings the 113th Military Police Company to a halt in front of their armory in Brandon, Miss., on June 3, for a welcoming home following a year long deployment to Iraq. (Photo by Sandy Ates, JFH-MSNG)

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FRONT COVER — Specialist Robert Wilson, of Pontotoc Miss., leaves a flyer on a FEMA travel trailer in Gulfport during notification operations in preparation for the landfall of Hurricane Gustav. Wilson is a member of the Pontotoc-based A Troop, 1st Battalion, 98th Cavalry Regiment, Mississippi Army National Guard. More than 2,500 members of the Mississippi National Guard were on state active duty, assisting civil authorities in preparing the Mississippi Gulf Coast. (Photo by 1st Lt. Andy Thaggard, MSARNG)

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Drop in Premiums for SGLI & VGLI

Military Personnel and many veterans will soon see a drop in the monthly premiums for Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced in May.

On July 1, the cost for basic SGLI will be 5.6 cents per month for \$1,000 of coverage, down from 7 cents per month for \$1,000. Those with the maximum \$400,000 of coverage will see their monthly premium cut from \$28 to \$26.

The reduction is due to lower non-combat-related claims and increases in investment earnings, VA said.

VGLI provides renewable term policies for people after their military discharges. Veterans pay premiums according to their age.

On July 1, VGLI premium rates will be reduced for veterans aged 30 to 64, who make up 85 percent of those insured.

Premium reductions, ranging from 4 to 12 percent are the result of fewer claims being received.

More than 2.4 million people currently participate in the VA-managed SGLI; another 433,000 in VGLI.

New Webb GI Bill

Some National Guardsmen who have been in the war zone have reason to cheer the so-called Webb GI Bill passed by a wide margin in the Senate in June. The house passed it in early July.

Conceived by Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., the bill pays tuition and fees of recent combat veterans at any college up to the amounts at his or her state's most expensive public school.

The full benefit is available to Guardsmen who have deployed for 36 months total since Sept. 11, 2001. However, it also provides partial benefit to Guardsmen with as little as three months of deployed time.

One provision that really sets this bill apart from the Traditional Montgomery GI Bill is the ability to transfer the unused benefits to spouses or children.

The effective date for the bill is Aug. 1, 2009, to give officials time to implement the changes, but it will be funded retroactively so recipients can begin using the benefit at colleges this fall. The bill also pays a monthly stipend for living expenses that will be tied to local housing costs.

Veterans will have up to 15 years after they leave the service to use the benefits. The Montgomery GI Bill allowed only 10 years.

Guardsmen who have **36 months** of deployed service since Sept. 11, 2001, are eligible for full benefits under the Webb GI Bill.

Gates taps McKinley as next NGB chief

WASHINGTON – Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates recommended Air Force Lt. Gen. Craig R. McKinley as the next chief of the National Guard Bureau and promotion to full general, and Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum as the next deputy commander for the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) during a Pentagon media briefing.

If nominated by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, McKinley would become the National Guard's first four-star general. Blum, the Guard's current chief, would become the first National Guard deputy commander of NORTHCOM, based in Colorado Springs, Colo.

McKinley is currently director of the 106,000-member Air National Guard, a post he assumed in May 2006. Blum has been chief of the Guard Bureau since April 2003. Blum served as NORTHCOM's chief of staff for eight months before that.

"General McKinley is well qualified for this important and historic new assignment," Gates told Pentagon reporters. "He has held command positions at every level of the Air Force during his 34 years of military service."

Gates said the nomination for a fourth star for the National Guard Bureau chief is in keeping with the recommendations of the Commission on the Guard and Reserves and the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

McKinley would serve as the principal advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on National Guard issues. The NDAA, also establishes the Guard Bureau as a joint activity of the Department of Defense.

The law further stipulates that the deputy commander of NORTHCOM be a National Guard general unless the command's top officer is already a National Guard general.

"This is truly a historic and magnificent selection," stated Blum. "Craig will provide the leadership that will take the National Guard to the next level.

He is a competent, caring and proven leader. Craig has and will continue to have my complete confidence and full collaboration."

"The elevation of the National Guard chief to four stars recognizes the enhanced importance of the Guard to America's overall national defense," said Gates. "The elevation also recognizes the vital role the chief will have as a bridge between the state and federal components of our government and the active and reserve components of our military."

The Guard Bureau chief is the senior uniformed Nation-



Lieutenant General Craig R. McKinley will become the next chief of the National Guard Bureau with promotion to full general. McKinley would become the National Guard's first four-star general if nominated by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. NGB online photo 2008.

al Guard officer responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, programs and plans affecting more than half a million Army and Air National Guard personnel, including civilian employees.

The last Air Force general to serve as Guard Bureau chief was Lt. Gen. Russell C. Davis, who held that position from 1998-2002.

Blum's nomination as NORTHCOM's deputy commander is in keeping with the recommendations of the Commission on the Guard and Reserves and the congressional requirement that the commander or deputy commander of NORTHCOM be a Guard officer.

"It reflects the critical role the Guard plays in our homeland defense, the unique experience and expertise a Guard officer of General Blum's caliber will bring to this position," said Gates.

Gates also called Blum's nomination as NORTHCOM deputy commander a "historic first," and he praised Blum's service as the Guard Bureau's chief.

"For more than five years, General Blum has been a dynamic and effective leader of America's National Guard.

TRICARE

Sought for Gray Area Retirees

Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., and Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., are cosponsoring an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that incorporates provisions of a House bill introduced in June by Rep. Robert Latta, R-Ohio, to benefit Gray Area retirees.

The lawmakers propose making TRICARE Standard insurance (TRS) available to all Gray Area retirees, who have served in the Guard or Reserve for 20 or more years, but have yet to reach the age of 60. These retirees and their families could purchase TRS no later than Oct. 1, 2009, at a premium rate equal to the full

cost of coverage to the Defense Department.

If billed accurately, the cost to an individual would be about \$168.45 per month, or \$2,021.42 annually; for a family, the cost would be \$364.40 per month, or \$4,372.92 per year. A Government Accountability Office report found the Defense Department had been overcharging.

Military Vets can salute

Military veterans are now lawfully permitted to render a salute during the hoisting, lowering or passing of the U.S. flag.

The formal enabling language was included in the fiscal 2008 National Defense Authorization Act signed earlier this year by the president.

It amended the U.S. Code to read, "Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute," when in the presence of the U.S. flag.

All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart.

210th FMCO Participates in Historic Finance Operation

■ By MAJ. James G. Gill, Jr., 326th MPAD

The 210th Finance Management Company (FMCO) of Jackson, Miss., joined a contingency of approximately 700 members of the US Army Finance Corps at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin for Operation Diamond Saber. Diamond Saber is the Finance Corps's premier training event and this year marked the fifth anniversary of this gathering of finance units. The exercise was conducted June 1-14 and this year's operation was identified as a historical event. The exercise was coined as "the Army's largest Finance exercise ever." Sgt Maj. Michael Dunn, United States Army Reserve G8 Sergeant Major, communicated, "Diamond Saber is the largest Finance exercise and this year is the largest Diamond Saber exercise ever."

Diamond Saber is a multi-component (Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard) finance training exercise sponsored by the United States Army Reserves. The units are tasked to integrate with different components on the battlefield and this training event offered the organizations an opportunity to prepare for battle. Maj Anthony Morgan, commander of the 210th stated, "This was a successful exercise, most importantly, Diamond Saber brought all three Army components together as one team – one team one fight." The units successfully worked together during the two-week exercise to accomplish valuable training.

The 398th Finance Management Center (FMC), Fort Belvoir, Virginia hosted the exercise. The 398th

FMC coordinated activities for 64 units as they participated in the two-part exercise. Diamond Saber began with a week of instruction. The Soldiers gained valuable training on the current finance systems during the initial week and applied the knowledge in week two by reacting to common situations stimulated by "lessons learned" from the current War on Terrorism. The organizers gained insight from war Veterans' experiences and designed realistic situations for the training environment.

Lt. Col. John Shaw and Command Sgt. Maj. Frederick Larry led the 398th FMC's efforts and applauded the Finance Command, Finance Management School and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service for supporting Diamond Saber. Shaw, Exercise Director, 398th FMC, expressed the importance of "training as we fight" and stated this exercise provided an opportunity for fiancé units from all three Army components to work together as they would during battle.

The plans for Diamond Saber 2009 have started. The 336th FMC, Lake Charles, Louisiana will host next year's event. Capt. Donna Beaulieu communicated the 336th is excited about using their recent experience as the first FMC to deploy in support of the War of Terrorism. "We will follow suit of the 398th who had great success this year and we will integrate our lessons learned down range to improve the exercise" said Beaulieu. Diamond Saber 2009 is scheduled for 31 May -13 Jun at Fort McCoy, WI.



The Mississippi Army National Guard's 210th Finance Management Company was among other Army finance elements taking part in a multi-component training exercise, Diamond Saber, at Fort Belvoir, Va., recently. Here, members of Diamond Saber 2008 form up to mark the historic Army Finance Operation. Photo by 1Lt Christopher Durphy.



Kid's AT campers take part in a flag ceremony, showing their newly learned military skills and flag etiquette. (Photo by Sandy Ates, JFH-MS-Public Affairs)



Kid's AT campers are given a demonstration on flag folding by Soldiers at Camp Shelby. (Camp Photo)

ALL WE COULD BE AT KID'S AT

■ By Sandy Ates, Staff Writer

Is a Jet better than a Rifle? Or a Helicopter better than a Tank? One would be very surprised by the answer they would get if they asked one of the colorful campers from the annual Kid's AT at Camp Shelby.

The Mississippi National Guard's summer youth camp held June 22-28 was a big success, according to Chief Warrant Officer Three Melissa Tanksley, State Family Program Director.

This year about 110 kids between the ages of 9-12 converged on Camp Shelby to see what their Guard parent/member experiences when they go to annual training at the Camp Shelby Mobilization Training Center near Hattiesburg.

But most of all, they just came to meet new friends and have fun!

This year's camp director, Mrs. Deborah Freeman, made sure everyone had plenty of activities to keep them busy, and the kids made sure they kept all the activities fun.

It takes a great deal of planning and preparation to put on an activity of this size, says Freeman.

"We wouldn't be able to do this if it weren't for the exceptional support we get from Army and Air National Guard personnel from around the state," Freeman said during the graduation and closing ceremonies on June 28th. "We have many who volunteer as junior and senior counselors and they are with the kids 24/7 to ensure they have a fun, safe, learning experience. Our

campers, many who have made it four years in a row, come back to be junior counselors. It takes many volunteers and a great deal of resources to host this event each year and we thank so many people and organizations who have given for this year's camp."

Kids have the opportunity to see what their guard parent experiences during annual training. They also learn about marching, drill and ceremonies, flag etiquette, individual/group discipline and team support, as well as many other summer camp fun adventures.

When campers were asked if they enjoyed the program, many said, "Yes! I'm coming back next year, too!"

Master Sgt. Scotty Cole, (left) presents a check for \$1500 on behalf of the Mississippi National Guard NCO Association, to Ms. Deborah Freeman to help with expenses for the 2008 Kid's AT. The program depends on the support of volunteers and donations from various individuals and organizations to provide such a youth program for children of Mississippi National Guard members. (NCOA Photo)





Mississippi Soldier earns National Fatherhood Award

■ By Sandy Ates, Staff Writer

There are many 'dads' out there that do a terrific job of earning their title—and that isn't an easy job to begin with—but some just seem to stand out above the rest.

One such person is Mississippi Army National Guard Soldier Sergeant First Class Brian Booker of Seminary, Miss., who was recipient of the 2008 National Fatherhood Initiative-Lockheed-Martin Military Fatherhood Award.

He was selected for the award from more than 300 nominees from across the nation.

Booker's wife, Amy, admits even she was surprised when her husband won the award.

"I had submitted the letter and then sent a copy to Brian," Amy said to local reporters. "I wanted him to know how proud we are of him and how thankful we are to have him in our lives. I never thought it would actually get picked out of entries from all over the nation. I am glad everyone else got to help me thank him for all that he has done and continues to do for us."

The award honors fathers for their continued commitment to their families during service with the U.S. military. Booker is a Readiness NCO with Company B, 155th BSTB unit in Meridian. He served a year-long tour of duty in Iraq in 2004-05, and has been alerted for duty to Iraq in 2009.

Fatherhood for Booker came a little differently than for most. His wife explained it best in her letter of nomination:

"Most fathers would be nominated for being a great coach in the delivery room or changing the most diapers. My husband was not there for that. My children lost their birth father to suicide in May 2004, just months before Brian deployed. It was the most devastating thing we have ever experienced. Brian was what got us through. He did not let the children miss a beat. He picked them up from the pain, wrapped his arms around them, and promised to love them and never let them go or feel that pain ever again. He showed them that life could be good again.

"He took on children that he never rocked as babies, he fed a bottle to, watch take their first step. Yet, he is right beside them fighting for their

every need, guiding them through the stages they are in, and helping to mold them into admirable and inspiring people. He loves them as though he were there from their first day. He is not a father that merely tells his children things. Brian shows them, he teaches them so that they can teach others in return. He has turned our life around, given our children reasons to smile again.

"They have such pride for him and the country that we serve as a family. Brian is a father like no other, he is our Soldier, and hero. I hope you too can see what I see in him as a father. We are so lucky to have him and know that he deserves an award like this for what he has done for our children."

Booker, a 1997 graduate of Seminary High School, said he doesn't look at being a father as a job, but because it is just the right thing to do. He credits his own father, Stephen Booker, with setting a good example for him to follow.

"He taught me that a child doesn't just need a friend, they also need a true parent who will give them limits, teach them life skills and guide them through the rough times," he said.

Stephen Booker also served with the Mississippi Army National Guard and was deployed overseas.

Booker said he enjoys spending time with his kids, Tyler and Whitney, when he's home, playing ball with them, riding 4-wheelers and go-carts, and watching them succeed in school.

It's not just Amy's children that Booker tries to help, though. When deployed in Iraq, he arranged for parents to be able to record messages to their children that were implanted into stuffed animals.

"I have never seen such genuine love and emotion come from young children as I did the day they pushed that button and heard their fathers and loved ones talk to them from so many miles away," Amy Booker wrote in her nomination letter.

And when he returned from Iraq, Booker got involved with Tyler's schooling. Amy Booker had been dealing with his learning disabilities by herself, but Brian met with teachers, principals, superintendents and state officials to get the help that was needed for their son, but also for other children in the school who were struggling. He continues to volunteer at extracurricular activities.

Brian is getting in as much time as possible with his wife and children these days, not just to prove his proven fatherhood abilities, but because he might be in Iran or Afghanistan next year--his unit has been put on alert to be deployed in mid-2009.

"It's tough to think about another deployment, but its part of the job and its only makes you stronger as a family," Amy Booker said.

But it is still a long way off, and today is a time to enjoy his wife and kids.

"I am very proud of my children and am honored to accept the award of military fatherhood that has been presented to me," Booker said. "I hope to keep being an example for them throughout the future."



Brian Booker, center, with his wife, Amy Booker, and daughter Whitney Steel gather at Pete Taylor Park as son Tyler Steel finishes with baseball camp for the day. Booker, 28, was recently named the 2008 recipient of the National Fatherhood Initiative-Lockheed-Martin Military Fatherhood Award. He was selected from more than 300 nominees from across the nation. The award was presented at a gala held April 29 at the Grand Hyatt hotel in Washington. (RYAN MOORE | Hattiesburg American)



AWARD PRESENTATION--Sgt. 1st Class Brian Booker (3rd left) poses with a group of well wishers following the presentation of the 2008 National Fatherhood Initiative-Lockheed-Martin Military Fatherhood Award presented to him in Washington, D.C. With him are from left, Mr. John Segal, board chairman, National Fatherhood Initiative; Mr. Roland C. Warren, president, National Fatherhood Initiative; Booker; Major General Michael Sumrall, the Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff for National Guard matters; Mr. Jim Knotts, director of Corporate Citizenship of Lockheed Martin; and Mr. Leon Harris, anchor, ABC7/WJLA-TV.

Mississippi Air National Guard assists in real-time video of flood damaged areas

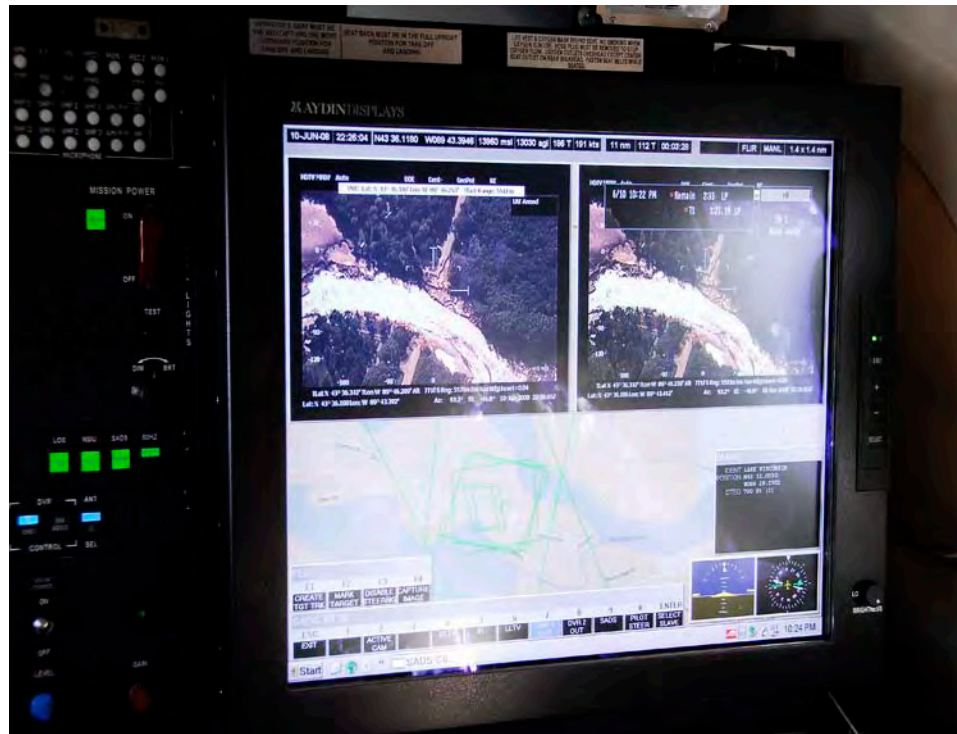
■ Story Wisconsin Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Don Nelson, Photos by Wisconsin Air National Guard Master Sgt. Dan Richardson 115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Flying at 8,000 feet above flood ravaged Wisconsin, members of the Wisconsin National Guard with assistance from Guard units in Arkansas and Mississippi provided emergency management officials with 'eyes in the sky' to help with disaster relief efforts.

Recent heavy rains have left Wisconsin rivers and lakes swollen and in many cases the surrounding areas flooded. With disaster relief efforts ongoing, the 115th Fighter Wing in Madison worked with the 186th Air Refueling Wing from the Mississippi Air National Guard in Meridian, Miss., to bring an RC-26 capable of flying over a flooded area and send back live video and still pictures. Along with technological assistance from the Arkansas Air National Guard's 314th Airlift Wing in Little Rock, Ark., the mission flew over more than 25 different locations across the state to help provide on the spot assessments of the flood situation.

The specific mission was born out of a similar mission Wisconsin Air Guard members undertook during Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. Wisconsin Task Force Katrina also used an RC-26 to take photos of the bridges, highways and associated infrastructure in and around New Orleans. The Katrina mission required the RC-26 crew to land the plane in order to process the photos where as the current mission in Wisconsin takes advantage of what's called a "Katrina Mod" which allows for instantaneous transmission of images and video. The testing phase of the modification was used in 2007 in support of the California and Florida wildfires. The Wisconsin floods mission is the first full scale disaster assistance use of the technology.

Dubbed "incident awareness assessment," by the crews who fly the missions, it is specifically designed to help coordinate on-the-ground relief efforts by providing real-time assessments of the flooded areas including highways, bridges and dams. The video and images are sent from the plane to an antenna array that is temporarily set up on top of a building



A video counsel monitor aboard a Mississippi Air National Guard RC-26 aircraft displays a video signal from onboard cameras during an initial flood awareness assessment mission in the skies over Wisconsin Tuesday [June 10]. This RC-26 aircraft is specifically designed for viewing and transmitting high quality video and still imagery to military and civilian Operations Center in real-time. The imagery captured during this mission was used to assess the integrity of several area dams in addition to providing flood damage assessment in the hardest hit regions of the southern half of the state. The capabilities of this aircraft give military commanders and civilian first responders a bird's eye view of significant events as they happen.

where officials coordinating the efforts can view the transmissions. The Wisconsin Joint Operations Center and the Wisconsin Emergency Operations Center, located within the Wisconsin National Guard Headquarters, take these instant images and video and combine them with the other information they are managing to coordinate the relief and recovery efforts.

"With any emergency response and recovery, it is all about accurate information," said Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, Adjutant General of the Wisconsin National Guard. "With this type of aircraft able to stream live video to the Governor holding a cabinet meeting or a county official meeting with first responders, they can see first hand exactly what's going on and figure out how to deploy their assets in the best way possible."

Wisconsin's National Guard is organized under a joint task force where disaster relief support is a combination of support from the Air and Army Guard components that are best used to suit the needs to the response. In this case, the Air Guard side was used to fly the mission and the collection of the images and video was done by both Army and Air Guard personnel working along side Wisconsin emergency management officials.

The RC-26 mission includes drug interdiction support for local and state law enforcement agencies. Wisconsin is one of 11 states that are home to an RC-26 and supports many of its neighboring states including Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. The counter drug mission combines the assets of both the Army and Air Guard and provides the operational preparation the crews need

to do disaster relief missions said Lt. Col Stephen Dunai, 115th Operations Group and RC-26 program manager.

"The communications and the relationships we have built up over the years doing the counter drug missions in Wisconsin apply directly to emergency response situations," said Dunai. "This greatly enhances our ability to provide support whenever called upon."

While it is not unusual for helicopters to be used by officials for assess damage over a particular area, the RC-26 offers some other advantages when there is widespread damage.

"The RC-26 is a fixed wing aircraft which can get to the scene fairly quickly and can easily be redirected

to other sites that officials would like to see," said Lt. Col. Dave Romuald, 115th Operations Group commander.

The Katrina and wildfire missions allowed the units who fly the RC-26's to tweak the systems to allow for the greatest ability to transmit live video, particularly when working with crews on the ground receiving the feed and transmitting it to officials who need it.

"The use of live video is new to our mission," said Lt. Col. Rick Berryhill, 186th Air Refueling Wing from the Mississippi Air National Guard. "The active duty has been using this capability for a while to support the war on terrorism and we are using some of the same

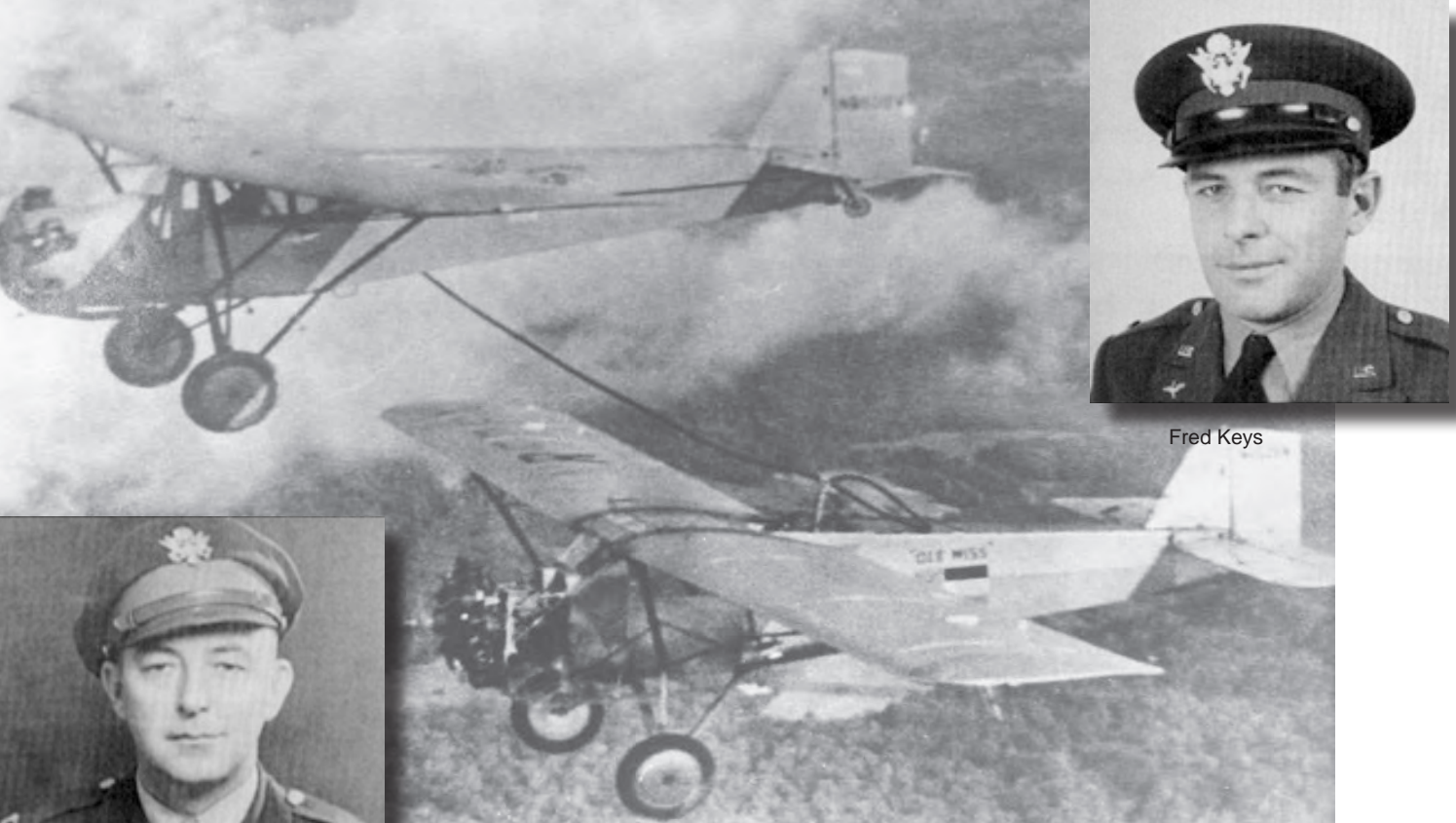
concepts they use overseas."

Unfortunately, the weather stress that Wisconsin has realized has generated a need to provide as much data to the emergency responders as possible, Dunbar said, providing that data to those who can use it to help people is the primary goal of the mission.

"It is not about the particular cause of the event, whether it is mother nature or a terrorist threat, it is about all hazards response and this capability for homeland defense is irreplaceable," said Brig.General Dunbar.



Pilots Lt. Col. Scot Craver (left), 186th Air Refueling Wing, Meridian, Miss., and Lt. Col. Steve Dunai, 115th Fighter Wing, Madison, Wis., consult a map in the cockpit of an RC-26 during an initial flood awareness assessment mission in the skies over Wisconsin in June.



Fred Keys



Al Keys

The historical first air-refueling flight by Al and Fred Keys is the legacy for the 185th Air Refueling Wing at Key Field in Meridian, Miss. Named after the two Meridian brothers, their 653 hour and 34 minute flight became a world record and remains unbroken today in conventional flight. The 186th has been called upon to serve in various missions around the world since.

Change on horizon for ANG unit

■ By Sandy Ates; with excerpts from Brian Livingston, Meridian Star; all photos courtesy of the 186th ARW.

There has been a strong presence of the Mississippi Air National Guard at Key Field since Al and Fred Key's historical first air-refueling flight in 1935. The members of the 186th Air Refueling Wing are proud to say that Key Field Air National Guard Base is named after these two Meridian brothers whose 653 hour and 34 minute world record remains unbroken today in conventional flight.

This was Mississippi's first Air National Guard units and one of the first 13 in the United States. It has had a mission since its federal recognition on September 27, 1939 and it doesn't look like anything is about to change as far as a mission is concerned.

What will change, as it has in the past, is the type of flying mission the men and women of the unit will undertake and the aircraft they fly.

The unit began with 110 members, the Douglas O-38E aircraft, and a tactical reconnaissance mission. Since that time, the unit has flown many different types of aircraft including the P-51 Mustang, the Supermarine Spitfire Mark V, the Republic P-47, the

Lockheed RF-80, the Republic RF-84 Thunderflash, the McDonnell Douglas RF-101 Voodoo, and the McDonnell Douglas RF-4C Phantom II.

With these aircraft, the 186th has been activated on several occasions, including service in England and France during World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Berlin Crisis, Operation Desert Shield, and Operation Desert Storm.

The 186th came full-circle to its historical roots in April of 1992 when they converted to the air refueling mission with the KC-135R model Stratotanker. Today, the 6,000 gallons transferred to the "Ole Miss" back in 1935 over a 27-day period would take only six minutes and 15 seconds to transfer with the Stratotanker. As a better idea of how much fuel that really is, that six minutes worth of transferred fuel would last the average single-car family seven years and three months.

Recently, the Air Force and Mississippi Air National Guard agreed to establish a temporary mission qualification training detachment for the RC-12 aircraft at Key Field.

Governor Haley Barbour, Sen. Thad Cochran, Sen. Roger Wicker and Congressman Chip Pickering announced the mission noting the mission will help bolster the Department of Defense's capability in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

"The Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., and I are very proud that the 186th Refueling Wing was chosen for this very important mission," Barbour said. "This wing has shown success time after time because of the dedication and professionalism of its officers and Airmen."

The RC-12 aircraft is the air Force's newest manned intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platform (ISR), providing near-real-time ISR. Nearly \$100 million has been obligated to bring up to seven RC-12 aircraft to the base beginning in January 2009.

"I am proud to see Air Force and National Guard leadership turn to Meridian to meet their immediate needs for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance on the battlefield," Cochran said. "This training at Key

Field will be the first of its kind and help to improve the intelligence gathering capability supporting our men and women serving in the Global War on Terrorism. The Department of Defense has clearly made this training a priority and I have confidence Mississippi will excel at answering the call.

"The bridge mission will endure the pilots, flight crews and maintenance personnel at Key Field will be able to stay in Meridian and maintain their high level of proficiency and skill while at the same time playing an important role in the War on Terror," Wicker said.

"As I leave office, I am grateful that this mission has been assigned to the 186th. Commitments were made to honor the rich heritage of Key Field and to preserve a flying mission for the 186th — those commitments are kept with this announcement. We can all celebrate and appreciate the hard work of the unit, as well as local and state leaders in making this happen," Congressman Pickering said.

This mission, designated Project Liberty, will train approximately 1,000 students over the next two years at the 186th Air Refueling Wing, located at Key Field.

The 186th will conduct total force mission qualification training for this program, providing manpower and facilities for the training unit. The 186th will continue performing its current air refueling mission through 2011 operating the KC-135R Stratotanker while conducting Project Liberty training.

The Air Force, National Guard Bureau and Mississippi Air National Guard are working closely to ensure a smooth and effective transition.



A KC-135R model Stratotanker from the Mississippi Air National Guard refuels aircraft thousands of feet above the Mojave Desert. (ANG File Photo)

"The Air National Guard is excited to be a part of this important mission and to play a critical role in providing this needed capability to today's flight," said Lt. Gen. Craig R. McKinley, Director of the Air National Guard.



The RC-12 will resemble the above aircraft that the 186th Air Refueling Wing of Meridian will use when training aircrew members for their new mission. (ANG File Photo)

Always on Guard



Iraqi War veteran Bailey makes contribution to country, Bulldogs

"They are trying to get people to see that you still have a life while you're in the Guard."

■ By Kyle Veasey, Clarion Ledger

STARKVILLE—Coming soon to a magazine, newspaper or Web site near you: Mississippi State defensive end Tim Bailey.

Or is it National Guardsman Tim Bailey?

Or both, which is exactly what the National Guard is hoping ads like the one in which Bailey will appear will make people think.

Bailey, a senior from Glen Allan, is among up to a half-dozen Guardsmen who'll be the face of the Guard's new national advertising in the first year of a five-year, \$450 million campaign.

Bailey went to Nashville in July 2008 for a two-day photo shoot.

"It was actually kind of crazy," he said. "This is like the biggest advertising campaign for the whole year. It caught me by total surprise, because I didn't know anything about it."

Jim Boyle, the management supervisor of the Guard account for Arlington, Va.-based LM&O Advertising, said the Bailey ads are still in development and that it's too early to tell exactly what form they'll take.

Boyle said plans are to run the ads in the 2008-09 academic year, and Bailey has been told to expect the finished product in a couple of months.

"The idea behind them is to show, as we've short-handed it here at the agency, the 'Achievers Campaign,'" Boyle said. "It includes Tim and a number of other National Guard members who are accom-

plished with what they're doing in their life and also members of the National Guard."

Said Bailey: "They're trying to get people to see that you still have a life while you're in the Guard."

To Mississippi State fans, Bailey's service to the armed forces is well-documented. He enlisted in the National Guard as a 17-year-old high schooler in 2002, did basic training that fall, then became a star linebacker at Mississippi Delta Community College in 2003. While he was preparing for his 2004 season, Bailey's unit, the 98th Cavalry, was activated.

He spent almost all of 2005 in Iraq, then arrived back in Mississippi the last week of December. Some five weeks later, he signed a letter of intent to play football at Mississippi State University.

After a redshirt year and a season playing behind senior ends Titus Brown and Avery Hannibal, Bailey projects as a starter for Mississippi State heading into the 2008 season.

A week away from turning 24, Bailey gives MSU leadership that's been tested beyond the football field.

"My coaches, they look for me to be a leader and step up," Bailey said. Then, a war analogy: "When the bullets start flying, really, somebody's got to step up there on the field and that's what they're mainly looking at me for."

Bailey has earned the right to say that, of course. And he might earn it all over again. There's

considerable thought that Bailey, whose commitment to the Guard runs through next August, will be activated and sent overseas again immediately following this football season.

At that notion, Bailey smiles, as if to say he's not worried about it.

"I'm just riding the train right now," he said. Bailey has received his degree in criminal justice and hopes to make it in the FBI or ATF. Even after his commitment ends, he thinks he'll re-up and stay on as a Guardsman.

Though the NCAA usually frowns on athletes participating in ad campaigns, Bailey's participation is OK, MSU assistant athletic director for compliance Bracky Brett said.

MSU requested a special waiver from the organization for the advertising, arguing that the National Guard isn't a for-profit entity and that Bailey wasn't given a choice in the matter. The NCAA granted it.

Turns out, Bailey was actually activated for two days to participate in the photo shoot, in which literally hundreds of photos of him were taken.

Though it's unknown whether they'll actually make the cut for the ads, one of the photo sessions included Bailey in his Mississippi State Uniform. Not bad advertising for MSU, coach Sylvester Croom said.

"It's great for him, great for our military men — and definitely doesn't hurt Mississippi State at all," Croom said.

Global Sapper

■ By Sandy Ates, staff writer

Don't let sleeping Cadet Gabriel A. Weiss fool you. This is a very rare moment for him. He hasn't had a day off in three and a half months says friend and Assistant Professor of Military Studies at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Major Mike Harlow.

A member of the Mississippi Army National Guard, Harlow said Weiss is a very exceptional young man and he is proud to have him in

the Mississippi National Guard.

"He is taking a quick nap on our way to the annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands, Arizona this past April (2008)," said Harlow. "He had just gotten back from three and a half months of training that morning -- with no time in between. Our ROTC light team took third place out of 20 teams competing in our category. That's over 26 miles and I never heard a complaint out of him."

Born in Switzerland, Weiss' early childhood was spent traveling with his German-born father and native-Swiss mother.

"I grew up traveling by nature of family," Weiss said. "I enjoy traveling, meeting people and experiencing new things."

Weiss' mother, Fabienne, was a very inspirational and driving force in his life. "She woke me up one morning and said I needed to join the National Guard," Weiss told Harlow.

Living in Iowa in 2006, he joined the Iowa Army National Guard and attended basic training after his sophomore year in high school.

After Hurricane Katrina, his stepfather, an architect, moved Gabriel, his mother and sister to Ocean Springs, Miss. Gabriel transferred to the Mississippi Army National Guard, and continued his education and future.

Weiss was an exceptionally bright student and earned nearly \$40,000 in scholarships to attend the college of his choice.

While visiting the University of Mississippi at Oxford, he happened to stop by the Croft Institute of International Studies at Ole Miss. It was at Croft that he found what he was looking for as far as a new experience, a way of traveling and a chance to meet some very interesting people.

Ole Miss is one of only three universities that have the flagship Mandarin Chinese program.

"I never knew much about China," said Weiss, "I'm interested in diplomacy and this would offer an incredible business opportunity."

Relatively few people fluently speak the Chinese language but doing so can have a marked advantage in many businesses and professions.

"I believe there are seven students remaining in Weiss' Mandarin Chinese class. It is a very difficult language to learn, and there is a very high attrition rate," said Harlow. "Croft only takes 45 students each year, and it is one of three that offers Chinese. We are so fortunate that we are one of the few National Guard states that offer this program."

Deciding Croft would definitely be his goal, his life began to go into overtime as he prepared for his Guard career, his education and his future.

As a member of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 288th Sapper Company of Houston, Miss., Weiss was required to complete his advanced individual training (AIT) as a combat engineer right after high school graduation. But that was going to pose a problem for him, because of the length of the AIT course and the start date of his freshman year at Ole Miss.

According to Harlow, the only way to solve the problem was to hurry things along.



Major Mike Harlow
ROTC, University of Miss.

"Gabriel actually graduated high school six weeks early, and the day after graduating he was on his way to AIT," said Harlow. "He arrived home the day before Memorial Day in 2007. He graduated high school, AIT, and was ready to start college [without taking a day off] in three and a half months."

Weiss remembered Harlow soon asking if he'd like to go on a run with some of the ROTC cadets. While he was physically fit, he wasn't a marathon runner he said.

"What I didn't know at the time, was that it was a 32-mile marathon. It was tough, but I made it," said Weiss with a humble smile.

Weiss said he loves college, and jumped into everything as a freshman; church groups, campus activities, and the ROTC, where he met commander, Maj. Mike Harlow of the Mississippi Army National Guard.

"The young man is exceptional," said Harlow. "I don't think he ever sleeps. He is top in his class, on the chancellor list, runs marathons and leaps over buildings in a single bound," said Harlow. "I ran that 50 km (32 miles) race in 100 degree heat with him and he never once complained. He is just amazing."

While the other Soldiers of his unit rarely see him, Sgt. Steven Crawford, the training and administrative NCO says he's a guy everyone likes to talk to.

"He is so interesting and intelligent, and he talks so fast," said Crawford. "We don't get a chance to see him much because of his schooling and our deployments. He's only been with us a little over a year, but he's a very likable young man and the other Soldiers like to hear him talk about China and other places he's been."

Weiss said he owes so much to the Mississippi Army National Guard and is proud to serve.

He adds the experience of the military is high on his list of important things he's done in his young life. Saying it would be right up there with the experience he had going to China this past summer and spending six weeks with the Chinese people.

Weiss said he studied hard and at the end of his freshman year at Ole Miss, had become so proficient in the language that he was able to carry on regular day-to-day conversations with the Chinese people. "I enjoy the people and being able to interact with these people at their cultural level," said Weiss. "It's great!"

Now a sophomore, Weiss speaks the language fluently, and when he graduates, according to Harlow, has been offered a job with starting pay at over \$200,000 a year. That's how important some

foreign languages are in some businesses like communications, trades and in the security world, says Harlow.

"Croft is an opportunity for anyone who wants to learn a foreign language; you don't need to be a student at Ole Miss to take advantage of this program," said Harlow.

While Weiss has been around the globe, he's found his friends and home in Mississippi, and the Guard glad to have such a high caliber Soldier within its ranks.



▲ Cadet Gabriel A. Weiss shows off a big blister on his heel that he received after completing the 2008 Bataan Memorial Death March in White Sands, New Mexico, in April. Without any practice, he joined other members of his ROTC group on the spur of the moment and together with his team, came in second in his category.



Sapper competition promotes MOS proficiency

■ Photos and Article courtesy of the 223rd Engineer Battalion

This summer members of the 223rd Engineer Battalion took part in a unique training event that combined MOS competency, physical fitness and mental agility. As temperatures rose into the mid 90's Sappers hustled through the course in the hopes of becoming Mississippi's Best Sapper. The competition was a first for the Knight Battalion and is loosely modeled after the annual competition at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The 223rd's version is geared toward MOS proficiency and providing an incentive for young Sappers to gain a better understanding of basic skills beyond what they are taught during AIT. The course consisted of seven different sites which each team of two had to navigate to from the initial start point. At each site the teams were required to perform basic 21B tasks such as installing triple standard concertina, demo calculations, building a firing system, and assembly, disassembly of weapons, and row a recon boat across Camp McCain's Hunt Lake.

The competition was a key component of increasing the proficiency of the 21B's within the

Knight Battalion. As a result of the Battalion's modular reorganization, the unit received a Sapper Company and 21B's throughout the Battalion Headquarters. Several of the Sapper Teams had only recently converted to their new 21B MOS. This was another important component to this training event as it allowed these personnel a competitive environment to hone their new skills.

While some of these new teams struggled through the various stations, the soldiers from the 288th Sapper Company, Houston, Miss., demonstrated their proficiency. As the competition wore on in the hot and humid conditions there was no doubt as to the Best Sappers in Mississippi. Sgt. Kody Clowers and Pfc. Brandon Rogers of the 288th Sapper Company tore through the rafting portion of the event and on to the finish line. They not only completed the course quicker than any other team but also scored the highest at each station along the route. Their Readiness NCO, Sgt. Stephen Crawford, attributed their success to the work ethic of the two young Sappers, "Those two put a lot of time into preparing for this competition. They really wanted to be the team to beat."



Sgt. Kody Clowers and Pfc. Brandon Rogers march ahead through the heat at Camp McCain during the Sapper competition held there this summer. Clowers and Rogers scored highest in all events.

Mississippi First to Receive Lakotas

■ By Col (Ret) Tim Powell, PAO

TUPELO, MISS—A Mississippi Army National Guard unit officially is the first in the nation to receive the UH-72A Lakota helicopter. The 1/114th Service & Support Battalion, based in Tupelo, recently unveiled its first two Light Utility Helicopters (LUH) in a "Roll-out Ceremony" in front of 200 Soldiers, civilians and local officials.

The Lakota LUH is a multi-use helicopter that will serve many functions in the civilian sector, according to 1/114th commander, Maj. Walter Jordan.

"The UH-72A was designed for non-combat use; homeland security, counter-drug, search and rescue, and various other types of operations," Jordan said. "They'll be a huge asset in the event of disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes and ice storms. There is just a wide range of things these machines will be used for."

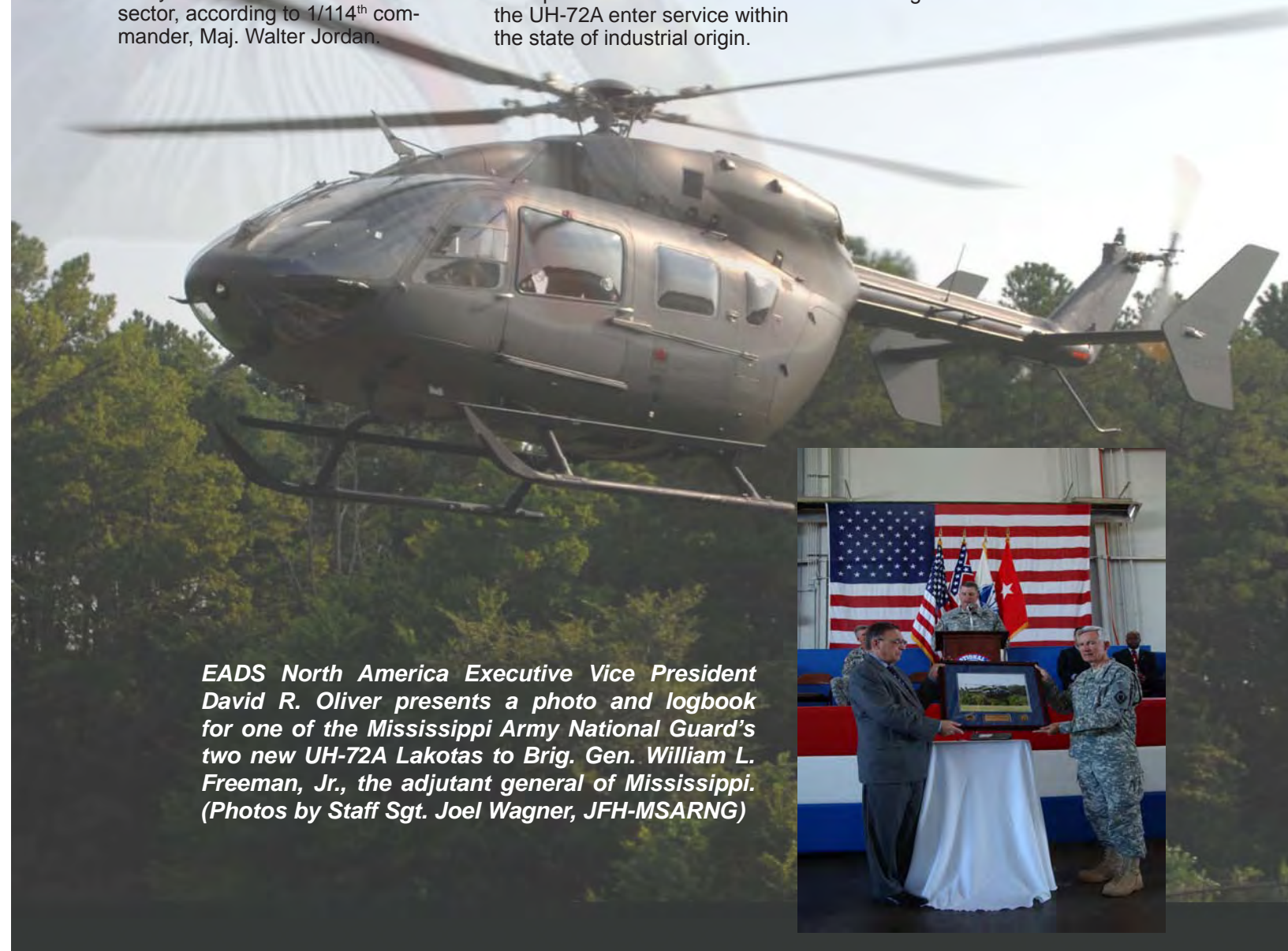
"The Lakotas will greatly enhance our capability—not only for supporting our military, but in aiding the state of Mississippi during times of emergency," said Brig. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi. "Our aviation in Mississippi is second to none. We have very capable people and an impeccable safety record and that's one of the reasons we were selected to receive the new aircraft."

Freeman also said it is a special distinction to have the UH-72A enter service within the state of industrial origin.

The Lakota is manufactured at American Eurocopter in nearby Columbus by EADS North America. Executive Vice President of EADS North America and former Navy Admiral David Oliver, Jr., said the Lakota is going to help modernize the National Guard.

"These are the newest helicopters the Army has," said Oliver. "They will be useful tools for the military to use with civilian situations like Hurricane Katrina. These things do everything. They are low-maintenance, agile and most importantly, are right here in Northeast Mississippi. They are being built in Mississippi, by Mississippians, so it's only fitting that the Mississippi Army National Guard will be flying them."

The unit received two additional helicopters in August, with an expected total of eight UH-72A Lakotas.



EADS North America Executive Vice President David R. Oliver presents a photo and logbook for one of the Mississippi Army National Guard's two new UH-72A Lakotas to Brig. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Joel Wagner, JFH-MSARNG)



On Guard for Gustav

■ By Sandy Ates, Staff Writer

The small tropical depression in the Caribbean didn't appear to amount to much, that is until it began taking on characteristics of a deadly hurricane exactly three years ago, almost to the day--August 28, 2005. Hard lessons were learned three years ago, so the looks of Gustav had Governor Harley Barbour and Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, on the ready and prepared to do battle.

Photo
by 1st Lt. Andy Thaggard

It seemed like déjà vu when hurricane forecaster's observation of tropical storm Gustav showed similar characteristics of Hurricane Katrina.

As Gustav reached hurricane category three strength, the lessons learned from Katrina were put into play and on August 29, 2008, Governor Haley Barbour signed an executive order authorizing Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi to activate members of the Mississippi National Guard for hurricane support operations.

"From lessons learned following Hurricane Katrina and from conducting hurricane response exercises, the Mississippi National Guard is better poised to respond to the Mississippi coastal counties to provide evacuation assistance, search and rescue, assistance to law enforce-

ment, and other hurricane support operations," said Freeman.

As early as August 27, 2008, forward and rear area emergency operations centers were manned at locations on the Gulf Coast and at the Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, and Soldiers and Airmen put on stand-by notice.

"The Mississippi National Guard is trained and ready to provide hurricane support operations on a moments notice to protect lives and property in the Gulf Coast region and in other counties in South Mississippi," Freeman told members of the media during a press conference.

Of the 12,218 members of the Mississippi Army and Air National Guard, Freeman said that there were a total of 8,000 members available for support operations in the likelihood that Hurricane Gustav

made landfall along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. They also had 100 percent of the required equipment on standby--65 percent of authorized, on-hand equipment and lease agreements for 35 percent or the remainder of equipment needed.

Freeman said that over 300 humvees and other vehicles were staged at Camp Shelby for the initial hurricane response and for follow-on forces post landfall.

"We also obtained four redundant communications systems that covered the entire coastal area, using satellite, two-way and cell phone services," Freeman said. "These systems were tested during several hurricane response exercises since Hurricane Katrina, and allowed for communications within the military task force with local emergency officials."



First Mission: Knock and Evacuate...

■ Story by Sandy Ates, Photos by 2nd Lt. Steve Stubbs, MSANG

Knock, Knock. "Who's There?" "The National Guard Emergency Evacuation Notification team to inform you of the threat of severe tropical weather, madam."

Indeed, that was the message Soldiers of the Mississippi National Guard's 155th Brigade Combat Team were telling residents in Mississippi's three coastal counties who were still in FEMA dwellings, mobile homes, cottages or in low lying areas vulnerable to a threatening Hurricane Gustav, August 31.

Called a 'Knock Mission', about 1,500 troops from the 155th went door-to-door notifying residents to evacuate after Governor Haley Barbour issued a mandatory evacuation of these type structures in Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson Counties along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The mission came as a first duty for Soldiers under new emergency plans developed following Hurricane Katrina, which was almost three years to the day of Hurricane Gustav.

While most residents had already evacuated, Soldiers still made sure that the names on the list were contacted, and if the resident was not home, a neon-colored orange door-hanger was placed on their door giving the same warning in English, Spanish or Vietnamese, depending on who lived there.

According to commander of the Guard's Joint Task Force Magnolia, Brig. Gen. Ben Gaston, most persons on a FEMA generated list were contacted or left a door hanger.

"Most residents along the coast had already evacuated the area, including these particular residents. Some decided to remain, but we were there to make sure they were notified of the impending weather conditions," said Gaston.

"Many people saw the presence of our Soldiers in their neighborhoods and decided to evacuate," added Col. Lee W. Smithson, Director of Military Support. "We prioritized the list of about 6,000 residents in areas prone to flooding and were able to make contact with most of them first. I feel the operation was successful and helped save lives."

Although Gustav didn't have the impact of Katrina, the well-seasoned Guardsmen were prepared for the worst.

This state's citizen soldiers and airmen are familiar with natural disasters and hurricanes. The people of this state know that the Mississippi National Guard will be there.

"Showing a presence is the most important aspect of our mission right now," Gaston said, "As long as we're showing a presence here, the [citizens] feel safe and protected. Military presence does deter theft and crime."

As the nearly 3,000 guardsmen activated for duty for Gustav continued their mission, residents on the Gulf Coast keep a weary eye on Hurricane Ike. He too, threatened to be paying a visit. But, residents know the Mississippi National Guard will be there, always.



Second Mission: Search and Rescue...



■ Story by Sandy Ates, Photo by 2nd Lt. Steve Stubbs, MSANG

GULFPORT, Miss. -- Shortly after Hurricane Gustav made landfall, several members of the 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group of the Mississippi Army National Guard launched a search and rescue operation at the Jordan River Estates subdivision in Kiln, Miss.

Six teams from the unit, based in Jackson, Miss., used rubber boats fitted with outboard motors to search for anyone who remained in the subdivision, which flooded as a result of a tidal surge from Hurricane Gustav on Sept. 1.

"They prepared to patrol the neighborhood to pick up those who had chosen not to evacuate, and had become trapped in their homes," said 2nd Lt. Steve Stubbs, a public affairs officer from the 186th Air Refueling Wing of the Mississippi Air National Guard in Meridian, Miss. "And suddenly it became more than just a rescue, it became an extreme emergency."

Scott Bilbo, chief of the Kiln Volunteer Fire Department, had gotten word that a man, whose house was surrounded by rising water, needed emergency medical help.

"I don't know what shape he's in. I was told

he was sick," Bilbo told the troops.

Within minutes, the Special Forces Soldiers had the victim on the way for emergency medical attention.

"We called our dispatcher through our fire marshal to get us a boat. We got here. They happened to be here doing rescues, and it worked out perfectly," said Bilbo. "Our boat would have to come from two miles away."

Stubbs said Sgt. Maj. Mike Patterson handled the mission very well. "You could just tell by his actions his main concern was getting those folks out safely and quickly. This was a perfect example of the Mississippi National Guard's Citizen-Soldiers helping fellow citizens in time of need."

The unit worked in conjunction with local fire, rescue and police departments to recover the stranded residents, Stubbs said. A total of six residents were rescued from Jordan Estates by the Special Forces troops.

Search and rescue missions continued while other Soldiers conducted security patrols along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



◀ One homeowner knows that the National Guard will be there to watch over things when Mother Nature determines to pay an ornery visit. The photo was taken during patrol presence missions along the Mississippi Gulf Coast following Hurricane Gustav, Sept. 1. (Photo by the MSARNG)

Final Mission: Protect and Provide Aid...

■ By Army Staff Sgt. Michael J. Carden, American Forces Press Service Photos by 2nd Lt. Steven Stubbs

GULFPORT, Miss., (09/02/08) – A day after Hurricane Gustav hit land, Gulfport-area residents are returning to their homes. But even though Gustav didn't pack quite the expected punch, many citizens may find themselves without power and clean, running water.

As they make their way back to their communities, people may notice one of several distribution points the state's National Guard has set up.

For the next few days, as local authorities repair the city's power grid, the state's citizen-soldiers and –airmen will provide water, food and ice in various locations along the coast.

Although the mission isn't as "sexy" as many of the troops would like, the Mississippi Guardsmen are pleased to support their communities and even more pleased that the local residents are already able to return home, Army Staff Sgt. Guy Bounds said.

"We've been to combat. We've been to Iraq, and we enjoyed helping the Iraqi people," said Guy, who's assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 114th Field Artillery Regiment from Starkville, Miss., "but helping out our own people in our own state and country – that really counts and means a lot to us."

The Guardsmen set up their operations at about 9 a.m. today and continued until sunset. They'll continue that schedule until they are ordered to stand down and are deactivated. By noon, they had handed out about ice and bottled water to nearly 800 people, Guy said.

"Although we hate to come here and see people in such need, we love the warm welcome," he said. "We love to see how happy they are to see us in their communities."

When people first saw the Guardsmen setting up and working their distribution point just outside of Gulfport, car horns started going off. People were waving and shouting their praises. Even people driving by who didn't need water and ice were appreciative, Guy said.

"Anybody can hand out food and water, but we're doing a lot more when we run our points of distribution," Army Maj. Lee Smithson, director of military support for the Mississippi National Guard's joint forces headquarters, said. "We're maintaining order, and we're making the public feel like their needs are being tended to, because nothing sets the public at ease more than guys in uniform and guys in Humvees. We don't need to carry weapons around for people to know we're taking care of them."

The Guardsmen were alerted for their mission Aug. 28 and began pre-positioning immediately at the Gulfport Army National Guard Readiness Center, the Stennis Space Center in Hancock County, and at Vancleave Middle School in Jackson County.

The weaker-than-expected hurricane allowed most of Mississippi's second-largest city to resume near-normal functions. The highways are bustling with traffic, and many local shops, retail outlets and restaurants are operating.

Officials with the Mississippi National Guard's joint headquarters here said local authorities had full control of the situation by Sept. 4.



NEW STARS

Two ceremonies were held in Jackson recently providing more stars to the ranks of two officers of the Mississippi Army National Guard and one officer of the Mississippi Air National Guard.



William L. Freeman, Jr.
Major General
The Adjutant General of Mississippi



Erick Hearon
Major General
Commander, Air National Guard
Asst. Adjutant General of Mississippi



Earnest L. Harrington
Brigadier General
Commander,
168th Engineer Brigade



168th Engineer Brigade gets distinctive insignia

Members of the 168th Engineer Battalion, Vicksburg, Miss., recently were given their new historic shoulder sleeve insignia to coincide with its new designation and mission.

Shoulder sleeve distinctive description: On a vertical rectangular embroidered item, arched outwardly at top and bottom and divided diagonally from upper left to lower right, white and red, displaying in the center a yellow tower, windows and doors light brown; all within a 1/8 inch (.32 cm) yellow border. The overall dimensions are 3 inches (7.62 cm) in height and 2 1/16 inches (5.24 cm) in width.

Symbol: Red and white are the colors traditionally associated with the Engineer units. The tower denotes alertness and emphasizes the brigade's mission. The red and white background also references the Brigades past history as an Engineer Group.

Background: The shoulder sleeve insignia was approved on 18 June 2008.



Distinctive Unit Insignia. Description: A gold color metal and enamel device 1 3/16 inches (3.02 cm) in height overall consisting of a vertical rectangular shape with circular upper and lower ends, bearing on a white base a gold demi-sun with rays (of similar delineation as that on the Philippine flag) charged with a vertical scarlet arrowhead, issuing from a gold wall masoned of four rows, in center overall a narrow blue saltire, the side interstices all of scarlet above the third masoned row of the wall and each interstices bearing a white five-pointed star, all enclosed by a continuous scarlet scroll (folded back and slightly undulating inwardly at the sides) inscribed at the top "MONUMENTS" and in base "TO PROGRESS" all in gold letters.

Symbolism: The two stars and arrowhead symbolize the unit's two battle honors in World War II, New Guinea (with arrowhead) and Southern Philippines. The saltire was taken from the state flag of Mississippi and the blue color also alludes to the unit's award of the Presidential Unit Citation (Army) for the Mindanao operation. The masoned wall symbolizes the unit's building capabilities and also refers to the defense and fortifications at Vicksburg, guardian of the lower Mississippi and the home station of the unit. Scarlet and white are colors used by Engineer units.

Background: The distinctive unit insignia was originally approved for the 168th Engineer Group on 26 October 1970. It was redesignated for the 168th Engineer Brigade and amended to update the description and revise the symbolism on 13 May 2003.



CHANGING OF THE GUARD

National Guard CSM to urge more overseas training, talks about the reserves' changing role

■ by Adriane Foss, Bavarian News editor

By next summer, the U.S. Army National Guard will make up half of all U.S. Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. But it's not a first.

The nation's "citizen-Soldiers" made up 56 percent of U.S. combat forces in Iraq in 2005, explained Command Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard John D. Gipe during an April 22 visit to the U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr.

That was no coincidence, said Gipe. "That was by design because that's when the Army was first transforming and growing brigade combat teams, so we went over there as little bit larger forces to allow them that time to do so."

The Floyds Knobs, Ind., native and eighth sergeant major of the Army National Guard said the oldest component of the U.S. military is a "whole different ballgame" from when he joined more than two decades ago.

Traditionally, members of the National Guard conducted military training one weekend a month and one month a year while maintaining their civilian jobs. Also, deployments amounted to rare, but occasional, civil emergencies and natural disasters.

"The focus has changed," said Gipe. "We're no longer a strategic reserve. We're an operational force and plan to be for the foreseeable future."

That transformation poses unique challenges for Guard families not accustomed to sending their Soldiers off to war, and Guard Soldiers who have to reintegrate into their civilian jobs after battlefield tours.

To balance that, Gipe said the

Guard increased the number of family assistance centers to 400 throughout the country, "not just to help Guard families but all families of deployed service members, so we've done really well regarding to that."

He said Congress has also passed legislation to help Guard families, "but the employers are the piece to me that we need to work on most because we have not done a lot to pay back employees, if you want to call it that, who support us so well."

The 50-year-old Gipe, who was activated after 9/11, has been on a military leave of absence from his civilian job for nearly seven years. He said his job fully supports him, "but I've just been very fortunate."

Gipe said it's a little easier for larger companies that are able to deal with the loss of their Soldier-employees, but smaller business with 50 or fewer employees and Guard members who own their own businesses need additional help.

"We've got to do some things to help them because a lot of time they lose their businesses," he said. "Doctors, lawyers, for example. We have to work certain programs for them because once you lose patients, they're hard to get back."

I think that's the next thing we've got to work on."

Despite the changing face of the Guard into a mobile fighting force, Gipes said they remain prepared for their civil mission.

"We have agreements between the states," he explained. "If it's a relatively small state, and they send 50 percent of their (Guard members) to a deployment, and something catastrophic happens and the Guard in that state is not large enough to overcome that, the surrounding states would send in troops, "similar to what happened during (Hurricane) Katrina, when we sent 50,000 Soldiers and airmen down there just from the Guard with about a five to six-day period, but that's something we've been doing for a long time."

Gipe's April 22 visit to Grafenwoehr wrapped up a week-long tour of military installations throughout Europe at which he observed Guard members conducting training and jobs.

Those jobs, he said, are saving the Army millions of dollars a year, and the state-of-the-art training provides realistic scenarios that will ready troops for what they'll face in forward

deployed locations around the globe.

He noted the National Guard engineers from several states who are doing construction projects for the Joint Multinational Readiness Center at Hohenfels.

"Well, this is good stuff because it allows our Soldiers to train in their (military occupational speciality) and get good relevant training," he said.

While constructing the mock Iraqi and Afghan villages that will be used to train U.S. Soldiers before they deploy, the engineers are placed in combat scenarios and "may be attacked while doing their mission," said Gipe. This is a real possibility if they deploy and makes the construction job and training here invaluable for Soldiers.

"But it also saves the Army millions of dollars every year by our engineers coming over here and doing construction projects (that would normally go to contractors) for the Army, so it's a win-win."

Currently, 3,500 reserve component Soldiers augment active duty units on Grafenwoehr, Vilseck, and Hohenfels in a fiscal year. Those Soldiers augment as follows during overseas deployment training, or ODT status:

- ▶ Engineer troop construction
- ▶ MP support to Grafenwoehr Garrison
- ▶ Infantry support to 1-4 Inf. in Hohenfels
- ▶ Maintenance support to 5th Maintenance Battalion on Grafenwoehr and MDH in Hohenfels
- ▶ Public affairs support to 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command Office Public Affairs Office
- ▶ Medical support to Grafenwoehr medical clinic
- ▶ Legal support to the Grafenwoehr JAG office. Legal support covers the entire JMTC footprint from Garmisch to Hohenfels.
- ▶ Sniper Mobile Training Team for CATC Grafenwoehr
- ▶ PSYOPS support to Hohenfels- OC Team Mustang
- ▶ Grafenwoehr Postal CMR

Gipes said at a National Guard conference in June he urged more states to take advantage of the first-rate training and aid the multi-million dollar savings by sending their troops overseas.

Arrivals & Departures

Mississippi National Guard Deployments/Redeployments

■ Story By Sandy Ates

Welcome back 1108th AVCRAD, 185th Aviation Battalion, 113th Military Police Company, 288th Sappers, and the 1687th Water Company! We thank you for your service and sacrifice.

As Mississippians welcomed home some of its Army National Guard units, other units were saying good-bye to family members and hometowns.

In fact, June 3rd was a bittersweet day for the Smith family of Pineville, Miss., when they welcomed home one son, and said good-bye to another, in the same day. But Jerry and Debbie Smith have come to terms with their sons' deployments because they know their sons, Jamie and Steven are committed to their country and service with the National Guard.

Jamie, youngest of the two brothers, deployed for training at Camp Shelby with the 113th Military Police Company of Brandon in June 2007 and was met by the family on June 3.

Steven is a member of the 1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery based in Forest. His unit has been deployed to Washington, D.C., as part of Homeland Security operations. About 190 Soldiers made their way to Fort Bliss for training on June 3.

"We were happy to have Jamie home, but at the same time, we were sad to see Steven leave. It just happened to take place on the same day. We were glad that Jamie got to see Steven before he had to leave," said mom, Debbie. "My heart is filled with so much pride to know they are willing to serve their country. It is an honor to serve your country, and I really want all of our Soldiers to know how grateful I am for their service."

The Smith parents know about the sacrifices their sons have had to make for the National Guard.

"Jamie had to drop out of school at Jones County Junior College to train for his tour in Iraq, and had to leave his family and friends. Steven recently had to leave his job, and his wife, Lisa, and their 2-month-old son, Logan," said dad, Jerry. "Debbie and I will be worried about him, as we did with Jamie; and you know that the next homecoming will be in about a year when Steven returns next July. We'll be waiting for him--me, his mom, Jamie, Lisa, his wife and his son, Logan, and sisters Melissa and Angela."

Several Scott Countians were on hand for the send-off of some 190 Soldiers of the 204th ADA. While the troops were going only as far as Washington, D.C., it still didn't make it any easier on families as they wished their loved ones good-bye.

Macie Loper said good-bye to her son, Spc. James Loper; nephew, Sgt. Jimmy Patrick, and Godson, Spc. Cameron Ragsdale.

"The first time they left from under my wing, they took my heart with them and I worried all the time," said Macie, as they all gathered around for hugs. "But this time I just don't know; I support them and I'm very proud of them!"

Just prior to the return of the 204th ADA, Newton was the first to sign a community covenant which is a Beyond The Yellow Ribbon Program put in place for those who serve. The covenant was signed by Gov. Haley Barbour on



▲ Brothers Spc. Jamie Smith (left) and Spc. Steven Smith, take a few minutes to chat in the motorpool at the 1/204th Air Defense Artillery Battalion in Newton, as they wait for Steven to deploy to Washington D.C. Jamie just arrived at his brother's farewell ceremony from his own welcome home ceremony with the 113th Military Police Company in Brandon. (Photos by Sandy Ates, Public Affairs Office)



▲ FAMILY TOGETHERNESS--The Smith family is all together to say hello to youngest son, Jamie, after his return from Iraq with the 113th MP Company, and good-bye to son, Steven, as he deploys with the 1/204th ADA for a Homeland Security mission in Washington, D.C. on June 3. From left is sister Melissa, Spc. Jamie Smith, mom, Debbie; dad, Jerry; Spc. Steven Smith with son, Logan; wife, Lisa, and sister Angela. (Photo by Sandy Ates)



▲ The extended family of Sgt. Mason Certain, Jr., who mobilized with 190 fellow Soldiers of the 1/204th ADA of Newton, to Washington, D.C., in June, find it hard to see their loved one go. (Photo by Tami Phillips, Scott Co. Times Editor)



▲ Macie Loper (2nd left) feels better about her extended family deploying for a second time. She was there the first time when (from left) Spc. Jimmy Patrick, nephew; Terriette Weidman, son's fiancée, Spc. James Loper, son, and Spc. Cameron Ragsdale, her Godson, served with the 204th Air Defense Artillery in Washington D.C., after 9-11.

May 31st. Signing the covenant was 1st Battalion, 204th Commander, Lt. Col. Joe White III, and Newton Mayor Michael Pickens. It was the first such community covenant signing to draw support from local communities for deploying soldiers and their families.

"This is getting its birth in Newton and will show that the elected local officials will support the families while the Soldiers are away emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually," said Capt. Deanna D. Butler, the Mississippi Army National Guard Soldier Service and Support Officer.

Community involvement and patriotism was in no short supply in Brandon as members of the 113th Military Police arrived home June 3rd.

After nine months in Iraq and three months of training for the mission Soldiers from the 113th MP Company returned home to families and huge crowds that lined interstates, highways and streets in and around the Brandon area.

Leading the buses home from Camp Shelby to the army was the Mississippi Chapter of the Patriot Guard, a group of about 50 motorcycle riders led by coordinator Craig Hatter. During the welcoming ceremony the commander of the 113th MPs presented a special award to Hatter on behalf of the Patriot Guard.

"We are here to stand for those who have stood for us," said Hatter, wiping his brow, "I appreciate this award but it is an honor for us to be able to serve those who have sacrificed their lives for us. Thank you."

Just newly appointed as the state's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., addressed the Soldiers and thanked them for the outstanding job they had done while serving in Iraq. He also thanked them for always answering the call.

"This is one unit that gets called upon often, and they never fail to respond," said Freeman. "I am proud of you, your state is proud of you and your country is proud of you."

But other units of the Mississippi National Guard are now serving their country. **(continued on next page).**



These children wait for their daddy to arrive home with other members of the 113th Military Police Company of Brandon.



You'll know this 113th MP Soldier from the picture displayed by his family.



Patriotism never tasted so sweet for this young boy waiting for his dad to come home with the rest of the 113th MPs.



The Patriot Guard leads the way for the homecoming of the 113th Military Police Company of Brandon.



Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, tells returning Military Police how important they have been to the security of this nation since 9/11.



Loved ones flock to buses as Soldiers of the 113th Military Police Company make their final stop at home in Brandon after a year in Iraq.



Lt. Col. Kim Jackson, Provost Marshal, welcomes home members of the 113th MP Co.



A 100% patriotic Mom waits for her son to return home along with other members of the 113th MP Co.



The friends and family celebrated the return of their loved ones early in June as the members of the 1387th Quartermaster (Water Purification) Company from Greenville arrived home.

The 1387th's family group hosted a homecoming ceremony at the armory telling all the families and community friends to bring flags balloons flowers, gifts, hugs, kisses and joyful smiles. And there certainly was plenty of that.

The family support group is very active in the Greenville unit. They are planning to purchase a monument displaying the names of soldiers serving with the 1387th QM Company during the deployment on the grounds of the armory.

Soldiers from Greenville, Leland, Hattiesburg, Biloxi, Philadelphia and Vicksburg units were among the 153 troops returning home after a year of duty in Iraq. While there, the 1387th was responsible for purifying water for troops serving in Iraq. It was their first deployment.

While many units arrived home over the summer months, some were still deployed.

The 102nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment are still deployed to Afghanistan, not to return home until early next spring.

The unit which is very small and are spread out in three locations--Bagram, Salerno and Jalalabad. They work out of media operations centers at the various locations and also escort media coming into Task Force areas.

Working with the 101st Airborne command, they are often embedded in convoys as they go with national and international media personalities covering news in Afghanistan.

The 102nd commander, Capt. Christian Patterson, said that his has been a difficult deployment, because of the difference of operating in an office environment and operating in a battle area. "We have learned so much about the public affairs role and have gained so much experience to bring back with us," said Patterson.

Several of the Mississippi National Guard units that deploy worldwide have skills that are often highly sought after in the business world. Their talents are priceless, their experience untouchable and their service, invaluable. The Mississippi National Guard is proud to have some of the best Soldiers and Airmen within its ranks.

Often our units are called often; such is the case with the 185th Aviation. A group of aviators just returned from Iraq; another group returned from Bosnia. The 1108th AVCRAD just returned from deployment for the second or third time because of their skill in rotary and fixed wing aircraft repair. They are among some of the best in the field.

We will soon have the 168th Engineer Brigade deploying, and in 2009, the entire 155th Brigade Combat Team will begin their second deployment in Southeast Asia. Most all units of the Mississippi National Guard have served one year and are now working on their second tour of duty.

We recently had the 288th Sappers to return home after a second deployment to Iraq.

One thing is sure. Mississippi loves its National Guard and every time a unit comes or goes, they take the hearts and prayers of every Mississippian along.



This little boy doesn't care nothing about being a super star, he's just glad that his dad is home with the rest of the 185th Aviation.



Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman Jr., talks with a family whose Soldier just arrived home with the 185th Aviation Brigade.

102nd MPAD reports from Afghanistan



The 102nd MPAD goes out with soldiers of the 101st Airborne photographing, video-taping or even escorting various media reps from the various national and international networks. The unit must also produce it's own media products.



Forward Support Company Supports Field Companies

■ Story and Photos by Sgt. Francis Spangler, 890th Eng. Bn., 926th Eng. Bde., MND-B

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Forward Support Company, 890th Engineer Battalion, Mississippi Army National Guard, is attached to the 926th Engineer Brigade. “FSC,” as it is aptly known, is a new unit with a grand responsibility. Understanding FSC and its impact on the 926th Engineer Brigade is paramount to mission success.

Maintenance, Distribution, Combat Recovery, and Field Feeding, are the main sections that make up FSC. Each of these sections is broken down into several different parts, it would be impossible to cover everything that FSC does and the effects they have on life here in MND-B.

The 890th Engineering Battalion Forward Support Company (FSC) is the real force of the mission's success. FSC is mission support; not only in name, but also with further analysis we can conclude that is a fact. Tactical combat operations within the Multi-National Division of Baghdad require assured mobility, as in today's modern battlefield, the greatest threat are IEDs in one form or another. The military's answer to this problem was the development of the Route Clearance Package. These Route Clearance Packages are a multifaceted force to mitigate this threat. The fighting edge of this force is the soldier and their equipment; FSC hones that edge and maintains the force.

FSC is an assembly of many crucial sections. Maintenance, Maintenance Control, Recovery, Welding, Distribution, and Field Feeding are the base of the pyramid of combat operations. Although, Route Clearance

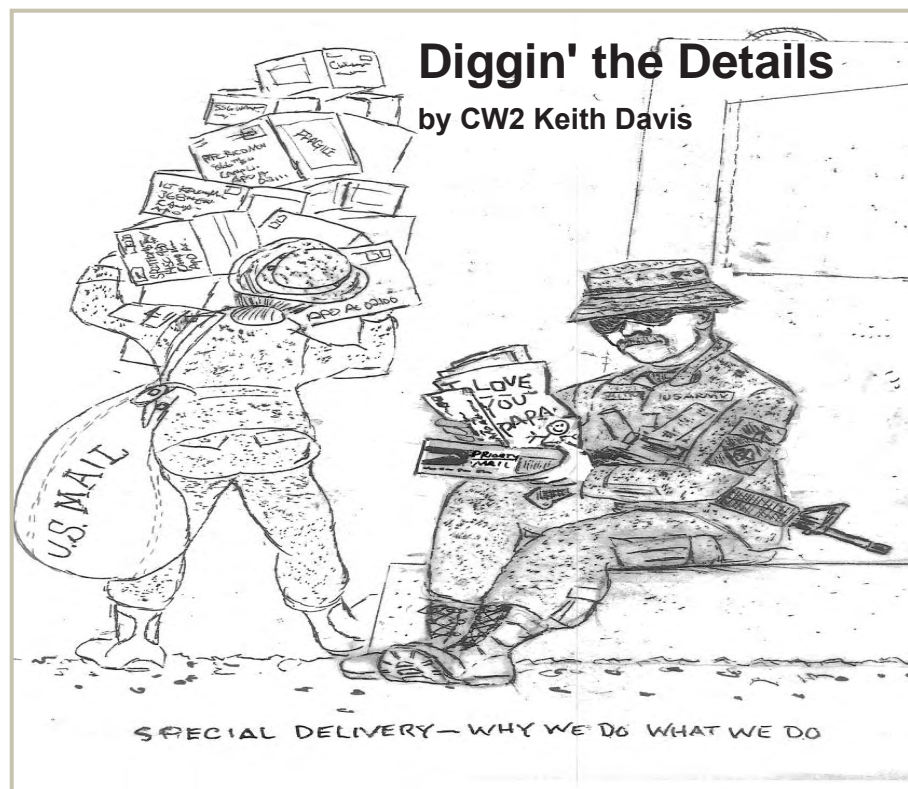
is the essential mission of the Battalion, FSC provides the maintenance of these vehicles in all aspects by either coordination or hands on “wrench turning.” Post mission assessments are conducted quickly and efficiently at the Hotwash Pad. This effort improves care for mission essential equipment and diminishes the need for Recovery Operations. Recovery of Non Mission Capable vehicles either on or off Forward Operating Base Liberty is just another task provided by the maintenance section. Maintenance Control secures the tools that route clearance operations have become dependent on to accomplish their mission with unyielding enthusiasm, coordination with those secondary providers, Man-Tech, Osprey, Gyro Cam, and Rhino II. The Weld Shop works to modify and improve Route Clearance equipment. The combination of parts provided by the Maintenance Control Section, and the work done by the Weld Shop, provide the Soldiers of the route clearance companies with tools better fit to assist them in their missions.

FSC handles all hauling operations for the brigade. Transportation of goods from one locale to another, picking up new equipment from other Forward Operation Bases then returning and dispersing to the supported units so they can accomplish their missions, is another service provided by FSC. Necessities and Equipment that are received through the Service

Support Agency (SSA) are hauled by FSC. Fuel is available 24 hours a day, Petroleum Oil Lubricants and disposal of HAZMAT within the Battalion. Palletized water is distributed to points all throughout the battalion. The Distribution section also supervises and secures the barrier yard, enabling units ease of access to mission essential materials.

A good balanced diet, if the soldiers want one, can be found at DeFlurey Dining Facility. Ordering food and providing meals for Route Clearance Teams occurs under FSC supervision. Field Feed secures the energy source of the force. Even though it is said in a simple manner, the implications of this statement are vast and crucial. Over 13,000 meals are consumed at De Flurrie daily. FSC soldiers inspect and inventory food that arrives. Supervision of food preparation and ensuring a sanitary environment for the 200 Third Country Nationals (TCN's), a typical day for the Field Feed section.

It is the combination of all these sections into one dynamic company that supports 890th Engineering Battalion, which in turn supports 926th Engineer Brigade, enabling it to ascertain mission success. FSC, 890th Engineering Battalion, provides the service that is support, without this company and the services, it provides maintaining operation tempo and mission success would be impossible.



890th Engineers - Life at liberty



NOTEWORTHY



◀ American Red Cross Award--The American Red Cross Central Mississippi Chapter honored former adjutant general of Mississippi, Lt. Gen. Harold A. Cross, the Service to the Military Award during a recent Save the Day Gala held in Jackson. He was honored for his exemplary leadership of the Mississippi Service men and women who serve the state and nation. The honorees, which also included the Jackson Fire Department and Fire Chief Vernon Hughes, but also Faith Hill for her humanitarian work following Hurricane Katrina. The honorees were first time recipients of the three awards that were presented during the annual Save the Day Gala in June.



◀ Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., second left, the adjutant general of Mississippi, accepts a \$20,255.64 check from John Polk, second from right, from Polk's Meat Products of Magee in support of the Mississippi Military Family Relief fund. company Vice President and General Manager, Julie Polk Breazeale, left, also was on hand for the presentation, as was coordinator for the Mississippi Military Family Relief Fund, Ron Graves. The Magee-based company launched a two-month campaign in May 2008 to raise awareness of the relief fund and to contribute a portion of sales generated. Since the inception of the relief fund in June 2005, more than 125 families have received assistance from the fund for needs including house payments, utilities, school supplies, insurance and food, among others. The fund is supported completely by donations.



◀ Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, presents a check for \$2,135 to a representative of the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) on behalf of the Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi National Guard. Each year, the Joint Force Headquarters participates in the MDA program, Cool and Casual Day, to help raise money for young children with Muscular Dystrophy. The Mississippi National Guard is always there to help, and this is one way Guard members support local communities and residents.



▲ Senior leaders of the Mississippi National Guard recently attended a Gettysburg Staff Ride and participated in a town-hall meeting hosted by the adjutant general. Army & Air senior commissioned officers, warrant officers, command sergeants major and senior chiefs participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Mississippi Monument during the battlefield tour conducted by the Army War College. During the town-hall meeting, all participants were given the opportunity to discuss wide-ranging issues with the joint staff as well as receive the adjutant general's guidance on topics such as retention, family readiness, and training.



◀ Proceeds from the third annual Dixie Thunder Run held June 28-30 were donated to the Mississippi Military Emergency Relief Fund, a fund established by the Mississippi legislature to help Mississippi's National Guard and Reserve families experiencing hardship because of military service after Sept. 11, 2001.

A check for \$10,000 was presented to Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi by the Dixie Thunder organization president, Sgt. 1st Class Tony Shackelford, during a ceremony at the office of the adjutant general here July 13. General Freeman thanked the Dixie Thunder Run riders for traveling all the way from Tupelo to donate to a very worthy cause and for taking care of their fellow Soldiers. The Dixie Thunder Run is a benefit motorcycle ride initially established to raise money for family members of killed or wounded Soldiers of the 155th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) during Operation Iraqi Freedom. It has since spread to include all Guard and Reserve troops in Mississippi. The route followed during the run begins in Tupelo where the 155th BCT is headquartered; they make a stop in Meridian, and end at the southern most point where 155th units are located in Biloxi, Miss.

▶ Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi stands quietly beside the weeping mother of Sgt. Timothy Osbey, Sherry, and 12-year old daughter, Saderia, after unveiling a memorial plaque naming the new Army National Guard Readiness Center in McComb after Osbey. Osbey a native of the Sherman Community, deployed to Iraq with the 155th Brigade Combat Team in January 2005. He died Feb. 16, 2005, when the Humvee he was riding in rolled over into a drainage canal after the levee it was travelling on gave way. The dedication ceremony is one of many taking place across the state as the Mississippi National Guard renames its readiness centers after fallen Soldiers.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Joel Wagner, JFH

While it started with just 155th motorcycle riders, the rally has grown to include anybody that wants to participate and help Soldiers.

"Our motto is, 'Soldiers Helping Soldiers'; we thought out everything while we (155th BCT) were in Iraq in 2005," said Shackelford.

Guard conscience about environment

On July 23, Maj. Gen. James "Ike" Pylant congratulated the Mississippi Army National Guard's Environmental Directorate for winning a National Guard Bureau (NGB) award for Outstanding Maintenance of the Installation Corrective Actions Plan for 1 April 2007-1 April 2008. Additionally,



he recognized Ms. Falicia Edwards for also receiving an NGB award for Outstanding Maintenance of the Installation Corrective Actions Plan for 1 April 2007- 1 April 2008. Many might not understand exactly what such an accomplishment implies. So, an explanation is necessary.

Over the decades, the U.S. armed forces have realized the importance of proper environmental management. In 1998, the National Guard addressed environmental concerns by implement-

ing the Environmental Performance Assessment System (EPAS). EPAS is the Guard's demonstration that they would enforce environmental stewardship. The program started as a checking system for the Guard. Yet as the system has gathered more data, it has shone a light into areas needing improvement, allowing the Mississippi

National Guard to be an active participant in improving its own operations.

Mississippi has a great deal of responsibility in national defense. Given this responsibility, Mississippi has filled the leadership role nicely. The environmental department takes pride in contributing to such excellence. The EPAS Program is dedicated to ensuring our facilities are kept in proper environmental order. Without such a checking system, the state would be subject to accidents,

disorganization, and wastefulness.

As you can imagine, keeping 100+ facilities in "check" is a very big job. It takes coordination, communication, and expertise. Mississippi has taken well to such a feat. Most facilities are ready to learn what they need to do to ensure environmental readiness. This is the main reason why the EPAS system has been successful. Additionally, the environmental staff has been dedicated to instituting the EPAS system for the Mississippi National Guard. The success of EPAS may be credited to the superior working relationships amongst the soldiers, facility managers, and environmental staff.

During July's recognition, the Environmental Programs Director MAJ Robert Lemire extended his gratitude to the MSARNG for helping the Environmental Directorate achieve such acknowledgment. Such success is a result of the commitment of Mississippi's soldiers to stand alongside the environmental staff and fight for a clean environment.



**American
Red Cross**

The American Red Cross Service to Armed Forces (SAF) Program is in need of volunteers to answer and route emergency telephone calls to men and women serving in the military.

Volunteers will work 24 hour periods on a rotating call schedule and must be accessible by phone during this time.

Please call 601-353-5442 or contact RaineyS@usa.redcross.org for more information and to enroll in the next Service to Armed Forces Training Class.

Thank You Veterans!

Soldiers and Airmen, now that you are back home, we are here to help you and your family members make the adjustment. You have served your country, and now we are here to serve you. Our counseling services are available free for all National Guard and Reservists.

Contact:

Jackson Vet Center

1755 Leila Drive, Jackson, MS

(off Lakeland Drive)

or call (601) 965-5727

Monday-Friday, 8:00 - 4:30 p.m.



Guard loses a good friend

■ By Sandy Ates, Staff Writer

There are few more admired by Mississippi National Guard members than Mr. Jack Lucas. A Japanese hand grenade at Iwo Jima during World War II couldn't kill Jack, but death, armed with age and cancer caught up with the Medal of Honor recipient in June 2008.

Lucas, who at 17 became the

youngest Marine recipient of the nation's highest military honor died in Hattiesburg after a long battle with leukemia at the age of 80.

His life was much like a Hollywood movie like Private York; big for his age and eager to serve, a 14-year-old Lucas lied that he was 17 and forged his mother's signature on a Marine's enlistment waiver.

He was sent to Hawaii for training but the Marines discovered he was only 15. They allowed him to stay, but assigned him to drive a supply truck. He eventually stowed away aboard a Navy ship headed for combat in the Pacific Ocean. He turned himself in to avoid being listed as a deserter and volunteered to fight. Just six days past his 17th birthday in February 1945, when his heroism at Iwo Jima made him the youngest serviceman to receive the Medal of Honor in any conflict other than the Civil War.

According to his wife, Ruby, as Lucas and three fellow squad members were exchanging fire with the Japanese, he looked down and saw two grenades at his feet. He knocked one

of his buddies out of the way, pushed one grenade into the volcanic ash beneath him with his rifle butt, and fell on the other one. He absorbed the grenade explosion with his body and was severely injured. He underwent 26 surgeries to remove more than 250 pieces of shrapnel. In October 1945, President Truman presented him the Medal of Honor.

In the 1960s, he joined the Army and became a paratrooper to overcome his fear of heights. One training jump, both of his chutes failed, and a last second roll as he hit the ground he claimed saved his life.

Lucas spent most of his life involved in supporting fellow members of the Armed Forces. Residing in Hattiesburg, he was a good friend to the personnel at Camp Shelby and routine visitor to the Armed Forces Museum where he enjoyed sharing experiences with other World War II veterans and their families that visited. He was often a speaker for the Youth Challenge Program and Kids AT and other programs for kids. He will surely be missed.



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