



Spring 2015

# GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



**Mississippi Guardsmen  
of Task Force Raven  
protect the Southwest border**



**THE ADJUTANT GENERAL**  
Maj. Gen. Augustus L. Collins

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**FRONT COVER:** A U.S. Border Patrol agent escorts four undocumented immigrants captured near the U.S.-Mexico border on April 23, 2015. A Mississippi Army National Guard LUH-72 Lakota helicopter helped locate the men beneath a tree along a mountainside near Nogales, Ariz. Six MSARNG Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment, of Tupelo, Miss., are assigned to Task Force Raven, which works with multiple federal agencies in securing the border. (Mississippi Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes, JFH-MS Public Affairs Office/Released)

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The Guard Detail is the official magazine of the Mississippi National Guard. It is published quarterly with a circulation of 15,000 copies and is distributed online via the Mississippi National Guard web and Facebook pages. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Army, Air Force, Army National Guard, Air National Guard or the Department of Defense.

Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Office of Public Affairs, Joint Force Headquarters Mississippi, State of Mississippi Military Department.

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# From the Editor

By Lt. Col. (Retired) Timothy J. Powell  
Director, Public Affairs Office

## *One last note ...*

I am retiring. After 36 years in the public affairs business, I am calling it quits ... time to move on ... time to enjoy the other side of life.

When I began my career in public affairs, photos were black and white, video cameras were new and their quality was marginal at best. We covered Mississippi Guardsmen training at Camp Shelby with photos and captions, same old training every year just different folks from different places. Home-town newspapers were our way of connecting National Guard Soldiers with the folks back home, and if nothing more, giving proof to our wives and employers that we really were soldiering at Camp Shelby.

Today is much different. The people are different, another generation of soldiers doing the same thing, almost. With wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the books, training now takes on a different perspective, a different purpose, crash courses in survival. But as the training tempo has changed, communications technology has soared to new heights in the past decade. Email is a necessity and proved to be a lifeline for many in the war zones. Facebook, Twitter and Skype were also major players, and continue as giants in today's digital world. Everyone has an iPod, Android, Blackberry or some other device, so everyone has a camera and the ability to share images through the social media super highway. Never would have imagined all this 36 years ago.

One thing has not changed—public affairs will continue writing stories about our Soldiers—stories of success and sometimes failure, stories of Soldiers helping Soldiers or just needy members of a particular community. Stories about life and stories about death—all human frailties that will never change with time. Our advantage now, we can tell these stories with the speed of light.

Thank you all, God Bless!



# Mississippi Guardsmen keep sharp eyes on Southwest border

■ *Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes  
102nd Public Affairs Detachment*

MARANA, Ariz. – Mississippi National Guard Soldiers are part of a federal multi-agency task force that has captured nearly 100,000 undocumented immigrants and more than 262,000 pounds of marijuana alone crossing the Arizona border since 2012.

Task Force Raven, based at Silver Bell Army Heliport in Marana, Ariz., provides the aerial component of Operation Guardian Eye, which conducts southwest border operations along the Arizona and Texas border with Mexico. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Drug Enforcement Agency agents along with Army National Guard Soldiers work closely with the U.S. Border Patrol to prevent the passage of drugs and undocumented immigrants.

Six Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment, of Tupelo, Miss., are currently assigned to Task Force Raven, which concentrates on the Tucson, Ariz., and Rio Grande Valley and Laredo sectors of Texas. Mississippi Soldiers are assigned to the task force for three to six months on a rotating basis with other state Guardsmen.

“Mississippi has been the most active state in supporting this mission,” said Lt. Col. Kris Bast, task force commander from the Arizona Army National Guard. “In 2012, Mississippi helped stand up the Texas operations. That was a very big thing.”

Operation Guardian Eye

was first established in 2010 as a one-year mission to assist federal agencies with Arizona border security, but has been extended each year because of the success of the undertaking. It was expanded to include portions of the Texas border in 2012.

“We are not a law enforcement agency. We simply support them,” Bast said.

A typical Raven flight crew aboard a UH-72 Lakota helicopter includes two pilots and a crew chief from the Army National Guard and a U.S. Border Patrol agent. Two of the Lakotas assigned to the mission are from Mississippi.

The Border Patrol agent coordinates with his agency and when something is located by radar, sensors or



*Chief Warrant Officer 2 David Bishop, of Caledonia, Miss., conducts preflight checks on a UH-72 Lakota at Silver Bell Army Heliport in Marana, Ariz., on April 23. Bishop, a pilot-in-charge, is one of six Mississippi Army National Guard Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment, of Tupelo, Miss., assigned to Task Force Raven, which works with multiple federal agencies in securing the U.S.-Mexico border.*



*Left, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jason Seal, of Brandon, Miss., points out a gathering of U.S. Border Patrol agents in the Arizona desert to 1st Lt. Jimmie Thomas, of Lexington, Miss., while responding to a call for assistance along the Southwest border. Right, Spc. Jonathan Wallace, of Tupelo, Miss., searches the ground for a group of undocumented immigrants trying to elude U.S. Border Patrol agents near Nogales, Ariz., on April 23.*



agents on the ground, he guides the Lakota to the scene, where they provide “eyes in the sky” to help pin down the position of the objective.

“(Undocumented immigrants) can be very hard to see,” said 1st Lt. Jimmie Thomas, a pilot with 1-185th. “They hide and wear light colored clothing or light camouflage patterns and can blend in very well with the terrain.”

While the mission provides support to federal agencies, it also gives the Soldiers some very realistic experiences they can translate to their military service, Bast said.

“The training benefit here is substantially equivalent to that which would otherwise be obtained from military operations,” he said.

Thomas said the benefits include learning to work with others outside the military command structure and adapting the Army’s techniques and procedures to address the needs of the mission.

It also provides a real-time scenario with changing situations that closely mirrors what they would

encounter on a combat mission.

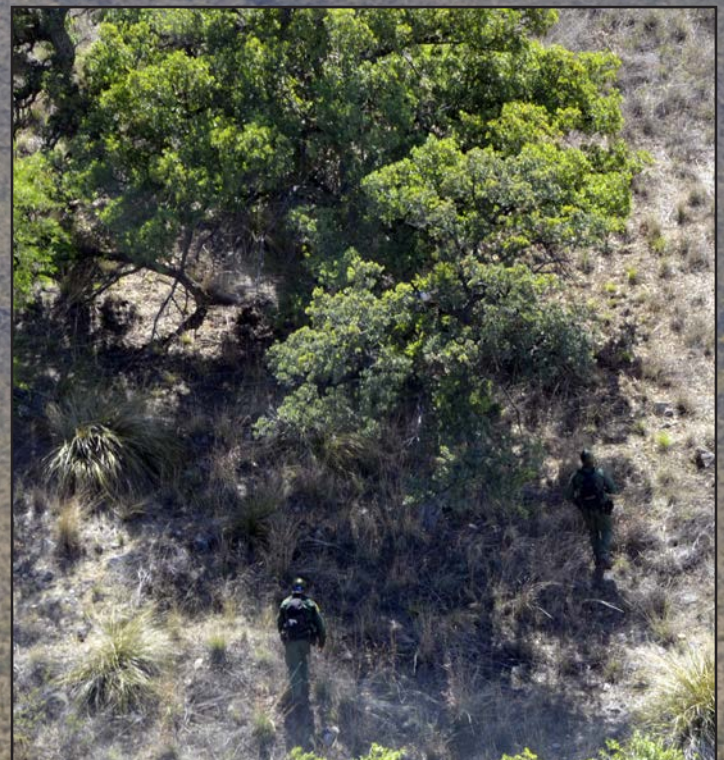
“It’s a good dynamic tasking where we are all working together,” he said. “I can’t see anything better to help in training for a combat mission. And it’s an opportunity to fly every day, which we don’t get serving as traditional Guardsmen.”

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jason Seal said the southwest desert environment, with its heat and high-density altitude, provides the additional advantage of being similar to operating conditions in Afghanistan and other Middle Eastern areas.

“The National Guard was originally designed to guard our nation and that’s what I see us doing here – guarding our borders,” Seal said.



*Four undocumented immigrants attempt to conceal themselves beneath a tree from U.S. Border Patrol agents and a Mississippi Army National Guard LUH-72 Lakota helicopter along the U.S.-Mexico border near Nogales, Ariz., on April 23. Right, U.S. Border Patrol agents follow the guidance of a Task Force Raven spotter and swarm the tree hiding the immigrants.*



# Best Warrior Competition te

■ *Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams*  
*JFH-MS Public Affairs Office*

CAMP SHELBY, Miss. – Nine of the Mississippi Army National Guard's finest warriors gathered at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center March 23 to compete in the 2015 Mississippi Army National Guard State Best Warrior Competition.

The three-day event brings together noncommissioned officers and junior enlisted Soldiers from across Major Support Commands (MSCs) throughout the state to compete against their peers in military tactics and training. NCOs and junior enlisted competed in separate, but similar, competitions.

During the best warrior competition, competitors were tested on their physical fitness, board interviews, land navigation and a number of tasks that are essential for survival on the battlefield, such as evaluating a casualty and weapon marksmanship.

"We are trying to distinguish who is the best in the Mississippi Army National Guard," said Command Sgt. Maj. Allen Amis, 3rd Noncommissioned Officer Training Academy commandant. "It's very difficult and demanding, but it's something I think a Soldier would enjoy - competing against other Soldiers."

Day one of the competition, Soldiers dressed up in their dress blue's to appear before a board of command sergeants major.

"Pay close attention," said Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Coleman, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team senior enlisted noncommissioned officer. "I'm going to give you some facing movements."

"Right face! Right face! Right face!" barks Coleman as other command sergeants major carefully inspect the competitors dress uniform for discrepancies.

After answering nine questions, each competitor had to recite either the Noncommissioned Officer Creed or the Soldiers Creed based upon their rank.

The second day of competition began early, at 4 a.m., as competitors put on their physical fitness uniforms to compete in the Army Physical Fitness Test while graders, spectators and sponsors gathered at the finish line.

This was just the beginning of a physical, exhausting and mental three-day event for the Soldiers. For one Guardsman, it was a challenging introduction to the competition.

"This is my first time competing in the best warrior," said Staff Sgt. Larry Nix, who is assigned as an infantry instructor at 2d Infantry Training Battalion, 154th Regional Training Institute (RTI). "I wanted the experience and to compete with the best Soldiers in the state of Mississippi."

Nix is competing against five other noncommissioned officers and feels that he is competing against the best of the best.

"This competition is very competitive," said Nix, a resident of Petal. "I'm competing against the best NCO's

in the state of Mississippi. They placed themselves above the best and want to compete against the best. So it is very competitive."

To ensure the best of the best attend the event, Soldiers are screened and tested at company, battalion and major support command levels before competing at the state level, where the winner will advance to regionals.

Nix said that Soldiers thinking about competing even at the beginning phase must start preparing themselves mentally and physically.

"I would encourage all my fellow Soldiers to compete in the best warrior competition," Nix said. "Start training now; especially on weapons, physical fitness and shooting. This event is a physically and mentally demanding competition."

Spc. Justin Speck, representing Company D, 106th Support Battalion, said this competition has definitely opened up his eyes toward preparation.

"This was my first time competing in the best warrior competition and it was very challenging and enduring," said Speck. "I should have prepared myself better, but hopefully next year I will come back and win."

From senior leadership down to squad leader, Speck said that he has received tremendous support from his unit.



*Staff Sgt. Ashley Porter, a 154th RTI instructor, trudges forward during the road march. Porter is the first female to win Best Warrior Competition Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Award.*

# sts the state's 'best of the best'

"My first sergeant, command sergeant major and squad leaders were really supportive," said Speck. "They met me at Camp McCain and helped me focus on things I needed to work on."

This year's competition brought back two competitors from last year: Army Staff Sgt. Ashley Porter, a 154th RTI instructor, and Army Spc. Ethan Scott, Headquarters Company, 890th Engineer Battalion.

Last year, Porter was the first female to ever compete in the Mississippi Best Warrior Competition. Even though she didn't win last year, she hoped she set a good example for other females to compete.

"I hope there are five or 10 females competing next year," said Porter. "I definitely want to encourage any female out there to be a part of this competition. They may look at it and think they can't do it because it's usually all males, but it's Soldiers skills so I hope more females come out and do it."

This year, not only is Porter competing but she's not alone. There is another female Soldier standing in the ranks - Sgt. LaShondra Marshall, a resident of Yazoo City and a member of the 168th Engineer Brigade.

Porter said she is proud of Marshall's accomplishments and hopes to see her again next year.

"Sgt. Marshall did a great job and I hope to see her next year sitting at one of these tables," said Porter.

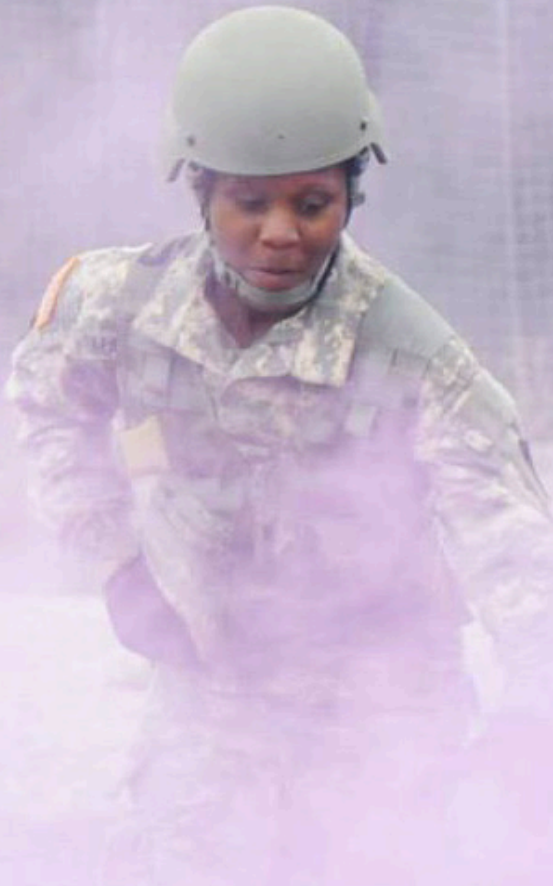
Through pride, determination and resilience, Porter was awarded the 2015 Best Warrior Competition Noncommissioned Officer of the Year and was recognized as the first female in the Mississippi Army National Guard to win the award.

Determination is what brought Scott back to the Best Warrior Competition. With just a few points that separated him from winning last year, Scott said he was determined to be back to win it all.

"Last year I came in second place by a couple of points and this year I was really motivated not to let that happen again," said Scott, who is studying to be a nurse at Mississippi State University.

It didn't. Scott was recognized as the 2015 Best Warrior Competition Soldier of the Year by Maj. Gen. Augustus L. Collins, the adjutant general of Mississippi, during a banquet March 25.

The Region III Best Warrior Competition was held at St. Croix, Virgin Islands, in April, where Porter and Scott both represented the MSARNG.



*Background, Sgt. LaShondra Marshall of the 168th Engineer Brigade competing in the 2015 Best Warrior Competition at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center drags a dummy through smoke during an event. Inset, Staff Sgt. Alexander Toups, assigned to A Company 2-198th Cavalry, conducts a function check on the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) during the Army Warrior Task portion of the competition.*



*A plaque honoring each Soldier will be installed on the Operational Readiness Training Complex buildings following the unveiling April 11 at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.*

# ORTC named for fallen state Soldiers

■ *Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes  
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office*

CAMP SHELBY, Miss. – It was a bittersweet day for the families of four fallen Mississippi heroes April 11 as the Mississippi National Guard dedicated the Operational Readiness Training Complex in their names.

The four buildings comprising the ORTC were named in honor of Sgt. Audrey D. Lunsford, of Sardis; Capt. Lowell T. Miller II, of Flint Township, Mich.; Sgt. Joseph A. Rahaim, of Laurel; and Sgt. 1st Class Christopher L. Robinson, of Brandon, who all died in service to their country overseas.

Each building provides facilities to accommodate administrative and supply operations for battalion- and company-level activities and open bay barracks and senior enlisted quarters for 336 Soldiers.

The ORTC is designed to provide a centralized location for the training and administrative needs of two individual battalions for up to 90 days.

“It’s a very special honor, especially for my kids who were so young when he died,” said Tamara Robbins, Robinson’s widow.

Robinson left behind Savannah, 14, who was five-years-old when he died, and Patrick, 10, who was nine months old.

“Patrick knows the stories and has seen pictures of his father and he’s developing a memory through that,” Robbins said. “This is a memory of his father he can keep for his own.”

Robinson was deployed to Afghanistan with the Headquarters Detachment, 2nd Battalion, 20th Spe-

cial Forces Group on March 25, 2006, when he was killed by enemy small arms fire.

The location of the building at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center has special significance to Robbins. She said they were married in 1992 while she was living on the Gulf Coast and he was in Jackson. They would meet at CSJFTC when he was there for training.

**See ORTC, Page 9**



*Martha Lunsford, the mother of Sgt. Audrey D. Lunsford, reacts as the first plaque is unveiled at the CSJFTC.*



# Regan, Pyle score in rifle championship

■ Story by Amy Slanchik  
Fort Smith, Ark., Public Affairs Office

FORT CHAFFEE (KFSM) — A competition involving some of the best snipers in the world wrapped up April 24 at Fort Chaffee with two Mississippi Soldiers capturing first place.

The 23 teams have spent the past five days competing in missions and events meant to test their abilities and sharpen their combat skills.

The Winston P. Wilson Championship and the Armed Forces Skill at Arms Meeting is designed to be as realistic as possible.

"It's not the hardest thing I've ever done but it was pretty tough," competitor Christopher Regan

Some of the events were back to back, leaving little time for sleep.

It was a lot of run and gun, the overnight missions were definitely a big pain," competitor Brennon Pyle said.

Regan and Pyle from Mississippi's 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team took first place.

"We definitely didn't come here expecting to place at all. So, first was a big surprise," Pyle said after the ceremony.

"We worked together as a team pretty good, being our first time actually working together," Regan

But it wasn't all about the awards — one of the goals of the week was to learn from other military units around the country and the world.

"It's a brotherhood here too. We'll compete to a certain extent, but we are here to help each other out," Nate Carnahan said.

"If someone is falling down ... every other team out there is there to help," Matt Howard said.

"We'll pick 'em up," Carnahan said.

The National Guard Marksmanship Training Center of the Arkansas National Guard hosted the competition.

## ORTC

Continued from Page 8



Lunsford

"He spent a lot of time training here at Camp Shelby," she said. "It was a place he liked and enjoyed coming to. It's an appropriate type of building to be named after him."

Lowell Thomas Miller agreed that a training facility was perfect to honor his son. Miller, a 22-year veteran of the Navy, said military service is a hallmark of the family. Another son, Patrick, is a major and an instructor at West Point Military Academy and a daughter, Jennifer, is a chief hospital corpsman in the Naval Reserve.

"You don't raise your child to go out and die, but he was so dedicated to being a Soldier that he would go and do it again knowing what would happen," Miller said. "I'm proud of the honor they've given him to keep his name going on."

Miller said his hope is that Soldiers training at the ORTC will read the plaque and remember his son and



Miller



Rahaim

perhaps look up the circumstances of his death for study purposes.

Miller II was deployed to Iraq with the Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment on Aug. 31, 2005, when he was killed by enemy small arms fire.

Family members also unveiled the plaques of Lunsford and Rahaim.

Lunsford was deployed to Iraq with Company C, 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment on May 23, 2005, when he was killed by an Improvised Explosive Device and Rahaim was deployed to Iraq with Detachment 1, Company A, 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment on Feb. 16, 2005, when the roadway beneath his M-998 HMMWV (Humvee) collapsed while conducting combat operations. The humvee rolled over, resulting in his death.



Robinson

# 66th Troop Command joins Allied Spirit

■ *Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann  
102nd Public Affairs Detachment*

HOHENFELS, Germany – Though not on a deployment, some Soldiers of the Mississippi National Guard are far from home. They aren't enduring the hardships of a foreign war and they're not where you would expect to find these so called "weekend warriors."

The 66th Troop Command, Mississippi Army National Guard from Jackson, Miss., took part in the NATO interoperability exercise Allied Spirit I Jan. 11-28 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany.

The unit's mission was to serve as the high command and control, or HICON in army jargon, for a multinational brigade of NATO allies and partners consisting of the US Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment, augmented by units and military representatives from Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

"We're here to facilitate the information flow from all the different staff sections," said Lt. Col. Jeffery J. Files from Madison, Miss., the acting commander of Troop Command during the exercise.

"There always has to be a HICON so there is another level of staff and command that force those functions at the subordinate, training audience staff," said Maj. Michael E. Fisher, the Fires Observer, Coach and Trainer for the JMRC.

The 66th Troop Command has many subordinate units at home in Mississippi such as a theater aviation

brigade, Military Police Battalion and a Special Forces Battalion. The unit brought many full-time military employees as well as the unit's traditional, part-time staff to perform this mission.

"The good thing about Troop Command is that we have representatives that do some level of the same work, that we do here, back in the States," said Files.

The 66th Troop Command brought many people who work in these areas of expertise at home and were able to work with the JMRC in identifying how to stress the rotational training units to help them continue to develop as a staff, said Fisher.

The National Guard not only brings their Military Occupational Specialty, but their civilian skill and training as well which is a big combat multiplier in an operation like this, said Files.

The exercise also gave the 66th Troop Command the opportunity to develop because they were tasked with additional duties once they arrived.

"I'm never surprised by the professionalism of the military," said Files. "We were faced with some unexpected tasks that we were unprepared to do because we didn't know we were going to have to do them, but everybody just put their complaints aside and made stuff happen."

"The whole environment is a little dynamic and it requires people to be flexible because requirements change," said Fisher. "66th Troop Command did a great job of being flexible and adjusting to the missions so that

we could make this a successful training event."

Although, adapting to this particular mission wasn't much of a stretch for the unit in that it also provided a great opportunity for them to practice for their state mission, which is responding to emergencies.

"It relates to our mission at home," said Files. "We gain good knowledge acting as a conduit between a higher level and a lower level unit which is the same thing Troop Command would do at hurricane operations."

"It was a great opportunity for us," said Files. "We pulled it out really good and it's just a testament to the experience level that we have."



*Lt. Col. Les White, the senior intelligence officer of 66th Troop Command, Mississippi Army National Guard, which is acting as high command during Allied Spirit I, briefs the unit Jan. 23 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany. The event includes more than 2,000 participants from Canada, Hungary, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States and exercises interoperability with NATO allies.*

# *SOD South conducts air operations*

Paratroopers assigned to the Mississippi Army National Guard's Special Operations Detachment South conducted a joint airborne operation with Special Operations Command South on Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla., Feb. 25. The airborne operation was also supported by Chinook helicopters from the Magnolia State's Company B, 1st Battalion, 111th Aviation Regiment. More than 60 paratroopers took part in the exercise.



*Above, U.S. Army paratroopers board a CH-47 Chinook helicopter, assigned to the Mississippi Army National Guard, as part of an airborne operation. Below, Paratroopers assigned to Special Operations Command South jump out of the back of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter. Left, A crew chief assigned to the Mississippi Army National Guard looks on as paratroopers assigned to Special Operations Command South descend into Biscayne Bay during a water jump. (Department of Defense photos by U.S. Army Master Sgt. Alex Licea, SOC-SOUTH Public Affairs Office)*



# Warrant officers give to family of fallen hero

■ Story by Staff Sgt. William Hill  
155th Armored Brigade Combat Team

JACKSON, Miss. - When the precious life of a veteran is lost, it is a tough situation for all involved. Kacee, Ty and Brynn Blackstock of Pickens know the feeling all too well. Their husband and father, retired Army Sgt. Chad Blackstock, was killed in a car accident in April 2014.

Chad had served in the Mississippi National Guard with Bravo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 114th Field Artillery Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team. He had survived deployments in Operation Desert Storm, Panama, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was medically retired as a result of injuries suffered while deployed. The Blackstock family is still dealing with their loss, but a gift from the Mississippi Magnolia Chapter of the United States Army Warrant Officer's Association is helping to ease the burden of such a tragic event.

Warrant officers from the Mississippi National Guard saw an opportunity to help the family of a fellow Soldier and quickly jumped into action. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Rachel Henson, president of the Mississippi Magnolia Chapter, had a chance encounter with Cheryl Bruce, founder and director of the Wounded Warriors of Mississippi, in May 2014. Henson heard the story of the Blackstock family: Chad had been a wounded warrior, his 14-year-old son had won multiple rifle marksmanship awards, and his seven-year-old daughter was tops in her class academically. Henson knew that there was a way to bless this family that had dealt with such tragedy.

"Miss Cheryl told me about Chad's passing and his family's situation," said Henson, of Brandon. "I brought it to the organization and we knew it was something we wanted to do. We decided to raise money for the kids."

The Mississippi Magnolia Chapter, led by warrant officers who are all a part of the MSNG, was able to raise more than \$3,000 to donate to the family. The money was raised through a raffle, donations from local businesses, and pledges for Henson and her fellow warrant officers who ran in the Mississippi Blues Marathon. The check was presented on Jan. 10 to the family at the marathon in Jackson.

"The Mississippi Magnolia Chapter of the USAWOA was established by all junior warrant officers of the Mississippi National Guard," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Bobby Tanksley, the top-ranking Warrant Officer in the state. "They're all W2s and W1s. They stood the chapter up less than a year ago and have done great things in a short period of time - to include raising money to help



*Chief Warrant Officer 2 Rachel Henson(back) stands with the family of the late Sgt. Chad Blackstock, (from l to r) Kaycee, Brynn, 7, and Ty, 14, at the Mississippi Blues Marathon in Jackson Jan. 10. Henson and fellow military service members ran in the marathon to raise money for the family. (Photo courtesy of Mississippi Magnolia Chapter)*

the family of this fallen Soldier."

A portion of the Warrant Officer Creed states that they will, "Contribute their past experiences, service and knowledge to a dedicated effort for a betterment of the future." Henson hopes that the warrant officers who comprise the newly formed Miss. chapter have exhibited this principle in contributing to the betterment of the future for the Blackstock family.

# Malloch named Warrant Officer of Year

■ Story by Spc. Connie Jones  
102nd Public Affairs Detachment

JACKSON, Miss. - Warrant officers are the technical experts of the U.S. Army. They train Soldiers as well as coordinate and counsel during missions, yet only make up about three percent of the Army's strength.

Whenever one hears about the Army and the awards given, they usually think of non-commissioned officers and commissioned officers. Rarely do we see warrant officers acknowledged, although they play a key role in a unit's success and mission readiness, said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Bobby Tanksley, state command chief warrant officer of the Mississippi National Guard.

The Warrant Officer of the Year award was established because no award existed to recognize warrant officers.

"There are awards for best warrior competition for the enlisted and then you've got the awards for the officers. There was nothing for the warrant officers. A few years back, the command chief at that time decided that we needed to recognize our best warrant officer in the state as well as the officers and the non-commissioned officers," said Tanksley.

He and his team make the final decision for the Chief Warrant Officer of the Year Award.

"I have a board that comes together and evaluates all the packets," the Wesson, Miss., native, said. "We are looking for the total Soldier concept. We want to know what they did for the unit and how they advanced the Mississippi National Guard. We want to know about the community involvement. This board decides on our warrant officer of the year."

The winner receives the award at the National Guard Association of Mississippi state conference. Their packet is then submitted to the National Guard Association of the United States for national competition, said Tanksley.

There's a difference between this award and other military awards.

"The Chief Warrant Officer of the Year award is an award the warrant officers don't even know they are competing for," Tanksley said. "Once a year, the major subordinate commands nominate one of their warrant officers for this award. It's based on what they did the previous year and how they worked with the unit to improve it. It also takes into consideration the warrant officer's community involvement. Malloch, who won this year, is heavily involved with Boy Scouts of America."

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Malloch, of Ocean Springs, Miss., is the team chief of the 231st Engineering Detachment in Gulfport, Miss. He has been a member of the National Guard for eight years and has six years of prior service in the Navy.

"It's a huge honor," Malloch said. "The Warrant Officers are a highly skilled group. To be selected means



**Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Malloch, left, of Ocean Springs, Miss., is presented the Warrant Officer of the Year Award for the Mississippi Army National Guard by Chief Warrant Officer 5 Bobby Tanksley, state command chief warrant officer of the Mississippi National Guard. (Photo by Connie K. Reed, National Guard Association of Mississippi/Released).**

someone recognized value in what I do," said Malloch. "To be selected amongst peers, it's a very humbling experience."

Although he did not know he was nominated for the award, Malloch is aware of the things that lead his chain of command to select him.

"There were two factors that went into the selection," he said. "One was the effort put into pursuing chief warrant officer status. The other factor was outside activities."

Malloch is a Scoutmaster in the Boy Scouts of America as well as a volunteer trainer for various skills.

"Skills that Boy Scouts are taught are similar to the skills that the Army teaches. We teach land navigation and survival techniques."

This award is not to be taken lightly, Tanksley said. If a Warrant Officer is selected, it means that that they are highly regarded in their state and they have the chance to win the national award as well.

"The award says to everybody else that if I work hard and I do community projects and I show them that I am that caliber of soldier, I have the ability to be recognized of the state level as the best warrant officer in the state this year as well as on the national level," said Tanksley.

# Army Strong Bonds program provides tools for healthy relationships

■ *Story and photos by Staff Sgt. William Hill  
155th Armored Brigade Combat Team*

The Mississippi Army National Guard uses the Army Strong Bonds Program to give married service members and their spouses a fun weekend away as well as valuable training to strengthen their relationship. The chaplain-led program helps couples focus on each other and gain valuable tools for cultivating resiliency.

“Strong Bonds is not about counseling or any kind of preaching on the part of the chaplain,” said Chaplain Capt. David Morris, the program’s action officer for Mississippi. “It’s actually curriculum that we use that encompasses the whole marriage relationship. It opens up an opportunity for couples to talk about things that they might not talk about on their own.”

Resiliency is a solid component of Strong Bonds’ curriculum. Webster’s Dictionary defines resilience as “The ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens.”

This is a vital characteristic of a healthy marriage, Morris said. Soldiers and their spouses experience unique hardships that are rare in civilian life but commonplace for those in uniform. Strong Bonds helps couples navigate the rough waters of separation due to deployment or training. Extra stress from added duties and emotional issues can be huge challenges for the Soldier and their spouse. Periods of long separation often cause the greatest strain on a military member’s marriage.

There are multiple Strong Bonds programs for families to benefit from. Strong Bonds for Couples curriculum

covers topics ranging from conflict resolution to intimacy. Strong Bonds for Single Soldiers offers guidance for managing priorities and what to look for in a future spouse. Strong Bonds for families teaches how to maintain closeness during deployment and transition to and from a prolonged separation. There are opportunities for every service member to benefit from the Strong Bonds program.

The program provides time away from daily distractions to allow couples to communicate more effectively with each other. Strong Bonds began in 1997 with 90 couples participating in four events. It has since grown to over 130,000 Soldiers and family members taking part in nearly 4,000 national events annually. Studies have shown the program has had a dramatic effect on lowering the number of divorces for service members who participate. One study showed the divorce rate for members who had participated in Strong Bonds was one-third the rate of those who had not attended the program.

“It helped me and my husband out greatly after a deployment,” said Staff Sgt. Frankie Washington, of C Troop, 106th Brigade Support Battalion. “We were going downhill in our relationship and Strong Bonds helped us overcome it. We are able to handle the conflicts better because of the tools that we learned here. Would I recommend this? Yes! A thousand times over!”

The entire experience is top notch, from food, to accommodations, to presentations, Washington said.

Couples are provided a nice dinner upon arrival Fri-

**See STRONG BONDS, Page 15**

## Strong Bonds: A Soldier’s experience

■ *Story and photos by Staff Sgt. William Hill  
155th Armored Brigade Combat Team*

I had a great time at the Army Strong Bonds event in Vicksburg. My wife and I arrived Friday night at the historic Cedar Grove Inn and were treated to a fine meal that rivaled anything I could get at a five star restaurant. We almost ate ourselves sick.

We had the pleasure of meeting with other couples and eating dinner with them. The discussion was refreshingly devoid of “military speak.” We talked about our kids and how we met. It was great to get to know these people on a deeper level than just name, rank, and unit. There

**See EXPERIENCE, Page 15**



*Chaplain (Capt.) David Morris gestures to make a point during a Strong Bonds session. The program is designed to strengthen relationships while providing the couple a fun weekend away.*

## Gulfport CRTC changes command

*Col. John Ladner, outgoing commander of the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center hands the unit guidon to Brig. Gen. William Hill, new assistant adjutant general Air National Guard signifying a formal transfer of authority and responsibility June 6. (Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams, JFH-MS Public Affairs Office)*



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## STRONG BONDS

Continued from Page 14

day night. They are encouraged to eat with their fellow attendees and get to know each other. Each couple is provided a room for the weekend and five meals through Sunday lunch. Saturday morning and afternoon consists of interactive lessons on handling problems that can arise during marriage. Participants are released Saturday afternoon to prepare for a date night and enjoying time alone with each other. Sunday morning begins with breakfast and is followed by two final sessions and a boxed lunch at noon. The only expense for the entire weekend is transportation and Saturday dinner.

## EXPERIENCE

Continued from Page 14

were officers, NCOs, and enlisted but we weren't worried about that. We were all there to strengthen our marriages and enjoy ourselves. We eventually made it to our "penthouse suite" on the top floor and slept like babies.

Saturday morning we enjoyed a big breakfast in a quaint little dining room just off from the main restaurant. We then made our way up the hill to the small chapel where the classes would be held. We discussed different elements of relationships and how each one played a vital role in the big picture of marriage. We took breaks and I had to opportunity to discuss things with my wife as the morning went on. We had another big meal around noon and were able to talk about what we had learned that morning. We had a short session Saturday afternoon that discussed finances and other potential obstacles of relationships. We were done at 3pm and told to enjoy the evening with our spouse. Riverfest Vicksburg happened to be going on that weekend so we decided to walk around downtown and see all the quaint shops and entertainment. We enjoyed a late dinner and had another great night's sleep.

Spouses are able to experience a more relaxed side of the military than they may be used to. It is especially helpful for spouses who may not have much interaction with others experiencing the same struggles, Morris said.

"Being at Strong Bonds helps me bond with the family," said Kenya Washington, husband of Staff Sgt. Frankie Washington. "I use the word 'family' because these are the people that have my wife's back when she is deployed or during training. These are her brothers and sisters and I've really enjoyed it."

For more information, visit [www.strongbonds.org](http://www.strongbonds.org).

Sunday morning we got up and loaded our bags in the car before partaking in another fine breakfast. The session on Sunday morning was focused on the importance of intimacy in a marriage. The speaker presented his thoughts with a lot of humor which helped to lighten the potentially awkward topic. It was a very fruitful session and I know we all learned a lot. We wrapped up right around noon and said goodbye to our new friends we had made over the weekend. We grabbed a couple of boxed lunches that were provided and were on the road back to our kids in no time.

Overall the weekend was awesome! My wife and I spent plenty of quality time together and were able to discuss some things that can be a struggle at times when you have to deal with little blessings at home that can monopolize your time and energy. Strong Bonds has been called "the best kept secret in the Army" but I'm hoping that we can get the word out about what a great opportunity it is for service members. It was definitely a highlight for us this year and we look forward to attending again in the future.

# National Guard assists Petal construction project

■ Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams  
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

PETAL, Miss.— The Robert E. Russell Sports Complex in Forrest County is receiving improvements as more than 40 Mississippi Army National Guard Soldiers become proficient in their engineering skills.

Members of the 168th Engineer Brigade, of Vicksburg, 890th Engineer Battalion of Gulfport, 250th Engineer Detachment of Purvis and 251st Engineer Detachment of Lumberton are spending part of their two-week annual training in Petal and are providing construction assistance for the city.

“Today we are adding on to an existing complex and allowing them additional parking,” said Lt. Col. Rick Weaver, 890th Engineer Battalion commander. “We are taking a hillside that has no value to the city and turning that into a parking area where they can utilize it to enjoy the ball fields and skate parks here in the complex.”

The new chip seal parking area will be approximately 54,000 square feet and will provide 140 parking spots for motor vehicles.

Chip Seal is the application of a special protective wearing surface to an existing pavement. A dump truck full of chips (gravel) locks on to the chip spreader and is pulled backwards. A thin layer of liquid asphalt is sprayed down in front of the chip spreader. Chip sealing is cheaper than resurfacing an asphalt concrete. It is used in conjunction with new road construction to make road beds more durable, longer lasting and cost effective.

The Engineer Readiness Training (ERT) provides real training opportunities for service members and units to prepare them for wartime missions while supporting the needs of America’s communities.

Customers will have to work through Jackson’s construction facility management office located at Joint Force Headquarters, where it will be evaluated as an engineer readiness project, said Weaver.

“Engineer Readiness Training allows the National Guard, under the auspice of the adjutant general, to come in and train on their military occupational skills, but also helps civilians,” says Weaver. “So we are giving back to the community and as the National Guard that’s who we are. We are very deeply rooted with the community and this gives us the opportunity to give back.”

“Once we get assigned the mission our survey team comes out and conducts compaction testing and wetland analysis,” said Weaver.

“They answer questions such as what the drainage will be. Then they will draw up plans that we need and from there send out construction engineers to be able to create a parking lot like we’re doing today.”

According to the IRT website, military units refine their engineering, healthcare, diving and transportation skills by performing services and developing projects for communities that otherwise would not have the resources to conduct them on their own.

“We are exercising our equipment out here and we are training our Soldiers,” says 1st Lt. Thomas

Brewer, 890th Engineer Battalion project officer. “Anytime we can come out here and move some earth for a cause while at the same time train our Soldiers, it’s definitely something to feel good about.”

The Mississippi Army National Guard will provide labor and equipment to construct the new parking lot and all materials will be provided by the city of Petal.

Tom Hardges, Petal’s recreation director, says this has been in the making for several years.

“The Mississippi National Guard is preparing a parking lot for the city and this is something we have been waiting on for four years,” said Hardges. “This project will benefit the city of Petal because it allows the community see the military at work; not just in a combat situation and it will also save the city some funding.”



*Sgt. Justin Grider and Spc. James Horn, both assigned to the 168th Engineer Brigade in Vicksburg, Miss., survey an area where a 54,000 square foot parking lot will be constructed at the Robert E. Russell Sports Complex in Petal, Miss. Mississippi Army National Guard engineering units are providing construction assistance for the city during annual training.*

See PETAL CONSTRUCTION, Page 21



# Mississippi Magnolia GOLD wraps inaugural program

■ *Story and photos by Maj. Andy Thaggard  
102nd Public Affairs Detachment*

CAMP SHELBY, Miss. - Students from five Mississippi community/junior colleges and one university completed the inaugural year of a new leadership program developed and taught in association with the Mississippi Army National Guard.

"We came up with the idea of starting what we called the Mississippi Magnolia GOLD (Guard Officer Leadership Development) program, which is an ROTC-like program at all of our junior colleges across the state," said Maj. Gen. Augustus L. Collins, the adjutant general of Mississippi. "We experimented, had some pilots (programs) in the fall and spring semester this year and our plan is to expand into all of our community colleges in junior colleges in the fall 2015."

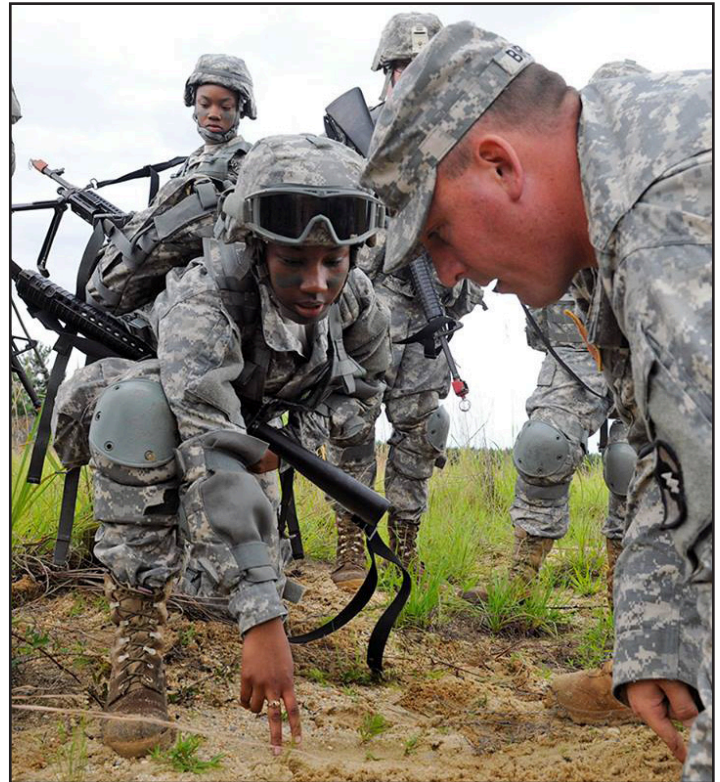
The Magnolia GOLD program is designed to immerse students into a military environment that focuses on leadership development, and the curriculum is comparable to that of first or second-year military science classes at universities.

It is open to all students, military and civilian, with no military obligation. For those interested in continuing into military career, financial aid and incentives are available once they become a member of the Guard.

The program was phased in at Jones, East Mississippi, Hinds, Northeast, Pearl River Community/Junior Colleges; as well as Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), who recently lost its ROTC program.

A total of 117 students enrolled in Magnolia GOLD, with 64 civilians and 53 military members. Enrollment was led by MVSU with 37 students, followed by Hinds at 25 students. Military members had a 96 percent retention rate.

The capstone event is a two-week annual training period, held this year on 14-30 May at Camp Shelby. All 34 participants this year were already Soldiers in either the Mississippi Army National Guard or in the Army Reserve.



*Mississippi Magnolia Guard Officer Leadership (GOLD) Program Soldiers practice tactical scenarios during annual training at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center. The program offers leadership development courses primarily to Mississippi community college students, preparing them to pursue a commission in the Mississippi Army National Guard.*

Program leadership is evaluating how civilians can participate next year.

Annual training focused on events designed to help participants not only become better leaders, but also generally better Soldiers. Events included a tactical combat course, combat lifesaver course, land navigation, a squad training exercise, and a staff ride designed to study leadership during the Vicksburg Campaign of the Civil War.

Spc. Terry C. Jackson is an information technology specialist with the Miss. Guard's 184th Sustainment Command. He is also student at Jones County Junior College.

"We help a lot on a campus, like at basketball games and football games.

"We also have a class (with) some people that aren't in the military, so we teach them courtesies and customs that the Army has. Everybody needs a look at what we do so they can fully appreciate the hard work and dedication it takes."



See MAGNOLIA GOLD, Page 20

# Recruit Sustainment Program prepares warriors for success

■ *Story and photos by Spc. Connie Jones  
102nd Public Affairs Detachment*

JACKSON, Miss. - Fear, joy and confidence are just a few of the emotions seen on the faces in a formation of colorfully dressed individuals receiving orders from two Soldiers.

Though it may look like a group of civilians standing in rows, it is actually a formation of enlisted National Guard recruits. The Mississippi Army National Guard's Recruit Sustainment Program helps to make Warriors a little more prepared before they begin their training.

Warriors go to Army Basic Combat Training where they learn basic rifle marksmanship, how to navigate with a compass and remain physically fit, as well as other basic tasks to earn the privilege of being called an American Soldier. They then move on to their Advanced Individualized Training in order to learn skills specific to their jobs so they can be all they can be when they return to their home state.

"We have this program set up to where they actually train once a month. We try to teach them some of the things they're going to need in training -the phonetic alphabet, how to tell military time, a little drill and ceremony, the different rank structures and things like that," said Staff Sgt. William C. Hale, a recruitment and sustainment noncommissioned officer at the Raymond Road Readiness Center in Jackson.

Hale has been a recruiter in Mississippi since 2008, where he has been one of the top five recruiters.

A large part of RSP (Recruit Sustainment Program) is physical training. When warriors attend basic training, they have to be able to meet the physical standards set in place by the Army. Unprepared recruits are sent home or to remedial training. RSP helps them by teaching them the exercises they will learn as well as giv-

ing them assessments.

"They do [Physical Training] on Saturday and Sunday. The beginners or Red Phase, take what is called the one-one-one assessment," Hale said.

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- Pvt. Akeem Oliver***

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This is a reduced version of the Army Physical Readiness Test that the new recruits will do when they get to basic training. It gives the warriors and the recruiters a feel for where the recruits are at physically before sending them off to basic training.

According to Hale, RSP has improved the number of warriors who make it through basic training and AIT (Advanced Individualized Training) to be handed off to their unit from 93 to 97 percent.

The warriors are divided by how long they have until they go to basic training.

"Red Phase is their very first drill after they enlist," Hale said. "We go over all of the required courses that we do every year - sexual assault, suicide prevention, the history of the National Guard. They sign initial counseling statements and they do a little drill and ceremony.

White phase are those who are waiting to go to training, he said. Some of them are in the RSP for seven or eight months. Blue phase is the last drill before they go to training.

"Gold phase is when they have completed basic training and AIT and we're waiting for them to be handed off to their unit," Hale said.

Pvt. Akeem Oliver, a Red Phase recruit from Jackson, and Pvt. Daniel Chambers, a White Phase recruit from Canton, were both excited to be



***Pvt. Daniel Chambers, of Canton, Miss., conducts physical training during the Recruit Sustainment Program drill at the Raymond Road Readiness Center in Jackson. Chambers will attend Basic Combat Training this summer.***



**Future Soldiers conduct physical training during the Recruit Sustainment Program drill at the Raymond Road Readiness Center in Jackson.**

preparing for basic training.

Both recruits felt that RSP was beneficial to new warriors for different reasons.

"I feel like RSP has helped me because I learned the Soldier's Creed. I had a test on it and I aced it," Chambers said proudly.

The White Phase warrior added that he was steadily increasing his knowledge of the Army while waiting, which he considered a weak point.

For many, however, the weakness is more physical



**Pfc. Courtney Walker, of Raymond, Miss. and Pfc. Caleb Hewitt, of Brandon, Miss., teach facing movements that are used while marching during a Recruit Sustainment Program drill at the Raymond Road Readiness Center in Jackson. These future soldiers are preparing to go to basic combat training.**

than cerebral.

"If you join the National Guard, it would be good to do this first because this will let you know whether you're in shape and it will help you to get there," said Oliver.

Oliver said he discovered he was not as physically prepared as he expected and was ready to improve.

During drill, Red, White, and Blue Phase warriors are able to talk to the recently graduated Gold Phase Soldiers for first-hand knowledge of what occurs during training.

"We give them advice on how to survive and stay motivated through the training," said Pfc. Caleb Hewitt, who was recently assigned to Headquarters Company, 185th Aviation Regiment.

The RSP also eases the minds of some parents who may have concerns with their sons or daughters enlisting the National Guard. The warriors are able to help them feel more at ease with the decision by passing on what they have learned and the benefits of being treated as a Soldier during drill weekends. The warriors also learn about the various benefits of military service, such as educational assistance.

"[My mom] did not want me to go," Chambers said. "She was scared of me getting hurt. Once I told her about the college benefits, that's what really pushed her to accept it," said Chambers.

The RSP is designed to ease the worries of warriors and parents alike by preparing them for their future in the Army. If the warriors can enter basic training already knowledgeable and physically fit, they can come home ready to contribute great work to their unit.



## 47th CST participates in readiness exercise

*The 47th Civil Support Team, Mississippi National Guard, participated in a readiness exercise in Oxford, Miss., on April 9. National Guard Civil Support Teams are the first military responder to chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear threats within their states. (Miss. National Guard photo by Maj. Andy Thaggard, 102d Public Affairs Detachment)*

## MAGNOLIA GOLD

Continued from Page 17

Of the 34 Soldiers attending annual training, 27 intend on becoming an officer in the Guard, four will remain enlisted, and three are considering the best path for them into the Army Special Forces.

Representatives from Copiah-Lincoln, Jones, and East Mississippi visited the Magnolia GOLD program during annual training.

“The Magnolia GOLD program is a good course for any person, because you’re going to learn all the skills needed in society in the workplace. Even if you don’t go into the military, employers are looking for these traits: for good character, leadership, discipline, focus, can you accomplish a mission, can you listen to supervision, show respect” said Linda Gates, the district director of job placement, workplace learning, and military liaison for East Miss. Community College.

Asked about the program’s impact on campus life, Gates said “we think that they are superb role models, and we think patriotism, citizenship, leadership, teamwork, good work ethic, and character, I mean this is what the Guard exemplifies. So we think having a (military) instructor (on campus) and having our students see them as role models is nothing but the best opportunity for us.”

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# 185th TAB takes reins in Southwest Asia

■ Story by Capt. Charles Baxter  
185th Theater Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

**SOUTHWEST ASIA** – After an extensive and rigorous training period leading up to their current deployment, the 185th Theater Aviation Brigade has taken the reins in assuming command of all aviation assets within the U.S. Army Central’s area of responsibility.

The Mississippi Army National Guard unit, with subordinate commands comprised of active Army and National Guard elements from across the U.S., was mobilized to support Operation Inherent Resolve in Southwest Asia.

While deployed, the brigade will be responsible for a wide range of aviation operations and support missions including: conducting training missions with partner countries, supporting ongoing and future operations throughout the USARCENT area of operations, and facilitating and participating in training with other U.S. services.

“It’s a really unique and challenging mission but I have confidence that the members of this brigade are prepared to perform with both perseverance and distinction,” said Col. Ronald Beckham, the 185th TAB commander.

As USARCENT’s combat aviation brigade, the unit will be responsible for conducting Theater Security Cooperation as well as providing aviation support to Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq.

“Balancing the operational requirements from the Theater Security Cooperation perspective with those presented by Operation Inherent Resolve is a top priority,” said Beckham. “We bring some of the most seasoned and well-trained aviators and support personnel that you’ll find anywhere.”

The brigade is a unique combination of active Army and National Guard units from across the U.S.



*Sgt. Phillip Sword (right) with the 185th Theater Aviation Brigade (TAB) raises the Mississippi flag at the brigade headquarters, April 20, 2015. The 185th TAB assumed the role of U.S. Army Central’s Combat Aviation Brigade and is responsible for commanding and controlling all Army aviation assets throughout the USARCENT area of responsibility. (Miss. National Guard photo by Capt. Charles Baxter, 185th Theater Aviation Brigade)*

“Everyone is jelling well and there really is a one team attitude throughout the organization,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Willie Ross, the 185th TAB command sergeant major.

The unit will command and control the 1st Battalion, 137th Aviation Regiment from the Ohio Army National Guard, the 351st Aviation Support Battalion from the South Carolina National Guard, and the 1-501st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, an active Army unit based out of Fort Bliss, Texas. Like the brigade, each battalion has elements from a number of different states.

“Bringing five states together, including the active component, and acting as one is a challenge,” said Lt. Col. Pat Durbin, the 1-137th AHB commander. “We have the ability to integrate everybody and get them on the same page to move forward to accomplish the mission. I will be extremely pleased with that. There is no doubt in my mind that we will do that,” Durbin said.

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## PETAL CONSTRUCTION

Continued from Page 16

“As a veteran, I feel that anytime we can get the Armed Forces involved some-way some-how, I think it’s a great thing for the community,” he added. “I really appreciate the Mississippi National Guard for taking on this project.”

The new parking lot should be completed within one week, weather permitting.

The sports complex is located in the city of Petal. It hosts youth baseball fields, concessions stands with press boxes, restrooms, playground, batting cages, soccer fields,

a skate park, recreation office, gazebos with tables and benches and a playground with benches.

Other annual training projects conducted by the battalion are at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center. These include creating a 300 meter VIP access road, resurfacing gravel in motor pools, adding rocks to low-lying marsh areas for low water crossings, pot-hole repair throughout the cantonment area and replacing rotten boards in the Leadership Reaction Course.



*The 890th Engineer Battalion conducted their 2nd Annual Grenadier Competition during annual training on June 19 at the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center. Teamed in pairs, each Soldier engaged pop-up targets using their rifles and launched grenades into a building with their grenade launchers. "Our Individual Weapons Qualification has gone up five percent since we've been conducting this competition," said Lt. Col. Rick Weaver, unit commander. (Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams, JFH-MS Public Affairs Office)*



# Four state Soldiers journey to islands

■ *Story by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes  
102nd Public Affairs Detachment*

BASSETERRE, ST. KITTS – Four Soldiers from the Mississippi Army National Guard participated in Tradewinds 2015, Phase One, here from May 31 to June 9 for annual training providing public affairs support of the multi-national exercise.

Tradewinds 2015 is a joint, combined exercise conducted with 19 partner nations to enhance the collective abilities of defense forces and constabularies to counter transnational organized crime and to conduct humanitarian/disaster relief operations. The exercise is sponsored by U.S. Southern Command and was hosted by the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis this year.

The Mississippi public affairs Soldiers wrote news articles and videos to promote the exercise internationally as well as supported coverage by local and regional media.

“It was exciting to me to work with many international Soldiers and different branches of the U.S. military,”

said Sgt. Tim Morgan with the 102nd Public Affairs Detachment in Jackson.

“It was interesting to see how all the different nationalities share the same goal and to see the different ways they go about completing those missions. It’s a unique perspective you can’t get at home.”

The opportunity to build professional relationships among the militaries of participating nations that can be utilized frequently in combatting transnational crime and to speed disaster response is a key element.

The exercise gives participants the opportunity to learn more about partner nations so service members learn what to expect if they are deployed to other islands and nations, said Lt. Col. Patrick E. Wallace, commander of St. Kitts and Nevis Defence Force.

“I stress that the knowledge and skill that comes from this exercise is essential,” Wallace said. “However, just as important, is the strengthening of multi-national relationships.”

The ability to train together ben-



*Lt. Col. Christian Patterson answers questions from local media during the Tradewinds 2015 Phase One exercise culminating event in Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis, on June 7. (Photo by Capt. Kayode Sutton, St. Kitts and Nevis Defence Force)*

efits those involved in case of a Regional Security System deployment. The RSS is a multi-national group of military and police units from nearly 20 Caribbean nations that collaborate to respond to emergencies.

“This year’s Tradewinds built, as they all do, on the successes of the past,” said Gen. John F. Kelly, commander of SOUTHCOM. “It tested the capabilities of all our service members.”

This year marks the 31st annual Tradewinds exercise. Phase one was held in St. Kitts and Nevis through June 9. Belize hosted phase two from June 15 – 24. Phase three will be held in Miami from July 14-16 for key stakeholders and decision makers within the region to discussion lessons learned from the exercise.



*Sgt. Tim Morgan and Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes capture video and quotes from Gen. John F. Kelly, commander of the U.S. Southern Command, during the Tradewinds 2015 Phase One closing ceremony in Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis, on June 9. The Soldiers are members of Jackson’s 102nd Public Affairs Detachment and were completing their annual training. The exercise is sponsored by U.S. SOUTHCOM (Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Christian Patterson, JFH-MS Public Affairs)*



*Sgt. Tim Morgan and Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann interview a SKNDF officer June 3 during Tradewinds 2015.*

# MARLINSPIKE 2015

*The Mississippi National Guard hosted exercise Marlinspike 2015 at the Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport on April 1.*

*More than 100 participants from across the region teamed together to practice integrated responses to maritime weapons of mass destruction threats and to establish plans for future natural disasters.*

*The participants included Civil Support Teams from the Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana Army National Guard, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Jackson County Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and other federal agencies. (Miss. Army National Guard photos by Sgt. Tim Morgan, 102nd Public Affairs Detachment)*

