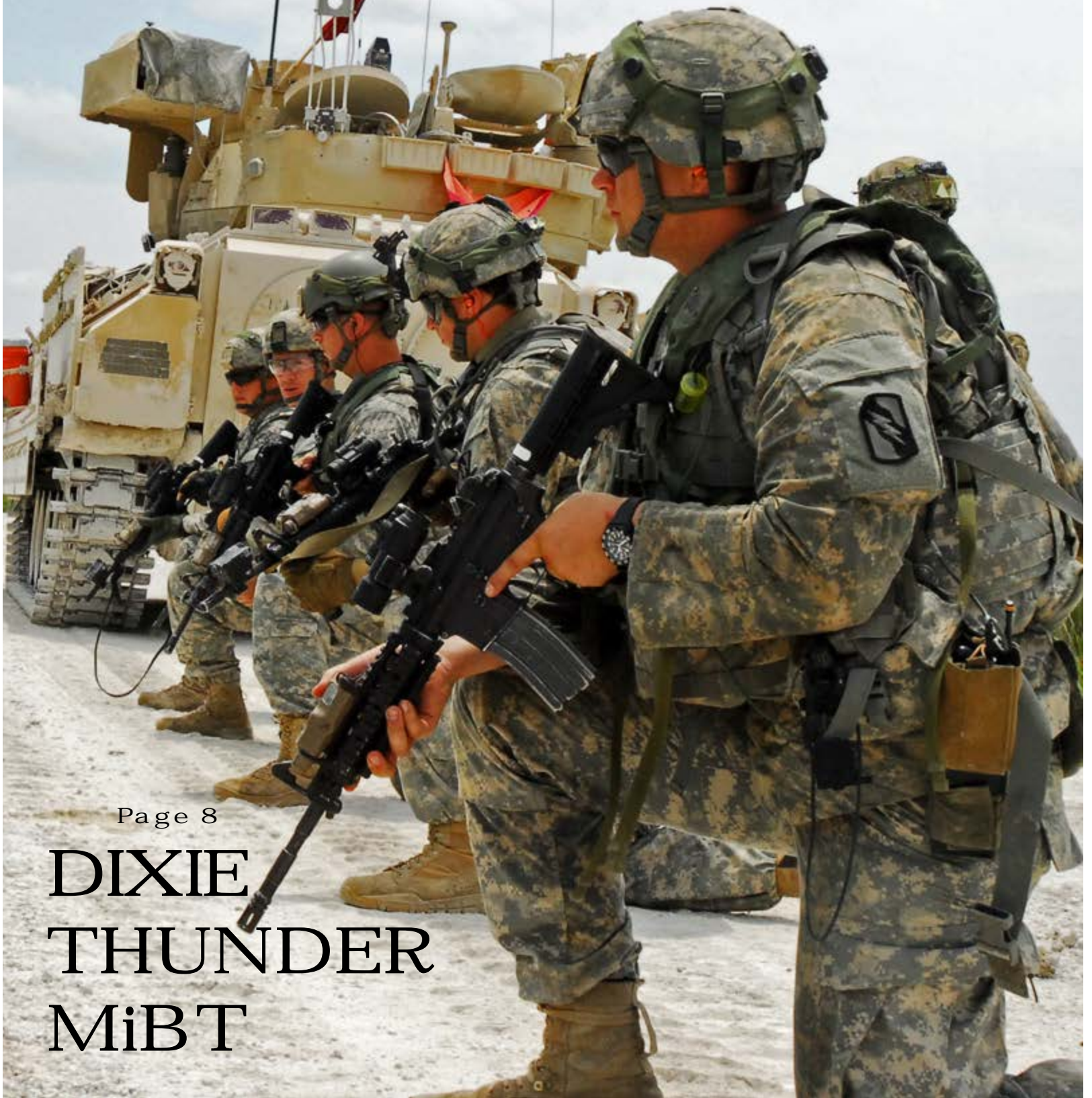


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ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

GUARD DETAIL

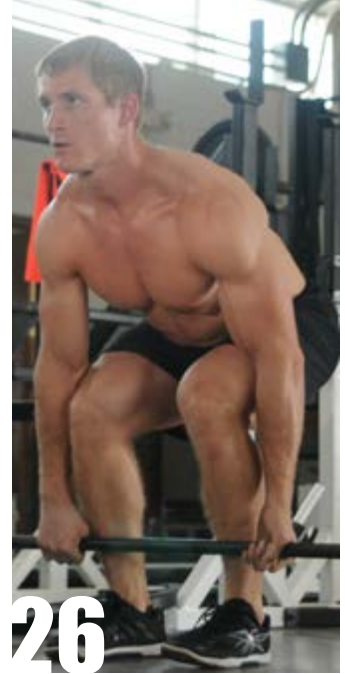
SUMMER 2016



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What is this?

Mississippi Minuteman
Summer 2016



A Quick Response (QR) code is a type of barcode that allows someone with a mobile device to scan it and be redirected to a website or other form of data. There are several free QR code readers available on the Internet for phones and tablets.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



PASS IT ON . . .

The Mississippi National Guard is full of Soldiers and Airmen with experiences that span, collectively, thousands of years. Lessons learned from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, numerous state emergencies, and from advanced professional military education opportunities are just a few elements of our overall expertise that will be very hard to replace.

As time passes, a new generation of guardsmen will fill our ranks. Gone will be the days of almost everyone with a combat patch or a Title 10 tour in defense of freedom. The years ahead will require a focused effort to provide mentorship to those who will face Mississippi and America's challenges down the road. After all, to everything there is a season and eventually new faces will take the wheel and our elder brothers and sisters will take the uniform off.

To confront this challenge, we must never waste an opportunity to pass on our expertise and wisdom. Our joint team should never waiver to stress career management and discuss best practices, leadership, and even our mistakes – to those young Mississippians who will one day run our great organization. They must understand not only what it takes to accomplish a mission, but also know the requirements to compete for full-time guard employment and how to fill the highest positions we have to offer.

Knowledge is power. What our new service members don't know can hurt them and others. In today's swift operations tempo, every piece of advice to the novice is critical. Be sure to pass on what you know to maintain our force. Your valuable counsel could be preparing a new Airman to support the next big humanitarian mission, a Soldier for a high-water rescue on the coast, or molding a future adjutant general for duty at the top.

Thanks again for reading and we hope that you enjoy this issue!

Christian Patterson

Lt. Col. Christian Patterson, APR+M
Editor-in-Chief

CORRECTION: In a photo in the "General Commends 186th ARW on Unit's Flexibility, Mobility" article in the Spring 2016 edition of the Guard Detail, Gen. Carlton D. Everhart II, Air Mobility Command commander, was actually visiting Airmen of the Year winners of the 172nd Airlift Wing as part of his visit to the state.

The Guard Detail is the official magazine of the Mississippi National Guard. It is printed three times a year with a circulation of approximately 12,500 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.

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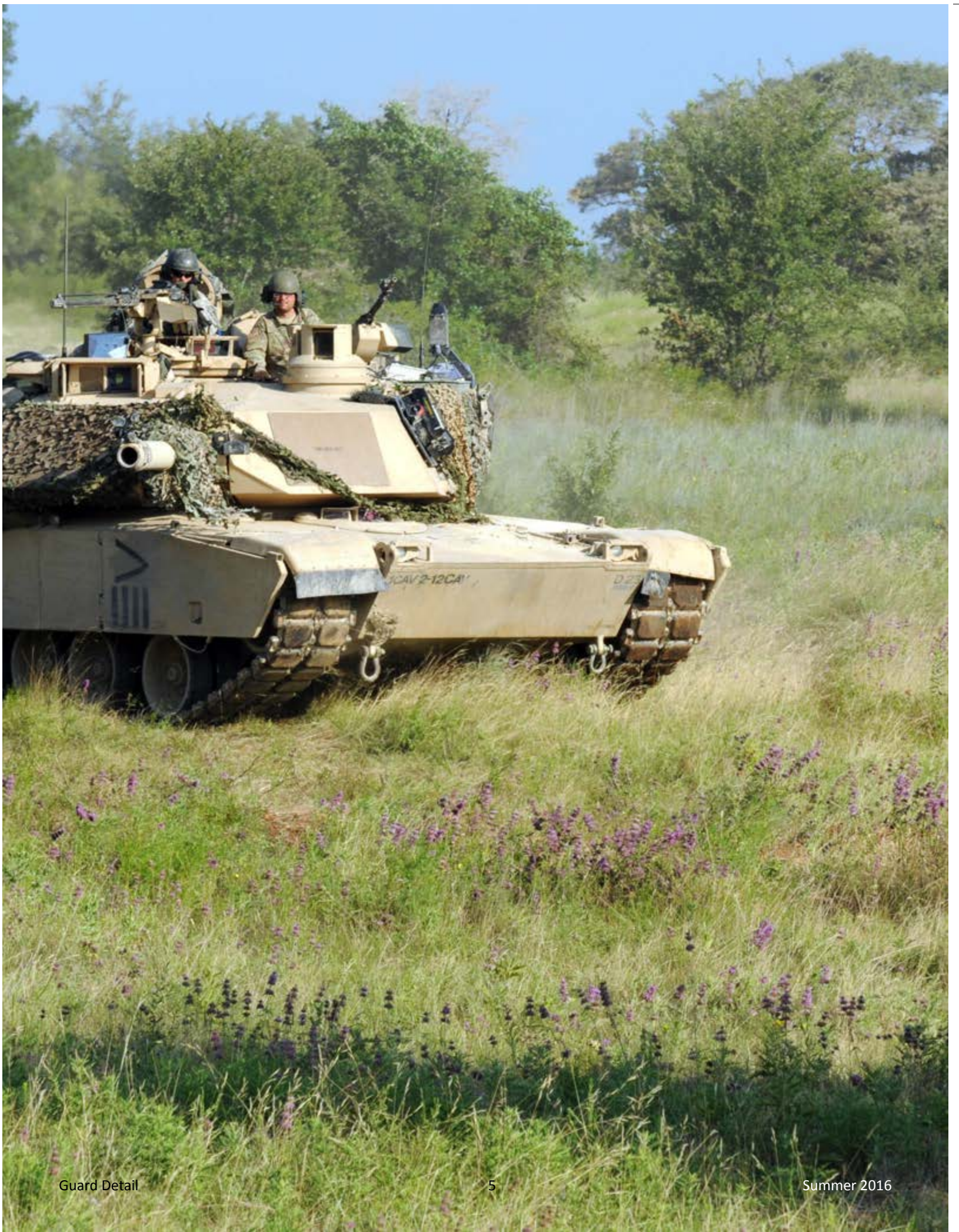
On The Move

An Abrams tank from the 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, moves to a new defensive position in response to an attack by 6th Squadron, 9th U.S. Cavalry, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, during Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training at Fort Hood, Texas, June 13. The MiBT showcases the partnership of the MSARNG's 155th ABCT and active components of the 3rd ABCT, 1st CAV and First Army, among others, to demonstrate the U.S. Army's Total Force policy. (Mississippi National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes, 102d Public Affairs Detachment/Released)



Video of the
Multi-echelon
Integrated
Brigade Training
may be
found here.





General Collins Set to Retire



Maj. Gen. Augustus L. Collins

“It has been said that “all good things must come to an end.” Well, that time has come for me. I will retire from the United States Army on Aug. 31, 2016. It is a decision that I made almost a year ago in consultation with Governor Bryant. It was never my intention to stay beyond one term, but there were some important events happening during the first half of this calendar year that the governor and I determined it was not in the best interest of the state to make a change in leadership in January. I can truly say that I have had the best job in the world. Being able to work with the best Soldiers, Airmen and civilians this country has to offer has been a rewarding experience that will never be forgotten. It has been an honor to serve with you. There is no way when I signed those papers as Private Collins that I could’ve imagined I would one day finish my career in this position. The ride has been great, the experience exhilarating and the people unforgettable.”

CAREER MILESTONES



LETTER FROM SENIOR NCO



As the Superintendent of the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron (ASOS), I welcome this opportunity to address the Airman and Soldiers of Mississippi through the Guard Detail. I have been asked to give my perspective on 238th ASOS preparations for Mississippi's National Training Center rotation. The 238th ASOS is comprised of Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) and TACP support. Our purpose is to provide communications expertise, airspace management, integration of joint fires, and precision strike control to ground combatant commanders.

Historically the 238th ASOS has a great working relationship with the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team. We deployed together in 2005 and have participated in numerous exercises, to include the recent Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training in Texas. Looking forward towards the 155th's National Training Center rotation, I see some challenges and some training objectives we can employ to overcome them.

One challenge for the 238th ASOS is the frequency with which the Army rotates individuals through leadership roles. Specifically, the staff we interact with on one exercise may be completely new at the next event. While this does pose some short term challenges, I understand how it serves the Army by developing well-rounded leaders. Fortunately, since the 238th ASOS only has one staff function to fill, our NCOs and officers are experts in that role and can assist the new Army staff members in the employment of airpower on the battlefield. The key to overcoming this challenge is continued training with command staff at every echelon to ensure a smooth battle rhythm.

With the shift in training from counter-insurgency operations to major combat operations, there are doctrinal changes in the way we must train. Communications training with high frequency radios for long distances and the use of emerging technologies for enhanced battlefield situational awareness are a must. The 238th is utilizing simulators, practical exercises, and JTAC evaluations to incorporate near-peer enemy tactics and capabilities into training scenarios. By practicing these combat skills together with maneuver units of the 155th, we will become more efficient and effective on the battlefield.

Another challenge for the 238th ASOS is manning. The training to become a TACP member is physically and mentally demanding. More than 70% of prospective candidates are unable to complete the school, presenting one of our most significant challenges. We are always looking for highly motivated, physically fit individuals capable of operating independently in various conditions. We seek the best of the best.

The 238th is constantly training for tomorrow's fight. We train to leverage combat power in support of our aligned Army units and look forward to supporting Dixie Thunder at NTC.

Brian J. Rittenhouse

Chief Master Sgt.
Squadron Superintendent
238th Air Support Operations Squadron

Dixie Thunder MiBT

Mississippi Guard challenges 1st CAV

■ *Story by Pfc. Justin Humphreys and Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes
102nd Public Affairs Detachment*

FORT HOOD, Texas – More than 4,500 Soldiers from the Army and Air National Guard, Reserve, and Active Duty components participated in Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training here June 3-24.

The MiBT showcased the partnership of the Mississippi Army National Guard and other components to demonstrate the U.S. Army's Total Force policy.

Concerns surrounding massive flooding throughout Texas prior to the event received national attention, but floodwaters receded as the Mississippi Guardsmen streamed in and actually served to enhance the experience.

"The flooding prior to the 155th's arrival at Fort Hood created an extensive amount of mud, but this did not hinder training," said Col. Doug Ferguson, who took command of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team at the end of the MiBT. "In fact, some excellent training was achieved in some real-world recovery missions because of it."

Instead, concerns shifted to ensuring Soldier safety as they trained in the sweltering 100-plus degree heat.

Units from all over the country came to help with the planning, preparation, and execution of the exercise.

"As the MiBT grew, we started seeing units from Texas, units from Puerto Rico, and units from elsewhere in the United

States coming together to make this happen," said Lt. Col. Chris Cooksey, operations officer for the 155th ABCT.

The exercise was also the first time the 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, Kansas Army National Guard, was able to train with its entire brigade since it was included in the 155th in late 2012 as a third maneuver battalion, Ferguson said.

"The 2-137th CAB is a great fit for the 155th. Thanks to the proactive efforts of both the KSARNG and the MSARNG, the 2-137th was able to integrate seamlessly into the 155th ABCT and the MiBT exercise," he said. "The MiBT was the first opportunity for the Kansas battalion to maneuver and shoot alongside the rest of the Dixie Thunder Brigade.

"The cross-state integration of the 2-137th into the 155th is a part of the Alignment Strategy of the ARNG Brigade Combat Teams that took effect in late 2012. With their proximity to Fort Riley, Kan., and their extensive history in maneuver, the Volunteer Battalion is truly an asset who the 155th identifies as an intricate member of the team."

The Mississippi Air Na-



tional Guard (MSANG) played a critical role in supporting the exercise, as they would if tasked to assist the 155th in an overseas deployment.

“The Air Guard provides the 155th ABCT with its Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC) from the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron in Meridian. We have been using these Air Guard enablers since our first deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III in 2005,” Ferguson said. “They play an intricate role not only in the way we fight, but also in our planning process. The interaction with battalion fire support planning and actual Air control on the ground with company level leaders significantly displayed the complement to our operations they bring.”

In addition to JTAC support, the MSANG’s 172nd Airlift Wing provided C-17 Globemaster lift assets to and from Fort Hood.

“These assets allowed us to move over 1,200 Soldiers from both Tupelo and the Gulf Coast to Fort Hood in a matter of hours and greatly increased the amount of time we were able to conduct mission preparation prior to the start of the MiBT exercise,” Ferguson said.

A variety of Army support units not organic to the ABCT also made the trip to Texas to sustain the MiBT.

“While we will not experience our full complement

of enablers until our National Training Center 2017 rotation, we were able to integrate some of the unique talents of the engineer and line haul assets,” he said. “These enablers proved to be valuable assets in both our fighting and logistical objectives. The MiBT exercise taught the depth and complexities of the actual integration required to deploy and utilize outside enablers into the ABCT and battalion tactical operations. The most glaring of the learning points was the time and planning required prior to the tactical deployment and the understanding of capabilities and support requirements for the specific platforms. Not having them involved in the train up maneuver time brought that to light.”

With all the different units involved, the exercise wasn’t simple to plan. In one of the state’s largest movements, Laurel’s 184th Sustainment Command tracked the movement of more than 800 vehicles and 6,000 personnel from Mississippi to Texas and sustained the force for the duration of the three-week event.

“We’ve been planning this whole exercise for about a year,” Cooksey said. “Multiple units came out here to Fort Hood countless times in the past year to plan this exercise.”



2nd Lt. Alex West, with Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 114th Field Artillery Regiment, 155th ABCT, points out a target area to Gen. Robert B. Abrams, the U.S. Army Forces commander, during the general’s Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training visit to Fort Hood June 8. (Mississippi National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann, 102nd Public Affairs Detachment) Back, Sgt. Kelly S. Polk, an assistant motor pool sergeant with Detachment 1, Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, overwatches maneuvers June 6. (Mississippi National Guard photo by Sgt. Connie Jones, 102nd Public Affairs Detachment)



Above, Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 114th Field Artillery, executes a live fire exercise on June 8 while at Fort Hood for MIBT. (Mississippi National Guard photo by Pfc. Justin Humphreys, 102nd Public Affairs Detachment/Released) Below, Soldiers of Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, Kansas Army National Guard, conduct defensive operations at Fort Hood June 12. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Wheeler, First Army Division West Public Affairs/Released)

The event was meant to be challenging for the Soldiers in the participating units.

“The conditions were set for the most complex scenario,” said Col. Brandon Robbins, commander of the 177th Armored Brigade. “The platoon and company were the focus here at the MiBT, both force-on-force and gunnery, but it starts with the individual Soldiers and the leaders who lead them. The MiBT is a way for a brigade combat team to train every system they have. Everything they do to run the operations process – planning, preparation, execution, and assessment – all the way down to the troop-leading procedures in the company, battery, and troop levels and those platoons underneath them.”

Observer controller/trainers from the 177th, an Active duty unit headquartered at Camp Shelby, advised and evaluated the participating units.

The MiBT involved many different training scenarios including moving a tactical operations center, defending a TOC, unit maneuvers, and offensive movements.

“The thing we learned here, we will one day potentially take out to the battlefield. It’s good, hands-on experience,” said Pvt. Jamarcus Smith, Battery B, 114th Field Artillery Regiment.

Capt. Deandre Eiland, 2nd Battalion, 198th Armored Regiment, agreed, adding the pairing of the Reserve and Active components in engagements gives the National Guard Soldiers an extra edge of competitiveness.

“It kind of shows you where you really stand,” he said. “It helps you really gauge how proficient you are and how well you work to match up against somebody who does this every day.”

It was an opportunity for the MSARNG’s 155th





Staff Sgt. Matthew Daigre, a squad leader with Company B, 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, points out possible Opposition Force vehicles during the MiBT, June 12. (Mississippi National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann, 102nd Public Affairs Detachment/Released)

ABCT to come to Fort Hood to train in a new environment that is more extensive than the confines of the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.

“We took the brigade combat team from Mississippi, moved it to Texas, and trained with the 1st Cavalry Division out of Fort Hood,” Cooksey said. “Here we’re able to maneuver as a company and use our maximum abilities in this massive terrain.”

The 155th ABCT and 1st CAV partnership is one of the strongest Active/Guard partnerships in the U.S. Army, which was demonstrated through joint staff training and development as well as tactical skills training.

Because the 155th was in a new territory, they also had to employ some of their basic Soldier skills.

“We train every year at Camp Shelby, but we know the place so well that we don’t even need a map. Here we had to do land navigation and we had to work on our communications and logistics,” Cooksey said.

The training exercise has been beneficial to every

active duty and National Guard Soldier as they prepare for next summer’s visit to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

“In many ways, the MiBT exercise will go a long way in setting expectations for the fast-approaching NTC rotation,” Ferguson said. “While the 155th has not conducted training at Fort Hood in almost 25 years, since the Operation Desert Storm mobilization, the MiBT experience gave the 155th a subtle reminder of how important it is to conduct effective user-level maintenance and how fortunate we are to have our Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site support teams. With that said, the MiBT exercise achieved exactly what my predecessor, Col. Jeff Van, engineered it to do: strengthen the Total Army Force relationship with the 3-1 Cavalry Brigade and provide an austere and spacious training environment where the 155th could better empower its battalion and companies to train lethal platoons, build functional staffs, exercise mission command, and protect and sustain the force.”



ricks brothers transmit in stereo

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

*I will look out
for him no
matter what.
Anything could
happen and
as long as
my brother
is OK,
everything
is fine.*

- Spc. Artis Ricks

FORT HOOD, Texas – The Ricks brothers have been inseparable since birth, even entering and serving in the same Mississippi Army National Guard unit together.

Identical twins, Alex and Artis, mirror each other in nearly every way. At 5'4", Alex is slightly taller than his 5'2" brother, but slimmer in the face. They share many of the same likes and dislikes, and both are outgoing and engaging. Both serve in Company B, Special Troops Battalion, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, as multichannel transmission system operator/maintainers who establish and monitor radio transmissions for the brigade.

"We are a lot alike," Artis said. "Some people say I'm the more aggressive one. I tend to make my point known and try to get my point across as firmly as possible. He's more tentative than I am. And his favorite color is red, mine is blue," he said and laughed.

At 21-years-old, the twins have rarely been separated for more than a few weeks.

"If I'm not at work, I'm at home with my brother. It's a love-hate relationship. When I'm around him and it's just me and him, I can't stand the guy," Artis said with a grin. "But when it's us against everybody else, he's my best friend in the world. I would never 'not' want him around me. You know his background and you can share everything. There's just a level of trust you can't get anywhere else. I can feel what he's thinking and we often say the same things at the same time."

The Meridian High School graduates enlisted together on Dec. 16, 2011.

"(We went to the see the recruiter) at the same time, same day, and we probably wore the same outfit," said Alex. "We were 17, low on money and we needed something to do. So it was pretty much out of boredom. Artis was like, 'Do you want to join the military' and I said, 'Well, I don't have anything to do today.'"

Their father's service in the MSARNG influenced their decision to enlist in the Army, but their decision of



Artis Ricks conducts a radio check while establishing a retransmission site in the field during MiBT.



Alex Ricks pounds a stabilizing stake in the ground for a communications antenna while building a Tactical Operations Center during MiBT at Fort Hood, Texas.

job specialty was more geographical.

"We wanted to be on the same team," Alex said. "We wanted to be at drill together, so we picked our hometown of Meridian and that so happened to be Signal. Now that I'm in it I can't complain. It's pretty tough when we first get out here – trying to set everything up - but once everything is in, it's the easiest job on Earth. I just maintain and maintaining is easy."

The recruiter arranged for them to ship for basic training at the same time and the bond between them grew stronger through the rigors of becoming Soldiers.

"We didn't have a tough time, really," Alex said. "We smiled all the way through. We actually got in trouble for being too happy a lot of the time. We got in trouble for singing during basic training and had to do push-ups all night, but we made sure we had a smile on our faces. I could not, 'not' be happy when I was around my brother at basic training."

"For the first three weeks of basic training, they did not know one of us existed," Artis added. "They thought Ricks was just one person and it worked out pretty fine until they realized it; and then they started to pick on us and throw some things at us to see how we could handle

them. When times get hard, like you get a letter from home that you don't really like or the drill sergeants are picking on you and you don't really have anyone else to talk to, I always had my brother. It really helped out a lot to keep my morale boosted."

The brothers also drove each other to strive harder through natural sibling competitiveness.

"That's how you get better with anything," Artis said. "If you have somebody to have competition with, he does better and that makes you do better; and you achieve greatness at that point. And we're the best. When I was at basic and AIT, I tried to have a better (physical fitness) score than he did. I tried to do better in classes."

The twins were separated for a month before relinking at Advanced Individual Training at the U.S. Army Signal School at Fort Gordon, Ga.

The brothers said the bond they share is similar, but stronger, than those shared by their fellow Soldiers in the 155th ABCT.

"Some of the Soldiers, we have a great bond," Alex said. "But there's a level of strength you get because he's your brother. When I'm with these guys I trust them, too, so I can share information with them and they can share information with me. It's always good to not be alone and to have a companion. I just so happen to have a twin so I'm never alone and it just makes you feel better. It makes things a little easier on you."

It's a fact both say they were grateful for in June during the 155th ABCT's Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training at Fort Hood, Texas.

"It's been a challenge," Artis said.

He was separated from his brother at a retransmission site on a mountain, while Alex was working on the main

antenna at the brigade's Tactical Operations Center - but the distance seemed much longer.

"I will look out for him no matter what. Anything could happen and as long as my brother is OK, everything is fine," Artis said, adding that something feels missing when they are separated.

"We only butt heads at home. When we are out here, we're best friends. It's us against everybody else out here," Alex agreed.

The brothers may have joined the Army National Guard on a whim, but the military has become a major factor in their lives and they plan to stay with it.

"We definitely plan on staying here as long as they will keep us," Alex said. "This is something that once we got into it, we said this could be a good life for us and help us to maintain the lifestyle we have. So, I don't see turning it down anytime soon."

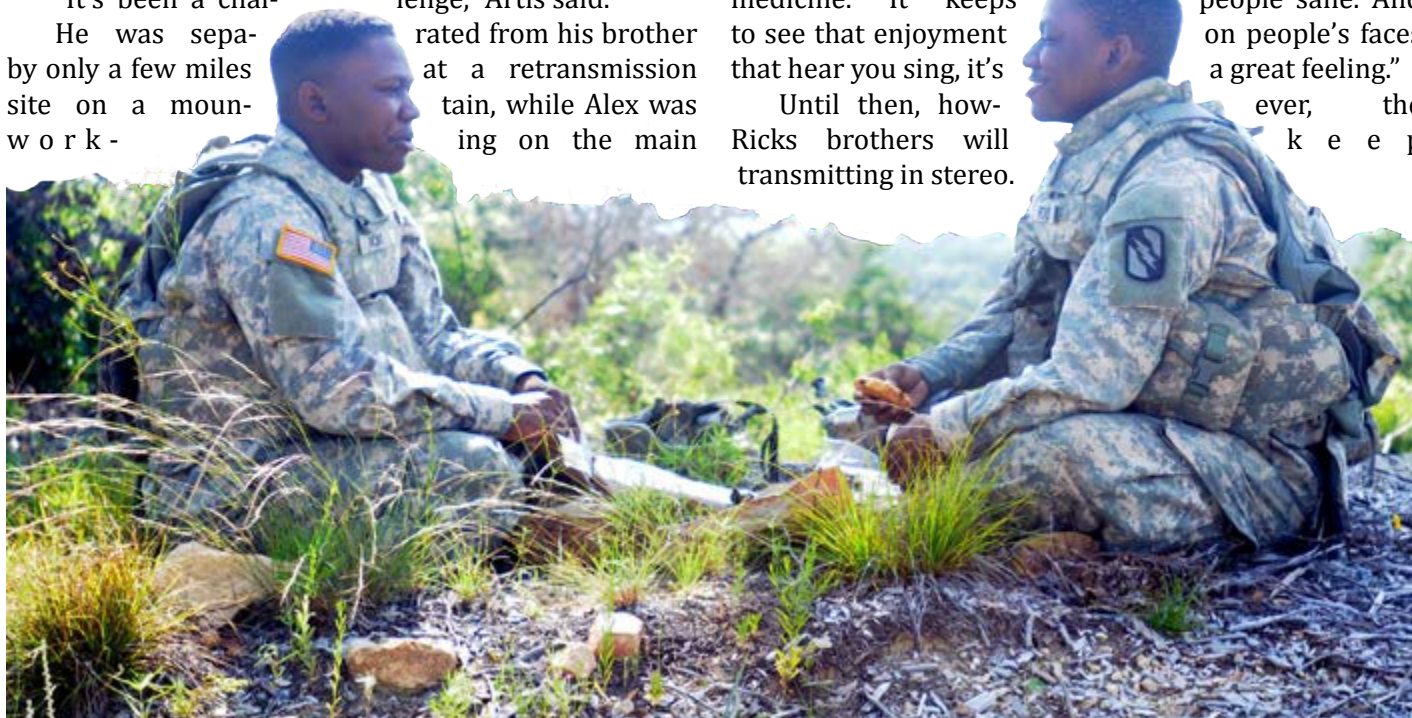
Both plan to make a career of the Army and realize at some point those paths may take them in different directions, but it is an adjustment they are already coping with in their civilian lives.

Alex works as an officer at a correctional facility while Artis works for Federal Express Ground.

Both, however, are pursuing careers at Meridian Community College. Alex started as a music major, but changed to criminal justice to advance his civilian career. Artis is seeking a music education degree with plans to attend Mississippi State University.

"The emotion that you can portray while singing is something that you just can't get anywhere else," Artis said. "I think music is the best medicine. It keeps people sane. And to see that enjoyment on people's faces that hear you sing, it's a great feeling."

Until then, however, the Ricks brothers will keep transmitting in stereo.



Artis and Alex Ricks enjoy a brotherly lunch in the field during MiBT at Fort Hood, Texas, June 11.



Air Force Tech. Sgts. Jim Buckley and Kole Nail, both Joint Terminal Attack Controllers with the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, discuss possible targets with Army Spc. Antwyn Sutton and Pfc. Tyler Davis, both cavalry scouts with 1st Squadron, 98th Cavalry Regiment, June 12 at Fort Hood, Texas. The JTAC Airmen assisted the 155th ABCT during the unit's Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training, which sustains readiness of the reserve and active components.

Brigade Calls in Air Support for Advanced MiBT Exercise

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

FORT HOOD, Texas – Mississippi National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are training together in the Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training exercise, June 3-24 at Fort Hood, Texas.

Airmen with Meridian's 238th Air Support Operations Squadron are getting to practice their skills while supporting their Army colleagues, the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, in the force-on-force training by helping them integrate all of their air and indirect fire assets, also known as "fires."

"The Army tends to think only of their organic fires like mortars and artillery," said Tech. Sgt. Jim Buckley, a Joint Terminal Attack Controller, from Panama City, Fla. "We think about the whole air space. We can manage all those assets for them. We will come in and say 'Hey, we will take over that bird and you guys do what you need to do.'"

"We can bring a lot to the fight," said Tech. Sgt. Kole Nail, a JTAC from Meridian. "We control Combat Air Support, Electronic Warfare and Close Combat Attack platforms."

The JTAC Airmen help contribute to the fight at all levels by being able to advise command staff and also call for fire directly from the battlefield.

"We are an interchangeable piece," said Nail. "We can plug and play anywhere. We have people from corps all the way to platoon levels."

Being able to adapt and work in different groups lets the 238th ASOS Airmen support several units. They not only support Mississippi's 155th ABCT, but also train and deploy with active and National Guard units such as the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team from Arkansas, the 35th Infantry Division from Kansas, and others.

The unit's training with the 155th ABCT for the MiBT will enable them to better integrate and be more familiar with each other's missions in the future.



The Logistics Support Area provided Soldiers with living conditions similar to those they would endure during an overseas deployment, with living tents, shower facilities, a dining facility and mobile exchange.

Beans, Bullets, Band-aids

184th Plans Largest Troop Movement in Years

■ **Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Veronica McNabb**
184th Sustainment Command Public Affairs

“Ever There” is the 184th Sustainment Command motto. In June, Laurel’s 184th SC supported a Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training (MiBT) event for the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team in preparation for a National Training Center rotation next year at Fort Irwin, Calif.

The 184th SC’s mission was to provide sustainment to 155th ABCT personnel participating in the exercise which included movement tracking, in-processing, billeting, and coordinating essential services. All of these operational tasks were designed to meet the strategic intent of the Army. It’s Total Force policy emphasizes the ability to conduct mission command and integrated training.

Leaders who participated in the MiBT planned for more than a year to ensure the operation would be successful and the units would accomplish the desired mission and training. The endstate is that the participating units would be at a higher level of readiness and complete a proof of principle with the National Guard drawing active duty equipment on an active post.

“Ultimately, we believe every dollar committed

to this type of training results in Soldier, as well as civilian, lives saved by providing the most realistic training available” said Brig. Gen. Gregory L. Kennedy, commander of the 184th SC.. “Although this type of training has only been done once before, we have scrutinized both our State’s plan as well as our logistical plans which provided greater benefit with our partners as well as improve efficiency on how we accomplish these types of missions.”

The 184th Movement Control Center (MCC) was integral in setting the stage for a brigade-sized element’s movement of personnel and equipment. The MCC also maintained flexibility and communication as the brigade moved to Fort Hood. The coordination and synchronization required to be able to move over 800 vehicles and more than 3,000 personnel had not been done within the Mississippi National Guard in 25 years.

For the 155th units traveling to Fort Hood, the drive took two days to complete. Remain-over-night (RON) sites were established by the 184th and supported by higher level MSNG resources. These sites provided a place for Soldiers to relax and rest between convoys, some having driven for over 12 hours. RON sites, as they are called, also provided limited mainte-



Col. Cheryl Anderson (right), chief of staff, 184th Sustainment Command, briefs Maj. Gen. Elizabeth Austin (left), assistant deputy commanding general, Army National Guard, Army Material Command, on the logistics employed to move more than 3,000 Soldiers of the Mississippi National Guard from their home state to Fort Hood, Texas, and sustain them during the weeks of MiBT. (Mississippi National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes, 102nd Public Affairs Detachment/Released)

nance services as well as life support functions.

“You can talk about us, but you can’t talk without us” said Staff Sgt. Erik Puder who is a member of the Joint Communications Team. Puder worked side by side with Mississippi Air National Guard members who also supported the MiBT and helped provide internal communications support throughout the exercise.

The 184th was responsible for the overall setup and the establishment of the Logistics Support Area (LSA) as well as maintaining its operations. Approximately 3,000 military service members experienced living conditions similar to overseas deployments areas, which allowed leaders to focus on the upcoming mission and training requirements.

Mississippi convoys traversed three states to arrive at the LSA at Fort Hood, Texas. Every Soldier and Airman who arrived for the exercise were in-processed and briefed by 184th personnel. They received information about the surrounding area, access to support services, and risks associated with training. These operations provided vital information and allowed MiBT participants to focus on the mission ahead.

To support the total Soldier, the LSA also provided a variety of services designed to meet certain needs. These included Chaplain services, legal support, higher level administrative services as well as communications support.

Chaplain Capt. Heather Duff, of the 184th SC said “Often times prayer, water and a couple hours’ sleep

are all a Soldier may require to keep them mission oriented, focused and combat efficient.” In many instances this was the case for those either arriving or returning to the LSA, so it was important for logisticians in the 184th that they remain a consistent presence.

In an exercise of this magnitude, Soldiers must display endurance required for fast paced transitions and changing mission requirements. For many it pushed Soldiers to perform as if they were on a battlefield, which is the goal in increasing Soldier survivability. Although these efforts present heightened risks and challenges such as dealing with unfamiliar terrain and warm temperatures, it didn’t deter Soldiers from striving for excellence and meeting their warfighting goals.

This intense training was added to benefit Soldiers at all levels. Within the next year, both the 155th ABCT and the 184th SC will continue to work together to prepare for future training at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., where these types of operations will continue to intensify. None of this training would have been possible without the dedicated Soldiers of the Mississippi National Guard.

“The key to the success was driven by leadership, which speaks volumes of our NCO corps, who make everything happen,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffery L. Riggs, of the 184th SC. “I’m very proud of the Soldiers who participated in this exercise as they continue to display why the 184th will always be ‘Ever There.’”



Operations Officer-in-Charge Lt. Col. William Walley and Sgt. First Class Robert “Joey” Decuir, non-commissioned operations officer, both with the 184th Sustainment Command, discuss information about sustainment for the 155th ABCT and supporting units while they occupy the Logistical Support Area. The LSA is a temporary living area where Soldiers are provided with hot meals, laundry, air-conditioned sleeping quarters, and a mobile PX during training.

Guardsmen's Dream Goes

GLOBAL

■ **Story by Tech. Sgt. Ed Staton**
172nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

When Mississippi Air National Guardsman Lt. Col. Christopher Powe is working at his civilian job, it's not uncommon for his customers to have to struggle through smoke, scream over sirens or quickly react to medical emergencies just to be able to communicate with him.

These difficult circumstances would likely drive most customers away from businesses. However, it's those adverse situations that have people lining up to receive the extraordinary training from Powe's Global Training Institute (GTI).

"Over the years, working at (University of Mississippi Medical Center) and having a passion for teaching kept me trying to think of a way I could bring a training center to Mississippi," Powe said. "I stepped out on a leap of faith, but felt that God had my back."

With 27 years of experience as a trauma critical-care nurse practitioner, a doctorate in clinical health sciences from UMMC, and combat experience in Iraq, Powe provides a wealth of knowledge and experience



Christopher Powe

to GTI students.

In September 2015, Powe left the security of his civilian employment and joined his father in forming GTI, one of the four largest simulation centers in the nation. GTI offers advanced training for healthcare professionals, military personnel, law enforcement, and fire service first responders. Despite the monetary risk of opening this expensive business, that now includes his wife Robin on the staff, he was determined to pursue his goal.

"Our passion is to bring high level training to those that normally wouldn't have it," Powe said. "This shows how real-life training can affect lives in a meaningful and powerful way."

Located in a more than 10,000-square-foot facility in Canton, Miss., GTI serves as another example of how Guardsmen can make a positive impact on their community through their civilian careers while also serving as a part-time Airman. The facility is one of the largest surgical simulation and training centers in the nation and boasts two fully functional operating rooms, hands-on laboratories, and a full array of cutting-edge equipment.

GTI's stated mission is "to



Students work their way through a simulated combat bomb site to save lives using the advanced techniques taught in the Global Training Institute's fire/smoke room. (Courtesy photo)

provide state-of-the-art educational experiences which promote quality, safety and competency among these professions." Additionally, the veteran-owned company works to promote the health, welfare and safety of patients and professionals who serve.

The numerous classes available provide hands-on training that often goes beyond a classroom environment. Students taking a class in the Spring on the extraction of occupants during a fire or active shooter training found themselves introduced to a scenario that requires quick thinking, combined with fast action in a stress-induced environment. In addition, training opportunities with cadavers offer added realism.

"The facility itself provides an environment that is 'safe,'" Powe said. "We don't judge our students here. We allow them to make mistakes, show them the mistakes, and train them to further develop their skills."

The life-saving impact of training provided by GTI personnel became evident when Mississippi Highway Patrol Special Weapons And Tactics team members were involved in a March 2016 shootout in Tishomingo County. Three of the SWAT team members were injured. One of the SWAT team members was shot in the leg and used a tourniquet technique that he learned at GTI to stop the bleeding, which saved his life. News of the life-saving measures quickly spread to Gov. Phil Bryant, who visited the GTI facility.

"The value of this training is evident," Bryant said while touring GTI's facilities. "(The trooper) would not have been able to stand; he would have not been able to hug his wife and family without the training."

Since GTI's opening nearly a year ago, more than 1,150 medical and law enforcement personnel have been trained at the facility. A contract awarded by the National Guard Bureau will enable them to train 25 students from the Flowood, Miss., based 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron in August. The Airmen will train on handling patients in ambulances, helicopters, Humvees and in emergency rooms through different scenarios.

"As an Iraq veteran, I have 12 years of service in the Air National Guard," Powe said. "It is overwhelming to have the privilege to translate a lot of the military expe-



Lt. Col. Christopher Powe teaches tracheotomy techniques to secure a patient's airway passage. (Courtesy photo)

riences I have and bring them back to the United States, particularly my brothers and sisters in the Air National Guard in Mississippi. It will be an honor to share that knowledge and experience with young Airmen who will go on to defend Mississippi and our nation."

Powe credits the late Mississippi Air National Guard (MSANG) commander, Maj. Gen. Catherine Lutz, for her role in helping the dream of GTI to first take root. It was Lutz who approached Powe and convinced the 33-year-old McComb native that his skills were needed by the MSANG. It was in the role he gained as a critical-care instructor at the 172nd Medical Group that he realized he had a passion for sharing his medical knowledge with others.

"I realized we needed to train the professionals in a private setting," said Powe. "I realized there were a lot of obstacles to do that, but our passion for training quality patient-outcomes is really the emphasis for the whole business."

Engineering life outside a name



Mays throws baseball a curve

■ *Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams*
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

When the name Willie Mays enters a conversation, there's an immediate connection with Major League Baseball. But for one Mississippi Delta resident, having that same name doesn't mean living up to the hype of playing baseball, it means living a simple life and serving your country.

Capt. Willie Mays Jr. is a Mississippi Army National Guardsman who is assigned to the 168th Engineer Brigade, headquartered in Vicksburg.

The Calhoun City native can be found coaching youth league baseball with his son Myles, who is a third baseman. Not only is the engineer a youth baseball coach, but he is also a Physical Education teacher and basketball coach at Bruce High School.

Having the same name as the former San Francisco Giants great, Mays said he thinks it's exciting his name is

associated with the former Major League Baseball stand-out.

"My dad was named after the baseball player; not me," said Mays. "Growing up with that name was pretty cool. If you think about it, it's associated with someone who arguably is one of the greatest baseball players of all time."

Willie Howard Mays Jr., the baseball player, was a center fielder who spent 22 seasons in MLB. Nicknamed "The Say Hey Kid," Mays was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1979, during his first year of eligibility. He is one of five National League players to have eight consecutive 100-RBI seasons with 50 home runs between 1955 and 1965.

"Most of the time, when I tell people my name, I know what the next question will be - are you related?" he said.

Mays is almost an 18-year veteran of the Mississippi Army National Guard (MSARNG). He joined the Guard in 1998 after his junior year at Calhoun City High School.



Mays coaches his children in little league play.

His military interest grew after observing several engineering missions being executed throughout the area he grew up in.

“I saw a lot of things they were doing in the community and in the parks,” said Mays, who holds degrees from Mississippi State University and Arkansas State University. “A lot of people in my community were in the

Guard and the armory was about two miles away,” said Mays. “I wanted to learn how to drive those pieces of engineer equipment.”

Mays enlisted in the MSARNG as an engineering specialist in 1998. Ten years later, he received his commission in the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps at Mississippi State University as a second lieutenant. Currently, Mays serves as an engineer officer. For the past five months, he has been performing duties with the brigade’s Survey and Design team after transferring from the 223rd Engineer Battalion, headquartered in West Point.

“We build plans and blueprints,” said Mays. “For instance, we would build and provide plans for a horizontal company that wants to construct a road. We would go out and survey the road, set the outer limits and test the soil.”

Engineers build anything and everything the Guard needs. From surveying and bulldozing to framing and wiring, these service members are responsible for completing construction and demolition projects of any size from beginning to end. These missions can range from

paving roads to setting up fortifications for hundreds of military personnel.

As for Mays, he feels you can’t strike out as an engineer in the Guard.

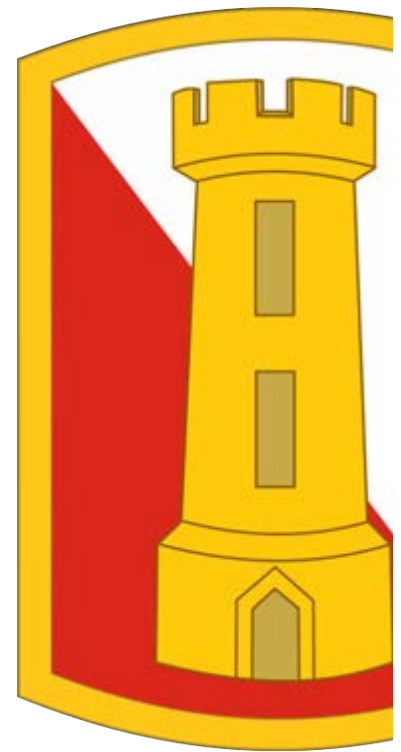
“This is a great field to be in, especially in Mississippi,” said Mays, “because there are a lot of engineer units in the state. If you dive into it and learn it, it’s a (military occupational specialty) that’s transferrable into the civilian world. Once a Soldier gets ready to get out of the military, they can take that experience into the civilian sector. You can go to any construction company or you can work for the Corps of Engineers.”

Mays said he has no regrets with his decision to join the MSARNG and encourages everyone to step up to the plate.

“I think the military is a good career,” said Mays. “In September, I will have 18 years of service. It (the military) has helped me get through college. The military is a part of me. It has afforded me to do a lot of things, such as going to college and getting bachelors and masters degrees and buying a home. I would tell anybody that thought about joining the Guard to just do it.”

There are connections between military service and playing a team sport. When asked what Mays thinks are some ties between a successful military career and baseball, he spoke about three things.

“The structure, hard work and discipline are very important traits that carry over from military experience into the sporting world to help children be successful,” said Mays.



Interested in Engineering?

Here are the requirements to be a part of the MSARNG’s Engineer community!

- Combat Engineer (12B): You must have a CO of 87 and a GM of 90
- Plumber (12K): You must have GM of 88
- Horizontal Construction Engineer (12N): You must have a GM of 90
- Interior Electrician (12R): You must have an EL of 93
- Technical Engineer/Surveyor (12T): You must have a ST of 101
- Concrete/Asphalt Equipment Operator (12V): You must have a GM of 90
- Carpentry and Masonry Specialist (12W): You must have a GM of 90
- Geospatial Engineer (12Y): You must have a GT and ST of 100



Sgt. 1st Class Bond

For more information, contact Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Bond, MSARNG Recruiting and Retention NCO at 601-313-6499, thomas.h.bond14.mil@mail.mil.

Alexander sets milestone as female engineer



■ Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

A Wiggins native is making a name for herself as she exceeds her own expectations in the Mississippi Army National Guard (MSARNG).

Lt. Col. Joy Alexander is the commander of the 223rd Engineer Battalion, headquartered in West Point. She is the first female MSARNG engineer officer to command the battalion.

Last year, when the announcement was made that she would assume the role, a sense of joy overwhelmed her.

"Having the honor and privilege to be selected to command any unit is quite spectacular," said Alexander. "As far as being the first female to command the 223rd, all I can say is that I hope it motivates and encourages more females to give the engineer branch more consideration for their military career choice."

Alexander says her responsibility as a battalion commander is to provide vision and guidance, mentor, coach and train subordinate company commanders and staff officers.

"My number one career goal upon becoming a commissioned officer was to be a battalion commander," said Alexander. "Honestly, I could hardly contain my excitement and disbelief. Once I realized I had achieved my career goal, I now focus my efforts on 'leading leaders' and now I'm making preparations to do just that."

Twenty-six years ago, Alexander enlisted into the U.S. Army Reserves' 304th Field Hospital, in Gulfport, as an X-ray Specialist. It didn't take her long to realize that

there was something special about being commissioned in the military. After joining the University of Southern Mississippi Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), she narrowed her desired branch opportunities down to two - logistics or engineers.

Alexander said engineering provided an interesting career path for her.

"When I decided to become a commissioned officer, engineers had a better career progression path," said the 26-year veteran. "Fortunately, all the units around the area in which I live just so happen to be engineer units that belong to the Mississippi National Guard."

Col. Trent Kelly, 168th Engineer Brigade commander said he's known Alexander for nearly 14 years and he knows she's a great leader.

"I've known Joy since she was my battalion S-3 before we deployed to Iraq in 2009 with a different unit," said Kelly. "Joy is a fine example of what an officer should be."

He said Alexander places Soldiers and her unit first and nothing

can be better than that.

While some adjust to women in leadership roles, they are breaking down gender boundaries in the military. The number of women in senior leadership positions has increased during the past years.

More than 200,000 women are in the military. Among the top ranks, 69 of the 976 generals and admirals (or 7 percent) are women. There were 28 female generals in the Air Force, 19 in the Army, one in the Ma-

If we have Soldiers like this in our formations, does it really matter what gender or race they are?

- Lt. Col. Joy Alexander

rine Corps and 21 female admirals in the Navy, according to Pentagon figures.

Enlisted women make up 2.7 percent of the military's frontline units. Until recently, women were barred from the infantry, but were allowed to serve on gun and air crews. Among officers, women represented 5.4 percent of those involved in "tactical operations."

Despite the restrictions, women made up 67 of nearly 3,500 Americans lost in hostile fire in Iraq and 33 of the 1,700-plus killed in combat in Afghanistan. Additionally, more than 600 others in Iraq and 300 in Afghanistan were wounded.

"I am frequently asked about my opinion of women in the military, in combat roles, in key leadership positions and in other non-traditional assignments," said Alexander. "Let me just explain it this way.

"What type of Soldiers do leaders want in their formations? We want Soldiers who have a desire for military service," said Alexander. "A Soldier motivated to achieve success. A Soldier willing to do what is necessary to complete the mission. A Soldier proud to serve. A Soldier who lives the Army Values. A Soldier determined to be their personal best. A Soldier who understands the often difficult requirements to do the job, yet chooses to try anyway.

"If we have Soldiers like this in our formations, does it really matter what gender or race they are?" said Alexander. "I don't think so. There are so many women out there who are true trail blazers, not in an effort to prove themselves better than their male counterpart, but the effort is to prove they can achieve things they had been told they couldn't."

Alexander also cited a litany of Army leaders, who influenced and mentored her throughout her career. She also named her own father, who steered her towards an Army career.

"I have had some of Mississippi's finest leaders in my chain of command, They were able to instill in me a desire to achieve the next level of education, of leadership, of promotion and of assignment," said the Stone High School biology teacher. "Their influence is an integral part of my leadership development and style."

Alexander says the only obstacle in her 26-year military career that made her want to walk away was when she experienced motherhood.

"Nothing I have ever experienced prepared me for the overwhelming responsibility of motherhood. All I can say is that the reason I have enjoyed the successes I have is because of my mother, my sisters, my brothers, and my family and friends who helped my children, Victoria and Nicholas, live stable, grounded and routine lives."

From 1998 to 2005, several life changing events took place in her life. Becoming a mother in 1998, a second



Lt. Col. Joy Alexander is the first female officer of the MSARNG to command an engineering battalion.

child in 2001, divorced in 2002, mobilizing to Iraq in 2003, and then there was Hurricane Katrina in 2005. For some, it might feel like their life is spiraling out of control. But Alexander gives credit to her family for support.

"My children had been through enough turmoil in their young lives," said Alexander emotionally. "I didn't have the heart to keep making their life so difficult, because being a single mom during that extremely trying period was the most difficult and most challenging thing I have ever endured."

It was a struggle, the children admitted, but it also helped shaped them.

"Growing up with a single parent living in the household is hard, but having that parent serve in the military is even harder," said Victoria, who is a freshman at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College's Perkinston Campus. "She has to spend so much of her time away from us for training, or even worse, on long deployments. Aside from the bad, it has done nothing but make our entire family so much closer and stronger! I've never been more proud of my mom ... my hero."

Nicholas, who is a sophomore at Stone High School, said he is the person he is today because of her and he wouldn't have it any other way.



HUNTING KONY:

MSARNG Special Forces Deploy to Locate War Criminal

■ **Story by Kevin Maurer**
Journalist and author

The charismatic Joseph Kony founded the LRA in response to widespread atrocities committed by a rebel movement active in Uganda in the 1980s, the National Resistance Movement. Kony claimed to receive instructions from spirits to overthrow Uganda's government and rule the country under the Ten Commandments.

After the NRM took over the government, its leader, Yoweri Museveni, became president and the militias he led formed the UPDF. The LRA found safe havens in sparsely populated areas of Uganda's troubled neighbors Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic, who were also destabilized by conflict.

For decades, LRA fighters have been appearing out of the dense forest to loot villages and kidnap children. Just in 2016, almost 300 children have been abducted in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, according to a report by the American nonprofit Invisible Children, which tracks the LRA. The boys are indoctrinated into believing Kony has supernatural powers and are forced to fight and murder in his name. The girls are conscripted into sexual slavery. Fighters sometimes cut off the lips and ears of their victims. In October 2005, the International Criminal Court in The Hague indicted Kony for crimes against humanity.

Kony and the LRA were unknown to most Americans until 2012, when Invisible Children released a 30-minute video about the guerrilla leader's child soldiers and brutal practices. The group alleges the LRA has kidnapped more than 40,000 children and killed more than 70,000 civilians since the 1990s. The video went viral, receiving more than 100 million views on YouTube. Soon, Americans who couldn't find Uganda on a map were demanding Kony's capture.

Editor's Note: In March, photographer Andrew Craft and reporter Kevin Maurer embedded with U.S. Special Forces troops partnering with the Uganda People's Defence Force to search for indicted war criminal Joseph Kony in the Central African Republic. Soldiers from the Mississippi Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group were part of the U.S. task force. They returned home in July. The following are excerpts from the story he published in TakePart.

Kony was already on the Pentagon's radar. The LRA was declared a terrorist group after the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, and in 2008 President George W. Bush directed AFRICOM to provide aid and logistics to Uganda. Two years later, President Barack Obama signed the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, which made it U.S. policy to provide military and intelligence support in the hunt for Kony. In 2011, Obama asked Congress for authorization to send 100 U.S. troops to Central Africa.

The group's terrorizing of the region prompted the African Union in 2011 to create a regional task force to capture Kony. For the last five years, 100 U.S. Special Forces soldiers working with troops from Uganda, South Sudan, and Congo have hunted the leader in an area the size of California. The mission is part of a broader U.S. effort to identify and train partners to counter the emerging threats across Africa. The United States Africa Command, known as AFRICOM, established in 2007, leads the effort.

"We only get a vote if we're here," said a U.S. Special Forces officer.



**Maurer's full
story may be
found here.**

SOMETHING IS FISHY AT LAKES WALKER, HUNT

■ Story by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Fishing the lakes on Camp Shelby and Camp McCain once made a recreational fisherman not want to return.

The bass were gone. That was all anglers knew at Hunt Lake on Camp McCain and Lake Walker on Camp Shelby. These were areas military service members would fish during their down time throughout their Annual Training period.

Not anymore. Things are turning around at the fishing venues for those who love the sport.

"The two lakes have not been managed in quite some time now," said Bryan Fedrick, wildlife biologist with the Mississippi National Guard. "This was one of the first tasks I was given and with the help of others, we carefully looked into it."

Mark Williams, a natural resources specialist at Camp McCain said they made some improvements at the post's Hunt Lake, which is approximately 19 acres. In December 2011, environmental experts determined the lake was too shallow to fish.

"We dug out the bottom of the lake, drained it, and made some improvements," said Williams. "We fixed the edges of banks and took out the weeds and we created a wave break and added a peninsula to provide a better fish habitat."

"After filling it back up, we restocked it with bluegills and bass," he said. "We did this for the morale of the Soldiers. Also the lake is open to the general public and want to continue a good relationship with the community."

"So far, it's really been successful. A lot of people are having good luck out there based off what our data sheets are saying," said Williams.

For some it may sound funny, but small fish overcrowding is the cause of anglers not catching that one fish that makes a fishing rod bend over at Camp Shelby's Lake Walker. Management of bass and bream populations requires maintaining a balance in the predator-prey relationship of the two species.

"One of the things people would tell you who are down here is that they weren't catching any bass at Lake Walker," said Fedrick.

"That's because of bream overcrowding. The problem with that is they eat up all the small bass when they hatch so you don't get any bass recruitment. So one of the management techniques that you do when your lake is bream over-



Bryan Fedrick and Capt. Grant Stone, a natural resources manager for the Mississippi National Guard, net fish in 2014 to measure size at Lake Walker. The seining determined bream overpopulation were keeping down the numbers of large bass in the lake, prompting revitalization efforts.

crowded is do "winter drawdowns."

Winter drawdowns is one of the most useful and inexpensive pond management practices. Water levels are reduced in a pond or lake, exposing nearly 50 percent of the pond-bottom area. This practice helps manipulate fish populations.

By reducing the water level and pond area, it drives forage fish, such as bluegills, out of shallow water refuges and concentrates them in open water, making them more available for bass to eat.

"You drawdown the winter levels in lakes starting in November and keep them down until February," said Fedrick. "What this does is pull all those small bream out into deeper water so the bass are hammering on them all winter long."

"So once we start reducing the number of bream, then there are less predators on your little bass. So we had to fix that situation," he said.

Managing the drawdown, environmentalists are seeing an increase of small fish.

"Since we started the winter water level drawdown, we have started to see small bass swimming close to the banks," said Fedrick. "Each year it has increased so we are getting back to where it needs to be."

Now, when service members get free time to fish on Camp Shelby or McCain, their luck might pay off with a fish or two.

"We are off to a good start and we hope to make it better each year," he said. "I'm already getting feedback now from people who have noticed a change and from people who have fished Walker before."

POWER UP

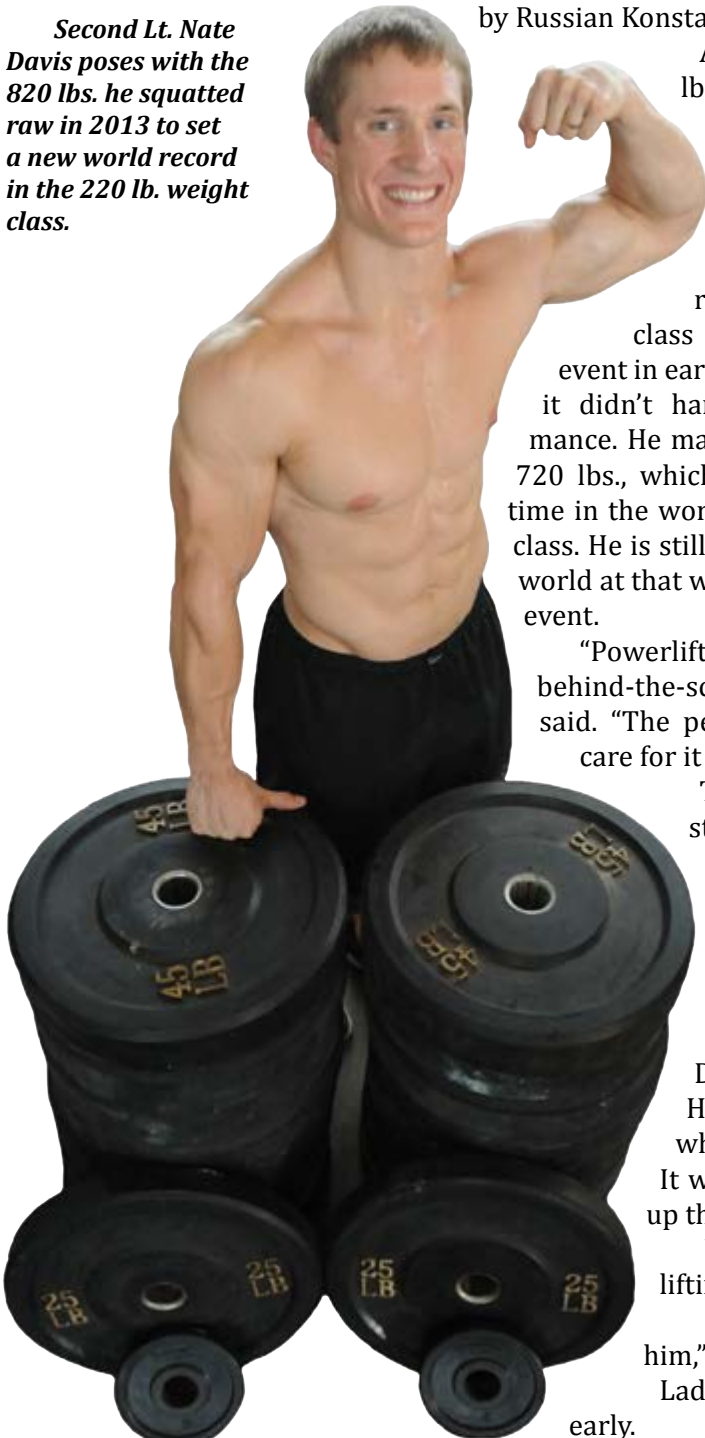
Soldier still one of top lifters in class

■ Story by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes with photos by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

What started as a way to improve his college linebacker skills turned into a passion that led 2nd Lt. Johnathan “Nate” Davis to a world record and two top-10 all-time placements on world powerlifting lists.

Davis, at age 23, made a raw squat of 820 lbs. in the 220-lb. weight class during May 2013 to set a world record. “Raw” means no equipment was used. The former record of 815 lbs. set by Russian Konstantine Pozdeev had stood for five years.

Second Lt. Nate Davis poses with the 820 lbs. he squatted raw in 2013 to set a new world record in the 220 lb. weight class.



At the same event, Davis made a raw bench press of 420 lbs. and a raw deadlift of 715 lbs. for a 1,955-point total score. That score made him 6th in the world all-time.

“At the time, I was the second best lifter in the world at that weight class,” he said.

Davis competed once more before leaving for Army basic training in May 2014. His preparations for basic reshaped his body and he dropped to the 198-lb. weight

class for the Florida event in early 2014. However, it didn’t hamper his performance. He made a raw squat of 720 lbs., which was second all-time in the world for that weight class. He is still ranked 8th in the world at that weight class for the event.

“Powerlifting is kind of a behind-the-scenes sport,” he said. “The people who really care for it are fanatical (about it).”

There has always been more to Davis than pure physical strength, though. At age 26, he is currently a second-year medical Doctoral student at University of Mississippi Medical Center and an officer in the Mississippi Army National Guard (MSARNG).

“I’m one of those guys who always has a plan and is always going for it,” he said.

Time has not changed that. A native of Mobile, Ala., Davis was raised in Pascagoula, Miss., from the age of 4. He graduated from Pascagoula High School (PHS) in 2008, where he earned All-Region honors in 2007 as a linebacker. It was his desire to improve in football that led him to pick up the iron.

While a student at PHS, Davis met Joe Ladnier, a “powerlifting legend” who lives and owns a gym in Hurley, Miss.

“I learned a lot of technique and how to work out from him,” Davis said.

Ladnier said Davis was a natural and had the drive to succeed

At the time, I was the second best lifter in the world at that weight class.

- 2nd Lt. Nate Davis



Above, 2nd Lt. Nate Davis gives a patient a shot during the Mississippi Medical Detachment's annual training at Camp Shelby in June. Left, Davis earned Best Lifter in the 2011 Southern Powerlifting Federation Mississippi State Powerlifting Championships. Here he raw squats 700 lbs. in the 200 lb. weight class. (Photo courtesy of Joe Ladnier) Below, Davis deadlifts 405 lbs. during a July workout while preparing for the Team USA Military competition.



"I met Nate at the end of his senior year in high school," Ladnier said. "I noticed his drive, dedication, and strength while working out in the gym where I was training clients at the time. After meeting him and getting to know his background, I knew he couldn't afford to pay for personal training, so I offered to train him for free. He responded very well to my training methods, so I decided to sponsor him and take him to compete in powerlifting meets. He was a gifted squatter and excelled rapidly - winning every contest he entered."

Ladnier became his friend and coach and spotted for him at all his major competitions, including the record-breakers.

"Over the years, Nate has become an adopted son for me and my wife," Ladnier said. "We couldn't be more proud of him even if he was our own!"

Davis competed and broke the powerlifting records while playing football and pursuing his biology degree at Millsaps College.

"By this time he was 20 years old and his strength was really booming," Ladnier said. "I continued sponsoring him, taking him to bigger and better contests all over the Southeast. He was winning and really impressing people with his strength, especially his squatting ability.

"We put everything we had into training and he flourished," Ladnier said. "I knew he had a chance at breaking the world record and he did, 820lbs raw squat. He was now the best of the best, squatting more than anyone in the world for his age and weight. After this accomplishment, he told me about his plans to join the National Guard to help pay for medical school."

He has since earned a Masters of Science degree in Biomedical Science from the University of Mississippi and is a second year student at UMMC seeking his medical doctorate with a projected graduation date

in 2019.

"I'm most interested at the moment in general surgery," he said. "My grandfather and three uncles are general surgeons."

His career goal led him to the Army National Guard. He enlisted in 2013, and was commissioned in 2014 once he was accepted for medical school. He now serves in the MSARNG Medical Detachment.

"The military is a life goal," Davis said. "The Army Guard, specifically, has really good incentives for medical school. It's a really good way to support myself and my wife through college."

He married the former Jessi Broadus of Lucedale in July 2013. She recently graduated with a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. The two are currently anticipating the arrival of their first child.

Joining the Army, however, caused Davis to reevaluate his physical training goals.

"It was a switch of goals," he said. "I felt I had accomplished what I set out to do. I got into Crossfit after returning from basic training at Fort Jackson. I still wanted to be strong and lift heavy weights, but I felt (Crossfit) was more balanced and a better fit for the Army."

Today, Davis still squats more than 600 lbs., but he said he is much faster and recently scored a 350 on the Army Physical Fitness Test.

"You have to try to achieve a balance between strength and endurance," he said. "You need strength in the Army in order to be able to ruck with 80 lbs. on your back, but you also need endurance or you may not be able to run or march long distances."

Crossfit, Davis said, is good "Army-style training" because it blends elements from a lot of sports to enhance strength, endurance, and agility to make a more



Joe Ladnier congratulates Davis on his win at the Southern Powerlifting Federation's Louisiana State Powerlifting Championship in Hammond, La., in July 2012.

complete Soldier.

Davis was selected in June to compete in a military pentathlon in Madrid, Spain, as part of Team USA Military, the joint forces military skills competition team. The team competes once per year in a joint, coalition, military skills event hosted by rotating NATO countries. This year, the Confederation Interallied du Officer Reserve Military Competition was hosted by Spain Aug. 1-3. The pentathlon consists of land navigation, rifle and pistol marksmanship, a 500-meter land obstacle course, and a 50-meter water obstacle course. Davis' team held the lead until the last day, when the Germans took the win.



Airman first to complete Army leadership course

■ Story by Danielle Thomas
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office - (Gulfport CRTC Bureau)

The Mississippi National Guard continues to work to produce more opportunities for its Army and Air personnel to work and train side-by-side.

Staff Sgt. Dustin Evans became the first member of the Mississippi Air National Guard to graduate from a leadership course offered by the Mississippi Army National Guard. Evans, who is with the Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, completed the Basic Leader Course at Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg this Spring.

"I learned a lot," said Evans. "I learned basically how to be more vocal; and how to lead people better with boots on the ground. It's good because both branches can learn from one another whether it be in deficiencies or proficiencies."

The Airman attended classes alongside hundreds of Soldiers.

"It's the first non-commissioned officer education course that an E-4 or an E-5 attends. It consists of just basic leadership," said Master Sgt. Michael Cullop, basic leader course branch chief. "It shows them how to conduct physical readiness training and the different evaluations they have to do as an NCO. We end it with a three-day simulated training exercise in the field. It's a good opportunity for Airmen to come through and experience what our Army NCO's go through at the first level."



Chief Master Sgt. Lynn R. Cole, CRTC chief enlisted officer, attended the graduation ceremony along with CRTC Commander Col. Paul Drake. Air National Guard leaders are thrilled.

"I'm excited for us. It shows we are trying to be joint and Gen. [Augustus] Collins is so adamant about (the MSNG motto) 'Shoulder to Shoulder.' So, I'm very excited the CRTC is the first to do this," said Cole. "The benefit is that it's joint and learning how the Army does stuff as compared to how the Air does stuff. You can never have too much knowledge. So learning how other people work and think and process solutions is always a plus."

Evans said he hopes to be the first of many Airmen to go through the program.

HAVE YOU TRANSFERRED YOUR BENEFITS?

The transfer of educational benefits allows eligible service members to transfer all 36 months or a portion of unused G.I. Bill benefits to your spouse or children or any combination of spouse and children

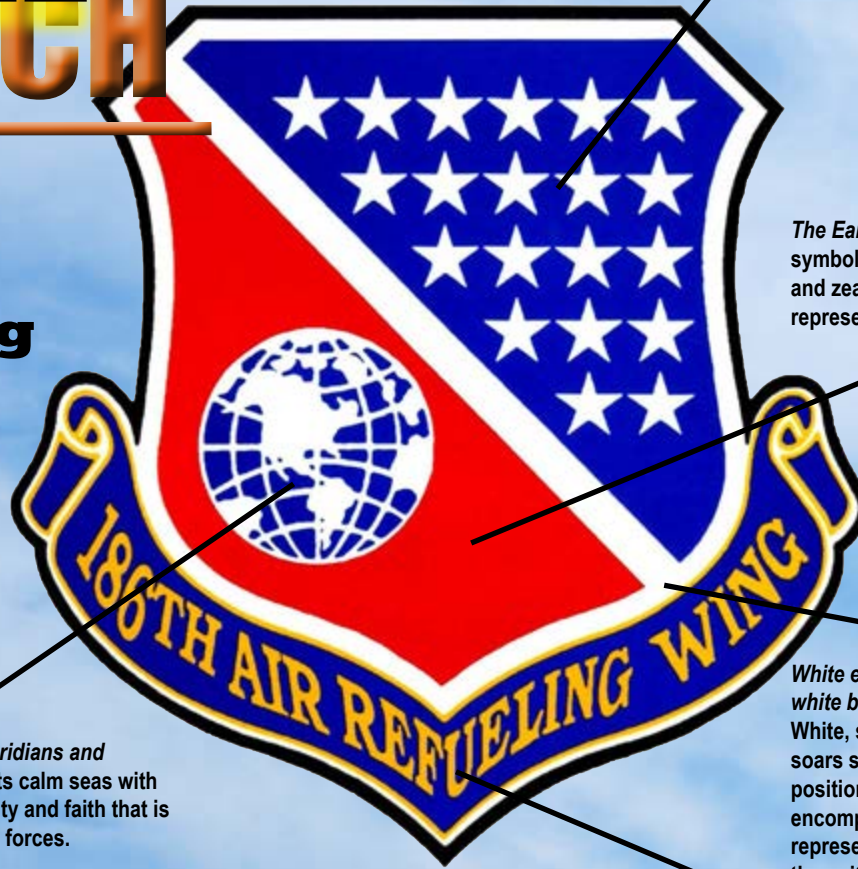
HOW DO I QUALIFY?

- Qualify for the Post-9/11 GI Bill at any payment tier
- Be currently serving in the Uniformed Services, with at least six years completed
- NOT be flagged for adverse action, APFT/ABCP failure, or as an Unsatisfactory Participant
- Agree to a four-year service obligation from the date of your transfer request

Call (601) 313-6355 for more information

BEHIND THE PATCH

186th Air Refueling Wing Meridian



Twenty white stars on a field of Air Force blue. The 20 stars in the upper shield represent the State of Mississippi, the 20th state to join the United States of America (1817). The blue field represents the sky.

The Earth on a field of red. Red symbolizes the strength, courage and zeal of the unit. The Earth represents the worldwide mission.

Blue waters with white meridians and continents. Blue represents calm seas with white symbolizing the purity and faith that is the goal of all U.S. military forces.

White element dissecting shield and white border around entire emblem. White, signifying perfection and truth, soars skyward and to the right - the position of honor. The white border encompassing the entire shield represents the wisdom that surrounds the unit.

Gold lettering and gold trim against a banner of Air Force blue. Gold symbolizes the sun, honor and wisdom. Blue represents justice, loyalty, thinking and truth.

With over 1,200 personnel, the 186th Air Refueling Wing is made up of mostly traditional Guardsmen who live and work throughout Mississippi and surrounding states. It began as part of the 153rd Observation Squadron in 1939. The Wing is headquartered at historic Key Field in Meridian. The unit has roots with aerial refueling pioneers Al and Fred Key. In 1935, the brothers utilized in-flight refueling to keep their plane, the "Ole Miss," continuously airborne for more than 27 days, a record that still stands today.

The wing has participated in nearly every major conflict since its inception almost 80 years ago. There have been 10 different types of aircraft used to accomplish the mission over the years. Their mission sets have included refueling; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; counterdrug operations stateside; and

mission qualification training. Most recently, they have returned to the KC-135R Stratotanker to fulfill their aerial refueling mission as well as aeromedical evacuations when needed. The unit consists of the 153rd Air Refueling Squadron, the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, and the 248th Air Traffic Control Squadron, and supporting units.

The 186th is also home to the Regional Operations and Security Center, a National Guard Bureau center that maintains a classified and unclassified wide area data network and houses some 50 Department of Defense information systems for 15 flying units and 51 units across 11 states and territories. The 186th Air Refueling Wing continues to honor its rich history through support of military operations around the globe.

BURNING QUESTIONS

for Col. Eric L. Bratu



You have questions? They have the answers!

Do you have questions about upcoming changes that will affect our armed forces? Each issue will feature a Question & Answer section with Mississippi National Guard leadership, both Army and Air, to answer questions from the force.

This issue we met with Col. Eric L. Bratu, Director of Staff - Air, for the Mississippi Air National Guard (MSANG). He plans and formulates executive support functions for the Adjutant General and Assistant Adjutant General-Air on all ANG issues and requirements as well as representing the National Guard in their absence. He directs and implements the policies of senior USAF, ANG, and State leadership, conveying command intent to the field. He provides oversight of support for the 2,600 Airmen assigned to two flying Wings and a Combat Readiness Training Center.

Q With DoD's continued planned drawdown from operations in Southwest Asia coupled with increasing ground troop involvement in Iraq versus ISIL, how will deployment tempo be affected?

A Over the past couple of years, the MSANG has not seen a significant change in deployment tempo and I don't foresee a change. The majority of our units have remained at a 1:5 or greater dwell. Therefore about every three years units experience a deployment surge. This surge for our units (based on our dwell) has been 2015-2016. Currently, the MSANG has approximately 250 personnel deployed overseas (10% of our personnel).

The ANG is experiencing more involuntary mobilizations in career fields that were not tapped as heavily in past deployment cycles. In my opinion, this may be related to a lesser use of voluntary mobilization authority across the ANG. Therefore, units are receiving involuntary mobilization authority based on their readiness reports. The Air Force remains committed to expand total force integration and will continue to rely on ANG support for emerging deployment requirements.

Q When will state education funding benefits be available for members seeking their Masters degree?

A It is doubtful for the foreseeable future based on past and current state funding for the State Educational Assistance Program (SEAP). For the state's Fiscal Year 2017, the MSNG requested approximately \$2.7 million for SEAP but only received \$900,000, which was \$100,000 less than what was received in FY 2016. Based on a maximum benefit of \$4,500 per year, this budget could support 200 MSNG personnel attending a university fulltime. Last year, an average of 290 MSNG personnel (60% ANG and 40% ARNG) received SEAP benefits fall and spring semesters. Therefore, there is not enough money to fully support personnel seeking undergraduate degrees much less graduate degrees.

In the past, the ARNG could use Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) to help with tuition. However, in FY 2014 the Army FTA program was changed and now a Soldier is not eligible for FTA until one year after he/she completes Advanced Individual Training (technical training). Therefore, the ARNG is now more reliant on SEAP than in the recent past.

Note that ANG AGRs are eligible for FTA, which will pay for a Masters degree and officers can enroll in the On-line Masters Program when they take Air Command and Staff College.

If you have questions you want answered, please contact us at ng.ms.msarng.list.public-affairs@mail.mil.

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Parting Shots

Mississippi Army National Guard Soldiers convoy home through Louisiana on Interstate 10 after Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training at Fort Hood, Texas, in June. More than 3,000 Reserve and active duty Soldiers and Airmen participated in the exercise from June 3-24. (Mississippi National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Veronica McNabb, 184th Sustainment Command)

