

SUMMER 2017

GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

SPECIAL EDITION

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Fiddler's Green

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COVER PHOTO: NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Letter From **THE EDITOR**

THE EVER WATCHFUL EYE



In late April 2017, I had the opportunity to hear Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, chief, National Guard Bureau, speak to the Guard's state public affairs officers at Fort Meade, Maryland. Without acknowledging that a Mississippi representative was present, Gen. Lengyel mentioned almost immediately how he was closely watching our 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team and its progress towards executing an upcoming National Training Center rotation. It turns out he was one of many high level officials eagerly waiting to see how the unit would fair with the massive challenge in the midst of the new enhanced readiness posture.

For many Guardsmen, it may not be obvious that our force is the focus of so many watchful eyes throughout the state, nation, and worldwide. It's really not a surprise, though. We have one of the larger Guard formations in the country with high profile units, missions, equipment, and training centers. While we have excelled collectively in the eyes of so many onlookers, it's essential

that we remain focused individually to preserve our status as one of America's premiere National Guard organizations.

As Soldiers, Airmen, and prominent members in our communities, we must remember that our actions will always represent the Mississippi National Guard, both in and out of uniform. Our team must not overlook things like maintaining good order and discipline and setting the right example for our younger service members to follow. In short, future success will depend heavily on our collective resolve to implement and maintain high standards in all that we do. With the instantaneous impact of social media, poor judgment could reflect negatively on our organization and have lasting effects for years to come. Furthermore, we must attack those areas that ail us; physical fitness and military education completion. There are way too many physical fitness test failures and personnel who lack the necessary military education for promotion. Our viewpoint must continue where we see aiming for the minimum as taboo. We also shouldn't forget the numerous intangibles, such as military courtesies and discipline. These issues are a severe threat to readiness and can push watchful eyes to divert opportunities from Mississippi to other states.

The next year will be huge for the Mississippi National Guard. More attention will be present as thousands of Soldiers and Airmen will deploy forward. Let's impress those who'll be watching, build on our culture of excellence, and show everyone what the Mississippi team can do!

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Captain Andrew Wolfe, with Company C, 2d Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, Kansas Army National Guard, issues orders to his unit during a combined arms assault exercise May 30 at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif. The Kansas unit is part of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, Mississippi Army National Guard. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann)



Use the QR code here to check out an NTC Hooah Video.



TRENDING





Colonel

Doug Ferguson

As the tactical focus of the current fight shifts from counterinsurgency, or COIN, to decisive action, leaders quickly realize an undeniable truth: it's not that junior leaders and Soldiers have forgotten how to fight decisively, it's that many of them have never been taught.

The Shift

Nothing could make this fact more apparent than the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team's recent National Training Center 17-07 rotation at Fort Irwin, California. In many ways NTC hasn't changed. It still can be the hottest place on earth, it still stresses systems and Soldiers, and it is still a communications nightmare. But, it also serves as a painful reminder of how dependent we have become over the last decade in the COIN fight on having all the solutions to the tactical problem provided. In the decisive environment, we can no longer expect to have advanced preparation. The dynamic shift: micromanagers must become macromanagers and empower subordinate leaders. This is easier said than done.

Habits of Stability

While the COIN operation has its doctrinal place, it has nonetheless generated a certain level of spoon-fed dependency for subordinate leaders. For this fundamental transition toward leader independence to occur, a certain level of trust must be fostered. This trust can only be gained through engaged mentoring and development. As leaders, we must invest in subordinate leaders to become critical thinkers who generate creative solutions. During the NTC rotation, one erosive habit that was continually realized was leaders spending most of their efforts and time focusing on the 'how' and not allowing capable

frontline leaders to develop the situation on their own.

Dangerous Business

An increase of operational risk is another by-product of this transition. Through COIN, we have become accustomed to being risk adverse because we knew what to expect. By nature, the decisive fight heaps so many tasks where predictability becomes elusive and spreads a leader thin. Managing decisive combat capabilities is a shift from the science to the art of leadership, which requires experience. Attempting to balance all factors of this complex problem set is not only a hard lesson learned, but it also places service members at risk – a risk all troops inherently understand come with the job. This became a stark reality on the night of May 29, 2017, when in zero illumination on rough terrain, Company A, 2d Battalion, 198th Armored Regiment experienced a fatal roll-over of one of its tanks and lost a leader, Sgt. Kyle Thomas of Amory, Mississippi. The loss of Thomas' life serves as a painful reminder of the dangerous business that comes with the decisive fight.

The shift from advising and enabling partnering nations to one of building combat capabilities to aggressively defeat near peer threats is a transition the Dixie Thunder Brigade readily accepts. We know the incorporation of leaders at all levels is critical to success. These leaders must realize and oust the coddling habits of counterinsurgency in order to cultivate decisive combat capabilities for when the need arises.

Col. Doug Ferguson
Commander, 155th ABCT
Mississippi National Guard

Sergeant Major

Henry Money

We, as service members, are always aware of the price that has to be paid while serving. Very few understand the process that is performed if that cost is paid.

If you are still reading this article, then maybe I can convince you to continue reading and hopefully change how you deal with the ultimate end: DEATH. Many service members view the subject of death as a jinx and have the opinion that, if discussed, it may come sooner than later. That opinion is an excuse to avoid a sensitive and emotional issue.

The Army has two important events that require Soldiers to begin to address the casualty process: the annual records review and a Soldier Readiness Processing, or SRP, prior to deployment. Unfortunately, many Soldiers don't know the significance of the Record of Emergency Data DD Form 93 and the Servicemember's Group Life Insurance Election and Certificate, or SGLV, Form 8286. Even worse, most of the families don't know that they are listed on the casualty documents!

During your annual records review/SRP, update your casualty documents. Additionally, update these forms when you have a significant life change, i.e. marriage, divorce, birth of a child, or the death of someone listed on the forms. These documents are used when you are on Active Duty, at Inactive Duty Training drill, and when you are in a Non-Duty status. Do not procrastinate when updating these forms. Otherwise, your family may have to endure additional pain during an already hard time.

As the casualty assistance coordinator, I have seen the heart wrenching effects that outdated or incorrect casualty documents have on families of deceased Soldiers. I strongly

encourage you to include your family in the discussion of your plans and tell them who you list on your casualty documents. Yes, this may cause heated arguments and hurt feelings, but this will only be temporary. The permanent and painful alternative is that they may never know the reasons for your choices.

As you complete the DD 93 and SGLV 8286, be as truthful and accurate as possible. Include your spouse, all children (even the children your family may not know about), and your parents. These forms are critical in determining what Veterans Affairs and Army benefits can be provided to your family. They may be the only way to find or contact every member of your family in the event you are unable.

If you don't understand the responsibilities required by the persons you place in each block on the DD 93 or SGLV 8286 (Beneficiary for Death Gratuity, Beneficiary for Unpaid Pay/Allowances, Person Authorized to Direct Disposition, Primary Beneficiaries & Secondary Beneficiaries, etc) or if you don't understand the casualty process, ask. Placing someone on your casualty documents who is unable or unwilling to perform the task or who is unfamiliar with your plan may cause further delay in the casualty process, resulting in unnecessary pain for your family.

In the casualty process, death is not the end, it is just the beginning.

Sgt. Maj. Henry Money
Casualty Assistance Coordinator
Mississippi National Guard





Sgt. Edward Lee



Spc. Daniel Parrott



Spc. Justin Humphreys



Staff Sgt. Veronica McNabb



Pfc. Jarvis Mace

A short time ago in a desert far away ...

155th ABCT NTC Rotation

**It was a period of intensive training.
Mississippi Guardsmen struck the forces
of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment during
a large scale force-on-force engagement
at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California.**



Spc. John Scarpati

National Training Center 2017

The NTC rotation showcased the 155th ABCT and supporting unit partnerships, demonstrating the U.S. Army's Total Force Policy. Collectively, about 5,500 Army and Air Force personnel participated in the joint exercise.

Key Participants



1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment
2d Battalion, 198th Armor Regiment
2d Battalion, 114th Field Artillery Regiment
1st Squadron, 98th Cavalry Regiment
106th Support Battalion
150th Engineer Battalion
2d Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment (Kansas National Guard)



184th Sustainment Command
298th Support Battalion
367th Maintenance Company



2d Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group



238th Air Support Operations Squadron
172d Airlift Wing



1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery



223d Engineer Battalion
890th Engineer Battalion



The 155th ABCT is one of the most modern Brigade Combat Teams in the Country, including its M1A2 SEPv2 tanks and M2A3/M3A3 Bradleys.



The 184th SC and 155th ABCT moved more than 3,800 brigade personnel, 1,300 vehicles, and 130 containers to Fort Irwin, California - an average of 1,800 miles from Mississippi.



The 155th ABCT enhanced its ability to conduct movement to contact, deliberate attack, and defense operations. The NTC rotation allowed the Dixie Thunder brigade to showcase its full capabilities as close to real world combat as possible.



The National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California is the U.S. military's premiere training facility for combat operations. The 155th, and supporting units, faced physical and mentally challenging scenarios that have been developed through actual combat experiences around the world in an environment that cannot be replicated in Mississippi.

National Training Center tests brigade's combat capability in 'the box'

Story by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams
155th ABCT Public Affairs

There is nothing quite like a trip to “the box” at the National Training Center.

In the Mojave Desert, the U.S. Army's National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, is the home of “the box.” This summer, “the box” was home for the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, which spent a few weeks conducting combat training exercises.

“The box,” short for the sandbox, is where the Dixie Thunder Brigade and other enabling units test battle tactics and their readiness.

“This is it. This is the game,” said Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi. “I would compare this to a playoff game to get to the Super Bowl or the World Series. This is where the real game is being played - where they get force-on-force because the next step is to deploy.”

Approximately 6,500 National Guardsmen from both the Army and Air Force from 11 states trained in California, in a tough, but realistic environment.

“I expect hot days, some long hours, and some very tough fights, but in the end we'll emerge victorious,” said Spc. Trevor Stephens, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 155th ABCT.

An NTC rotation replicates the operational environment that America's war fighters face in combat. The training is reflective of the complexities of potential challenges our nation could face and include guerilla, insurgent, criminal, and near-peer conventional forces.

“The National Training Center is a premiere training venue for the United States Army,” said Brig. Gen. David O. Smith, 184th Sustainment Command commander. “It is the best training our Soldiers can receive anywhere short of actual combat.”

During the brigade's seven-day intensive training in “the box,” its mission was to disrupt, defeat, or destroy enemy forces through decisive actions to achieve higher headquarter's objectives.

“The world is a dangerous place and the last 15 years we have been focused as an Army on fighting counter-insurgency - conducting, training, advising, and assisting,” said Gen. Robert B. Abrams, commanding general, U.S. Army Forces Command. “We have shifted our orientation away from



Staff Sgt. Veronica McNabb

Training at NTC has shifted the brigade's orientation from counter-insurgency operations back to conventional warfare, with emphasis on force-on-force engagements. However, it also included non-lethal operations, like evacuating civilians from the battlefield.



Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann



Sgt. DeUndra Brown



Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann



Sgt. Edward Lee

Thunder Rolls Across Desert

counter-insurgency training and advising to be ready to deal with those near-peer threats should be called upon by the combat commander.”

With its crosshairs on training, the unit trained for readiness and vigilance for the unexpected.

“We are going to train hard and learn a lot. The goal of this exercise is to train and help us to improve our readiness and preparedness,” said Lt. Col. Jacques Byrd, 155th ABCT deputy commander.

Throughout the vast desert, the 155th occupied several villages with houses, shops, mosques, and marketplaces. The exercises are part of what the Army calls “full immersion combat simulation.” They use training dummies and hire people to play civilian roles.

The training is tailored to specific situations that the unit could face during a deployment, such as villages and cities in the desert terrain and intense fighting.

“This is very beneficial to me while in this immersive training environment,” said Stephens. “This opportunity will show the brigade’s work as a whole and it will give me the opportunity to test my individual tasks.”

While in the box, the unit’s objective was to assist the Atropian government, a mock government used to train troops in urban warfare at NTC. During the game-play, the brigade supported the Atropian Security Forces in operations to deter further aggression by Donovia and other notional hostile regimes.

Role-playing official leaders and the brigade leadership teamed up to achieve peace, stability, and to provide prosperity for all citizens of Atropia.

“This training offers our brigade the unique opportunity to train in a vast austere environment utilizing scenarios that closely replicate conflicts that the Army had to deal with in the past,” said Byrd.

The brigade’s training also included in-



Photo By
Spc. Dana Clarke

teracting with Afghan-speaking role players, terrorist cells, insurgents, criminal networks, civilian authorities, and military forces. The exercise was designed to test Soldiers of all ranks and challenge them with a thinking, dedicated opposition.

To provide the brigade with that opposition, the 155th confronted the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. "Blackhorse" is home-based at the training center and confronts units several times a year across the same terrain the 155th contested. Significantly, this gives Blackhorse the same advantages a force defending its own territory would have.

"This right here is a great opportunity to come out and better ourselves," said Command Sgt. Maj. John Beasley, 1st Squadron, 98th Cavalry Regiment. "When we are called up, we will be well-trained in a great organization and these Soldiers will be able to perform the duties they are supposed to with the least amount of injuries and to the best effectiveness that we can do."

For decades, America's Guardsmen have been defending their freedoms in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in other countries around the world. In order to defend, service members train in environments that provide intensive training, such as NTC, to hone their warrior skills.

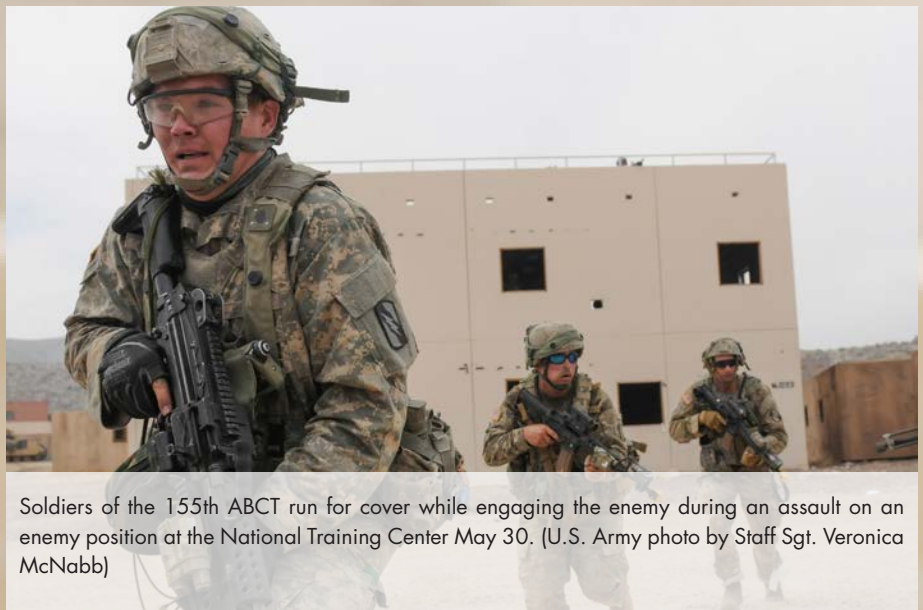
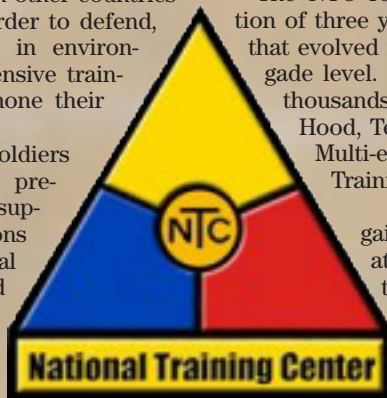
"Our Mississippi Soldiers and Airmen are fully prepared to complete and support combat operations training at the National Training Center," said Boyles. "This exercise will display the Mississippi National Guard's robust talent, joint capabilities, and commitment to national defense. This is their best opportunity to validate and say we know what are doing."

"We were sort of identified as the unit to test the National Guard," said Boyles. "Mississippi has been selected to test that system. And we are very proud of the Sol-

missippi.

While NTC rotation 17-07 is a conclusion of several years of individual Soldier tasks, gunnery tables, and larger events like the MiBT and the XCTC, it is also a stepping stone for the Dixie Thunder Brigade's final preparation for mission readiness.

Mississippi Guard units that supported the 155th NTC rotation include the 184th Sustainment Command, 298th Support Battalion, 367th Maintenance Company, 1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery, 223d Engineer Battalion, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group, 890th Engineer Battalion, 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, and the 172d Airlift Wing.



Soldiers of the 155th ABCT run for cover while engaging the enemy during an assault on an enemy position at the National Training Center May 30. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Veronica McNabb)

diers that are achieving those goals and continuing that legacy for the 155 being that unit you can depend on."

The NTC rotation was the culmination of three years of intensive training that evolved from the company to brigade level. In 2016, the brigade sent thousands of Guardsmen to Fort Hood, Texas, to participate in the Multi-echelon Integrated Brigade Training exercise, or MiBT.

In 2015, the brigade gained valuable experience at the company level in the Exportable Combat Training Exercise, or XCTC, that was held at the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center near Hattiesburg, Mis-



Cpl. Stephen Solomon

"This is where the real game is being played ..."

- Maj. Gen. Janson Boyles



Spc. John Scarpati



1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Soldiers role-play as opposition forces to defend against a combined arms assault by the 155th ABCT May 30. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann)



Bring it in Close!

Ground-based
controllers
call in air
support strikes



A 238th Air Support Operations Squadron Tactical Control Party watches as an F-16 Fighting Falcon releases a flare while performing show of force movement after a successful combined live fire exercise June 6. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann)

Story by Staff Sgt. Veronica McNabb
184th Sustainment Command Public Affairs

The 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, from Key Field, conducted close air support at the National Training Center during the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team's rotation at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin.

The Meridian-based 238th ASOS has members with over thirteen years of experience in the Tactical Air Control Party, or TACP, field. The unit specializes in close air support and plays an important role in supporting the 155th ABCT.

During the rotation, they showcased what they can bring to the battlefield for the Mississippi National Guard.

Major Frank Monterrosa, the air liaison that coordinates with the 155th, said it lets the Army see what Joint Terminal Air Controller's capabilities are, effects on the battlefield, and how they can help assist the ground commander.

The TACP consists of JTACs who call in for critical air support that can advance the 155th against opposing forces. They coordinate air support missions with pilots and guide them

during attacks to engage enemy targets.

The JTACs provide pilots and the commander on the ground with live updates of GPS coordinates and visual descriptions while observing the enemy.

They help shape the battlefield by hitting key targets, enemy defensive systems, command and control centers, artillery pieces, and anything at the commander's discretion, said Monterrosa.

The 238th ASOS also conducted live fire and close air support training at NTC following the two-week field exercise. The Airmen coordinated with F-16 Fighting Falcons and F-18 Super Hornets from Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, to engage targets with Mark-82 high explosive bombs and 20 mm gun systems.

Staff Sgt. Jared Doyle and Staff Sgt. Ted Soto used the live fire to complete their qualifications and are now qualified JTACs. They are now able to call in close air support during real-world combat missions.

"NTC lets you see where those holes are in your training plan and lets you see where your deficiencies are", said Senior Master Sgt. Matthew Jackson. "It also shows you where your strengths are too, so you get an overall picture of where your unit stands."



Sustain to Maintain

A Heavy Expanded Mobility Truck with the 539th Transportation Company of Fort Wainwright, Alaska, delivers food supplies to the supply distribution point operated by consisting of all components supported and trained with Mississippi's 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann)

Coordination critical to keeping Soldiers on mission at NTC

Story by Staff Sgt. Veronica McNabb
184th Sustainment Command Public Affairs

The detail and coordination required to keep track of the logistical needs of a brigade in the field is staggering and plays as large a role in the success of a mission as the Soldiers on the frontlines.

The 184th Sustainment Command provided support to more than 6,500 service members at the National Training Center for the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team's rotation this summer.

It oversaw the supply and logistics efforts during the brigade's NTC rotation from beginning to end. The 184th's mission at NTC was to assist the 155th ABCT with reception, staging, and movements, and included mayoral duties of the Logistical Support Area.

One of the largest challenges faced during the rotation was getting the equipment to the training center.

The NTC rotation showcased the partnership of the Mississippi National Guard and other states to demonstrate the Army Total Force Policy. The 184th SC and 155th ABCT were busy long before its arrival in California.

More than 200 personnel loaded equipment such as tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles on the railhead at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, to the Golden State. It took six trains and 470 rail cars to move all 1,251 pieces to California. Once the equipment arrived,

Soldiers unloaded equipment and offloaded it in preparation for its upcoming brigade operations.

The 184th coordinated and moved approximately 6,500 troops to and from home stations using 100 different aircraft. The unit had to direct incoming and outgoing flights while providing over 300 ground transportation missions to and from Fort Irwin. When Soldiers arrived at the post by bus, they were checked in by a Reception, Staging, Onward-Movement and Integration team that provided information and briefings about living areas. The team supported 65 units from 11 different states during the NTC rotation.

The 184th was also responsible for providing basic life support for the 155th during the rotation. That included establishing a running Logistical Support Area that housed the brigade before and after the exercise. The LSA is set up as a temporary necessary life support provision for the rotational units while at Fort Irwin.

"Maintaining the life support for the brigade by providing housing, fueling, and feeding the brigade is a monumental task especially when dealing with 5,300 people," said Lt. Col. William Walley, 184th assistant chief of staff.

During their stay at the LSA, service members experienced living conditions to replicate an overseas deployment. Many services were available, including billeting, meals, and base transportation. The 184th mayor's cell operated 24-hour shifts to maintain a smooth operation while the unit trained in the field, so forward leaders could focus on the fight.

"It is essential that the mayor cell has a good relationship with the brigade. It helps the operation move forward if everyone communicates with each other," Walley said.

The 184th operated from the LSA while training units were on the battlefield and were able to track real time movements



the 106th Support Battalion June 4 at the National Training Center. Over 40 Army and Air Force units

of the 155th while in “the box.” The Laurel-based unit conducted daily meetings to keep Brig. Gen. David O. Smith, 184th commander, updated on all aspects of support and provided timely, vital information to maintain the training event. Issues briefed included medical statuses, maintenance tracking on vehicles, food services, and how many Soldiers were on the ground at Fort Irwin.

Once the brigade completed the training, they moved back into the LSA to rest and recover before returning home. The 184th coordinated flights and transportation for all flights leaving California and Nevada, but many of the unit’s personnel stayed behind to ensure equipment was sent back home safely and the training area was cleared and ready for the next unit coming in to train. The Soldiers conducted police calls and turned in more than 1,000 pieces of equipment drawn while at the training center.

“The skill set in the 184th allowed us to focus on different aspects of the LSA operations and help things run as efficiently as possible during the rotation,” Walley said.



Chief Warrant Officer Randall Potter, 1687th Transportation Company, directs a driver as he moves a Bradley Fighting Vehicle from a rail car to an unloading ramp June 25 at Camp Shelby, Miss. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Christopher Shannon)

Supporting Victory!



6,500

personnel supported during the 155th ABCT’s NTC rotation at Fort Irwin, Calif.



65

National Guard, Active Duty and Reserve Units

11
States

6

Trains



470

Rail Cars



1,251

Vehicles Transported



600,000

Gallons of JP-8 Fuel

25,000

Gallons of Diesel Fuel

187,767

MREs Issued

164,484

Meals Served

INCOMING!

Soldiers of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team react to indirect fire while evacuating stranded civilians during an exercise May 31 at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Don Kazery)





ENGAGE!

An Abrams tank with 2d Battalion, 198th Armored Regiment, fires a 120 mm projectile during battalion hasty defense live fire training June 9 at the National Training Center. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann)



A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter sits under the Milky Way galaxy in the Mojave Desert, May 30. The Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri-based 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, supports the 155th by using the platform to carry personnel and equipment within the training area. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Tim Morgan)

Missouri Guard Provides Air Mobility

Story by Pfc. Jarvis Mace
102d Public Affairs Detachment

Transportation of Soldiers and materials across the vast, rugged terrain at the National Training Center is critical to mission execution.

Fortunately, the 155th Armored Brigade Team had Company C, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, Missouri Army National Guard there to provide aerial transport and assault.

UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters are used to transport cargo and personnel across the simulated battlefield.

"I assist the pilot in command with flying the aircraft, doing ring routes, and moving Soldiers and equipment around the training area," said Warrant Officer Jeremy L. Benford, a line pilot with the 1-106th. "Ring routes are a series of predetermined pickup points that are usually flown in a roundabout, reaching spots between the start and end points."

"Whenever we fly, I'm making sure

that all the crew and passengers are safe," said Spc. Ryan N. Gonzales, a crew chief with the 1-106th. "I also ensure that any loads on the aircraft are intact."

The unit has two working shifts for Soldiers conducting day-long missions, while the other shift prepares for the next day, said Benford. At the start of their shift, Soldiers with the 1-106th report to the battalion's tactical operations center for a briefing.

"There I am told what aircraft I'm going to be in, what missions I have, and takeoff times," said Gonzales. "After that, I have to get the aircraft ready, whether for an air assault or passenger carry."

The mission planning process is lengthy and tedious, with many factors the crew members have to adapt to.

"The execution is straightforward," said Benford. "It's more of the unknown that is the difficult part. Being able to adapt is necessary while working here."

In addition to transportation, the unit provides aerial reconnaissance for ground units in their area.

The 35th Aviation Brigade has other battalions that use AH-64 Apache and CH-47 Chinook aircraft. The unit's presence at NTC is an important learning experience for the 155th as they train here.

"This exercise is not so much about teaching us how to conduct missions," said Benford. "It's more about integrating with larger units and learning how to do things under their command."



A UH-60 helicopter assigned to 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, Missouri Army National Guard, lands May 31 during Mississippi's 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team's rotation at the National Training Center. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jarvis Mace)

Non-Lethal Operations make Brigade Adaptable



Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations formed a multi-functional team that included public affairs and unit ministry teams to meet the needs of citizens during the National Training Center's training scenario. (U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. Terry Hill II)

Story by 2nd Lt. Terry Hill II
155th ABCT Public Affairs

The sun is beating down on Soldiers in the unforgiving heat of the Mojave Desert. A crowd of angry civilians block the entrance to the U.S. Embassy in the fictional city and country of Razish, Atropia. The situation has the feel of a powder keg with a short fuse.

Luckily, members of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team's multi-functional team, or MFT, have the situation under control as they evacuate American citizens from the war-torn country of Atropia.

An MFT consists of the brigade's "non-lethal" elements: civil affairs, psychological operations, unit ministry teams, and public affairs. Each team offers a distinct and valuable role while providing aid and support to the populace after a major battle in a populated area.

"I think CA and psychological operations forces are very complementary, and yet don't work together as often as they need to," said Maj. Matt Morgan, brigade CA officer and MFT leader. "The unit ministry teams can complement both with their perspective looking at religious leaders, and yet they are never integrated into our training. It's something we need to continue developing for the future."

Civil affairs identifies critical requirements needed by local citizens or during crisis situations. They are primarily responsible for researching, coordinating, conducting, and participating in the planning and production of CA-related documents, while carrying out the civil-military operations of

the commander.

The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the U.S. mission.

A unit ministry team's main task is to provide spiritual support to Soldiers in a unit. Chaplains can also provide a connection to a town's spiritual leader. This brings an invaluable dynamic, especially in areas where religion is dominant in the culture.

"It was a wonderful opportunity being integrated into the MFT. The CA and psychological operations were very professional and utilized us right from the start," said Maj. Sean McMackin, 155th ABCT brigade chaplain. "It was neat to see us all function at a high level during our first experience working with these groups."

The public affairs office is responsible for developing a working relationship with reporters and other media representatives, maintaining a robust community relations program, keeping contact with other government agencies, and keeping internal and external publics informed on issues that may affect them.

The diversity and adaptability of the MFTs was on display at each mission the team's conducted. The positive effect of these operations is not just the support of the international community, but more importantly the support of the host nation to help quell the insurgency that had been a major problem throughout the province.

These entities played an important role in each mission. The value each of these elements brought to the brigade is immeasurable, Morgan said.

"I think CA and psychological operations forces are very complementary, and yet don't work together as often as they need to."

- Maj. Matt Morgan

155th ABCT CA Officer



RTI Graduates Master Leaders

Sergeants 1st Class Ferila Langkilde and Bennie R. Viverette, Jr., prepare a course of action briefing during the Master Leaders Course at the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center's 154th Regional Training Institute. The RTI graduated its first MLC class June 16, 2017. The class becomes a requirement for the master sergeant rank in 2018.

**Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs**

The 154th Regional Training Institute graduated its first Master Leaders Course June 16, 2017, paving the way for senior non-commissioned officers of the future.

The MLC is new to the Army as a whole and the 154th RTI is one of 10 locations nationwide to host it. The National Guard hosts two locations, Camp Shelby and Utah, with two in the Army Reserves and six at active duty locations.

"It came about based off an NCO 20/20 survey that was done in September to October of 2013, and it identified an educational, or institutional, gap between the Senior Leaders Course and the Sergeants Major Course," said Command Sgt. Major Chris Young, commandant of the 3rd NCO Academy, 154th RTI.

Additionally, a gap analysis on the master sergeant rank identified weaknesses in communications, problem solving, critical thinking, leadership and management, he said. Also identified was an operational gap in their joint, multi-governmental, and inter-agency abilities.

"This course is what is going to take the students from the tactical way of thinking to the operational way of thinking," he said.

The MLC is now in its validation phase.

"It will not be a promotion requirement for Guardsmen until January 1, 2019. It's not effective for the active component until October 1, 2018, and we do train all three components here."

Camp Shelby will host its first validated class on Oct. 5 to start its annual MLC scheduling. However, classes graduated during the



validation phase do meet the promotion requirement.

"The simple fact that we have capability in the state to teach this level of the noncommissioned officer professional development system will pay huge dividends in the future," Young said.

The academy will host 10 classes per year, spanning 15 days, with 32 students per class, for a total of 332 seats.

"The rigor of this course is monumental," Young said. "If they wait to get here to prepare, they are going to fail. If Soldiers come here unprepared, a 50 percent graduation rate is very likely."

Master Sgt. Brian Wall, deputy commandant of the 3rd NCO Academy, agreed preparation for the course was extremely important and noted that classwork actually starts before the report date with a required paper and readings.

**"The rigor of this course is monumental.
If they wait to get here to prepare,
they are going to fail."
- Sgt. Maj. Chris Young**

"It is very challenging. It is intellectually challenging. When we first got here we hit the ground running on Day One," said Sgt. 1st Class Ferila Langkilde, readiness NCO of the 1687th Transportation Co., headquartered in Southaven, Mississippi.

Wall said there are a few things prospective students should do now to prepare for the course.

"If you've never taken college writing or English, I would strongly suggest that," she said. "Multiple choice tests are gone."

Sgt. 1st Class Jason Underhill, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia National Guard, said he was fortunate that he is close to completing his master's degree because the college experience was very beneficial.

"You can have a lot of tactical and technical knowledge, but unless you can articulate it on paper and do it in a short amount of time, you're not really gonna get the whole Soldier concept that we are looking for," he said. "It's definitely an eye-opener. It's something that more NCOs need. It's more academically challenging than other courses I've been to."

Langkilde said she was excited about being a part of the first class and the skills she learned.

"This was the first time being facilitated in Mississippi at the RTI and I wanted to participate in the program and gain some knowledge so I could take it back to also educate our Soldiers back at home," she said.

Airmen Exposed to Japanese Culture During Joint Training

Story by Tech Sgt. Betsy J. Winstead
172d Airlift Wing Public Affairs

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan - Approximately 190 personnel from 18 sections of the 172d Airlift Wing seized a chance to work and train beside the active duty Air Force during their annual training at Yokota Air Base, Japan in July.

“Our goal, while at Yokota Air Force Base, is to seamlessly integrate our personnel with their active duty counterparts and provide the professional, technically proficient support that has become synonymous with the 172d Airlift Wing and the Mississippi Air National Guard,” said Lt. Col. Randy E. Cahoon, 172d Logistics Readiness Squadron commander and troop commander.

There are goals and benefits to training abroad versus staying at a unit’s home station, he said. One goal includes exchanging best practices to strengthen task proficiency and operations efficiency.

Cahoon hopes the mutual exchange of knowledge, experience, and skill will foster a stronger relationship between the Air National Guard and the Air Force to ensure mission accomplishment and

the protection of our great nation and allies.

“It allows us to learn from active components those things that have and have not worked for them, and it gives us an opportunity to share our knowledge base with them,” said 172d Maintenance Squadron Capt. Jake Way.

Another goal is to become familiar with equipment or technology that the Guardsmen may not have a chance to encounter at home station. Way said this is a chance for our young Airmen to train in their military jobs without outside distractions.

The last goal is to lend a helping hand to the local shops who may be short-staffed, which promotes teamwork and total force integration.

“This is a change of scenery that makes our Airmen get out of their comfort zone, shows us where we may have become complacent, and focuses their attention on building relationships with each other to grow and learn,” said Lt. Col. Chris Wright, 172d Maintenance Operation Flight commander.

He wants his Airmen to enjoy the opportunity to serve at an active duty base to keep them from taking their home sta-

tion for granted and to help them see how good they really are at their jobs.

When the Airmen have finished their jobs, off-duty activities enable them to immerse themselves in Japanese language, culture, and cuisine. For some, this is their first trip outside the United States, and it is a rich experience in every aspect.

Wright said he wanted them to experience the contrast in cultures. The Japanese are known for their rich culture and history, humility, and respect for elders and others.

Wright says, “I want them to experience not being the ‘center of the universe,’ and get out of their rooms to enjoy this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

Taking Wright’s advice, many enjoyed climbing Mount Fuji, attending festivals, strolling through gardens, viewing shrines, and riding thrilling amusement park rides.

At the end of the two-week jam-packed training event and taste of Japanese culture and recreation, the 172d Airlift Wing Airmen said ‘Sayonara’ to the ‘Land of the Rising Sun’ and Yokota Air Base, Japan.



172d Maintenance Squadron’s Airman 1st Class Taylor Wynn salutes the aircrew of the 172d Airlift Wing’s during a mission at Yokota Air Base, Japan, July 18, 2017. Wynn was part of a group of more than 190 Airmen who traveled to Japan for their two-week annual training. (Photo courtesy of 172d Air Refueling Wing)

Camp Shelby Celebrates Centennial Anniversary



Special guests and service members gather to celebrate at the Lake Terrace Convention Center July 13. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Tim Morgan)

**Story by 2nd Lt. Rachel Henson
Camp Shelby Public Affairs**

Merriam-Webster defines a century as a period of 100 years. For the Service members of the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, it means so much more.

Established July 18, 1917, Camp Shelby first served as one of 16 national Army camps established by the War Department to train and mobilize Soldiers during the First World War.

“Many, many Soldiers have been mobilized through Camp Shelby, to include the 442nd Japanese American Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Battalion in the Army Reserves,” said Col. Bobby M. Ginn Jr., Camp Shelby commander. “The 442nd trained here at Camp Shelby and went off to support the war effort of WWII and became the most highly decorated unit of WWII.”

Prior to becoming the 35th commander of Camp Shelby, Ginn, of Tyler-town, Mississippi, worked at the base for 24 years at the Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site. His most recent position at MATES was the division chief.

He said it has always been his dream to become Camp Shelby’s commander due to his family’s long history with the base.

“My grandfather, who passed away before I was born, was here at Camp

Shelby during WWI, and my father was a WWII veteran and demobilized here at Camp Shelby in 1945,” said Ginn. “So I listened to stories about Camp Shelby and the rich history of the base all my life.”

For Ginn and other members of the Mississippi National Guard, Camp Shelby is regarded as the premiere National Guard training site in the country.

“We do a lot of training with the Air Force, the Marine Corps, Special Operations Groups that come in here due to Shelby having the very latest and greatest types of training aides to use,” said Ginn. “Every unit that comes through Camp Shelby is treated with priority, and priority means everything when it comes to training.”

Ginn became the 35th commander of the base July 15 when the 34th Commander, Col. Gregory S. Michel, relinquished command and prepared for retirement.

Michel commanded the base from 2015 to 2017 and spent his entire command preparing for the base’s centennial celebration. He coordinated a

formal gala that was held July 13, 2017 at the Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center, as well as an open house at Camp Shelby July 15, 2017.

“If you go all the way back to the humble beginnings of Camp Shelby and to see how it has grown, to be here during this time has been a great honor for me, and I’m very humbled,” said Michel. “I’m of course excited about the next part of my career and I’m going out on a high note leaving as the commander of Camp Shelby.”

The centennial anniversary was also a time of reflection for many retirees who previously served at Camp Shelby. Celeste Young, a MSNG retiree and board member of the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, recently attended the annual retiree day at Camp Shelby and talked about her memories of the base.

“I’m so proud that the state of Mississippi is well remembered by the people who served and represented not only our state, but our nation,” said Young. “Having been mobilized for desert storm, along with my unit at Camp Shelby, I see names and places that are no longer here, and my heart swells with pride as well as sorrow that I’ve lost my friends, but I’m very proud of them for what they did for our country.”



The WWII vocal trio, The Victory Belles, sing the National Anthem during Camp Shelby’s change of command ceremony at the base’s Mississippi Armed Forces Museum July 15 during the centennial celebration. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes)



Amanda Hammons



Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes

“As WWI centennial events continue, we salute Camp Shelby’s 100th year of training brave Americans to protect the USA.”

- Senator Thad Cochran via Twitter



538 likes
lex_gone_flex I couldn't be more proud of you, Daddy! God has given you an incredible talent to lead. Congratulations on becoming Post Commander of Camp Shelby ❤️💙



Courtesy Photo



Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes



Amanda Hammons

THE HISTORY

Of

CAMP SHELBY

Camp Shelby celebrated its centennial anniversary this year on July 18, 2017. Here's a look back at how far the base has come in 100 years.



CAMP SHELBY ESTABLISHED
War Department awarded Hattiesburg National Army Camp. 50,000 troops trained from 1917-1920.



NATIONAL GUARD TRAINING
Base closed in 1920 and reopened in 1924 for NG training exercises until 1940, including Third Army and the 37th & 38th Infantry Divisions.



PEARL HARBOR
Trained over 750,000 U.S. troops for WWII. Second largest Army post in the U.S. from 1943-1945.



NATIONAL GUARD CONTROL
MS gained control after WWII. Trained troops for Vietnam & Desert Storm. Annually trained 100,000 through late 1990s.



CAMP SHELBY MOBILIZES
Camp Shelby is designated as Global War on Terror mobilization site. Mobilizes and trains troops from all branches of service from 2004-2012.



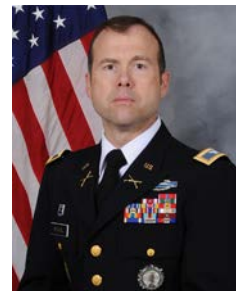
CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY
Camp Shelby has trained and mobilized over 1 million troops in all conflicts, but the Korean War, since its establishment in 1917.



Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, presents Col. Greg S. Michel, 34th Camp Shelby commander, a U.S. flag in honor of his retirement after nearly 30 years of service, July 15.

Commander's Farewell to Troops

Two and half years ago when I took command at Camp Shelby, I made the statement that it was not lost on me the great responsibility.



I committed to dedicate myself to the Soldiers of this unit and that I would push hard all the way, and I certainly hope that I have done that for you.

It is about you; you're the glue that keeps this installation to be the finest installation in the nation.

This year we celebrate Camp Shelby's 100 years. Established in 1917 as a part of World War One, this installation has served to mobilize, deploy, and train Soldiers in every one of our nation's conflicts, besides the Korean War.

I cannot think of a finer person to take command than Bobby Ginn. He's not only one of my peers, but a friend of mine and I'm excited to pass the guidon to someone I've know for such a long time.

It has been an honor to serve as the commander at Camp Shelby. I will take these memories with me forever with my next chapter of my life, but I am very thankful to the men and women that have served me.

Continue doing the great job that you are. Send these men and women out these gates better trained to go serve, protect, and defend this nation so that we can all sleep on a dark and stormy night.

COL Gregory S. Michel
34th CSJFTC Commander

"I'm so proud that the state of Mississippi is well remembered by the people who served and represented not only our state, but our nation." - Celeste Young, MSNG Retiree



601-558-2765



@CSJFTC_MS



@campshelby1917

Deep Roots at CRTC-BAC

3 Generations of Turners have called base home since WWII

Story by Danielle Thomas
CRTC-BAC Public Affairs

An Air National Guardsman has a family tree with roots that run very deep through the CRTC-Battlefield Airmen Center in Gulfport, Mississippi.

Chief Master Sgt. John Darrin Turner works at the CRTC-BAC as a maintenance superintendent. When he joined the Mississippi Air National Guard in 1990, his family had a long established connection to the CRTC that was created decades earlier by his great-grandmother Cleo Patton and his father Chief Master Sgt. John DeWitt Turner.

"I've wanted to join the Guard since I was 10," said John Darrin Turner. "I saw my dad in uniform, and I wanted to be like him."

The elder Turner enlisted in 1964 as part of the 173d Air Base Squadron. He later joined the CRTC and retired from the National Guard in 2000 as a flightline maintenance chief.

"I'm proud to have worn the uniform," said John DeWitt Turner. "I've been at the CRTC at midnight, all day sometimes, and three days straight without a bath. But, I did it gladly because I was dedicated."

The Mississippi National Guard recognized the dedication of Cleo Patton, the grandmother of John Darrin Turner's mother in 1946. From 1943 to 1946, Patton was employed at the base, then known as Gulfport Field. Her excellent work ethic in the Army Air Force Exchange as a food server and a sales clerk did not go unnoticed.

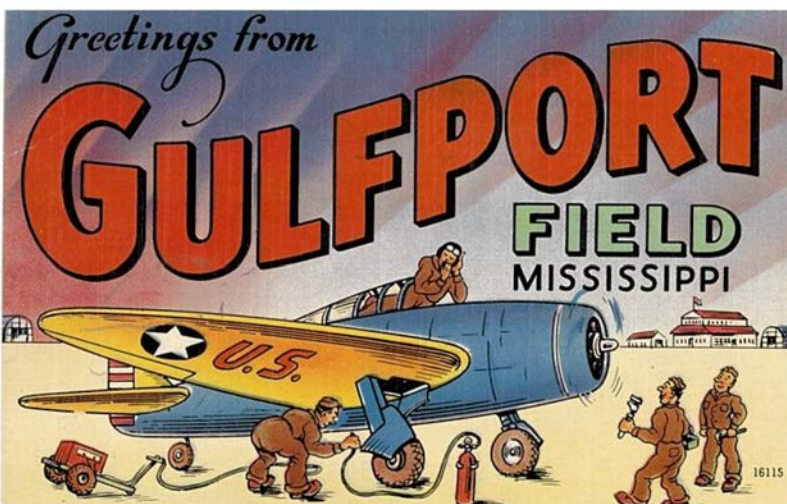
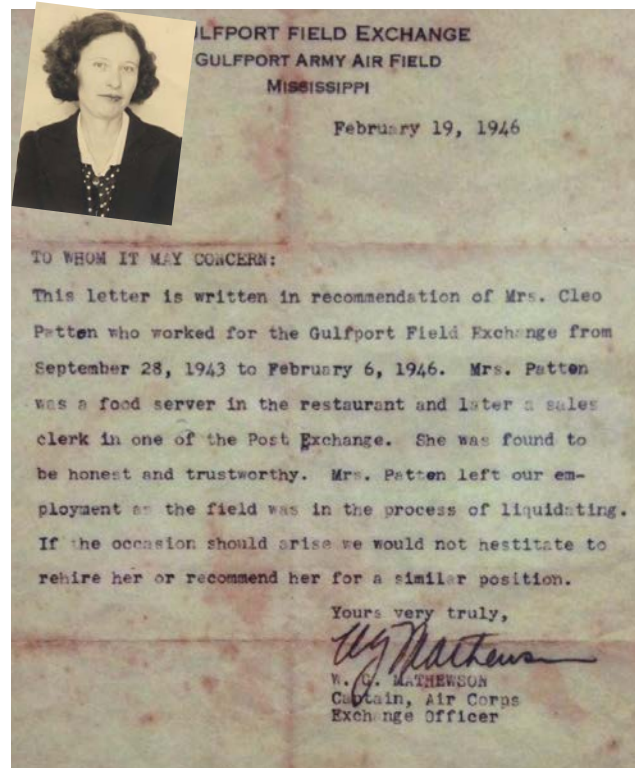
Patton passed away in 1997 at 94 years old. Her relatives cherish a certificate of appreciation letter in which the Capt. W.C. Mathencon, the exchange officer for the Air Corps, praises Patton as "honest and trustworthy."

"You can tell by the letter, they were really proud of her," said John Darrin Turner. "She was a special woman and from her I learned compassion. She was simple, not extravagant, but she had class."

John Darrin Turner said growing up his family instilled in him a love of country. He was taught to respect the flag and the National Anthem.

Watching his son follow in his footsteps into the National Guard and also climb to the same rank has made John DeWitt Turner very proud.

"I think he made a real good choice," he said. "He made a life for himself and his family. I think it's smart. He's hung in there and I'm proud of him."



Chief Master Sgt. John Darrin Turner follows his grandmother and father in serving through most of the history of Gulfport's CRTC-BAC. Both Turners also served for a time in the 255th Air Control Squadron.



RCTA Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Story by 2nd Lt. Rachel Henson
Camp Shelby Public Affairs

This year the Mississippi National Guard reached many milestones – Camp Shelby celebrated its 100th year of service, Kids Annual Training celebrated its 25th anniversary, and Camp McCain will hold its 75th anniversary in October.

Another milestone met involves a little known MSNG program on the outskirts of Meridian, Mississippi, at the Naval Air Station known as the Regional Counterdrug Training Academy.

The academy is tucked away in a remote location to provide a distraction-free learning environment for county and municipal level law enforcement, Drug Enforcement Administration and Department of Defense personnel, National Guardsmen, and from time to time, international partners.

The RCTA, the longest standing National Guard counterdrug training center, was created in 1992 by congress through the Gulf States Counterdrug Initiative. The program, developed to support counterdrug activities along the U.S. southern coastal region, is managed by the MSNG in a joint partnership, which includes both Army and Air National Guardsmen and Mississippi state civilians.

“It’s been a great partnership because everything we do here supports national drug strategies keeping our nation and our communities safe,” said Lt. Col. Gary L. Crist, RCTA commandant.

Crist has worked in the program for almost 20 years, and says the academy has trained over 137,000 law enforcement



Lt. Col. Gary Crist, RCTA commandant, spoke about the academy’s rich history during its 25th anniversary July 21, 2017.

“It’s a team effort, and just because we’ve managed to get this far doesn’t mean we’re stopping.”
- Congressman Greg Harper



Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, adjutant general of Mississippi, presents Congressman Greg Harper with a plaque for his faithful dedication to the RCTA.

officers from across the U.S. in skills that help keep their communities safe from illicit narcotics production, trafficking, and distribution.

“They come to us because we’ve got the best training out there in drug law enforcement and it’s at no cost to them,” said Crist. “It’s taxpayers’ dollars that are congressionally appropriated from year to year.”

Mississippi Congressman Greg Harper attended the academy’s 25th anniversary celebration in July, and said he supports the program and intends to keep it going for another 25 years.

“The work and the effort that’s done here, it has an incredible impact on the safety of our country,” said Harper. “It is a team effort, and just because we’ve managed to get this far doesn’t mean we’re stopping.”

Crist said unfortunately, the U.S. will continue to have a drug problem and there will still be a need for this type of training in the future. He is hopeful that the training conducted at the RCTA will continue to make a difference within communities across the nation.

“Since I’ve been here since 1999, I’ve become very passionate about it,” said Crist. “We get stories all the time on the training that they’re getting, how they go back and apply it in their jurisdictions and it’s saving lives. It’s taking illicit narcotics off the streets and making our communities safer. I go to sleep at night knowing that we’ve helped some community out there.”



Bake the Cake

Story by 1st Sgt. John B. Melson
and Staff Sgt. Domenic Williams
1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment

As a service member you should constantly improve your skills and abilities in all aspects of your job. You are not only responsible for yourself, but more importantly for the men and women to your left and right. Your performance is their performance.

In order to perform at a level above our enemies, prepare your body as you would bake a cake. It takes the right ingredients to make a great cake. The same is true of your body.

On average, put into your body what you lose during a rigorous workout. Putting the right nutrition into your body is paramount to staying healthy. Examples of eating healthy can be accomplished with the right attitude. Practicing self-discipline can become very simple.

Nutrition

Fruit is a great source of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber. I prefer watermelons and bananas to stay hydrated and healthy. Hydration is a vital part of any workout, before and after, to keep the blood flowing to each muscle.

Eggs and meats during the day can provide crucial protein for both recovery and daily nutrition. If you have no choice but to choose fast food, get chicken and remove the skin. White meat is not necessary but is better for the body than lean dark meat, and on the run it is better than a loaded cheeseburger. When possible, stick with fish rich in omega three or turkey.

Whole grain bread in the morning before physical training with some jelly will provide your body with plenty of nutrition.

Hydration is vital. The preferred technique is to drink a 50/50 mix of Gatorade and water. I rarely drink a Gatorade by itself. I recommend dumping half of the Gatorade into a half full bottle of water. Store-bought coconut water or pickle juice is also a great source of electrolytes for post-workouts.

Sodas provide almost no value to your daily nutrition. Since they are mostly loaded with sugar, your body can function without them, and they also have a large number of un-

wanted calories. The carbohydrates found in most sodas will actually reduce your energy level and ruin a well-planned PT session.

Frozen food, processed meat, and fried foods are filled with saturated fats. Our bodies produce their own saturated fats. Excess saturated fats from processed meats will hinder your performance during a workout as your body figures out where to store it. If you choose fried food, stay away from french fries. Stick with chicken and remove the fried skin.

The Anabolic Window

Other than breakfast being your most important meal of the day, a post-workout consumption of nutrients can have a positive impact on your recovery. It allows you to restore your glycogen to energize you after strenuous exercise, as well as providing protein to help repair and rebuild muscle tissue that was used and broken down during your PT session. This window is approximately 45 minutes after completing your PT session. However, you need to allow yourself 10-15 minutes for your stomach to settle and the blood flow to return to your intestines that was rushed out to your muscles to perform PT. That narrows the window down to 30 minutes.

Post-Workout

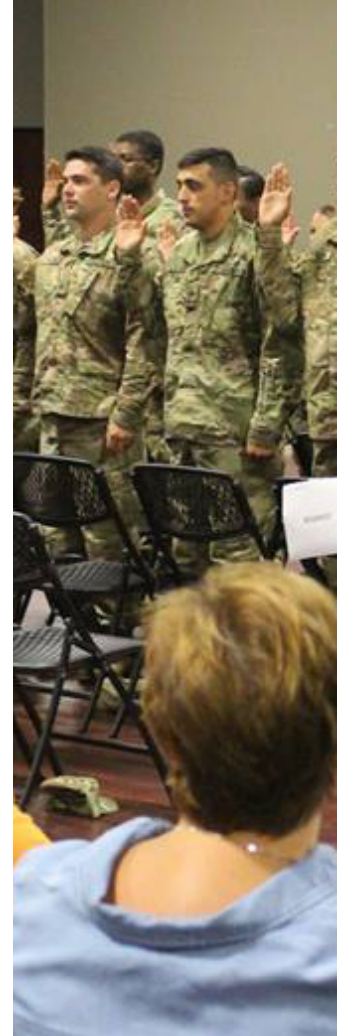
You should consume no more than 40 grams of protein since your body can only consume between 40-45 at one time. There must be a small consumption of carbohydrates at this time as well to properly digest proteins ingested and to restore your glycogen stores.

A good option is whey protein with half of a Gatorade. I recommend using a blender and frozen fruit, to eliminate the need for ice. Blend a banana for its B vitamins and potassium, frozen strawberries, and blueberries for their fiber and abundance of vitamins. Use a vanilla-based whey protein. Some pre-made protein drinks may be a bit more convenient, but be sure to consume some fruit as well. Paying attention to this anabolic window will greatly increase your ability to recover from PT sessions and will increase your overall performance.

"In order to perform at a level above our enemies, you need to prepare your body as you would bake a cake. It takes the right ingredients to make a great cake. The same is true of your body."



1.



3.





2.



4.



Missions at a Glance

1. Staff Sgt. Josh Farrar and Senior Airman Callop Hampton simulate providing oxygen to a patient aboard a 172d Airlift Wing C-17 Globemaster III during in-flight training exercises over Mississippi. The Airmen are assigned to the 183d Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron and gained experience with medical equipment setup, simulated in-flight emergencies, and simulated patient care. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech Sgt. Ed Staton)
2. The Mississippi National Guard's 230th Finance Detachment reaffirms their commitment to Mississippi and the nation during their send-off ceremony July 5 at the Brandon Civic Center. The unit is currently deployed to Afghanistan as part of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. (U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. William T. Hill)
3. Members of Company A, 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment held a promotion and reenlistment ceremony for Spc. Robert Lee and Spc. Daniel Stadalis Aug. 6 on top of "Big Duke" mountain in Kosovo. The Soldiers are among approximately 130 1-185th AV troops currently deployed to Kosovo in support of Operation Joint Guardian. (Photo courtesy of the 1-185th Aviation Regiment)
4. The Mississippi National Guard provided support in response to the U.S. Marine Corps KC-130 plane crash July 10 in Leflore County, Miss. Airmen from Meridian's 186th Air Refueling Wing assisted in locating the last fallen Marine using the unit's RC-26B aircraft. In addition, Flowood's 172d Airlift Wing assisted the team with the transport of remains from Mississippi to Dover Air Force Base, Del. The wing also provided security for the fallen service members and ramp space for a C-5 Galaxy to arrive and depart with the Heroes for Dover.

Immortalized on Stone

Rock wall captures NTC, Soldier for posterity

Story by 2nd Lt. Terry Hill II
 Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs



The 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team added their mark to the "Rockpile" at Fort Irwin, Calif., upholding the tradition of commemorating their 2017 rotation at the National Training Center. This year, however, the back of the unit's rock was also painted in honor of Sgt. Kyle Thomas, who was killed in a training accident during the rotation.



The "Rockpile" is a place where units memorialize their rotation at the National Training Center in Ft. Irwin, California.

"The painted rocks at NTC are the first and last thing soldiers see as they train at Ft. Irwin," said Lt. Col. Paul Lyon, battalion commander of the 150th Engineer Battalion. "Each rock serves as a lasting monument to the units that trained there."

For decades now, units will wrap up their training and paint one of the large boulders located just a few miles outside the main gate. At the conclusion of NTC rotation 17-07 the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team painted their rock with the "Dixie Thunder" logo and subsequent battalion crests on the front, but it is the backside of the 155th boulder that holds a deeper significance.

"Until Fiddler's Green, rest easy Sgt. Thomas" is painted on the back of the brigade's boulder. "Fiddler's Green" is a reference to a poem traditionally associated with the passing of a cavalry trooper. On the night of May 29, 2017, less than a week into the 14-day field exercise, Sgt. Kyle Thomas of Company A, 2d Battalion,

198th Armored Regiment was tragically killed in a training accident.

"Kyle had always wanted to be a soldier, from the time he was a kid," said Chrystal Parker, Thomas' sister. "He actually turned down a college soccer scholarship to serve."

The 24-year-old Amory native had served in the Mississippi National Guard as an M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank crewman for over five years and had just recently become a father for the first time. He was known as a hard worker and an example of what a non-commissioned officer should be.

"When it was time to do work, rest assured Kyle was at the forefront of it," said Capt. Gerald McCarty, Alpha Company commander. "Kyle was a great example of what an NCO should be and I hope that those of us who know him will carry on and strive to be like him."

"Sgt. Thomas' passing is a somber reminder of the dangerous business we are in." Said Col. Doug Ferguson, 155th ABCCT brigade commander. "He lost his life in training to improve the readiness of this brigade and to protect this country, his sacrifice will never be forgotten."

Until Fiddler's Green Sgt. Thomas.

In Memory of Sgt. Kyle Thomas

Alpha Company, 2d Battalion, 198th CAB
 Mississippi Army National Guard



BURNING QUESTIONS

What's next for the Dixie Thunder Brigade?

**Command Sgt. Maj. Silvester Tatum
155th Armored Brigade Combat Team**

Q1. As the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team shifts its focus from National Training Center operations to deployment mode, what are some priorities being stressed by brigade leadership?

A2. Individual and family readiness are key priorities. It is imperative that our Soldiers prepare themselves both physically and mentally for what we will encounter forward in 2018. We must all continue to place great emphasis on physical fitness and work very hard to complete all professional military education requirements. Excelling in these areas will not only build success during the upcoming mission, but also it will grow the next generation of leaders within the brigade. Regarding families, it is absolutely essential that we keep them updated with all important information throughout the deployment process. The best way for this to happen is for them to be an active participant in each unit's family readiness group. We're aiming for maximum participation as we prepare to serve overseas.

Q2. The brigade has had an amazing run over the past few years with the XCTC at Camp Shelby, MiBT at Fort Hood, Texas, and the recent NTC rotation at Fort Irwin, California. What has impressed you the most about these challenges?

A2. Resilience. We have some of the most resilient Soldiers in the entire United States Army. I have witnessed firsthand how so many have worked hard to guarantee mission success, while conquering many personal responsibilities and challenges outside of uniform. It takes dedication to duty to achieve what we've done over the past few years. Our Soldiers have signaled that they don't plan on slowing down in service to Mississippi and the Nation.



Q3. The Kansas Army National Guard's 2d Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment is now settled in as a formation within the 155th ABCT. What has the experience been like with working with them?

A3. Our Kansas Soldiers have been great to work with and we're blessed to have them as members of the team! We have a great relationship and look forward to serving with them during the deployment.

Q4. You've been a member of the Mississippi Army National Guard for more than 34 years. What's your best advice for the new generation of younger Soldiers who will lead the force into the future?

A4. My best advice is for them to remain committed, be highly motivated, maintain professionalism at all times, and strive to exceed the standards in everything they're involved in. If all of that can be accomplished consistently, success will find them as far as promotions and other opportunities are concerned. Always be willing to go the extra mile, maintain situational awareness, and challenge yourselves and others to be the best of the best.

Joint Force Headquarters
Mississippi National Guard
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"The Rockpile" sits underneath the Milky Way on the night of a new moon outside of Fort Irwin, California, May 26. The boulders bear the painted insignias of units who have completed their rotations at the National Training Center. The 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team completed their third rotation at the training site in June. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Tim Morgan)

