



# MOUNTAINEER **DEFENDER**

Magazine of the West Virginia National Guard



**Deployment  
Updates**

**Homecomings**

**Home Front  
News**

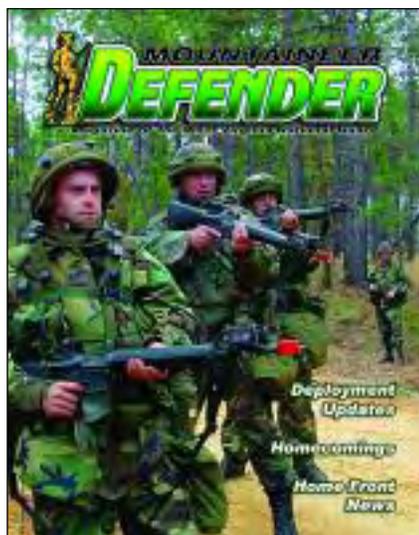


The Magazine of the  
West Virginia National Guard  
Spring 2004



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*On the cover:*

**Members of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st/150th Armor Battalion prepare to engage the "enemy" during an exercise at Fort Bragg, N.C., in November 2003. Standing (l-r) are: Spc. Ralph Anderson Jr., Sgt. Dewey Harper and Sgt. Robert Rowan II. An observer/controller with the evaluation team stands at right. The 1/150th trained at Fort Bragg, then traveled to Fort Polk, La., for validation before shipping out to Iraq.**

Photo courtesy of the 30th Heavy Separate Brigade



**Adjutant General**  
Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett

**State Command Sergeant Major**  
Command Sgt. Maj. Bruce A. Coleman

**State Command Chief Master Sergeant**  
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# W.Va. Guard excels, despite higher optempo

**S**EVERAL weeks ago, I was awakened by the telephone at 2:30 a.m. I dreaded answering the phone, fearing bad news. I was surprised to hear Lt. Gen. Robert Foglesong's voice on the other end. "Doc," as he is known to his friends, is a native of Mingo County and commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe. He told me he was cruising over Baghdad at 35,000 feet and had to call and let me know what a great job the 167th AW was doing in Southwest Asia.

Was I surprised? Not at all. I often get that kind of feedback about West Virginia guardsmen. The positive comments just keep coming.

I've heard from many of our units' mobilization stations that our troops were better prepared than any other unit that had processed through that location. Commanders at forward operating locations all over the world also call to tell me what a great job our West Virginia troops are doing.

Nothing makes me prouder of our soldiers and airmen than when I hear those kinds of comments. Our troops are doing an outstanding job, even though the operations tempo has increased tenfold.

Consider what our guardsmen have faced since 9/11.

We placed guardsmen on duty immedi-

ately after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon to protect armories, airbases and airports throughout the state. More Guard members were then called to support Operation Noble Eagle, guarding critical infrastructure within the United States.

West Virginia troops answered the call to duty for Operation Enduring Freedom, and the follow-on mission of Operation Iraqi Freedom required a massive mobilization effort involving almost every unit in the state.

Those missions continue today, as we currently have more than 2,600 soldiers and airmen mobilized. Almost every unit in the state has been mobilized since 9/11. The WVNG continues to play a vital role in the war against terrorists.

These success stories, and many others like them that have yet to be told, are grounded in the dedication and commitment of those who support our organization.

To those people — Gov. Bob Wise and the state Legislature, employers of our guardsmen, family members and the citizens of West Virginia — I say "Thank you."

I want to say a special thank you to the families of our Guard men and women. Families who often bear the brunt of long



Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett  
West Virginia Adjutant General

and painful separations, yet continue to support our Guard. Many individuals have stepped up and taken responsibility for unit family readiness groups. Thank you for the job you are doing.

The road ahead is long and will require more sacrifice. While we ready ourselves to welcome home those who have been gone, we prepare to send others in their place. I feel very confident that, in the true West Virginia spirit, our National Guard men and women will meet the challenge.

## WVANG is ready, reliable and relevant

**O**N March 6, 2004, the WVANG celebrates 57 years. We have been blessed with great leadership in the WVANG. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who came before us and laid the foundations for the two outstanding units we have today, the 167th Airlift Wing at Martinsburg and the 130th Airlift Wing at Charleston.

Our retirees are a direct link to our distinguished past and, from them, we draw knowledge, strength and encouragement for the future.

On Sept. 11, 2001, the president's call to arms in the war against terrorists found the West Virginia airlift wings ready to answer the call.

I have never been more proud than when I watched our two units mobilize, say their goodbyes to families, fly away to a foreign land and perform their duties in an outstanding manner.

Ours is "The Profession of Arms," a time-honored tradition that is known to only a select few in our nation's history. Only 6 percent of Americans under the age of 65 have served in our nation's military. It is a proud time to be in uniform as a citizen-airman serving this great nation.

Behind every aircrew, every ground crew, every mission and every blue-suiter stands a mother, a father, a sister, a brother, a child, a family member bearing the quiet burden for which all of



Robert D. Chandler  
West Virginia Command  
Chief Master Sergeant

ready, reliable and relevant.

Remember, you represent the "Best" of who we are and what we are about as airmen and Americans!

May God bless you and yours.

America is truly and gratefully proud. We need to give special thanks to our families in their support. I cannot think of a group that has given so much and made so many sacrifices.

As citizen-airmen, we share the same core values as the U.S. Air Force — Integrity First, Service before Self, Excellence in all we do. We will continue the fight and do our part in the global war against terrorists.

As the ANG transforms into a balanced Expeditionary and Homeland Security Force, I see the WVANG remaining strong,

# Vollmecke new CO of 167th AW

Col. Eric W. Vollmecke assumed command of the 167th Airlift Wing during a change of command ceremony Jan. 11 at the Martinsburg Air National Guard Base.

Vollmecke accepted the 167th AW guidon from Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett, adjutant general of the West Virginia National Guard, as unit members, community leaders, family and friends looked on.

Vollmecke's main job is to ensure his people are trained and equipped to go to war. His experience as the airlift squadron commander prepared him for the unit's top post, as he previously led the 167th on many high-profile deployments.

"The 167th has a long history of answering the call to duty," Vollmecke told those assembled. "Our unit members are demonstrating their abilities every day in places like Kosovo and Iraq."

But the unit's ongoing missions in Europe and Southwest Asia are only two of the issues Vollmecke must face this year. The 167th also will undergo a series of demanding Air Force evaluations that will test the unit's ability to per-

## Gain new 167th AW air commander

Col. William R. Gain was named air commander of the 167th Airlift Wing by Brig. Gen. V. Wayne Lloyd. Gain will oversee the full-time work force and day-to-day operations of the wing.

form its flying mission and survive under many of the same conditions found in Iraq.

Vollmecke said his people are up to the challenge.

"I don't question our members' commitment to excelling on the evaluations, even though it will create a tremendous amount of additional work at a time when they are already busy," he said. "The leader of the 167th might have changed, but the quality and professionalism of its people hasn't."

Vollmecke is the first traditional guardsman in about 30 years to command the unit. He replaces Col. Jesse Thomas, who led the unit from 1999 until his retirement in 2004.



Photo by Tech Sgt. Bob Leverknight, 167th AW. Col. Eric W. Vollmecke accepts the 167th AW guidon from Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett.



Employers of America's National Guard and Reserve members have become a vital part of our national defense. The role of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program is to obtain employer and community support to ensure the readiness of Reserve forces.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act is the foundation for the ESGR program. This law protects military members and civilian employers by setting forth specific employer obligations and defining the rights of their employees serving in the military.

The WV ESGR Committee is planning an employer orientation weekend at Camp Dawson from April 23-25. This event is designed to give Guard member employers the experience of seeing first-hand what their employees experience during military training. There will also be many opportunities for "hands-on" activities. Slots will be filled on a first-come, first serve basis.

For more information, contact:  
Maj. Jeff McCray at  
304-561-6438.



## Challenge Academy gives at-risk teens a second chance

"We do more before 7 a.m. than most people do all day."

The Army used this recruiting slogan to attract adventurous young people to the military. It might also apply to cadets at the National Guard's Mountaineer Challenge Academy.

Cadets are up at 5 a.m., do an hour of physical conditioning, take showers and clean the barracks. All before breakfast.

But the program is not designed to transform these teens into soldiers. Students are encouraged to engage in education, personal development and community service, which is reinforced through physical fitness training, classes and mentoring.

Teens who were not successful in a traditional school environment get a second chance here, said Kathy Tasker, deputy director of Challenge Academy. She said students have the opportunity to obtain a GED and develop life-coping skills through the program.

Challenge was formed in the early 1990s to provide opportunities for at-risk West Virginia teens. The curriculum consists of a 22-week residential phase and a one-year follow-up program.

Teens 16 to 19 years old must volunteer for the program, but sometimes school administrators, parents, or even juvenile probation officers refer them. Applicants must not have a felony on their record, and they must be free of illegal drugs.

About 100 to 125 youths begin each class. The program's graduation rate is about 70 percent, with about 80 percent of students obtaining a GED.

No matter how many times she has seen it before, Tasker is always proud on graduation day. "You would have to be here when the students show up that first day to completely understand how much these young people have changed and what it takes to get them to graduation," she said.

# 150th Armor now in Iraq



Sgt. Christopher Fleming of the Scout Platoon, 1st/150th AR, trains his weapon on a suspected "enemy" vehicle during military exercises at Fort Polk, La., in January.

Photo by Maj. Mike Cadle, HQ WVANG

## Unit is one of many in largest troop rotation since World War II

Three Army National Guard brigades totaling about 15,000 citizen-soldiers deployed to Iraq in February as part of the largest U.S. troop rotation since World War II.

The 30th Heavy Separate Brigade (Infantry), based in North Carolina, the 39th HSB (Infantry) from Arkansas and the 81st HSB (Armor) from Washington state will take over from battle-seasoned troops who have been in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion by U.S.-led forces.

The massive movement of U.S. troops into Kuwait and Iraq will peak in March, according to published reports, when 220,000 soldiers, airmen, sailors and Marines will be on the ground in theater.

That number is scheduled to be halved before spring turns to summer as units return home. The remaining force of 110,000 Americans will consist of 80,000 soldiers, 25,000 Marines and 5,000 Air Force and Navy personnel.

Among those deploying is West Virginia's 150th Armor Battalion, part of the 30th HSB.

The 150th was mobilized on Oct. 1, 2003, and has spent the past four months training at Fort Bragg, N.C., and at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La. The JRTC is the Army's top combat-training center.

The 150th and other units in the 30th HSB have traded in their tanks and artillery for Humvees.

"Our armor battalion will essentially become a motorized infantry battalion," said Lt. Col. Greg Wilcoxon, the 150th's commander.

They have three main goals:

- Gain public support for U.S./coalition military forces and the interim Iraqi government;
- Create an environment that facilitates the restoration of the Iraqi infrastructure and restoration of public services, health services and utilities.

■ Support coalition operations to remove or apprehend threat elements and neutralize the enemy.

Sgt. Russell Morgan of Huntington is a cavalry scout for the 1st/150th. Scouts provide personal security to key leaders in the unit.

"Following standard operating procedure that we have learned is key," said Morgan. "I am looking forward to the mission and giving the troops over there a break."

Soldiers have been taught at least three rules of thumb for their deployment:

- "Every soldier is an ambassador for the United States."
- "If it looks out of place, investigate."
- "Stay alert — stay alive."

Much of the training the 150th went through involved remaking a heavy armor unit into a mobile infantry unit.

During exercises at the JRTC, the 30th HSB was subject to convoy attacks and attempted infiltrations. Simulated mortar

attacks became a daily routine.

"Learning how to live fire at fixed targets in a moving convoy was helpful training," said Spc. Lee Hagy of Oak Hill, a fueler in HHC of the 1st/150th.

The citizen-soldiers of the 30th HSB and their families will make many sacrifices in the coming months.

"Having the support of family is key for deployed Guard members. Knowing that everything is OK at home will enable a soldier to focus on the mission at hand," said Lt. Col. Mark Strong, commander of the 30th HSB's 1st/113th Field Artillery Battalion. "Family Readiness Groups are vital in helping families of deployed guardsmen cope with the pain of separation and provide a variety of services from financial advice to counseling."

Many of the units have multiple family members going, such as father-and-son sets, brothers and cousins.

"The Guard, by nature, is a very community-based organization," said Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Vance of the 1st/150th, "with neighbors, business partners and family members being part of the same unit."

The 30th HSB will deploy to Iraq as part of the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized), which will replace the 4th I.D. in northern Iraq.

*1st Lt. Scarlet Wootton of the North Carolina Army National Guard contributed to this report.*

# '1st W.Va.' makes history — again

## 201st Artillery unit sheds big guns for force protection

By Joseph C. Atkins  
Mountaineer Defender

West Virginia's storied 1st Battalion, 201st Field Artillery shipped out in February, around the unit's 269th birthday, for duty in Iraq.

The history of the "First West Virginia" is not lost on its commanding officer, Maj. Mark Hennigan. He's proud of that history. And, under his command, the unit is making more history.

"The 201st saw action in the Gulf War and, 13 years later, we're heading back," he said. "I feel great; this is what I've been working for."

The history being made this time is that the 201st Field Artillery is not going into harm's way as an artillery unit. Hennigan said he and his soldiers have deployed for force protection. Most of their mission will be to man checkpoints and protect convoys.

"In the broader sense, [the mission] is convoy and fixed site security," he said. "That's one of the challenges we've had to adapt to, going from an artillery role to a security role."

The 201st is not tasked to police the Iraqi civilian population, though, the major said.

"We're not going as MPs," he said. "Other artillery units have, but the 201st won't do things like crowd control, processing prisoners of war/detainees, house-to-house searches."

He added, "At this time, we're not going to be doing that, but the mission is always subject to change."

The 201st was federalized Dec. 18, 2003, but its more than 400 soldiers were able to spend Christmas and New Year's at home, Hennigan said.

Upon reporting Jan. 8 to Fort Drum in upstate New York, the unit quickly went to work becoming validated for deployment. Hennigan said trainers at Fort Drum validated the unit Feb. 12, a little more than a month after its arrival at Fort Drum.

"We have been validated in all areas of personnel, equipment and training," he said the day the unit achieved its validation feat. "And we are going to begin the next phase of deploy-

ment, which is to actually go over."

Hennigan said the unit's mobilization orders are for 740 days. U.S. Army forces are on a 12-month rotation in Iraq, so a two-year activation doesn't mean the West Virginia unit will be in country that whole time.

Hennigan said the 201st is replacing a battalion of the 17th Field Artillery Brigade from Fort Sill, Okla. The unit will be attached to the 197th Field Artillery Brigade, a New Hampshire National Guard unit, which will report to 3rd Corps Artillery.

Hennigan said in February that his soldiers were ready to go, especially after spending winter in upstate New York.

"They are ready to get out of the cold weather," he said. "They are very well motivated. Morale is good, spirits are high; they just want to get to a warmer place."

Ground temperatures in Iraq the week the 201st flew there ranged from the upper 50s to the upper 70s. Of course, the blistering heat of the Iraqi summer is just around the bend.

## 196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment heads out

There might not have been a standing-room-only crowd at the Charleston National Guard Armory on Jan. 5, but the building was overflowing with love and pride for the small group of soldiers heading off to war.

Seven members of the Army Guard's Detachment 1, 196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, were activated Jan. 2 for deployment with the 196th MPAD headquarters, based in Columbus, Ohio.

Both groups have been training together at Camp Atterbury, Ind., near Indianapolis, the past month.

"Our mission is to tell the Army story through the soldiers' eyes," said Master Sgt. Robert A. Powell, first sergeant of the Charleston-based unit.

The challenge for West Virginia's soldiers was getting to know the strangers they have come to embrace as family. For Powell and a few others, this isn't the first joint deployment with their Ohio counterparts. Four soldiers from the two states deployed to Bosnia in 1998 for the



Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD

Members of Det. 1, 196th MPAD join their Ohio counterparts at Camp Atterbury, Ind., before leaving for Iraq.

think we have built a pretty good camaraderie and now are like one little family."

"I couldn't ask for a better bunch of people to work with," Powell said. "It's fulfilling to see them turned loose, and great that they enjoy their work."

peacekeeping mission there.

"I am pretty excited about redeploying with those who were with us in Bosnia," said Staff Sgt. Steven R. Johnson of Columbus, Ohio, a broadcast journalist. He said the unit has experienced soldiers, and that everyone is willing to get the job done.

"The experience that we gained during Operation Joint Guard in Bosnia will help the others who have a variety of talents," said Cpt. Lillian P. Sydenstricker of Chesapeake, Ohio, commander of the West Virginia detachment.

One of the newest members of the West Virginia detachment, Spc. Sherree L. Casper, a print journalist from Berkeley Springs, said, "I

## Merrill top airman in WVANG; 167th sweeps OAY awards

Senior Airman Timothy J. Merrill, a traffic management craftsman with the 167th Logistics Readiness Squadron, has been awarded the James K. McLaughlin trophy as the Air Guard's top airman.

Merrill joined the Air Guard in October 2001. He recently deployed to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, for five months to support Operation Iraqi Freedom and, while there, was recognized as airman of the quarter for the installation.

Tech. Sgt. Kerry M. Anderson was chosen



Merrill Anderson Sadler

as the Air Guard's top airman in the non-commissioned officer category. Anderson is a special purpose vehicle supervisor in the 167th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Master Sgt. Robert E. Sadler was honored as the Air Guard's top airman in the senior noncommissioned officer category. Sadler is an equipment management supervisor with the 167th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Senior Master Sgt. Patsy J. Guzzi, Jr. was named the Air Guard's best first sergeant. Guzzi is first sergeant for the 130th Civil Engineering Squadron at the 130th Airlift Wing in Charleston.

(Guzzi's photo was unavailable at press time.)

# Rebuilders return

By Spc. Sherree Casper

196th MPAD

CAMP ATTERBURY, Ind. — After spending eight months at war, Spc. Eric S. Mallett was anxiously waiting to hug and kiss his 2-year-old daughter, Charlee. Although the toddler hadn't seen her daddy's face in months, she was sure to recognize his voice.

Mallett, a Hometown resident, said he was fortunate to speak with his daughter every day while serving overseas.

The 27-year-old technical engineer specialist was among 80 soldiers with the 111th Engineer Group out-processing at Camp Atterbury after serving eight months in Kuwait.

■ 111th earns family readiness award. Page 10

The 111th Engineer Group, based in St. Albans, was welcomed home by family Jan. 30 after supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Col. Robert L. Kincaid, commander of the West Virginia Army National Guard engineer unit, praised the efforts of his soldiers who participated in the mission.

"It's great to be back and to bring all of the soldiers back in one piece," said Kincaid, 52, of Buckhannon, who, along with six of his soldiers, was awarded a Bronze Star for his service during this deployment.

"We are very excited to be home," said Maj. Ronald G. Garton, 45, of Charleston, who worked as the group's public affairs officer.

The group's primary duty in Kuwait was to support the deployment and redeployment of coalition forces for the operation.

The 111th also provided general engineering, design, troop construction and contractor projects, as well as engineering construction and maintenance throughout the country, Garton said. The West Virginia Guardsmen built 77.8 kilometers of new roadway and managed the construction of 97 concrete pads, 22 buildings and 37 other structures



Photo courtesy of F. Brian Ferguson, The Charleston Gazette

**Charlee Mallett, 2, awaits the return of her father, Spc. Eric S. Mallett of the 111th Engineer Group, on Jan. 30.**

## 111th Engineers back in W.Va.

in Kuwait.

"There was a lot of wear and tear on the roadways," he said.

The unit mobilized in March 2003. Before returning home, the engineers tackled 470 major construction projects in Kuwait and southern Iraq.

Sgt. Jason W. Williams, 27, of Charleston, said he was looking forward to spending time with his family and friends, not to mention getting as far as he can from the sweltering heat — something that is

indelibly burned into his memory. During the summer, the mercury rose to 130 degrees at noon on some days, he said.

While many soldiers with the 111th Engineer Group brought back memories carved deeply in their minds, four chose to wear a cherished reminder of their recent military duty.

Spc. Casey S. Phalen sports an 18-carat gold ring on his right band finger. It is engraved with the words "Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003-2004." A crest of an engineer castle sits atop the ring. The words "Never Forget 911" and "WTC" are on one side of the ring. "WVARNNG," a patriot symbol and STARC patch line the other side.

Capt. Dan L. Picklesimer, 49, of Radnor, designed the ring for a jeweler at the Fahaleel Market in Kuwait City who specially made them. Four soldiers from the engineer unit — Garton, Phalen, Picklesimer and Spc. Raymond L. Rideout — bought rings, which ranged in price from \$435 to \$500, depending on size.

# State's 157th MPs policed postwar Iraq

By Joseph C. Atkins

Mountaineer Defender

For many soldiers serving in Iraq, this is not their first time in the ancient "Fertile Crescent."

Such was the case with Capt. Mark A. Merritt, commanding officer of the West Virginia National Guard's 157th Military Police Company. Merritt was there in 1991 as a U.S. Marine Corps reservist when the United States and its allies evicted Saddam Hussein's army from Kuwait.

But being back in Iraq wasn't like coming home for the Wayne County native and Marshall University graduate.

"It didn't get any better the second time around," he said.

Merritt led 110 soldiers of the 157th from Martinsburg and Moundsville out of the state Feb. 15, 2003, to Fort Knox, Ky., before heading to Kuwait on May 1. A month later, the unit was in Iraq, attached to the Army Reserve's 310th MP Battalion out of New York.

The 157th's duty was running prisons, force protection at four locations, prisoner processing and instructing Iraqi guards, Merritt said. Its main base of operations was Ad Diwaniyah, a city of roughly 200,000, 75 miles south of Baghdad.



Photo courtesy of the 157th MP Company

**A 157th Military Police Company soldier and his Iraqi crew take a break in the shade while cleaning up around the unit's forward operating base in Iraq.**

After six months policing postwar Iraq, the 157th returned unharmed to the United States. The soldiers' return in December 2003 was marked from the get-go by appreciation from fellow Americans, and it started as soon as they touched down in New England.

"In Bangor, Maine, the local citizens got

wind we were coming in," said Merritt, a FedEx driver in civilian life. "About 300 of them were there to greet us. That was a great surprise, and they gave us a hero's welcome. It was really great."

The soldiers returned to Martinsburg on Dec. 22, 2003, to much the same welcome as they'd experienced in Bangor.

"The turnout in Martinsburg was really nice, too," Merritt said.

Merritt said care packages from home played an important role for troop morale. He wanted to single out Sgt. Matt Izzo for special appreciation regarding morale, welfare and recreation.

"He sponsored a program to have care packages sent to all of us," Merritt said of Izzo, a member of the 156th Military Police Detachment and an employee of City National Bank in Cross Lanes, which assisted Izzo in his voluntary task.

The packages included candy, razors, toilet paper, cards, film, batteries — just about everything a soldier might need on a modern deployment, including, "Oh, yes, baby wipes," Merritt said.

He also wanted to thank the state of West Virginia for its MWR efforts.

"The state got us stuff we needed when we couldn't get it any other way," Merritt said without elaborating.



167th AW members (l-r) Maj. Randy Richter, Tech. Sgt. Mark Walters and 1st Lt. Eric Widmeyer (behind Walters in doorway) are greeted by wing leadership as they arrive in Martinsburg after serving five months supporting OIF. (Photo courtesy of the 167th AW)

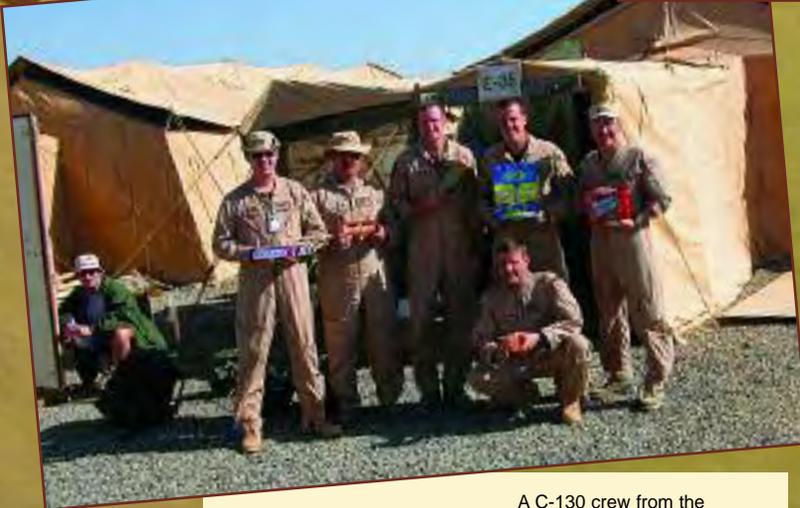
Family members wait for the arrival of a C-130 Hercules to bring Army Guard soldiers home for Christmas. (Photo by Maj. Mike Cadle, HQ WVANG)



Soldiers of the 150th Armor Battalion receive civil-disturbance training at the Joint Readiness Training Center in preparation to deploy to the Middle East. (Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD)



Aircraft of the 146th Medical Company over the state capitol demonstrate the unit's transition from UH-1 "Hueys" (foreground) to new UH-60 Black Hawks. (Photo courtesy of the WVARNG)



A C-130 crew from the 130th AW shows off the contents of a care package sent to them by a friend of Tech. Sgt. Aaron Cook (kneeling). Standing (l to r) with Cook are Capt. Bill Grimes, Master Sgt. Rich Lockard, 1st Lt. Chris Wright, 1st Lt. Richard Switzer and Chief Master Sgt. Dave Boyles. (Photo by Master Sgt. Debbie Turrill, 130th AW)





Soldiers of the 119th Engineers are welcomed home by Maj. Gen Tackett during their homecoming ceremony in Clarksburg on Feb. 11. (Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD)



West Virginia Gov. Bob Wise bids farewell to members of the 201st Field Artillery, who would soon leave for Iraq, during a Feb. 18 ceremony at Fort Drum, N.Y. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

Black Hawk pilot Chief Warrant Officer 3 Rob McClure demonstrates the winch his crew used when they rescued civilian flood victims. Their story is on Page 12. (Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD)



Soldiers cross the frozen flightline to greet loved ones waiting in the Charleston ANG base hangar. Maj. Gen. Tackett secured the soldiers' leave from mobilization stations at Fort Bragg, N.C., and Fort Dix, N.J., and West Virginia ANG units flew more than 1,000 ARNG soldiers home for Christmas. (Photo by Maj. Mike Cadle, HQ WVANG)



Brig. Gen. W. Craig Broadwater meets with local villagers during his recent deployment to Djibouti. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)



Master Sgt. Carl Short Jr. is all smiles as members of the 111th Engineer Group stand in formation before being released to their families during a homecoming ceremony Feb. 4 at the Charleston Air National Guard base. (Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Rick Ware, 130th AW)

# Deployment update



## Deployment of W.Va. Guard across the globe since 9/11

Special Operations Detachment - Europe	229th Engineer Detachment
2nd Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group	1257th Transportation Company
1092nd Engineer Battalion	1st Battalion, 150th Armor
1863rd Transportation Company	Det. 28, Operational Support Airlift Command
157th Military Police Company	3664th Maintenance Company
156th Military Police Detachment	Det. 1, 196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
111th Engineer Group	1st Battalion, 201st Field Artillery
152nd Military Police Detachment	130th Airlift Wing
119th Engineer Company	167th Airlift Wing

## 111th Family Readiness Group honored

WASHINGTON — The family readiness group of the West Virginia Army National Guard's 111th Engineer Group was honored Feb. 13 at the Pentagon as one of the top programs in the Reserve component for 2003.

The 111th Family Readiness Group was honored for going beyond the call of duty in supporting units throughout the Mountain State. The group also was cited for helping three other units create and certify their own family readiness groups.

Daphne Rideout, president of the 111th Family Readiness Group, and unit Chaplain Maj. Bruce Reed accepted the award. They were joined for the presentation in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes by Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, Lt. Gen. Roger Schultz, director of the Army National Guard, and Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett, adjutant general of West Virginia.

Lt. Col. Ian Ferguson of the Reserve Affairs office served as master of ceremonies. Ferguson emphasized that family readiness is a key component of mission readiness.

"Robust family readiness programs have greatly enhanced the deployability of the Guard and Reserve," he said. "One need only look at the last few years to recognize the critical role the Reserve components play in supporting our nation. Improved family readiness programs and command emphasis have enabled Guard and Reserve families to be prepared when the service member is called to active duty."

DOD Reserve Family Readiness Awards were established in 2000 to recognize the top unit in each Reserve component that demonstrates outstanding family readiness while maintaining superior mission readiness.

A large delegation of 111th group members and state family program officials accompanied Tackett to Washington for the Hall



Photo by Rudi Williams, AFPS

**Daphne Rideout, president of the 111th Engineer Group's Family Readiness Group, is presented a certificate and plaque in recognition of the West Virginia organization being named the Army's top family readiness group during a ceremony at the Pentagon on Feb. 13.**

of Heroes ceremony.

Rideout was accompanied by her husband, Spc. Raymond Rideout, and Reed was joined by his wife, Judy. Others making the trip were Lt. Col. Craig Lambert, 111th operations officer, and his wife, Carrie, a member of the State Family Readiness Council, and Command Sgt. Maj. Donald Hill, 111th command sergeant major, and his wife Susan, a past president of the 111th family readiness group.

The state family program office was represented by Col. Glen Diehl and Gary Wood.

*American Forces Press Service contributed to this report.*

# 3664th Maintenance in Iraq

The 3664th Maintenance Company, based in Point Pleasant and Eleanor, headed to Iraq in February.

The unit mobilized Dec. 7, 2003, and trained at Fort Dix, N.J. Like most outfits, it has orders for up to two years of active duty service.

The 171 soldiers in the 3664th were able to come home for the Christmas holidays before preparing to ship out.

In early February, they were back to business, hard at work, their commanding officer said.

"We are rehearsing skills needed to perform our mission in the Iraqi theater," Maj. Jeffrey Perkins, of Buckhannon, said at the time. "Our mission is to provide direct-support maintenance and repair/part supply to units in and passing through the corps area."

Perkins, a graduate of Buckhannon-Upshur High School and the University of Charleston, said the 3664th's soldiers were prepared for the business of reshaping Iraq into a democracy.

"We are all ready to go," he said. "Our morale is very good. We're anxious to start doing our job."

Perkins said the 3664th would be attached to the 298th Corps

Support Battalion from the Mississippi National Guard.

In the workup for service in Iraq, the unit trained mostly in soldiers' skills, survival skills and battlefield techniques to prepare themselves for the trying work ahead.

And when something breaks, Perkins said, the 3664th is ready to make it right.

"Either we go retrieve it, or repair it on the spot, or fix it at our base camp," he said.

He said in early February that the unit would have elements attached to different maneuver battalions for support.

And he said his company has combat veterans to lead it in the hostile environment of Iraq.

"I have some soldiers that have been with Special Forces and other units that have been there," he said. "It's good to have that experience."

Perkins said he anticipated a successful tour of duty in ousted dictator Saddam Hussein's former country. But he said his soldiers will be happy to come back home when their work is done.

"We'll be anxious to come home when its our turn," he said.

## Bugler gets help honoring fallen veterans

More than 1,500 veterans die in the United States every day. How does the military honor them? With a small boom box and CD to play the ceremonial song of taps. This is due to a massive shortage of buglers available to play taps at military funerals.

Upset with the military's approach to honoring fallen soldiers, Master Sgt. Ronald Glazer, a member of the Air Guard's 167th Airlift Wing, is doing his part to change the way local veterans are honored.

Glazer joined the base's Honor Guard, only to learn that the team did not have a bugler.

"I was appalled that we were not giving our fallen comrades an appropriate and proper funeral," he said.

He got permission from the Honor Guard NCOIC to become the bugler for the team, and found a used bugle on eBay. Calling on his six years of instrumental training in school, Glazer began playing taps at military

funerals in the Martinsburg area.

But Glazer still wasn't satisfied. The lacquer was peeling off the bugle, and its sound quality was not the best. Wanting to present a professional image for families of the men and women he was honoring, Glazer contacted the bugle's manufacturer, Getzen Co., to see if the company would help him restore the instrument. Glazer was astonished at the company's response.

Getzen President Tom Getzen asked Glazer to send the worn horn to him. About six months later, Glazer received the refurbished bugle. The horn lay inside an embroidered blue case on a bed of velvet-like material.

Now, families of late veterans will bear witness to the respect and reverence being shown to their loved ones. And it's all because an Air Guardsman followed through on his dream, and a true American company helped him achieve it.



Glazer

## First responder teams prepare for WMD attack

By Chief Master Sgt. John Finlayson  
HQ WVANG

HOMESTEAD AIR RESERVE BASE, Fla. — A joint training exercise of West Virginia's 35th Civil Support Team and the 45th CST from Tennessee took place in August 2003.

CSTs blend resources from the military, local police and fire departments and other public emergency response organizations.

As the CSTs continue to evolve for every state and territory, the groups refine their operational readiness to be prepared for any event involving weapons of mass destruction.

The joint exercises of the 35th and 45th CSTs were nighttime training operations to respond to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosive incident.

The St. Albans-based 35th CST consists of 22 military professionals with skills in firefighting, bio-environmental, medical support, communications and computer/information management.

"This exercise afforded both teams the

opportunity to interact and train with first responders from Miami-Dade County agencies, adding an additional layer of realism to the exercise," said Lt. Col. Michael Kitts.

Integrated operations with the first responders permitted team members to conduct joint planning, entry and survey operations.

In the first exercise, the Tennessee and West Virginia CSTs received word that an unmanned aircraft had exploded in the Homestead area and that another had crashed. The incidents called for immediate deployment.

The first to deploy was Tennessee's 45th CST, which was responsible for initial assessment of the situation and establishment of onsite evaluation. West Virginia's 35th CST collected data about the suspected individuals and groups behind the attack.

The West Virginia unit moved to the site and set up the Unified Command Suite (communication center), Dismounted Analytical Platform lab, decontamination survey team, tactical operations center and medical team.

CST members are required to have about

700 hours of training in live nerve agent, J-5 technical escort (bombs, nuclear, missiles), hazardous material, combat lifesaving, basic chemistry, radiation safety, 9mm weapon qualification, chemical warfare and joint training with civilian agencies.

"The composition of the Civil Support Teams from both Army and Air Force specialty skills has created a very capable response team for any type of chemical, nuclear, biological or other types of threats on our communities," said Staff Sgt. Eddie Shinn, a member of the unit's survey team.

The final exercise had the Tennessee and West Virginia units working simultaneously in a 14-hour exercise that included bomb identification and disengagement, contamination and agent assessment, and community protection.

These types of exercises are vital to the CST's readiness. The unit will train with Tennessee's 45th CST again in March and is working with Dugway Proving Ground officials in Utah to coordinate a joint exercise there in April.

# Black Hawk Up

## Training mission turns into real-life rescue as crew lifts 3 from floodwaters

By Joseph C. Atkins

Mountaineer Defender

A hoist training mission using night vision goggles turned into the real thing Nov. 12, 2003, when the crew of a West Virginia Army National Guard HH-60L Black Hawk helicopter pulled three Lincoln County residents from a truck stalled in raging floodwaters.

Darkness had fallen and bad weather conditions were quickly getting worse when the four-man aircrew from the 146th Medical Company out of Parkersburg were alerted to the rescue mission near Hamlin, 65 miles away. Apparently, National Guardsmen in a deuce and a half cargo truck were trapped.

"It was very bad," said the Black Hawk's pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert N. McClure, a Beckley native and Woodrow Wilson High graduate who has spent 13 years flying helicopters for the WVNG. "A thousand-foot ceiling and three miles of visibility is the normal requirement before we can launch to somewhere."

McClure said the only time they'd go on a mission with worse than the ideal weather conditions was during an emergency.

This was one of those times. The flight to Hamlin was well below the ideal minimum.

"When we left Parkersburg, it was bad enough that I didn't think we would make it," McClure said. "Mr. Godbey [co-pilot Chief Warrant Officer 3 Carlos R. Godbey] and I decided that if weather became a factor, we would scrub the mission."

McClure said the weather was worst around Parkersburg.

"We'd had just about enough and were going to turn around, when it cleared up," he said. "The ceiling was still low, but we could see almost all the way to Charleston. So we went on to the location."

The flight took just under half an hour. As they approached the scene, the aircrew made contact with Lincoln County Emergency Services, which told them their target vehicle was an Army surplus deuce and a half now used by a Lincoln County volunteer fire department.

With the poor visibility and darkness, even with their NVG employed, the crew couldn't see the truck.

"We had been given [GPS coordinates], so we went right to the location," McClure said. "We flew over the truck because the water was so high that we couldn't see it."

There was so little illumination, and the flooding was so bad, the crew didn't recognize the truck they'd just overflown.

"We know what a deuce and half looks like," McClure said. "We didn't see the truck because the water was up over the hood. Part of the cab and [rear-bed] tarp were the only



DOD photo

**The crew of an HH-60L Black Hawk medivac helicopter performs a hoist-rescue exercise. The crew of a West Virginia Army National Guard HH-60L rescued an elderly woman and two youngsters from raging floodwaters Nov. 12, 2003.**

things visible."

Moments later, emergency services contacted them on the radio and told them they'd passed the site. So, McClure swung around, and there it was. The truck was on W.Va. 3, surrounded by water from the swollen Middle Fork of the Mud River.

McClure put the HH-60L into a 200-foot hover off to one side of the truck to see the target area. The truck was surrounded by trees, and power lines also posed a threat to the helicopter.

The hoist training they'd just been honing went to work. It was McClure's first non-training live hoist.

"With the high winds, no visibility, no illumination, and the water moving so fast that it created a visual illusion," McClure said, "I couldn't get the aircraft closer than 90 feet and maintain a safety factor."

McClure, flying for the West Virginia Guard since 1992, gingerly moved his aircraft into position over the deuce and a half.

The powerful engines of the HH-60L produce strong rotor wash. McClure said that often pushes anyone who is dangling beneath the chopper on the jungle penetrator fore and aft, making the hoist operator's job even more difficult.

But McClure's hoist operator, flight engineer Sgt. Jonathan S. Burge, was trained well.

"[Someone] had cut a hole in the tarp between the last two beams in the support ribs [on the truck bed]," McClure said. "[A] rescue swimmer was standing in the hole, using a flashlight to signal us, and we picked him up with the night vision."

Burge went to work, lowering flight medic Sgt. 1st Class David L. Baldwin to the truck.

"Each time our flight medic was lowered,

he put him right in that hole," McClure said. "And he did it three times. That's what was amazing."

The hoist can pull up about 600 pounds with each lift, so Baldwin was going to put as many of the Guardsmen on the hoist for the first lift that he could. Burge put Baldwin through the hole to the truck bed.

"When his feet hit the floor, he immediately found water over his knees," McClure said.

Baldwin also found a twist in the rescue mission -- an elderly woman and a family, not National Guard soldiers.

"We didn't know there were civilians," McClure said.

A little stunned to see the woman, Baldwin sure-handedly went about his work.

The woman was hoisted into the chopper, and Baldwin went back down for the children.

Fuel was running low, so McClure flew to Charleston's Yeager Airport, where an ambulance awaited the woman and children. The three men still in the truck used ropes to reach the side of the riverbank.

After refueling, McClure flew back to the Hamlin area to look for more people threatened by the raging water, then returned home.

Sikorsky, maker of the Black Hawk line of helicopters, has honored the Parkersburg aircrew with its Winged S rescue award. The company also posted the mission in "Sikorsky Lifeline" on its Web site and put the men up for a national award, McClure said. He said military recognition for the crew also is possible.

"I think we all felt a great sense of accomplishment on the way back," McClure told *The Charleston Gazette*. "You train for situations like that, but rarely do you really have to put that training to use. It was good to be able to do something like that."

# Tunneling to homeland security

## *West Virginia Turnpike's former Memorial Tunnel provides critical training for a nation at war*

Alex Wojcicki

Center for National Response

As the nation discovered in September 2001, we are not immune to attack in the homeland. And now, even with the war against terrorists being waged at home and overseas, there remains the threat that a few people — with access to chemical, biological, or nuclear materials — could cause another catastrophe.

In the event of such an occurrence, local first responders — police, fire, and EMS — along with National Guard soldiers and airmen, will be on the front line. If they are not trained and equipped to deal with the consequences, many needless casualties surely will occur.

West Virginia is the home of the nation's premier weapons of mass destruction training facility — the Center for National Response, operated by Titan Corp.

Nestled in the rugged terrain of southern Kanawha County, the West Virginia Memorial Tunnel is the home and main training site for the CNR.

Opened in 1953, the Memorial Tunnel once acted as a conduit for the goods of the nation passing along the W.Va. Turnpike. Beginning in 2000, it found a new life as one of the world's largest classrooms, with 79,000 square feet under a single roof. With an additional 10,000 acres of adjoining maneuver area leased by the W.Va. National Guard, the CNR can respond to the training needs of first responder organizations at the local, state, federal and DOD levels nationwide.

The CNR maintains seven major training venues in Memorial Tunnel, giving it the ability to provide realistic environments to exercise and train first responders reacting to a WMD event. The trainers and support personnel at the center pride themselves on preparing and facilitating the most professional and realistic WMD training available in the United States.

More than 7,500 National Guard and civil responders have benefited from CNR training and exercises. Recent exercises and equipment-testing events at the center have included:

- A 72-hour exercise with two civil support teams conducting continuous operations in response to multiple WMD events.

- Testing of advanced thermal night-vision equipment and battlefield robots under strictly controlled light and temperature conditions.

- Tunnel vehicle rescue operations by 50 members of the Seattle, Wash., Fire Department in anticipation of the opening of a



Photo by Alex Wojcicki, Center for National Response

**Civil Support Team members conduct decontamination operations during an exercise at the Center for National Response training site inside Memorial Tunnel, a part of the former West Virginia Turnpike in Kanawha County.**

## W.Va.'s CNR facility

The West Virginia Memorial Tunnel serves as the principal training facility for the Center for National Response.

The tunnel is two-lane, 2,800 feet long, and provides 79,000 square feet of covered, controlled training and testing space.

In this one-of-a-kind facility, CNR staffers develop realistic, challenging training for first responders.

This setting allows response teams to practice their techniques and experiment with new procedures without alarming the public or disrupting any commercial or public activities.

new tunnel in that city. During this weeklong exercise, five members of the SFD, en route from the center to their billets, came upon a blazing vehicle overturned on Interstate 64 near Beckley. They were able to extract a victim from the burning vehicle, saving her life. They credited their training at the center.

- A weeklong exercise with the Columbia, S.C., COBRA (Chemical, Ordnance, Biological, Radiological) Team, which included multiple scenarios specifically designed for the team, and extensive explosive ordinance disposal exercises.

- In October 2003, the U.S. Army Operational Test Command conducted a monthlong operational test of the prototype Analytic Laboratory System (ALS) that is planned to replace the Civil Support Teams' current Dismounted Analytical Laboratory

(DAP) and Mobile Analytical Laboratory Systems (MALs).

CNR personnel also travel from West Virginia to customers' sites all across the country. They facilitate training events involving local and state first responders — including fire, police, hazardous materials, EOD, emergency medical services and emergency operations centers — operating in conjunction with their home-state CSTs.

Recent exercises away from the Center have included:

- Five-day major exercises in New Mexico and Arkansas with a six-person facilitation team from the CNR. These involved the 64th and 61st CSTs and first responders at local, county and state levels in eight cities and towns.

- A major exercise in Kansas with the 73rd CST and local first responders in Hutchinson.

In Hutchinson, a four-person facilitation team organized a major exercise involving more than 500 people, including role players, police and SWAT (hostage rescue), fire and HAZMAT (WMD event), hospitals, fixed wing and helicopter air evacuation, Red Cross Disaster Relief, (inoculations and registration), as well as survey, sampling, and identification of the WMD materials used in the exercise.

The CNR and the West Virginia National Guard provide the citizens of West Virginia and the nation with a critical piece of the national strategy for homeland security. The National Guard's CSTs are principal customers of the CNR.

# 'Move forward; clear the line'

## 119th Engineers learn new skills manning the gates in Virginia

By 1st Lt. Amanda J. Mullins  
119th EN CSE CO

In early May 2003, 156 pieces of engineering equipment and 154 soldiers assigned to the 119th Engineers were to be shipped overseas.

Instead, the Clarksburg and Buckhannon engineers learned a new skill: manning the gates at Fort Eustis and Fort Story, Va.

"Move forward; clear the line," became a familiar phrase for everyone entering the gates. Writing passes, inspecting vehicles and checking identification cards for nearly 10,000 commuters passing through the front gate was an everyday occurrence for these engineers.

"We enjoyed the mission," said



Soldiers of the 119th Engineers hold their final formation before being released from a 10-month stateside deployment.

Staff Sgt. William Gross. "We came back a better-trained com-

pany."

"Soldiers did an outstanding

job, we received compliments on professionalism, military bearing and gate operational procedures," said 1st Lt. Brent Schultz, the officer in charge of the force protection mission at Fort Eustis. "The post hated to see us go; likewise, we hated to go"

The Fort Eustis Detachment spearheaded over 45 drug cases, 100 DUI cases and prevented more than a half-dozen illegal alien entries onto the post.

"I was able to step up to the plate and be a squad leader for the first time," said Spc. Patrick Mayle. "It felt great to have that responsibility. And it felt good to learn another trade with the Army and to know that we now have military police and force-protection missions under our belts."

## WVANG security cops fight war on terror from remote base

By 1st Lt. Beverly Mock  
40th AEG Public Affairs

SOUTHWEST ASIA — Two West Virginia National Guard members are helping fight the war against terrorism from Southwest Asia.

Air Force Master Sgts. Kevin Carter and John Conner serve with the 40th Expeditionary Security Forces Flight supporting U.S. Central Command's execution of operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom 2.

Carter and Conner, two 20-year Air Force veterans, are full-time active Guard and Reserve members assigned to the 130th Security Forces Squadron of the West Virginia Air National Guard.

The 40th Air Expeditionary Group consists of approximately 800 airpower specialists from more than 30 military installations. Its mission is to provide global strike capability when and where it is needed in support of the Central Command combat operations.



Conner



Carter

"I have had the distinct privilege to work with both Sergeant Conner and Sergeant Carter for the last three months here," said Capt. Bryan O'Neill, 40th Expeditionary Security Forces Flight chief. "These two gentlemen are a pleasure to work with both on and off duty. The integrity that they possess is above reproach; and what they say, they deliver. Also, they both have great senses of humor that seem to elevate the moods of everyone in the flight, as well as everyone

they come in contact with."

Conner is the superintendent of the flight. He is responsible for directing security forces flight operations, which include special projects, reports and analysis, Air Force instruction review and disciplinary actions. He also is the lead investigator and has investigated several tough cases, the captain said.

As the noncommissioned officer in charge of armory and supply, Carter is responsible for all of the weapons that the Air Force security forces personnel and aircrew carry, said O'Neill. Carter's duties include maintenance, issuance and storage of the weapons. In addition, he ensures that all of the security personnel have the equipment necessary to effectively conduct security operations and any additional taskings that come along.

In a war for goodwill, both men are convinced of the importance of their jobs.

"I believe I am making a difference in keeping our country safe from all enemies, foreign and domestic," Carter said.

### Family Readiness Group activities

#### Meetings:

**C Btry, 201st** — every third Saturday of the month at 2 p.m. at the Hinton armory;

**Det. 1, 157th** — second Tuesday of each month at the Moundsville armory;

**Det. 1, HHC, 150th** — first

Saturday of every month at 11 a.m. at CiCi's in Bluefield;

**A Btry, 201st** — every two weeks starting on Sunday, March 21, at 3 p.m. in the Elkins armory;

**HHC, 201st** — every two weeks starting Sunday, March 21, 2 p.m., at Fairmont armory;

**Det. 1, C Btry, 201st** — first Saturday of each month at 1 pm in the Ronceverte armory;

**130th AW** — March 16, May 11, June 15, at Charleston air base, Bldg. 141, 5 p.m.;

**1257th Transportation Co.** — April 4, May 2, 2:30 p.m. at the armory;

#### Other activities:

**Det. 1, 157th** — Banquet honoring soldiers who served in Iraq will be in May (TBD);

**Det. 1, C Btry, 201st** — Busch Gardens trip, Father's Day

weekend in June (TBD);

**130th AW** —  
■ March 27, Easter egg hunt on the base;

■ April 22, reception on the base for kids graduating from high school (children of 130 AW members);

■ April 27, Volunteer Recognition Dinner on the base;

■ May 15, kids activity on the base (details TBA).

# News you can use

## Air Force issues guidance

### on wear of new name tag

Effective Jan. 1, the new metallic nametag must be worn on both the service dress jacket and the pullover sweater.

For wear instructions or information on how to order the nametag, contact your personnel office.

## Commissary access OK'd for Reserve, Guard

Members (and their dependents) of the Ready Reserve (selected Reserve, individual Ready Reserve, and inactive National Guard) and the Retired Reserve are now permitted unlimited access to commissary stores.

## Soldiers' and Sailors' Relief Act improved

President Bush signed the Service Members' Civil Relief Act into law Dec. 19, 2003. The law provides protections to service members who have difficulty meeting their personal financial and legal obligations because of active military service.

The new law replaces the Soldiers' and Sailors' Relief Act. Key provisions include:

- Members sent to new duty stations or deployed for 90 days can terminate housing leases without penalty.

- Active, Guard and Reserve personnel deployed overseas or called up for 180 days can terminate car leases without penalty.

- Families living in homes with rent up to \$2,400 per month can not be evicted for nonpayment of rent.

- Interest rates are capped at 6 percent for debts prior to being mobilized or deployed.

- The government will protect up to \$250,000 of life insurance for nonpayment of premiums.

Contact your unit judge advocate if you have questions concerning the new law.

## Expanded health care set for Guard, Reserve

The National Defense Authorization Act signed last year by President Bush includes expanded health care benefits for reservists.

Key provisions include:

- Members and their families can remain in TRICARE coverage for up to six months after demobilization, regardless of their time in service.

- Members of the Guard and Reserve who have no employer-provided health insurance can buy into TRICARE even if they are not on active duty.

- Guard and Reserve members can buy into TRICARE up to 90 days prior to the start of the member's activation.

Also announced by the DOD is the implementation of the "2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program" for eligible Reserve component sponsors and their family members.

The 2004 TRHBP includes an additional Tricare benefit provision to those listed above. It expires Dec. 31, 2004.

Tricare will implement these new provisions this spring.

- Tricare is temporarily authorized to provide medical and dental coverage for Reserve component sponsors activated for more than 30 days and their family members.

Eligibility begins either on the day the sponsor receives delayed effective-date active-duty orders or 90 days prior to the date the active-duty period begins, whichever is later.

Reserve component sponsors and family members are encouraged to save health care receipts, claims and explanations of benefits for dates of service from Nov. 6, 2003, through Dec. 31, 2004. This is necessary in the event the sponsor is determined to be eligible and the care qualifies for retroactive Tricare reimbursement once the 2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program begins.

Three permanent health benefit provisions of the NDAA include:

- Benefit counselors for the

Reserve component in each Tricare region.

- Authorization for medical and dental screening and care for members alerted for mobilization.

- Tricare eligibility for Reserve officers pending orders to active duty following commissioning.

For more information, contact your unit Tricare representative.

## Operation Hero Miles helps troops in Iraq

Check out the website [www.heromiles.org](http://www.heromiles.org). This site is a clearinghouse for military members, their families and other military travelers. It has information about how to donate frequent flyer miles, how military members can receive complementary tickets, and other ways to help our troops serving in Iraq.

## Disabled vets get priority at VA medical centers

Veterans with service-connected medical problems will go to the front of the line when receiving care at VA medical centers.

Priority access means that when qualifying veterans go to a VA treatment facility for inpatient or outpatient care, they will receive an appointment within 30 days.

If a VA facility can't arrange an appointment within 30 days, an appointment must be made at another VA facility or a facility under contract in the private sector.

For more information, contact your local VA medical center.

## Military Tax Relief Act of 2003 offers much

Servicemembers are eligible for several tax breaks under this law:

- The death gratuity paid to survivors of deceased servicemembers rises to \$12,000 and is non-taxable.

- Deductions for overnight travel expenses (transportation, lodging, meals) of reservists who stay more than 100 miles from home while in service (drill, meeting, etc.) are deductible.

- Various extensions granted to

combat-zone participants to file returns or pay taxes also will apply to Secretary of Defense-approved contingency operations.

- Dependent-care assistance programs for military personnel are excludable benefits.

For more information, consult your personal tax adviser.

## Mail addresses must not have geographic location

Because of persons improperly addressing mail, a large amount of military-addressed mail is being found in the international mail network.

This mail is being severely delayed and some might be lost.

On the advice of military postal officials, geographic locations should not be included anywhere on mail being sent to service members. The APO number is all that is required.

If the geographic location is included with the APO number, the optical readers and scanners pick up the name of the country and automatically send that mail to the international processing section.

A proper address would be:

Sgt. John Doe

1 CS/CSX

APO AE 09301

## Military medal created for defending S. Korea

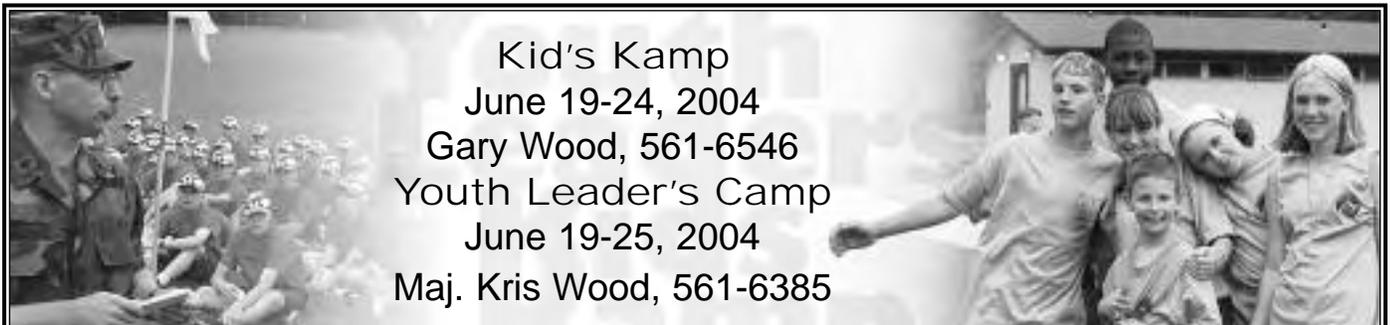
The Defense Department announced the creation of the Korean Defense Service Medal.

The medal gives special recognition for the sacrifices and contributions made by members of the U.S. military who have served or are serving in the Republic of Korea.

The area of eligibility encompasses all land in South Korea and the seas out to 12 nautical miles, as well as air space over those areas.

The time period is from July 28, 1954, to a future date to be determined by the defense secretary.

Contact your unit administrator or personnel office for more information.



Kid's Kamp  
June 19-24, 2004  
Gary Wood, 561-6546  
Youth Leader's Camp  
June 19-25, 2004  
Maj. Kris Wood, 561-6385



Photo courtesy of the 30th Heavy Separate Brigade

**A scout with the 1st/150th Armor Battalion qualifies on a 240B automatic weapon during the unit's pre-deployment training at Fort Bragg, N.C., in November 2003. The unit received additional training at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, La., before deploying to Iraq in February.**

State Public Affairs Office  
West Virginia National  
Guard  
1679 Coonskin Drive