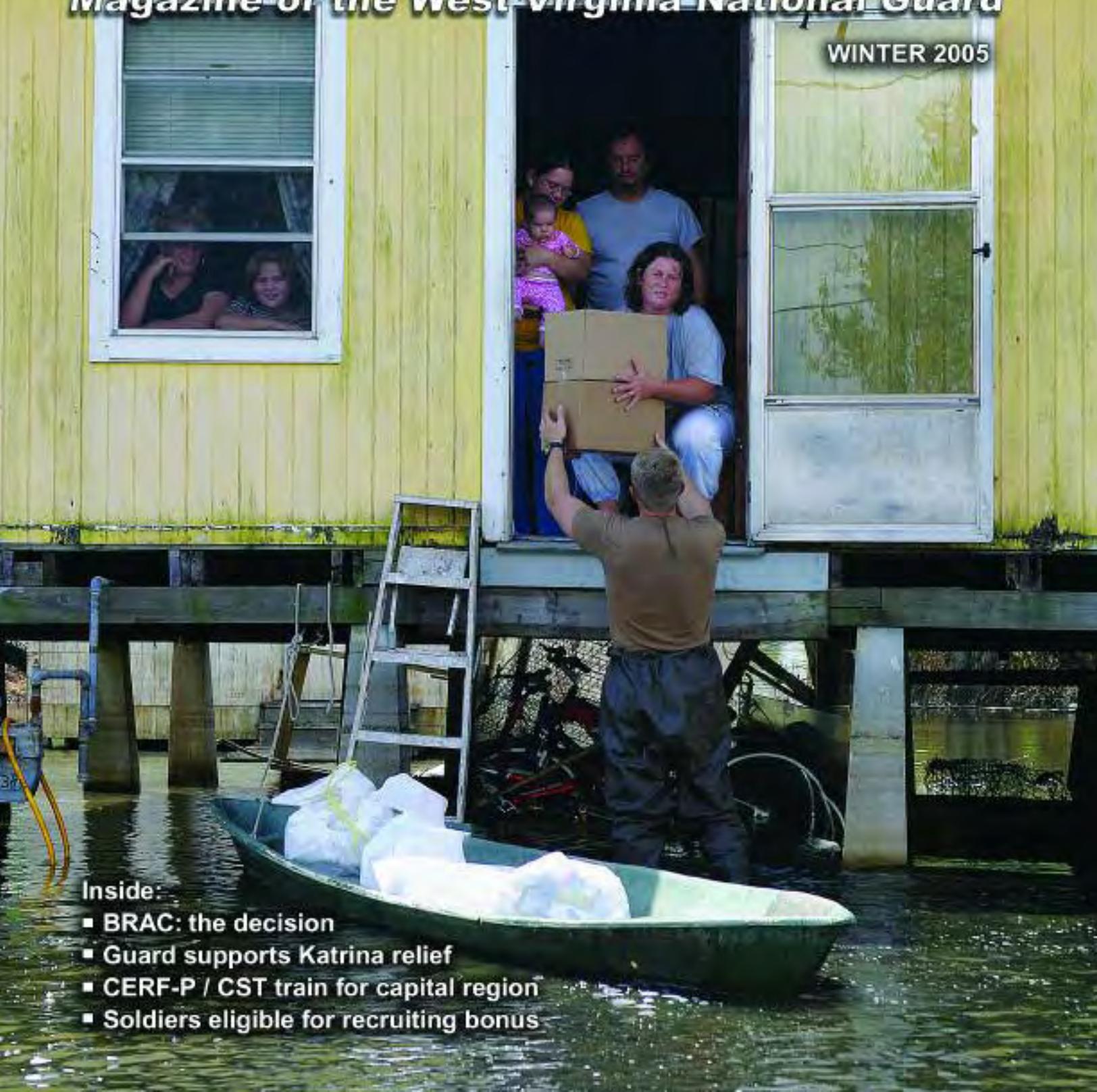




MOUNTAINEER DEFENDER

Magazine of the West Virginia National Guard

WINTER 2005



Inside:

- BRAC: the decision
- Guard supports Katrina relief
- CERF-P / CST train for capital region
- Soldiers eligible for recruiting bonus



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West Virginia National Guard
Winter 2005



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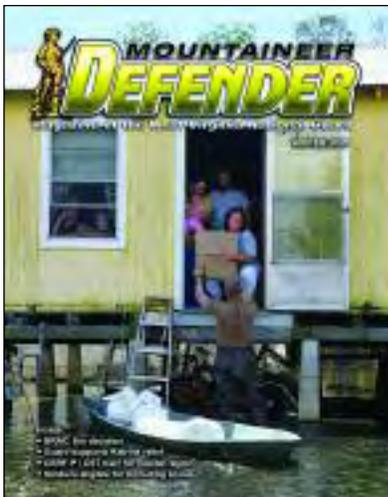
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On the cover:

Capt. James Fletcher, 2d Bn, 19th SFG(A) delivers food and water to flood victims in Houma, Louisiana. Read more about West Virginia National Guard's response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on Page 4

Photo by:
Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD



Adjutant General

Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett

State Command Sergeant Major

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The Adjutant General

Our soldiers and airmen really proved their worth in 2005. We completed another round of deployments. New facilities dot the West Virginia landscape. We met end strength goals and finished the year over 100 percent for the eighth consecutive year.

One of the most important things we did was support Gulf Coast hurricane recovery operations. I am so proud of the 1,000-plus soldiers and airmen who took part in operations at the Charleston air base, Camp Dawson, Belle Chasse operations center, Terrebonne Parish, and so many other places that our members helped those in desperate need.

But 2005 also brought great challenges, including the greatest single threat to our National Guard that we've faced in many years -- BRAC. Closing the Charleston air base would have had a devastating effect on our strength and



Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett
readiness. The effort to save the base was massive, and I thank all of you for getting involved.

Budget and troop concerns are also pressing issues. DOD is in the midst of another Quadrennial Defense Review, and the Air Force is trying to determine its future force structure. Changes in funding and manpower allocations could affect every aspect of our operations.

What does the future hold? It's likely that it will hold much of the same -- more deployments, continued uncertainty regarding future funding and force structure, and hard work. But we'll overcome these challenges if everyone remembers the things that make us successful -- maintaining strength and readiness, taking care of soldiers and families, looking for opportunities to grow the WVNG. Embrace these goals, and our organization will continue to be recognized as one of the best in the nation.

I wish each of you the best in the coming year!

State Command Chief Master Sergeant



Command Chief Master Sgt. Bowe

I am extremely grateful to be your State Command Chief Master Sergeant. I thank the leadership of this state for allowing me this opportunity. The shoes that I have to fill due to retirement of Chief Master Sgt. Dan Chandler will be a challenge to say the least, but I am up to the task. We've faced some challenges in the recent past, such as the BRAC Commission fight at the 130th in which the state pulled together to save the unit. Another challenge that lies

ahead is that of the C-5 conversion at the 167th. We will work together to ensure this transition is as smooth as possible.

MY VISION is an enlisted force capable of going anywhere at any time to accomplish any mission. I'll work for a well-organized and equipped enlisted force that is all-inclusive, where everyone has a sense of purpose and is a valued member of our state organizations.

I SEE THE JOB as taking care of the enlisted force by working through both Wing command chiefs. Our goal will be to assess the morale and welfare of both units by attending unit functions, such as enlisted council meetings and functional area units, and will include assessing feedback from the enlisted force and Commanders.

MY ROLE is to establish a closer rapport with commanders, senior officers, chiefs, senior enlisted, family readiness, and employer support of Guard and Reserves. I will establish effective communications by unit visits, attending Commanders Calls, joining deployments, and being involved in unit retirements, promotions and award ceremonies.

MY PLACE IN THE ORGANIZATION is as the senior enlisted grade in the state. I will be a mouthpiece for both the enlisted personnel and senior leadership.

State Command Sergeant Major



Command Sgt. Maj. Vance

As we enjoy the Christmas and New Year season with our friends and family, let us not forget those deployed Soldiers and Airmen of the West Virginia National Guard. Our soldiers miss out on many special family events such as weddings, graduations and other milestones. The cost of being a patriot comes at a high price. Some have given their all. In recent years our fellow guardsmen, with their families, have answered the call of our nation.

West Virginia Soldiers and Airmen have served in many places around the world enduring many hardships.

These outstanding Citizen Soldiers have also served in hurricane recovery operations. "Neighbors helping neighbors," the adopted slogan, describes the mission best. The senior leadership of the state and nation have noted many outstanding accomplishments during these operations.

Our soldiers have kept a pace like no other in the 369 years of the National Guard's existence. The patriotism of our guardsmen is second to none. Different people have asked me if it is really worth it all. As I travel from unit to unit taking part in celebrations of Christmas and other very important events, I see smiling children, wives and husbands enjoying each other's company and the freedom that our Citizen Soldiers value and guard so fervently. I say to everyone it is worth it all! This is the birthright and the legacy of a guardsman. So this Christmas and New Year's season is extra special to many of our fellow guardsman who have returned from recent deployments. We don't know what trials our nation will face in the New Year. However, our nation's citizens can be assured that the West Virginia Guard will be ready and willing to tackle any mission given.



Neighbors Helping Neighbors



Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD

By Maj. Todd Harrell

153d Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

In August, 2005, nature dealt the Gulf Coast a devastating blow that would test our nation and potentially redefine the role of the National Guard. When hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck, Guard personnel from all 54 states and territories responded in the largest domestic National Guard mobilization in U.S. history.

West Virginia's response to Hurricane Katrina began more than a week before the storm made landfall. The Guard's Emergency Operations Center in Charleston was manned around the clock, monitoring the storm's progress and identifying assets and resources. Leaders began developing plans should the storm drive north and threaten West Virginia. Next, the staff developed a response plan to support the gulf region.

National Guard Bureau was well aware of West Virginia's experience in flood operations. "When the magnitude of the devastation became evident, we received a call from the joint staff at NGB requesting our assistance," recalls Col. Johnnie L. Young, deputy commander, land component, West Virginia National Guard.

The response

West Virginia's first response was to launch C-130's from the 130th and 167th Airlift Wings to assist in the evacuation. Maj. Kevin Meagher of the 130th Airlift Wing piloted the first C-130 from West Virginia into New Orleans' Airport.



Photo by Capt. Paula Sydenstricker, Det.1 196th MPAD

In the shadow of the Louisiana Superdome, a West Virginia National Guard convoy enters flooded downtown New Orleans.

"We didn't know what to expect," tells Meagher. "There was a lot of disjointed information both in the air and on the ground." This flight was also significant because it delivered battery powered lights

allowing the airport to conduct twenty-four hour operations. Even a C-17 grounded by nightfall was now able to continue its lifesaving mission. In addition to delivering critical lighting equipment, the plane also brought in an Air medical crew from Pope Air Force Base to establish an initial triage at the airport. The aircraft was reconfigured and loaded with medical evacuees who were transported to San Antonio for treatment. Additional West Virginia aircraft would soon follow suit bringing in more forces and supplies and evacuating the victims.

Brig. Gen. John E. Barnette, West Virginia's assistant adjutant general for Army and land component commander, was returning home from Korea when he received a call from Adjutant General Allen E. Tackett asking him to lead a West Virginia task force into Louisiana. The first West Virginia ground forces arrived at Belle Chasse Naval Air Station on Sept 3. Minutes from downtown New Orleans, the small reserve airfield soon became a critical hub in the relief effort and the staging area for Task Force West Virginia.



Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD



Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD

Left: Members of Task Force West Virginia work with Louisiana National Guard in the Joint Operations Center, Belle Chasse, La. Left Inset: Victims of Hurricane Katrina prepare to board a C-130 from Charleston's 130th Airlift Wing. Above: Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Edmunds and Sgt. John G. Arnold deliver drinking water and food to flood victims in Houma, La.

The arrival

Barnette was on the flight deck as the C-130 approached New Orleans. He brought additional staff members forward for their first look at the flooding. "At first there was no point of reference. Everything was still under water," said Barnette. "It probably took us 48 hours on the ground to even begin to comprehend the level of devastation. It was much deeper than the media had represented." The first aircraft arrived carrying security and staff personnel with enough food, water and equipment to sustain themselves for 15 days. A ground convoy arrived in Belle Chasse later that day with 62 vehicles and 120 personnel. Staff Sgt. Richard A. Rose, a mechanic with A Co., 1092d Engineer Battalion, was in that convoy. "With the armor, the weapons...it was similar to rolling into Baghdad," recounts Rose. Another A Co. member, Spc. Shane Dillon, recalls their arrival in New Orleans. "There was so much confusion. We had to find a place to start. That was the hardest part," said Dillon. "You think you're prepared coming down here, then you see the devastation. You feel lost." Dillon, like others did manage to find his role. Dillon's commander, Capt. Brent A. Schultz, noted, "We had to tell Dillon to slow down. He would finish his shift but remain in the

shelter, sometimes twenty hours a day." Dillon and his peers were taken in by the children. "They just saw us as G.I. Joes and wanted to climb on us," remembers Dillon. "You cannot 'not' get involved with these kids." Capt. Schultz's team brought more to the shelter than flood supplies. They brought along friendship and delivered compassion. According to Schultz, "We got to know them. For the first time [since the flood], they felt like someone actually cared about them."



Photo by Capt. Paula Sydenstricker, Det.1 196th MPAD

Task Force West Virginia works closely with Oregon Guardsmen during search and recovery operations following Hurricane Katrina.

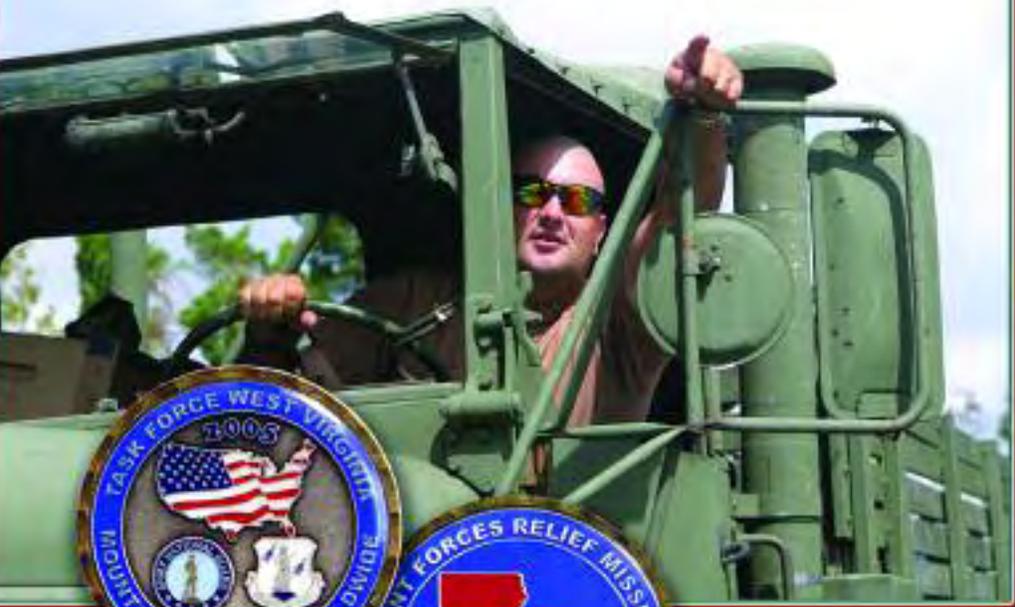
Developing the mission

Lt. Col. Donald G. Lockard, commander, 151st MP Battalion, led the first West Virginia security forces into Louisiana. According to Lockard, "The challenge was

that the mission was developing, the response was developing – everything was developing. It was purple...truly a joint operation with Army, Marine, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard working together," said Lockard. "You had a large influx of people. Everyone trying to help - we needed to synchronize their efforts." Working closely with the J2 staff, Barnette's first goal was a comprehensive assessment. "There was scattered knowledge, so our staff developed the first intel estimate, which was used by everyone," noted Barnette.

West Virginia Delivers

With much of New Orleans still submerged, Task Force West Virginia now had a defined mission. Initially, the task force had expected to support a single parish, similar to a county in other states. Realizing the scope of the operation, members modified their plan to accommodate 11 parishes. Now anticipating a Guard strength approaching 40,000, the task force focused on establishing a Reception Staging and Onward Integration (RSOI) operation at Belle Chasse. "It was the vision of our leadership," according to one staff officer. "General Barnette stayed three steps ahead of everyone else in the operation. He forced us to think. He challenged us." Barnette worked closely with his



Coins were minted to reflect West Virginia's participation in the hurricane relief effort.

Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD
Spc. Ricky Paugh of the 1092d Eng. Bn. looks for flood victims in need of food, water and cleaning supplies during relief operations in Houma, La.

Louisiana counterpart, Brig. Gen. Hunt Downer. But Barnette was clear from the beginning, "We're not here to take over the operation. It's Louisiana's show. Eighty percent of their forces have been personally impacted by Katrina. We're here to assist until they can get back on their feet."

As the RSOI mission grew, so did the logistical requirements to support the troops. At one point, Belle Chasse was home to nearly 25,000 service members.

Responsibility for logistics fell upon Col. Larry A. Brown, West Virginia's J4. His first task was to establish the Logistics Support Area (LSA) for Belle Chasse. The role of the LSA soon grew, to support all 11 affected parishes.

Brown and his fledgling staff proved equal to the task. "I took a lot of junior personnel down there. We'd drop them in and they'd take off and run with the mission with little or no supervision," said Brown. "It really opened my eyes to witness the caliber of junior leaders and NCO's we have in the organization." Brown went on to point out how well the staff integrated with other state's personnel and representatives from National Guard Bureau. Overwhelmed, yet under control, West Virginia's role would only increase.

Ready for Rita

Less than a month after Katrina, Hurricane Rita was heading north towards the Louisiana coast. With Katrina labeled "a one hundred year storm," no one could have imagined another hurricane so soon.



Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD
Along the gulf coast lay reminders of the awesome destructive power of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Two ships displaced in the small fishing town of Empire, La. represent just one of many unique challenges faced throughout the recovery effort.

"It was like a poorly written CPX (command post exercise)," remarked Brig. Gen. Barnette, referring to the constant challenges presented throughout the operation. At times, it seemed as if the most unimaginable scenarios became routine. Before Rita reached Louisiana, Brown and his staff built a plan that called for a Direct Support Brigade (DSB) and three LSA's to provide logistical support for the

entire state. "In West Virginia, we've done floods where we supported 2,500 troops," stated Brown. "All I did was take that process and expand it ten times." In the midst of the nation's most catastrophic event, his plan worked. And not only did this plan work, Brown and his staff went on to accept the FEMA logistics role as well.

The rest of the story

As significant as their role in logistics, West Virginia troops were dispatched throughout the region to support numerous diverse missions.

In Mississippi, the J6 ISISCS [communications] van provided communications throughout regions where telephone and power systems had failed. The small team of Air and Army Guard personnel established a work model so effective that their systems will be fielded to every state.

In Gulfport, members of the 167th Air Wing provided aerial port operations for aircraft bringing personnel and supplies to the Mississippi coast.

The depth of West Virginia involvement in the relief effort extended far beyond the scope of this article. The barely mentioned Emergency Operations center in Charleston was critical in every aspect of the operation. Personnel, many rotating to and from Louisiana, would return home to supplement EOC staff.

At Camp Dawson, a shelter was established to house more than 300 hurricane victims. National Guard, the Office of Emergency Services, Department of Health and Human Resources, State Police and countless other state organizations worked together to bring the faces of Katrina right here to the mountain state.

In all, nearly 1,200 volunteers from the mountain state served in the relief effort. By all accounts, West Virginia's National Guard proved that even a relatively small force of experienced, dedicated

troops with strong leadership can overcome seemingly insurmountable odds, even under the most austere conditions.

More than three months after hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck, more than two dozen West Virginia service members remain in Louisiana filling various roles, and with them remains the Mountaineer spirit and our legacy of "Neighbors Helping Neighbors."



Commission votes to keep C-130s in Charleston

By Lt. Col. Mike Cadle

Joint Forces HQ, Public Affairs Office

A nine member panel convened by President Bush to evaluate the Defense Department's plan to close or realign more than 800 military installations voted Aug. 26 to save the Air Guard Base at Yeager Airport.

BRAC analysts presented a report to commissioners during final deliberations, harshly criticizing the Air Force and calling data regarding the realignment of the 130th Airlift Wing "inaccurate and outdated." Commissioners later voted 9-0 to remove the 130th from recommendations it will send to the President.

Under the Pentagon proposal, eight C-130 Hercules aircraft and about 600 of the 130th Airlift Wing's employees would have been transferred to Pope Air Force

Base, N.C. Charleston's Air Guard base would have become an enclave, home to members whose primary mission would be training and deployment for contingency operations.

The mood was festive on Coonskin Drive as word spread that the base had been spared. Some troops celebrated by high-fiving their coworkers, while others took to the phones to tell family members that the uncertainty surrounding the base had finally been resolved.

Base Commander Col. Tim Frye called a meeting of the unit's full-time workers to spread the good news. Adjutant General Allen Tackett received a standing ovation from the energized crowd when he proclaimed, "What a great day for the

130th Airlift Wing!"

Gov. Joe Manchin and Tackett led elected officials and community leaders in the fight to save the base.

Manchin wrote to commissioners daily to express his concerns about losing specialized homeland security response capabilities found at the 130th. He praised the Commission for seeking input from the states.

"I'm pleased that Chairman Principi and the BRAC commissioners looked at the facts closely," Manchin said. The 130th is an important part of West Virginia's ability to respond to natural disasters or potential terrorist incidents, and I am very happy with the Commission's decision."

Tackett applauded the efforts of those who worked hard to save the base. "We've had such an outpouring of support from our elected officials and local communities," he said. "Sen. Byrd mobilized the congressional delegation, Gov. Manchin mobilized state government, and Keep 'em Flying mobilized our communities."

But Tackett heaped the greatest praise on airmen at the 130th Airlift Wing. "Community support doesn't mean much if a unit can't perform its mission," he said. "It's the support 130th members consistently provide to the state and nation, particularly since 9/11, that proves the true military value of the unit."

"This is a great day for the citizens of West Virginia and the West Virginia Air National Guard," Tackett said.

Frye celebrated with unit members, but worried that this was only the first battle in a long fight. "I'm very pleased that we dodged the BRAC bullet this year. "But DOD is still pushing transformation, and that means we have to be concerned about QDR [Quadrennial Defense Review] and Future Total Force," he said.

Frye explained that QDR is a process accomplished every four years in which Pentagon planners review military missions and capabilities of all services and their active and reserve components. Future Total Force is an attempt to identify the right force structure to counter emerging threats facing the U.S. today, he said.

Editor's note:

President Bush and Congress accepted the BRAC Commission's recommendations, which became law on Nov. 9. DoD has two years to begin closing and realigning affected installations.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Joseph, Det. 1, 196th MPAD
 Spc. Jessica Brandon, 196th MPAD, talks to
 Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, Chief, National
 Guard Bureau, during his visit to Naval Air
 Station New Orleans, Belle Chasse, La.



Photo by Capt. Paula Sydenstricker, Det. 1 196th MPAD
 Vehicles from Task Force West Virginia rolled into Belle Chasse Naval Air
 Station on Sept. 3, 2005, to begin relief operations. Belle Chasse would
 soon evolve into the logistics hub for the entire relief effort.



Photo by Capt. Paula Sydenstricker, Det. 1 196th MPAD
 Brig. Gen. John E. Barnette discusses Direct Support
 Brigade operations with Louisiana Assistant Adjutant
 General Hunt Downer at Belle Chasse Naval Air Station.



Photo by Capt. Paula Sydenstricker, Det. 1 196th MPAD
 Col. William E. Aldridge, chief of staff for Task Force West Virginia,
 confers with Louisiana National Guard Deputy Chief of Staff Col. Glen
 Curtis on Sept. 4 outside the Superdome in New Orleans. The West
 Virginia contingent was preparing to augment the Louisiana troops
 who had been working non-stop since Hurricane Katrina hit.



Photo by Master Sgt. Sean M. Brennan, 167th Airlift Wing
 Tech. Sgt. Michael Bowman and Senior Airman Ryan M.
 Caponi of the 167th Airlift Wing land at Belle Chasse Naval
 Air Station to assist in flood relief efforts.



Photo by Capt. Paula Sydenstricker, Det.1 196th MPAD
Capt. Brent Schultz briefs Spc. Curtis Cook and other soldiers during relief operations in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.



Photo by Capt. Paula Sydenstricker, Det.1 196th MPAD
Television personality Oprah Winfrey meets with Guard members outside the Louisiana Superdome as flood waters recede from New Orleans.



Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD
Brig. Gen. John E. Barnette speaks with a reporter from FOX news about the National Guard's mission during a visit to Houma, La.



Photo by Capt. Paula Sydenstricker, Det.1 196th MPAD
Members of Task Force West Virginia rest in place at Belle Chasse Naval Air Station. Facilities were soon constructed to house nearly 25,000 Guard members.



Photo by Sgt. Sherree Casper, Det. 1, 196th MPAD
Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Lee from the 77th Brigade Troop Command pins sergeant stripes on Spc. Joe Robinson during a field promotion ceremony Sept. 13 at the Belle Chasse Naval Air Station near New Orleans.



West Virginia Responds to National Capital Region

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau



Lt. Col. Jim Marrs of the 167th Airlift Wing conducts intel operations as a member of the CST.

Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – Staff Sgt. Scott Nidy returned to some old stomping grounds, where he once trained as a Marine, to help the National Capital Region train for a new mission during the second week in August.

Nidy, a medical technician, was among 114 members of the West Virginia National Guard who were flown to northern Virginia to help test a plan for quickly bringing in outside forces should terrorists again attack this country’s capital with weapons of mass destruction.

“The place hasn’t changed much at all,” said Nidy while working in a blue mobile medical lab parked at Camp Upshur, where he perfected his Marine combat skills about 20 years ago.

But the mission has changed a great deal. No one was nearly as concerned about terrorist attacks against this country in the mid-1980s as they are now – nearly four years after the Sept. 11. And officials believe it’s only a matter of time before terrorists strike again.

That is why the National Capital Region’s Joint Force Headquarters conducted its first Joint Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration/Base Support Installation exercise in the wooded terrain of the Marine Corps’s sprawling base. Approximately 250

people took part in the readiness exercise. It was praised as a promising first effort.

The West Virginia National Guard provided the people, and their equipment, to make the exercise near Washington as realistic as possible. They belonged to the state’s 35th Civil Support Team and its CERFP who are trained to support local authorities following an attack with agents or weapons that could kill or incapacitate many people. CERFP is short for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear or High Yield Explosive Response Force Package.

The West Virginia Air Guard used its C-130 transport planes to fly those units from Charleston to Davison Army Air Field, near Fort Belvoir. The teams were transported about 20 miles south to Camp Upshur where they conducted a mass casualty exercise orchestrated and supervised by the federal Center for National Response that is also based in West Virginia.

“It was a positive first step. We’ve never done this before – bringing in an outside force. Now we need to build on this,” said Navy Cmdr. Luis Molina, chief of logistics planning at Joint Forces Headquarters – National Capital Region at Fort McNair in Washington.



Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD

Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum, Chief, National Guard Bureau addresses members of the CST during a National Capital Region exercise at Quantico, Va.



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
West Virginia National Guard's decontamination unit, part of the state's CERFP, washes volunteer "victims" of a mock gas attack while participating in a National Capital Region training exercise.

"It was positive to work with the National Guard. We've started new friendships that will pay off in the future," added Molina who hopes that future training exercises will involve many more people, including the U. S. Northern Command, and be even more realistic.

The idea for the exercise originated during the presidential inauguration in January 2005, he explained.

How would officials bring in reinforcements should an incident be so catastrophic that it exhausted all of the resources in the National Capital Region?

"We were concerned that if we have to bring in a sizeable force because of an emergency, do we have the right tactics, techniques and procedures to support the troops," Molina said.

"This tested our planning, pre-arrival, arrival, sustainment and redeployment phases for accommodating outside forces," he added. "West Virginia volunteered to provide the test units. I envision that we will be working with the Guard more and more."

It made sense for the West Virginia units to take part because Washington is part of their territory, explained Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett, West Virginia's Adjutant General, who observed the exercise with Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, Chief, National Guard Bureau.

"Part of our assignment is the National Capital Region," said Tackett. A Memorandum of Agreement makes it legal for West Virginia to move Guard troops

into the District of Columbia if they are requested, officials explained.

"Let's face it. Terrorists have hit in London. They've hit Spain. September 11 is a long way behind us. But the bottom line is that it's going to happen again. The most probable target is our National Capital Region – Washington, D.C. And we have to be prepared to take care of the American public."

The scenario at Camp Upshur involved extracting 80 people from a building after they had been exposed to the deadly nerve gas Sarin, the same agent that terrorists released in several Tokyo subway cars in March 1995, and then cutting off their outer clothing and washing down the victims in a decontamination line.

It was the first time that the 96 members of West Virginia's CERFP, which was organized in March 2004 and validated last August, were transported on airplanes as a team and operated outside West Virginia.

Furthermore, 39 of them were new to the team. They had received 10 days of training

in hazardous materials and the incident command system before flying to Camp Upshur, explained Lt. Col. Larry Wheeler, the CERFP commander. "This was their first training event. It was a steep learning curve for them," Wheeler said.

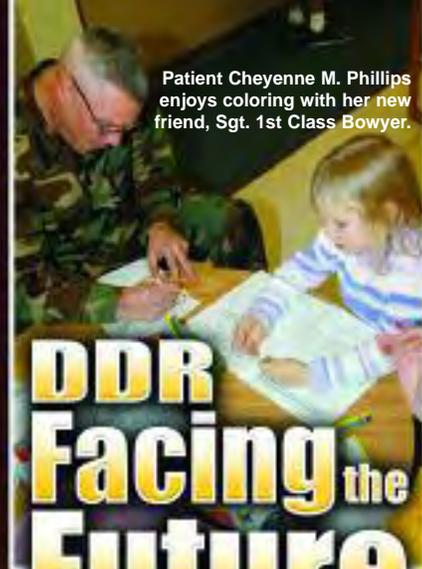
CERFPs are relatively inexpensive to maintain, it was pointed out, because they are additional duty for the Guard members who belong to other units. The West Virginia team members train together every three months so they can function as a unit when they have to, it was explained.

"This is the most dangerous battlefield in the world because you cannot see or hear your enemy," said Wheeler about why the teams need all of the training they can get to help people cope with weapons of mass destruction. "And we need to be able to mesh with other first responders and deal with incident command systems and work with people we've never worked with before.

"This training event," he added, "is an important step to get us ready to do that."



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
A member of the 35th Civil Support Team attempts to determine what agent affected volunteer "victims" during the National Capital Region exercise.



Patient Cheyenne M. Phillips enjoys coloring with her new friend, Sgt. 1st Class Bowyer.

DDR Facing the Future

Story and Photo by
Pfc. Bryan D. Shepherd
 Det. 1, 196 MPAD

MORGANTOWN, W.Va.— Three members of the Guard's Drug Demand Reduction team brought holiday cheer to children in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Ruby Memorial Hospital here on Dec. 7. Army sergeants Jeremy Bates and Brad Bowyer and Air Force Staff Sgt. Chris Ford made the 150 mile trek from Charleston to visit with children who were likely to be in the hospital during the holiday season.

During the visit, the kids watched movies brought by the DDR team and received bags filled with coloring books, stickers, and dog tags that read "Don't be chained to drugs." After the movies, the DDR team went around the PICU wishing patients and their families a Merry Christmas.

The Drug Demand Reduction team is a joint service program based in St. Albans whose members travel the state discussing the effects of drugs on young adults and children. "We talk to teens about drug awareness and making choices," said Bates. "The program is similar to the DARE program offered by the West Virginia State Police."

Team members hold other community events to promote their message. They even hold camps for teens during the summer.

Bates said the team plans on making these hospital visits a continual thing. "Not just to Ruby either," he said. "We're working on visiting other hospitals as well such as St. Mary's, CAMC, Women's and Children's, and Cabell-Huntington," said Bowyer.



KEPT 'EM FLYING!

By Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Joseph
Det. 1, 196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Retired AF colonel leads charge to fight BRAC

CHARLESTON – While most teenagers were learning to drive in the late 1960's, Bill Peters was learning to fly. He soloed at age 16 and became a flight instructor at 18.

Peters dreamed of following his father into the West Virginia Air National Guard. "I grew up in that unit, Peters said of the 130th. "As a little boy I would sit on the steps of the Ops building and wait for my Dad's plane to land." Peters joked that the mechanics were his babysitters.

When Peters finished the Reserve Officers Training program at Morris Harvey College (now the University of Charleston) he earned a commission in the Air National Guard.

Through the years Peters found himself in the seat of many 130th aircraft. He flew his way to the top and commanded the unit from 1999 until he retired in 2001.

When the secretary of defense forwarded

Pentagon recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in May, Air Guard units across the country shuddered in disbelief. News that the Charleston-based 130th Airlift Wing was slated for realignment under the Pentagon's 2005 base realignment and closure recommendations shocked state leaders.

Thirty Air Guard flying units were slated to lose aircraft. Plans for personnel were vague. Most would have to transfer

to other units. Although the 130th wasn't being deactivated, it was losing its aircraft – many thought the unit would soon follow.

Peters said he couldn't sit idly by while the Air Force "took the Guard's planes."

He helped form Keep 'em Flying, a grassroots organization that worked to combat the BRAC plan.

Keep 'em Flying grew into a fact-finding public relations machine that echoed the sentiments of most West Virginians.

West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin III became the chair of the organization.

Former governors Bob Wise and Cecil Underwood became co-chairs. Peters became co-chair for military affairs.

The movement gained significant support from local businesses, military families, city and county government, and citizens alike. Money was raised to fund a study that counters the

Pentagon's findings.

Jessica Lynch, the West Virginia native of Operation Iraqi Freedom fame, became the cause's spokesperson. She was heard on radio stations statewide saying, "When I was a POW in Iraq, airmen from the 130th helped rescue me in my hour of need. I didn't give up then, and we cannot give up now. Please call the BRAC Commission and tell them to save the 130th."



Photo by Sgt. David Dyer, Det.1, 196 MPAD

Gov. Joe Manchin and former prisoner of war Jessica Lynch speak in support of the 130th Airlift Wing during a news conference held at Yeager Airport.



By Spc. Sherree Casper
Det. 1, 196th MPAD

ELEANOR, W.Va. – Operation Quick Fix. The optimal word is quick.

That's the mission underway at West Virginia's newest Army National Guard facility, the Combined Support Maintenance Shops here. South Carolina National Guard soldiers are working alongside West Virginia soldiers to accomplish the mission.

About 160 soldiers from the 742nd Maintenance Company have come to the Mountain State to support West Virginia's tasking to repair equipment returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"What the Army found out is that reserve component equipment isn't getting fixed quickly enough," said 1st Lt. Chris Lexington, executive officer for the South Carolina unit.

Soldiers fix everything from generators to heavy-wheeled equipment. This equipment is vital to the readiness of any unit, whether stateside or overseas bound.

Officials at National Guard Bureau, recognizing that the West Virginia Guard had a new, state-of-the-art maintenance facility at Eleanor, requested the state become a backup demobilization site for equipment returning from overseas, according to Col. Johnnie Young, the state's deputy Army commander. "Getting this mission also allowed us to hire 16 state employees to oversee maintenance units, like the 742nd, coming to Eleanor," Young said.

South Carolina soldiers – who arrived in the Mountain State in mid-June - expect to be deployed here for up to 18 months.

This is not the first time South Carolina has supported West Virginia missions. 126th Engineer Battalion soldiers came to West Virginia in 2001 to support Operation Southern Storm and the massive flooding that devastated the southern part of the state.

DoD Announces Awards for Katrina/Rita

By Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



The Department of Defense has announced the approval of two medals for service members who participated in hurricanes Katrina and Rita relief operations. Individuals serving in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas between August 29 and October 13, 2005, are eligible for the Humanitarian Service Medal.

Those serving between August 27, 2005, and February 27, 2006, may be eligible for the Armed Forces Service Medal for serving 30 days consecutive or 60 days cumulative in support of flood relief operations. The AFSM is only awarded for service not covered by the Humanitarian Service Medal.

An additional Louisiana service medal is being considered for West Virginia Guardsmen who served in Louisiana, but a decision has not yet been made.

Permanent orders will not be issued for these awards. Commanders in the grade of O-6 and above will determine individual eligibility. See your unit administrator for more information.



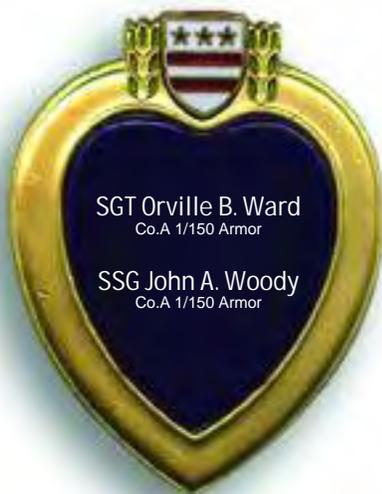
Army Award Info

The Army's Institute for Heraldry has an extensive website with more information about the history and the wear of Army decorations at:

<http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil>

Serving With Heart

Since the last issue, two additional West Virginia Guardsmen have received Purple Hearts.



COMBAT ACTION BADGE

Combat badge approved for non-infantry soldiers

By Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Joseph
Det. 1, 196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The insurgent war in Iraq and Afghanistan and the age-old debate over the merits of an "infantry only" combat badge led to the creation of the new Combat Action Badge.

In recent years, non-infantry soldiers have found themselves fighting alongside MOS-qualified infantry soldiers. Infantry soldiers often receive a Combat Infantryman Badge for engaging the enemy, but this medal is not authorized for soldiers not MOS-qualified in the infantry field.

The intent of the new Combat Action Badge is to recognize non-infantry soldiers serving in a combat zone who actively engage the enemy in battle.

Recognition for having been tested in battle is one reason soldiers want the badge. Earning promotion points is another. The Army promotion system currently awards 15 promotion points for the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Recent deployments of the West Virginia National Guard helped fuel the debate. Members of the 1st Battalion, 150th Armor Regiment and 1st

Battalion, 201st Field Artillery deployed to Iraq after reclassification training in infantry and military police tactics. They often found themselves in the thick of the insurgent war.

The traditional Combat Infantrymen Badge policy has also been changed. Infantry and Special Forces soldiers must have been engaged in active ground combat to close with and destroy the enemy with direct fires. Old language allowed the badge to go to qualifying soldiers who engaged or were engaged by the enemy; arguably, a much broader eligibility criteria.

Any soldier meeting the criteria after Sept. 18, 2001, is eligible for the new award. The Combat Action Badge is not authorized for service prior to that date. Specific requirements can be found in HQDA letter 600-5-1 (dated June 3, 2005). The policy will be added to the military awards and decorations regulations at a later date. A link to the policy letter can be found at:

<https://akocomm.us.army.mil/usapa>.



Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD

After rejoining the Guard, Staff Sgt. Loretta Osuna Cotto stands with husband Chief Warrant Officer 2 Felix Osuna Cotto, who will receive a \$2,000 bonus for his recruiting effort.

W.Va. yields nation's first enlistment under National Guard recruit bonus program

By Lt. Col. Mike Cadle

Joint Forces HQ, Public Affairs Office

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- A prior service Army National Guard member became the nation's first enlistment under the National Guard's new recruit bonus program when she was sworn into the West Virginia Army Guard at a ceremony here Sunday.

Staff Sgt. Loretta Osuna Cotto, an 18-year Army veteran, rejoined the Guard under the Guard Recruiting Assistance Program, which pays current Guard members a bonus to bring eligible candidates, like Osuna Cotto, to the service.

She was given the oath of enlistment by Adjutant General Allen Tackett as her husband and son, both members of the West Virginia National Guard, looked on.

"I'm just ready to get back into the swing of things," said Osuna Cotto. "I want to finish my career and do something for my country."

Osuna Cotto's enlistment is a positive first step for the Army National Guard's newest recruiting initiative, according to Tackett. Tackett and Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, director of the nation's Army National Guard, launched the program in West Virginia on Nov. 28.

Guard leaders hope GRAP will motivate current service members to identify qualified candidates for the Army National Guard and help the service meet its Congressionally-mandated strength goals.



Photo by Maj. Todd Harrell, 153d MPAD

Staff Sgt. Loretta Osuna Cotto gains media attention as the nation's first enlistment under the Guard Recruiting Assistant Program.

Soldiers can sign up to be recruiting assistants by completing an on-line registration and training course with Docupak, a private contractor administering the program for the Army National Guard. Recruiting assistants pre-qualify interested prospects and answer questions about joining the Army National Guard.

Recruiting assistants are paid \$2,000 for each soldier they recruit. One thousand dollars is paid when the candidate enlists, and another \$1,000 is paid when the new recruit reports to Basic Training.

Osuna Cotto's husband and sponsor in the GRAP, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Felix Osuna Cotto, signed up to be a recruiter assistant last week. He said the program is so new that he didn't tell his wife about the bonus money until hours before the ceremony.

The 22-year Army veteran said he had encouraged his wife to rejoin the Guard for the past several years, reminding her that she would be retirement eligible in two years. "After we talked about it for awhile, she wanted to wait until our children were grown," he said.

The turning point for his wife, according to Chief Warrant Officer 2 Osuna Cotto, was the Guard's Family Day last year. "After that she came to me and said she was thinking about getting back in," he said. "It totally surprised me."

"Money wasn't the primary factor in my wife reenlisting," the chief said. "We had been discussing this for a long time." He said the money would be used to help pay college expenses for their son's freshman year at West Virginia University.

Maj. Kristine Wood, commander of the state's Recruiting and Retention Command, was not surprised by how fast word spread regarding the new recruit bonus program.

"We [West Virginia] already have 56 soldiers signed up as recruiter assistants," she said. "Our soldiers are excited about the prospect of helping their friends become part of such an outstanding organization. "This program will really motivate and reward them for the work they've been doing all along to build their units."

State Adjutant General Allen Tackett believes the program will be successful in West Virginia.

"Recruiting in the West Virginia National Guard has always been a team effort," Tackett said. "We couldn't have stayed among the top states in the nation in recruiting and retention for the past eight years if our soldiers didn't believe in what we do," he said. "I believe this is just the first of many more enlistments to come under this program."

Soldiers interested in this program can find more information and enroll at:

www.guardrecruitingassistant.com

News you can use

DoD begins reimbursement for protective gear

DoD has begun to reimburse some service members who bought their own protective gear. The directive covers "privately purchased protective, safety or health equipment" purchased between 10 September 2001 and 1 August 2004. Reimbursement is limited to actual purchase price, plus shipping of the equipment. Receipts are not needed. Those claiming reimbursement must turn in their privately purchased gear. Reimbursement may not exceed \$1,100.00 for any one piece of equipment. Covered equipment includes the Kevlar helmet, ballistic eye protection, hydration systems, and the complete outer tactical vest or equivalent commercial ballistic vests. Vest components are covered individually. To apply for reimbursement, the Soldier must submit a DoD Form 2902, available at:

<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/forms/dd2902.pdf>

For further information, visit

http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2005/20051006_2953.html



Free Turbo Tax for service members

Turbo Tax is available for service members at:

www.militaryonesource.com

Enter the ID and password as follows:

id: military
password: onesource

Members can use this path to prepare and file their taxes electronically and DoD will pay for it!

New cell phone use restrictions on DoD installations

Effective 1 December 2005, cell phone use is prohibited in moving vehicles on all DoD installations unless used with a hands-free device.

A \$50 fine applies if you're caught!

USAF offers reserve personnel letters

Members can now go on-line to obtain 20-year retirement and VA mortgage eligibility letters. For more information go to:

<http://arpc.afrc.af.mil/support.asp>

MOAA offers dependent scholarships

Military Officers Association of America is offering \$1,000 college scholarships to 25 dependent children of military members. Deadline for on-line entry is March 1, 2006. For more information go to:

<http://www.moaa.org>

DOD proposes TRICARE increase

Defense officials have drafted plans to raise TRICARE enrollment fees and deductibles sharply over the next three years for retirees under age 65. Some costs would triple by 2008. Veterans groups are fighting the proposed changes. Information will be updated as it becomes available.

Beware of requests for personal financial info

Servicemembers shopping online, managing finances online, or reading e-mail that claims to need personal or financial info should be cautious. Countless scams are working their way around the Internet. E-mails that require someone to login in with personal financial information are seldom authentic. Contact your financial institution or go to:

<http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft>

Members can put more in TSP

In 2006, civilian and military employees may contribute to TSP the full amount allowed by the IRS, which is \$15,000 for 2006. Also, members may start, change, stop or resume TSP contributions at any time. Those serving in tax-free combat zones are allowed up to \$44,000 in annual contributions. To make changes, fill out a form TSP-U-1 at local personnel or finance offices or go to:

<https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>

Tips for sending care packages to deployed troops

When sending packages, especially to overseas zones, families and friends should be aware of restrictions and not send: illegal substances, alcoholic beverages, explosives and flammable items such as fireworks, offensive or obscene photos, or items of a religious nature. Other factors to consider include extreme temperatures and proper packing. Also make sure your package is properly addressed on the outside with the service member's APO/FPO address and your return address. Read more about addressing parcels to troops overseas, postal restrictions, and holiday mailing deadlines at:

<http://www.usps.com/supportingouttroops>

Job protection for activated Guard and Reserve members

The Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act of 1994 protects members of the U.S. National Guard and Reserve from being laid off while they are called to active service. The law grants service members the same status they would have held if they had been continuously employed. They cannot be passed over for promotion or denied vacation time because they are away from work. For further information, contact the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve at:

1-800-336-4590 or visit:

<http://ebird.afis.mil/ebfiles/e20051011395708.html>

Cell phone discounts

Many cell phone companies are voluntarily providing discounted rates to active-duty military personnel, and, in some cases, to retirees. The discounts vary by carrier but range from 10 to 19%. Some carriers require a service-agreement prior to offering the discount. To see if you qualify for the discount, call your carrier at the numbers listed.

Cingular	1-800-319-6393
Nextel	1-800-639-6111
Sprint	1-888-788-4727
T-Mobile	1-866-646-4688
Verizon	1-800-511-1150



Jasmine Nickerson of New Orleans shows Spc. Shane Dillon of A Company, 1092nd Engineer Battalion, how to write her name. Nickerson had been evacuated from New Orleans and was staying temporarily at the Houma-Terrebonne Parish Civic Center in Houma, La. West Virginia soldiers and airmen provided security at the center while using it as a staging base for the distribution of food, water and cleaning supplies into flooded bayous of southern Louisiana.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy, 29th MPAD

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