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FALL 2015

Oregon Sentinel

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Oregon National Guard activated to assist firefighting efforts

Photos by Jason van Mourik, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Above left: An Oregon Army National Guard HH-60M Blackhawk helicopter crew, with Charlie Company, 7-158th Aviation, navigates through smoke on the way to drop water from a 'Bambi bucket' in support of firefighting ground crews, August 5, at the Stouts Fire near Canyonville, Oregon. Above right: A member of the Oregon National Guard uses a variety of tools to put out wildfire hot spots at the Grizzly Bear Complex Fire near Elgin, Oregon, Sept. 3. See **Soldiers and Airmen** on Page 4.

Heroic actions of Oregon Soldier captivates the world

Story by Capt. Leslie Reed,
41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs

SALEM, Oregon – For Oregon Army National Guard Spc. Alek Skarlatos, his rest and recuperation (R&R) time following a recent deployment to Afghanistan has not gone exactly as planned. While on vacation in Europe with two of his lifelong friends, U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Spencer Stone and Anthony Sadler, Skarlatos unexpectedly found himself back in harm's way.

A gunman carrying an AK-47 and a Lugar pistol opened fire aboard a train carrying 500 passengers from Amsterdam to Paris, August 21. The sound of gunfire immediately caught the attention of Skarlatos, who looked up to see the attacker emerging from the lavatory. The gunman had stopped to reload. Skarlatos tapped his friend, Stone, on the shoulder and motioned towards the gunman, saying, "let's go."

Stone tackled the gunman and tried to wrestle the rifle out of his hands. Together, the three friends and a British passenger surrounded the gunman to subdue him. The attacker fought back with a box-cutter, injuring Stone. Skarlatos took the gunman's rifle and used it as a blunt weapon to knock him unconscious, then

See **Soldier** on Page 4

Photos by Glenn Fawcett, Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs

Above: Oregon Army National Guard Spc. Alek Skarlatos (left), U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Spencer Stone and Anthony Sadler look to each other at the conclusion of a ceremony at the Pentagon, Sept. 17, honoring them for their heroic actions in stopping a gunman on a Paris-bound train outside of Brussels, August 21.
Right: Secretary of Defense Ash Carter presents the Soldier's medal to Spc Alek Skarlatos during a ceremony at the Pentagon, Sept. 17, honoring him for his role in stopping the gunman on a Paris-bound train outside of Brussels, August 21.

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Oregon National Guard members and their families are encouraged to submit articles and story ideas. Stories and letters to the editor from any source, military or civilian, are accepted. All submissions must include the author's name, mailing address and daytime phone number. Names may be withheld in print upon request. All submissions are subject to editing prior to publication, and the Public Affairs staff reserves the right to print or reprint submissions at any time. The Oregon Military Department Public Affairs Office and Oregon Sentinel staff are not accountable for factual errors presented by contributing authors or photographers.

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Story files must be submitted in Microsoft Word format, with no formatting. Photos must be high-resolution color JPEG files, accompanied by caption information containing the following: full name, rank, and unit of person(s) depicted in the photo, and a short description of what is happening in the photo. All hard-copies submitted to the Oregon Sentinel become the property of the Oregon Military Department unless prior arrangements are made with the Public Affairs staff.

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COMMAND

Governor appoints Brig. Gen. Stencel as Adjutant General

SALEM, Oregon – Governor Kate Brown appointed Brigadier General Michael E. Stencel to succeed Lieutenant General Daniel R. Hokanson as Adjutant General, Oregon, in an official announcement, Sept. 25.

Brigadier General Stencel began serving as Acting Adjutant General on August 16, following Hokanson's promotion to Deputy Commander, United States Northern Command (NORTHCOM), Vice Commander, United States Element, North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.

"Michael Stencel is a proven and accomplished leader. He will make an excellent Adjutant General, and I thank him for his continued contributions to the state and nation," said Governor Brown.

Prior to his selection as Adjutant General, Stencel served as Acting Adjutant General, in a dual position as the Oregon National Guard's Air Component Commander as well as the Air National Guard Assistant to the Commander of 11th Air Force.

Brigadier General Stencel received his commission in 1984 from the Air National Guard Academy of Military Science. Upon completion of Undergraduate Pilot Training in 1985, he completed F-4 upgrade training and was assigned to the 123rd Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Portland Air National Guard Base. In 1989 he completed F-15 transition training as part of the 142nd Fighter Wing's conversion to the F-15. His many assignments consist of Maintenance Officer and State Plans and Programs Officer at Oregon Air National Guard Headquarters.

Brigadier General Stencel has served as Commander of the Oregon Air National Guard and Chief of Staff to the Oregon Air National Guard in Salem. He has commanded the 142nd Fighter Wing with an interim assignment as Battle Director in Air Force Central's 609th Air and Space Operations Center, Al Udeid Air Force Base, Qatar. He previously commanded the 142nd Civil Engineering Squadron and the 142nd Mission Support Group. He also previously served as the State Director of Operations/A-3 Joint Force Headquarters for the Oregon Air National Guard where he was the principal advisor to the commander of the Oregon Air National Guard on operational readiness and strategic planning for state and federal tasking.

Hokanson bids farewell, takes Oregon heritage with him

To the Soldiers, Airmen, Civilians and Families of the Oregon Military Department:

I am truly humbled that I have been confirmed for appointment to the rank of lieutenant general and assignment as Deputy Commander, United States Northern Command/Vice Commander, United States Element, North American Aerospace Defense Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. It will be an honor to continue serving our great nation in such an important capacity.

My appointment would not have been possible without the experiences and opportunities I was fortunate to have as a member of the Oregon National Guard. Over the past 20 years I have had the honor to serve alongside some of our nation's greatest Citizen-Soldiers, Airmen and Civilians; and under the command of three Oregon governors.

My family and I will miss being part of the Oregon Military Department family. It has been incredible to be part of this great organization and all it has accomplished, and we look forward to following all you will accomplish in the future. Although I will be leaving Oregon in the near future, I will never forget my military heritage and what it means to be an Oregon Guardsman.

Very Respectfully,

Dan Hokanson

Photo by Sgt. Erin J. Quirke, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

Gen. Frank J. Grass (left), Chief of the National Guard Bureau, presents the Oregon Distinguished Service Award to Lt. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson during his promotion ceremony at Camp Withycombe in Clackamas, Oregon, August 15.

Emergency preparedness a neccessity for the future

This past month we have witnessed many changes. The change of summer to fall, a new school year, the different color of leaves, and a new sports season is in progress. With the promotion of Lt. Gen. Dan Hokanson, this past month has also brought about new change in leadership for the Oregon National Guard.

These changes allow us to reflect on the past few months and evaluate the successes that we as an organization have had. Comments from top National Guard Bureau officials came from the "State of State" briefings. Their praise of the Cascadia Playbook brought great credit to our state and is sought after as a model for other states and territories to follow. We are fortunate our leadership has provided a way forward, not if, but when an event shall occur. "The Cascadia Playbook will be a cross-cutting emergency management tool for the State of Oregon that supports various existing plans and efforts for the first 14 days of a catastrophic incident."

For years our communities have implemented several types of plans. These plans have ranged from intruder drills, earthquake drills, fire drills, and tsunami drills along our coastal waters. However, "all best laid plans of mice and men go awry." Especially to those who don't or are unable to answer the call.

In a conversation with Lt. Col. Brian Houston, HH-60M Blackhawk medevac helicopter pilot, he stated that when that call comes in, regardless of the time of day, he and his crew will load up the aircraft and rescue those in distress. There are several of our Oregon Citizen-Soldiers who not only believe this but are also prepared to do so at a moment's notice. For they and their families know the importance and the expectations Oregon taxpayers have on those who serve.

"This is who we are, and this is what we do," said CW5 (Ret.) Rod Comstock, during his remarks given at his retirement ceremony. Chief Comstock was sharing with the audience of the many sacrifices that his family had made throughout his military career. He described a time when he received a phone call for a search and rescue mission in the southern part of the state. It was Christmas Day, the family woke a few hours earlier, the presents opened, and the afternoon dinner was being prepared. As he was putting on his uniform, his children stood by, questioning why he had to leave.

As an organization we pride ourselves as a brigade, a battalion, a company, and/or as a platoon when it comes to inspections, surveys, and matrices that build up our readiness. Our readiness is our ability to individually and/or collectively respond to the call from our command, state or nation.

Photo by April Davis, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Chief Warrant Officer-4 Paul Zenchenko was recently promoted to CW5 during a promotion ceremony, July 9, at Heritage Park in Salem, Oregon.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Paul E. Zenchenko, Command Chief Warrant Officer, Oregon National Guard

The warrant officer is highly sought after for their experience, expertise, and meeting these sustained readiness levels. Our own personal readiness plays an integral part of our organization's ability to respond. The elements that make up the criteria for a promotion board or retention board — no matter how insignificant they may seem — assist us to determine our own personal readiness.

The month of September has been declared National Preparedness Month by Oregon Governor Kate Brown. We have an opportunity to learn more about ways to prepare for all types of emergencies. The Oregon Office of Emergency Management has provided resources on their web page to prepare and provide for our family readiness. Throughout their web page are ideas for us to think about, "BEEing Prepared," with several links to assist the family in creating plans and ideas on how to build our own family "go-kit".

We surely cannot control mother nature. However, we can control our ability to react to such a catastrophic incident. The Playbook is published, plans are in place, and rehearsals are ongoing. It is our responsibility for preparedness and readiness (both personal and family). This is who we are, and this is what we do!

NEWS

Renewal of labor management agreement marks 20 years of partnership

Story and photo courtesy
CW4 Dale A. Williams,
Deputy Director of Human Resources

On May 12, 2015, Maj. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, then-Adjutant General, Oregon, and AFGE Local 2986 President Gary Snider signed the fourth iteration of the Labor Management Partnership Agreement, reaffirming that the Oregon National Guard and AFGE Local 2986 will continue to do business well into the future for the betterment of the Oregon National Guard.

The partnership originally began February 23, 1995, when former Adjutant General of Oregon, Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, and then-president of AFGE Local 2986, Terry Swartwout, signed the first Oregon National Guard Labor Management Partnership Agreement. The agreement was in response to President Bill Clinton's Executive Order 12871, which mandated partnerships within the executive branch of government. Executive Order 12871 was signed to focus on evaluating, analyzing, implementing and monitoring matters effecting the labor management relationship, and utilizeing interest-based bargaining techniques to improve the efficiency of the government.

In the 20 years since that time, the Oregon National Guard has had four subsequent adjutants general and two subsequent U.S. Presidents (Bush and Obama) each with executive orders of their own on this subject. The Partnership Agreement has had two additional iterations, five collective bargaining agreements (CBA's) and seven presidents of AFGE Local 2986.

Interest-based bargaining takes a lot of commitment. Much time is invested in trying to obtain a consensus, understand other people's points of view, and the nucleus of the interest at hand. It isn't a case of merely actively listening to the other party's interests. It entails becoming familiar and understanding fully what the interest is behind a particular concern or issue. It's not always easy, but it produces a superior result that all parties can live with.

With the signing of this agreement and our shared, continued commitment, we expect to keep adding value to the Oregon National Guard for the next 20 years.

Photo by Sgt. Betty Boyce, JFHQ Public Affairs

From left: Lt. Col. Jenifer Pardy, management chief negotiator with the Oregon National Guard's Human Resources Department; AFGE Local 2986 President Gary Snider; and Maj. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, then-Adjutant General, Oregon, renewed the 20-year partnership between the union and the Oregon National Guard, May 12, 2015.

82nd Tactical Support Detachment supports division operations at NTC

Story by Lt. Col. Kenneth Safe,
82nd TSD Commander

The 82nd Tactical Support Detachment (TSD) conducted annual training with 7th Infantry Division (7th ID) at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, in July 2015.

The TSD was transformed from the 82nd Rear Operations Center in March of 2014. Since the formation of the unit, this is the first time the 82nd TSD and 7th ID set up and operated the Division Tactical Command Post (DTAC) as a multi-component unit (MCU).

According to Maj. Gen. Terry Ferrell, commanding general of 7th ID, this structure and mission is a "proof of principle" as the active component is faced with the reduced force structure and continued high operational tempo requirements. The DTAC exercises the MCU staff in division tactical operations while providing mission support to an active duty U.S. Army Stryker brigade out of Joint Base Lewis-McCord.

"The support from 7th ID has been exceptional from the beginning," said Capt. Tom Greenwood, battle caption. "Although emphasis on battlefield situational awareness was a priority, there was an encouraging and constructive learning environment with 7th ID in the DTAC."

The 82nd TSD is a small detachment of 47 personnel with 18 officer positions and three warrant officer positions. The unit is unique in that it's composed entirely of staff sections that 'round out' the division staff. The multi-component DTAC mission is a great opportunity to integrate with the active component.

"We quickly attained battle rhythm as we learned how to work and function as a division TOC [Tactical Operations Center]," said Capt. David Rose, fires officer.

The 82nd TSD is the only unit in the Oregon Army National Guard that trains at the division staff level.

"Some of my early difficulties were determining what a brigade fight meant at the division level, with the scope of operations significantly wider than I have ever experienced," said Capt. Brian Fike, battle captain. "It was an eye opener to realize the combat power and how it can be applied to shape the battlefield."

The mission provides excellent broadening experience for officers and non-commissioned officers (NCO). As can be expected, the unit structure and mission is still not well known. Col. William Prendergast, commander of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, was able to visit and learn about the DTAC while he was at NTC.

The 82nd TSD staff said seeing the MCU DTAC in operation was motivating and they returned from NTC with excitement. They now have a foundation to continue developing the DTAC capability.

"NTC was a great experience to expand my knowledge base and experience in division operations, and to work in partnership with different units and components within the Army," said Staff Sgt. Lucien Darensburg, operations NCO.

Staff Sgt. Daniel Hall, CBRN NCO, received a recognition coin from Maj. Gen. Ferrell for his contributions during the training.

Capt. Harland McWatters, intelligence officer, briefed Maj. Gen. Ferrell during the culminating, live-fire exercise.

The staff said the culminating exercise was "awesome" and was well attended. Those in attendance were, Lt. Gen. Steven Lanza, I Corps commanding general; Maj. Gen. Terry Ferrell; Brig. Gen. Joe Jarrard, Adjutant General of the Georgia National Guard; and Col. (Promotable) Antonio Aguto, Jr., deputy commanding general, operations.

Currently, the DTAC mission is to support an NTC training cycle each year. The next NTC training cycle is scheduled for January 2016.

234th Army Band concerts observe WWII anniversary

Story by Oregon Sentinel Staff

SALEM, Oregon – The Oregon Army National Guard's 234th Army Band performed a series of summer concerts to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of WWII.

The band was the featured musical headliner in the 70th Anniversary of WWII events coinciding with the national Spirit of '45 Commemoration.

Oregon Governor Kate Brown proclaimed August 9-16, 2015, as WWII 70th Anniversary, Spirit of 45 Commemorative Week to honor and celebrate the achievements of the "Greatest Generation." The second Sunday of every August has been designated as Spirit of '45 Day to commemorate the service and sacrifice of all those who participated in WWII.

Oregon's 234th Army Band appeared at locations throughout the region, including Salem, Eugene, Medford, Bend, Pendleton, and Camp Withycombe in Clackamas, Oregon. The concerts were free and open to the public.

Oregon's Spirit of '45 Honorary Chairman, retired Brig. Gen. James B. Thayer, Sr., said he was proud to be a part of the 70th WWII commemoration celebration.

"I am pleased that Oregon has created a permanent day to honor the commitment of service, unity and spirit of 16 million American Soldiers on the ground, Sailors at sea, pilots in the air, and millions who supported the home front," Thayer said.

The Oregon Military Museum is named in honor of Brig. Gen. Thayer, and is undergoing a $16 million renovation. The Army Band concert at Camp Withycombe, August 15, was preceded by a ribbon-cutting ceremony dedicating the Oregon Military Museum Park.

The park includes two of the original buildings at Camp Withycombe, the Quartermaster Storehouse and the Field Artillery Horse Barn. The park will also tell the story of the world famous Clackamas Firing Range, which produced national and international rifle champions for many years.

For more information on the Oregon Military Museum, visit http://www.oregonmilitarymuseum.org.

Photo by Master Sgt. Thomas Hovie, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

The Oregon Army National Guard's 234th Army Band performs at the Elsinore Theatre, August 9, in Salem, Oregon, during their summer series of concerts commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the end of WWII.

Marijuana prohibited despite Measure 91

Story by Tech. Sgt. James Batdorff, 116th ACS,
Drug Demand Reduction Program Manager

During drug testing, several Oregon National Guardsmen have asked the question, how does Measure 91 affect them? Measure 91 does not affect existing employment laws of Oregon. An employer who requires drug testing can continue to do so. So, in short, the use of marijuana is still forbidden in the Oregon National Guard. Additionally, both the Air and Army National Guard prohibit the ingestion of products containing, and products derived from, hemp seed or hemp seed oil. For additional information see Command Policy Memorandum #143.

What about synthetic or substitute marijuana? No.

The Oregon Board of Pharmacy has voted to ban the sale and possession of synthetic marijuana. Synthetic marijuana is comprised of a number of different chemicals, none of which are derived from the Cannabis family Cannabaceae. The chemicals contained in synthetic marijuana have been added to the Oregon Board of Pharmacy's list of controlled substances.

For members struggling with substance abuse issues, please seek help from either your chain of command or mental health care providers. We are stronger as an organization when our members are healthy, happy and ready to protect our communities.

NEWS

Soldiers and Airmen deploy to fire camps throughout the state

Continued from **Front Page**

SALEM, Oregon – Oregon National Guard Soldiers and Airmen worked alongside civilian fire crews during the 2015 wildfire season. Approximately 375 of Oregon's finest provided support to local, county and even out-of-state fire response personnel across the state. They dug fire lines, put out smoldering trees, and dropped water from helicopters.

Oregon Army National Guard helicopters were called into action, in August, to provide support for the Stouts Fire near Canyonville, Oregon. Two HH-60M Blackhawks, assigned to Charlie Company 7-158th Aviation, based out of Salem, Oregon, and one CH-47 Chinook, assigned to Detachment 1, Bravo Company, 168th Aviation, provided bambi bucket support to ground crews with fire suppression.

Chief Warrant Officer-2 David McPherson said the mission provided valuable training time.

"It helps increase our proficiency as pilots," he said. "This is probably some of the toughest flying that we do, so it's a good experience."

The Oregon Army National Guard helicopters were just three among more than a dozen aircraft working in the area.

"It's extremely busy and challenging to operate with all the different aircraft out there," said Capt. William Liebhaber, Det. 1, 168th Aviation commander. "Everyone has to keep watch at all times to make sure we stay safe."

Aviators with Charlie Company, 7-158th Aviation, continued on to support wildfire efforts near John Day, Oregon, in September, as well as providing a medical evacuation helicopter.

"For many of us, this is just another day at work," said Chief Warrant Officer-4 Dennis Cooper. "This is what we do, what we train for, to support Oregonians in their time of need."

Following the activation of the Oregon National Guard by Oregon Governor Kate Brown approximately 375 Soldiers and Airmen completed training at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST), in Salem, Oregon, and deployed to fire camps throughout the state. Volunteers came from both of the Oregon Army Guard brigades, the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team and the 82nd Brigade Troop Command, and both of the Oregon Air Guard wings, the 142nd Fighter Wing and the 173rd Fighter Wing.

Daniel Cleveland, a wild lands fire management officer for the Oregon Military Department, underscored the importance of the training while talking about this year's fire season.

"The fire switches direction every day," he said. "You could be on the trail edge or the heel of the fire and then the winds will switch and the next thing you know you're on the front of the fire."

One team of Citizen-Soldiers deployed to the Canyon Creek fire near John Day.

"They helped save John Day and Canyon City," said George Ponte, Central Oregon District forester. "The Guard crews played a pivotal role in securing the fire perimeter."

Another team of Citizen-Airmen deployed to Elgin and Troy, Oregon, respectively, to assist in mop-up operations at the Grizzly Bear fire.

"Our Soldiers are motivated and glad to be able to help," said 1st Sgt. Eric Pettis, noncommissioned officer in charge at the Elgin fire camp.

The Oregon National Guard has an ongoing agreement with the Oregon Department of Forestry known as Operation Plan Smokey, which stipulates the details of how Oregon National Guard members will be utilized to assist in firefighting efforts. This agreement is reviewed by both agencies annually to remain up-to-date for each fire season.

Photo by Sgt. Tianna Waite, 41 Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

Lt. Col. Brian Houston, with Charlie Co. 7-158th Aviation, briefs Brig. Gen. Michael Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, on the current status of the fire support mission, August 21, at the Baker City Helibase. Three Oregon Army National Guard HH-60M Blackhawk helicopters provided support to ground firefighting crews on four separate fires in the area.

Photo courtesy 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Members of the Oregon Air National Guard search for hotspots during clean up operations following a massive wildfire Sept. 1, in Eastern Oregon.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Van Mourik, OMD Public Affairs

An Oregon Army National Guard HH-60M Blackhawk helicopter (above right) with Charlie Company, 7-158th Aviation, fills a 500-gallon Bambi bucket (above left) with water to suppress the Stouts Fire near Canyonville, Oregon, August 5.

Soldier thrust into overnight fame from Paris to D.C. to Hollywood

Continued from **Front Page**

secured him with makeshift restraints.

"It wasn't a conscious decision," Skarlatos said of their heroic actions. "We didn't even have time to think about it. We just acted."

Skarlatos, of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, had not even been back from deployment for a full month yet when he traveled to Europe to sightsee and spend time with his best friends. He had been deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Freedom's Sentinel for approximately nine months. His unit conducted security-based missions; personnel and vehicle searches and providing base security at Bagram Air Field. The unit returned to Roseburg, Oregon, on June 24. The 1-186th Infantry Battalion was officially demobilized on August 8 in Medford, Oregon.

"At first we couldn't believe it was someone from our unit, but then we weren't shocked it was Skarlatos," said Sgt. 1st Class Frank Rademacher, Charlie Company's readiness noncommissioned officer, about hearing the news.

Rademacher went on to say that Skarlatos is all about bettering himself.

"He wants to be an elite Soldier," said Rademacher. "He's a solid performer, has lots of integrity and is extremely trustworthy."

The three Americans and the British citizen were presented with the Legion of Honor, the highest honor in France, by French President Francois Hollande at the Élysée Palace in Paris, August 24.

Upon their return to the United States, Skarlatos and his friends were honored by Secretary of Defense Ash Carter in the Pentagon courtyard on Sept. 17. Skarlatos was awarded the Soldier's Medal; Stone was awarded the Airman's Medal and Purple Heart; and Sadler received the Secretary of Defense's Medal of Valor.

Photo by Capt. Leslie Reed, 41st IBCT Public Affairs

Oregon Army National Guard Spc. Alek Skarlatos and his Dancing with the Stars partner, Lindsay Arnold, pose for a photo with U.S. Senators Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) following the presentation of his Soldier's Medal at the Pentagon in Washington D.C., Sept. 17.

The Soldier's Medal is the U.S. Army's highest award for acts of heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy. The award citation reads, "for extraordinary heroism above and beyond the call of duty" due to "Specialist Skarlatos distinguishing himself in a courageous manner, voluntarily accepting risk to his own life" and his actions "prevented a potentially catastrophic loss of life."

Skarlatos also had several other engagements during his visit to Washington D.C., including a tour of the White House and a brief meeting with President Barack Obama, where the President praised the three friends as "the very best of America."

Accolades came pouring in from military leadership across all branches of service, to include Gen. Mark A. Milley, the 39th Chief of Staff of the Army.

"Who hears gunshots and runs towards them? Skarlatos did," said Milley. "Who motivates others to follow him into a small battle where he could die? Skarlatos did. Who willingly puts his life in danger to protect others? Skarlatos did. He did it because he is a member of the U.S. Army. He did it because he is a member of the Oregon Army National Guard. He did it because he's an American."

Leaders in the Oregon National Guard said they are especially proud to call him one of our very own.

"It's fantastic that no matter who it was, someone stepped up to stop such a horrific event," said Maj. Stephen Bomar, a spokesperson with the Oregon National Guard. "We're absolutely proud that it happened to be someone from the Oregon Army National Guard."

Brig. Gen. Michael E. Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, said, "These men are true heroes. The Oregon National Guard is very proud of Spc. Skarlatos. His quick reaction, his courage and his bravery undoubtedly saved many lives, for which we are thankful beyond words. He is a true Citizen-Soldier who displayed the courage each of us would hope to find in ourselves."

The young specialist's life has changed dramatically since he made that split-second decision on the Paris-bound train. He said all the attention has been overwhelming; his schedule packed with flights between media engagements. On the morning of September 3, he appeared on Good Morning America and was announced as a contestant on ABC's Dancing with the Stars. Skarlatos is paired with professional dancer Lindsay Arnold as a member of the Season 21 cast.

"I think it'll be fun. I hope I learn a lot," Skarlatos said, "I'll need to, if I'm going to stay on [the show] very long."

His work ethic as a Soldier paired with Lindsay Arnold's dance instructions seem to be paying off. He has survived the first two eliminations on the show, showing off both his jazz and quick step skills.

Following his brush with fame, Skarlatos plans to follow a career path that was already in the works with his leadership prior to that life-changing day on the train. As a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-186th Infantry Battalion, he plans to complete his Warrior Leader Course (WLC), for promotion, as well as sniper training and Air Assault school.

Photo by Capt. Leslie Reed, 41st IBCT Public Affairs

Oregon Army National Guard Spc. Alek Skarlatos (center right) alongside other Dancing with the Stars competitors, celebrates his scores from the judges following his Jazz dance performance with professional dance partner, Lindsay Arnold, Sept. 21 in Los Angeles, Calif. Skarlatos was invited to compete on the ABC reality show after he and his friends subdued a guman on a Paris-bound train, August 21. Skarlatos has successfully danced the Foxtrot, Quickstep, Tango and a Jazz piece and remains a fierce competitor on the television show.

NEWS

142nd Fighter Wing activates new alert facility at Portland Air Base

Story and photos by
Tech. Sgt. John Hughel,
142nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Col. Paul T. Fitzgerald (center right), 142nd Fighter Wing commander and Maj. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson (center left), then-Adjutant General, Oregon, along with other dignitaries, take part in a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new alert barn at the Portland Air National Guard Base, July 10. The new alert barn will ensure readiness efficiency by keeping all alert aircraft co-located in one area of the base.

PORTLAND, Oregon – Marking 25 years after the construction of the main alert facilities housed at the Portland Air National Guard Base, an additional alert barn was officially opened during a ribbon cutting ceremony July 10.

Highlighting the projects development, 142nd Fighter Wing Commander Col. Paul T. Fitzgerald said the new $1.8 million facility was worth the wait.

"We've done plenty of repair projects in the last few years [on base], but this facility is the first standalone military construction project to be completed since the new 50-year lease was signed in January 2013 with the Port of Portland," he said.

The new alert barn is equipped with 400Hz power, with the latest foam discharge system and features the "Redhawk red" roof color scheme standardized as part of the base installation master plan by previous wing commander Rick Wedan, who was also in attendance for the ribbon cutting.

The facility addition marks the continued evolution and importance of the air base in providing the Aerospace Control Alert mission in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States.

Beginning in 1958 as part of North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), the Air National Guard and the active duty Air Force began operating in a split-shift relationship. The 142nd Fighter Wing (recognized then as the 142nd Fighter Group) flew the 14-hour daytime operations with the 337th Fighter Group providing night watch over the region.

Col. Paul T. Fitzgerald, 142nd Fighter Wing commander, addresses attendees at the official ribbon cutting ceremony for a new alert barn at the Portland Air National Guard Base, July 10.

With the departure of the active duty force in early 1966, the 142nd became the sole provider of the 24/7 alert mission over Pacific Northwest skies.

Describing the continued importance of the mission, Fitzgerald outlined the Department of Defense's emphasis on homeland protection and building global security.

"The alert mission is our cornerstone mission," he said. "We are geographically suited to defend from Canada to California."

The Air National Guard operates the majority of fighter jet alert sites in the continental United States, Alaska and Hawaii. The new alert structure will help enhance the capabilities of the mission by providing a state-of-the-art building to maintain and prepare the unit's F-15 Eagles when they're needed at a moment's notice.

"We fly the world's greatest air dominance platform. Our F-15's, equipped with electronically scanned array radar, can detect, track and engage multiple targets," Fitzgerald said, but emphasized that "the most import site is here [in Portland]."

Maj. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, then-Adjutant General, Oregon, also spoke during the ribbon-cutting ceremony and echoed Fitzgerald's comments with regards to the strategic importance of the new facility.

"With this new building, the ability of the maintainers, avionics, flight crews and others will insure that there is never a gap in the coverage provided to the United States," he said.

Hokanson experienced how well the current facility and alert team worked in concert together as he was present during a recent tasking of alert jets by NORAD while at the Portland Air National Guard base.

"I had the opportunity to come out here and see some tired, yet smiling, faces of people who couldn't be happier doing their job," he said. "Personally it was one of the best moments I've had, just to be part of this organization and seeing their professionalism."

Hokanson will take that experience with him when he is promoted to the rank of lieutenant general and assigned as deputy commander of United States Northern Command and vice commander of United States Element, NORAD Command, at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.

With more than 600 alert events in the past 10 years, the new alert barn will continue to add value to the overall mission tempo. Maintainers, pilots and aircraft will be able to ensure readiness efficiency with improved security proximity and by keeping all alert aircraft co-located in one area of the base.

"So, it all comes down to two things: speed and span of control. In this game, seconds count, but we have to remind ourselves that this is no ordinary game," Fitzgerald said. "It is a no-fail mission that requires 24/7 dedication by everyone involved."

Regional Training Institute seeks instructors for influx of students

Story and photo courtesy
Maj. Timothy Merritt,
249th Regional Training Institute

Staff Sgt. Ryan Bendall, an Advanced Leader's Course student from Fort Hood, Texas, fires the M2 .50-cailber machine gun during training at the 249th Regional Training Institute at Camp Umatilla in Hermiston, Oregon.

It was supposed to be a raid. The mission was fairly straightforward. The rehearsals had gone smooth, the pre-combat checks were all complete and the patrol was preparing to leave the objective rally point (ORP). That's when Staff Sgt. Ryan Austin informed the patrol leader that there was a change of mission: several American prisoners had been spotted in the vicinity of the objective. The raid was now a rescue mission.

This scenario played out during the fifth Infantry Advanced Leader's Course (ALC) taught this year by Oregon's 249th Regiment, Regional Training Institute (RTI) at Camp Umatilla, in Hermiston, Oregon. Last year, the RTI conducted just two ALC courses. The 21 Soldiers attending this class are the culmination of a record-breaking year of instruction for the RTI: 97 active duty Army, 17 National Guard and three Army Reserve Soldiers, totaling 102 ALC graduates. This is up from 53 ALC graduates the previous year, a 92 percent increase.

Four squad designated marksmen opened fire on key enemy positions just as dusk was falling. The support element then quickly gained fire superiority and in the ensuing chaos the assault element broke through, swept across the objective and rescued all the hostages.

"It was awesome!" said Austin, who previously served with the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) and is now the senior ALC instructor for the 249th RTI. "Over half these guys are either currently serving in an active duty Ranger battalion or are former graduates of the Ranger school. They smoked 'em!"

This year, 167 Soldiers graduated from all of the 249th RTI courses combined. Next year's growth is forecasted to be even more dramatic.

Master Sgt. Travis Sigfridson, the RTI's new Regimental Operations NCO, explained it this way, "With the conversion of the Washington National Guard's 81st Armored Brigade Combat Team to a Stryker brigade, we are expecting an enormous increase in Soldiers coming from Washington, Oregon and California to attend both our Military Occupational Specialty – Transition (MOS-T) and Infantry Transition Courses (ITC)."

The RTI is playing a key role in the transition, providing the training necessary to facilitate a major organizational change.

"This demonstrates how the RTI is rapidly transforming into a major training center, serving the entire western region," said Sigfridson.

He also discussed some of the techniques used to handle the increased course load. By conducting several courses simultaneously, the RTI is able to achieve some economies of scale. One dining facility, for instance, can accommodate the students from several different classes without a significant increase in cooks.

"Right now, we are teaching the Army Basic Instructor course (ABI) and then the Small Group Instructor course (SGI) to our new instructors, while right next door we are simultaneously conducting the ALC classes for Infantry NCOs," he said.

Still, the RTI cadre are stretched pretty thin.

"RTI instructors don't go to annual training (AT) all together like Soldiers in other units," he said. "Instead, we schedule them for one drill weekend, followed immediately by two weeks of AT, followed immediately by another drill weekend, for a solid 19-day block in which they can teach a course. We stagger them this way all year long."

The RTI has to be resourceful in its use of personnel in order to meet the increasing demands for training in the western region. The current course offerings of the RTI include the Tactical Certification Course (TCC) in addition to its ABI/SGI, MOS-T, ITC and ALC courses. The RTI detachment in Monmouth is also responsible for teaching the Health Care Specialist (68W) certification course and for running the Officer Candidate School (OCS).

To add even more acronyms to an already crowded catalogue, there are plans in the works to develop a Small Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (SUAS) operator course, as well as a Maneuver Senior Leader's Course (MSLC).

"We are making a big push right now for new instructors," Sigfridson said. "A tour with the RTI also sets the stage for those E-6s and E-7s to go back to their units and be more effective leaders. That's what NCOs do, they train Soldiers, and the RTI gives them the skills to be better trainers."

The RTI is going to need those new instructors if they hope to meet the growing demand for training.

"We're really breaking new ground," said Sigfridson. "It's an exciting time to be a part of the RTI."

FEATURES

Oregon Army National Guard battles in heavyweight match-up at National Training Center

Story by
Sgt. 1st Class April Davis,
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment,
with contributions from
Sgt. Anita VanderMolen, 115th MPAD,
and Staff Sgt. Pat Caldwell, HHC 3-116th Bn.

More than 700 Oregon Soldiers augmented the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team (Armor) during 'force-on-force' Army National Guard versus U.S. Army Opposing Force (OPFOR) combat and maneuver battles at the National Training Center.

Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Above: Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with D Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team, maneuver M1A2 Abrams tanks toward an obstacle breach operation during a company live-fire exercise, August 16, at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.

Right: Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team, drive away from an enemy smoke screen at dawn during simulated combat and manuever operations, August 22, at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.

Photo by Spc. Michael Germundson, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Right: Soldiers with 3rd Platoon, A Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team, receive a situation report as an enemy helicopter peaks over the hilltop during a force-on-force battle simulation exercise at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, Calif., August 22.

Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, 115th MPAD

Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, 115th MPAD

Left: Members of the Fire Direction Center, Staff Sgt. Troy Stewart (front) and Sgt. David Hippe, Mortar Platoon, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, process a fire mission on 'enemy' targets at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, Calif., August 24.

FORT IRWIN, California – Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 116th Calvary Regiment, and the 1186th Military Police (MP) Company, spent 12 days conducting live-fire exercises and large-scale simulated battle scenarios in the blistering heat of the Mojave Desert at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, Calif., August 14-25, 2015.

The Oregon units augmented the Idaho Army National Guard's 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team (CBCT) during the first decisive action integrated combat and maneuver training operation the Army National Guard has completed since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom. The 116th CBCT (Armor) brought big guns to the fight in the first 'force-on-force' Army National Guard versus U.S. Army Opposing Force (OPFOR) heavyweight match-up since before 9/11.

"The purpose of this NTC rotation is to allow the brigade to advance its collective training skillsets and our proficiencies as a brigade combat team," said Idaho Army National Guard Col. Russell Johnson, brigade commander of the 116th CBCT.

Every aspect of the training was designed to increase war-fighting capabilities at all levels, from the individual Soldier up to the higher headquarters echelons. In this case, the main focus was to synchronize the brigade's use of combat multipliers in full-spectrum battles against the U.S. Army's 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), also known as the world-class OPFOR.

The 116th CBCT pulled no punches as their Abrams tanks; Bradley Fighting Vehicles; Paladin Howitzers; Apache helicopters, from the Idaho Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 183rd Attack Reconnaissance; and engineer assets, from the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion, collided with 'enemy' opposing forces.

"The National Guard is part of the total Army force and we have combat formations within our team ... so it's important that we give these organizations the opportunity to come out and go against world-class OPFOR to grow and train," said Lt. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, Director of the Army National Guard.

Kadavy said NTC training ensures combat units in the National Guard achieve the readiness levels required by the Army in order to meet the nation's demands.

The training simulated an expeditionary experience, allowing large units to 'deploy' together and work simultaneously. More than 5,200 Service Members participated in the training, including National Guard units form 10 states, 11 units from the U.S. Army Reserve, and three active-duty U.S. Army units.

"We rarely, if ever, get the opportunity to take all 4,000-plus Soldiers out and train together at one time," said Johnson. "The National Training Center is one of those rare resources in today's Army that allows us the opportunity to do that."

Tent cities, known as tactical assembly areas, peppered the desert terrain. Each unit had to maintain security of their location and react to any opposing forces that 'attacked' with simulated indirect or direct fires. Units conducted several tactical 'jumps' (packed up and moved to new locations) during the two-week training cycle in order to prevent the OPFOR from planning large-scale attacks.

"We don't get to do this type of training at our unit at home," said Oregon Army National Guard Spc. James Ross, of Grants Pass, Oregon, a gunner with the 1186th MP Company.

Spc. Jannalyn Farley, an Oregon college student from Yuma, California, with the 1186th MPs agreed, "A training like this only happens once in a lifetime."

All of the vehicles, weapon systems and Soldiers were fitted with a laser tag system, known as Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES). The laser system recorded "hits" appropriate for each weapon's capabilities during simulated attacks. When hits registered, Observer-Coach-Trainers (OCTs) in charge of testing the units at NTC would notionally disable vehicles and require simulated casualties to be evacuated to a medical aid station where medics practiced treating their wounds.

"It teaches you to think on your feet like you expect to do overseas," said Sgt. Erin Drews, of Oregon City, a team and assistant squad leader with the 1186th MPs.

Besides the ever-present 'enemy threat' at NTC, the unforgiving desert environment made every resource a crucial commodity; from food to fuel, water and ice, generators and equipment repair-parts. That's where support units had to flex their muscles in order to sustain the fighting force. Cooks are an integral part of keeping the force strong and ready for action.

Oregon Army National Guard cooks, Spc. Tristen Ayhens, from Baker City, Oregon, with F Company, 145th Brigade Support Battalion (BSB), 116th CBCT, and Spc. Katrina Goins, from Coos Bay, Oregon, with F Company, 141st BSB, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, worked to keep the Soldiers nutritionally ready for the mission.

"I like to see their faces when they have food," said Ayhens. "They are happy when they're eating."

In the field, cooks don't have fresh ingredients at their disposal to create a menu, or plumbing and electricity to operate a full kitchen. They use heat-and-eat meals, called Unitized Group Rations (UGRs), that come in containers packaged in boxes. The meals are warmed in a field kitchen housed on a trailer and powered by generators.

Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Pfc.Treyse Reber, M240 gunner with 1186th Military Police Company, provides security for his squad as they contemplate a route for their mission at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, Calif., August 23, during the second day of the force-on-force simulated battle between the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team and the 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Soldiers with A Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, race their M2A3 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle toward the opposing force (OPFOR) during force-on-force battle simulations at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., August 22.

Photo by Sgt. Anita VanderMolen, 115th MPAD

Spc. Sarah Kilby, of Portland, Oregon, with the HHD 821st Troop Command Battalion, and Pfc. Marcelina Deleon, of Medford, with F Company 145th Brigade Support Battalion, prepare heat-and-serve meals for Soldiers of A Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, during training, August 19, at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.

Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, 115th MPAD

Spc. Elliot Torres, an infantryman with 1st Platoon, B Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, shaves in the desert at the National Training Center, August 17.

Goins and Ayhens did what they could to bring smiles to the Soldiers of Charlie Company, 3-116th Cavalry Battalion. It's all about the little things that cooks do to boost morale.

"The Soldiers were really happy to have coffee this morning," said Goins. "They also really like PB and J."

In another tactical assembly area, Spc. Sarah Kilby, of Portland, Oregon, with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 821st Troop Command Battalion, and Pfc. Marcelina Deleon, of Medford, Oregon, with F Company, 145th BSB, worked to provide relief from the desert heat for Soldiers of Alpha Company, 3-116th Cavalry Battalion.

"They really liked it when we made tea," said Deleon. "We also have cold lemonade available."

The simulated deployment environment helps prepare Soldiers for a real world deployment; living in the field, developing team cohesion, and coping with environmental stressors. They lacked common amenities, such as a bed, electricity or even bathrooms.

"The troops have been great; high morale under very austere conditions," said Master Sgt. James Webb, with the 1186th. "They've risen to every challenge. I'm fantastically proud of each and every one of them."

The 1186th MP Company (based in Salem and Milton-Freewater, Oregon) contributed to the 116th CBCT's NTC training as a combat service and support unit. Many of the Soldiers in the MP unit are new and have never experienced a deployment.

"We are starting with the basic skill levels, solidifying discipline, developing more cohesive teams," said 1st Sgt. Misti Chastain, senior enlisted advisor for the 1186th. "We are also focusing on internal unit care, such as proper field hygiene, preventing heat casualties and maintaining and repairing vehicles."

The Oregon MPs trained alongside MPs from the Idaho Army National Guard's 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion during situational training exercises (STX). The MPs ran lanes focused on military intelligence, area security, explosive ordinance disposal, law enforcement, and training foreign national police. They kicked in doors, reviewed security processes and practiced combat lifesaving and medical evacuation skills.

"The biggest lesson we learned early on (at NTC) was communication," said Webb. "We don't get the opportunity to communicate on a daily basis being in the Guard, so having all of these days together to build on our skills and refine our communication process has truly paid dividends for us."

The Oregon Army National Guard's 3-116th Cavalry Battalion brought heavy metal to the armor fight as one of the 116th CBCT's combined arms battalions. The 3-116th (with companies based in Woodburn, Hood River, The Dalles, Hermiston, Pendleton, La Grande, Baker City and Ontario) was the first National Guard battalion in the nation certified on the U.S. Army's most advanced new armor equipment, the M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle and the Abrams M1A2 System Enhancement Program (version 2) main battle tank. Several years of training on their new equipment culminated with the 'big show' at NTC.

"The last two years, as far as our live-fire skills, we have ramped up and spent additional time to get qualification so we would have the opportunity to do company level live-fire," said Lt. Col. Brian Dean, of Salem, Oregon, commander of the 3-116th Cavalry Battalion. "You've got to shoot accurately, move tanks and communicate effectively."

The battalion's first test at NTC included combined arms live-fire exercises (CALFEX) with multiple 116th CBCT units firing different weapon systems in a synchronized effort; tanks, Bradleys, artillery, infantry and engineer units, as well as aviation support.

"This CALFEX is the opportunity for these Soldiers and leaders to maneuver under live-fire conditions with themselves and their enablers, to include live artillery rounds and live MICLICs (Mine Clearing Line Charges)," said Dean.

Oregon's 3-116th Battalion was the tip of the spear during the 116th CBCT's force-on-force simulated battles against an active-duty Army unit.

"The battalion defeated more than double its weight in opposing force combat troops, armor and equipment," said Dean.

Capt. Christopher Miller, commander of Charlie Company, 3-116th, said his unit defeated 90 percent of the 'bad guys' for the battalion in their first decisive action operation.

"The OCTs said they'd only seen one other company destroy as much OPFOR as we had," said Miller.

Oregon Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Patrick Kane, of Middleton, Idaho, a tank gunner with Charlie Company, 3-116th, said the OPFOR made the simulated battles challenging.

"They used camouflage and terrain very well," Kane said. "When they moved and used the terrain, it was difficult to pick them up."

Despite a well-trained OPFOR, Dean said the Soldiers did exceptionally well in an extremely challenging environment with a very difficult standard.

"We have proved we can accurately and effectively maneuver," said Dean. "We know we are good and also know we have room to improve."

Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

An M1A2 Abrams tank crew with D Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team, fires the 120mm main gun during a company live-fire exercise, August 16, at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.

FEATURES

Oregon enlists first female combat engineer in Army National Guard history

Story and photos by
Master Sgt. Nick Choy,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Oregon – Eighteen-year-old Mackenzie Clarke sits in the lobby of the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) in Portland, Oregon, with other recruits watching a DVD movie on a large screen television. She waits for her name to be called, as she passes the time alternating between texting a friend and occasionally looking over to an adjacent room crowded with several Oregon Army National Guard recruiters. The recruiters also wait to hear her name being paged, so they can join her for a swearing in ceremony.

Clarke and the Oregon Army National Guard are about to make national history.

The recent graduate of Clackamas High School has agreed to enlist as the Army National Guard's first female combat engineer (12B) – the first combat military occupational specialty (MOS) to be opened to female Soldiers by Army officials. The Pentagon officially lifted a ban on women in combat in January 2013, and the U.S. Army opened up the combat engineer MOS to females in April 2015.

According to Army officials, Soldiers in the 12B MOS learn a wide variety of tasks, including explosive demolitions to clear obstacles, operating heavy equipment, route and mine clearing, construction of fighting positions, and constructing bridges.

Over the building paging system comes the call, "Army National Guard applicant, Clarke, please report to the lobby."

Master Sgt. Mark Browning and Staff Sgt. Erin Meyers, of the Oregon Army National Guard Recruiting & Retention Battalion, promptly exit the room, and walk over to where Clarke was now standing.

"You ready for this?" Browning asks. Clarke responds with a smile.

Clarke, who lives in Damascus, Oregon, met the Army's qualification standards to enter training as a combat engineer, one of 14 combat-specific jobs that were previously exclusive to males.

According to Maj. Stephen Bomar, director of Public Affairs for the Oregon Military Department, combat engineers have been deployed around the world since the attacks of September 11, 2001.

"Although females have been in combat the entire time, this is the first combat arms job position open to them. Of course women have been deployed in harm's way, but not in that specific job," he said.

The Oregon Army National Guard's 1249th Engineer Battalion deployed to Afghanistan in 2011. Most recently, one of its subordinate companies returned in May 2015 from a nine-month deployment to Kuwait.

Mackenzie Clarke takes the oath of enlistment into the Oregon Army National Guard at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) in Portland, Oregon, June 24. The 18-year-old Clackamas High School graduate made national history as the Army National Guard's first female recruit to enlist as a combat engineer (12B).

Mackenzie Clarke (second from left) poses with members of the Oregon Army National Guard Recruiting & Retention Battalion following her oath of enlistment ceremony at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) in Portland, Oregon, June 24. From left to right are; Sgt. Dimitri Fenrick, Mackenzie Clarke, Staff Sgt. Erin Meyers and Master Sgt. Mark Browning.

According to Clarke, who scored very well on her military entrance exams, her enlistment into history almost didn't happen.

"I was disappointed when I realized my first choice was a male-only job," she said about the 12B MOS.

Recruiters offered her alternatives – welding, military police, masonry or cartography. Nothing appealed to Clarke. But timing was on her side. The combat engineer occupation opened up just as she was deciding between the alternatives.

"I wanted to do something worthwhile and interesting," Clarke said of her new military career path.

Clarke had some insight. She consulted her uncle, who is a Marine Corps veteran, and gained valuable advice on being a member of the military. Then, during a recent Skills USA competition held at Camp Withycombe in April 2015, she said she was motivated and excited about the different jobs available to Oregon's Soldiers, and was able to conduct hands-on training with Oregon Citizen-Soldiers as mentors and teachers.

"I had thought about the military for a long time, but I wasn't sure what branch to go into at the time," she said. "I wound up at the Skills USA competition and had a lot of fun."

Growing up, Clarke played with Legos. She liked building things, tearing them down and then rebuilding them again. With a knack for math and science, she had her sights set on being an engineer.

"They said I was going to blow stuff up, and I couldn't resist," Clarke said.

Meyers, who assisted Clarke in the enlistment process, said joining the military is no piece of cake. Add to this being a female, let alone the first female combat engineer. But Meyers was convinced Clarke was up to the challenge.

"I wouldn't put her in the job if I didn't think she was going to be good at it," Meyers said. "That includes the public scrutiny. She's just going to push forward no matter how tough things get."

Clarke said she never considered gender when considering her new role in the military. Throughout her life, her compass was always pointed toward activities she thought where new, interesting and worthwhile, she said.

"I don't think I've ever had a problem with gender stereotypes," Clarke said. "I've always done what I want and what I'm good at. I'm not afraid of what this is going to throw at me."

In a large, red-carpeted room festooned with flags representing the different military branches, Clarke prepared to officially enter the military with her oath of enlistment. U.S. Army Capt. Juliette Herman, executive officer at MEPS Portland, presided over the ceremony. Clarke raised her right hand and repeated the oath Herman dictated to her, as Browning and Meyers stood in the back of the room, smiling approvingly.

"I think this is great," Herman said about Clarke's enlistment following the ceremony. "It's a long time coming, if females want to do it, by all means we should be able to do it just like the men."

Clarke summed up the excitement about being the first female combat engineer in much the same fashion as she does with everything else in her life – with a relaxed, 'can-do' attitude.

"One thing that keeps going through my head about being the first … I'm going to be good at it whether I'm a girl or not," she said.

According to the Oregon Army National Guard Recruiting & Retention Battalion, Clarke is scheduled to attend the Recruit Sustainment Program at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon, until her tentative report date at Basic Combat Training in October. There, she'll join other Soldiers waiting to ship out to basic training to do physical fitness and learn rank structure, basic drill and ceremony, land navigation, rappelling, rifle marksmanship and other Soldier skills.

"I think this is fantastic," Browning said. "We do our best to set up our recruits to be successful at basic training, and we are going to give Clarke every opportunity to succeed in her military career."

For anyone interested in a career in the Oregon Army National Guard, Clarke had some simple advice.

"You should talk to all the different branches and find out which is the best fit for you, then look at the different jobs and pick your favorite," she said.

Clarke certainly didn't settle for anything less than her favorite choice when she signed up to become a combat engineer.

Cadet becomes OSU's first female officer to branch into combat arms

Above: 2nd Lt. Deanna Holliman's family pins on her new rank as she commissions into the Oregon Army National Guard as a field artillery officer during an ROTC graduation ceremony at Oregon State University, Sept. 18.

Left: 2nd Lt. Deanna Holliman renders her first salute as an officer to Sgt. 1st Class Travis Parker, military science instructor for OSU-Cascades, Sept. 18.

Story and photos by
Christopher L. Ingersoll,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

CORVALLIS, Oregon – Second Lieutenant Deanna Holliman became the first female Oregon State University (OSU) Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) graduate in the Oregon Army National Guard to branch into combat arms during a graduation and commissioning ceremony for U.S. Army ROTC cadets at OSU, Sept. 18.

Holliman chose to pursue a career as a field artillery officer (13A). She will be assigned to 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Oregon Army National Guard.

Holliman was unaware that she was making Oregon history until she was told just before the commissioning ceremony. She said her motivation for joining the Oregon Army National Guard was the appeal of work that is out of the ordinary.

"There are some jobs in the military that didn't appeal to me because I could do the same thing as a civilian," she said, wearing cross cannons on her dress uniform. "Those type of jobs are not why I wanted to go into the military. Field artillery seemed different and unique."

Originally from Bend, Oregon, Holliman's mother, Bonda Powell, said her daughter has always been a strong woman and is not surprised to see her making history in a strong career.

In March 2014, the U.S. Army opened approximately 1,900 field artillery officer positions to women in the active component, and 1,700 in the Guard and Reserve. More recently, in August 2015, the Army announced plans to open all but one field artillery position to enlisted women, with the exception of the fire support specialist (13F) military occupational specialty (MOS). This decision will open positions such as cannon crewmember (13B) and field artillery automated tactical data system specialist (13D) to enlisted females.

These are the latest changes in an ongoing campaign to phase out the Direct Ground Combat Assignment Rule.

FEATURES

Teaching new tricks to the oldest field artillery unit in the West

Soldiers with Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, prepare to attach an M119A2 Howitzer to a CH-47 F-Model Chinook helicopter during an artillery training mission, Operation Thunderstruck, June 20, at the Yakima Training Center near Yakima, Washington. The artillery training mission was the first of its kind to be executed in the history of the Oregon Army National Guard.

1st Lt. Justin Phelps, 2nd Platoon leader with Alpha Battery, 2-218th Field Artillery Battalion, hooks an M119A2 Howitzer to the undercarriage of a CH-47 F-Model Chinook helicopter during an artillery training mission June 20, at the Yakima Training Center in Washington.

Story and photos by Capt. Leslie Reed, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

YAKIMA, Washington – It took well over a year of planning, but only seven minutes for Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers to fire the M119A2 Howitzer cannons following their first air insertion mission using aviation assets.

Soldiers of Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment, conducted Operation Thunderstruck during their annual training, June 20, at the Yakima Training Center near Yakima, Washington. It was the Oregon Army National Guard's first dual training mission of this kind: a sling load mission followed by an artillery raid. It involved moving four Howitzers using CH-47 Chinook F-Model helicopters in two chalks or iterations.

For the Soldiers and command team of Alpha Battery, 2-218th Field Artillery Battalion, it raised the stakes a lot higher than their normal training, according to the unit commander, Capt. Andrew Christoson.

"It definitely put the pressure on … everybody's watching you," he said. "It's the first time we've ever done anything like this and now we have an audience. Stress is high."

As part of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, a light infantry brigade, the 2-218th Field Artillery Battalion has light Howitzers, M119A2s. The cannons are capable of a range of up to 14 kilometers and are often used to specifically destroy targets in areas with difficult terrain. The ability for artillery assets to be dropped into an area with helicopters is a crucial skill that gives the battalion far better reach to support the brigade. One example is the mountainous terrain found in Afghanistan.

"If we are unable to get to a specific terrain area ourselves, due to terrain features, we can use air assets to transport us there," Christoson explained.

A total of nine Soldiers from Alpha Battery were sent to the Air Assault course, May 30 - June 14, at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center, in Warrenton, Oregon, to become qualified for these types of air insertion missions. The Oregon National Guard has played host to the Air Assault course since 2004.

Staff Sgt. Adam Fodge, Howitzer section chief for Gun One, 1st Platoon, Alpha Battery, 2-218th Field Artillery Battalion, slides a cover over the barrel of his team's M119A2 Howitzer to prepare it for sling load during an artillery training mission, June 20, at the Yakima Training Center in Washington. Alpha Battery will celebrate its 150th anniversary this coming February and is one of the oldest artillery batteries east of the Mississippi River.

"This is the kind of stuff that Soldiers join the Army for and we can't get this stuff without schools, training and the equipment," he said.

Sgt. William McKnight, an ammo team chief, recalls the preparatory training he was involved with, months ahead of the actual mission.

"I mainly assisted other Air Assault qualified Soldiers, preparing power point slides for classes, going over the characteristics of various helicopters, practicing rigging and unloading sling loads," McKnight said. "It was a nice surprise to actually start to use the training and an even greater surprise to do the mission."

Air Assault personnel were also responsible for guiding the aircraft in with hand and arm signals, performing and supervising the slings, and acting as the hook-up crew for the helicopter.

A team of five personnel is necessary to attach the M119A2 Howitzers. One person connects what is referred to as the "dog bone" or static probe to the underside of the helicopter, while three Soldiers provide support. A fifth Soldier stands at the ready, providing backup in case the Soldier with the static probe falls due to strong gusts of wind known as "rotor wash" coming down from the helicopter rotors. At the same time, the Chinook's crew chief observes the situation on the ground through the cargo-hold door (a hatch that opens from the helicopter floor) and gives direction to the pilots.

"The main thing is to make sure we have the Howitzer tied up quickly," McKnight said. "There are some shiny surfaces on the Howitzer that can't get scratched for any reason, otherwise it could be dead-lined."

Dead-lined would mean that the Howitzer becomes inoperative or would be damaged and unsafe for further use. Soldiers ensured that important parts of the Howitzers were covered-up to avoid damage.

Christoson said the most difficult part of supervising the mission was ensuring all the sling loads were inspected properly and that everybody was safe.

"Safety is probably the biggest challenge and my biggest concern," he said. "If we're not safe, than the mission is not a success."

One of the game changers during the operation was not relying on trucks to pull the Howitzers. The gun crews would be traveling by air with their gun attached below. They had to make necessary adjustments ahead of time and ensure they had all the proper tools they would need.

A gun crew consists of seven Soldiers, a gun chief plus six additional Soldiers who are assigned as ammo chief and gunners. During the training mission, each gun crew fired four rounds with high explosive shells, point-detonating fuses, and charge three. The fuse initiates an explosion, through a series of sensitive explosive material, also known as an explosive train, causing the round to produce the desired effect. The charge, which can range from one to seven, refers to the propellant, which pushes the projectile or round to the target, destroying it on impact.

Spc. Joel Reyes, an ammo team chief, was specifically responsible for preparing the rounds, "…making sure when chief calls for a round, that I have it ready and we are able to fire that round."

That includes making sure they have the right charge, the right fuse and that they are firing the right shell. All of which is critical in effectively putting the artillery on its intended target.

The F-Model Chinook, piloted by Chief Warrant Officer-4 Don Ford and Chief Warrant Officer-2 Anthony Ives, both of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, is a new model of the CH-47 helicopter. The Oregon Army National Guard owns several older model CH-47s, but only has one of the new F-Models and anticipates receiving two more. Oregon Guard helicopter pilots across the state are currently undergoing training to become qualified on the newer aircraft, which have updated electronics and cargo loading systems.

"It pretty much flies itself between point A and point B with a 50-foot hover," said Sgt. Jeremy Maddox, flight engineer with Bravo Company, 1- 168th Aviation.

The helicopter used specifically for this artillery mission was borrowed from California for training purposes.

"What's cool about this mission is that it gives us the training, but also gives aviation their training," Christoson said. "They are preparing for a deployment and sling loading is part of their certification. So it was a success on both ends."

McKnight agreed, "The more we work together, the more we serve as one team."

Reyes, who has been in the battalion for nearly five years, said the mission was a huge morale booster.

"This is a totally new experience for most of us," he said. "There are a couple of people here and there that have done it in the past, but overall this is a new experience for the whole unit. This shows great trust in what we have done in the past, and now we are able to build upon it."

Sling loading and air assaulting Howitzers is not the only training on Alpha Battery's dream wish list. The unit's senior enlisted Soldier, 1st Sgt. Richard Parker, said they want to start utilizing more of their high tech equipment, such as the RQ-11 Raven – a lightweight Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), designed to conduct low-altitude reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition.

"We have Ravens we want to start adding to our arsenal," said Parker. "We'd like to send people to Raven school, which we are already working on, and utilize them to do recon missions for us. It helps save Soldiers, plus gives us an eye in the sky."

As the unit looks towards the future, they are also marking their past. Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment, will celebrate its 150th anniversary in February 2016. With a lineage that began in 1866, it is said to be the oldest artillery battery west of the Mississippi River.

1st Sgt. Richard Parker, with Alpha Battery, 2-218th Field Artillery Battalion, assists in directing a CH-47 F-Model Chinook helicopter to sling load an M119A2 Howitzer during an artillery training mission, June 20, at the Yakima Training Center in Washington. Nine Soldiers earned Air Assault qualification at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon, to support the artillery battalion's air insertion missions.

FEATURES

Military and civilian first responders partner in joint disaster response exercise

Idaho Air National Guard Capt. Jonathon Miller, with the 124th Fighter Wing Medical Group, and Oregon Army National Guard Capt. Amy Kerfoot (right) lift a simulated casualty during the Pathfinder-Minuteman 2015 Exercise, August 5, at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon. The event is a joint multi-agency, multi-state disaster preparedness exercise based on response to a possible Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. Officials believe the Northwest is overdue for a magnitude 7.0 or greater earthquake and subsequent tsunami.

Story and photos by
Tech. Sgt. John Hughel,
142nd Fighter Wing

WARRENTON, Oregon – Oregon Air and Army National Guard members were among more than 250 participants that took part in the Pathfinder-Minuteman 2015 training exercise at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon, August 4-5. Pathfinder-Minuteman is an annual joint multi-agency, multi-state disaster response exercise.

Military personnel from U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), Air National Guard from six states, the U.S. Air Force Reserve, and the U.S. Coast Guard joined forces with civilian organizations, such as State Emergency Registry of Volunteers in Oregon (SERV-OR), and state and county agencies to simulate a coordinated response to a Cascadia Subduction Zone disaster.

The year's Pathfinder-Minuteman training exercise was sponsored by Oregon's Joint Force Headquarters and hosted by the 173rd Fighter Wing's Medical Group. Other participating Oregon National Guard units included the 142nd CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP), 142nd Force Support Squadron, 125th Special Tactics Squadron, Oregon Army National Guard Medical Command, and Oregon Army National Guard aviation units from Pendleton and Salem.

The exercise was designed to replicate a post-earthquake and subsequent tsunami environment with casualties in need of immediate medical treatment. Officials believe the Pacific Northwest is overdue for a magnitude 7.0 or greater earthquake due to the Cascadia Subduction Zone – an area that extends along the Pacific coastline from California to Vancouver, British Columbia.

"In a Cascadia Subduction Zone event, security and medical forces will be critical elements of the initial response," said Col. Kristen Leist, 173rd Medical Group Commander. "Pathfinder-Minuteman is an opportunity for military and civilian responders to build relationships as well as train together and learn each other's capabilities. This type of training and networking opportunity will provide a more seamless medical response when called upon."

Military members worked side-by-side with their civilian counterparts in 12-member teams. The teams were organized to have a variety of skills in each group, to include specialists in search and rescue, medical personnel and other key first responders.

The teams accomplished two scenarios during the day to find and rescue simulated causalities, and provide immediate medical care and recovery. A key aspect of the training was ascertaining a common language between team members while integrating skill sets during the search and recovery process.

Overseeing rescue operations from the joint operations center, Lt. Col. John Graver, 304th Rescue Squadron commander, said that working with others in a training environment not only helps focus resources but also enhances communication abilities.

"When a disaster strikes, no one group or agency can do it all," he said. "So why wait until game day? In these [training] events we are learning a common language between group members while building relationships and incorporating vital skills sets."

As the exercise began, participants explored various designated training areas at Camp Rilea including Slusher Lake, a mock village known as the MOUT (Military Operations in Urban Terrain) Site, and a large purpose-built rubble pile designed to simulate a collapsed structure.

Three separate scenarios began to emerge as the exercise unfolded. The first involved a water rescue and drowning victim recovery in Slusher Lake. An air crew with the U.S. Coast Guard's Air Station Astoria assisted with hoist operations using an HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter, while members of the Oregon Air National Guard's 125th Special Tactics Squadron (STS) provided the water recovery and search teams on the ground.

The second scenario focused on house-to-house searches for injured victims at the MOUT Site, while the third training scenario involved teams locating and rescuing victims trapped in vehicles and simulated collapsed buildings at the rubble pile.

"The fortunate part of doing a morning and afternoon exercise is that we can learn from the mistakes from the first half and in the second half play a little better," said Graver.

Working in concert with the military was the Oregon Disaster Medical Team (OMDT), led by Dr. Jon Jiu, a professor at the Oregon Health Science University, Portland, Oregon.

Jiu described how he joined the ODMT in 2000 when his friend, Dr. Helen Miller, 'twisted his arm' to join, "Nine months later 9/11 happened," he said.

Staying prepared is never too far from Jiu's mind even in light of recent reports of a possible devastating earthquake for the region.

"We have been focused on this training for over five years, so it is not like we are just now beginning the process," Jiu said.

Jiu said in the past several years these exercises have continued to grow and become more complicated as areas to improve and shortcomings are identified and built into subsequent training scenarios.

"This is a full scale exercise from start to finish and requires both the military and civilians to do the job," Jiu said. "Certainly having the military with search and rescue capabilities and air evacuation assets are critical to having our doctors and medical teams treat the injured."

Jiu echoed Graver's assessments about the training for Pathfinder-Minuteman 2015, and emphasized how communication is the common thread.

"Honestly, understanding each others capabilities and the abilities on how to work together is the most important aspect of this type of training," he said.

Many of the participants live in the local area and would be susceptible to the hazards of a tsunami following a major earthquake.

Corinne Bechet, from Manzanita, Oregon, played the role of a diabetic patient who had missed two dialysis treatments and was suffering weakness. Later on that day, she role-played as someone who had suffered burns from a house fire. Having done this training over the past three years, she said she understands the importance to the overall objective.

"It's very important to know what to do because we live in an earthquake place, I already have a bag ready to go at home," she said.

Knowing the risks, Bechet weighs the pros and the cons of living in a tsunami zone.

"The beach is my medicine, I run every morning with my dogs," she said. "I am more and more prepared, and the more training and awareness allows me to feel at ease with nature's uncertainty."

Previously a caregiver and medical provider, the roles were reversed for Oregon Air National Guard Senior Airman Melinda Duran, who is a trained medic with the 173rd Fighter Wing's Medical Group. She said reversing her role to play a casualty gave her a renewed understanding of what a patient would experience in a natural catastrophe.

"I guess I did not realize how complicated it was to get someone out of a fallen building," Duran said. "It took six people to drag me on a skid through a series of holes. Now I know the things a patient will experience by the things that hurt me in the extrication process."

Duran begins medical school soon, but will continue to participate in this type of training and hopes to draw upon the experience from these exercises. She sees the benefits for all parties to constantly improve understanding, efficiency and readiness.

"Communication is huge. It was the biggest issue today, especially across the different services with civilian and military. It probably was my biggest takeaway from the training," she said.

Air National Guard members assist a survivor out of a simulated collapsed structure during a disaster response exercise, August 5, at Camp Rilea.

Testing the steps that it took to find, recover and move patients put into play all of the preparation that Graver and Jiu established before this year's exercise.

"Victims were found, teams were sent to triage to treat them, they were flown on hypothetical helicopters (pickup trucks) all the way to casualty collection points," said Graver. "We accomplish all of that in this exercise. We are trying to standardize the information flow so we can do the 'best for the most' when we find victims in these situations."

Graver said the learning will continue even after the last tents and radios are packed up. All participants received packets during the start of the exercise, and are encouraged to share their experiences and feedback, which will be used in future training exercises.

"They can give us their thoughts and offer other vital information so we can regenerate substantial knowledge going forward," Graver said.

First responders prepare a simulated child victim for medical evacuation during the Pathfinder-Minuteman 2015 Exercise, August 5, at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon. Military personnel worked in concert with civilian agencies to coordinate disaster response.

A U.S. Coast Guard HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter, from Air Station Astoria, retrieves a rescue diver from Slusher Lake during the Pathfinder-Minuteman 2015 Exercise, August 5, at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon.

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

How to prepare for the Big One, a cascadia subduction zone event

Story by Althea Rizzo, Oregon Office of Emergency Management

Over the past 10,000 years, there have been 41 earthquakes on the Cascadia Subduction Zone, a 600 mile long earthquake fault stretching from offshore northern California to southern British Columbia. In the event of a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, the devastation would extend from the coast to the Cascade Range, from northern California to British Columbia. The resulting earthquake could be similar to the magnitude 9 earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in March 2011. All of this was covered very thoroughly by the excellent New Yorker article "The Really Big One" by Kathryn Schulz, perhaps too well.

The article which came out earlier in August has led to a great deal of conversation and consternation on the part of the public. Emergency management agencies have seen an uptick in the number of inquiries from panicked people wanting to know if Oregon will be swallowed by a 600-foot tsunami. The short answer is no. And the long answer is no. The truth is that yes, Oregon and the entire Pacific Northwest will be impacted for years to come after a Cascadia event. It is also true that there is a lot that families and communities can do to prepare for a major earthquake in Oregon.

Guidance from the Oregon Office of Emergency Management says that families and communities should be prepared to be self-reliant for two weeks after Cascadia. It simply could be that long before relief efforts can reach some areas of the state. Many of our first responders will also be victims of the disaster, meaning our normal support system will not be fully functioning.

But the situation is not hopeless. Despite the bleak picture illustrated in the New Yorker article, there is so much that can be done to prepare for disasters. It starts by talking about it with your family, friends, coworkers, teachers, neighbors, the guy at the coffee shop … basically with just about everyone. It will take all of us working towards this goal to make it work. Start small with a conversation tonight around the dinner table, or on Facebook with your friends and family. This action doesn't cost any money and can be accomplished today. It's a start.

Your next step could be to establish a friends and family network. Designate one person, preferably east of the Mississippi, to be your central point of contact. Put their contact information into your mobile phone under the name "1EQ_Contact". While you may not be able to call out of an affected area, you may be able to text that you are ok.

Once you have contacted your emergency contact, go to a pre-designated meeting place. This should be well known to everyone in your friends and family network. Practice walking there from different starting points, because you never know where you will be when an earthquake happens. It is very likely that you will not be able to drive after an earthquake due to road damage. Think about alternate routes if the bridges over rivers are down. Make back-up plans. These actions don't cost any money but will do a great deal to make you better prepared. The next steps involve gathering the equipment and supplies you will need to camp out in your own house for weeks. Oregon is fortunate to have a culture that loves the outdoors, so many are already more prepared than they may realize. It is just a matter of taking it one step at a time.

Take the time to pull out that old camping gear and see what you have and what needs to be replaced. Remember that earthquakes can happen at any time of the year, so plan for both hot and cold weather. Think through what your family will need, because it is individual and unique to each. Do you have pets? Do you have elders in your family that might need extra care? Children? Everyone should be included in the planning and preparedness efforts to make sure everyone's needs are met.

The importance of preparing your family to be self-sufficient can't be overstated. We all saw the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and how people left the area to go to massive evacuation centers out of the impacted area. You don't want to be one of those unprepared families disbursed out of the region. You can take control and take the steps necessary to make sure your family is safe and well after Cascadia.

You can also be a part of the world's largest Drop, Cover, and Hold On earthquake drill on October 15, 2015. The Great Oregon ShakeOut is a great opportunity to get everyone in Oregon thinking about earthquake preparedness. Join the millions of others practicing in the drill. You can find more information at www.shakeout.org/Oregon.

Photo by Cory E. Grogan, Oregon Office of Emergency Management

Brig. Gen. Mike Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, discusses the necessity of preparedness for individuals and families at the Cascadia Playbook rollout event, Sept. 15. The playbook supports various plans and efforts for the first 14-days of a catastrophic incident, including a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami.

Oregon coast residents Race the Wave, a tsunami awareness event

Story and photo by Cory E. Grogan, Oregon Office of Emergency Management

The 2nd annual Race the Wave run, walk or roll returned to Cannon Beach, Sept. 13. The event provided an energetic, easy way to prepare for a large tsunami that will be caused by a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. Race the Wave began along the beach before following a scenic evacuation route through the city, and ending out of the tsunami inundation zone at the supply cache containers.

A post-race preparedness fair featured grilled hot dogs, games, emergency preparedness giveaways, preparedness displays and more. This year's event also included a one-mile preparedness walk/roll along a fully paved evacuation route.

"This will offer a chance for everyone to practice," said Justin Ross Emergency Preparedness Program Coordinator Oregon Office on Disability and Health. "The one mile course is free and great for those interested in walking a shorter distance as well as people with limited mobility."

Oregon Office of Emergency Management Director Andrew Phelps. says that the underlaying principle of the vent is preparedness.

"Knowing and practicing evacuation routes is a simple way to become more prepared for a tsunami or any emergency that could impact your community," said Phelps. "This is a fun way to address a serious topic, and I am excited to support this unique preparedness initiative because we know activities like this could save lives when a disaster happens."

Being able to move quickly to high ground is critical because a tsunami caused by a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake will hit the Oregon coast in as little as 15 minutes. The earthquake will be the only warning that a tsunami is about to arrive.

Oregon Congresswoman Susanne Bonamici, who participated in last year's Race the Wave, said she is making it a priority to be there again this year.

"We need to increase awareness about the unique risks tsunami pose to our coastlines and educate people about how to respond when there is an emergency. Race the Wave is a great way for residents and visitors to practice tsunami evacuation routes and learn more about what they can do to prepare their families and their communities. The event is the result of a fantastic partnership among federal, state, and local agencies and organizations, and I hope Race the Wave will continue to grow and spread to other coastal communities in the future."

Race the Wave was supported by the community of Cannon Beach, Cannon Beach Children's Center, Clatsop County Office of Emergency Management, Oregon Office of Emergency Management, Oregon Office on Disability & Health at Oregon Health & Science University, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region X office, and DOGAMI.

U.S. Representative Suzanne Bonamici addresses "Race the Wave" participants in front of supply cache containers during the tsunami evacuation fun-run, Sept. 28. The run highlights local preparedness accomplishments in the city of Cannon Beach and Clatsop County to raise awareness about the Cascadia Subduction Zone threat.

Are you prepared for emergencies?

Being prepared means being equipped with the proper supplies you may need in the event of an emergency or disaster. Keep your supplies in an easy-to-carry emergency preparedness kit that you can use at home or take with you in case you must evacuate.

For more information, or to build a kit, visit the Red Cross website at:
www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family/get-kit

Be a survivor, not a statistic!

OREGON AIR NATIONAL GUARD

123rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron trains with Romanian air force

Story and photos by
Senior Airman Dylan Nuckolls,
52nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

CAMPIA TURZII, Romania – U.S. Air Force Airmen from the 142nd Fighter Wing, Oregon Air National Guard, Portland, Oregon, are conducting training with the Romanian air force as part of a Theater Security Package (TSP) of F-15C Eagle fighter aircraft deployed to Campia Turzii, Romania.

More than 200 Airmen from various active duty and Air National Guard (ANG) units comprise the 123rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron (EFS), which is serving in the TSP as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve. In response to Russia's actions in Ukraine, Operation Atlantic Resolve is a visible demonstration of U.S. commitment to the collective security and stability of Europe and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies in the region.

A Romanian MiG-21 fighter aircraft takes off during the 2015 Campia Turzii Air Show, July 19, at Campia Turzii, Romania. The air show celebrated the Romanian air force's birthday and had static displays of aircraft, tanks and military equipment.

"Our mission in Romania is to support Operation Atlantic Resolve," said Oregon Air National Guard Lt. Col. Sean Sullivan, 123rd EFS commander. "It is to show the United States' dedication to security, stability and peace in Europe and to work on interoperability with our NATO allies."

The 123rd EFS took over as the lead unit of the TSP from the 159th EFS from the 125th Fighter Wing, Florida Air National Guard, Jacksonville, Fla. The 159th EFS arrived in Europe in March with 12 F-15Cs to start the ANG TSP in the European theater.

"The U.S. Air Force's forward presence in Europe, augmented by a rotational force like the TSP, allows us to work with our allies to develop and improve ready air forces capable of maintaining regional security," said U.S. Air Force Gen. Frank Gorenc, U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa (USAFE-AFAFRICA) commander, in a news release.

The TSP deployments are not new to the Air Force as fighter squadrons have been deploying like this to the Pacific region since 2004.

"It is very important for us to exercise that capability with our NATO allies, and I think we can all benefit from this experience," said U.S. ANG Maj. Gen. Eric Vollmecke, ANG assistant to the USAFE-AFAFRICA commander, in a news release concerning the 159th EFS deployment to Leeuwarden Air Base, Netherlands. "Our NATO allies are very capable aviators and have great air forces. There are many things we can learn from them, especially from their innovation. They may not have the resources that the U.S. has, but they have done an incredible job of maintaining an impressive level of readiness."

Two U.S. Air National Guard F-15C Eagle fighter aircraft assigned to the 123rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron and two Romanian MiG-21 fighter aircraft fly over a flightline in formation during the 2015 Campia Turzii Air Show, July 19, at CampiaTurzii, Romania. More than 200 Airmen from the 142nd Fighter Wing, Oregon Air National Guard, trained with the Romanian air force as part of a Theater Security Package deployed to Romania.

An F-15C Eagle fighter aircraft assigned to the 123rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron takes off from the runway, July 21, at Campia Turzii, Romania. The U.S. Air Force's forward presence in Europe allows cooperation among NATO allies and partners to develop and improve ready air forces capable of maintaining regional security.

173rd Fighter Wing hosts Sentry Eagle air-to-air exercise, open house

Story by Tech. Sgt. Jefferson Thompson,
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Oregon – The 173rd Fighter Wing hosted six fighter squadrons and a tanker unit at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, for the 15th Sentry Eagle multi-force exercise, July 30-August 2.

Sentry Eagle is the Air National Guard's largest air-to-air exercise, providing military pilots of the active and Reserve components a forum to test their flying skills, including air-to-air combat tactics against different types of aircraft, as well as large force employment training.

"This exercise is a fantastic opportunity for different fighter squadrons across the country to take advantage of our exceptional airspace, weather, and hospitality and allow the pilots to train as they would fight in combat," said Col. Kirk Pierce, 173rd Fighter Wing commander. "Sentry Eagle allows units to set the objectives of the exercise to meet their unit's training objectives."

Sentry Eagle 2015 marked a nearly 30-year-span for the exercise featuring dissimilar air combat techniques among fighter airframes. The exercise drew units from as far away as South Carolina and included units from Arizona, Texas, and California and aircraft from U.S. Naval Air Station Lemoore. More than 40 fighter aircraft and two tankers participated this year, including F-15s, F-16s, F-18s, and KC-135s.

Photo by Scott Wolff, Fightersweep.com

A U.S. Navy FA-18 Super Hornet breaks from formation with Kingsley and Fresno F-15 aircraft, August 1, during the Sentry Eagle 2015 exercise, hosted at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Sentry Eagle featured more than 40 aircraft, including F-15s, F-16s, F-18s and KC-135s, in the Air National Guard's largest air-to-air training exercise.

"Sentry Eagle 2015 was a huge tactical success for all of the participating units, preparing them for the battlefield we may encounter in the future," said Maj. Victor Knill, the assistant project officer for the exercise.

Photo by Scott Wolff, Fightersweep.com

Fighter aircraft from three units converge on a KC-135 tanker from Washington state, August 1, during the Sentry Eagle 2015 exercise, hosted by the 173rd Fighter Wing at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

Knill said among the various scenarios, units faced-up against an outnumbered, realistic enemy air threat. Additionally they practiced defensive counter-air, or protecting something from an enemy air strike, and offensive counter-air where they escorted a strike force to eliminate a defended target.

Bringing the exercise to fruition required the fuel shop to pump more than 1-million gallons of fuel, the maintenance group to coordinate ramp space for all the visiting aircraft, and the 270th Air Traffic Control Squadron to orchestrate launch and recovery of 1,128 arrivals and departures for the four days of Sentry Eagle.

"That is close to triple our normal operating tempo," said Doug Cunningham, the air traffic manager.

The tower brought in extra people in order to accommodate this high traffic time, as did many base organizations. Fuels added an entire extra shift to help cover everything from fueling more than 50 aircraft to receiving 12-14 delivery tankers daily to maintain enough fuel for another day of flying.

Master Sgt. Eddie Gibson, the fuels shop superintendent, said they received and delivered 1.3-million gallons of fuel for the exercise.

Additionally, parking for all of the visiting aircraft takes precise planning. Maintenance troops created an alternate pattern utilizing closer spacing, stored a number of resident Kingsley jets that didn't fly in the exercise, and worked closely with operations to coordinate traffic flow.

Photo by Master Sgt. Jennifer Shirar, 173rd FW PA

Members of the community watch as 173rd Fighter Wing F-15 crew chiefs launch an F-15 Eagle during the open house held in conjunction with the Sentry Eagle 2015 exercise at Kingsley Field, August 1.

Photo by Senior Airman Penny Snoozy, 173rd FW PA

Members of the community watch a jet take off during the open house held in conjunction with the Sentry Eagle 2015 exercise at Kingsley Field, August 1.

"Setting up the parking is the most difficult part, you have to get out and physically measure the spaces; we are literally down to the foot for parking these aircraft," said Master Sgt. Bryan Johnson, the lead maintenance expediter for Sentry Eagle.

Another feature of the exercise, since its inception 30 years ago, is an open house where the public was welcomed to the base for most of the day on Saturday to observe the large number of aircraft launching and departing, as well as a festival-like atmosphere surrounding the flight line.

"We had static displays, a climbing wall, and some really interactive displays set up for the community and we estimate 10-thousand people visited the base for the open house," said Master Sgt. Jennifer Shirar, 173rd FW public affairs manager.

Organizers hope to host the next Sentry Eagle at Kingsley Field in 2017.