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# Oregon Sentinel

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

## Oregon Celebrates 150 years of statehood

*Citizen-soldiers, airmen, VIPs join festivities looking back to 1859*



Photo courtesy Lt. Col. Alisha Hamel

Lt. Col. Alisha Hamel and her husband Edward wear period dress during the celebration. Hamel's 1859 ball gown is an authentic dress made by Marge Harding, a clothing historian at the Ermatinger House in Oregon City. It is made of silk and worn with a hoop. Hamel is the 150 Special Projects Officer, and as such was one of the ball organizers. She is also an historian for the Oregon National Guard.



Maj. Wyatt Welch of the Oregon National Guard wears a Civil War period Cavalry Uniform and his wife Gina also wears an antebellum dress which is accurate for the year 1859 when Oregon joined the union. Photo by Capt. Richard Paetz.

Story compiled by Oregon Sentinel staff  
Oregon Military Department



SALEM, Ore. -- Valentines Day saw more than one thousand people celebrate the 150th anniversary of Oregon's statehood at an event in Salem.

The 1859-themed party at the Salem Convention Center also coincided with the Oregon National Guard's Senior Leader's Conference and annual Military Ball, which was attended by many Oregon National Guard members and their spouses.

Oregon Governor, Theodore R. Kulongoski, and First Lady, Ms. Mary Oberst, the Chair of the Oregon 150 Committee, were also in attendance.

"Both Valentine's Day and the sesquicentennial remind us of the power of hope, the power of doing for others, and the power of love," Kulongoski said. "So make 2009 a joyous year of celebration and a year dedicated to service."

Kulongoski added that this celebration kicks off eight more months of celebrations ending on Labor Day, Sept. 7.

Senior leaders of the Oregon National Guard attending the sesquicentennial celebration, included Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, The Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Bruce Prunk, Commander, Oregon Air

See 150th on PAGE 3

## City of Gresham thanks Guard for emergency assistance

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy  
Oregon Military Department  
Public Affairs Office



Oregon Army National Guard members pose with Gresham Police Officers during what many called the worst storm to hit the region in many years.

GRESHAM, Ore. -- The City of Gresham honored 29 Oregon Army National Guard soldiers on Feb. 3 for their assistance during the recent severe winter storms.

Gresham Mayor Shane T. Bemis presided over the ceremony at the council meeting in the city hall's chambers. Bemis read a proclamation to the Oregon Army National Guard's 141st Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) Executive Officer, Maj. Dan Morris, as a number of the unit's soldiers and their family members watched.

"On behalf of our citizens of Gresham, we express our deep appreciation for the men and women of the Oregon National Guard," the mayor stated in front of the standing-room only crowd.

Morris then presented Bemis with a 141st Brigade Support Battalion coin on behalf of Lt. Col. Brian James, the battalion's commander.

"I'm very proud of my guys," Morris said. "I've heard nothing but praise."

The unit's members were placed on state active duty to assist emergency responders in reaching snow-bound citizens during heavy snow and ice storms from Dec. 22-27, 2008.

The unit provided six Humvees and drivers to assist police and emergency medical technicians in getting to Gresham citizens in snowbound neighborhoods where the average emergency response vehicles were incapable of operating in the icy conditions.

Gresham Police Chief Craig Junginger said the heavy snow prevented access to about half of the entire City of Gresham.

"When you're tasked with providing law enforcement to the community and you can't do it because you lack the resources, it's a bit disconcerting," he said. "We were really in a crisis. So, when I saw those

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## Gates: 'Guard's domestic missions must not suffer'

Story by Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke  
National Guard Bureau

WASHINGTON -- The National Guard's domestic responsibilities must not suffer because of operational missions, Defense Secretary Robert Gates told the Senate Armed Services Committee Jan. 27.

"The demand for Guard support of civil authorities here at home remains high," Gates said in a statement to the committee. "For example, the 'man-days' that Guardsmen have spent fighting fires, performing rescue and recovery, and other duties increased by almost 60 percent in 2008 as compared to 2007."

To compensate, the DoD has "substantially increased" support for the Guard and Reserve, which for decades had been considered a low priority for equipment, training and readiness.

"Today, the standard is that the Guard and Reserves receive the same equipment as the active force," Gates said. "For FY 2009, the base budget request included \$6.9 billion to continue to replace and repair the National Guard's equipment."

Gates said the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve, a panel created by Congress four years ago, has also helped to ensure that both reserve components are better trained, manned, and



Photo by Cherie Cullen, National Guard Bureau

Defense Secretary Robert Gates testifies before the Senate Armed Services Committee Jan. 27, about an increase in National Guard domestic support missions and leveling down of reserve-component deployments. Gates wore his jacket halfway on due to surgery on his arm.

equipped for this new era.

"We have taken, or are taking, action on more than 80 percent of the commission's recommendations," Gates said.

For example, the panel suggested a combined pay and personnel system to fix problems that arise when Guard and Reserve members shift from the reserve pay system to the active-duty system. Gates said DoD is now launching that integrated system.

Shortly after he became the secretary of defense, Gates implemented mobilization policies that are more predictable and conducive to unit cohesion.

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## COMMAND

## Make safety a priority in the Year of the NCO



**Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees,**  
Adjutant General,  
Oregon National  
Guard

At the Oregon National Guard Association Conference in February, General Peter W. Chiarelli, the Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, spoke about the year of the non-commissioned officer and the role they play in the success of the Army.

In his talk, he stated Oregon had the best Command Sergeant Major in the entire army; State Command Sergeant Major Brunk Conley. We are fortunate to have such a fine leader here in our state. He is a team player who is willing to lead from the front. To all the non-commissioned officers, I challenge you to follow his lead, especially given that the U.S. Army has designated 2009 as the year of the non-commissioned officer.

Non-commissioned officers are known as the backbone of the military. Warriors, leaders, trainers, mentors, and caretakers are among the words used to describe these amazing men and women of the Oregon National Guard. These individuals work together to create a team, which can accomplish any mission, assignment or task.

Right now I am calling on you, the non-commissioned officers, to make safety your top priority within our National Guard. Thirty-four Army National Guard soldiers have died in the U.S. as a result of accidents since October 2008. A majority of the deaths are contributed to motor vehicle accidents. This is more than four times the number of combat-related deaths over the same period. Safety must be a priority.

In every situation there is risk, but taking the extra time to assess possible risk can not be over-emphasized. Whether you're training, off-duty or even heading to your retirement party,

safety is paramount.

The next highest casualty rate is due to suicide. There is no greater overall safety risk for our military than for soldiers or airmen to hurt themselves. There are many reasons why a service member would take this course of action. Non-commissioned officers can be a major factor in preventing suicide. It is our job as leaders to get the word out and end any stigma.

There are chaplains, health services and also the Oregon reintegration team available for our guard members to use, along with mentorship and guidance from their chains of command. Make it clear! There are people and programs ready and available for each and every guard member regardless of the circumstances. Let's work together to be apart of a solution, but most of all take care of our soldiers and airmen.

Another key issue our guard members seem to forget, or are unaware of, is the fact that safety begins at home. This means family readiness is essential to accomplishing our missions' success. Whether you are single or married, we all need to focus on safety. When our soldiers

and airmen know their families are safe, they are able to do their best, no matter what the circumstances.

There are a multitude of new programs available for our guard members and their families. Some of these programs are listed at both [www.ornv.org](http://www.ornv.org) and [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com).

I challenge every NCO to check out these programs and tell their fellow guard members and subordinates about them, especially for those who are about to deploy or returned from a deployment. These programs are for you and your families.

There is no one more professional than the non-commissioned officer. Through your efforts our soldiers and airmen are prepared to handle the challenges this year will bring.

To all the soldiers and airmen in our organization, never forget you are the best that Oregon has to offer our nation.

Thank you for service and the leadership you provide everyday.

You make certain Oregon is, Always Ready! Always There!

*Raymond F. Rees*

## Chief Zagya: qualities of a 'quiet professional'



**CW5 Michael Zagya,**  
Command Chief  
Warrant Officer,  
Oregon National Guard

Do questions like "Why should I become a warrant officer?", "What are the benefits?", "What do warrant officers really do?", and "Aren't warrant officers just 'glorified NCOs?'" sound familiar?

As your command chief warrant officer let me try and shed some light on these questions and others like them. Here are some general descriptions and guidelines for "The Silent Professionals."

The Army's definition of a Warrant Officer is:

*"...a highly specialized expert and trainer, who, by gaining progressive levels of expertise and leadership, operates, maintains, administers and manages the Army's equipment, support activities or technical systems for an entire career."*

Newly appointed or junior, commissioned warrant officers (warrant officer 1 or chief warrant officer 2) normally begin their careers at the company or detachment level and function as company grade officers. Warrant officers become commissioned officers when they are promoted from warrant officer 1 to chief warrant officer 2.

Chief warrant officer 3s and 4s are more in line with the battalion or brigade level. As "specialized experts" the quality and production of work should equal if not exceed field grade officers in their particular specialty. Chief warrant officer 5 positions are usually located in the higher

headquarters, with the exception of aviation. Aviation warrant officers serve as senior advisors to command.

With the "progressive levels of expertise and leadership..." comes additional pressure to succeed. The traditional trade-off has been pay, privileges and a greater opportunity to influence policy and procedures.

If junior warrant officers are successful, they are promoted to senior warrants and earn field grade privileges. This requires hard work and dedication.

When a soldier pins on the warrant officer rank, he or she commits themselves further to the organization and success of the unit and the commander. They are leaders in their field both by knowledge and example. They must maintain the equipment and themselves by meeting all the standards and requirements including height, weight, fitness and many others.

The day of the crusty old warrant sitting in his office chew-

ing on a cigar and barking out regulations are over. We are the technical experts of the Army, in areas ranging from earning aviator wings, to making the communication system function, to ensuring all our soldiers have the "beans and bullets" and means to get to the fight.

We make it happen.

The Oregon Army National Guard currently has six warrant officer candidates heading off to Fort Rucker, Ala. for their Basic Course and one who remains on stand-by. Join me in wishing the following success: Bill Lowe, admin. field, graduates March 15; Steve McDaniel, aviation field, graduates April 14; Jeremy Uhrig, aviation field, graduates April 14; Raphael Toler, aviation field, graduates April 14; Robert Young, mobilization field, graduates April 14; Nick Thompson, field artillery field, graduates April 14; and Eric Gustafson, aviation field who remains on stand by.

Good luck to each of you!

## Command Chief: 'Get involved'

At a recent Senior Leadership Council meeting, Brig. Gen. Bruce Prunk, the new commander of the Oregon Air National Guard, stressed the importance of volunteerism for our organization.

A perfect example of what he meant took place on, Feb. 21, 2009, at Broughton Beach of the Columbia River in Portland, Ore.

Thirteen of us 142nd Fighter Wing Redhawks plunged into the Columbia River in order to raise money for the Special Olympics. Our group raised over \$4,700 from pledges, while the entire body of over 500 "plungers" collected more than \$76,000 for this worthy cause.

The Redhawks' efforts were spearheaded by Staff Sgt. Jarrod Johnson of the 142nd Security Forces Squadron and Master Sgt. Matt

Kochosky of the 142nd Operations Group.

They were joined in the frigid waters of the Columbia by Brandi Bell, Neil Bohne, Tech. Sgt. Jason Cohen, Master Sgt. Don Johnson, Staff Sgt. Liz McKenna, Tech. Sgt. Greg Neuleib, Maj. Frank Page, Senior Master Sgt. Chris Roper, Col. Jeffrey Silver, Staff Sgt. Stephanie Willis and myself.

My body was cold, but my heart was warm as I dove in and swam in the 45-degree waters of the Columbia River. The camaraderie was great and the cause was most worthwhile.

I came away from the experience quite invigorated and ready to do this as an annual tradition.

I encourage all of you, my fellow airmen, to participate in the Polar Plunge next year.



**142nd Fighter Wing Command Chief, Chief Master Sgt. Max White,**  
Oregon Air  
National Guard

The 142nd Fighter Wing already does a credible job of reaching out to those in need. But I will be actively looking for more ways that the 142nd Fighter Wing can give back to our communities.

Let's take opportunities like this one to get involved in our communities!

NEWS

# 150th Celebration commemorates past, present

OREGON from front page

National Guard, Brig. Gen. David Enyeart, Assistant Adjutant General for Army, and Deputy Director of State Affairs and State Defense Force Commander, Brig. Gen. Michael Caldwell.

Following official remarks, which kicked off the Oregon Ball, Rees joined Spc. Alex Amen of "Oregon's Own" 234th Army Band, and the Governor during the cake-cutting ceremony. The trio used a saber to cut the birthday cake.

"We, the Oregon National Guard, have a proud history to parallel that of our state," Rees said. "From the Whitman Massacre to our latest mobilization--time and again the Oregon Militia has responded."

Kulongoski spoke of Oregon's pioneer spirit, its strength and resilience, but called upon that same strength and ingenuity to weather the current national financial crisis and rising unemployment.

He challenged all Oregonians to work together to help build the foundation for another prosperous 150 years.

The 234th played "Big-Band" tunes upstairs while music of the pioneer era was performed in the downstairs ballroom,



where "period correct" dancers twirled the night away.

While Oregon Guard members wore their "Mess Dress" uniforms, other attendees took the 1859 theme seriously.

Costumes ranged from Civil War soldiers and early pioneers or settlers to women in crenelined skirts and ball gowns. The mix of cocktail dresses, formal gowns, top hats and military uniforms made the ball unique and according to some ball-goers, a "roaring good time."



Photo by Sgt. Paul Rushing, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs  
Maj. Gen. Raymond Rees, joined Spc. Alex Amen of Oregon's 234th Army Band, and Gov. Ted Kulongoski, during the cake-cutting ceremony.

Above left: General Peter W. Chiarelli, the Vice Chief of Staff for the United States Army, who attended the Senior Leader's Conference, also spoke at the Oregon 150 Ball. He brought attention to the Year of the NCO, calling Command Sgt. Maj. Brunk Conley, the "best command sergeant major in the entire Army."

A silent auction displayed many works by local artisans. Proceeds from the auction went to benefit the Oregon National Guard Association Education Fund. According to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Diane

Beach, the association funded six \$1,500 scholarships that were awarded this year to Oregon Guard members and their dependents to help with continuing their education.

## Gresham fire chief: 'if we're in trouble, we call the National Guard'



Left: Spc. Matt White, of Alpha Co., 141st Brigade Support Battalion, Oregon Army National Guard, chats with Gary Palas at the Gresham City Council meeting, Feb. 3.

GRESHAM from front page

Humvees pull up, it was quite a relief."

Junginger said the soldiers were enthusiastic and energetic, and worked well with his police officers.

"I think they enjoyed it. I know the police officers enjoyed it," he said. "Every time I saw them, they had smiles on their faces."

"This was some of the nastiest stuff we've seen in a long time," said Gary Martin, a firefighter with Gresham Fire Station Number 71. "But, with the Humvees chained up, we had no problem reaching people who needed help."

According to Morris, during the storm response, two soldiers went well above the call of duty during an emergency

medical call.

Spc. Matthew White and Spc. Chelsea Moore, both of Alpha Co., 141st Bgd. Supt. Bn., drove a firefighter to a home in response to a 9-1-1 emergency call in the Mt. Tabor neighborhood. Resident Gary Palas had slipped on his icy front porch after returning home from dialysis treatment, tearing out his dialysis shunt. Palas was surprised when his 9-1-1 call resulted in the arrival of a National Guard Humvee.

"If they had not shown up, I might not be alive today," Palas said, as he was flanked by soldiers at the Gresham City Council meeting.

but the chance to see Mr. Palas again tugged at her heartstrings.

"I think I had a tear or two," Moore said. "It was very nice to see him again." "Trust your training," White added. "A lot of people complain about all the training (we have to go through), but it helps."

Gresham Fire Chief Scott Lewis said he was amazed and thankful by the quick response from the Oregon National Guard. From the time Mayor Bemis declared a state of emergency to when the soldiers showed up in Gresham was about 15 hours, he said.

"The Guard was always willing to do whatever was asked of them,"

*"If they had not shown up, I might not be alive today."*

— Gary Palas, Gresham Resident

Morris said both White and Moore will receive the Oregon Exceptional Service Medal with Gold Star for their selfless sacrifice and efforts "well beyond the call of duty."

Moore, a resident of Gresham, said the opportunity for her unit to be recognized by her own community was rewarding,

Lewis said. "They had one goal in mind: What's best for the citizens of Gresham. If there's trouble, you call the police or the fire department. We'll give it our all to get you out of trouble. If the fire or police departments are in trouble, we call the National Guard, and they will help keep us out of trouble."

## In the wake of natural disasters 'who is going to help you?'

Whenever there is a storm or other type of disaster in Oregon, questions come to us about financial and other types of assistance. We hear "Who is going to help us?" and "How can we get state or federal assistance?"

I would love to be able to tell you that the government has enough money to fix everything for everyone, but you know that's not true. We do what we can under the laws that we have and that includes a process that must be followed. Having enough home and flood insurance is the best way to protect your property.

Response to a disaster begins at the local level. Each town, city and county is prepared to assist their citizens immediately during an event. If the disaster uses up all of their resources, county officials can ask the Governor for an emergency declaration. If the Governor agrees then state resources are provided and coordinated by Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) to assist the counties. If the disaster becomes a burden on the state, the

Editorial by Jennifer Bailey  
Public Affairs Coordinator,  
Oregon Emergency Management



Governor may ask the President for a federal declaration.

This is a simplified explanation of the process. There is always a lot of paperwork involved, information must be gathered and rules followed. Unfortunately when the storm hits you, it seems like everything takes forever.

Remember-- your first responders are working diligently to make things safe and secure and your local officials are following procedures to get you the assistance you need. Follow instructions from your local emergency managers and be prepared for the next one -- it is still winter.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy, Oregon Military Department

One of the streets in downtown Vernonia, Ore., sits under several feet of water, Dec. 4, 2007, following heavy rains the night before. Many residents of Vernonia and other coastal towns were left homeless after floods caused widespread power outages, and damage to buildings and homes. Residents of the small town assisted each other using a boat to transport those stranded to safety. The flooding prompted state officials to declare a state of emergency.

## NEWS

# Soldier suicide rates on the rise, Department of Army says

Story by  
Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy  
Oregon Military Department  
Public Affairs Office

**SALEM, Ore.** -- The U.S. Army recently released statistics that show a sharp spike in suicides among their ranks. The number of Army suicides increased for the fourth consecutive year, according to the Army's 2008 Suicide Data report released in January.

Army officials say at least 142 soldiers took their lives in 2008, and they are investigating the deaths of an additional 13 soldiers, which may have been possible suicides. These numbers are up from 102 in 2006, and 115 in 2007.

This is the highest number since the Army began keeping records in 1980—and also the biggest jump from one year to the next. Suicides in 2008 were on the rise across all the military branches, but the Army showed the most dramatic rise, according to the report.

"[Suicide] is not just an Army problem," Army Secretary Pete Geren said. "It's a national problem ... we're committed to doing everything we can to address [the issues] better [and] put programs in place."

In past years, the Army, which consists of 1.1 million active and reserve troops, has been just below or on par with the national suicide rate, Geren said.

It is estimated 20.2 suicides oc-

curred per 100,000 soldiers. The figure is higher than the national suicide rate, which is less than 20 victims per 100,000 people.

A study done by the National Institute of Mental Health found more than 90 percent of suicides throughout the general population stem from mood disorder or psychiatric illness. Furthermore, suicide is the third leading cause of death among 10- to 24-year-olds. Experts attribute higher numbers among veterans, caused by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD.

The Portland VA Medical Center's Suicide Prevention Coordinator Robert Tell says a soon to be released VA study also shows that the suicide rate for veterans throughout most of Oregon is nearly 50 per 100,000.

"There have been a huge number of Guard losses," said ODVA Public Information Manager, Tom Mann. "We know they're high. Unfortunately, many of these veterans don't have enough time to deal with these issues upon returning home. Many are expected to immediately return to work. We know that just doesn't work."

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs recently completed a

six-week media campaign to raise awareness of veteran suicides. Radio and television public service announcements began Dec. 17, 2008, and were broadcast on Portland area radio stations and in cable TV markets from Portland to Eugene, from Coos Bay to Astoria, and in Bend.

Mann said their PSA was released about a month before the national VA television PSA's, featuring actor Gary Sinise and TV host Deborah Norville.

has at times stigmatized mental illness. Those who admit to having problems many times are labeled as weak or inadequate. An admission could also mean they will be placed in a medical status that doesn't allow them to deploy worldwide.

"I think it's a strength of character issue," the soldier added. "When someone asks for help and his buddies give him grief, I guarantee you they all have issues too, but are afraid to say anything."

“Untreated depression, PTSD or TBI deserve attention. Encourage those who are affected to seek help without embarrassment.”

— Maj. Gen. Mark Graham

Yet the soldier admits "that stigma is changing," and indeed, the winds of change are blowing from top levels of the Army.

One Oregon soldier who requested anonymity said the guys return home from their deployment and find themselves back in civilian clothes within a week. "That's not enough time to figure out if you need help or not."

Military members who have been away for a year or more only want to get back to their families. "They don't want to get bogged down at the demobilization station because they admitted to having psychiatric issues."

The military as an institution

According to the commanding general for the Army's Division West and Fort Carson in Colo., Maj. Gen. Mark Graham, he hopes the Army can overcome the stigma attached to soldiers who ask for help.

"I can think of few subjects more important than this one," Graham said during a speech at the 2009 DoD/VA Annual Suicide Prevention Conference held in San Antonio, Texas, Jan. 12.

He said more people need to talk about the challenges and stigma

associated with mental health and thoughts of suicide. Graham knows first hand about the challenges. His son committed suicide while attending medical school.

"Don't be afraid to intervene to save a life," he advises. "Just being with someone can make a difference. Leaders, be compassionate. Soldiers, it's okay to get help." "Untreated depression, PTSD or TBI deserve attention. Encourage those who are affected to seek help without embarrassment."

To help ease returning military members back into their communities, the ODVA recently introduced House Joint Memorial 4 into the state legislature. Mann said the funding request would help cover a minimum of 90 days for returning soldiers to "decompress," and to provide a "soft landing to allow for thoughtful reintegration back into society."

During this time, soldiers will receive information and referrals to their educational and employment benefits, and medical assessments. The bill will also allow for service member's families to be with them throughout the extended reintegration process—something not provided in the existing demobilization plan.

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press 1.

# NCO corps the 'heart and soul' of Army National Guard

Story by  
Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy  
National Guard Bureau  
Public Affairs Office

**ARLINGTON, Va.** -- As a way to highlight the role and accomplishments of its NCOs, the Army has designated 2009 as the "Year of the NCO."

The leadership of the Army National Guard has also embraced the yearlong celebration of the NCO corps, which has many events and initiatives planned throughout the year to showcase the role of NCOs.

"For 372 years, our noncommissioned officers have been the backbone of the Army National Guard," said Command Sgt. Maj. John D. Gipe in a letter announcing support of the Year of the NCO. "Since 9/11 though, they have particularly proven to be its very heart and soul."

Being the heart and soul of the organization is something that others have recognized about the NCO corps.

Gen. George Casey Jr., the chief of

staff of the Army, expressed a similar sentiment. "As the secretary (of the Army) and I looked around the Army, it was clear to us that the noncommissioned officer is the glue that is holding this Army together at a critical time and many accomplish the near-impossible everyday."

And that glue comes as at time that finds the military in protracted overseas operations to include combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. After more than seven years of combat operations, many feel the NCOs of the Army National Guard are among the best in the Guard's history.

"Our ranks consist of the most talented pool of professional NCOs ever to muster," said Gipe. "Their unique depths and talents, forged in their communities, bring to the force the ability to operate, maintain, administer, manage, train, lead, fight, dominate and win on today's battlefield."

And the "Year of the NCO" comes with a special significance for the Guard with the naming of Staff Sgt. Michael Noyce Merino of the Montana Army National

Guard as the U.S. Army's NCO of the Year.

"(Staff) Sgt. Noyce Merino exemplifies the professionalism, skill and knowledge that are the hallmarks of National Guard NCOs and we are immensely proud of this great American," said Air Force Gen. Craig McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau in Washington D.C.

As part of the celebration, the Army National Guard has several events planned to highlight the contributions of the NCO, including many events that will feature Noyce Merino. Each month is scheduled to focus on the achievements and contributions in everything from combat



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill

Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. John Gipe visits National Guard troops at an entry control point to the International Zone in Baghdad, Iraq, Oct. 17, 2008. "The National Guard is playing a vital role," Gipe said.

operations to daily training activities.

For more information on the "Year of the NCO" visit the following website: [www.ngb.army.mil/features/yearofthenco/default.aspx](http://www.ngb.army.mil/features/yearofthenco/default.aspx)

**OREGON NATIONAL GUARD  
POST DEPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE  
(Reintegration Program)**

The Oregon National Guard wants to see you succeed, and is ready to help with employment, health care, college, or other matters.  
Call toll-free: 1-888-688-2264, 24-hours, 7-days per week  
visit our website at: [www.orng-vet.org](http://www.orng-vet.org)  
**OTHER CONTACTS FOR ASSISTANCE**

- Suicide prevention hotline: 1-800-237-TALK (8255)
- Oregon Military Department: 1-800-452-7500
- VA Hospital, Portland, Ore.: 1-800-949-1004
- VA Hospital, Walla Walla, WA: 1-888-687-8863
- VA Hospital, Boise, ID: 208-422-1000
- VA Hospital, Roseburg, Ore.: 541-440-1000
- Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs: 1-800-828-8801
- Veterans Administration: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)
- Military One Source: [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)  
or: 1-800-342-9647
- ESGR: 1-800-452-7500 / 503-584-2837
- Family Readiness Program: 1-877-881-5181
- CTAP Employment Assistance: 1-888-688-2264

## NEWS

# Airborne legacy passed down through four generations

Story and photo courtesy,  
Cheryl Rodewig  
*The Bayonet*

**Fort Benning, Ga.** -- When 1st Lt. Nick Conley graduated from Airborne School with more than 460 fellow students and received his wings, it represented both three weeks of intensive training for Conley and more than 65 years of tradition for his family.

"It's indescribable ... fantastic; it's tradition," said Sgt. 1st Class (Ret.) Brunk J. Conley, Nick Conley's grandfather, who traveled from his home in Oregon to Fort Benning to help pin the wings on his grandson, during a ceremony held in late December.

The 65-year-old grandfather earned his wings at Fort Bragg, N.C., in 1961, 20 years after his father, Nick Conley's great-grandfather, did in 1941. Nick Conley's father, Oregon State Command Sgt. Maj. Brunk Conley, earned his wings in 1972 at Fort Benning, Ga.

That makes Nick Conley number four in a line of Airborne soldiers dating back to 1941 -- the earliest days of the paratrooper in the Army.

Named by his father (who took a fancy to the surname of farmhand George Brunk), the eldest paratrooper Brunk Winston Conley parachuted into Normandy and Holland during

World War II.

Those were among the first combat jumps ever made, said his son, who inherited both the family name and the love of all things Airborne from his father.

"To me, it was just kind of natural. I wanted to be just like my dad," said the second generation paratrooper, who hoped to join the 101st but was sent to the 82nd Airborne Division instead. "If they'd let me jump today, I'd do it. I always tell people when a plane hits the ground, that's when you get hurt. If you jump out of it, you got a better chance."

Command Sgt. Maj. Brunk Wesley Conley, the Oregon National Guard Command Sergeant Major, took that chance, following his father's footsteps and enlisting in the Army at 18, with plans to join the 101st Abn. Div. like his grandfather or the 82nd Abn. Div. like his father. When he found out the 101st had become an air assault unit and the latter was full, the undeterred soldier joined a ranger battalion instead.

"Joining the Ranger battalion was the best thing that could have ever happened to me," Command Sgt. Maj. Conley said.

It also gave him the opportunity to be Airborne.

"I like to jump out of airplanes," he said. "Plus, for those adrenaline junkies in life who like to be on the edge

of things, it's a pretty exciting lifestyle."

Growing up with Airborne stories, 1st Lt. Conley chose to call that lifestyle his own. After receiving his commission, he attended the Infantry Basic Officer Leadership Course on Fort Benning. While here, he was lucky enough to attend jump school, he said.

"It's something I've always wanted to do," he said. "I grew up with it. When I was little, my grandpa used to tell me stories about my great-grandfather and my dad. These were the kinds of lessons I learned: hard work, dedication, leadership."

Like his dad, the younger Conley plans to attend Ranger School. He heads there this year before deploying to Iraq with the 41st Brigade Combat Team in late spring.

Nick Conley said he is proud of his heritage, something he plans to pass on to his own family one day.

Pinning the wings on the youngest paratrooper in the Conley family, both father and grandfather said they were proud of their Soldier.



As one of more than 460 students in B Company, 1st Battalion, 507th (Parachute) Infantry Regiment, Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga., 1st Lt. Nick Conley, joins a succession of Conleys who have made their mark on the United States military. The younger Conley's father, Oregon State Command Sergeant Major, Sgt. Maj. Brunk W. Conley (left), and grandfather, retired Sgt. 1st Class Brunk J. Conley (right) joined him after his graduation in Fort Benning, Ga., in December, 2008.

If the first Conley paratrooper could be here, he would be proud, too, said "Grandpa" Conley.

"The only thing that changes in the history of the world is technology," he continued.

"From 1941 to 2008, it's the same esprit de corps of the paratrooper. It's a challenge, (but) once you jump, it gets in your blood. It's an aura you get around you, a confidence. It is pride."

# Portland Trailblazers host Oregon Guardmembers, families

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

**PORTLAND, Ore.** -- For Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Evans and his family, spending an evening with an NBA basketball team was a dream come true.

"They're going to remember this forever," Evans said about his four sons, as he hoisted his youngest, Jacob, onto his shoulder for a picture with Portland Trail Blazers head coach, Nate McMillan.

Evans, who is with Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery, will deploy to Iraq this summer, along with more than 3,000 other Oregon Army National Guard members.

He and his wife Jennifer, and three other sons, Gavin, Dylan and Braden, joined 30 other Oregon Guard mem-

bers and their families at the Memorial Coliseum, the evening of Feb. 9, during the "Make It Better Holiday Carnival" hosted by the Blazers.

The annual event is the team's way of saying thank you to various groups in communities throughout Oregon, said Traci Rose, vice president of community relations for the Blazers.

"Our organization is very sensitive to what's going on with the war and the families who are affected," Rose said. "Every year we get together and throw a big carnival for a group, and this year we decided to do it for military members and their families. It's very fulfilling for our team members, but in all honesty, the soldiers are the heroes."

McMillan welcomed the soldiers and their families before introducing about 10 players scattered throughout the crowd.

"When I found out we were hosting the military, I

knew we would have the opportunity to meet some of the soldiers in person," McMillan said. "We wanted to tell them 'thank you'—not just the soldiers, but also the families for the sacrifice they all make to protect our country and our freedoms."

The event included carnival-style games, an inflatable play zone, a video game kiosk, double-shot basketball and ping-pong. Nike provided special gift bags for the children. The soldiers and their families filled up on hotdogs, cotton candy and popcorn, or played games in the carnival-like atmosphere alongside NBA players, who towered over the excited children.

Across the hall, the Oregon National Guard's Civil Support Team set up a video-conference system, where Guard members and their families could interact via live teleconference with soldiers at Camp Victory in Iraq.

Allen Pine sat at the conference table with his two sons, Ryan, 16, and Liam, 14. His wife, Sgt. 1st Class Nancy Pine, is deployed to Iraq with 2nd Battalion, 641st Aviation.

"We talk to her [on the phone] about every other night, but it's not the same as being able to see her," he said. "You get a feel for how they're doing when you see their face."

He thanked the Blazers for organizing the event, and added that lately, the team seems to be more involved in the community.

McMillan said all of his players were enthusiastic and supportive of meeting the soldiers during the event. Most were surprised by the number of years most of them have been in the military. "Most guys I talked to had been in for more than 15 years," McMillan said. "I think that says a lot about these soldiers and what they do for our country."

Blazers center, Greg Oden, said he had a great time meeting and talking to the soldiers. "These guys do so much for our country, it's great to do something for them."

The event was originally scheduled for Dec. 20, but was rescheduled due to inclement weather.



Portland Trail Blazers head coach, Nate McMillan, gives a high-five to Jackson Creswell at the "Make It Better Holiday Carnival" at the Memorial Coliseum, Feb. 9. Jackson, and father, Sgt. Ryan Creswell, of Bravo Co., 41st Special Troops Battalion, and his wife Christina, and daughter Emma, spoke to McMillan before handing their camera to a bystander to take a picture of the group. Hosted by the Portland Trail Blazers NBA basketball franchise, the event honored military members, giving them a chance to meet with Blazers team members



**Left:** Portland Trail Blazers mascot "Blaze" entertains Gavin and Dylan Evans, who attended the "Make It Better Holiday Carnival" at the Memorial Coliseum in Portland Feb. 9.

**Below:** Oregon National Guard members and their families attend the "Make It Better Holiday Carnival" at the Memorial Coliseum, Feb. 9.



## FINANCE

# Military OneSource offers free tax filing

Story by Gerry J. Gilmore  
American Forces  
Press Service

WASHINGTON -- The Defense Department's Military OneSource family support program is once again offering free, online tax preparation and filing for servicemembers and their families, officials said Feb. 2.

The service began Jan. 15. It's available to active duty servicemembers, National Guardsmen and reservists and their families.

This is the second year of the program. Last year, more than 327,000 tax claims were filed using a similar program, said Jane Burke, the principal director in the office of the deputy undersecretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy.

Burke added servicemembers can put their tax refunds to good use as a deposit in a savings or retirement account or to pay off debts.

"How to use the refund may be the first financial decision of



Photo courtesy U.S. Army

the year" for servicemembers in improving their financial readiness, Burke noted. DoD is launching a campaign called "Military Saves" to encourage servicemembers to save money and eliminate or reduce their personal debt.

Filers who use Military OneSource's online system can expect to receive their refund within 10 days, Burke said. And Military OneSource tax consultants, she said, are trained to answer questions on preparing and filing taxes and provide other

financial management information.

Additionally, through the Military OneSource Web site at [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com), servicemembers and their families can get guidance and answers to questions, Burke said.

The Military OneSource service augments the long-standing voluntary income tax assistance program offered through legal centers at most military installations, Burke said.

Volunteers at the centers provide free tax preparation and filing services.

Tax-filing assistance also is available through the Internal Revenue Service's electronic filing program.

Military OneSource's online tax preparation and filing was very popular with servicemembers and their families last year, Burke said.

"It is just one more way we can help improve the quality of life for our troops and their families," she said.

## TRICARE Reserve Select gets cheaper

Story courtesy,  
U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet &  
TRICARE

TRICARE is consolidating, updating and economizing to provide more efficient, cost-effective service to active, reserve and retired service members and their families.

One of the most important announcements by TRICARE is the savings that have been realized and are being passed on to Reservists through the TRICARE Reserve Select program.

Tricare Reserve Select is a premium-based health plan available to soldiers and airmen of the Selected Reserve (unit assigned and IMA members) at 28 percent of the premium cost.

TRS offers coverage similar to Tricare Standard (and Tricare Extra) with the active duty family member deductibles and cost shares applied to both the Selected Reserve member and family members under the TRS plan.

"Now that TRS has been in place for several years, we were able to calculate premiums from actual cost data obtained in earlier years," said Army Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director of TRICARE Management Activity.

"It is important to provide high quality and affordable healthcare coverage for our National Guard and Reserve families," he added.

As a result, Monthly premiums for TRS individual coverage will drop 44 percent from \$81.00 to \$47.51, and TRS family coverage will drop 29 percent from \$253.00 to \$180.17.

For more information please visit [www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/trs/](http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/trs/), or call the TRICARE North Region Contractor at (800) 555-2605.

# Veterans Affairs ramps up job search for injured vets



Photo by D. Myles Cullen

Staff Sgt. Liliانا Caparo shares her observations of Walter Reed and the Veteran Affairs program with Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Marine Gen. James Cartwright during a luncheon in Washington, D.C., Feb. 16, 2008.

Story courtesy,  
Department of  
Veterans' Affairs

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs will be increasing the number of disabled veterans positions in its workforce in 2009.

Thirty percent of VA employees are veterans and nearly eight percent of those employees are service-connected disabled veterans.

"I am proud of this effort," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "VA knows the true quality of our men and

women, and we should be a leader in employing them."

Peake said all severely injured veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be contacted by VA's Veterans Employment Coordination Service to determine their interest in and qualifications for VA jobs. So far, that office has

identified 2,300 severely injured veterans of those wars, of whom 600 have expressed interest in VA employment.

The coordination service was established a year ago to recruit veterans into VA, especially those seriously injured in the current wars. It has nine regional coordinators working with local facility human resources offices across the country not only to reach out to potential job candidates but to ensure that local managers know about special authorities available to hire veterans.

For example, qualified disabled veterans rated by the DoD or VA as having a 30 percent or more service-connected disability can be hired non-competitively.

"Our team is spreading the message that VA is hiring, and we want to hire disabled veterans," said Dennis O. May, director of VA's Veterans Employment Coordination Service.

VA coordinators participate in military career fairs and transition briefings, and partner with veterans organizations including the Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service, as well as VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, the Army's Warrior Transition Units and the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment.

## Disabled Veterans may receive property tax reduction in Oregon

If you are a disabled war veteran or the surviving spouse or registered domestic partner of a war veteran, you may be entitled to exempt \$16,391 or \$19,669 of your homestead property's assessed value from property taxes.

The exemption amount increases by three percent each year.

The exemption is first applied to your home and then to your taxable personal

property.

If you are an Oregon resident and a qualifying veteran or that veteran's surviving spouse/partner and live in your home, you may file a claim and receive the exemption.

For more information visit [www.oregon.gov/DOR/PTD/docs/310-676.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/DOR/PTD/docs/310-676.pdf), or contact tax assessor's office for your respective county.

## Oregon Guard: Drill, AT pay now tax exempt

*Because of the timeliness of this article in lieu of tax season and because it has information that will potentially save nearly every guard member money on their state tax return, the editorial staff at the Sentinel has chosen to update and rerun the following article. ~ Ed.*

By Kim L. Lippert  
Oregon Military Department  
Public Affairs

In our March 2008 issue of the Oregon Sentinel we told you about a \$6,000 tax deduction military service members are eligible for under a new law put into effect this year.

Under this law, members of the Oregon National Guard and Reserves can deduct up to \$6,000 of their pay earned for performing active service, which did not include pay for weekend drills among other things.

A temporary rule was adopted by the Oregon Department of Revenue in October 2008 to clarify that this law applies to pay earned while serving at weekend drills, annual training, encampments, special school attendance, and battle assemblies of the reserves.

The rule took effect on Nov. 1, 2008 and will apply to tax years going back to 2007 and forward to 2008.

The new information will be included in your 2008 tax returns and instructions will be sent to taxpayers.

For more information visit the Oregon Department of Revenue website at [www.oregon.gov/DOR/](http://www.oregon.gov/DOR/) or call them at (503) 945-8655.

This law does not affect another military tax exemption law passed in the 2007 legislative session that deals with deductions for Guard members and reservists who have been away from home for 21 days or longer. The two are distinct and do not relate, however a military member may be eligible for both, if they meet the criteria.

## NEWS

# Employees pack up museum before move to new facility

Story and photo by

Spc. BZ Zeller,

115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**CLACKAMAS, Ore.** -- The mannequins that donned vintage uniforms are bare, the L-19 Birdog plane rests wingless and more than 10,000 artifacts have been delicately tagged and boxed away.

Oregon Military Museum Curator Tracy Thoennes' face lights up when she talks about the how the now dormant facility will transition to a new museum at Oregon National Guard's Camp Withycombe, near Clackamas.

"It's a true potential for growth," she said. "We're just ecstatic to get a new building that will be more accessible, better laid out and more display space. It will be a primo museum."

The museum, which was closed to visitors in November, has a June 1, 2009 deadline to move its 13,147 artifacts to the Clackamas Armory. The four buildings that the museum currently occupies will be utilized by the 41st Infantry Division Armed Forces Reserve Center.

"As with most museums, we only display about two percent of our collection at any given time," Thoennes said. "When you exhibit something, you are inherently damaging it. The curator added that the museum has permanent artifacts that are displayed for five years and temporary exhibits that rotate every six months.

Thoennes stated the new museum's

space will be increased from 17,000 square feet to 27,000 square feet. The facility will feature an enlarged gift shop, expanded library, more administrative space and possibly a viewable vault so that guests won't need an appointment to see the weaponry.

Two historic buildings are also scheduled to be uprooted and moved. A World War II Quonset hut and a 1911 barn that housed horses from Battery A, Field Artillery.

Following the move, Thoennes will focus on funding the new museum. The curator since 2003, said she will seek federal and state grants, as well as, funds from non-profit organizations, private individuals, corporations, foundations and military channels.

"I'd love to launch that campaign," Thoennes said. "But, we must pack the collection first."

According to Thoennes, the new facility's price tag will be at least \$3 million. She hopes the previous 3,500 annual visitors will blossom to 10,000. There are registered visitors from 28 states and 10 foreign countries. The demographics reflect 75 percent of visitors are male with a military background and half of those are retired. The museum also is frequented by school children, families and boy scouts.

"Coming up with that money is going to take some time," Thoennes said. "The armory needs to be fixed to accommodate museum standards such as exhibit areas



A U.S. Army L-19 Birdog aircraft sits with its wings removed in preparation for the move to a new location. Each of the items in the photo must be painstakingly dismantled and packed in order to preserve them for their move.

and air conditioning and there needs to be adjustments to the parking lot."

With a new entrance to be constructed for Camp Withycombe, the museum will be located in a heritage area that visitors will be able to access as general public and not have to bypass a guard house or show identification. Thoennes envisions mini-theaters, self-guided exhibits, large

photo murals and dioramas that will immerse visitors in an educational "you are there feeling" at the new museum.

"We're not going to be world class," Thoennes said. "But we'd like to be regional class, not homemade."

To contribute artifacts or make donations, contact Tracy Thoennes. (503) 557-5359; [tracy.thoennes@us.army.mil](mailto:tracy.thoennes@us.army.mil)

## Salem resident awarded Purple Heart and Bronze Star for actions while deployed to Afghanistan



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jefferson Thompson, Oregon Military Dept.

Oregon National Guard Capt. Dominic P. Oto received the Purple Heart for wounds sustained in battle and The Bronze Star Medal in a ceremony Thursday Feb. 12 at Joint Force Headquarters in Salem, Ore.

On Sept. 20, 2008, insurgents attacked a six vehicle convoy of U.S. and Afghan soldiers going from Forward Operating Base Tombstone to Kandahar Air Field. The ambush included a 500-pound Improvised Explosive Device that struck the lead vehicle as Oto drove. The blast sent his vehicle 20 feet in the air, causing it to land on its roof and skid to a halt.

Oto served on the Embedded Training Team training the Afghan Army. He returned from the year-long deployment in December 2008.

Oregon's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees pinned Oto with both medals during the ceremony. Oto resides in Salem.

Capt. Dominic P. Oto stands at attention during a ceremony where he was pinned with the Purple Heart (lower right) and The Bronze Star Medal, Thursday Feb. 12, 2009 at Joint Force Headquarters in Salem.

## New commissary sales scheduled for March, April

Through the new "Bringing the Benefit to You" campaign, the Defense Commissary Agency is reaching out to Guard and Reserve members who have earned the commissary benefit, but who cannot easily travel to a local store to shop on a regular basis. "Bringing the Benefit to You" includes taking a bit of the commissary itself to Guard and Reserve units through on-site truckload case-lot sales. In addition to supporting Guard and Reserve members, these sales are open to all authorized commissary customers.

This March 27-29 the program will stop at Jackson Armory near Portland Air National Guard Base in Portland, Ore., and at Deschutes County Fairgrounds in Bend, Ore. April 2-4. These sales are scheduled from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily and will feature typical groceries including staple items, dry goods and fresh meats and vegetables.

They are open to all military ID card holders, both active and retired.

## Commissary Sale!! March 27-29

At Jackson Armory in  
Portland, Ore.  
6255 NE Cornfoot Rd,

Open to all military ID holders,  
active and retired

In an effort to bring the commissary benefit to Guard and Reserve units who do not have commissary facilities nearby, DeCA is bringing the benefit to you. The sale features staples and dry goods.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### ORNG's National Champion Marathon Team wants runners

The Oregon National Guard has had a winning tradition at the National Guard Marathon Championships in Lincoln, Neb.

Last year's team won the team title for the entire National Guard! The team is looking for distance runners who can meet the following minimum standards: male: 3:30 marathon, female: 4:00 marathon.

If you meet those criteria you could compete for the Oregon National Guard Marathon Team, Sunday May 23, 2009 in Lincoln, Neb. starting at 7 a.m.

To sign up contact Master Sgt. Bill Kaemmer at (503) 725-3512 or email at him at [kaemmerb@pdx.edu](mailto:kaemmerb@pdx.edu).

### Retirees: Stay connected, stay informed

Each Tuesday the Retiree Service Office (RSO) sends out information to retirees via e-mail. E-mails on change of command ceremonies, deployments, Tri-care services, survivor's benefits, quarterly luncheons and COLA increases are just a few examples. If you are retired and would like to start, or stop receiving information via e-mail from the RSO, just send your name and e-mail information to [orrs@or.ngb.army.mil](mailto:orrs@or.ngb.army.mil) or phone at (503) 584-2891.

Keep your information current. Mailing addresses and phone numbers are kept on every Soldier and Airman retiring from the Oregon National Guard.

Official retirement orders are used to add information about retirees to a data base maintained by the Retirement Service Office (RSO).

A list of retirees along with their last known address is what the Oregon Sentinel staff uses to mail out copies of this paper. Retirees

should contact the RSO whenever there is an address or phone number change.

Want to find another retiree from the Oregon Army National Guard?

If you would like to get in touch with another retiree from the Oregon National Guard, just give the Retiree Service Office (RSO) a call at (503) 584-2891, or e-mail them at [orrs@or.ngb.army.mil](mailto:orrs@or.ngb.army.mil).

### Retiree service office has moved

The RSO moved to their new location in Room 243 of the Anderson Readiness Center, located at 3225 State St, Salem, Ore. The RSO will share the office space with representatives of TriCare and Employer Support to Guard and Reserve (ESGR). Office hours remain from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM every Tuesday.

### Retiree luncheon scheduled for April

Twice each year, in April and September, the Oregon National Guard Retiree Council sponsors a retiree luncheon at the Salem Eagles lodge. This year the luncheon is scheduled for April 17, 2009.

All retired members of the Oregon National Guard, both Army and Air Guard, and former civilian employees of the Oregon Military Department are invited to attend.

The luncheon will begin with a "get acquainted time" starting at 11:30 a.m. and the meal will be served at noon. The Salem Eagles Lodge is located at 2771 Pence Loop in Salem. A small fee is charged for the meal which includes both lunch and dessert.

If you would like to be added to the invitation list please contact Chief Warrant Officer 5 (Ret.) Lee Ashwill at (503) 393-9320 or [leebarbiashwill@comcast.net](mailto:leebarbiashwill@comcast.net).

## AIR GUARD NEWS

## Kingsley Field airman relates deployment experiences from Afghanistan



Photo courtesy 173rd FW/PA

Letter by  
**Capt. Tim Bruner**  
 173rd Fighter Wing  
 Civil Engineering Squadron

Recently Capt. Tim Bruner of the 173rd Fighter Wing Civil Engineering Squadron in Klamath Falls, returned from a mission to Afghanistan. While there he wrote a letter detailing his mission. ~ Ed.

We are known as a Staff Augmentation Team, or "S-Team". Our primary mission is to provide highly technical engineering

staff in the areas of public works, design, project management, planning, and command and control.

Our team is made up entirely of Air National Guardsmen. There are currently three Air National Guard S-Teams deployed to Afghanistan. Each team consists of seven members and each of them is located at Army Forward Operating Bases, or FOB's. On the FOB, we are known as the Facility Engineer Team, or FET. Aside from myself, our team is comprised of 240th Civil Engineering Flight members at Buckley Air Force Base, Colo. We are stationed at FOB Fenty near Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

We are performing a mission for the Army, or as they call it now, a JET (Joint Expeditionary Tasking) mission--basically, a service outside the Army performing an Army mission. We are all one team in one fight!

Our primary mission is planning, programming, design, and construction of facility and infrastructure projects. This experience has been great! The highlight has been working with the other members of the team. They are all motivated, dedicated, and

well-trained professionals.

Everyone except the commander has been assigned construction projects that they are responsible for from initial planning to construction completion. The commander is responsible for overseeing our entire operation and acts as a liaison between the FET and the Army command element. He is also responsible for entertaining distinguished visitors, of which we have had more than our fair share in the last four months.

We feel that we have the best jobs on the base. We fall under the Army for tactical control (TACON) but under the Air Force for admin. control (ADCON). We can be an independent liaison for the base, providing engineering support and we get to work with everyone on base since everyone has a need for facilities and infrastructure. We have found that the Army is great to work with because they are used to austere living conditions and they are very appreciative of the facilities we provide. Anything is a step up from living in a tent.

We are converting from an expeditionary base to a permanent

base. In doing so, buildings were put in before basic infrastructure, such as water and sewer, were established. Now we are in the difficult process of trying to develop this infrastructure while working around existing buildings. Power and communications lines have been put in to provide lighting, heating and air conditioning systems, and computers. We only drink bottled water and most of the toilets are portable units that must be pumped daily. There are a few water wells on base but only part of the water is treated with ROWPU (mobile filtration) units to provide potable water for the dining facility and hospital. The rest of the water is treated with chlorine and used for showers and bathrooms and is not suitable for drinking. This is typical at most FOBs.

One of the most rewarding parts of our job is our daily interaction with the locals. We have two interpreters who are invaluable to our operation. They bridge the language barrier and take the time to discuss their culture and religion. They know the local construction methods and the local contractors. The contractors work hard especially

considering their lack of modern tools.

For example most building foundations are created with hand shovels and pick axes. Most of the buildings are brick and mortar. I have personally seen times where concrete is poured by a "bucket line" of workers with large bowls.

Prior to a JET deployment, airmen are required to attend Army Combat Skills Training, or CST. CST is a one-month training course to familiarize other services with the Army way of doing things. Courses included weapons qualifying, Combat Life Savers (CLS), HMMV training, convoy training, Army force structure, basic tactics, and a five-day field deployment.

The three Air Guard S-Teams all attended the same CST course at Fort McCoy, Wis. One of the benefits was that our class was all civil engineers preparing to deploy to various locations in Afghanistan and Iraq. This provided a great networking opportunity allowing us to get to know other engineers that would be in the same theaters.

For a first deployment, this was a great assignment!

## New Air Guard director promoted in Pentagon ceremony

Story by  
**Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy**  
 National Guard Bureau  
 Public Affairs Office

ARLINGTON, Va. -- Lieutenant Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III became director of the Air National Guard and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general by Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norman A. Schwartz and Air Force Gen. Craig McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, in a ceremony held at the Pentagon, Feb. 2, 2009.

Wyatt, who previously served as the adjutant general of the Oklahoma National Guard, was nominated in December by then President George W. Bush to the U.S. Senate for confirmation as the director of the Air National Guard.

Wyatt succeeds McKinley, who served as the Air Guard's director for more than two years until becoming chief on Nov. 17, 2008.

In this position, Wyatt will be responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, plans and programs affecting more than 106,800 Air Guard members in more than 88 flying wings and 200 geographically separated units throughout the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy, National Guard Bureau

Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, center, is pinned by Gens. Norman A. Schwartz, left, U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, and Gen. Craig R. McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, during a ceremony at the Pentagon, Feb. 2. Wyatt was recently named the director of the Air National Guard, and previously served as the adjutant general of the Oklahoma National Guard.

and the Virgin Islands.

"This is a special day for members of the Air National Guard," said McKinley.

Wyatt, who also served as commander of the 138th Fighter Wing in Tulsa, Okla. and as the Oklahoma Guard's chief of staff for its Joint Force Headquarters, said

he was humbled by the promotion.

"I'm actually just Bud, from Oklahoma," he said after receiving his third star.

He entered the Air Force in 1971 and has flown aircraft such as the F-100 Super Sabre and the F-16 Fighting Falcon.

## GATES from front page

"I have tried to ease, to the extent possible, the stress on our reserve components," he said. "We have provided greater predictability as to when a Guardmember will be deployed by establishing a minimum standard of 90 days advance notice prior to mobilization. In practice, on average, the notification time is about 270 days.

"There is no longer a 24-month lifetime limit on deployment, but each mobilization of National Guard and Reserve troops is now capped at 12 months."

The goal is five years of dwell time for one year deployed. "We have made progress toward this goal but are not there yet," Gates said.

He added that the ratio of dwell time to mobilization for the Army National Guard this fiscal year is just over 3-to-1.

Finally, Gates said the percentage of soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan who are Guard or Army Reserve is currently about half what it was during the summer of 2005.

"Reliance upon the reserve component for overseas deployment has declined over time," he said.

# NATIONAL GUARD DAY WITH THE PORTLAND LUMBERJAX

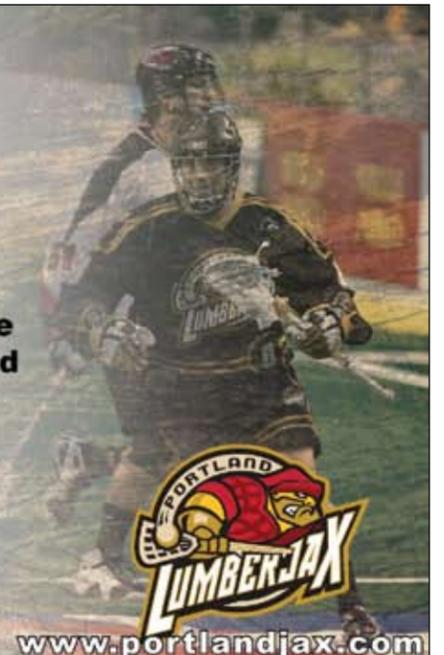
Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 3:00pm - Rose Garden

The Oregon National Guard and the Portland LumberJax have teamed to honor the men and women of the Oregon National Guard. Members of the National Guard and their families can get tickets for this game in the "Lumber Yard" section for \$5. Over a 50% discount from regular ticket prices!

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