

A full-page photograph of a young man in a British Army camouflage uniform and beret, holding an M16-style rifle. He is standing on an airfield with a fighter jet in the background. The magazine title 'at ease' is overlaid in the top right.

at ease

March 2005

Serious Business

Reach Out
Challenge Academy
Family Resources

Pay chart inside

From the top

Recruiting, Retention, Reset, Remembrance

As always in these extraordinary times there is no shortage of important issues to cover in this space.

One issue of National importance also affects us here in Wisconsin. You may have read published news reports about the Army Guard's difficulty filling its 350,000 authorized positions with qualified soldiers. We face a challenge here in Wisconsin, as well. After achieving 100 percent strength at year-end 2004 — and holding fairly steady for about a year — the Wisconsin Guard's strength began to slide. I am concerned about this trend, and we are all working hard to reverse it. Generous new recruiting and retention bonuses came online in December, 24 new Wisconsin production recruiters are in the field — and we're starting to see positive results. But money and recruiters alone won't solve this problem. The solution will require all of your support, as well. Now is the time to focus our recruiting and retention efforts to ensure that our Wisconsin Army National Guard advances its assigned strength to a minimum of 100 percent. This is a top priority mission for all of us and we will not fail.

The Wisconsin Air Guard, you should know, continues to be among the top in the nation with a strength of more than 104 percent.

Another hot issue is summed up in the single word "reset." Reset refers to resetting the force for the future. It's about transformation and change. It means the National Guard of the future may look a bit different than the National Guard you first joined. Reset will change the composition of the Wisconsin National Guard so that Wisconsin's capabilities will be relevant to the military requirements of the future. You will begin hearing more about resetting our force in the future, but I wanted you to hear about it first from me.

Finally, the Wisconsin Army National Guard lost its second Soldier in late December. **Staff Sgt. Todd Olson** was serving as a squad leader in Iraq with Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry when an improvised explosive device was detonated near his patrol in Samarra. Todd Olson was a husband and a father, a community leader in his hometown of Loyal, and he was

an outstanding soldier and NCO who will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

Since the last issue of *At Ease* was published in October, 12 other Wisconsin service members have given their lives in service to their country:

- Marine **Pfc. Andrew Halverson**, 19, Shopiere
- Marine Corps Reserve **Lance Cpl. Daniel R. Wyatt**, 22, Caledonia
- Marine Corps Reserve **Cpl. Robert P. Warns II**, 23, Waukesha
- Marine Corps Reserve **Lance Cpl. Shane K. O'Donnell**, 24, Deforest
- Army Reserve **Staff Sgt. Todd R. Cornell**, 38, West Bend
- Marine Corps Reserve **Cpl. Brian R. Prening**, 24, Plymouth
- Army **Pfc. Isaiah R. Hunt**, 20, Suamico
- Marine **Sgt. Benjamin Edinger**, 24, Green Bay
- Marine Corps Reserve **Lance Cpl. Ryan Cantafio**, 22, Beaver Dam
- Marine Corps Reserve **Pfc. Brent T. Vroman**, 21, Oshkosh
- Marine Corps Reserve **Lance Cpl. Richard D. Warner**, 22, Waukesha
- Marine Corps Reserve **Lance Cpl. Travis M. Wichlacz**, 22, West Bend



Albert H. Wilkening
Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening

Please join me and all of Wisconsin in remembering these service members and the sacrifices they made for America.

Changes

The Wisconsin Army National Guard has a new chief of staff. **Col. Robert H. Ronge**, formerly director of personnel and administration, became chief of the Joint Force Headquarters Army staff in August. Ronge replaced **Brig. Gen. James A. Krueck**, who remains commander of the 32nd Infantry Brigade.

Joint Force Headquarters Army staff changes since the last issue of *At Ease* are: **Lt. Col. Mark Bruns**, new deputy chief of staff for personnel (DCSPER G-1); **Lt. Col. Kevin Greenwood**, deputy chief of staff for operations (DCSOPS G-3); **Lt. Col. Tim Lawson**, director of Army Guard recruiting and retention; and **Col. Dennis Simons** has been deputy chief of staff for logistics (DCSLOG G-4) since March 2004.

New joint staff officers include **Col. John McCoy**, director of manpower and personnel (J-1); **Col. Tim Pfrang**, director of security and intelligence (J-2); and **Lt. Col. Paul Russell**, director of operations (J-3).

Col. Dale Pommerening took command of the 426th

Regiment at the Wisconsin Military Academy in August. Pommerening, who had been the regiment's executive officer for the past three years, replaced **Col. James J. Olson**, who will retire from the Wisconsin Army National Guard at the end of July.

New "Iron Brigade" commander **Col. Dominic Cariello** formally assumed command of the Army Guard's 57th Field Artillery Brigade in February. Cariello succeeded **Col. Bryan Much**, who retired after more than 20 years of active duty and AGR service.

The 128th Air Refueling Wing changed command at a ceremony in Milwaukee March 5. **Col. John Cozad**, commander since 1997, transferred command of the 900-member unit to **Col. Donald Dunbar**. Dunbar comes to the Wisconsin National Guard from the Washington Air Guard's 141st Air Refueling Wing, Fairchild Air Force Base, Spokane. Cozad retired after 33 years of military service.

at ease

March 2005



at ease

Volume 28 Number 1

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Features

- 6 Serving America is serious business**
The Wisconsin National Guard continues to carry on.
- 10 Reach out**
Services available to help Soldiers, Airmen and their families readjust after a deployment.
- 12 Holding down the home front**
Resources and programs of the Wisconsin National Guard Family Program.
- 14 Telling the Army's story**
The 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment helps win hearts and minds in Iraq.
- 18 Into the blue**
Army Guard Soldiers protect Air assets.
- 20 Need water? We deliver**
New Homeland Defense capabilities of the 147th Aviation Battalion.
- 22 The courage to change**
Teens turn their lives around at Wisconsin National Guard's Challenge Academy.
- 26 Freedom Salute**
Honoring Soldiers for service in the War on Terror.
- 28 Wisconsin Military Achievement Awards**
Wisconsin recognizes top members of Guard and Reserve.

Departments

- 2 From the Top**
- 4 People in the News**
- 30 Pay chart**
- 31 News Briefs**

On the cover:

Army Guard Spc. Joshua Kammeraad guards F-16s on the ramp at Truax Field, Madison. The Army Guard's Task Force Red Arrow assisted with protection of two Air Guard bases and an Air Force Reserve base in Wisconsin from Jan. 30, 2003, until Nov. 28, 2004.
Photo by Larry Sommers.



Tippett awarded combat badge



Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Tippett, right, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 126th Field Artillery, receives the Combat Infantryman Badge from Brig. Gen. John Basilica, commander of the 256th Brigade Combat Team. Tippett, stationed near Baghdad, Iraq, was awarded the badge after participating in a direct-fire engagement during a convoy operation.

Fighter Wing honors Airmen of the Year

Four earned Airman of the Year honors from the 115th Fighter Wing: Master Sgt. Alice Sischo, Mission Support Group first sergeant; Master Sgt. Christopher Lemke, non-commissioned officer in charge of Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection; Tech. Sgt. Val Chandler, Mission Support Flight recruiter; and Staff Sgt. Joseph Klich, Security Forces Squadron. Lemke was also honored as the state Outstanding Airman of the Year program's senior non-commissioned officer.



Master Sgt. Alice Sischo



Master Sgt. Christopher Lemke



Tech. Sgt. Val Chandler



Staff Sgt. Joseph Klich

Low Ropes course recognized in D.C.

Representatives of the Wisconsin National Guard Low Ropes program receive the Secretary of Defense Community Drug Awareness Award from Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz at a Pentagon ceremony Oct. 25, 2004. From left: Tech. Sgts. Wayne Wilson and Telvin Gross; Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening, the adjutant general; Wolfowitz; Lt. Col. Paul Russell, director of the Wisconsin National Guard Drug Control program; Sgt. Robert Medina and Staff Sgt. Eric Gonzales. Wilson, Gross, Medina and Gonzales are all Low Ropes program course facilitators.



In Memoriam... Todd Olson 1968-2004

“He cared about his men almost as much as he cared for his own children.”

He was Staff Sgt. Todd Donald Olson, a 36-year-old infantry squad leader and a lifelong resident of Loyal, Wis. The comment was made by Lt. Col. Steve Bensend at a memorial service Jan. 5 in Loyal’s high school gymnasium, which was filled above its 1,500-seat capacity.

Todd Olson was the second Wisconsin National Guard member killed in Iraq.

He died Dec. 27, 2004, in the 67th Combat Support Hospital, Tikrit, Iraq, after being wounded the night before by an improvised explosive device while on patrol in Samarra. His hometown “took down all the Christmas decorations and put up all the flags” when word of Todd’s death was received, said his wife, Nancy Olson. He also left four children, Trevor, 17, Jesse, 16, Cody, 13, and Kasey, 5.

“It took a community to raise Todd,” said Nancy. “I’m asking that same community to help me raise his children.”

Todd Olson was born Oct. 26, 1968, in Neillsville, the son of Donald and Shirley Olson. He attended Loyal public schools and graduated from Loyal High School in 1987. A 1992 University of Wisconsin – La Crosse graduate, he was a vice president and agricultural loan officer with M&I Bank in Neillsville. Todd was remembered as a loving husband, father and son, a supporter of his hometown community and a good friend to many. He was a member of Trinity Lutheran Church and an adult leader of their Luther League. He served as president of his local Lions Club and Chamber of Commerce.

Todd loved spending time with his family and friends: fishing with his children, watching them show dairy cattle at the fair, and attending local sporting events as well as Packer games.

Todd joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard after high school and served 17 years until his death. In June 2004, he left Wisconsin with his unit — Detachment 1, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry — for pre-deployment training at Camp Shelby, Miss. The unit deployed in November, bound for Iraq



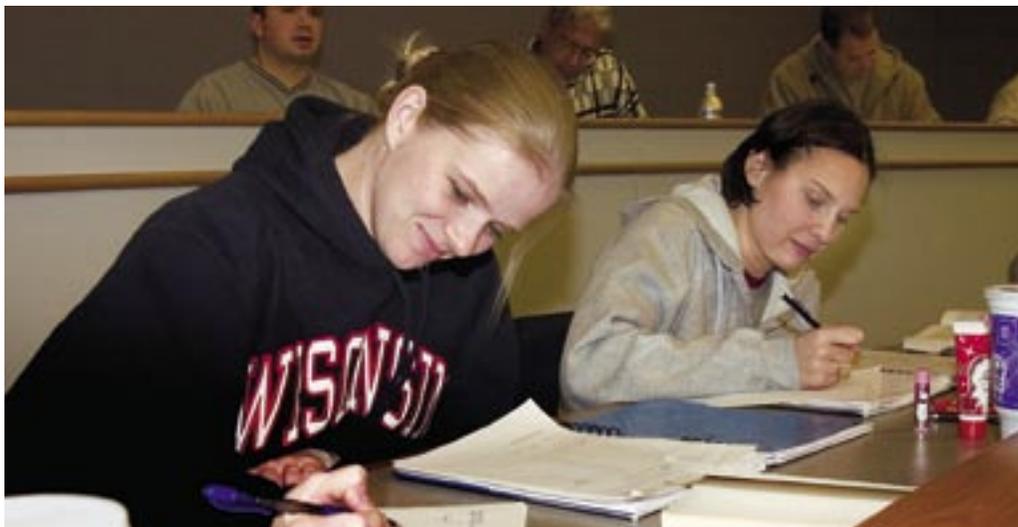
Todd Olson on duty in Iraq in December.

via Kuwait. Todd called home on Christmas and was mortally wounded the next day. He was one of 680 Soldiers in his battalion.

The Marshfield News Herald reported that after his death, Nancy received a photo of a Soldier kneeling before Todd’s helmet and weapon at a memorial service the unit held in Iraq.

“It’s just made them more determined in their mission to make Iraq a better place,” she said.

Guard members learn Arabic language and culture



Sgt. 1st Class Georgett Bronk, left, and Lt. Jamie Makowski take notes during an Arabic class in Madison. About 50 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers recently completed a four-month Arabic language and cultures course offered through the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Studying at five distance learning sites, students practiced the Arabic language by speaking, reading and writing. They also studied the history of the Middle East and cultures of Arabic people. The text portion of the course was taken online through the Arab Academy in Cairo, Egypt.

Serving America is

By Lt. Col. Tim Donovan
At Ease Staff

We mobilized our largest infantry outfit deployed for combat overseas since World War II, flew and supported air superiority missions in the Middle East and at home, and provided key support to help a new democracy in Afghanistan find its legs: Busy months, and serious business for the Wisconsin National Guard.

1-128th Infantry goes to war

The 670 Soldiers of Eau Claire-based 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry mobilized in June and trained for five months at Camp Shelby, Miss., and Fort Irwin, Calif., with 3,000 others from Tennessee, Texas, New Jersey, Vermont and Massachusetts — the combined units forming the 278th Regimental Combat Team, under Tennessee National Guard leadership.

On Nov. 11 the entire regiment was formed on the parade field at Camp Shelby for a grand sendoff. Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour, Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen and Wisconsin Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton joined 1st Army commander Lt. Gen. Russell Honoré and National Guard Bureau chief Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum to wish the troops well as they embarked on a one-year mission in Iraq.

“You are better led, better trained, better equipped than any American Soldier that ever went to war in the history of this nation,” Blum told the assembled troops. “We will not let you fail.”

Also making the Veterans Day trip to Camp Shelby were Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening, Maj. Gen. Fred Sloan, Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, and more than 20 Wisconsin journalists.

The entire 278th deployed to Kuwait before Thanksgiving and moved into Iraq by mid-December.

With the arrival in Iraq of the 278th RCT, the National Guard’s percentage of the Operation Iraqi Freedom mission climbed past 40 percent of the Army combat forces on the ground there.

“When you call out the National Guard, you call out America. God bless America and the 278th Regimental Combat Team,” Blum said.

Shortly after the unit took up its duties in the region north of Baghdad, Staff Sgt. Todd Olson died of wounds received from an improvised explosive device in Samarra as he led a patrol of Soldiers from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry. Todd Olson became the second Wisconsin National Guard Soldier killed in Iraq.

The unit’s mission continues.

“It’s just made them more determined in their mission to make Iraq a better place,” said Nancy Olson, Todd’s widow.

Other units to Iraq

Oak Creek’s Battery B, 1st Battalion, 126th Field Artillery normally fires M-109A6 Paladin howitzers, lobbing 96-pound shells at targets up to 30 kilometers away. Today the battery’s 80 Soldiers are in the infantry business in Baghdad, slinging M-16 rifles while their Paladins are parked 6,380 miles away — at home.

Mobilized in September, the Oak Creek field artillery Soldiers were among many Guard artillery troops pressed into service for a general security mission rather than the artillery mission for which they were organized and trained. Because of these Soldiers’ adaptability, the National Guard was able to convert capabilities not needed at the moment, field artillery, into capabilities in higher demand.



Photo by Sgt. James B. Smith Jr., 55th Signal Company, Combat Camera

Staff Sgt. Dan Kelley, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, shakes hands with children during a foot patrol of a small section of Ad Dujayl, Iraq, in December.

IRAQ

serious business



Bravo Battery Soldiers are expected to complete their mission by November.

Soldiers of the 1158th Transportation Company arrived in Southwest Asia in December to begin what is, for many of them, a second active-duty mission in two years. In 2003 the unit's 299 Soldiers were mobilized for support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, but they never left the U.S. Instead, about half the unit was released after four months at Fort McCoy while others were sent to Fort Knox, Ky., and Fort Irwin, Calif., where they served between nine and 12 months providing transportation support to the two Stateside installations.

The second mobilization took them overseas. The unit is currently operating convoys from a base in Kuwait all the way into Baghdad and beyond. It's dangerous work, but the Soldiers and their 96 Heavy Equipment Transporters were doing fine as *At Ease* went to press at the beginning of March.

Fighter wing around the world

Madison's 115th Fighter Wing completed two large scale deployments, to Iraq and Qatar, and sent smaller combat support packages to at least eight other destinations around the globe — all while continuing its air sovereignty alert mission from Truax Field.

About 80 troops from the wing's 115th Civil Engineering Squadron spent 120 days at Balad Air Base in central Iraq. Even at the secure compound, insurgent attacks were common, with mortar rounds raining down on the base almost nightly.

Under the squadron's direction, engineers at Balad made \$188 million in airfield improvements, constructed three million square meters of ramp space, repaired seven runway craters, patched over 1,000 smaller holes on active runways and taxiways, and fixed more than a mile of ramp and runway joints.

Also serving at Balad were 115th Fighter Wing firefighters, who responded to more than 270 emergencies, saved five lives



A soldier of Company B, 1st Battalion, 126th Field Artillery, enjoys the company of two Iraqi boys and their dog.

and one F-16 aircraft, and prevented more than \$150,000 in other property damage.

The civil engineers returned to Madison safely in late December.

While the engineers were wrapping up their work in Balad, a 300-member aerospace expeditionary force package was just beginning a six-week rotation in Qatar, operating F-16s in support of military operations in Iraq. During the 45-day deployment, Madison aircrews flew 1,591 hours in 250 combat sorties over Iraq. The fighter package returned to Wisconsin in mid-January.

An organization with a global reach, the 115th also dispatched personnel to duty in Kuwait, Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates, Cyprus, Spain, Germany, Kyrgyzstan and Diego Garcia.

An 1158th Transportation Company convoy of HETs starts its journey from Kuwait into Iraq.



Rebirth of a nation

Eleven Wisconsin Army National Guard members mobilized last June for duty with Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix in Afghanistan. The Phoenix, according to ancient myth, was a large bird that would periodically die in flames, then rise from its own ashes to live anew; and the task force's mission is to help Afghanistan's rebirth as a nation.

Since joining JTF Phoenix, the Wisconsin Guard members have helped write the most recent chapter in Afghanistan's history and bring new life to a nation that had crumbled into chaos and decay.

Originally designated to round out the task force's Central Command Advisory Group, they found their roles changed considerably by "mission creep." At the time, Afghanistan's fledgling army was centralized near the capital city of Kabul but, with national elections approaching, strategists believed decentralization of the Afghanistan National Army would improve regional security and add legitimacy to the new national government.

In spite of the fact that the original timeline for decentralization was almost a year out, and much of the infrastructure was not in place to make it happen, planning proceeded anyway. Construction of the regional command sites began immediately in Herat to the west, Mazer-e-Sharif to the north, Gardez in the east and Kandahar in the south. The objective ultimately was to place an ANA corps in each of the regions.

Eight of Wisconsin's task force Soldiers immediately found themselves reassigned to make up the Regional Command



A diverse mission indeed: While deployed near Balad, Iraq, members of the 115th Civil Engineer Squadron were tasked with hoisting a camel into a truck. The camel, brought on base to give service members rides, wouldn't get back in the truck when it was time to leave.

Advisory Group in Gardez, while Kandahar became home for two others assigned to the RCAG for the southern region, and one remains with the Central Corps in Pol-e-Charki, near the capital. Their mission is to oversee the construction of the regional army posts, act as the command element for all American embedded training teams in their respective areas of responsibility, and to mentor the regional ANA corps leadership.

Only nine weeks after arriving in country and six weeks after assuming their regional command roles, Wisconsin's Afghanistan-based Soldiers played a critical role in the hugely successful national elections. The decentralized ANA they oversee boosted the security presence in each region, helping make the elections safe for the 10 million voters who braved threats of violence in order to cast their votes, which legitimized Hamid Karzai as Afghanistan's first democratically elected president. Much of what was learned in Afghanistan's national election ultimately served as the blueprint for the more recent successful elections in Iraq.

Since that time, these decentralized commands have taken part in regular attacks on Taliban and Al Qaeda forces, engaged in presence patrols, assisted with the "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration" efforts, and undertaken weapons and ammunition searches in towns and villages.

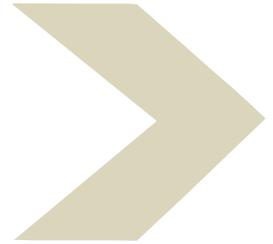


Members of the Afghanistan National Army begin their morning with stretches and physical training.

AFGHANISTAN



Soldiers of Task Force Phoenix enjoyed an 'Indian Summer' just two months ago, but patrols are increasingly difficult now due to frigid temperatures and deep snow.



Other missions, other locations

Not all the deployments of Wisconsin Guard members were in Southwest Asia.

For aircrews and ground support personnel of Milwaukee's 128th Air Refueling Wing, the destination of a recent AEF rotation was Guam. The central Pacific island served as a base for aerial refueling operations for six weeks. From Guam, the Milwaukee tankers fueled military aircraft crossing the ocean or operating in and around Guam.

Another deployment had members of the 128th Air Control Squadron supporting operations in the Washington, D.C., area. The capital region has received a lot of extra military security support since September 11, 2001, including combat air patrols flown by Madison's 115th Fighter Wing in the months following 9/11. More recently, security was beefed up for events ranging from the funeral of former President Ronald Reagan to the Jan. 20 inauguration of President George W. Bush.

Halfway into the fourth year since the Attack on America, Soldiers and Airmen of the Wisconsin National Guard continue to find new and valuable ways to serve the nation. ■

DDR is the process in place to strip warlords of their armies and weaponry and reintegrate them into the mainstream — many end up joining the ANA, which has doubled in size to over 20,000 since last July.

The majority of the fighting and insurgency that occurs in Afghanistan happens in the eastern and southern regions where most of Wisconsin's Soldiers are located. It is these two regions that contain the border with Pakistan, where infiltration of insurgents and expatriated Taliban occurs. The Taliban are originally from the Kandahar area.

The Wisconsin Guard Soldiers are over halfway through their year-long tour. Next up on their agenda? The spring elections to determine the political leadership in each of the regions. Security will continue to be a priority as the next piece of the puzzle is put into place for Afghanistan's new democracy.

And there is always Osama bin Laden, who intelligence experts currently believe is located in one of these two regions.

(Lt. Col. Mike Gourlie, Wisconsin Army National Guard, provided this account of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix by e-mail from Afghanistan.)

Home again

For four Wisconsin Army National Guard units, early 2005 brought an end to one-year missions in the Middle East.

The 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment is made up of soldiers from both Illinois and Wisconsin, with the headquarters in Springfield, Ill., and a detachment in Madison, Wis. The public affairs troops returned Jan. 18 to a welcome, led by Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton, at the La Crosse airport. (The 139th MPAD is featured in "Telling the Army's Story," Page 14.)

Lawton also led welcome-home events for the 232nd Personnel Service Company in Madison, Company B of the 118th Medical Battalion in Waukesha, and the 264th Engineer Group in Chippewa Falls. All four units had mobilized the same day — Dec. 7, 2003 — and they came home within weeks of one another.



Sgt. 1st Class Gary Everingham, 232nd Personnel Services Company, gets a big hug from a co-worker, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Sandy Johnson, as the unit returns to Volk Field from Kuwait Jan. 27.

QATAR

Reach Out

By Kelly Bradley
At Ease Staff

Matt: "I didn't think there was a problem until I talked to another veteran from a different conflict. I told him I could imagine crashing my car and dying and how unimportant that would be compared to dying in combat. I felt I could die anywhere at anytime now that I was home, but over there I didn't focus on it or I wouldn't have been able to function. The vet told me, 'You'll see death everywhere, around every corner. You'll see it more and it comes out. Recognize where it's coming from — where you stored it for months and months.'"

True stories from Wisconsin National Guard members and their families reveal how hard adjusting to life after combat can

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

The National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder says that a traumatic experience produces emotional shock and may cause emotional problems. Because everyone responds differently to traumatic events, some of the reactions may be more prevalent than others, and some reactions may not be experienced at all. The most common problems after a trauma are:

- Fear, anxiety
- Flashbacks, nightmares
- Jumpiness, trouble concentrating, trouble sleeping
- Anger, impatience, irritability
- Guilt, shame
- Grief, depression

be. Many returning veterans struggle to enter the lives they left behind — to reconnect with family and spouse, readjust to work or college and deal with emotions and experiences that stay with them.

The Wisconsin National Guard and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs offer readjustment support to the state's returning Guard members and other service members.

"This is no different than Soldiers or Airmen taking care of each other's physical needs," said Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard. "If someone was low on water, we'd give them water. If a Guard member and their family need help readjusting after a deployment, we'll help them."

The Wisconsin National Guard Family Assistance Center, based in Madison but with locations throughout the state (see Page 13), has set up a resource and referral program. The FAC assists any service member, whether active, Guard or Reserve.

"Anyone who's gone through a traumatic experience will have symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. What they go through is normal and they should talk about it," said Carolyn Morgan, lead Family Assistance Center liaison. "It's how they come out of it that matters."

Jen: "My husband had been home less than a month from Iraq, and already things between us were bad. He and I were arguing a lot and he still didn't seem fully re-engaged with life. This was not how I had pictured our reunion going. Once in the middle of the night, while dreaming, he rolled over in bed and raised his fist to punch me in the face — until he realized it was me. Then he turned over and fell back asleep. The next morning he didn't even remember doing it. I asked if he'd been dreaming about being back over there and he said yes. I knew we needed to talk to someone."

“We wouldn’t be doing our duty if we didn’t offer to help Soldiers, Airmen and their families.”

— Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson
Wisconsin Army National Guard Commander

The VA’s Madison and Milwaukee Vet centers provide free individual or couples counseling services to any veteran. They also offer job assistance, homelessness services and have hired an outreach person to talk with returning units and their families.

“If a service member lives more than a 50-mile radius outside Madison or Milwaukee, they are eligible for contract counseling services in their area,” said Jane Conway, a readjustment counseling therapist with the Madison Vet Center. “We’ll help them find something closer to home.”

Located throughout the state, VA medical centers offer a wide array of services for veterans. Besides treating any physical condition associated with stress, living environment or combat, the VA medical centers provide free, unlimited, individual and family readjustment counseling. A Madison-area support group has also been started.

“Combat is unlike any other life stress,” said Bob Kelter, Madison VA Medical Center chief of social work and chaplain service. “It leaves them shaken, full of adrenaline and in a hyper-alert state. Sometimes it requires help to get readjusted to living in civilian life.”

Even service members who served in a war zone but did not see direct combat can experience symptoms of PTSD.

“Symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder come from the stress of just being there,” Morgan said. “It comes from not knowing what’s happening day to day and living on the edge.”

Amy: “I feel guilty for being home while there are other Soldiers still there; it doesn’t feel like I did enough. In a weird way I miss the adrenaline rush, the living on the edge. It’s like I loved it, and yet, I never want to see it again. I am having nightmares. I never thought it’d be this hard (coming home). I debate every day whether I should talk to someone.”

“We wouldn’t be doing our duty if we didn’t offer to help Soldiers, Airmen and their families. There should be no stigma or embarrassment on the part of Guard members and families getting help,” said Denson. “We’ll work together on this. We owe it to them. We owe them any help they may need.” ■

Editor’s Note: Names of veterans and family members have been changed to protect privacy.

March 2005

RESOURCES FOR WISCONSIN VETERANS

Wisconsin National Guard Family Assistance Center
1-800-292-9464 www.wingfam.org
daniel.hanson1@wi.ngb.army.mil
carolyn.morgan@wi.ngb.army.mil

Madison VA Medical Center
608-280-7038 or 608-280-7085
www.madison.med.va.gov

Milwaukee VA Medical Center
414-384-2000
www.vagreatlakes.org/Milwaukee

Tomah VA Medical Center
608-372-3971
www.vagreatlakes.org/Tomah

Madison Vet Center 608-264-5342	Milwaukee Vet Center 414-536-1301
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Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs
1-800-WIS-VETS
<http://dva.state.wi.us>

Army One Source Program
Free information and referral service, open 24/7
www.militaryonesource.com 1-800-464-8107

www.myhealth.va.gov
MyHealthEVet
VA’s Gateway to Veterans’ Health and Wellness

www.ncptsd.org/topics/war.html
National Center for
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

www.pdhealth.mil
Department of Defense’s Deployment Health
Clinical Center for Post-Deployment Health

www.army.mil/ds3/About/html
U.S. Army Disabled Soldier Support System

Holding down the Home Front



Story and photo by
Capt. Jackie Guthrie
At Ease Staff

They don't deploy, don't carry a weapon and don't get paid for their service; but they're fighting the Global War on Terrorism. They are moms, dads, husbands, wives, sons and daughters holding down the home front — and they get lots of help from the Wisconsin National Guard Family Program.

"Soldiers and Airmen need to know we're here for their families when they can't be," said Lt. Dan Hanson, program director. The mission of the Family Program is to support families and units before, during and after deployment. The program has two components: Family Assistance Centers and Family Readiness.

Family Assistance Centers, known as FACs, are located throughout Wisconsin, with a main office in Madison and six other offices around the state.

"The primary mission of the FAC is to inform and emotionally support families," Hanson said, "so the military member can perform his or her mission." The Family Assistance Center staff puts family members, Soldiers and Airmen in touch with personnel or programs that meet their needs, such as the need for counseling or help with finances.

Family Readiness is a multi-part program, with readiness groups that build communication and emotional support networks. Each unit in the Wisconsin Guard has a family readiness group coordinator, a volunteer who works with the unit commander identifying and meeting family needs.

Team Khaki gives it their all during a tug-of-war at last summer's Youth Camp at Volk Field. The Wisconsin National Guard Family Program sponsors the annual youth camp for children of Wisconsin servicemembers.

“The first step is inviting new members to the military family,” said Vicki Edgren, readiness coordinator for the 115th Fighter Wing. The process varies from unit to unit, but the goal is to create a military family. In the 115th, new unit members fill out forms listing family contacts — spouse, parents, siblings, close friend, significant other — and provide phone numbers and postal and e-mail addresses.

“This helps me create mailing, phone and e-mail trees” for relaying information, Edgren said. During deployments she sends out packets outlining benefits, resources, deployment information, contacts, and much more.

“Knowing the system works provides a sense of security,” Edgren said.

To promote communication, the Family Program also sponsors an interactive family forum on its www.wingfam.org Web site. Each unit has its own page, accessed with a user ID and password. Family members can post pictures, read a letter from the unit commander, or just chat. During a deployment, unit members can use the site to communicate with family and friends back home without worrying about security issues.

The Family Program also sponsors a three-day youth

camp, held annually at Volk Field. The camp “gives kids a taste of the military environment where their mom or dad works,” said Lt. Col. Meg Blankschein, youth camp director.

Participants start camp on Friday evening, in age-graded “platoons,” each with 10 to 12 campers. Platoons are led by volunteers — off-duty Soldiers and Airmen who teach kids how to march, lead them to and from activities and provide a structured and fun military environment.

“Youth Camp builds camaraderie and expands the youth support network,” Blankschein said. “It’s important for children to know there are other youths going through the same experiences they are, especially during deployments.”

The Guard also hosts a youth advisory board, where children of Guard members can express their feelings and concerns about the military — views that are passed on to commanders. A similar program is offered for adults, and each year the Family Program hosts an informational and networking conference for all Family Program volunteers.

Service members and families wanting more information on these programs and other available resources can visit www.wingfam.org on the Internet or call **1-800-292-9464**. ■

Wisconsin Family Assistance Centers

State Family Assistance Center (FAC)

2400 Wright Street
Madison, WI 53704-2572

Toll Free: 1-800-292-9464

Office: 608-242-3414

Cell: 608-513-2890

Fax: 608-242-3482

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Carolyn Morgan

daniel.hanson1@wi.ngb.army.mil

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Madison FAC

64th Troop Command
2402 Bowman Street
Madison, WI 53704

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Cell: 608-219-8672

Fax: 608-242-3989

Bill Hasz

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Telling the Army's story

By Capt. Jackie Guthrie
At Ease Staff

Public affairs units tell the story of the U.S. military, but they also have stories of their own. What follows is one such story, culled largely from unit publications, family newsletters and unit members' personal e-mails.

Soldiers in the Illinois-Wisconsin 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment knew it would be their job to tell the Army story in Iraq, but at the outset their commander, Lt. Col. Paul Hastings, used his column in the unit's family newsletter to state the facts of life: "The public affairs mission is not the only mission we have. We all must be infantrymen first."

After weeks of training at Fort McCoy and in Kuwait to reinforce their infantry skills, the Soldiers embarked on a four-day convoy to northern Iraq, arriving in Mosul on Feb. 19, 2004.

"Except for my weapon in my arms I could hardly tell I was in Iraq," wrote Spc. Gretel Sharpee, recounting the convoy movement in an e-mail to friends and family. "It was dark and there wasn't anything around us so I started imagining I was in Wisconsin driving to Milwaukee or Madison... a comforting thought."

"I consider myself very lucky to have made it all this way unharmed. This place is

Staff Sgt. Brian Jopek is 'on air' with Radio TFO, a radio station the 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment started, while deployed to Mosul, Iraq.



not bad... this is an opportunity. I have a great camera in a city that needs its picture taken.”

In Mosul, the MPAD troops set up shop in a palace on a hillside overlooking the Tigris River. Their job was to support Task Force Olympia, the headquarters element for coalition forces in three provinces of northern Iraq. TFO controlled U.S. Army units including the new “Stryker” Brigade and Albanian commandos, among others.

“Our mission is critical to Task Force Olympia’s strategic communications program,” Hastings reported in the family newsletter, so that “our audience (i.e. Iraqi and American public, international media, Soldiers & families) can receive timely and objective information.”

The MPAD journalists, like their civilian counterparts, relied on embedding with units to collect stories. “Every embed has been fun and has allowed me to get out and tell the Army story,” reported Staff Sgt. Fred Minnick in a newsletter article. “During this time, we are taking photos, getting broadcast footage, conducting interviews and making friends.”

The public affairs troops, like other Soldiers, were in harm’s way. “Things are starting to heat up around here,” wrote Spc. Mary Flynn in a private e-mail. “A few days ago there were like 12 hits in downtown Mosul. Rockets fired, IEDs [improvised explosive devices], drive-by shootings... So I guess, keep us in your prayers like you have been and these emails should keep coming.”

On April 20, after weeks of preparation, the 139th hosted a media day; reporters from 35 Iraqi news outlets came to learn about Task Force Olympia.

“This is an opportunity... to tell the Iraqi people about projects and opportunities that are ahead,” said Hastings.

To serve another key audience, coalition Soldiers, the unit started a radio station, Radio TFO, which went live in May. Staff Sgt. Brian Jopek became the main

radio personality, putting to work his 10 years of radio experience.

Soldiers of the 139th also learned to operate Digital Video and Imagery Distribution System, a new broadcasting tool. “It’s the same technology used by CNN, NBC, major news networks,” Flynn explained in a message home. “We can upload our info to a satellite, it goes back to like Georgia and from there some crazy little elf whisks it off to the appropriate news markets.”

The new equipment allowed service members in Mosul to appear live on their local TV stations Stateside. “I think families need to be able to see the faces of the Soldiers here to reassure them that their loved ones are doing well,” said



On an embed in northern Iraq with the 133rd Engineer Battalion, Maine Army National Guard, Spc. Sara Roeske operates a video camera during an interview.





ABOVE: Spc. Mary Flynn videotapes children in Mosul, Iraq.

BELOW: Sgt. Fred Minnick looks over clippings of stories published in other newspapers during the last week of August 2004. Stories and photos by 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment journalists were also posted on numerous websites.



Spc. Sara Roeske.

As the Soldiers told the stories of the units around them, they also shared their observations with friends and family.

“Each day, I wake up and see a country that has so much potential,” Minnick e-mailed. “Since the last time I’ve written, I’ve seen some really cool things. One that comes to mind is a 13-year-old boy who speaks four languages. I also saw the reopening of a bridge that was bombed out by Saddam. The people were so thankful that we rebuilt it.”

Not all news was good, however.

On June 24, insurgents launched a series of coordinated attacks across Iraq that claimed 89 lives, some of them in and near Mosul. Minnick and Sgt. Jeremiah Johnson, 55th Signal Company (Combat Camera), joined a quick-reaction force to photograph the destruction caused by several car bombs.

The events of June 24 also demanded a global television hookup for Brig. Gen. Carter Ham, commander of Task Force Olympia. “It was the first real-world test of our new DVIDS equipment and it worked just like it was supposed to for live interviews with stations back to the states,” Sgt. 1st Class Julie Friedman reported after the attacks.

“I had to cover three memorial services in the space of 12 days,” said Friedman. One was for a fellow Wisconsinite from Friedman’s hometown of



Rhineland. “I had met him just a couple weeks before he died, and... was planning to write an article about him to send to the *Daily News*. Unfortunately, it ended up being a story about his memorial service.”

“The performance of our Soldiers continues to amaze me,” wrote Hastings in June. “Each understands the importance of the mission and does whatever it takes to get the job done. This was plainly evident throughout the day and night of the June 24 attacks. Our Soldiers are making a difference and for this we should all be proud.”

The 139th MPAD Soldiers continued to do the job — informing their various publics about daily events, open schools, trained Iraqi forces — despite big challenges to their emotional balance.

“We lost our friend Samir Monday morning,” Jopek e-mailed in late September. “He was one of our translators who worked here in the office and a good guy. He was kidnapped and then tried to get away. He was running from his kidnappers into a crowded market area. He begged people to help him as he was shot....”

In the first eight months the Soldiers supported 600 missions, published a weekly newsletter, produced 18 episodes of a bi-weekly television news program, and helped 17 major international media teams cover increased insurgent activity in the Mosul area in November.

“Our time in Iraq is fast coming to a close,” Hastings said in December. “There is no doubt that we will accomplish our mission and we will always continue to take care of each other.”

“Of course, we are all excited about returning home to our own families, but we will truly miss our Army family here,” wrote Friedman in a final commentary in the weekly TFO newsletter.

“Our job was to tell the Army story to the rest of the world and to highlight the work you, the Soldier, do every day.... Our rewards were many, but perhaps the highest compliments we received came from people who reacted with surprise when they learned we are not actually part of I Corps, but rather Army National Guard Soldiers from Illinois and Wisconsin.”

“As this deployment comes to an end,” wrote Minnick, “I know I will never be the same. I will never forget those who died, and now understand why old men cry when they stand before memorials....”

“I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade.... These are not just words — these are facts — our ethos. As our Soldiers proved...we live by these words.” ■



Spc. Gretel Sharpee pauses while documenting a mission with Gen. Ham and President Massoud Barzzani, the president of Kurdistan, in northern Iraq.



Sgt. 1st Class Julie Friedman interviews the mayor of refugee village Al Fayida, which received seven truckloads of food donated by the Islamic Supreme Council of America.





INTO THE

BLUE



“The green and blue worked very well together for the common cause of base security.”

— Col. John Cozad
128th Air Refueling Wing Commander



ABOVE LEFT: Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Alicia Dixon, left, and Army Guard Spc. Joshua Kammeraad report to their security supervisor, Air Guard Tech. Sgt. James Engeler, on the ramp at Truax Field, Madison.

LEFT: Dixon and Kammeraad perform a security inspection of a tank truck delivering jet fuel to the 115th Fighter Wing.

ABOVE: Kammeraad checks the identification of Staff Sgt. Russell Huggett, an Air National Guard electronics and environmental technician working on an F-16 fighter on the ramp at Truax Field.

For the past two years, more than 8,000 Army Guard Soldiers nationwide have been in the Air Force.

This joint operation came out of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The Air Force ordered a full-court press to protect worldwide USAF assets from terrorist threats, mobilizing thousands of Guard and Reserve Security Forces personnel to beef up the active-duty security presence.

“As they approached the end of their two-year mobilization,” recalled Col. Mike Smith, then commander of Milwaukee’s 440th Airlift Wing, an Air Force Reserve unit, “we were getting somewhat nervous about how to fill that significant gap.”

The gap was plugged by Army National Guard Soldiers temporarily assigned to the Air Force at the blue force’s request. In Wisconsin, 106 members of the 32nd Separate Infantry Brigade mobilized for Task Force Red Arrow, which began its official existence January 30, 2003. The task force was commanded by Army National Guard Lt. Col. Fred Falk.

The TF Red Arrow mission was to augment the forces protecting the Milwaukee Reserve unit and Wisconsin’s two Air Guard flying units: The 128th Air Refueling Wing, based in a separate location at Milwaukee’s General Mitchell International Airport; and the 115th Fighter Wing, flying out of Truax Field, Madison.

The Air Force gave the Army Guard troops a week’s training in air base security and then sent them out to pull guard duty alongside Air Force Security Forces troops.

Maj. Kent Hansen, commander of the 440th Security Forces Squadron, said he and others were impressed by “the professionalism and capabilities of the Wisconsin Army National Guard soldiers as they swiftly adapted to their new surroundings and began to accomplish what, until they arrived here, was a relatively unknown mission to them.”

Specific tasks included patrolling the restricted areas around air base flight lines and aircraft, staffing flight line and air base entry points, checking IDs and inspecting vehicles making deliveries to the air bases.

“The Task Force Red Arrow Soldiers have been nothing short of superb,” said Col. Joe Brandemuehl, commander of the 115th Fighter Wing.

It was also a winning situation for the Army Guard, Falk said. Through careful manpower management, he and his staff were able to rotate the Red Arrow troops to needed specialty training during their two-year mobilization period, so that all soldiers not previously qualified in their military occupations “will go back to brigade fully MOS-qualified.” Soldiers also attended needed career development schools, and those needing dental work got that done so they are now readily deployable, Falk said.

TF Red Arrow went out of business Dec. 2, 2004, when its two-year mobilization ended.

“The green and the blue worked very well together for the common cause of base security,” according to Col. John Cozad, commander of the 128th Air Refueling Wing. “Many friendships were made, many lessons learned and an atmosphere of respect and trust was generated. We were proud to have the Army Guard as part of our Wing. They will always be welcome at the 128th.” ■

Need water? We deliver



ABOVE: A 147th Aviation Battalion UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter dumps a load of water at the Dane County Regional Airport during a training exercise last fall.

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: A UH-60 crew fills a canvas bucket in a river north of Madison.

LEFT: The 147th acquired two heli-baskets which can be used for rescue missions or filled with equipment.

RIGHT: Sgt. 1st Class Dan Lindert, left, Sgt. Matthew Oliver and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Troy Bittner unfold a canvas water bucket to be sling-loaded beneath a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, while Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nicole Schuetz prepares for the flight.



Story and photos by Kelly Bradley
At Ease Staff

With Wisconsin National Guard members deployed all over the world, units are concentrating on preparing for mobilizations, deployments and family readiness. But our state's homeland defense mission continues as units train to stay ready and relevant.

In early 2003, the Madison-based 147th Aviation Battalion purchased two canvas water buckets to use in fighting fires. The buckets also provide an opportunity to train aircrews on flying with external loads — a mission requirement for the unit.

"These are resources worth developing, and it enhances our aircrew training," said Col. Jeff Paulson, deputy chief of staff for Aviation and Safety. "We are prepared to provide fire suppression services to Wisconsin and any other state that would need our help."

In October 2004, the 147th assisted the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in containing a controlled forest burn near Necedah. The unit dropped 13,000 gallons of water in a single afternoon.

"It's hard flying above fires," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Troy Bittner, an instructor pilot with the 147th. "You have to deal with other aircraft and smoke. Big fires create their own atmospheres which can cause temperature changes and up-and-down drafts."

The 400-pound canvas bucket can be folded up, loaded into a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and flown where needed. To fill the bucket, a crew member attaches it to the helicopter's external cargo hook before takeoff; then the pilots dip the bucket in any open body of water to fill it. As it sinks, the bucket fills with 640 gallons of water weighing 5,400 pounds. When the helicopter reaches the drop point, a crewmember pushes a button that opens a valve at the bottom of the bucket.

To prepare for these missions, crews train by hovering over water, filling the bucket and releasing the water. Unit members must also attend underwater rescue instruction to learn to use a breathing device and regulator.

"It's different flying over a big body of water. While we're filling the bucket, the rotor wash creates waves, which creates the illusion of movement, so you have to pick good reference points to stay steady," said Bittner.

"After the bucket is full and as we're flying to the drop point, we have to keep the aircraft very stable, and water will actually siphon off the top. We also have to compensate for the release of the weight while we're dumping the water."

The 147th also acquired two new heli-baskets. The large metal baskets can be used for rescue missions or filled with equipment such as a pressure washer, an aircraft de-icer, or a decontamination kit for quick response to a biological or chemical incident. ■

RIGHT: Gabriel Sayeg, 18, Milwaukee, starts a round of pushups in his barracks while an instructor watches.

BELOW: Discipline, integrity, courage, honor and commitment are the five key principles behind the Challenge Academy's motto, "The Courage to Change."

Pfc. Meghan Phillips



Pfc. Meghan Phillips



The Courage to Change



By Staff Sgt. Terry Ruggles
At Ease Staff

They sit in the barracks studying, just the two of them, while the others play ball outside.

David and Roberto need the extra book time so they can graduate from the Wisconsin National Guard's Challenge Academy at Fort McCoy. They have made a sort of pact: They have found an apartment to share after graduation, in a city far from their gang-ridden neighborhood in Milwaukee.

"They plan on enrolling in a technical college there to avoid their past and returning to that atmosphere," said Lawrence Hellerude, a senior team leader in the Challenge

Academy program.

Roberto is not the young man's real name; we have changed it for his safety. "I was involved in gangs and they were looking for me to like...kill me," he said. "My mom told me that they're looking for me, so that's why I'm moving out."

David was expelled from a previous Challenge Academy class and is now getting a second chance.

"The first time I came here I had trouble following orders and directions. Every time I was given an order I would throw a fit. I didn't take the opportunity to see what I had until I lost it.

"When I got kicked out, I went back home and I started using drugs and alcohol again and that was something I didn't want to do, that's something I didn't want to be around. I don't



Pfc. Meghan Phillips



ABOVE: Roberto does extra studying in the barracks while others play ball outside.

LEFT: Members of the Packers eat with the cadets during a visit in 2004. Later, the players gave a motivational talk and answered questions from the cadets.

Lt. Dwayne Countyman

want to become a low-life, I want to do something good and positive with my life.”

A Challenge Academy cadet “has to volunteer, it has to be his decision to come here to change his life,” Hellerude said. “It probably wouldn’t work out unless he saw a need to be here.”

After counseling, and with a lot of help from his mother, David is back at the Challenge Academy and trying to make the most of the opportunity.

Why?

“I’ve got a little sister, she’s twelve, and a little brother, he’s sixteen,” David said. “I want to set the example for them so they don’t start getting bad grades and get influenced by drugs and alcohol.”

David hopes to get good grades at technical college, join the Navy, become a Seabee — a member of the Naval Construction Battalions (CBs) — and see the world.

Roberto, born in Mexico and raised in the Milwaukee area, seems quiet, bent over like a man carrying a heavy burden.

“I’ve got a daughter,” Roberto said, “and my girlfriend told me that I need to change. So, that’s why I came over here, to change.”

Life at the academy is not easy. Cadets concentrate on the academy’s Eight Core Components: academic excellence, physical fitness, job skills training, service to community, health and hygiene, responsible citizenship, leadership/followership and life-coping skills.

The transition to the academy’s structured life can be very tough.

“When I first got here,” Roberto said, “I called my mom and asked if she could come and pick me up. She told me I had to stay.

“I stay here because of my daughter. That’s the reason I’m here.”

Gangs don’t let former members go easily. “I’m kind of scared,” Roberto said, “because once you’re out of the gang, they go for your family. That’s the thing I don’t want.”

He hopes to get a law enforcement degree and get a job with the United States Border Patrol along the U.S.-Mexican border. When he does so, he will have changed his life dramatically. His motive? “For my daughter,” he says.

The Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy provides information on its Web site at www.challengeacademy.org. ■



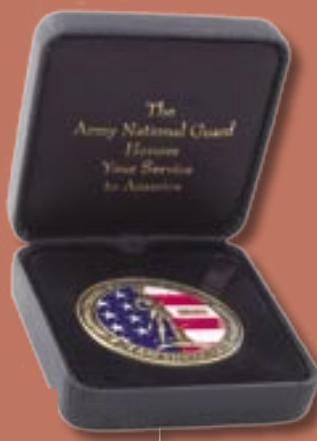
Staff Sgt. Terry Ruggles

Cadets hit their stride during a December run. One of the Challenge Academy’s Eight Core Components is physical fitness through daily exercise activities and intramural sports.



A member of the 264th Engineer Group, left, receives the Freedom Salute Campaign items in a ceremony in February. Lt. Col. Tim Donovan

Soldier Freedom Salute Items



Freedom Coin presented to Soldier.



Future Soldier Footlocker Kit presented to each Soldier's children includes the Daring Eagle board game, Mission Command game, Army National Guard trading cards and a *Guard Force* comic book.

Saluting Soldiers

By Capt. Jackie Guthrie
At Ease Staff

The Wisconsin Army National Guard has been honoring Soldiers mobilized for more than 30 days in Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, as well as their families and supporters.

The National Guard Bureau's Freedom Salute campaign, begun in December 2003, provides for a public recognition ceremony for each mobilized unit after its mobilization is complete.

"We can never thank our soldiers and their families enough," said Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening, the adjutant general. "The Freedom Salute campaign gives us a chance to show them our gratitude with a few small tokens of appreciation."

In ceremonies last year, more than 2,000 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers each received an encased U.S. flag, a Defender of Freedom lapel pin and certificate, and a numbered commemorative coin. Soldiers' spouses each received a National Guard Team

member lapel pin, and each Soldier's children received a "Future Soldier Footlocker Kit" that includes the Daring Eagle board game, Mission Command game, Army National Guard trading cards and a Guard Force comic book.

"It is so nice to do something that recognizes our families," said Sgt. Roger Dial, 147th Aviation Battalion. "It really made Mom proud — that's the best thing." The 147th deployed in March 2003 and served in Kuwait and Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Units also have the opportunity to name "distinguished" and "outstanding" community centers of influence, the persons or organizations the Soldiers feel supported them the most during their deployment.

Members of the 32nd Military Police Company, who mobilized in March 2003 and served in Iraq until June 2004 as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, honored their family support group leaders as community centers of influence during the unit's Freedom Salute ceremony.

"Mary Kay Kulla and Sherry Salsbury

were honored because of their outstanding work as family support group leaders," said Capt. Scott Southworth, commander of the 32nd MPs. "They devoted themselves to all the families of the 32nd MP Company by providing information, fundraising and personal support."

"It was such an honor to be described as a 'center of influence,'" Kulla said. "But even more important was that every family was honored" for the support given and sacrifices made during the deployment.

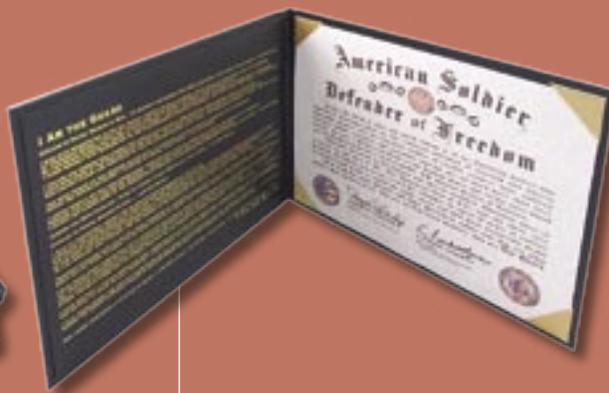
The unit gave Kulla a mounted Minuteman statue and Salsbury a framed Army National Guard flag mosaic print.

"The ceremonies allow us to recognize Soldiers and their families in a formal, dignified environment," said Southworth, "showing them the importance of their service and sacrifices."

Freedom Salute ceremonies are expected to be held soon for the 232nd Personnel Services Company; Detachment 1, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment; and Company B, 118th Medical Battalion. ■



Flag case with Freedom Salute medalion honors the Soldier and family.



Defender of Freedom certificate presented in a leather case honors the Soldier for dedication to defending our country.



Employer Freedom medal and lapel pin recognizes those employers who supported their employee/Soldier during their extended absence.

Wisconsin Military Achievement Awards

Story by Pfc. Meghan Phillips
Photos by Sgt. Jim Wagner
At Ease Staff

Cheers and applause resounded in the state Capitol rotunda Sunday afternoon, Nov. 7, as 83 reserve component service members received Wisconsin Military Achievement Awards for 2003-2004.

“Your dedication and service too often is taken for granted, but today I want you to know that I recognize and appreciate the

sacrifices that all of you in this room have made for our country,” said Gov. Jim Doyle, guest speaker for the ceremony.

“The reserve component has a more vital role in the defense of our nation than ever before,” Doyle noted.

The Military Achievement Awards are given annually or biennially to outstanding enlisted members of the seven reserve components: Army and Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Naval Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve. Each component is allocated a number of awards based on its Wisconsin strength relative to the other components.



Doyle praised the families and employers of Wisconsin reservists for their support and noted the unique character of the ceremony itself.

“This awards ceremony — the only one of its kind in the country — is just another example of how much our state supports our military personnel,” he said.

This year’s ceremony marked the 40th year of the awards. Over the years a number of corporations and organizations have sponsored the ceremony. For the past several years the main sponsor has been the Wisconsin Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. ■



LEFT: Wisconsin’s state Capitol Rotunda provides a stunning backdrop to the Military Achievement Awards on Nov. 7, 2004.

RIGHT: Members of Wisconsin’s Army and Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Naval Reserve, Air Force Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve listen as Gov. Jim Doyle speaks at the 40th annual Wisconsin Military Achievement Awards.

2003-2004 Wisconsin Military Achievement Award Winners

Wisconsin Army National Guard

Pfc. Sara Bartlein
 Sgt. Martin Beausoleil
 Sgt. Rebecca Bender
 Sgt. Justin Bomkamp
 Staff Sgt. Christopher Corbin
 Sgt. 1st Class Todd Effinger
 Sgt. Andrew Elgersma
 Sgt. Stuart Engelke
 Sgt. Jeffrey Erisman
 Staff Sgt. Paul Formolo
 Sgt. Kimberly Freimark
 Spc. Darren Habermehl
 Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Hilgendorf
 Staff Sgt. Ryan Hudson
 Cadet Bryan Huebsch
 Sgt. Daniel Jackan

Cadet Mark Jepsen
 Staff Sgt. Troy Johnson
 Sgt. Scott Kainz
 Sgt. Samantha Kotula
 Sgt. Daniel Marenda
 Sgt. Kerry McAllen
 Sgt. 1st Class Jason Meyers
 Sgt. William Nething
 Staff Sgt. Russel Nyberg
 Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Preder
 Staff Sgt. Carl Pregel
 Sgt. Joseph Rasmussen
 Sgt. Johnny Simmons
 Sgt. 1st Class Robert Thomas Jr.
 Sgt. Elizabeth Vacek
 Sgt. Carlos Valentin
 Sgt. Christopher Voelker

Sgt. Kari Wagner
 Sgt. Nathaniel Weier
 Sgt. Benjamin Wenzel
 Sgt. 1st Class Adam Wohlwend

Wisconsin Air National Guard

Master Sgt. Frederick Busdicker
 Staff Sgt. Timothy Humpal
 Tech. Sgt. David Kind
 Senior Airman Shawn Kneeland
 Senior Master Sgt. Philip Rentmeester
 Senior Master Sgt. Jeffrey Rohloff
 Senior Airman Nathan Simonis
 Tech. Sgt. Douglas Tremain
 Senior Airman Kristina Villwock
 Master Sgt. Delbert Williams

A YEAR IN THE GUARD

This chart shows 2005 annual basic pay received by Wisconsin National Guard members for 12 weekend drills and 15 days annual training. It does not include allowances, special pay or income received by Guard members who perform additional duty.

Grade	Years of Service														
	< 2	2	3	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26
Commissioned officers															
O-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26,110	26,110	26,110	26,110
O-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23,810	24,152	24,648	25,513
O-8	16,847	17,399	17,765	17,867	18,324	19,088	19,265	19,990	20,198	20,822	21,726	22,559	23,116	23,116	23,116
O-7	13,999	14,649	14,950	15,189	15,622	16,049	16,544	17,038	17,533	19,088	20,401	20,401	20,401	20,401	20,504
O-6	10,375	11,399	12,146	12,146	12,192	12,715	12,785	12,785	13,511	14,796	15,550	16,303	16,732	17,166	18,009
O-5	8,649	9,744	10,418	10,545	10,965	11,218	11,772	12,178	12,702	13,505	13,888	14,266	14,695	14,695	14,695
O-4	7,463	8,639	9,216	9,344	9,879	10,453	11,167	11,724	12,110	12,332	12,461	12,461	12,461	12,461	12,461
O-3	6,561	7,438	8,029	8,753	9,172	9,632	9,930	10,420	10,675	10,675	10,675	10,675	10,675	10,675	10,675
O-2	5,669	6,457	7,437	7,688	7,846	7,846	7,846	7,846	7,846	7,846	7,846	7,846	7,846	7,846	7,846
O-1	4,922	5,122	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191	6,191
Commissioned officers with more than four years of service as enlisted members or warrant officers															
O-3E	-	-	-	8,753	9,172	9,632	9,930	10,420	10,833	11,069	11,392	11,392	11,392	11,392	11,392
O-2E	-	-	-	7,688	7,846	8,096	8,517	8,843	9,086	9,086	9,086	9,086	9,086	9,086	9,086
O-1E	-	-	-	6,191	6,612	6,856	7,106	7,351	7,688	7,688	7,688	7,688	7,688	7,688	7,688
Warrant officers (Army)															
W-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11,651	12,051	12,451	12,855
W-4	6,780	7,294	7,504	7,710	8,065	8,415	8,770	9,116	9,475	10,036	10,395	10,747	11,111	11,470	11,836
W-3	6,192	6,451	6,715	6,801	7,079	7,397	7,816	8,230	8,669	9,000	9,328	9,470	9,616	9,933	10,251
W-2	5,446	5,758	6,030	6,228	6,397	6,863	7,220	7,484	7,743	7,920	8,069	8,353	8,634	8,920	8,920
W-1	4,809	5,203	5,467	5,637	6,091	6,365	6,607	6,878	7,058	7,220	7,485	7,685	7,685	7,685	7,685
Enlisted members															
E-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,193	8,378	8,612	8,888	9,165	9,609	9,985	10,382	10,987
E-8	-	-	-	-	-	6,706	7,003	7,186	7,407	7,645	8,075	8,293	8,664	8,870	9,377
E-7	4,662	5,089	5,283	5,541	5,742	6,089	6,284	6,478	6,824	6,998	7,162	7,263	7,603	7,823	8,379
E-6	4,033	4,437	4,632	4,823	5,021	5,469	5,643	5,836	6,006	6,066	6,107	6,107	6,107	6,107	6,107
E-5	3,695	3,942	4,132	4,327	4,631	4,893	5,085	5,146	5,146	5,146	5,146	5,146	5,146	5,146	5,146
E-4	3,387	3,561	3,753	3,943	4,111	4,111	4,111	4,111	4,111	4,111	4,111	4,111	4,111	4,111	4,111
E-3	3,058	3,250	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446	3,446
E-2	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907
E-1	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594	2,594

Annual pay rates are rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

Wisconsin Guard members on active duty

As this magazine went to press in early March, more than 1,570 members of the Wisconsin National Guard were serving on active duty — receiving active duty pay and benefits.

Compensation for active duty service — as with Guard pay — is based on rank and time in service. These are some examples of active duty basic pay for one year's service:

- Army Specialist or Air Force Senior Airman (E-4) with four years service — \$22,536.
- Army Staff Sergeant or Air Force Tech Sergeant (E-6) with 12 years — \$33,348.
- Army Master Sergeant or Air Force Senior Master Sergeant (E-8) with 22 years — \$49,512.
- Chief Warrant Officer 3 (W-3) with ten years — \$44,664.
- Captain (O-3) with eight years — \$55,044.

Guard members on active duty are also eligible to receive non-taxable allowances for subsistence and housing.

Based on the U.S. military's historic custom of providing rations as part of a service member's pay, Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) is meant to offset the costs for service members' meals. BAS is currently \$183.99 a month for officers, Enlisted personnel receive \$267.18 each month.

Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) is an allowance to offset the cost of housing when service members do not receive government-provided housing. Individual BAH rates depend upon location, pay grade and whether or not a service member has dependents.

Pay and benefit charts are available online at www.dod.gov/militarypay.

New Close Combat Badge debuts for Soldiers

Some Soldiers who fight in close ground combat, but do not qualify for the Combat Infantryman Badge because they are not infantry, will now be eligible for a new Close Combat Badge.

The CCB recipient must be an armor, cavalry, combat engineer or field artillery Soldier in a specialty likely to engage in direct combat and must be assigned or attached

to an Army unit purposefully organized for direct combat. In addition, the Soldier must be personally present and under fire while engaged in active ground combat.

The Army plans to announce specific rules and regulations for the new award later in March, and the actual badge should be available in the fall through unit supply and in military clothing sales stores.

Events

Youth Camp 2005

Volunteer and camper applications for the 2005 Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp are available. The camp will be held August 12-14 at Volk Field.

Applications are available by contacting the Family Program office and will soon be online at www.wingfam.org. The camp is intended for children, between the ages of 8 and 17, of Army and Air National Guard members. Early application is encouraged as space is limited.

Volunteers can choose from a variety of positions such as counselors, activity support, administrative support, public affairs, logistics, security, cooks, fund raising and medical. Children of volunteers are guaranteed a spot at camp.

For applications or questions call the state Family Program office, (800) 292-9464 or (608) 242-3414. Youths and volunteers who would like to participate should complete the application and return it, along with application fee, to Joint Force Headquarters, Attn: Family Program, Youth Camp, P.O. Box 8111, Madison, WI 53708-8111.

Medical Conference

Guard and Reserve medical personnel are invited to a dual continuing education conference sponsored by the 13th Medical and Dental Detachment at Volk Field April 1-3. The event will consist of two conferences side by side: One for enlisted emergency medical technicians (Military Occupational Specialty 91W) and one for officer-rank medical professionals including doctors, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and dentists, plus enlisted dental technicians.

This is the first iteration of a conference the organizers hope will be repeated every two years, according to Capt. Mark Christman of the 13th MEDD.

The enlisted EMT conference should count for the required periodic recertification of skills needed for the 91W MOS. The officers' conference will present military lecturers on a variety of topics, some unique to the military (e.g., deployment procedures for medical personnel) and others of general medical interest, applicable in civilian and military practice.

Rooms are set aside at Hotel Volk for attendees. There is no conference registration fee, but a small voluntary nonrefundable donation will be collected for snacks and coffee. Meals will be catered for enlisted personnel; officers will dine on their own. The Volk dining facility is being renovated; its availability during the conference is unknown. Point of contact for questions and reservations is Capt. Mark Christman, 262-896-0568.

Armed Forces Week

The Milwaukee Armed Services Committee will sponsor a series of Armed Forces Week events during the period May 14-28:

- The 128th Air Refueling Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, will kick off the festivities with a military display Saturday and Sunday, May 14-15, including musical performances by the 84th Division Army Reserve "Railsplitter" Band.

- On Monday, May 16, the Wisconsin Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve will host "Breakfast with the Boss," an annual event designed to educate employers about their employees' military service.

- The 440th Airlift Wing will host a Civic Dinner Dance on Thursday, May 19.

- On Armed Forces Day — Saturday, May 21 — the Milwaukee Navy League will host a dinner and dance.

- The following Saturday, May 28, is "Armed Forces Day at Miller Park," with special Brewers tickets available through the Coast Guard Group Milwaukee.

For more information, call 414-482-6100, or visit the committee's Web site at www.armedforces.org.

Red Arrow Reunion

The 32nd Division will hold its 86th annual convention and reunion Aug. 18-22 at the Concourse Hotel in Madison. Events include tours of the Veterans Museum and State Capitol, business meetings, memorial service, farmers market and the annual banquet. To register call Allen Wiesner at 414-354-6707. Call the Concourse Hotel (1-800-356-8293) for room reservations.

Fort McCoy Open House

Fort McCoy will host its annual Armed Forces Day Open House, rain or shine, on Saturday, May 21 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Activities scheduled for the open house include: Civil War, WWI, WWII, Korean, and Vietnam war displays; guided tours of the installation; training displays; interactive shooting van; military equipment; face painting; personalized dog tags; refreshments; and more. All activities will be located at Fort McCoy's Commemorative Area. For further information call (608) 388-2407.



Col. Todd Nehls, commander of the Wisconsin contingent of Task Force Phoenix, confers with Afghan nationals in the field. Read about Task Force Phoenix and other mobilized Wisconsin National Guard units starting on page 6. U.S. Army photo.

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