



@ease Express

May-June 2011



[Click here](#) to find out about the recent Vigilant Guard exercise. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Spec. Alyson Swanke



@ease Express

2010 NGB Media Contest winner

May-June 2011

Volume 3, Issue 3

Official Newsletter of the Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard

<http://dma.wi.gov>

The Adjutant General:
Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar

Deputy Adjutant General Army:
Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson

Deputy Adjutant General Air:
Brig. Gen. John McCoy

Director of Public Affairs:
Lt. Col. Jackie Guthrie

At Ease Editor:
Vaughn R. Larson

Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs

157th Maneuver Enhancement
Brigade Public Affairs

115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

128th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

Volk Field Combat Readiness
Training Center Public Affairs

How to Reach Us

E-mail: vaughn.r.larson@us.army.mil

Phone: (608) 242-3056 Fax: (608) 242-3051

Department of Military Affairs;

Attn: Vaughn R. Larson

2400 Wright Street; Madison, WI 53708-8111

Submissions:

For photo or story submissions,
please call (608) 242-3056

or e-mail vaughn.r.larson@us.army.mil

roll call



4 National Guard, state and local agencies respond in real time to mock disasters



10 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers advance to NGB Best Warrior Competition



14 Opportunity translates into enlistment for Iraqi interpreter



20 Medical conference allows for hands-on training opportunity



on the cover

Members of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing assist in the setup of medical triage lanes during a Vigilant Guard event at Volk Field on May 16. For more information, see the story on Page 4. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spc. Alyson Swanke

- 3** FROM THE TAG
- 7** NICARAGUANS OBSERVE VIGILANT GUARD
- 8** 115TH FW TAKES PART IN NATO EXERCISE
- 12** GOVERNOR THANKS GUARD MEMBERS
- 13** WISCONSIN'S FIRST V.I.P. CLASS GRADUATES
- 15** DRILL SERGEANTS IN THE NATIONAL GUARD?
- 16** COMMUNICATION EXERCISE A SUCCESS
- 17** HANGER EXPANSION AT 128TH ARW
- 18** SECOND TAKE-BACK EVENT BETTER THAN FIRST
- 19** A VISIT WITH WOUNDED WARRIORS
- 22** TAKING ON THE BOSTON MARATHON
- 23** WISCONSIN WINS GUARD MARATHON
- 24** TOP TROOPS AWARDED AT ESGR BANQUET
- 25** WISCONSIN GUARD TAKES THE GOLD
- 26** UNIFORM CHANGES ANNOUNCED
- 27** MERITORIOUS SERVICE
- 28** VETERANS, FAMILIES, RETIREEES

The Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard's **At Ease Express** newsletter is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of **At Ease Express** are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, or the Department of the Army or Air Force. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Officer.

From the TAG

Recently the Wisconsin National Guard and dozens of other federal, state, local and volunteer agencies took part in a major exercise on disaster response in various communities across the state.

Vigilant Guard is a U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) program conducted four times a year in different regions of the United States, to test National Guard capabilities developed since the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks as well as Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The exercise shows how local, state and federal agencies would collaborate in response to a real emergency.

Our homeland security strategy builds upon existing training and programs, and culminates with a periodic capstone training event. Vigilant Guard is that capstone event. This exercise was designed to put pressure on our emergency management response network, and help us identify any weaknesses.

Imagine responding to chemical spills — some small, some large — and tornado damage which also smashed homes and businesses. Imagine moving inmates from a prison threatened by rising flood waters. Imagine coordinating relief efforts for earthquake evacuees in the Midwest. Imagine losing power because of a cyber attack on the



Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, is given a tour of the decontamination and medical lanes by Maj. Shaun Riffe, Minnesota National Guard's 682nd Engineer Battalion, during a CBRNE (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Explosives) Emergency Response Force Package exercise, part of a Vigilant Guard event at Volk Field. 112th Mobile Public Affairs photo by Spc. Alyson Swanke

power grid. Imagine a suspicious, possibly hostile vessel lurking off the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Now imagine responding to all those scenarios at the same time, and you get a sense of the scope of Vigilant Guard.

Approximately 3,000 individuals were involved in this exercise. Many were with National Guard units in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Ohio. There were also county emergency units, Wisconsin Emergency Management and other

state agencies, federal agencies and volunteer organizations such as the American Red Cross and Salvation Army. Responding to disasters involves many moving parts and effective communication and coordination tools.

It was a big undertaking, but being the first military responder in the event of a disaster is a big responsibility. The military often says it trains as it fights, which means that training conditions should mimic those on the

battlefield. Similarly, when we prepare for responding to natural or man-made disasters, the training should be as realistic as possible. There is no 9-to-5 mentality here — the Wisconsin National Guard worked 24/7 on this exercise, just as we would in a real emergency. This is what is required to live up to our motto of “Always Ready, Always There.”

As Vigilant Guard drew to a close, Gov. Scott Walker stopped by Joint Force Headquarters to deliver a thank-you message in honor of Armed Forces Week to the Wisconsin National Guard. Allow me the honor of relaying that message to each and every one of you. Your governor is proud of your service, and so are the citizens of the great state of Wisconsin.

I am proud of the Wisconsin National Guard's Joint Staff for its support, planning and preparation for this exercise. I am equally proud of Wisconsin Emergency Management for its assistance and coordination. Both organizations did a great job throughout this challenging exercise. More importantly, however, I am proud of all our Soldiers and Airmen that serve Wisconsin and America — thank you for your selfless service!



this is only a **TEST**

Members of the 434th Chemical Company, Minnesota National Guard Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Explosives Emergency Response Force Package (CERFP), provide aid to a role-player posing as an injured victim during a Vigilant Guard event at Volk Field on May 16. CERFP teams provide immediate response capabilities to large contaminations. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spc. Alyson Swanke

1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard

Senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders are pleased with the results of a massive disaster response exercise — including scenarios of tornadoes, flooding, chemical spills, power outages due to cyber attacks, earthquake evacuees, and an encounter with an armed drug-running boat — which wrapped up May 19.

Called [Vigilant Guard '11](#), the exercise is a dress rehearsal for disaster that tested how well the Wisconsin National Guard responds to calls for assistance from local communities.

“This type of exercise — the homeland mission, the types of disasters that have happened here — this is what the National Guard is about, in addition to our warrior role with the Army and the Air Force,” said [Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar](#),

adjutant general of Wisconsin. “This was an extraordinary event — it stressed our system and strengthened our relationships with local and federal partners.”

Nearly 3,000 participants representing up to 48 federal, state, county, volunteer and private agencies — including 12 Wisconsin National Guard units, two Minnesota National Guard units and one Ohio National Guard unit — took part in the exercise, which coincided with two

other federal disaster exercises concerning a notional earthquake along the San Madrid fault.

Lt. Col. Steven Sherrod, exercise director for Vigilant Guard, was happy with the end results.

“I believe we produced the largest, most complex Vigilant Guard as far as number of different activities and

Continued on Page 5

Vigilant Guard prepares Wisconsin National Guard, civilian agencies for real-world disaster response

Continued from Page 4

number of civilian agencies involved,” he said. “We still have a lot to learn about supporting our civilian partners.”

Col. Todd Nehls, chief of staff for the Wisconsin National Guard Joint Staff, said the value of the past week’s training was the opportunity to test existing plans and protocols “to facilitate a response of this magnitude, and manage it. There’s no doubt in my mind that we exceeded expectations.”

The three chief goals of Vigilant Guard were to task the joint staff with responding to requests for assistance and information as well as providing direction to subordinate units, integrate military responders with the civilian incident command structure, and to establish a contingency dual status commander authorized to direct both National Guard and other U.S. military assets.

“This is the first time we’ve ever exercised [the contingency dual status commander],” Nehls said. “It went very well.”

The week-long exercise consisted of several disaster scenarios in various Wisconsin communities. The largest scenario was at Volk Field — a Wisconsin Air National Guard base near Camp Douglas, Wis. — which simulated the portions of the city of La Crosse devastated by two tornadoes and a major leak at a collapsed chemical plant. Approximately 1,000 National Guard troops from Ohio and Minnesota who specialize in rescue and decontamination operations were brought to Volk Field for the exercise.

“These units are located near us geographically, and they specifically exist to provide support to domestic emergencies similar to the one that we are simulating,” said Capt. Matt Mangerson, a Vigilant Guard planner. “The Ohio units came in via ground and military air travel — nine different flights over the course of about eight hours. The logistics were very intense. The ground transport for both

Load masters for a C-130 cargo plane prepare to load a vehicle from the Wisconsin National Guard’s 54th Civil Support Team at Truax Field May 17 as part of a Vigilant Guard exercise. In this scenario, a portion of the 54th CST, along with members of

Minnesota and Ohio included a very large convoy that consisted of all their unit equipment.”

While Wisconsin was importing National Guard troops, it was exporting them as well. Collaborating with the Federal Emergency Management Administration’s National Level Exercise 11 and U.S. Northern Command’s Ardent Sentry 11 — both focused on scenarios

of earthquakes along the Midwest’s San Madrid fault — the Wisconsin National Guard deployed part of its [54th Civil Support Team](#) as well as members of civilian agencies to Indiana on C-130 military cargo planes.

Flooding was another scenario that played out in various communities. The Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 132nd Brigade Support Battalion delivered

the state Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin State Patrol, deployed to Indiana to assist with earthquake relief. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue [Click on this photo to see video.](#)

sandbags to Prairie du Chien, and manned traffic control points once there. A situational awareness team maintained contact with the Wisconsin National Guard’s Joint Operations Center in Madison during the scenario. Wisconsin Emergency Management, Crawford County Emergency Management and the

Continued on Page 6

Multiple scenarios test Wisconsin National Guard's ability to respond to disasters

Continued from Page 5

Prairie du Chien Correctional Institute staff also participated.

Chemical spills were another recurring theme in this exercise. Besides the chemical plant leak in La Crosse, chemical spill scenarios played out in [Jefferson County](#) and Kenosha County. In the latter case, a traffic collision between a van, a coach bus and a tanker truck filled with hydrochloric acid was the notional challenge for approximately 100 first responders from 23 agencies. The Wisconsin Army National Guard's 457th Chemical Company in Burlington also took part in the scenario, decontaminating victims at a nearby hospital.

"If you don't practice doing it — the hospitals getting drained down, the EMTs, paramedics and firefighters working — you won't learn it," said Rob Hamm, a Somers Fire Department captain. "It's important you get to practice it in real life and real time."

"This [exercise] is as close to real life without anybody getting hurt," said 2nd Lt. Jeremy Garfoot, a platoon leader with the 457th. "It helps our young Soldiers get some insight of what we might do in the field or in the civilian world."

A portion of the Wisconsin National Guard's 54th CST and the Minnesota National Guard's 55th CST joined forces with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, Ozaukee County Sheriff's Department, Ozaukee County Hazardous Materials Team and Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department tactical team to respond to reports of an armed drug trafficking vessel navigating along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Portions of Vigilant Guard were not necessarily hands-on, but still required Wisconsin National Guard members to respond to requests. For example, while elements of the 54th CST actually flew to Indiana, the scenario called for approximately 2,000 Soldiers and Airmen to deploy in support of earthquake relief.

This required members of the Joint Staff and others to determine which Wisconsin National Guard assets were available and develop a plan to activate and deploy those troops in short time. This "notional deployment" was also used for search and rescue scenarios requiring military aircraft as well as sending troops to support local authorities in Wisconsin communities.

Vigilant Guard was also the first time Wisconsin Emergency Management staffed the State Emergency Operations Center around the clock for an exercise. In declared emergencies, WEM receives requests for assistance from the county level, and coordinates with the Wisconsin National Guard Joint Operations Center to determine if National Guard assets should be used to meet that request.

"Our role was integral," said Mike

Hinman, departing WEM administrator. "The National Guard and the scenarios all had a nexus with local communities."

Hinman said Vigilant Guard gave county agencies the opportunity to address emergency response practices or policies that needed rehearsing or improvement, even if they were not directly related to scenarios laid out in Vigilant Guard.

"We were able to write it into the exercise," Hinman said.

He also said Vigilant Guard clarified individual responsibilities concerning executive orders, and provided WEM cross training opportunities in planning, operations, logistics and the emergency mutual assistance compact, as well as an opportunity to test new Emergency Operating Center procedures. The cyber attack scenario highlighted ways

to improve coordination with local government and industry.

Dunbar praised WEM's role in the exercise.

"It was awesome to see them get into the fight like that," he said. "It highlights the professionals that work on the civilian side of the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs."

Sherrad reiterated the importance of civilian agency interaction in Vigilant Guard.

"One of my best experiences working on this project is the diversity of the civilians I got to work with," he said. "In almost every scenario, civilians were in the lead. That's where we really shined — the depth of civilian involvement."

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/wiguardpics/sets/72157626574889301>

Distance learning: Nicaraguan delegation observes Vigilant Guard 2011



Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The chief of civil defense and five other Nicaraguan emergency management officials visited Wisconsin May 16-18 to observe emergency management practices as part of Wisconsin's State Partnership Program.

The primary purpose of their visit was to observe the crisis planning and response phases of the 2011 Vigilant Guard exercise—a training exercise with multiple disaster scenarios in different communities throughout the state in order to assess the Wisconsin National Guard's ability to assist state and local agencies in response, coordination and collaboration to several emergencies.

The six members of the Nicaraguan delegation observed the response to a chemical spill and collapsed building rescue after two tornadoes struck the city of La Crosse. The simulated exercise took place at the Regional Emergency All-Climate Training Center (REACT) at Volk Field—a training facility that certifies emergency responders in a variety of catastrophic disaster management techniques. Brig. Gen. Mario Perezcassar, the Nicaraguan chief of civil defense, and the other Nicaraguan emergency management officials observed the steps, precautions and technology needed to decontaminate victims from hazardous material and how different agencies interact with one another.

"We have seen what we were promised we were going to see," said Perezcassar. "It's evident that there was an incredible amount of planning for this exercise and the excellent execution and dynamics of the exercise have been well-organized," he added.

Both the Wisconsin National Guard and the Nicaraguan military have similar roles in emergency management. The Nicaraguan Civil Defense works in conjunction with SINAPRED (National System for the Prevention, Mitigation

and Response to Disasters) just as the Wisconsin National Guard works with Wisconsin Emergency Management to plan and respond to natural disasters and other emergencies that take place within their respective borders. Like Vigilant Guard exercises, the Nicaraguan military prioritizes involving the civilian population during natural disaster exercises.

"This exercise is great hands-on-learning," said Perezcassar.

"One of the goals for our state partnership program with Nicaragua is to bring a team of their search and rescue Soldiers to conduct an exchange at our REACT Center," said Capt. Joe Davison, State Partnership Program coordinator. "As the Wisconsin National Guard will be forming its own Chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) in 2012, there is great potential for future collaboration with the Nicaraguan Civil Defense Forces, especially their humanitarian rescue unit."

The Nicaraguan delegation visited Joint Force Headquarters to see how the exercise was controlled from the State Emergency Operations Center and Wisconsin Joint Operations Center. They also visited the 147th Aviation Battalion and got a sense of Wisconsin's rotary wing capabilities. On their final day in Wisconsin, in addition to sampling Wisconsin cheeses, the Nicaraguan delegation met with Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman, who explained the Wisconsin court system and the history of the State Capitol.

Wisconsin's relationship with Nicaragua dates back to 1964, when 18 sister-city relationships developed as a result of President Kennedy's "Alliance for Progress" initiative. This initial people-to-people connection was part of the impetus to establish the State Partnership Program with the Nicaraguan Defense Ministry in 2004. The Wisconsin-Nicaraguan partnership is one of 63 similar partnerships within the National Guard. 

F-16s return to Iceland after a mission June 6, as Airmen from the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, participate in Operation Northern Viking, training in Iceland with NATO forces focusing mainly on air-space protection. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Ryan Roth



115th Fighter Wing part of NATO exercise in Iceland

Senior Airman Ryan Roth
115th Fighter Wing

KEFLAVIK, Iceland – Approximately 100 Airmen from the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, were among 450 NATO military members to take part in [Operation Northern Viking 11](#) June 6-10, focusing mainly on air-space protection and interoperability between forces.

The biennial exercise was held at the former Keflavik Naval Air Station, near the coast of southwest Iceland, miles from the snow-covered volcanoes that have erupted into world-wide news the past two years. The volcanic eruption at [Grimsvotn volcano](#) in Iceland was officially declared over May 28 according to a situation report from the Icelandic Meteorological

Office and the University of Iceland's Department of Earth Sciences.

Northern Viking — an annual United States-led NATO and partner nation interoperability exercise based on a 1951 bilateral treaty between the government of Iceland and the U.S. — validates participant readiness and their ability to respond quickly to conflict or emergency situations.

“This exercise allows a venue for NATO forces to come together, train as we would fight, operate within the European theater and this kind of training provides that continuity from year-to-year to sustain our combat capability,” said Lt. Col. Brian Vaughn, Northern Viking exercise director.

Military members from Denmark, Italy and Norway trained with the United

States. The Icelandic Coast Guard assisted in the exercise as well. Of the nearly 450 participants, roughly 150 were from the U.S. — including active duty Airmen from the European command and the Air Force Reserve. Iceland is the only member of NATO without an active military.

Participants from the U.S. military included the 115th Fighter Wing; the 459th Air Refueling Wing, Joint Air Base Andrews, Md.; the 100th Air Refueling Wing, Royal Air Force, Mildenhall, England; the 1st Combat Communications Squadron and the 603rd Air Operations Center, Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

“This is a great opportunity for Euro Fighters to fly together with F-16s and learn from each other,” said Maj. Eros Zaniboni, a pilot with the 36th Fighter Wing, Gioia Del Colle, Italy.

NV11 is the first time Euro Fighters from Gioia Del Colle have trained with U.S. and Norwegian F-16s. Likewise, 115th Fighter Wing pilots have never flown against the Italian Euro Fighter 2000 Typhoon aircraft.

Two Norwegian DA-20 electronic warfare aircraft performed electronic warfare operations with fighter jets, implementing communication and radar jamming during the training exercise. A KC-135 Stratotanker from the 459th Air Refueling Wing, Joint Air Base Andrews, Md., is also gaining joint-force training, having already refueled numerous U.S. and Norwegian F-16s.

“In a real world scenario, it is always going to be a coalition of partners,”

Continued on Page 9

Staff Sgt. Jeff Braun, a crew chief with the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, buckles in Lt. Col. Charles Merkel, a pilot with the 115th, as they participate in Operation Northern Viking. 115th Fighter Wing photos by Senior Airman Ryan Roth [Click on this photo to see video.](#)



Staff Sgt. Jason Varnum, a crew chief with the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, prepares an F-16 for takeoff in Iceland June 4.



Tech. Sgt. Alex Fiebig and Senior Airman Chris Gibbs, both electrical and environmental systems technicians with the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, replace an anti-collision light on an F-16 in Iceland as their unit participates in Operation Northern Viking.

115th FW part of NATO's 'Northern Viking' exercise

Continued from Page 8

said Lt. Col. Ivan Rismo, detachment commander for the Norwegian forces. "The fact that we are able to operate with [our partners] and different fighters will allow us to be interoperable with these other units at any given time."

The pilots were not the only ones training together in Iceland.

"The controllers that talk to these pilots are shared between the Norwegians, the U.S. and Italy," Rismo said. "We are very happy to see this exercise come through and it is very interoperable in the way we are doing it."

The importance of this type of training is still evident today, 60 years after the treaty.

"All the big conflicts we have seen have always consisted in an alliance, whether in NATO or in a coalition," Rismo said.

To maintain and improve interoperability, NATO members take advantage of the opportunity to train at one location together.

"Being together where we can all talk together in the same room and get a common picture of how we need to operate is paramount," Rismo said.

The 1st Combat Communications Squadron and 603rd Air Operations Center, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, from United States Air Force Europe also contributed to NV11.

Col. Erik Peterson, 115th FW operations group commander and fighter pilot, believes the training received through NV11 can be invaluable toward ensuring NATO partners adapt and plan accordingly to ensure mission success in real world engagements.

"The exercise is a prime example of how partner countries can act collectively to address common, natural challenges," Peterson said. 

BEST *in the* MIDWEST

■ Wisconsin Army National Guard sweeps regional Best Warrior competition

Spc. Cassandra Monroe
Iowa Army National Guard

Two Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers from the same infantry battalion took top honors at the Region IV Best Warrior Competition May 9-12 at Camp Dodge, Iowa, and will now advance to compete against the best Soldiers across the National Guard for national honors in August.

“Another first for the great state of Wisconsin,” said Wisconsin Army National Guard State Command Sgt. Major George Stopper.

Thirteen Soldiers from Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin competed in events such as the Army Physical Fitness Test, combat water survival test, M-9 pistol and M-4 rifle qualification, day and night land navigation, confidence course, a nine-mile road march with a 35-pound backpack, an essay and an appearance board in dress uniform.

Sgt. Steven Dahl of Oconto, a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry in Menomonee, Wis., bested six other competitors in the Soldier category at the Best Warrior Competition. He was a specialist when

Continued on Page 11

Sgt. Brandon Swanson low crawls beneath a bridge of barbed wire May 11. Swanson and 12 other Soldiers ran the course as part of the Region IV Best Warrior Competition held at the Iowa National Guard's Joint Maneuver Training Center, Camp Dodge, Iowa. Iowa Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Chad D. Nelson

Wisconsin Army National Guard sends two Soldiers to National Guard Bureau's Best Warrior competition

Continued from Page 10

the competition began at the unit level last fall. (Click [here](#) for related story.)

Sgt. Brandon Swanson of St. Croix Falls, a member of Detachment 1, Headquarter Company, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry in Chippewa Falls, Wis., beat out five other competitors in the noncommissioned officer category.

"It's a lot of weight off my chest, that's for sure," Dahl said. "I'm relieved now — hopefully next year I can sponsor one of my Soldiers and take it again to give him a heads up."

"The competition was great, and all the competitors were phenomenal, and in the end I was not expecting to win," Swanson added. "I can't even describe how I felt. I was just as happy when [Dahl's] name was called out because we're from the same company."

When unit-level competitions began, both Dahl and Swanson were members of Company A. Swanson has since transferred to Headquarters Company.

For Staff Sgt. Matthew Ward, a Green Bay, Wis., native and infantryman with Company A, preparing Dahl for the competition was second nature.

"I'm [his] squad leader actually, and I looked at him and said, 'You can pick anyone you want as your sponsor,' and he ended up picking me," Ward said.

Ward and Dahl prepared for the competition by modeling their training to mirror past competitions and by utilizing local training areas.

"We used a local armory to train, and we also came up to Ft. McCoy twice to do some training as well," Ward said. "Whatever resources we could get hold of, we used."

"I feel extremely proud, but he put in the effort," Ward continued. "He had the motivation and dedication to put in the work — that's what gave him the edge."

Staff Sgt. Joshua Eads, Swanson's sponsor, was also pleased.

"The level of competition was tough,

At right, Sgt. Brandon Swanson plunges into the deep end of Urbandale High School's swimming pool during the Region IV Best Warrior Competition on May 10. Iowa Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Chad D. Nelson

but I think it brought out the best in him," Eads said. "Sgt. Swanson is literally a human sponge — he's one of those rare individuals that can take information from any given source at any type of level and he automatically processes it and applies it. He was born to do stuff like the Best Warrior Competition."

According to Command Sgt. Maj. John Breitsprecker, the senior enlisted advisor for the Iowa Army National Guard, the regional Best Warrior competition evaluated each Soldier's skill as a war fighter.

"Every one of the tasks we test here are Soldier-type skills, to include the combat water survival tasks, the marksmanship training and the physical readiness," Breitsprecker said. "It's all tied at what warriors do, either in combat or during their unit missions."

"I can't swim and water survival always gets me, but I did it no problem this time," Dahl said. "I surprised myself — when the going gets tough, you just have to stay calm and not worry about anyone else but yourself."

Stopper said that the appearance board was a critical piece in evaluating the mental aptitude of competitors.

"It's a fairly intimidating event because [there are] three senior command sergeants major sitting in front of the room with the Soldier and [they] fire questions at them," said Stopper, who was also the president of the enlisted board. "We had 90 questions in a period of 30 minutes, but the reason why we give them so many questions is that so when they get to the next level in the competition, they've had exposure to a lot of different topics."

Spc. Matthew Kosloski, a Lansing, Mich., native and a cable systems installer maintainer with the 126th Network Signal Company, 46th Military Police Brigade, was chosen as the runner-up for the Soldier of the Year. Staff Sgt. Patrick Helderman of Medina, Ohio, a military policeman with 838th Military Police Company, was chosen as the runner up for the noncommissioned officer of the year.

This will mark the third straight year the Wisconsin Army National Guard has competed at the National Guard Bureau's Best Warrior Competition, held Aug. 2-8 at the Warrior Training Center, Fort Benning, Ga. 



Gov. Walker thanks Wisconsin National Guard troops

1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard

The commander-in-chief of the [Wisconsin National Guard](#) expressed his appreciation to some of those citizen Soldiers May 20 as part of [Armed Forces Week](#).

“I wanted to come by and offer my thanks on behalf of my family and on behalf of the state of Wisconsin,” [Gov. Scott Walker](#) said during a brief visit to Joint Force Headquarters in Madison. “We appreciate the commitment you make, the excellence you bring — we don’t take that for granted.”

Walker spoke of attending numerous sendoff ceremonies and funerals for fallen service members when he served as Milwaukee County executive.

“I like the welcome home ceremonies best of all,” he said. “I consider every one of you my guys. As commander in chief, I won’t be satisfied until everyone who is currently deployed is welcomed home.”

[Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar](#), adjutant general of Wisconsin, recalled how Walker reached out to him shortly after winning the election last year with the idea of holding a [tailgate party for the troops](#) during the Jan. 1 Rose Bowl game.

“His appreciation for the military is real,” Dunbar said. 

Brig. Gen. John McCoy, commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, presents Gov. Scott Walker with a coin and a handshake in Witmer Hall at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison on May 20. Walker thanked Wisconsin National Guard members for their service as part of Armed Forces Week.

Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson



Veterans In Piping graduates first Wisconsin class

Sgt. Eric Liesse

112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

GREEN BAY — Fourteen veterans are ready to enter the workforce as certified pipefitters with accelerated welding training, following their June 3 graduation from the first [Veterans in Piping](#) class at the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Camp Williams.

"It's not just a good thing to do, it's the right to do," said [United Association](#) General President Bill Hite, who created the program in 2008 in Washington state. "It's an honor . . . to make a difference in these men and women's lives." Camp Pendleton, Calif., also has a VIP program.

The VIP program started its first class at Camp Williams in January, finishing its 20-week, free program Friday (June 3), certifying the veterans as second-year apprentices in the United Association at the Wisconsin Pipe Trades Association 99th Annual Convention. The program — a partnership between the United Association, [Wisconsin Army National Guard](#) and the [Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development](#) — provides training and also guarantees job placement for the graduates.

"When you're on active duty, you're behind the curve on employment," said graduate and Wisconsin Army National Guard member Sgt. Paul Anderson of Oconto Falls. "Thankfully, that is starting to change with programs like this." Anderson will work in UA Local 400 in Green Bay.

"To be given an opportunity like this is unheard of, and I can't think of anywhere else [this could happen]," said Sgt. Mike Dunlap, another graduate and Wisconsin Army National Guard member. Dunlap will work in UA Local 539, Minneapolis.

Of the 14 graduates, 10 are currently Wisconsin National Guard members. The program placed 10 graduates around

Wisconsin, two in Minneapolis, one in South Dakota and one in North Dakota.

"We also take brotherhood and sisterhood seriously," said Mike Arndt, the UA training director. "All 14 of them said thank you. But you all need to realize you don't need to thank anyone. We need to thank you."

"This program is not about a job — it's

about a career," Hite said. After five years of apprenticeship, UA members can earn journeymen status and may earn up to \$68,000 per year.

Graduates include: Justin Engelkens, Belleville; Zackary Romanowski, Chippewa Falls; Cassidy Gunderson, Grand Chute; George Maxwell, Green Bay; Michael Johnson, Menominee;

Charles Buari, Middleton; Charles Cluney, Oak Creek; Paul Anderson, Oconto Falls; Benjamin Eskola, Osceola; Nicholas McGeshick, Rhinelander; Cody Fegraeus, Superior; Geoff Brand, Wausau; Michael Dunlop, Wausau; and Jacob Nieft, Wisconsin Rapids.

The second Camp Williams class will begin in mid-July. 📷



Abbab Taj Mousa — known as “Cowboy” — finalizes his enlistment process into Wisconsin’s National Guard by signing a contract June 3 at Milwaukee’s Military Entrance Processing Station. Mousa is scheduled to leave for basic training in Fort Jackson, S.C. in November and will become an automated logistical specialist with Company A, 257th Brigade Support Battalion in Whitewater.



Abbab Taj Mousa recites the oath of allegiance administered by Lt. Col. Julie Gerety during a ceremony held at Milwaukee’s Military Entrance Processing Station June 3. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photos by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez

From Baghdad to Badgerland: New Soldier enlists in Wisconsin National Guard

Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

One of the newest Wisconsin Army National Guard enlistees already has served overseas with one of its units.

Abbab Taj Mousa — affectionately known as “Cowboy” — recited the oath of allegiance during a June 3 ceremony at the Military Entrance Processing Station in downtown Milwaukee. But the Baghdad native worked as an interpreter with members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 332nd Rear Operations Center during the unit’s 2007 deployment to Iraq.

After obtaining a visa from the U.S. Embassy, Mousa came to the United States in August 2009 to be with family.

“Wisconsin was the first place I came

to in America,” Mousa said. “I chose to enlist in Wisconsin because of the friends I already have in the Wisconsin Guard.”

Becoming a Wisconsin Guardsman took nearly three months. “The process was frustrating at times because I’m not yet a citizen,” Mousa said. “The interpreter job I was hoping for was closed, so I had to explore other options. Once I get my citizenship, I plan to go to officer candidate school.”

Mousa is scheduled to leave for basic training in Fort Jackson, S.C. in November. After learning the basic Soldiering skills, he will continue on to become an automated logistical specialist where he will handle the distribution of nearly every type of supply. He will then join the ranks of Company A, 257th Brigade Support Battalion in Whitewater. 

Traditional Wisconsin Guardsman first to fill assigned drill sergeant role

Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette
Wisconsin Army National Guard

The “Smokey the Bear” brown campaign hat. The cold stare that freezes blood in the veins. The loud, piercing voice barking commands. Anyone who has spent any time in an Army boot camp can recognize these trademark signs of a drill sergeant — the tough-as-nails noncommissioned officer charged with turning civilians into Soldiers in roughly two months.

Until recently, drill sergeants primarily resided in the active Army and in Army Reserve training regiments. Now, however, drill sergeants are showing up in the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion, preparing young recruits for basic training. The newest drill sergeant — a member of Detachment 1, Company B who graduated drill sergeant school June 2 — is the first traditional Wisconsin Army National Guard member to fill that role.

“It’s a very challenging program, but also very rewarding,” said Sgt. “LJ” Maple of Mosinee, who drills on a monthly basis just like his recruits. “I’m able to give our new recruits the tools they will need to succeed and become honor graduates at the schools they attend.”

Maple — whose wife, [Senior Master Sgt. Jessica Maple](#) was recently selected as the national level Airman of the Year — joins Staff Sgt. William Shafer, who works full-time with the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion, as one of the few National Guard Soldiers to graduate from the course.

“I’ve always wanted to do this and

help new Soldiers, and this program was a great way to bring back the latest and greatest teachings to our Soldiers here,” Maple said. “The Wisconsin National Guard having a drill sergeant means we can bring back the best techniques for training our Soldiers and set them up for success.”

The benefit of having drill sergeants training National Guard recruits include similarity of instruction from the recruit sustainment companies to basic training, and less culture shock from one training environment to the next.

The Recruiting and Retention Battalion has 12 drill sergeant positions for six companies. 1st Sgt. Joshua Reed, a recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer in charge stationed in Green Bay, said that some Army Reserve drill sergeants have transferred into the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s recruit sustainment companies, and that two other part-time National Guard Soldiers attended drill sergeant school but did not transfer to the battalion.

“Maple is our first home-grown drill sergeant on the traditional side of the house,” he said.

The U.S. Army Drill Sergeant School, established in 1967, is now the Army’s only drill sergeant school after the schools at Fort Benning, Ga., and Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., closed in 2007 and 2008, respectively.

Sgt. “LJ” Maple, a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion, graduated from drill sergeant school at Fort Jackson, S.C. on June 2.

Submitted photo



Agencies learn effectiveness of communications systems



A communication exercise involving approximately 250 people from more than two dozen federal, state, local and volunteer agencies as well as the Mexican military surpassed expectations, according to a Wisconsin Emergency Management official.

“Agencies from all levels of government are establishing communication,” said Kent MacLaughlin, state communication and warning officer with WEM. “They’re meeting others, learning about other [communication] platforms — exactly what we’re supposed to be doing.”

The three-day exercise, sponsored by the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) Vital Connection Program and hosted by WEM and the Wisconsin National Guard, was held April 13-15 at the 64th Troop Command headquarters building in Madison, next to Truax Field and the Joint Force Headquarters. There, numerous command platforms were staged and communication capabilities were briefed for agency representatives.

“SIMCOM is intended to bring together communication assets from all levels of government,” MacLaughlin said. “It’s not the first time we’ve done this, but in the event of an incident we’d like to know each other and develop some trust.”

The exercise included communication assets from the Wisconsin National Guard,



Keith Tveit (front, far right), fire services coordinator for Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM), provides a tour of the WEM mobile communications center to fellow participants in the SIMCOM ‘11 exercise April 13. The exercise, was sponsored by the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) and hosted by Wisconsin Emergency Management and the Wisconsin National Guard. Wisconsin Emergency Management photo by Jerad Albracht

Wisconsin Emergency Management, several state departments, several county agencies including two from Illinois, amateur radio operators from around the state, the Civil Air Patrol, the Ohio National Guard’s Homeland Response Force, the South Dakota Air National Guard, NORTHCOM, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

and representatives of the Mexican Army and Navy.

Participants got the chance to work together in four groups on practical exercises involving incident command structures — used in multi-agency operations — and incident action plans. In addition to interfacing with different communication platforms, participants

had to overcome terminology barriers.

“The Department of Defense has its own language and so do [non-military agencies],” MacLaughlin explained. “We really had to learn to speak in plain language, or we wouldn’t understand each other.”

The exercise also demonstrated the need to include federal emergency radio frequencies in the network of mutual aid communication channels. MacLaughlin said WEM will propose adding those frequencies this year.

There were no major communication problems during this year’s exercise, MacLaughlin said, and participants were pleased with how the event was organized and run. He credited the Wisconsin National Guard’s Joint Operations Center with planning the exercise and meeting the challenge of cold, wet weather.

“We feel that we’re much better prepared to respond to an event because we’ve done this,” he said. “It’s good to get the equipment out, get new people to work with it and to make sure it works in a non-emergency situation.”

SIMCOM is expected to return in 2012, though without NORTHCOM sponsorship it will return to a one-day event.

“One of the first things to consider in an incident is how do we communicate?” MacLaughlin said. “We’ve made some giant leaps forward with this exercise.”

128th Air Refueling Wing expands hangar capabilities

Sr. Airman Ryan Kuntze
128th Air Refueling Wing

A \$4 million expansion at the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing in Milwaukee that will make maintaining a larger fleet of stratotankers much more efficient is weeks away from completion.

The project converts an airplane dock that previously could only accommodate the wings and forward portion of aircraft into a fully enclosed hangar that will allow for year-round painting and cleaning of KC-135R Stratotankers. According to Chief Master Sgt. Chris Chatham, 128th Air Refueling Wing maintenance operations flight chief, a detailed cleaning for stratotankers requires two days in an enclosed hangar. An isochronal inspection — fully reviewing, repairing and returning an aircraft to the flightline as mission ready — takes one month.

Corrosion is the biggest problem for today's aircraft, Chatham explained.

"It's always going to happen to these aircraft as they get older," he said.

Deployments near salt water require constant corrosion repair, and an aircraft deployed for even 30 days requires corrosion maintenance, he said.

Expansion began Sept. 13, 2010 according to Maj. Heath Duncan, 128th Air Refueling Wing civil engineering squadron commander. The project is expected to wrap up on July 10.

The project faced some challenges, such as winter's effects on the new foundation.

"We had to figure out a solution to these problems, and then execute the solution," Duncan said. He praised



Contractors from KPH Construction of Milwaukee continue work on expanding an aircraft dock into a \$4 million aircraft hangar at the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing in Milwaukee. Dual hangars will give a

greatly increased capability to the 128th Air Refueling Wing's maintenance squadron and improve efficiency by 40 to 50 percent. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by 2nd Lt. Nathan Wallin

KPH Construction and the architect and engineering firm Mead and Hunt for their continuing role in mitigating the construction challenges.

"We wouldn't have done this without this team," he said.

Dual hangars will greatly increase the 128th Air Refueling Wing's maintenance capability, Chatham said. The existing

hangar is used to great effect, but it is also the site for on-base functions regarding community interactions, such as the Civic Dinner Dance, or training events, such as base-wide annual training. With the new hangar, the maintenance squadron can continue its mission without interruption while also serving the needs of the base's population.

Furthermore, the 128th Air Refueling Wing will save money by reducing the amount of time spent maintaining each aircraft, Chatham said. This has become more important since the Wing acquired three new aircraft late last year, Chatham said.

"[This expansion will] increase our efficiency by 40 to 50 percent," he said. 

Take-Back effort exceeds last year's totals

The Wisconsin National Guard's [Drug Control Program](#) delivered 5.6 tons of expired, unused and unwanted prescription medication to the Drug Enforcement Administration's Milwaukee office May 2 following the [National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day](#) April 30. That is two-and-one-half times the pharmaceutical turn-in from Sept. 25, 2010 — the first national take-back event.

Wisconsin residents also turned in nearly 7,400 pounds of over-the-counter medications, which are not considered a controlled substance, to 138 collection sites operated by 123 law enforcement agencies.

The over-the-counter medications were destroyed in Milwaukee shortly after the collection. The discarded pharmaceuticals were destroyed by the DEA May 5 in Indianapolis.

James Bohn, assistant special agent in charge of the DEA Milwaukee district office, said the biggest challenge was the logistics behind coordinating the safe collection, transportation and destruction of the pharmaceuticals.

"Due to the combined cooperation and participation of local, state, and federal agencies, [National Take-Back Initiative] II was a tremendous success for Wisconsin," he said, "and once again demonstrated the overwhelming need for such a program."

Col. Mark Greenwood, director of the Wisconsin National Guard's Counter Drug Program, said that creating awareness of the need for the event and providing the right information was challenging, but ultimately worthwhile.

"The amount of prescription drugs turned in by Wisconsin citizens during this second Take-Back event was simply amazing," he said. "Our people did a great job — all of them had participated in the Take back event back in September, and were knowledgeable and experienced in how to transport the drugs.

"They were pleasantly surprised by the amount of prescription drugs turned in,"



Wisconsin National Guard Drug Control Program members assist personnel from the DEA Milwaukee District Office as part of the National Take-Back Initiative on May 2. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mike Hemberger

Greenwood continued, "but were well prepared to handle the volume because of the planning and coordination with DEA and community law enforcement beforehand."

National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day was initiated to give the public a free, anonymous opportunity to safely dispose of old or unwanted prescription medication. The two-fold impetus behind the take-back event: prevent prescription drug abuse or theft by removing supply, and keeping pharmaceuticals from contaminating the water supply. A 2009 national survey on drug use and

health indicated prescription drug abuse outpaced the combined use of cocaine, hallucinogens and heroin.

"There is a misperception among the public that prescription drugs are safer than illicit drugs since they are prescribed by a licensed medical provider," Bohn said. "However, when abused and not taken as prescribed, prescription drugs are just as dangerous as illicit drugs."

Greenwood said that Wisconsin is not immune to this growing danger.

"Our Wisconsin National Guard members live and work in many of these communities, and have a vested interest in

protecting them from this growing threat to their neighborhoods," he said.

Bohn said that the increased collection this year shows the ongoing need for this type of program in communities across Wisconsin.

"This program is so successful in Wisconsin due to the enthusiastic support received from law enforcement, community groups, and the Wisconsin National Guard," he said. "DEA could not have undertaken this enormous task without the cooperation and support received from countless partners and the public across Wisconsin and the nation." 

1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard

Following a line from the Warrior Ethos — “I will never leave a fallen comrade” — senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders visited a handful of their Soldiers in the Warriors in Transition program at Fort Knox, Ky., May 25.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard currently has 35 Soldiers in the [Warriors in Transition](#) program. Eight are assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Knox, intended for injured or wounded Soldiers who require at least six months of complex medical management. The remaining 27 Soldiers are participating in the Community Based Warrior Transition Unit, which allows wounded or injured Soldiers to receive medical treatment from health care providers near their home. Soldiers remain on active duty status while in the program.

The Warrior Transition Command is designed to provide a vast array of services, but no system is foolproof — any number of variables can impact a Soldier’s progress, impeding his or her return to productive service as a Soldier, or as a veteran in the community. The leadership visit is, in part, one way to ensure their Soldiers are satisfactorily engaged in the transition from injured to recovered.

“We’re here to support you,” state Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper told the six Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers present at the May 25 meeting. “We want you to know that we still really care about you.”

“We’re busy in the state, and we’re busy overseas,” said Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard. “But in the midst of all that, we want you to know that you are not forgotten — you are not lost to the Wisconsin Army National Guard.”

Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, agreed.

“Sometimes we can miss the obvious,” he said. “It’s important to me that you know your mission has not diminished — it’s just changed. Your mission is to get well.”



Warriors in TRANSITION

Dunbar invited the Soldiers to speak their minds about their time at the Warrior Transition Battalion. Given the opportunity, many chose to air their frustrations. Some remarked about their extended stay — one Soldier had been at Fort Knox since June of 2009, and another since December of that year. Others raised concerns about the post transportation system and its impact on their ability to keep medical appointments. Inconsistent flow of information and perceptions about case managers and Warrior Transition staff were also raised. One Soldier said the only change he would like to see is a greater opportunity for family members

to visit for extended periods of time, and others acknowledged the strain their stay at Fort Knox has put on relationships.

“These are some serious issues,” Dunbar acknowledged. “I believe the Army and Fort Knox have our best interests at heart, but that doesn’t mean these aren’t real issues.”

According to Maj. Gregory Majewski, executive officer for the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Knox, the Warrior Transition Command is not intended to be a hospice where the chief goal is relieving discomfort. The environment is modeled after a traditional Army “line” unit, with Army procedures

Pfc. Joshua Vlach, a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 273rd Engineer Company in Medford, speaks with Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, at the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Knox, Ky., on May 25. Senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders spoke individually with the Soldiers, who are undergoing lengthy medical treatment, to gauge their morale and quality of care.

Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

and professional cadre providing a structured setting that allows a Soldier to focus on healing. Each Soldier is assigned a primary care manager, nurse case manager and squad leader to coordinate their care with other medical professionals.

“Our main focus and mission is to support the warfighter and the war effort,” he said. “The rules are simple — go to formations for accountability. Make your appointments — that’s a big deal because missed appointments cost us money. Do [physical training] within the limits of your profile. You’re going to do some kind of job.”

For example, Spc. Ryan Mantz, a member of Detachment 1, 32nd Military Police Company in Oconomowoc — who has spent nearly two years at Fort Knox — performs mail clerk duties for the Warrior Transition program.

“Engagement is crucial,” Majewski continued. “Those that are engaged do the best, are the least stressed out, are the happiest.”

Some of the additional opportunities available to Warrior Transition Soldiers at Fort Knox include job fairs, college courses, internships, and volunteer positions at the Veterans Administration hospital in Louisville.

Stopper said that the Warrior Transition Command may never be perfect, but that Soldiers should not give up hope. Majewski agreed.

“This is a good program,” he said, “and it’s not going away. The Army is doing the best it can to take care of these guys.”

Wisconsin Army National Guard combat medics transport a mannequin via litter as part of a training event at the Wisconsin Military Academy on May 21. 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade photo by Sgt. Tiffany Addair

Sgt. Tiffany Addair
157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade
Public Affairs

Crawling on their bellies under barbed wire, while moving a patient strapped to a litter. Applying a tourniquet to a battlefield amputation in the dirt and grime of the field. Saving a life while getting everyone back to safety in one piece — just part of a recent weekend training event for more than 150 Wisconsin Army National Guard medical professionals.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard's third Army Medical Department (AMEDD) conference, held May 20-22 at Fort McCoy, gave medical professionals — those assigned to medical units as well as those assigned as medics or medical professionals in non-medical units — the opportunity to brush up on medical skills, train with new and familiar equipment and network with other people in the medical community around the state.

"The focus of the training was to get down to basics," said Capt. Shawn Murphy, physician's assistant with the Wisconsin Medical Detachment — the organization tasked with providing medical readiness support to all Wisconsin Army National Guard units. "It is important to always build on the basics. You add more skill sets and equipment at every level, but the fundamentals are always the same."

Through the [Wisconsin Military Academy](#), the Wisconsin National Guard training facility housed at Fort McCoy, the 68 whiskeys (combat medics), medical professionals and other medical military occupational specialties were able to receive valuable training in a field where continuing education is paramount.

The training was designed to be very realistic, helping Soldiers prepare for scenarios they may face in the future.

"It is really easy to be overwhelmed with a casualty," said Sgt. 1st Class Clint Vervoren, senior combat medic and training noncommissioned officer-in-charge with the 426th Regiment, based at WMA. "The lanes were designed to put a

Continued on Page 21

Going back to basics



Sgt. Kayla Wells, dental specialist with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 135th Medical Detachment, is evacuated via litter beneath a barbed wire obstacle at the Wisconsin Military Academy at Fort McCoy on May 21. 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade photos by Sgt. Tiffany Addair



Wisconsin National Guard combat medics carry a litter and patient through a culvert as part of an obstacle course combining medic skills with tactical challenges May 21 at the Wisconsin Military Academy.

Wisconsin Army Guard medical professionals strengthen skills from the ground up

Continued from Page 20

little stress on the medics so they can learn to focus and communicate effectively with counterparts to manage a casualty.”

Murphy echoed Vervorens’ words, stating that creating a little bit of stress during the training helps put the skills and knowledge into a deep-seated memory box.

While the weekend was concentrated on getting back to the basics, new technology aided in creating more realistic medical scenarios for Soldiers to respond to. Life-like simulators were used in place of traditional mannequins that were used in the past.

“The new mannequins are computer and trainer operated with multiple medical scenarios,” said Col. Kenneth Lee, Wisconsin Army National Guard state surgeon. “The mannequin responds to

the treatment rendered or not rendered. This type of training not only provides the necessary requirement to maintain certifications as EMT-B, but more importantly the expertise needed to provide advanced emergency care.”

Following the conference, Soldiers were wet, muddy and — in some cases — blood-stained from the mannequins’ simulated wounds. In spite of that, or perhaps because of it, the training proved immensely popular.

Lee was also very impressed with the caliber of training.

“I sleep soundly knowing that I can rely on the Wisconsin Army National Guard AMEDD NCOs to push the limits of our logistics, training and mission,” Lee said. “I am proud of the Soldiers that participated, as well as the leadership who were able to foresee the necessity of the realistic training scenarios.”

From Baghdad to Boston, Wisconsin Guard members answer marathon challenge

Sgt. Tyler Lasure

112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Running the Boston Marathon once is quite the accomplishment for any runner. Running it twice, on two different continents, is a rare feat.

Maj. Mike Yount, the brigade logistics officer for the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 64th Troop Command and a Baraboo native, and 1st Lt. Katie Berberich, the rear detachment administrative officer for the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and an Onalaska native, are members of the elite few who have done this. Yount and Berberich ran their first Boston Marathon as a "shadow run" while deployed to southern Iraq in April 2010. This race qualified them for the 2011 Boston Marathon held stateside.

"When the opportunity to enroll came we decided, 'Here's our chance to go for real,'" Yount recalled.

"Not many people get to say they have run the Boston Marathon — certainly fewer can say they have run it in Iraq and in Boston," Berberich added.

The two planned on running the original Boston Marathon since taking part in the shadow run last year. Once they were registered, the hardest part of the endeavor began — training.

"My goal was to improve from the last marathon," Yount said. The workload of a full-time logistics officer, along with the Wisconsin winter, didn't make the training any easier, but Yount had a partner in Berberich. They competed in the shadow run in Iraq together and decided to have a reunion tour in Boston.

Even though Berberich and Yount live in different parts of the state — Berberich in Onalaska and Yount in Baraboo — the two trained together.

"We were encouraging each other over e-mail and Facebook to keep up with the training and to stay focused," Yount said.



1st Lt. Katie Berberich and Maj. Mike Yount ran in the 2011 Boston Marathon in April. Last year they took part in a "shadow run" of the Boston Marathon while deployed in Iraq. Submitted photo

"We have put many miles in together," she said.

One of the biggest differences between the two marathons was the training. For the first race, they trained in the Iraqi desert with temperatures exceeding 100 degrees, but when they began preparing for this year's Boston Marathon they faced the freezing Wisconsin weather.

After 16 weeks of preparation, it was finally time to make the trek to Boston and realize their goal of running in one of the country's oldest marathons.

"The Boston Marathon is 'the' marathon to run," Berberich said. "There was so much sensory overload that the course just flew by.

"Running in the marathon was rewarding because of the pageantry they have," Yount said. "They really do it right."

Yount and Berberich ran the race

together, but they weren't the only veterans in the immediate area. Other recent combat veterans took advantage of a Boston Marathon program where deployed shadow run participants automatically qualify for the stateside race.

"It was very moving to be treated like a rock star just for doing what I volunteered to do," Berberich said of the veteran's program.

"Getting to run with over 100 other veterans was very rewarding," Yount said. "There, other veterans ranged from 82-year old veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars to recent veterans of Operation Enduring and Iraqi Freedom." [The race officials] brought us together and treated us well. The interaction with all of the veterans was the coolest part of the deal."

With their training behind them and

new friends made, the two began the grueling 26.2-mile run ahead of him. But the 16-week running program wasn't the only preparation the officers had in their corner.

"Military training instills 'heart,' which is what compels people to run a distance that most people would prefer to drive," Berberich said.

"The thing about marathon running is that it is nine-tenths mental, and the ability to focus and stick to a goal and plan helped," Yount explained. "When Things weren't ideal my military background gave me a leg up to mentally work through the 26-mile run."

The most memorable part of the four hours, 33 minutes and eight seconds the two ran the marathon?

"Crossing the finish line after four and a half hours and being motivated by the crowd and being able to feed off the crowd's energy and the energy of the other runners," he said. "It's a good feeling."

Yount encourages others to get out and run, especially at the marathon level,

"It's one of those things where you become part of an elite group just by doing it," he said. "If you're into it and motivated you can make it happen. Get a group of like-minded Guardsmen and build camaraderie — move toward an important personal goal."

"[Yount] has been a great mentor and running all the relay races and now the two Bostons are great memories," Berberich said.

Berberich also hopes to run the 116th Boston Marathon next year, either as a part of the veteran's program or through fundraising. Yount plans on running the Fox Cities Marathon later this summer, and has put together a group of active and retired Wisconsin National Guard members to run a 200-mile relay.

"It really is about the camaraderie," he said, "and the ability to get with folks that enjoy running and doing something that others rarely get a chance to do." 

Wisconsin National Guard marathon team top in championship race

LINCOLN, Neb. — After 27 years of close finishes, the Wisconsin National Guard marathon team can once again take a victory lap.

The Wisconsin team pulled out the closest victory possible in edging the Pennsylvania National Guard's marathon team at the 2011 National Guard marathon championship race held May 1. Just one second separated the first-place team from the runner-up, after the top three times for each team were tallied. Wisconsin's top three finishers averaged 2:55:21.

Staff Sgt. Jason Kirch, 106th Engineer Detachment, was the top Wisconsin finisher with a time of 2:53:42. Maj. Michael Western, 128h Air Control Squadron, was on his heels at 2:53:56, followed by Capt. Seth Kaste, 54th Civil Support Team, at 2:58:20.

The five-man Wisconsin team competed against teams from 43 states and territories. Tech. Sgt. Michael Zeigle, 115th Fighter Wing, took first place in the 55-59 age group with a time of 3:07:29, and Spc. Nathan Lee, 106th Engineer Detachment, finished in 4:08:37 to round out the Wisconsin team.

Western, a first-year team captain, said it was special to break through and win the team title.

"It's pretty cool, absolutely," he said. "We've always been somewhere in the top five and this is our first year winning."

Making the win extra special was the fact that Western was replacing a staple of the Wisconsin team and National Guard Marathon team as captain. Zeigle is expected to retire at the end of August after a 29-year career, also ending his stretch of competing in the marathon since it began in Lincoln in 1984. Zeigle was awarded a Wisconsin Air Force Commendation Medal during a ceremony held the night before the marathon for his

years of service and extensive running accomplishments.

"I think everybody running today ... that was kind of the extra thing that kept us rolling is [to] give a good race for Mike [Zeigle]," Western said. "It was pretty inspiring to know this is his last race and to win it for his last year here."

"This team has always been kind of competitive," he added. "We've always thought it was something we'd be able to do and to actually do it this year is neat, especially on Mike's last year."

Zeigle agreed.

"I was on the team the only other time Wisconsin won the championship," he recalled. "We have been on the podium many times since then, but the top spot always eluded us. The guys really did a great job to pull this off, and to win it by one second was icing on the cake."

"Every step of the race counted."

Western, Kirch, Kaste, and Zeigle all qualified for this year's All-Guard team, which competes in race events throughout the country and participates in recruiting and retention activities.

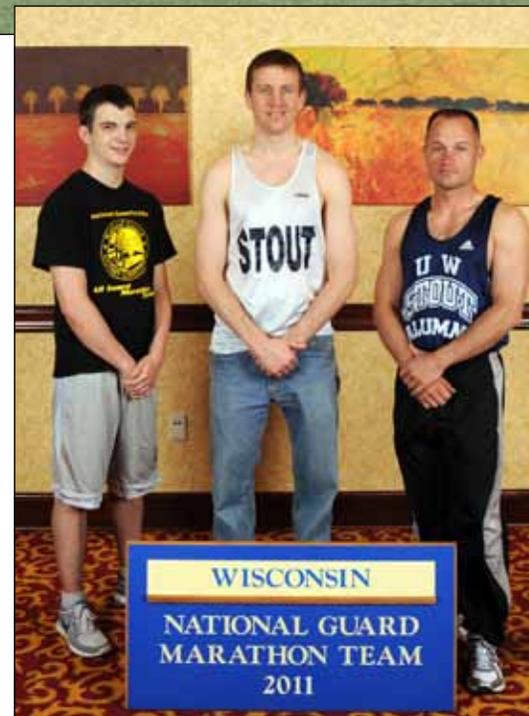
Western, Kaste and Kirch are extending a tradition of team running which began with Western and Kaste at Cadott High School and continued with Kirch joining them on the University of Wisconsin-Stout cross country team.

Zeigle said he would miss being part of the team as well as the Wisconsin National Guard.

"It is time to move aside and make room for the young troops," he observed. He plans to continue running and competing in biathlons.

"It will be different doing it as a civilian," he said.

Tech Sgt. Alex Salmon of the Nebraska National Guard contributed to this article.



Above, Tech. Sgt. Michael Zeigle (wearing green sweatband) completes his final National Guard marathon as a team member. He had competed in the annual event since 1984.

At left, Spc. Nathan Lee, Maj. Michael Western and Staff Sgt. Jason Kirch of the Wisconsin National Guard's marathon team. Nebraska National Guard photos



Master Sgt. Mike A. Schmaling of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing, Milwaukee, receives the Bong Award during the ESGR breakfast held at the Wisconsin Club in downtown Milwaukee on May 16. Pictured with Schmaling is Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin (left), and Brig. Gen. Dom Cariello, land component commander for the Wisconsin Army National Guard.



Sgt. 1st Class Richard P. Gerard of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 132nd Army Band receives the Bong Award during the ESGR breakfast held at the Wisconsin Club in downtown Milwaukee on May 16. Pictured with Gerard is Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin (left), and Brig. Gen. Dom Cariello, land component commander for the Wisconsin Army National Guard. 128th Air Refueling Wing photos by Tech Sgt. Thomas J Sobczyk

Service members, employers recognized during Armed Forces Week

Tech. Sgt. Thomas Sobczyk
128th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

Two Wisconsin National Guard members were among five Richard Bong Award recipients honored at the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) breakfast, held May 16 at the Wisconsin Club in downtown Milwaukee.

Master Sgt. Mike A. Schmaling, New London, a member of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing in Milwaukee, and Sgt. 1st Class Richard P. Gerard, Franklin, of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 132nd Army Band in Madison received awards alongside Staff Sgt. Edel A. Rojas, U.S. Air Force; Boatswain's Mate (Petty Officer) 1st Class Adam Kraft, U.S. Coast

Guard; and Sgt. Ryan M. Lackey, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve.

Hydro-Thermal Corporation, Waukesha, was recognized at the breakfast for its support of service members.

Bong Award recipients are chosen by their commanders for outstanding service and dedication. The award commemorates Maj. Richard Bong, a Medal of Honor recipient born in Superior, Wis., in 1920 who remains the top American ace fighter pilot with 40 enemy aircraft destroyed in aerial combat.

The ESGR breakfast, organized by the Milwaukee Armed Forces Committee and the Wisconsin Committee for ESGR, kicks off Armed Forces Week in Milwaukee. 📷



Members of Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing Honor Guard present the colors during the ESGR breakfast held at the Wisconsin Club in downtown Milwaukee on May 16.



Two graduate from advanced military studies

Two Wisconsin Army National Guard officers recently graduated from the School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth, Mo., with a Master's degree in Military Arts and Science.

Maj. Virginia Egli, deputy intelligence director with the directorate of security and intelligence at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison, and Maj. Stephen Pelicano, Headquarters Company, 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, were among 113 graduates of the year-long program May 19. Pelicano also earned the Physical Fitness Badge during the course of his studies.

The advanced military studies program prepares students to become agile and adaptive leaders capable of critical and creative thinking who can produce viable options to solve operational problems. The program focuses on building leaders with a firm understanding of peer leadership; effective operational planners grounded in doctrine who think critically to solve problems and effectively communicate recommendations to commanders; educating leaders who understand how to think, not what to think; and building teammates who collaborate effectively and do not seek credit for success. 

Wisconsin Army Guard takes gold rating in Army evaluation

The Wisconsin Army National Guard was awarded a Gold First Place award in the Army National Guard category of the [Army Communities of Excellence](#) Awards competition.

The West Virginia Army National Guard, one of the two finalists along with Wisconsin, was named the overall winner by the Department of the Army. Wisconsin is the first runner up.

According to Wanda Thurman, chief of the business transformation branch at the Army National Guard's chief of staff office, all 33 participants are winners in the quest for excellence. Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, agreed.

"Whether it's first place or a lower ranking does not matter to me as much as the results we have seen in our organization because of the strategic planning at the organizational level and the operational planning at the [brigade] level," he said.

"The real benefits of the ACOE program are better organizational and individual readiness to meet our domestic and federal missions.

"More than anything else, it's a validation of the organization and our focus on continuous improvement," he added. "I want to thank all of the leaders and Soldiers who continue to support our efforts in this area. The recognition belongs to everyone in the Wisconsin Army National Guard — they should be very proud of it."

The ACOE Awards program follows a 12-month evaluation in which Army, National Guard and Reserve installations are judged against Army priorities and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program criteria. Participants are not judged against each other. The assessment considers the overall quality of military environment, facilities and services.

The ACOE program, a holistic integrated business management approach used to measure organizational performance, is based on the idea that communities have the greatest success supporting people when excellent services are combined with excellent facilities in a quality environment.

The ACOE guidelines state that Soldiers who are convinced their leaders care about them and their families perform their mission with greater confidence.

"We're able to focus on systems and processes and streamline them to better utilize the funding we get to sustain or improve our readiness," Anderson explained.

This year's placement continues a string of recent top ACOE finishes for the Wisconsin Army National Guard. In 2010 Wisconsin received a Silver Second Place finish — sixth in the Army National Guard. The state earned a Gold Third Place award in 2009 (fourth overall), and a Silver 1st Place award (fifth overall) in 2008.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard was the overall ACOE winner in 2001, and took third place overall in 1999 and 2000.

Wisconsin may participate in next year's competition, but as one of this year's top two finishers will be considered for feedback only.

All ACOE participants were honored during a May 4 ceremony in Arlington, Va. 





Interim solution reached for combat identification badge

The Army has announced a temporary fix for indicating combat service on the Army Service Uniform.

Soldiers who served in Afghanistan may wear the U.S. Forces-Afghanistan badge (USFOR-A) until their authorized unit badge is produced. Likewise, Soldiers who served in Iraq may wear the U.S. Forces-Iraq badge (USFOR-I) until their authorized unit combat service identification badge (CSIB) is produced.

Soldiers serving in the Philippines may wear the Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOC PAC) badge until their authorized badge is produced.

This voluntary interim measure allows Soldiers to display their wartime service and geographic location while waiting for completion of authorized CSIBs. All badges are tentatively scheduled to be completed by December, 2013. No other CSIB will be worn in lieu of the authorized badge, and once the authorized badge is available it becomes the only CSIB authorized for wear by that Soldier.

The CSIB is for the Army Service Uniform only, and is not authorized for the Dress Green uniform or the Army Combat Uniform (ACU). 

Beret out, Velcro optional under ACU changes

C. Todd Lopez
Army News Service

The voice of the Soldier has been heard: the Army announced the patrol cap will replace the black wool beret as the default headgear for the Army combat uniform.

Also changing are the options for how Soldiers can attach certain items to their ACU shirts. Army Chief of Staff Martin E. Dempsey said Soldiers will soon be able to sew on name tapes, service tapes, rank insignia and skill badges, instead of using Velcro.

According to the National Guard Bureau, the changes are effective as of June 14. The change comes 10 years to the day after the beret was first authorized as standard headgear for the entire Army.

The changes were made after Dempsey received input from Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III, who had been tasked to gather opinions from Soldiers in the field.

“I am a scout for General Dempsey, who asked me to look into everything a Soldier wears from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet,” Chandler said. “These are changes that the field said they wanted to see.”

Typically, uniform changes come as a result of a board that meets twice a year. But Chandler said issues surrounding both the ACU headgear and the use of Velcro were changes the Army chief of staff wanted to bring to the Secretary of the Army immediately.

Chandler said he spoke with “several thousand” Soldiers and also received comments via social media sites, like Facebook.

“I have also discussed this with my board of directors — the most senior sergeants major of our Army,” Chandler said. Post-deployment combat uniform surveys were used as a basis for the changes.

The No. 1 and No. 2 issues, Chandler said, involve the beret and Velcro.

“The Soldiers didn’t like the fact that the beret was hot — it was not something

that they wore the majority of the time,” he said. “And they didn’t like the fact it didn’t shade the sun and it took two hands to put on. And they didn’t like to carry two pieces of headgear to do different functions during the day.”

The beret has been the standard headgear for the Army’s ACU — the camouflage uniform worn by most Soldiers. But most Soldiers still needed to switch to the patrol cap based on the work they were doing — in a motor pool or in the field, for instance.

Those Soldiers would have to carry two pieces of headgear with them, one in each pocket, and switch depending on what they was doing. In the field, they put on the patrol cap. Back on base, they’d have to switch to the beret.

The new policy will make the patrol cap the standard. But the beret isn’t going anywhere. It will remain as the standard for the Army service uniform, and as an optional uniform item with the ACU — at the discretion of commanders.

“They could choose to say for an event, like change of command, that they want them to wear the beret,” Chandler said.

The change in the beret policy will save the Army about \$6.5 million over the lifecycle of the ACU. New Soldiers had been issued two berets, now they will be issued one.

Chandler pointed out that Soldiers didn’t ask to eliminate the beret — just to change when it’s worn.

“Soldiers said we don’t want to wear it with this uniform, but they do feel they look very professional wearing it with the Army service uniform,” Chandler said.

The Army implemented a mandatory wear date for the ACU in April 2008. The ACU, a replacement for the Battle Dress Uniform, featured many design changes. Included among those were a different cut for the fabric, new placement for pockets and a new “digital” color pattern.

Also included were Velcro fasteners that allowed pockets to be sealed shut, sleeves to be cinched down, and rank insignia, name tapes, service tapes, patches and skill badges

to be added and removed at will — without time-consuming and sometimes costly trips to clothing alterations.

Still, some Soldiers were displeased with Velcro on the uniform, Chandler said.

The Army’s new policy on attaching accouterments to the ACU will allow Soldiers to sew on rank insignia, the name tape and the service tape. Additionally, skill badges such as the Airborne, pathfinder, combat action, combat infantryman’s, and expert infantryman’s badge will also be authorized for sewing.

Currently, those badges are provided in painted metal and have to be pinned to the uniform. Pinning badges to the uniform can be a lengthy process because they have to be aligned using a ruler. The new policy will allow Soldiers to sew those badges to the uniform.

Combat and unit patches on the left and right sleeve and the U.S. flag will remain Velcro-only, the SMA said. Additionally, the ACU will continue to come with Velcro in the same locations it is now. Where a Soldier is authorized to sew something on, they will sew it on top of the Velcro.

Chandler also said Soldiers had asked for changes to how cargo pockets are fastened. Velcro had been used — now, ACUs are available with buttons used to keep the pockets closed. A similar change is being discussed for how sleeve cuffs are fastened, but Chandler said that decision will be made by the July uniform board.

A more localized uniform decision will affect Soldiers assigned to the Army’s headquarters at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. There, Soldiers had been wearing the ACU as their daily uniform. By as early as October, those Soldiers will show up to work in the Army service uniform, Chandler said.

“Our perspective is that this is the corporate part of the Army,” he said. “The business-part of the Army is done in the Pentagon, and as a professional there are certain standards of attire associated with certain activities. For the business aspect of the Army, it is the Army service uniform.” 

Meritorious service

Three retired Guard Soldiers enter Wisconsin Army National Guard Hall of Honor

Retired Brig. Gen. James Daley of Janesville, retired Maj. Lynn Rasmussen of Madison, and retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William W. Richardson of Middleton, joined the prestigious Wisconsin Army National Guard [Hall of Honor](#) during an induction ceremony May 15 in Witmer Hall at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison.

With nearly 100 years of combined military experience, each of the inductees expressed their profound honor at being selected for the highest honor in the state of Wisconsin.

"I am honored and humbled to be here," Rasmussen said. "I have had the opportunity to work with great commanders and mentors over my career, and I never would have gotten here without them."

Daley shared his secret for success throughout his military career.

"Do every job you're given to the best of your ability," he said. "Whether it's pushing a broom or taking the hill. We don't do this for glory — we do this

because it's our job, and it's important." Richardson had similar remarks about his success.

"When you surround yourself with people who enthusiastically share your goals, you can accomplish anything," Richardson said. "Choose good people, give them the tools they need to succeed, and they will astound you with what they can accomplish."

Retired Brig. Gen. James Daley (top photo), retired Maj. Lynn Rasmussen (lower left photo) and retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William W. Richardson (lower right photo) were inducted into the Wisconsin Army National Guard Hall of Honor May 15 at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison. Pictured with the inductees are, left to right: Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard; Wisconsin Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch; and Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, the adjutant general of Wisconsin. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette



Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, the adjutant general of Wisconsin, and Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin

Army National Guard, attended the induction, along with family and friends of the inductees as well as current and retired Guard members. 📷



Meritorious service

732nd CSSB honored for deployment excellence

Sgt. Tyler Lasure
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The Tomah-based Headquarters Company of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 732nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion was recognized as the runner-up in the [Chief of Staff of the Army's Deployment Excellence Awards](#) during a ceremony earlier this month.

The 732nd took second place in the National Guard small deploying unit category. The unit [deployed to Iraq](#) in 2009 and was in charge of eight companies — approximately 1,280 Soldiers — located at 13 contingency operating bases throughout southern Iraq. Their mission also consisted of running the second-largest supply support activity and ammunition supply point in country.

The DEA is a part of the Chief of Staff's Combined Logistics Excellence Awards, a program that awards achievement in the areas of maintenance, supply operations, and deployment.

"They are looking for units that have deployed and redeployed to a theater of operation and done so in a manner that exceeded the standards," said Maj. Mike Yount, the battalion's support operations officer during the deployment.

The goal is to share and adapt the processes and standard operating procedures used by the top units with other units throughout the areas of operations.

"The DEA is intended to find practices in both training and logistics to be shared with other units based on pre-deployment, deployment, deployment activities, and redeployment," said Lt. Col. John Blaha, commander of the 732nd during the deployment.

One of the reasons the 732nd was recognized is that the unit spent less than 30 days at the mobilization site, Blaha said. The short mobilization allowed



A concrete "T" wall adorned with the 732nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's logo is moved into place at Camp Adder, Iraq Aug. 3, 2009 during the 732nd's deployment. The Wisconsin National Guard unit earned a top deployment excellence award. Wisconsin National Guard file photo

the unit to spend almost 11 months in Iraq.

The award is a two-phase process.

"You put in a packet and it goes up to be reviewed," Yount explained. "If you are chosen, then they send a team to the armory to see the different products on hand that made the unit successful."

The unit's ability to work cohesively, focus and move toward a common goal helped the unit take runner-up, Blaha said. The honor of being recognized is not lost on the unit.

"It's very prestigious," Yount said. "It's for the unit, not the individual — as a unit, every person was responsible for the award."

"It is a great honor for the members of the 732nd," Blaha added. "It shows their pride, work ethic and commitment to excellence."

"It is good to see the Wisconsin Army National Guard get recognition for what we always do," Yount said. 📷

Veterans, Families, Retirees

Military, veterans family day at Milwaukee Zoo

The Milwaukee County Zoo is offering free admission and parking to service members, veterans and their immediate families on July 3 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets are required and are available until July 1 at local County Veterans Service Offices. There is a limit of 10 tickets per family.

During the Milwaukee County Zoo's Military/Veterans Family Day, a Supermarket of Veterans Benefits will be held at the US Bank Gathering Place from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. This event, sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and the Milwaukee County Veterans Service Office, offers veterans one-stop shopping to learn about their benefits. Veterans are advised to bring a copy of their most current DD-214.

The next Supermarket event will be held in Madison Aug. 5-6. 📷

Veterans job fairs scheduled

Job fairs for veterans will be held across the state in July.

At these events, veterans will be able to meet with local, state or federal agencies who may have employment opportunities; visit with local employers about job opportunities; leave resumes or job applications with employers; have short interviews with employers about their job skills; apply for state and federal benefits; receive information and talk with representatives about loans, health care and education benefits; and visit with Wisconsin Job Center Veteran staff, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs staff, and County Veterans Service Officers.

Veterans job fairs will be held July 15 at the Army National Guard armory in Beloit, July 20 in Bristol, and also July 20 at American Legion Post 52 in La Crosse. 📷

Military appreciation day

All armed forces personnel and their immediate family members will receive free admission to the Dane County Fair on July 21, Military Appreciation Day. Proper military identification — military ID card, VA hospital ID card, or a copy of separation orders — is required for free admission. 📷

Services, hours for Retiree Activities Offices

The Retiree Activities Office (RAO) provides guidance and information to retirees and spouses of retirees, of all ranks and services. The RAO provides information on military status, TRICARE, military ID cards, survivor benefits, death reporting and much more.

Retirees may provide an e-mail address, to include first name, middle initial, last name, retired military grade and branch of service to widma.retiree@wisconsin.gov to be added to the RAO's e-mail data base. The RAO also has a website that provides a lot of information for retirees and can be found at <http://dma.wi.gov/retirees>.

The Madison RAO is located at Joint Force Headquarters, 2400 Wright Street, Room 160, Madison, Wis. 53704. The RAO is open Tuesdays and Thursdays 7:30 to 11:30 a.m. except on holidays. Their phone number is 608-242-3115, 1-800-335-4157, ext. 3115, DSN 724-3115. Contact the RAO with questions or for assistance.

The Milwaukee RAO is co-located with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, General Mitchell Air National Guard Base, 1835 E. Grange Ave, Bldg 512, Milwaukee, Wis., 53207. Their phone number is 414-944-8212. Their e-mail address is rao.128arw@ang.af.mil. The Milwaukee RAO is manned by volunteers on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. 📷

Parting shot



Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, presents Green Bay Packers President Mark Murphy with a Minuteman trophy in thanks for the continuing support the Packers organization has shown to the Wisconsin National Guard. Dunbar said that, like the Wisconsin National Guard, the Green Bay Packers are a community-owned and community-backed organization. Wisconsin National Guard photo