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roll call



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on the cover

A quiet moment at the 115th Fighter Wing in Madison Sept. 23. The 115th marked its 65th birthday in September. 115th Fighter Wing photo by 1st Lt. Stephen Montgomery

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From TAG

Always Ready — Always There. This is quite simply the motto and essence of the National Guard and reflects the commitment our Soldiers and Airmen make to our communities, state, and nation by serving in the National Guard.

A few days ago, Bravo Battery of the 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery returned home from a year-long deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. It was the first operational artillery mission for the National Guard in decades and it reflects the Army's continuing commitment to the National Guard as the unit deployed with the new HIMARS system. Bravo Battery performed superbly, as have all of our units who have deployed for Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom over the past 12 years.

The return of Bravo Battery brings the current number of Soldiers and Airmen deployed from the Wisconsin National Guard to less than 100, mainly individual deployers. These deployments are just as important as any unit deployment, but it does reflect a slowing operations tempo consistent with the President's decisions on overseas contingency operations.

These 12 years of constant conflict have proven the value of the total force concept and the all volunteer military. It also proved



the Abrams doctrine and the value of including the National Guard in any military conflict as the best approach to ensuring community and public support endures.

As our nation faces fiscal challenges, today's National Guard provides our elected leaders an opportunity that our nation has never before possessed. Today's

National Guard is an operational force that, if utilized wisely, can help our nation ensure its national security and meet its fiscal obligations.

After 12 years of consistent combat deployments and domestic response, we stand at over 100 percent in our strength and have the continued support of

our families, communities, and employers. It is a privilege to serve with you. The Wisconsin National Guard remains Always Ready — Always There.



Above, as Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, looks on, Maj. Michael Hanson and Sgt. Maj. Glen Newkirk of the 104th Security Force Advise and Assist Team present Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch with a unit photo taken in Afghanistan during the unit's homecoming ceremony Sept. 28 at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison. At left, Sgt. 1st Class Donald Frieze greets his family at Joint Force Headquarters. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Vaughn R. Larson

WELCOME HOME

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

Eleven members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 104th Security Force Advise and Assist Team returned to Wisconsin Sept. 28 after serving nine months in Afghanistan.

Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch joined the Wisconsin National Guard's senior leadership and families in welcoming the team of Soldiers home to Madison.

The SFAAT spent its deployment working with the 4th Afghan Border

Police at a remote combat outpost on the Afghan border with Iran and Turkmenistan. Their work represented a critical component of the U.S. strategy to transition security and responsibility for the country back to Afghan hands before the expected withdrawal of U.S. forces next year.

Brig. Gen. Ken Koon, the Wisconsin National Guard's assistant adjutant general for readiness and training, touted the unit's long list of accomplishments

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Wisconsin Guard unit helps Afghanistan assume security role

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during his remarks at the homecoming ceremony.

Throughout the deployment, which began in January, the SFAAT conducted 24 major operations in the 4th Afghan Border Police area of responsibility, which includes more than 1,100 kilometers of international border. The team planned and conducted more than 100 combat patrols in addition to working with their Afghan counterparts to improve operations, logistics, and communications.

The unit also helped start two 12-room schools and a deep water well, distributed donated school supplies to villages, and delivered 175 desks to a school that previously had no furniture.

As a result, the 104th, or Team Talon as it was known in Afghanistan, earned five Combat Infantryman Badges, two Combat Action Badges, one Combat Medical Badge, and eight Bronze Star Medals.

As the unit's executive officer, Maj. Michael Hanson, said at the Sept. 28 ceremony, the 104th SFAAT was described by the commanding general in charge of all coalition forces in Afghanistan, as the best SFAAT operating in the country.

As important as the accolades heaped on the unit was the very real difference the SFAAT made in a country the U.S. has spent 12 years preparing to stand on its own.

"I told them [Afghan partners], 'the future of your organization is very bright,'" Hanson said. "You have some very good young leaders here that we were working with and mentoring."

"You will never know the effect that you've had on this part of the world," added Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general. "A very tough part of the world. The people that you met

and the people that you mentored, and the seeds that you've planted...some will take a long time to germinate.

"What you have done is substantive, and it matters to our country and the country of Afghanistan," Dunbar continued. "And if they have any chance at success after we leave, it is going to be because of efforts like you just put forth these last nine months on the ground."

But the theme of the day was family, as the Soldiers returned to the waiting arms of their families for the first time in a year.

Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch brought her two daughters along for the ceremony.

"I think it's really important that we show our children what this is and why it is so important that we admire, we respect, that we show thanks and gratitude for those who preserve their ability, our ability to do what we get a chance to do every day — love life, pursue the American dream," she told the troops and their families. "These are things that we wouldn't be able to do were it not for you preserving freedom around the world.

"Gentlemen, it was so important to bring my kids to show them that in today's generation, superheroes are not the stuff of movies," she continued. "They're not the stuff of comic books. They don't wear capes. They don't wear masks, and they don't only work under the cover of night. They are here. They are among us. They are tremendously brave, and they are human. Thank you for serving Wisconsin so well."

The 16-member 104th SFAAT deployed to Afghanistan in January after several months of [training](#) at Fort Polk, La., and Camp Shelby, Miss. Several Soldiers returned to the U.S. ahead of the unit's main body. ■

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)



Above, Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Kenneth Koon, assistant adjutant general for readiness and training, and state Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields greet returning members of the 104th Security Force Assist and Advise team at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison Sept. 28. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Kelly J. Bradley
Below, members of the 104th SFAAT exchange awards with their Afghan Border Police counterparts during a Sept. 17 ceremony in Afghanistan. The 104th SFAAT spent nine months helping transition security responsibility from U.S. forces to Afghan forces. 104th SFAAT photo



TRAINING FOR DANGER CLOSE

■ *Badger State plays key role in Patriot Exercise*

With temperatures and humidity soaring, more than 2,000 Soldiers, Airmen and civilian first responders came together to participate in a massive training exercise at Volk Field and Fort McCoy July 15-20.

Approximately 50 Army and Air National Guard units representing 26 states participated in Patriot Exercise 2013, an annual joint-service exercise that tests their ability to assist local and state first responders contending with multiple emergencies. The goal is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each agency's current response plans.

Patriot 2013 is a milestone for the exercise, which has been conducted at Volk Field for approximately 10 years.

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Two Mississippi Air National Guardsmen and an Army Reserve firefighter from Wisconsin battle a simulated aircraft fire at Volk Field July 18. Numerous states joined together for Patriot Exercise 2013. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photograph by Pfc. Christopher Enderle



Above, Air National Guard flight crews from both Minnesota and Illinois prepare a C-17 for take-off at Volk Field July 18. Numerous states joined forces at Volk Field for the Patriot Exercise 2013. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photograph by Pfc. Christopher Enderle

Wisconsin Guard played key role in Patriot Exercise

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This year marks it as the National Guard's first Joint National Training Capability-accredited exercise, putting it on par with such major active duty exercises as Ardent Sentry and Red Flag.

For the past 12 years, the National Guard has dramatically enhanced its warfighting abilities to support combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. But less acknowledged is the Guard's additional role — helping save lives within their state.

The National Guard is at the forefront

At left, members of the Wisconsin National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Emergency Enhanced Response Force Package care for a patient during Patriot Exercise 2013 July 16 at Volk Field. 153rd Airlift Wing photo by Tech. Sgt. Natalie Stanley

of many disaster relief operations, most recently its responses to Hurricane Sandy and the Boston Marathon bombing, as well as wildfire and flood rescue operations. Being ready and available to help support their states respond to any kind of emergency is just as important as supporting combat operations overseas.

Supporting domestic operations requires a different mindset than most military members are familiar with — instead of leading operations, they take on a support role aiding the rescue efforts led by civilian emergency managers.

Lt. Col. Saul Hage, Patriot 2013 exercise director, said the National Guard has a host of different capabilities to provide emergency support to civilian rescue efforts. The Patriot exercise provides a venue, he said, tailored to train Guard Soldiers and Airmen to support any hazard that might come along, using the

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Staff Sgt. Robert Farrington descends to safety with Airman 1st Class Matthew Molus, who is playing the role of an unresponsive victim, during a tower rescue exercise at Volk Field in Camp Douglas July 18. The Minnesota Air National Guardsmen with the 210th Engineering and Installation Squadron conducted the training. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Staff Sgt. Megan Burnham

More than 2,000 military, civilian first responders part of Patriot 13

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unique equipment and personnel they possess. It's a bottom-up approach that allows participating units to request what types of emergency response they would like to train.

"We don't like to sit there and say just one event [might happen] because as we've seen in our nation, anything can happen at any time," Hage said. "We want to be ready for anything."

The intent of this year's scenario was to create an emergency situation that quickly overwhelmed local and state response agencies, forcing state government officials to call up the National Guard to support civilian response efforts. In this case, exercise disasters started with tornadoes that devastate two Wisconsin cities, while a terrorist organization simultaneously launches a cyber-, radiological- and conventional-based attack.

The exercise had civilian and military personnel searching for victims, decontaminating residents and neighborhoods, transporting patients and conducting site recovery command and control.

This year's exercise marks the first time that elements of the U.S. Army Reserve have participated in the exercise. Last year, the Secretary of Defense authorized Reserve forces to be called up to active duty at the request of a state governor to aid in emergency operations.

Civilian agencies involved in the training included: the Northeast Wisconsin Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team, the Lacrosse Hazardous Materials Response Team, the State of Wisconsin Radiation Protection System and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Besides providing facilities to host the exercise, the Wisconsin National Guard played a large role in Patriot. The Milwaukee-based 32nd Military Police Company, Wisconsin's joint-service Chemical, Biological Radiological, Nuclear Emergency, and Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP), and Wisconsin's 54th Civil Support Team participated alongside fellow Wisconsin Guard units like the Medford.-based 724th Engineer Battalion.

The Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing also participated along with the Volk



Soldiers of the Puerto Rico Army National Guard's 22nd Civil Support Team inspect a building for radiation contamination during a radiation detection exercise at Fort McCoy July 16 as part of Patriot 2013. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spc. Kimberly Chouinard

Field Fire Department, and the 126th Weather Flight.

Those units joined a host of other Wisconsin personnel from the Madison-based 64th Troop Command who helped plan, organize and staff the 2013 Patriot Exercise.

Each unit faced different scenarios throughout the 2013 Patriot Exercise. The 32nd Military Police Company was assigned to set up a roadblock for an urban operations training site that had radiation contamination.

Spc. Michael Smits of the 32nd Military Police explained that this type of training is very beneficial because it keeps the unit up-to-date on how to handle a natural disaster, which could strike at any time.

Civilian role players were tasked to start a riot at the roadblock, at which point the 32nd Military Police reacted promptly and attempted to calm and explain the situation.

"It's allowed us to gain confidence to deal with shocking and difficult experience that we may face in a real-life situation," the 32nd's Pfc. Katherine Tebow said of the training exercise.

Meanwhile, Airmen from the 128th responded to a car accident with a victim inside. They extricated the victim

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Soldiers of the Milwaukee-based 32nd Military Police Company stand ready during a riot control training exercise at Fort McCoy July 16, as part of Patriot Exercise 2013. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Staff Sgt. Megan Burnham



Exercise brings military, civilian responders together

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from the vehicle and placed them in the care of medical personnel. Despite the rising heat, they were tasked to throw on their gear and respond to an airplane fire a few days later.

“These guys are doing real-world training exercises to be ready and available for anything that may happen back at home or with the 1,500 people who are on base,” said Tech. Sgt. Ryan Wick, the unit’s

safety officer.

CERFP members are specially trained to support civil authorities in the event of a nuclear, chemical, or radiological incident. CERFP units provide search, extraction, medical triage, and decontamination of casualties.

“The Wisconsin CERFP holds the distinction of the world record in set-up time,” said Lt. Col Brad Meyers of the 115th Medical Group, based in Madison. “Forty-one minutes, from the drop of the trailer doors to being able to receive casualties.”

Just as important as the action in the field are the communications and command functions that exist behind-the-scenes. National Guard commanders and leaders learn to communicate effectively with their civilian counterparts, who have developed similar response tactics but have differences that can cause delays — delays that could cost people their lives.

Standard Operating Procedures and regulations dictate how military personnel respond to an emergency; civilian first responders use best practices encapsulated in the Incident Command System guidelines produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Both sides learn to adapt to and incorporate those different guidelines in their own operations to improve their efficiency.

Volk Field is one of only four Air National Guard Combat Readiness Training Centers in the nation which provides a year-round integrated training environment with state-of-the-art facilities for units to enhance their combat capabilities and readiness. 

Tech. Sgt. Natalie Stanley, 153rd Airlift Wing, Wyoming Air National Guard, and Spc. Kimberly Chouinard, 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Wisconsin Army National Guard, contributed to this article

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)
- [Video](#)

Airmen of the Wisconsin Air National Guard’s 128th Air Refueling Wing and Mississippi Air National Guard’s 209th Civil Engineering Squadron remove a door using the Jaws of Life during a vehicle extrication exercise at Volk Field July 15. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spc. Kimberly Chouinard



Red Arrow takes the field



(Left to right) Pfc. Nicholas Ash, Pfc. Thomas Schmidt and Sgt. David Brown of the 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry conduct perimeter security during a platoon defense exercise at Fort McCoy July 9. The platoon defense exercise was part of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's annual two-week training here. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Staff Sgt. Megan Burnham

■ *Tactical excellence the goal for 32nd Brigade at annual training*

Story and photos by 1112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORT MCCOY — For the first time since deploying in 2009, the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team conducted an extensive series of training exercises certifying them in combat operations in July.

Approximately 2,500 Wisconsin Army National Guard soldiers participated in the three-week exercise known as Exportable Combat Training Capability. This program tested and validated soldiers' proficiency in their job positions and skills.

This realistic training provided a golden opportunity for junior leaders to understand their individual roles as well as the combat mission of an infantry brigade, said Col. Tim Lawson, the 32nd IBCT commander.

"I really want them to take away some of those critical foundations as junior leaders that will last them a long time," Lawson said.

Due to recent National Guard mobilization for disaster relief efforts and deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, there hasn't been an opportunity to carry out a training exercise of this degree for many years.

The brigade trained for a variety of different warfighting scenarios including close-quarters response fire, platoon attack and defense training, urban combat operations and mortar, artillery, and missile fire.

The exercise provided a rare opportunity for the brigade to train at the platoon and company levels as part of a larger team effort in a full-scale operation.

"I'm looking forward to it," said Staff Sgt. Christopher Lauerman of 2nd Battalion, 127th

Infantry, as he stood in his foxhole. "It's going back to some of the roots that the infantry has and something that we haven't done for a long time."

In addition to the challenges of the exercises themselves, the brigade endured changing weather conditions, from high temperatures and humidity, to heavy thunderstorms and rain.

"It's been hot. It's been humid, but we'll push on," said Sgt. Ben Mutterer of 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery.

The exercise serves as a culminating event for units to validate their operational readiness for combat. Traditionally, units participate in the exercise as a way to demonstrate their unit's ability to perform in a deployed environment, which typically occurs once every five years.

The three-week exercise concluded at the end of July.

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32nd Brigade makes most of rare training opportunity

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Red Arrow Soldiers conducted high-explosive missile training for the first time in more than 10 years here July 11.

Company D, 2nd Battalion of the 127th Infantry Regiment, and Company D, 1st Battalion of the 128th Infantry Regiment fired two separate missile-launching systems as part of their annual training.

The Soldiers first fired the tube-launched, optically attached, wire-guided missile, better known as the TOW missile. The second was the Javelin missile, which is guided by a command launch unit. Both systems are used effectively against heavily armored and large area targets, and require multi-man teams to operate.

Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Gerrits of the 127th, the range officer in charge, stated that this was the first opportunity in 10 years for their unit to conduct this type of training. The unit felt fortunate to carry out the training, he said.

“This is a culmination of years of

training for some men today,” Gerrits said as he cordoned off a safe blast radius. “This is a first for most of us out here, and everyone wants to be part of it.”

Lawson visited the site along with other brigade leaders to view the live fire and show their support for the troops.

“This is a golden opportunity, not only for all our Soldiers, but especially for our junior leadership,” Lawson remarked as he and others awaited the next missile firing. “It gives the training opportunity to advance their skills in a way that they haven’t been able to until now.”

Soldiers look forward to these types of training opportunities, explained Sgt. Kevin Hoss of the 127th, because while they may simulate the experience during training, the best experience comes from true hands-on work.

“I’ve been in for seven years now and have never done anything like this yet,” Hoss said. “We are infantry. This is our job. This is who we are, and we love it.”

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Above, Pfc. David Monroe of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment fires the first Javelin missile in more than 10 years during a July 11 training exercise at Fort McCoy. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photograph by Sgt. Oscar Gollaz Below, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry vehicles wait to fire vehicle-mounted missile systems July 11. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Monroe



Commander-in-chief visits 32nd Brigade during annual training



A platoon leader from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Company A, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment directs his Soldiers' withdrawal from the mock village during an urban combat training exercise at Fort McCoy July 11. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Monroe

Urban warfare training tests Red Arrow

Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment participated in a simulated urban combat operation at an urban warfare training site designed to resemble a village in Iraq or Afghanistan July 9.

The Army uses this training to familiarize Soldiers with the complexities of urban warfare and to test how they react to various situations that can occur when dealing with a hostile force and noncombatant civilians.

"We're not just going out looking for an enemy to engage and destroy," said Sgt. Norman Esser, a team leader in the 127th. "We are providing security for the civilian populace, and we are doing our best to get information from them to help us later on."

The urban training operation was conducted as part of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Exportable Combat Training Capability exercise during the unit's annual training. Observers and trainers were on hand to provide feedback to the unit and to guide them through the exercise.

Sgt. Alexandria Hughes
32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team

Gov. Scott Walker got a first-hand look at the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 32nd Brigade Soldiers during their Exportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) exercise July 15.

Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, and Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, deputy adjutant general for Army, accompanied Walker for the tour of the 32nd Brigade.

Walker was briefed about the 32nd Brigade tactical operations center capabilities. He also observed and participated in some of the Soldier combat training — firing a 105-mm howitzer with Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery and touring an urban training site with members of 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment.

Col. Tim Lawson, commander of the 32nd Brigade, said the purpose of showcasing the 32nd Brigade to the governor was two-fold — for Walker, as commander-in-chief of the Wisconsin National Guard, to see the Soldiers he may call to duty for state emergencies such as floods or wildfires, and for him to recognize their value in the midst of sequestration spending cuts for the U.S. Armed Forces.

"I told [Gov. Walker] that there are 28 brigade combat teams in the United States and he has one in his house," Lawson said. "He needs to understand what that really means to the state with the capabilities we have."

"He's the guy who has power at the national level — he can go lobby for support of the National Guard and for these Soldiers," Lawson continued. "There are troop cuts as far as the national level in the active component. And there may be a day when we'll have the troop cuts at the National Guard level, and we just wanted to



Gov. Scott Walker is escorted from a Black Hawk helicopter to an inside compound by Col. Tim Lawson, commander of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, at Fort McCoy July 15. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photograph by Pfc. Christopher Enderle

make sure Gov. Walker understood how valuable the 32nd Brigade Combat Team really is — to him, to the state of Wisconsin, and to these Soldiers."

Lawson was pleased with how the visit went, a sentiment shared by many of his Soldiers.

2nd Lt. Kyle Schaffer, of Hudson, a platoon leader for Company B, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, said that events like the governor's visit are vital to getting the message out that his Soldiers and the rest of the National Guard are working hard.

"It lets them know that we're active, we're doing what we need to do, we're highly trained, and we're a beneficial asset to the state and to our country,"

Schaffer said. "We're very involved in our communities besides out here and in our training and overseas — and it's nice to see the governor take an interest."

Staff Sgt. Scott Stoeberl, of Turtle Lake, a squad leader for Company B, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, was a part of the urban operations exercise Walker observed.

"Urban operations are a big part of what we do in the infantry," Stoeberl explained. "I think it's important that [Gov. Walker] sees what we're doing and knows that the training is actually worthwhile."

Spc. Douglas De Oliveira of

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Gov. Walker visits Red Arrow Soldiers during AT

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Company B, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, agreed.

“I think it’s important that he sees that we are training, that we are proficient at what we do,” Oliveira said. “We are doing the job and taking care of it.”

At left, Soldiers of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment fire mortar rounds during a training exercise at Fort McCoy July 10.

112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photograph by Staff Sgt. Megan Burnham

[Click on this photo to see video](#)

“It’s a morale booster,” Schaffer said. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do something like this [governor’s visit] and I’m very thankful the command thought of my company, that we were selected to do this, and my guys got to go.”

Lawson said it was great the governor was able to see the 32nd Brigade during XCTC, a program proven to provide quality training to Soldiers.

“I just think that the training we’ve got going on is great and we’re getting a lot out of this exercise, and we’re going to be a much better organization when we’re done,” Lawson said. 

[Additional photos](#)



32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team photo by Sgt. Alexandria Hughes

Red Arrows in flight

Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

FORT MCCOY — Three Wisconsin Army National Guard battalions joined forces July 23 to hone their combat skills, and leverage different skill sets, in a complex training scenario.

The 1st Battalion, 147th Air Assault Aviation Regiment airlifted two 105-mm howitzers and a pallet of ammo from the 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery, as well as cannon crew members, from one Fort McCoy location to another as part of an artillery raid training scenario.

The artillery raid, intended to suppress notional “enemy” air defenses, supported an air assault mission by Company B, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment into a mock village to rescue a captured U.S. service member and detain a high-value enemy target. Nearly 120 Soldiers from the Green Bay-based unit were flown to a site adjacent to the mock village, where they conducted a raid and clearing mission.

“This is the culmination of seven or eight days of coordination and planning,” said Capt. Dan Peterson, the battalion operations officer for the 2-127th. “This is the first time in anyone’s memory that they

can remember doing this in the Wisconsin Army National Guard.”

This type of mission is known as “combined arms” as it involves different dedicated skill sets, often referred to as military occupational specialties. In addition, such a mission subjects Soldiers to new requirements — preparing cannons and cargo for sling-loading, properly establishing areas for Black Hawk helicopters to land, and loading on and off a helicopter safely and quickly in a hostile environment.

But making a training mission such as this happen takes more than combat skills.

Such seemingly mundane administrative tasks as submitting requests, coordinating meetings, conducting briefings and rehearsals were completed before the Black Hawk’s blades first began turning.

“Quite a bit is involved in making it happen,” said Capt. Lisa Hendershot, logistics officer for the 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation, adding that the planning was worth the effort.

“This is actually the first time we’ve ever done a combined arms air assault with the 32nd Brigade and worked to support a

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Aviators, infantry, artillery team up for training

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mission like this for them.”

The 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry and 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery are subordinate units of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. The Madison-based 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation is part of the 64th Troop Command Brigade.

Hendershot said the Black Hawk pilots prefer real passengers for air assault training missions.

“You get more real-life scenarios,” she explained. “Having the troops involved and the equipment to sling-load — everybody is getting better value out of

the training. The pilots love it because we’re an air assault battalion — this is what we’re meant to do. To actually go out and execute is great for us. The infantry guys are thrilled to be on the aircraft to load their equipment and hone those skills they don’t otherwise get to use.”

Staff Sgt. Daniel Stanke of Bonduel, a squad leader in Company B, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, agreed.

“It was some of the best training I’ve ever had,” Stanke said. “I’ve never done an air assault mission before, and doing this was really exhilarating.” 

- [Story online](#)
- [Related photos](#)



Col. Douglas Fleischfresser, the Wisconsin Army National Guard state command chaplain, places the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team unit patch on 1st Lt. Christopher Mohr, of the 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, during a July 10 ceremony at Fort McCoy.
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
photo by Staff Sgt. Megan Burnham

Buddhist chaplain joins Red Arrow

Staff Sgt. Megan Burnham
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Chap. (1st Lt.) Christopher Mohr swore the Oath of Membership in the United States Corps of Chaplains in front of the red arrow of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team July 10, during the brigade's annual training at Fort McCoy. In doing so, he became the Wisconsin Army National Guard's first Buddhist chaplain, and one of only a handful in the U.S. Army.

Mohr joins the 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion to serve as the unit's advisor to the battalion commander and provide morale, morals and ethics support to the Soldiers.

He explained Buddhist teachings such as mindfulness, equanimity and service to others helped him in his personal life and how he interacts with other people.

"These things have been very useful to me in making sure that I can be a person who is of benefit to others and a person who can work with others to make sure that everybody's needs, as best I can, be met," said Mohr.

During his first two-weeks as a Buddhist chaplain in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, Mohr will hold nightly meditation training with a full-scale Buddhist service once a week.

Chaplain (Col.) Douglas Fleischfresser, the state command chaplain, is excited to have a new religion represented in the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

"I think it speaks for where we're going in diversity and the need to have a diverse viewpoint in spirituality," said Fleischfresser.

Army chaplains, regardless of the faith they represent, provide spiritual, ethical and moral guidance to all Soldiers in need of assistance.

I think the chaplains are such a critical part of the unit," said Maj. John Reiter, 32nd BTSB commander. "They are responsible for the [spiritual] care of the Soldiers. With the emphasis on resiliency, it's critical to the health of the battalion."

Mohr became a Buddhist reverend after receiving his master of divinity degree from a seminary in California and being ordained into the faith.

Mohr's roles as battalion chaplain are performing Buddhist services and providing opportunities for worship to other religions. There are approximately 30 Soldiers who have identified themselves as Buddhists with others showing interest in the faith, Fleischfresser said.

- [Story online](#)
- [Related video](#)

'Not everyone can do this job'



■ *Equal abilities displayed at 128th Security Forces Squadron annual training*

Staff Sgt. Jenna V. Hildebrand
128th Air Refueling Wing

MILWAUKEE — “Fire!” an instructor commands over the loudspeaker, as he overlooks a firing range full of security forces members.

A long row of M4 rifles are pointed at targets downrange. Individual shots blend into a continuous, thunderous rumble, and dust begins to rise from behind the long line of targets.

One security forces member takes a breath, holds it, and then slowly squeezes the trigger. The echo of the single shot is lost in the thunder.

“Recover!” the instructor barks in a firm voice.

After switching on the safety, she stands up from the prone position and brushes a wisp of chin-length blonde hair behind her ear and under the straps of her Kevlar helmet. Her small frame is donned with the same heavy equipment as the others in her squadron. She rests her hands on her flack vest lined with bullet proof plates and waits for the next command from the Combat Arms Training and Maintenance instructor.

Airman 1st Class Courtney R. Metzger, a security forces member with the Wisconsin Air National Guard’s 128th Air Refueling Wing, is one of seven women

Airman 1st Class Courtney Metzger is a security forces journeyman with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard in Milwaukee. She has worked in the 128th Security Forces Squadron for more than one year. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jenna V. Hildebrand

who participated in the 128th Security Forces Squadron annual training at Fort McCoy June 10-15.

Members of the 128th SFS completed small arms familiarization, heavy weapons qualification, all-terrain vehicle training, the Wisconsin National Guard Leadership Development Course, land navigation and urban assault training in order to maintain their readiness and efficiency as well-trained law enforcers.

Metzger, who has been with the 128th SFS for nearly two years, was inspired by her step-father, an Army Ranger, to join the military — and more specifically, military law enforcement. It was her first time completing annual training off-base with the squadron.

“We get a lot of training out here with weapons and getting used to wearing the vest with the plates,” Metzger said. “We get training with the batons and with take-downs. When you’re going through SF technical training, you get trained on the Taser and with pepper spray.”

Metzger is also pursuing a civilian law enforcement career, presently halfway through her studies at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College.

“Next year I’ll be graduating from WITC,” Metzger said. “It’s a lot of cross-over. It helps in the aspect of learning new techniques.”

Metzger said she is drawing on her military experience to help out other people in her college course.

“As a female in security forces, I think there are definitely challenges,” Metzger said, “but it’s nothing a female couldn’t overcome. You definitely have to work harder and you definitely have to prove yourself a lot more than, say, a male coming into security forces, but it’s not impossible.”

Staff Sgt. Tiffany Wunder, a fellow security forces member with the 128th SFS, is no stranger to the dynamic of being

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Females integrate into 128th Security Forces Squadron

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a female in security forces.

“We get treated like one of the guys,” Wunder explained. “You kind of have to expect that if you’re going into a male-dominated career field. But I don’t mind it.”

Wunder has been a Milwaukee Police Officer for nine years and a security forces member for eight years. She originally started her military career with the 440th Airlift Wing, Air Force Reserves in Milwaukee until that unit relocated. Wunder said she always knew she wanted to be in law enforcement.

Last year, Wunder had the opportunity to deploy with the 128th SFS to Kyrgyzstan. She was one of two females who made up the nearly 20 members who helped secure the overseas installation.

“I don’t think it’s harder being a female while being deployed,” she observed. “I think it’s harder in general to be a female in the military.”

Wunder said that while she hasn’t experienced any instances of gender discrimination while deployed or at her home station, she perceives a difference in the military’s unwritten standards. Still she said she loves her job and will continue to overcome any such obstacles.

“Not everybody can do this job,” Wunder said. “I think that’s why there are not a lot of females in this job to begin with. It takes a strong person.”

Throughout the training at Fort McCoy, Metzger fully engaged herself into every opportunity to learn and excel at her job. She was familiarized and qualified with the M9 pistol, M4 rifle and M249 automatic rifle. Her excitement to participate in the Leadership Development Course, which is a Wisconsin National Guard asset, paid off as her team successfully completed all the obstacle courses.



Above, Staff Sgt. Linda Kosterman, a security forces member with the Wisconsin Air National Guard’s 128th Air Refueling Wing, fires an M9 pistol during weapons qualification June 10 at Fort McCoy. At right, Staff Sgt. Tonia Elsrod, a security forces member with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, leads all-terrain vehicle riders through a training drill during an ATV qualification course at Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center June 12 as part of the 128th Security Forces Squadron’s annual training. 128th Air Refueling Wing photos by Staff Sgt. Jenna V. Hildebrand

“Honestly I think I love it more than anything,” Metzger said of being a member of security forces. “You get the stereotypes that women are weaker — they’re not as strong, they’re not as headstrong, they’re not as focused. I guess you could say they’re more emotional. But I don’t think that’s true completely. I think there’s always an exception to the rule.”

Metzger plans to advance her security forces career by continuing to upgrade her training and looking for future leadership opportunities. She hopes for the opportunity to deploy in the near future.

Metzger said that when she’s in charge of troops, she hopes to be as a good mentor as her supervisors.

[Story online](#)



Civilian, military team up for active shooter training scenario

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

Airmen, Soldiers, and civilian personnel at Volk Field got a lesson in the unthinkable when they stared down an active shooter during a scenario training exercise June 27.

It was the first time Volk Field trained for such an occurrence, which offered a rare chance to see how military and civilian personnel would react if the terrifying scenario were ever to become reality.

“An active shooter, there’s really nothing that can prevent that,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Dahl, a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard and the physical security officer for the building the training scenario shooters stormed. “All you can do is mitigate risks, and if you don’t run through a scenario like this, you don’t know what to expect when that person comes around the door popping rounds.”

Some 80 people were involved in the post-wide exercise. Dahl said it is rare that a military facility conducts such an exercise, but incidents like the shootings at Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009 and the Sept. 16 Washington Navy Yard shooting make it necessary for post’s to train for similar situations.

“Wounded” Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers evacuate the Consolidated State Maintenance Facility at Volk Field during a June 27 active shooter response exercise.



In the scenario at Volk Field, two gunmen — playing the role of disgruntled employees facing personal issues at home — stormed one of the post’s buildings.

Exercise director Brendan Smith, who also serves as the post’s antiterrorism officer, was pleased with the overall response to the situation, which was over in a matter of minutes.

“I was pleasantly surprised by the overall flow of the exercise and with the response,” he said. “They did a good job and the failures that we had were really technological failures, not procedural failures.”

He also pointed to the cooperation between Army and Air assets at the joint service National Guard base.

Dahl, who helped plan the scenario, agreed.

“I can’t say enough about working with the Air Force guys here,” he said. “We have a great relationship, and not just on physical security. On maintenance and logistics, we work great together on this tiny little home we call a base.”

Dahl said the installation would evaluate the results of the scenario and continue to improve Volk Field’s performance.

“This is ongoing,” he said. “Physical security and antiterrorism, you don’t just check the box. You keep going.”

[Story online](#)



Scott Miller, a state Department of Military Affairs security officer, and Tech. Sgt. Kirk Slama clear a locker room in the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s Consolidated State Maintenance Facility during an active shooter response exercise June 27 at Volk Field. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Vaughn R. Larson



A firefighter from the 115th Civil Engineer Squadron prepares a water hose for use during a bomb exercise at Truax Field in Madison Aug. 23. The Hazmat Pharmacy Environmental building was smoking following a simulated bomb explosion, so firefighters rushed to the scene to rescue victims inside. The exercise was part of a new Air Force Inspection System initiative. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti

ALWAYS READY

Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti
115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

A large explosion shakes the base. Smoke flows from the front door of Building 411. Police vehicles and fire trucks surround the scene.

Fortunately for the Airmen of the 115th Fighter Wing, this was an unexpected on-base exercise designed to test mission readiness Aug. 23.

“All of the participants were unaware of the event, or even if there was going to be an event,” said Col. Kevin Philpot, 115th FW mission support group deputy commander. “We had about 12 people involved in the planning and execution.”

In addition to the inspection team, there were several units that participated in the exercise including the fire department, explosive ordnance disposal, emergency management, emergency medical services, operations, security forces squadron, force support squadron and the medical group.

The exercise began when a man ran past security with a backpack, got into the Hazmat Pharmacy Environmental building and simulated blowing up a bomb. The EOD team added realism by filling that

building up with smoke, giving the rescue teams a challenge when removing the victims.

“The exercise was a great opportunity to test our response plans and EMS triage plan,” said Master Sgt. Gary Peck, 115th SFS fire chief. “Everything went really well.”

This was the first of many exercises planned for the 115th FW. The Wing Inspection Team has been put in place to ensure members of the 115th FW are mission-ready at all times.

“This is a complete cultural change to how we do inspections,” said Col. Jeffrey Wiegand, 115th FW commander.

In the past, inspectors were brought in from outside of the 115th FW. Now, the wing inspection team will inspect all units on a more regular basis by developing unexpected real-world training.

“Our focus is on mission readiness, not inspection readiness,” Wiegand said. “We’re going to have really challenging scenarios pushing us to fail. Each day you drive off Truax Field, I want you to ask yourself, ‘Am I ready?’”

[Story online](#)

The 115th Fighter Wing Explosive Ordnance Disposal team added realism to the exercise by filling that building up with smoke, giving rescue teams a challenge when removing the victims. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Roth

SUBTERRANEAN OPS

■ Joint training exercise prepares 54th CST in event of deep trouble

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

The Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team can be called to almost any scenario. From hazardous materials spills, to suspicious luggage or a big football game, the unit stands ready to respond to a diverse set of scenarios.

A Sept. 5 exercise at the Cave of the Mounds National Natural Landmark in Blue Mounds, Wis., prepared them for yet another.

The CST partnered with the Mount Horeb Fire Department as they spent the day honing their skills entering and operating in a confined space. The cave system at Cave of the Mounds — one of Wisconsin's most popular tourist destinations — provided the perfect natural environment in which the unit could test its abilities.

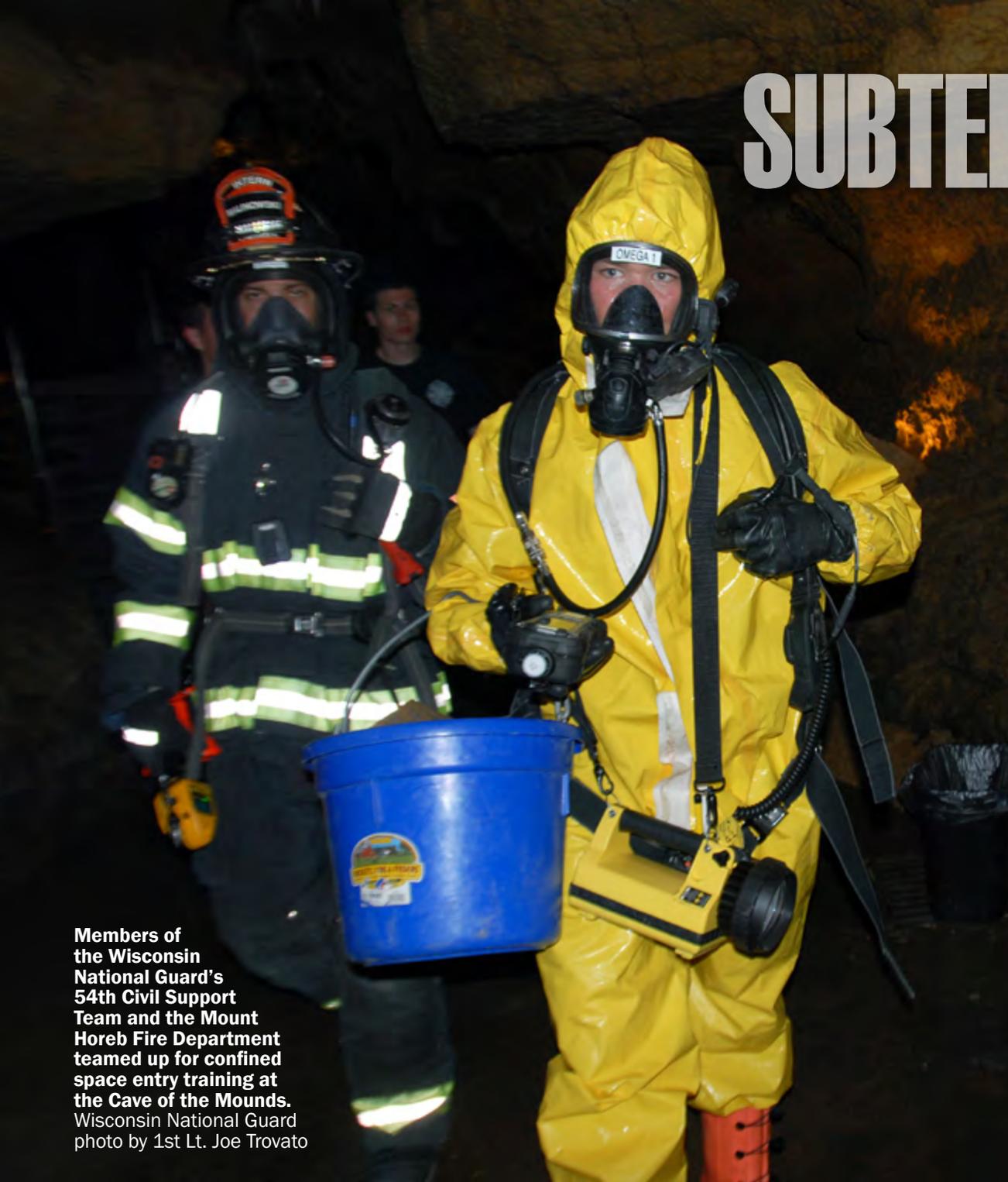
In the exercise scenario, a family emerges from the cave with respiratory distress, eye, and skin irritation, and an individual remained missing in the cave. First responders called the local hazardous materials team, which reached out to the CST.

The CST was up to the task as it quickly gained awareness of the situation, donned hazard suits and sent its survey team into the cave with a team of firefighters to collect air and water samples and search for victims.

The scenario was another in a series of monthly exercises that helps prepare the full-time joint-service National Guard unit for the multitude of scenarios it could face.

As valuable as the training was, even more important was building a relationship with the Mount Horeb Fire Department, said Lt. Col. David May, the unit's commander.

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Members of the Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team and the Mount Horeb Fire Department teamed up for confined space entry training at the Cave of the Mounds. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato

Members of the Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team and the Mount Horeb Fire Department prepare to enter the Cave of the Mounds National Natural Landmark in Blue Mounds to search for the cause of respiratory and eye irritation, part of an exercise scenario for confined space entry training underground

Sept. 5. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato



Staff Sgt. Kenneth Prieur and Sgt. Austin Ryan of the 54th Civil Support Team discuss readily available items that are used to manufacture poisons, explosives and drugs during a July 9 visit to the Stockbridge-Munsee Indian Tribe. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Vaughn R. Larson

54th CST reaches out to tribe

BOWLER. — Members of the first responder community in the Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation were given an up-close and personal view, in a non-emergency setting, of the Wisconsin National Guard's [54th Civil Support Team's](#) capabilities July 9.

Lt. Col. David May, commander of the 54th CST, indicated that this training event might be the first between the Wisconsin National Guard and tribal government.

"I hope it's the first of many," he added.

May emphasized that civil support teams augment a local incident commander.

"We work for you," he said. "We support completing your objective as long as they are within my approved mission."

And despite the detection capabilities they bring to an incident, May said civil support teams cannot replace local first responder services.

In addition to showing some of the equipment the 54th CST uses in the course of its duties, unit members outlined current methods and components clandestine labs use to make methamphetamine, poisons, nerve agents and explosives.

Roger Miller, the emergency coordinator for the Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation and safety officer for the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Volunteer Fire Department, appreciated the visit.

"One of the things is [we know] we've got backup if something major happens," Miller said. "This mutual aid that we have here is instrumental out in the field, with tight dollars for training, having people come out who are experts training our local people — it's pennies on the dollar for protection."

[Complete story online](#)

Wisconsin Guard disaster response team conducts confined space training

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"The primary thing that I've found is just establishing the relationships," he said. "By and large, every agency is full of wonderfully competent people. It's knowing each other on a personal level that gets us together on a scene working together effectively."

May also said the confined space training Cave of the Mounds provided was an invaluable tool to add to the unit's repertoire, which generally focuses on chemical, biological, and radiological hazards. Operating in a cave allowed the unit to train on several key competencies while also preparing for a variety of different operating environments.

"There certainly could be natural structures like this, but possibly more realistically an urban environment whether it be a collapsed structure that has been shored up and safe for us to enter or parts of buildings, ventilation shafts, utility pipes, under man-hole covers or things like that," May said of the real-world applications of training in a cave. "Any kind of space like that could provide a confined space challenge for us."

But more importantly, establishing a relationship and demonstrating the unit's abilities to yet another civilian agency was of vital importance for the 54th.

"If they know what kind of technology or equipment we have available that could help solve their problem

then they know not only that they need to call us but they know how to call us, and they're comfortable working with us because they've met us before," May said.

The subterranean environment, with 50-degree temperatures and slick surfaces provided a unique array of challenges for the Guardsmen and firefighters searching the complex in hazard suits. The thick limestone walls also posed communications hurdles, but learning to adjust to situations is an important training tool, said Sgt. Jeremy Smith, a member of the 54th CST's survey team who entered the cave alongside a firefighter to assess the situation.

"Moving in a smaller, confined environment is always somewhat tricky, and also the communications," he said. "That was one of the biggest things."

For Smith, making another connection and building relationships was the most important part of the day.

"We try to do as much outreach as possible," he said. "We never know as a state asset who and where we're going to be called by. We're just here to advise, assist, assess, and identify whatever they need done."

The 54th CST is a full-time joint Army and Air National Guard unit made up of 22 personnel with backgrounds and training in fields ranging from chemical, biological and radiological threats, to medical, communications, and logistics operations. ■

[Story online](#)

229th Engineer Company comes home



Members of the 229th Engineer Company rush to meet family and friends at Volk Field July 11. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Seven roads, two expanded forward operating bases and 23 Combat Action Badges under their belts, the 147 Soldiers of the 229th Engineer Company returned from a nine-month Afghanistan deployment.

Maj. Jesse Augustine, 229th Engineer Company commander, let the numbers speak for themselves.

“Two hundred sixty-six days in theater, over 580 missions, 16,000 miles traveled, 41 improvised explosive devices found and cleared, countless construction projects, the highest maintenance readiness rate in theater,” Augustine said at the unit’s welcome home ceremony July 11. “Your

Soldiers — these Soldiers — were hands down the best engineers in theater and the best company in theater.”

Augustine spoke with emotion about the challenging mission his Soldiers accomplished.

“What you accomplished in nine months is absolutely remarkable,” he said. “I could go on for hours talking about the highlights and accolades of your missions, but I’m not going to. I’ll let you do that. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but tell your stories. Tell your moms and dads and your spouses how you blew through the birthplace of the Taliban, how you recovered downed aircraft, how you

built forward operating bases in the face of the enemy, how you recovered missing Soldiers so they could go home to their families. How you trained and mentored the Afghan army to stand on their own feet and fight their own battle.

“Those are your stories, and you should tell them.”

The 229th deployed alongside the Massachusetts Army National Guard’s 181st Engineer Company and worked under the direction of the active component 20th Engineer Battalion. The 229th was responsible for expanding forward operating bases and combat outposts, building and improving roads,

helicopter pads and other surfaces. They increased mobility on the combat roads and trails in Kandahar Province.

Sgt. Mitch Engelke, of Bloomington, who was on his first deployment, was one of the Soldiers on the combat circulation team which drove more than 8,000 miles supporting the company’s three other platoons.

“I had a great team,” he said shortly after getting off the plane at Fort Bliss June 30. “It was an easy deployment just because everybody stayed professional and positive.”

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“It was a good mission,” said Sgt. 1st Class Hayden Eckelberg of Tomah. “I would say it was everything I would have wanted as a horizontal engineer.”

“We accomplished every task that we were given no matter how big or how small,” said Master Sgt. Joshua Bowers, a school teacher from Beloit. “They worked real hard throughout the deployment. Real hard. We didn’t take many days off, and a lot of days we worked from sunup to sundown, and they did a real good job.”

Staff Sgt. Eric Klar of Evansville served as a squad leader operating bulldozers on new road construction projects in Afghanistan.

“We built a road with the 2nd Infantry Division into places held by the Taliban,” Klar said. “It allowed [the 2nd Division] to get in there and kick the Taliban out. It was very rewarding to help the infantry get in there with their vehicles rather than having to walk all the time. We had a couple of missions like that, which were by far the most rewarding.”

Spc. Phillip Webber of Baraboo traveled across Afghanistan on mission. His most memorable mission involved an incident that occurred to an infantry unit.

“We needed to go in and help out, clean up,” he said. “I can’t say much more than that.”

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, deputy adjutant general for Army, praised the returning Soldiers.

“229th Engineers, I only have a couple of words for you — mission accomplished,” Anderson said. “We are unbelievably proud of what you have accomplished in theater.”

Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, expressed his pride in the 229th.

“You had a difficult mission in a difficult part of the world,” Dunbar said. “Not only is our country grateful, but so is Afghanistan. You’ll never know how many men and women in Afghanistan will be forever grateful for your contribution to their country. You did a remarkable job.”

Gov. Scott Walker agreed.

“To the men and women of the 229th, thank you for your service, and thank you for protecting freedom here and around the world,” Walker said. “We’re proud of you. We also say thank you to the families who made sure things were good back here at home so your loved ones who deployed could do the job they were sent to do.”

The 229th previously deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, and Operation Desert Storm in 1990. ■

[Additional photos](#)

■ *Engineer unit among first in National Guard to get latest road clearance rides*

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

The Superior-based 950th Engineer Company arrived at its annual training at Fort McCoy in mid-June to begin training on the Army's Husky mine detection vehicle as well as the Buffalo mine resistant ambush protected armored vehicle.

Like other Guard route clearance vehicles, the 950th used both vehicles extensively on past deployments overseas. The unit most recently deployed to Iraq in 2010-11 where it used the vehicles to sweep roads for improvised explosive devices. But the unit has never had its own vehicles on which to train here at home.

"Route clearance is nothing new, but having the equipment definitely is," said Capt. Paul Cusick, who commands the 186 Soldiers of the 950th along with the 954th Area Clearance platoon.

Route clearance missions took on an important role during the conflicts of the past decade as insurgents buried improvised explosive devices along roads in an effort to derail coalition vehicles. The military adopted the Husky, which was originally used in South Africa, to help detect the devices. There are millions of mines scattered across Afghanistan, underscoring the importance of route clearance to military objectives.

"My opinion is it's phenomenal," said Spc. Justin Ball of Superior, who was training on the vehicle for the first time. "It's a vehicle-mounted mine-detection system, and it's keeping Soldiers safe. You don't ever have to leave the vehicle in order to pinpoint and mark an IED."

The Husky is outfitted with mine-detecting sensors and specially designed

overpass wheels that exert less than nine pounds of pressure per square inch at their point of contact with the ground. That allows the vehicle to roll directly over most explosive devices without tripping them.

Once the Huskies find and mark the explosives, the 950th calls in its other new vehicle, the Buffalo, which is equipped with a 39-ft. arm with a fork that can probe the suspicious area to determine the nature of the device.

The Buffalo, a 66,000-pound, six-

wheeled armored vehicle, is built specifically for the purpose. Its extended arm has cameras, the ability to dig, and a high-pressure blower that can clear dirt and debris from the area.

"This is what we do," said Sgt. 1st Class Ray Heilman. "This is our baby. This is the vehicle to have, because this is what is going to determine your mission. We're there to clear routes. This is what does it for us."

The unit spent its first several days of

its annual training familiarizing with the equipment before embarking on a five-day field training exercise at Fort McCoy.

"All the guys I've talked to have just been loving the training," said Sgt. Corey Pederson, who oversaw the arrival and assembly of the Husky vehicles.

The 950th also spent time in virtual simulators where they received additional training on the operation of both vehicles before testing their skills in the field. 

[Story online](#)

257th BSB has region's finest field dining



Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

FORT MCCOY — The menu might have read braised pork chops, mashed potatoes and gravy, soup and salad, but for one Wisconsin Army National Guard unit the dessert was a berth in the Department of the Army-level [Philip A. Connelly Awards Program](#)'s food service competition.

What made the victory even sweeter for the mess section of Headquarters Company, 257th Brigade Support Battalion is that the unexpected opportunity to take part in the 46-year-old competition is occurring during the company's "reset" year, when training essentially starts from scratch with basic individual tasks.

"This was an opportunity that came up and we really had to seize the opportunity," said Capt. Ryan Traxinger, Headquarters Company commander. "With the mess section we have the right leaders, we've had plenty of support from the staff, support from the other companies, and so far, so good."

Headquarters Company, 257th BSB won in Region 3 and will compete against National Guard food service sections from Florida, Maine, Nebraska and Oregon

Sgt. Michael Zahn, first cook with Headquarters Company, 257th Brigade Support Battalion, garnishes a tray of braised pork chops before the evening meal Aug. 10 at Fort McCoy. Headquarters Company, 257th BSB won the Philip A. Connelly Awards Program's Region 4 food service competition during the battalion's annual training, preparing a meal in the field for 100 Soldiers. They will advance with four other National Guard companies to the Army-wide competition. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Vaughn R. Larson

in the National Guard division of the Department of the Army level contest, which begins Oct. 15. Headquarters Company, 257th BSB expects to be evaluated in early November.

Chuck White, an evaluator with Logistics Systems Incorporated, explained that the competitors are judged on sanitation, food handling, following recipes and the nutritional value of the meal.

"Just making sure that everyone is doing their job so that when a Soldier walks through here expecting a good meal, he's going to get a good meal," White said.

White, an evaluator for the past three years, knows a thing or two about well-run food service sections. He completed a 38-year National Guard career as the food service sergeant major for a division, and ran the northwest Iraq food service program during a year-long deployment.

"I can tell you now I'm very impressed," White said of Headquarters Company, 257th BSB. "I'm impressed with the way they work together, their attention to detail — just overall a good staff. It's good to watch."

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Meyer heads up the battalion's food service section, bringing a wealth of experience in food service to the job — during his 34-year career he has worked in battalion and brigade food service sections and also as a state food service advisor. Sgt. Kyle Edwards is the lead cook, responsible for the overall operations of the containerized kitchen (CK), sanitation center and dining tent.

"The combination of those two just made the timing right for this competition," Traxinger said. "I can't say enough about the NCO leadership in our mess section right now."

Sgt. Michael Zahn is the section's first

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Sgt. Kyle Edwards, lead cook with Headquarters Company, 257th Brigade Support Battalion, adds sautéed mushrooms to boiled peas before the evening meal Aug. 10 at Fort McCoy. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Vaughn R. Larson

257th BSB mess section to vie for NGB crown

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cook, and runs operations in the CK.

"It's all about Army regulations," Zahn explained. "If I'm keeping my cooks in line and they know what they're doing. I'm in charge of CK operations, overseeing what everybody's doing, what they're cooking, making sure they're on time, everything's up to temperature so we're not serving bad food, staying hydrated, safety. My job [today] is the pork chops — I've got to cook the main entrée and the gravy I've got to make from scratch, and I get to make the coffee."

Zahn said he was very confident about his section's chances in the competition.

"I've known most of these cooks on this squad for years upon years," he said. "We've done annual trainings together. I've seen all of them cook, I know their

skills, I know their attitude. They work well with me and we're great friends outside of the military. We know how we work, and we get the job done."

Spc. Nicole Mayer, an intelligence analyst with the battalion, said the food during annual training has been pretty good.

"Our cooks take a lot of pride, so I know they put their all into it," she said.

That kind of commentary was no surprise to Traxinger.

"Our mess section is a real force multiplier when it comes to morale," Traxinger said. "They continually, through their training and their hard work, have provided high-quality meals for our battalion for the last couple of years. They've had hiccups along the way, but they've learned from their mistakes. It's a culture of continuous improvement." ■

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)



AMVETS members applaud after Gov. Scott Walker signed Senate Bill 96, which designates State Highway 128 as the 128th Infantry Memorial Highway to honor the members of that regiment during a signing ceremony June 21 at the AMVETS Commander's Banquet in Appleton. Submitted photo

State highway renamed to honor 128th Infantry

A retired Wisconsin National Guard Soldier's two-year drive to honor his infantry regiment resulted in the designation of a 38-mile state highway in northwestern Wisconsin as the 128th Infantry Memorial Highway.

"Now," said Gov. Scott Walker after signing the legislation during the 69th annual Wisconsin State AMVETS Convention June 21, "everyone driving on State Highway 128 will remember the sacrifices of the 128th Infantry."

That was Mike Hanke's goal when he began this project. A retired sergeant first class from Chippewa Falls, Hanke enlisted in the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 32nd Brigade in 1983, serving four years before transferring to active duty from 1987-1990. Ten years later he rejoined the Wisconsin Army National Guard, deploying twice to Iraq with the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry.

"Shortly after I returned from my second deployment, I was driving on I-94 [west of Menomonie] and passed the Highway 128 exit," Hanke said. "That highway passes through the heart of where units of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry are located. I knew that the 32nd Division was honored with a highway in eastern Wisconsin and felt that the 128th deserved similar recognition."

It was while as an AMVETS liaison to the Wisconsin National Guard that Hanke got the idea of designating the highway. He first contacted his state legislators, who put him in touch with the legislators who have that highway in their districts. He remained active throughout the two-year process.

The legislation states that the signs commemorating the highway are to be paid for with private donations. ■

[Complete story online](#)

A public peek into the 128th ARW

Staff Sgt. Jenna V. Hildebrand
128th Air Refueling Wing

MILWAUKEE — The Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing provided local media members the opportunity to experience the Boeing KC-135R flight simulator, observe the maintenance phase and to talk to KC-135R subject matter experts June 28.

Representatives from all four Milwaukee-area TV news stations toured the isochronal inspection dock where a disassembled aircraft was being inspected and experienced the flight simulator with Maj. Todd Walton and Maj. Adam Uhan, both pilots with the 128th ARW.

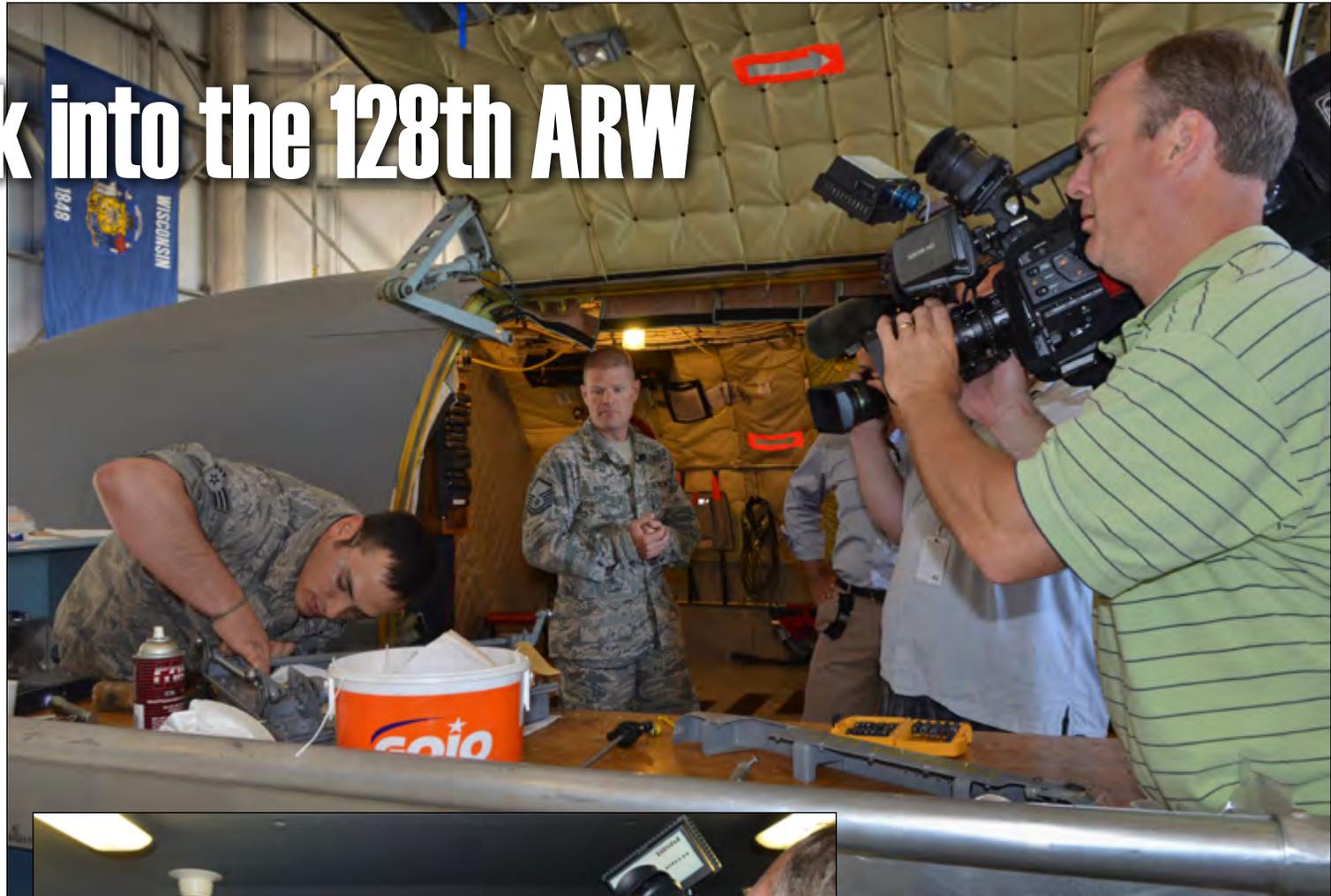
The goal of the event was to raise public awareness of the extent of training the aircrew goes through to operate the aircraft and to gain the knowledge and ability to handle hazardous situations while operating it. Another goal of the media engagement was to showcase the meticulous level of detail and extensive experience that the maintenance personnel use to inspect and maintain the fleet of aircraft.

The 128th ARW reported four in-flight emergencies in the past three months that received media attention. Capt. John Capra, a 128th ARW public affairs officer, explained to the media that the in-flight emergencies were non-critical situations that resulted from abnormalities while flying the aircraft.

There are two types of in-flight emergencies according to U.S. Air Force technical data — critical, which requires immediate attention and action, and non-critical, in which abnormalities that occur require immediate attention, but not necessarily immediate action.

“These malfunctions normally do not necessarily pose an immediate threat to the safety of the crew or airplane, but may impact mission accomplishment or lead to a more serious situation if not properly

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Above, Milwaukee television news crews receive a tour of the isochronal inspection dock by Senior Master Sgt. Matthew Kuspa (center) at the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing on June 28. At left, Maj. Adam Uhan talks to a Milwaukee television news crew June 28 before receiving a training flight in a KC-135R simulator. The Milwaukee news teams were invited to attend a media engagement event at the air wing to learn more about the KC-135R flight simulator and phase maintenance of the KC-135R aircraft. 128th Air Refueling Wing photos by Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Rohloff



Hillary Mintz of WISN 12 Milwaukee captures her story introduction next to the nose of a KC-135R Stratotanker at the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing on June 28. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Rohloff

Wisconsin Air Guard unit engages local media

Continued from Page 28

handled," said Capra in regard to the four non-critical in-flight emergencies.

The four non-critical in-flight emergencies were due to condensation in the cockpit, a low oil pressure indicator light, irregular engine fuel flow, and a hydraulic quantity gauge abnormality. All of the situations required the aircrews to take precautionary measures such as shutting down an engine, returning to the airfield, or diverting from the flight plan for maintenance.

"One in-flight emergency is too many, so we take it very serious," Capra said. "Of course having four in-flight emergencies within a short period of time is concerning to us. But upon review, after we look at all the data, they are all unrelated so there's nothing that would indicate there's a trend going in any specific direction.

"The fact that they're all non-critical — the fact that they're all sensory related and nothing that would have endangered the safety of the aircraft or the crew — it's comforting to know that they took the right approach," he added.

The flight simulator assigned to the 128th ARW, which is one of three KC-135R simulators in the Air National Guard owned by the U.S. Air Force, is an asset that attracts aircrews

throughout the region to simulate and practice for problems that could arise while flying in order to proficiently train for real-world situations. Training in the simulator gives the 128th ARW the opportunity to save money and aircraft flying hours. Training in the simulator costs about 25 percent of flying the actual aircraft. More than 1,000 pilots from the 128th ARW and also various units around the nation logged nearly 2,400 hours in the flight simulator.

During flight simulator sessions, pilots experience a virtual non-critical in-flight emergency. The pilots talked them through how they would handle the situation and then returned to the airfield and landed the virtual aircraft.

The media observed experienced maintenance technicians actively working one of the KC-135Rs at the inspection dock. They visited different work stations on and around the aircraft where the technicians explained their inspection processes and the regular maintenance they do to each part of the aircraft.

"When you look at the aircraft and you look at the amount of hours and number of years, you've got an incredibly safe and reliable platform that's not just good for today and the past 50 years, but in the near future as well," Capra said. ■

[Story online](#)



Col. Dan Yenchesky accepts the guidon from Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, deputy adjutant general for Air, during a July 14 change of command ceremony in Milwaukee. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Wilson

New commander takes charge at 128th ARW

Staff Sgt. Jenna Hildebrand
128th Air Refueling Wing

MILWAUKEE — The Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing bid farewell to one commander and welcomed another during a formal change of command ceremony July 14.

Col. Edward Metzgar relinquished command of the wing to Col. Daniel Yenchesky, who served as the vice commander of the 128th ARW.

During the ceremony Metzgar was awarded The Legion of Merit, authorized by Lt. Gen. Stanley Clarke III, Director of the Air National Guard, for his service to the 128th ARW.

Metzgar began his tour as 128th wing commander in February 2009. During his command, the wing logged more than 18,427 flight hours, executed 4,379 sorties, simultaneously provided homeland security and contingency aerial refueling for 7,704 receiver aircraft and safely delivered more than 97 million pounds of fuel.

Metzgar's focus on mission readiness resulted in the 128th ARW setting a new Air National Guard standard during Air Mobility Command's first ever No Notice

Nuclear Operational Readiness Inspection. Under Metzgar's command, the wing was rated "Outstanding" for aircrew Nuclear Command and Control and "Excellent" for Command and Control procedures.

In 2011, Metzgar commanded the deployment of 128th ARW unit members, aircraft, and resources to the 313th Air Expeditionary Wing, Moron Air Base, Spain, to carry out Operation Unified Protector. They executed missions that contributed to the ability of the U.S. to sustain successful North Atlantic Treaty Organization operations in Libya.

Yenchesky, a command pilot with more than 4,000 flying hours, previously served as commander of the 126th Air Refueling Squadron, Milwaukee; commander of the 90th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, Incirlik Air Base, Turkey; air operations officer of the 128th Operations Group; and commander of the 128th Maintenance Group. In 2011, he commanded the 313th Expeditionary Operations Group, Moron Air Base, Spain during Operation Unified Protector.

Metzgar assumed his new duty as wing commander of the 171st Air Refueling Wing in Pittsburgh. ■

[Complete story online](#)

CONTACT: Recruiters seek new venue to reach students

MADISON — The University of Wisconsin's Union South Plaza was packed with new and returning college students as well as groups and vendors competing for their attention Sept. 4.

An inflatable pugil pit, courtesy of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, may have been one of the more unique attention-getters, drawing about 150 students in a three-hour span.

"I saw a big jumpy thing and I kind of wanted to fight my best friends — what better opportunity to do it?" said Ajay Koya, a UW junior.

"It was really fun — I got my butt whupped," he continued. "You definitely have to be strong to do this — that was a really great workout for the two minutes I was up there. Definitely makes me respect them."

In addition to gearing up to take on friends with padded pugil sticks, students could test their strength on a pull-up bar or choose from a complimentary selection of T-shirts, water bottles or other promotional items.

"We're hoping to get the word out about the National Guard, and hopefully generate some new leads and some interest in the National Guard," said Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Kammeraad with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion. "Hopefully we can help some of these kids pay for college."

Brandon Gentile, also a UW junior, appreciated the no-pressure atmosphere at the National Guard booth.

"It's a nice way to get people out and interested in the National Guard," he said.

- [Complete story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)

Wisconsin Army National Guard recruiters challenged incoming and returning University of Wisconsin students to pull-ups and pugil stick competitions, in exchange for T-shirts or water bottles, during Badger Fest 2013 at the Union South Plaza Sept. 4. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Vaughn R. Larson

829th builds innovative summer training

Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard

LAKE TOMAHAWK — Visitors to Camp American Legion, including veterans with disabilities or limited mobility, now have an easier time getting to Big Carr Lake thanks to the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 829th Engineer Company and 824th Engineer Detachment.

The 16 Soldiers spent two weeks replacing a hazardous dirt and gravel path leading to a lakeside concrete pier with an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant wooden ramp for wheelchairs, as well as a concrete ramp for electric golf carts or all-terrain vehicles. As a result, campers who require wheelchairs or walkers can now access the lake independent of support staff.

The 829th worked on this project under Innovative Readiness Training guidelines. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nick Grob, the officer in charge for the project, said getting this project approved as an IRT was a two-year effort. The project has to be announced in a public newspaper of record three times without response from private-sector contractors, and then must be approved by the National Guard Bureau.

"They also have to factor in the costs to the government, the National Guard and the taxpayers, and what kind of benefits will be realized," Grob added.

The National Guard did not fund any of the raw materials, parts or equipment — referred to as a bill of materials — needed to complete the project. The American Legion purchased all the expendable items required, such as saw blades and drill bits. Camp American Legion fed and housed the Soldiers during the 14-day, 1,300 man-

AFTER: The new landing concrete pad, concrete ramp and wooden ramp are dedicated during a July 26 ceremony. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nick Grob

hour project.

Grob said numerous benefits were realized from the Camp American Legion project.

"We got all sorts of [military occupational skill]-specific training," he explained. "We also were able to get in some driver's training on some of the equipment" such as a backhoe, a skid steer and a 10-ton dump truck, "and our noncommissioned officers got some great training leading teams for two weeks."

Kevin Moshea, Camp American Legion's director, acknowledged that the steep terrain, woodline and lakeshore combined for a demanding work environment.

"It presented them with unique construction and engineering challenges," he said. "This was a great learning exercise and a great team-building exercise, and I think an incredibly productive experience for them."

Capt. Kyle Gruber, the 829th Engineer Company commander, said his troops were motivated for this particular mission.

"This is what they joined the unit to do," he explained. "They are providing a cost-effective finished product for an organization that — without their efforts — may not have been possible. This is a very strong retention and recruiting tool."

Grob said the Soldiers' enthusiasm grew as they gained a better understanding of the mission and scope of services Camp American Legion provides for military veterans.

"I was proud to do this," Grob said. "Some of the guys working on the project thanked me for the opportunity to work on it."

Moshea suggested that the 829th built more than user-friendly lake access for military veterans.

"Beyond the cement, mortar and rebar, this was really a great relationship builder," Moshea said. "It took our relationship to a much higher level."

[Story online](#)



BEFORE: Members of the 824th Engineer Detachment work on a concrete pad at Camp American Legion in Lake Tomahawk July 17. The 824th Engineer Company and 824th Engineer Detachment took part in an innovative readiness training project that allowed them to practice their military construction skills on a real-world project for veterans.



ARNG BWC

Strong effort falls short

CAMP ROBINSON, Ark. — The journey that began nearly a year ago for Sgt. Edward Schmitt of Lake Mills and Spc. Brandon Byrne of Oak Creek ended tantalizingly close to the gold July 24.

Schmitt and Byrne — Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers with the 54th Civil Support Team and Company B, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, respectively — were top finishers in the grueling Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition. Byrne finished second among the top seven enlisted competitors in all the Army National Guard, while Schmitt placed third among the best seven noncommissioned officers competing at the event.

“It was fun, but I’m glad it’s over,” Byrne said the day after the event. “I’m sore and could use some sleep.”

Schmitt said it was disappointing not to win, but he knows he did his best.

“I didn’t leave any time or points out there,” Schmitt said. “I won the events that I knew I needed to win to stay competitive, but made some mistakes and just gave up too much ground in some of my weaker events. I am proud of my efforts, but wish I could have brought the win home to Wisconsin.”

The Best Warrior competition measures the total Soldier in physical fitness, endurance, military bearing, weapons skills, Soldier skills, mental agility, resilience and Warrior spirit. The just-completed competition tested Soldiers in 10 events over the course of 56 hours in sweltering Arkansas heat and several inches of rain.

Schmitt said the shooting events proved his greatest challenge.

“I am an average to slightly above average shooter,” he said, “but at this level, above average doesn’t quite cut it.”

Byrne excelled at marksmanship, winning the M4 qualification on backup iron sights with a score of 38 out of 40 targets. The toughest event for him was the road march with a loaded ruck sack.

“Ten-point-three miles, all in the rain, running up mountains at 1 o’clock in the morning,” Byrne explained. “No fun.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields, the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s top enlisted Soldiers, praised Schmitt and Byrne.

“The effort they both put forth was absolutely

tremendous,” Shields said. “I told them last night [at the awards ceremony], when you consider the total number of Soldiers in the Army National Guard, remember that you took second and third. I couldn’t be prouder of how they represented themselves and Wisconsin.”

Twelve states — Arkansas, Florida, Maine, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, West Virginia and Wisconsin — were represented at this year’s event, held for the first time at Camp Robinson. More than 350,000 Soldiers comprise the Army National Guard.

For the past several months Schmitt and Byrne have matched their skills against Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers at the company, battalion and brigade level before winning the Wisconsin Soldier of the Year competition in April. They advanced to the regional competition in May, where they won the right to compete against the best National Guard Soldiers in the nation.

Byrne said his brother advised him to give 100 percent effort during the competition — advice he is sharing with Soldiers who will take part in upcoming Best Warrior

events.

“Your body won’t fail you, and that’s something they need to know to be able to push through and max that P.T. test or finish the ruck march or climb Pike’s peak and find your last point for land navigation,” he said.

Schmitt said he learned a lot about himself during the course of these competitions.

“There are a lot of times when you have to really just trust yourself, and that builds a lot of confidence,” Schmitt said. “Board appearances aren’t nearly as daunting as they were before I started this process, and I’m sure that will continue to help me throughout my career.”

Both Schmitt and Byrne thanked their sponsors, families and units for their support as they advanced from one competition to the next en route to Camp Robinson.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard has sent at least one competitor to the Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition in four of the past five years.

“There’s no doubt in my mind that the National Guard Bureau knows who Wisconsin is,” Shields said. 

[Complete story online](#)

Nicaraguan military rescue team trains in Badger State

Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

Members of a Nicaraguan humanitarian rescue unit (UHR) spent three days in Wisconsin sharing search and extraction techniques with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 273rd Engineer Company — the search and extraction component of the Wisconsin National Guard's CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high explosive) Enhanced Response Force Package ([CERFP](#)).

Capt. Peter Owen, 273rd commander, was pleased with the joint training event, part of the [State Partnership Program](#) Wisconsin enjoys with Nicaragua.

"Our guys were able to interact with the Nicaraguans, learn some of their techniques for search and rescue while we shared some of the ways we excelled in our exercises," Owen said. "There are a lot of different ways to conduct search and rescue, so it's important we take every opportunity to learn in the event we are called to serve in Wisconsin or another state."

The six Nicaraguans and five Wisconsin National Guardsmen — Owen, Sgt. 1st Class Scott Macglashin, Sgt. David Williams, Spc. Josh Mezyk and Honduran native Sgt. Will Valladares — trained on shoring collapsed structures, using ropes for extractions, and waterborne rope rescue. Those skills were applied to the practical exercise, a scenario calling for rescuing four victims from two earthquake-damaged buildings and a collapsed parking structure.

Owen noted that the 273rd Engineer Company was experienced on more equipment than their Nicaraguan counterparts, but any advantage that experience might bring evaporates in a constrained environment such as a collapsed structure.

"I thought they were very technically sound," Owen said. "I'd put them on par with many other units as far as search and rescue extraction skills. It was great to see their level of pride and esprit de corps, and the techniques they use during real-life missions."

Capt. Turman Selgado, officer in charge of the Nicaraguan UHR, was also pleased with the exchange.

"Each of the exercises performed were

very productive," he wrote in a letter to Owen. "We learned new ways and methods ... the command of my unit is very happy with this exercise [and] feels that we are creating strengths for the support of the population [of Nicaragua]."

Selgado thanked the Wisconsin National Guard leadership for the joint training opportunity, adding that he hoped this "is not the only training" with Wisconsin.

Owen said that the Nicaraguan UHR

squeezed every possible training moment from the "rock pile" — the collapsed structure training site — at Volk Field. The two units teamed up to build a shoring structure that could bear up to 13,000 pounds.

"Everybody learned something," Owen said. "Everybody came away with a positive experience and learned new techniques." 

[Story online](#)

Fallen Wisconsin Guard hero STILL MAKING A DIFFERENCE in community he loved

Maj. Paul Rickert
Wisconsin National Guard

CHICAGO — One hundred twenty-five South Chicago kids enjoyed a campout in Nat King Cole Park Aug. 23 during the fourth annual Peace in the Park After Dark (PPAD).

Part of the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy initiative (CAPS), PPAD is a community event for South Chicago youth. Run by volunteers, it includes overnight camping, archery, and teambuilding exercises with a focus on leadership, respect and teamwork.

The waiting list for PPAD fills up months in advance.

The event would never have been possible without the efforts of Chicago police officer, and Wisconsin National Guardsman, Thomas Wortham IV who was murdered May 19, 2010, during a robbery at his parents' home just across the street from the park.

Wortham enlisted with the Wisconsin National Guard in April 1999 and deployed to Iraq twice — a 12-month deployment in 2004 with the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and a 10-month deployment with Troop A, 105th Cavalry. He also spent a year on active duty performing airport security as part of Operation Noble Eagle in 2003.

After he was commissioned in 2006, Wortham attended the police academy and joined the Chicago Police Department, working in the Englewood district.

An active leader in his community, Wortham served as the president of the Cole Park Advisory Council in Chatham, working to make the neighborhood safe

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Above, Sgt. 1st Class Paul Wagner of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 105th Cavalry Troop stokes a campfire as camp participants prepare to roast marshmallows during the fourth annual "Peace in the Park After Dark" youth campout Aug. 23-24 at Nat King Cole Park in Chicago's Chatham neighborhood. Left, Staff Sgt. Daniel Killam, Sgt. 1st Class Paul Wagner, 1st Sgt. Steven Pavlick, Staff Sgt. Douglas Krueger and retired Sgt. 1st Class Edward Hoffman of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 105th Cavalry Troop joined Thomas Wortham III and his wife Carolyn to support the event commemorating 1st Lt. Thomas Wortham IV. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Maj. Paul Rickert

Wisconsin National Guard supports Chicago safe parks event in honor of fallen Soldier

Continued from Page 34

for children to play in the same park that he enjoyed growing up.

After Wortham's death, his father Thomas Wortham III asked the 105th if they would be willing to help with a community event Wortham had been planning at the park. Staff Sgt. Daniel Killam — "Canada" to his friends — jumped at the chance.

An outgoing, friendly individual during his life, it wasn't hard to find fellow service members who knew Wortham and wanted to help. They pooled their resources, which included a general purpose medium tent from the unit, rented a truck and drove down.

During the first event in 2010 there was a lot of community involvement. A local benefactor bought tents and sleeping bags and police officers blocked off the park and provided security and lights.

There was not much organization. Killam and the other Wisconsin Guard volunteers found themselves gathering the kids together and teaching them how to work as a group to put up tents, build bonfires and make s'mores.

"If you've ever seen a kid learn how to make s'mores for the first time, times a hundred, that's a contagious type of joy," Killam said.

Someone had paid a bugler to perform reveille the following morning, and Killam and the rest of the volunteers corralled the kids out of the tents and led them through some calisthenics.

"Afterward, we put them on line, did a 'police call' — a military term for cleaning trash up in an area — and gave them a sense of ownership in the park," Killam said. "Getting them to engage in that kind of ownership wasn't what we had in mind when we came down here but it kind of evolved into that."

Volunteers from the Wisconsin Guard this year included 1st Sgt. Steven Pavlick, retired Sgt. 1st Class Edward Hoffman, Sgt. 1st Class Paul Wagner and Staff Sgt.



Above, Staff Sgt. Daniel Killam helps a group of young campers attach a military tent to its metal frame during the fourth annual "Peace in the Park After Dark" youth campout Aug. 23-24 at Nat King Cole Park in Chicago's Chatham neighborhood. Below, Sgt. 1st Class Paul Wagner, Killam, retired Sgt. 1st Class Edward Hoffman and Staff Sgt. Douglas Krueger with Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Wisconsin National Guard photos



Douglas Krueger. All had fond memories of Wortham.

Thomas Wortham III and Carolyn Wortham, parents of Thomas Wortham IV, were very grateful for the support.

"This is a continuation of what he was trying to do," Carolyn said. "It gives kids an opportunity to interact with police... ask questions... to interact with the military. Most of these kids have only seen Soldiers on television."

This was the first year that children outside the 6th district were invited to attend.

"We're trying to teach these kids to make better choices," Carolyn said, adding she hoped the experience might make a child think twice about joining a gang. "Kids are more alike than they are different."

The event was attended by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and 1st Deputy Superintendent Al Wysinger from 6th District, both bringing an anti-drug and anti-violence message.

Wysinger assured local residents the kids would be safe.

"Every person you see here in a blue T-shirt is a police officer," he said. "They are going to spend the night here with these kids."

One of the volunteer police officers included Field Training Officer Herb Williams from the 6th District. He had heard about the program but this was the first year he had volunteered.

"I knew about it and wanted to give back," Williams said, adding that it was a great experience. "I'll do it every year."

Both the Wisconsin National Guard and the Chicago Police department have created an award in Wortham's honor. The Thomas E. Wortham IV Achievement Award is presented each year to a member who best represents the values and commitment to community and service Wortham emulated.

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)

Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers volunteer to search for infant's remains

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

The Army values were on display Aug. 25 when citizen Soldiers from the Wisconsin and Illinois National Guard volunteered their time to search for the remains of a murdered five-month-old child in a landfill in Zion, Ill.

Two current Wisconsin National Guardsmen joined a former Wisconsin Guardsman and nearly a dozen from Illinois in searching for Joshua Summeries, who was allegedly suffocated by a Zion man, placed in a backpack and disposed of in a large trash bin.

Police and fire personnel began searching for the boy's remains, and after three full days were joined by a group of Guardsmen who had volunteered to help.

After seeing news reports on social media, James Stroh, of Racine, who recently completed seven years of service in the Wisconsin and Illinois Army National Guard and eight more in the U.S. Navy, called Zion Police Chief Wayne Brooks and offered his assistance.

Soon, Stroh was on the phone with his former comrades in Wisconsin and Illinois. Within hours, he had assembled an ad-hoc team of Soldiers from two states, who volunteered their Sunday to go search through a landfill for a complete stranger. Joining him from Wisconsin were Staff Sgt. Andrew Whelan, a Waukesha resident and recruiter from Detachment Three, Company B of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion in Milwaukee, and Muskego resident 2nd Lt. David Dicker, from Detachment One of Headquarters Company of the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, based in Clintonville.

With a crew of exhausted rescue personnel and after several unsuccessful days of searching, Chief Brooks was all too happy to have extra help from a trained and professional force.

"I knew going in that these guys would follow directions, especially from each other, because we had to form the search

lines and skirmish lines," Brooks said. "People going off and doing their own things was not helping," Brooks said.

"Everyone else I had was burnt out by that time."

While the search for Joshua's remains ultimately proved unsuccessful, the contributions of the National Guardsmen who sacrificed their personal time to slog through a foul-smelling, teeming landfill under a punishing late-summer sun to assist a family and emergency crews in need still reflected a high degree of service above self. The odor was so intense that the volunteers applied vapor rub under their noses to combat the smell.

"I was trying to explain the harsh conditions they were dealing with," Brooks said, describing his initial conversation with Stroh. "It's not what you think up there. It's completely beyond what you can comprehend, and he [Stroh] said, 'you've

got the right guys.' They went beyond my expectations and just stuck with the task. You sent them on a task, and they just followed it and did everything you asked."

Stroh, Whelan, Dicker and the volunteers from the Illinois National Guard, most of whom had recently returned from Afghanistan, worked from approximately 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., when authorities finally called off the search.

"It was really beyond my expectations, and I couldn't be more happy or thankful," the Zion police chief said. "We had a lot of people wanting to volunteer, but I didn't have people that had the proper demeanor, the proper experience, or the proper structure or discipline. And I knew they did."

As a parent himself, Whelan never hesitated when asked if he could help.

"We all kind of looked at it like it was something we needed to do if we had the

opportunity," he said. "I have a son that's six, so it's one of those things where, as a parent, it hit home.

"It was a despicable way for anybody not only to die, but their final resting place," Whelan added. "I figured that if I had time to go out and spend a day trying to bring that kid home to have a proper burial then that is important, and that's worth my time."

For Whelan, it was just a matter of living the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

"It was just selfless service, and it was the right thing to do," he said.

Dicker agreed.

"I looked at it as if it were my kid, I would want as many as people as possible looking for it," he said. "It was complete selfless service, going out there and doing something for the community. I think that is another thing that makes the Guard the Guard, being able to have that community connection."

The service on display that day was representative of the quality of people serving in the National Guard, Stroh said.

"Every single one of them that was involved with this, it was right in line with [the Army values]," he said. "It shows the character and the quality of the Soldiers that are serving in the National Guard and that sense of duty, sense of honor, to go out and try and complete a task that you know is not going to end well. Obviously, going out there, we knew it was a deceased baby."

The volunteers ultimately spent more than nine hours raking, and at times, digging through trash with their hands. But they never lost sight of why they were there.

"The stolen innocence of the victim, and just the way that Joshua was discarded literally like a piece of trash ... certainly for those that have been deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, it didn't take much to convince people to come out and give up their time to come and search," Stroh said. ■

[Story online](#)

HORSING AROUND

for a good cause

Pfc. Chris Enderle
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

DEERFIELD — Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 105th Cavalry Squadron and their families joined together during a Family Readiness Group event hosted by owners of the Harmony Horsemanship Freedom Stables here June 15.

The event had horse rides for the children followed by an equi-soccer match, in which members of the 105th rode horses while playing soccer against one another for bragging rights for the year. The event also included hay bale tossing followed by a children's version of equi-soccer with stick horses, a water balloon-tossing event, a rock wall and a pie throwing contest.

"I love doing events like this, because it shows both the Soldiers and their families that we truly do care about them," said Sgt. Maj. Curtis Patrouille of the 105th Cavalry Squadron, shortly after awarding both the winning and losing teams with their trophies. "The Soldiers are strong, there's no doubting that at all. They're built like a brick wall. But a wall is nothing without its mortar and foundation, and that's what their families are. As such we have to make sure we take care of both."

The fundraising event was also open to the public as part of the Cavalry Association, which accepts public membership and public donations. All proceeds from the event went towards helping fund future events for both the Cavalry Association and Freedom Stables.

Paulette Stelpflug and Teddy Schluter, owners and caretakers of the farm, have been working together with the Army for years through their At Ease program. The program is designed to help Soldiers



returning from war learn to cope and handle the stresses of living back at home again, said Schluter, a wounded Vietnam War veteran.

"The reason why we do this is because there is nothing harder on a Soldier or their family than coming back from a war," Schluter said. "What we aim to do here today is help ease the tension at home, and the best way I've seen is through the connection a man makes with a horse. It's a beautiful thing, which you won't see anywhere else."

Schluter and Stelpflug said they plan on holding events such as these and helping Soldiers and their families for as long as they can. ■

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)



Above, Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Texidor and Staff Sgt. Lee Jones of Company A, 105th Cavalry Squadron during an equi-soccer match June 15. At left, Spc. Dean May, Spc. Sidney Rigden, Staff Sgt. Lee Jones, and Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Texidor celebrate their victory. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photos by Pfc. Christopher Enderle

RESCUE FARM

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

When her son, a Marine firefighter with five tours in Iraq and Afghanistan under his belt, walked into the kitchen and slapped a solitary bullet on the table, Barb Knopf knew what she had to do.

Her son had planned to use that bullet to end his life in her home with his wife and two children living within the same walls. But even Knopf, the man's mother and a Marine veteran herself, had not seen the signs.

At the time, Knopf was running a horse rescue on which her son worked.

"I didn't see it," she said. "A mom living with her child could not see it. I knew I had not gotten back the same young Marine I had given the Marine Corps, but I figured he was tired after five tours in Iraq and Afghanistan as a firefighter."

After revealing what he had once planned to do to himself, her son acknowledged he was suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. He told her that he would constantly see the shadows of comrades he had scooped up in body bags. The images haunted him until he began working at the horse rescue farm. Soon the horrific memories were replaced by memories of the good times he shared with his brothers in arms.

When Knopf and her son finished their conversation, he handed her a \$1,000 check, which became the seed money for the non-profit Veterans Equine Trail Services, or V.E.T.S. program.

The V.E.T.S. program found a home at the Douglas Legacy Farm in La Valle, where the late Russell and Pearl Douglas, dedicated their family farm to serve veterans.

Russell, a World War II veteran, passed away in 2011 at the age of 95. His wife, Pearl, passed away in 2012.

"In her last year of life, she decided that this farm meant a lot to her and her community," said Beverly Vaillancourt, one of the farm's trustees and a longtime friend of the Russell family. "And she wanted to honor her husband's war service, so she dedicated the farm to serve veterans."

When Vaillancourt and Knopf met several years ago, the perfect match emerged, and the veterans equine therapy program was born.

In the past year alone, 245 veterans have visited the



Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general, greets one of the horses at the Douglas Legacy Farm in La Valle July 2 as Barb Knopf, the founder of the Veterans Equine Trails Program, looks on. Dunbar and other senior leaders from the Wisconsin National Guard and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs visited the farm to see the program, which offers veterans an opportunity to work with horses as part of their healing process. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato

farm in search of peace. The farm, which primarily serves veterans in Juneau, Sauk, Iowa, and Dane counties, has drawn veterans from as far away as Green Bay, Wis.

The Douglas Legacy farm offers a place for veterans of all conflicts, services, and backgrounds to come work with horses, connect with fellow veterans, and most importantly heal from the physical and mental wounds they suffered when serving their country.

"Everything here for veterans is free," Vaillancourt told a gathered crowd during a July 2 visit that included senior leaders from the Wisconsin National Guard. "Veterans can come into the house and sit and have coffee or play cards. It's R&R all day while they're here. They can come here and work with horses all they want, anytime they want. Everything is free."

"We honor our veterans," she added. "We thank our veterans, and we can't do enough to say thank you to all that serve this country. So we're here because this is our way to say thank you and express our gratitude."

Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general, spoke to the value of the V.E.T.S. program and others like

it during a July 2 visit with Wisconsin National Guard and state Department of Veterans Affairs members.

"Programs like this are really important to allow veterans to reconnect and find themselves and move forward with their lives," he said during his visit to the farm. "There's no right way to do that. There are many ways to approach that, and the right one is the one that allows the return to be successful."

"I'm so excited that the Douglas family had this kind of grace in their hearts to dedicate to veterans," Dunbar continued.

Knopf said that the physical and emotional healing horses can offer helps veterans find mental peace. Many cut themselves off from their families, because they don't want to burden their families with their mental and emotional struggles.

"Through working with the horses and other vets, they have epiphany moments where they're allowed to let go of some of these moments," Knopf said. "The horses tell no secrets, and they tell no tales." ■

[Story online](#)

Striking a chord



Capt. Matt Mangerson, commander of the deployed Wisconsin Army National Guard's Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, addresses the Country USA audience in a video produced to be shown in conjunction with the Toby Keith performance June 29. Battery B is wrapping up a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System mission in Afghanistan.

Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

The Wisconsin Army National Guard's [Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery](#), sent a long-distance dedication to a massive five-day county music festival.

Country USA has been a popular destination for country music fans in the Plymouth-based High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) unit, but the unit's current deployment in Afghanistan has interrupted those plans for the past two years.

But in a classic example of adapting and overcoming, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Pembroke — the unit's morale and welfare officer — decided if the unit couldn't go to Country USA, then Country USA would come to the

unit.

"The original idea was to have a grill-out, and we wanted it to be like home," Pembroke explained. "I thought that Country USA is kind of close to Plymouth, so we contacted the folks at Country USA to see if we can do our own little event here. They were all for it."

Dan and Cher Liebhauser, owners of Country USA, sent 30 T-shirts and a donated custom banner to Battery B. The unit held its event May 25, playing music by country artists scheduled to perform at Country USA this year. In addition to enjoying grilled food and non-alcoholic beer, Soldiers played bean-bag toss tournaments and Frisbee. A U.S. flag that had been carried during a combat mission was displayed with the Country USA banner, and a video of the Afghanistan event was sent

to the Liebhausers to be shown before Toby Keith's performance.

In the video, Capt. Matt Mangerson — Battery B commander — thanks the Country USA audience for their support, and presents them with the U.S. flag seen in the background.

"Not only this unit, but all members in the National Guard were fortunate enough to receive the thoughts, prayers and consideration from their respective communities," Mangerson said.

Pembroke said the event was originally scheduled to last about two hours, but the Soldiers enjoyed the event so much it lasted much longer.

"It was absolutely worth the effort," Pembroke said. 

[Story online](#)



Safe at any speed:

Course aims to reduce motorcycle accidents for military riders



Jason Pridemore, STAR Motorcycle School's chief instructor, discusses turning during a National Guard-focused training day at Blackhawk Farms Raceway in South Beloit, Ill., June 26. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato

1st Lt. Joe Trovato Wisconsin National Guard

Soldiers and Airmen from the Wisconsin National Guard and Guardsmen from other states gathered at Blackhawk Farms Raceway in South Beloit, Ill., June 26 for a day of instruction from the STAR Motorcycle School.

Aimed at limiting the number of service members killed or injured on their motorcycles, STAR, or Skills and Techniques for Advanced Riding, used the closed track at Blackhawk to teach the all-National Guard class, which included beginners and other riders with years of experience.

"It doesn't matter if you've been riding for five years or 30 years," said Jason Pridemore, a racing legend who now serves as STAR's chief instructor. "There's always something to be learned on these motorcycles."

The more than 40 Soldiers and Airmen who participated in the training fulfilled a military requirement to take a motorcycle safety course intended to sustain their knowledge of basic safety principles. Service members must take a basic rider

course as well as an additional course to ride in a duty status. Every three years thereafter they must take some sort of sustainment training.

More important than satisfying a requirement is the safety record that goes along with additional training.

Since Pridemore began teaching classes to military students in 2009, none of his National Guard students have been killed in a motorcycle accident.

"It just makes no sense to me whatsoever that you can come back from Iraq and then kill yourself on a motorcycle," said Pridemore, who teaches four Guard-specific classes each year with stops at Blackhawk Farms, California, Washington, and New Jersey.

"I'm here to create a fun learning environment, and we're going to go through everything we possibly can in one day, breaking down shifting, body position," he said. "We're going to run the gambit on everything motorcycles and see if we can improve you as a rider."

For Capt. Brian Russell, the Wisconsin Army National Guard's safety specialist and a sport bike rider himself, the Guard's partnership with STAR Motorcycle School

is invaluable.

"You run into people who say, 'I've been riding for 30 years, there is really nothing left to learn,'" he said. "It's hard to break that mentality, but they're fooling themselves."

The opportunity to train at a winding closed course like Blackhawk Farms presents a huge advantage over traditional motorcycle safety courses that usually occur in parking lots, he said.

Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Ball, of the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's Kenosha, Wis.-based Company B, 257th Brigade Support Battalion, concurred.

"You can't really get up to speed in a parking lot," he said. "Here [at Blackhawk Farms] you can get up to freeway speeds."

"Most of the problems you're going to end up with are going at speed, either at highway speed or even higher. This is a great place to learn how to control, how to break, and how to steer properly."

The course focused on proper motorcycle handling, whether on cruisers or sport bikes, and it was geared for riders of all ages and skill levels. STAR Motorcycles offers the training free for all Guardsmen. 📄

[Story online](#)

115th EOD has a blast raising money for charity

Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti
115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

MADISON — Dark clouds, a chance of rain and cool temperatures didn't deter people from attending the 2nd Annual Explosive Ordnance Disposal Warrior 3-Gun Shoot at the Deerfield Rod and Gun Club in Deerfield July 27.

More than 70 people participated in the shotgun, pistol and rifle shooting events, raising approximately \$10,000 throughout the day. The money raised was donated to the EOD Warrior Foundation. According to eodwarriorfoundation.org, EODWF provides financial assistance and support to active-duty and veteran wounded, injured or ill EOD warriors, families of wounded and fallen EOD warriors, and maintains the EOD Memorial.

"All of the EOD Airmen from the 115th EOD were responsible for planning the event," said Senior Master Sgt. Edward

Smith, superintendent of the 115th Fighter Wing EOD. "It was very much a team effort."

Numerous volunteers and sponsors made it possible for those who weren't interested in the shooting portions of the event to donate to the cause through raffles, ticket drawings and food purchases.

In addition to the fundraising activities, EOD Airmen set aside space to display several items they work with on a regular basis. They had improvised explosive devices, EOD tools, personal protective gear, and a bomb suit for guests to try on. The display gave the Airmen a chance to educate attendees on their career field and the missions of the 115FW EOD.

"All of their work means they stayed out of trouble for one more weekend," said Col. Kevin Philpot, 115th Civil Engineer Squadron commander. "I'm very proud of my EOD guys." ■



Participants take turns aiming at their clay targets during the shotgun portion of the 2nd Annual Explosive Ordnance Disposal Warrior 3-Gun Shoot at the Deerfield Rod and Gun Club in Deerfield July 27. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti



A rifle participant aims at his target during the 2nd Annual Explosive Ordnance Disposal Warrior 3-Gun Shoot at the Deerfield Rod and Gun Club in Deerfield July 27. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti

Tackling physical, mental challenges while building friendships

Pfc. Chris Enderle

112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

DELAFIELD — More than 100 Wisconsin children were presented a unique opportunity to attend a youth camp, held at St. John's Northwestern Military Academy, Aug. 9-11.

The Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp is an annual camp for children between the ages of eight and 17. This is the first time in the camp's 21 years it's been held at the military academy.

The camp is designed to give children a feel for what their parents or family members do within the armed forces, and to help create a bond with other people who are in similar situations, explained Tina Jeffords, the Wisconsin National Guard's lead child and youth program coordinator.

"Anytime you can get these kids together and let them build these friendships, and build these bonds, when and if that deployment happens, it's going to benefit them," said Jeffords as a group of kids marched in formation behind her. "There are kids who've started at age eight, and when they age out at 18 they come back as volunteers, and still talk to kids they went to camp with years ago."

D.J. Grundy of Waterford recommends that anyone who can go should go to Youth Camp, not only because of the events that you get to participate in but also because of the people you meet.

"They're people you've never met before, and right away you just start clicking with everybody," said Grundy while others were scuba diving in the pool next to him.

This was the first year at Youth Camp for Philipe Jones of Shawano, and Britanie Murphey of Necedah, yet both stated that they look forward to coming back again next year and seeing the friends they have made again.

"I have a friend here I call my half-twin," said Bryce Koback of Waterford, a camper who has been going for more than six years, and looks forward to many

Children of Wisconsin service members partake in a leadership adventure course at a Wisconsin Army National Guard armory in Sussex Aug. 10. The course was part of the 2013 Youth Camp held at St. John's Northwestern Military Academy in Delafield. The children, grouped together into

more. "I'm used to leaving home, going to friends' houses, but I like it here more."

Jeffords explained it's important for people to know what a military child is, and who qualifies.

three age categories, participated in a three-day military themed camp to learn how their parents and family operate within the armed forces. Wisconsin National Guard photograph by Staff Sgt. Megan Burnham

[Click on this photo to see a video](#)

"A military child is anyone who has a service member in their life, who would be affected by that member deploying," said Jeffords. "It doesn't matter if they're a dependant or not, so long as they are

sponsored by a military member, they are more than welcome, no matter the branch of service. 

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional Photos](#)

Badgers salute Guardsmen, veterans in pre-game ceremony

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

Soldiers of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 229th Engineer Company joined fellow Wisconsin veterans for the annual Badgers Football Salute to Veterans event Aug. 31 at Camp Randall Stadium in Madison.

The 229th, which returned in July from its tour in Afghanistan, took part in a pre-game ceremony alongside members of Wisconsin veterans organizations before the Wisconsin Badgers took on the UMass Minutemen to open the 2013 football season.

Families and friends joined the 229th Soldiers in holding an oversized American flag during the National Anthem, and University of Wisconsin Athletic Director Barry Alvarez presented a game ball signed by Wisconsin football coach Gary Anderson to senior leaders of the Wisconsin National Guard in thanks for their service to the state and nation.

"Camp Randall has a rich tradition, and it started as a training center during the Civil War," Michael Trepanier, the deputy secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, said as he addressed veterans before the game. "It is just nice and touching that we get to be here in a place where people did actually serve."

Wisconsin Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch joined Trepanier for the pre-game festivities to thank the assembled group of veterans for their service.

"I am so honored and humbled to be here as I always am when I get the opportunity to say, 'Thank you,' in person," she said.

"This is a state that continues to work hard for you, because you have sacrificed so much so that Wisconsin could offer all these great opportunities."

Following the pre-game ceremony, the Guardsmen and the veterans that served before them took in the Badger game, where they watched Wisconsin kick off the 2013 season with a 45-0 victory over UMass. ■

[Story online](#)



Above, Brig. Gen. Ken Koon receives the game ball from Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch as Wisconsin Athletic Director Barry Alvarez, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary Michael Trepanier and Chief Master Sgt. Gregory Cullen look on prior to the game between Wisconsin and UMass Aug. 31 at Camp Randall Stadium in Madison. The presentation was part of a pre-game ceremony that honored Wisconsin veterans during the Badgers Football Salute to Veterans event.

At left, Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 229th Engineer Company with Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch. The 229th, which recently returned from a deployment to Afghanistan, joined fellow Wisconsin veterans for the Badgers Football Salute to Veterans. Wisconsin National Guard photos by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato

New display honors former adjutant general

Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

MADISON — A nearly 30-year-old honor for retired Maj. Gen. Raymond Matera, Wisconsin adjutant general from 1979 to 1989, was given a new home during an Aug. 23 ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters.

Matera, now 88, received the Order of the Sword — a U.S. Air Force program that allows noncommissioned officers to recognize command officers they hold in high esteem — in April 1986. At the time he was only the fourth Air National Guard recipient of the award, an award patterned after medieval European chivalry orders. That award is now on display at Joint Force Headquarters.

“This Order of the Sword is an exceptional award given by the enlisted corps to an officer,” Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, the current Wisconsin adjutant general, said at the unveiling ceremony. “The senior enlisted member has to nominate, and 75 percent of the enlisted corps has to agree on the quality of the officer. This award has been given to 236 officers in our Air Force’s history. Ten have been Guardsmen. To my knowledge, Maj. Gen. Matera is the only adjutant general to receive this award.”

The inscription below the sword reads, in part, “He was a man that had the time and a smile for everyone.” Dunbar thanked Matera, in addition to donating the sword to Joint Force Headquarters, for his mentorship and friendship. He credited Matera with positioning the Wisconsin National Guard for success.

“In my opinion, we have the finest National Guard that our nation and our state have ever had, and the reason for that has nothing to do with me — it has to do

with Maj. Gen. Matera,” Dunbar said. “If you think about the transition when he led this organization from 1979 to 1989 as the adjutant general, you think about the nation had just come out of Vietnam and the military was not something young men and women [aspired to]. The military did not enjoy the favorable opinion with the public that it does today. It took leaders like Maj. Gen. Matera — a World War II veteran, Korea veteran and true Guardsman.”

Matera, a Marine in World War II, was also the first Air National Guard member appointed to be Wisconsin adjutant

general. Last year he indicated his desire to have the award — which includes the sword, scrolls and other items — at Joint Force Headquarters.

“I feel really good about it, because it’s going to be nice the way they’re going to have it,” Matera said. The way I had it, you couldn’t have it all in one room. This way I can come up here, which I enjoy doing anyway.”

Matera continues to remain involved in military activities, such as wearing his uniform and greeting Honor Flight passengers as they enter the Dane County Regional Airport en route to the World

War II monument in Washington, D.C.

“It’s always been important, right from the start,” he explained. “I couldn’t get into pilot training but I became a Marine and spent some time in the South Pacific and I see a few of the people I know there [at the Honor Flights]. I’ll have a nice chat with them. You never want to just walk away from them.”

The retired adjutant general spoke with pride about the Wisconsin National Guard, and said he had no words of wisdom to pass on.

“They’re doing a great job,” he said. 

[Story online](#)

WMA graduates 55th OCS class

Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

FORT MCCOY — Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, and other senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders were on hand to congratulate the latest Officer Candidate School graduates Aug. 10 at the Wisconsin National Guard's 426th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), part of the Wisconsin Military Academy.

Officer candidates included Matthew Christiansen of Kenosha, Joshua Doro of Sheboygan, Amber Garfoot of Waunakee, Colin Griffin of Neenah, Kayla Krueger of Shawano, and Dustin McCormick of Madison. McCormick completed the course but chose not to accept his commission at this time.

Col. Richard Borkowski, 426th Regiment commander, applauded the six candidates for completing the rigorous course.

"As time passes you will reflect on the time and experiences of this past year," Borkowski said. "These experiences have had a profound impact on you and will continue to shape you forever. As you embark to lead your Soldiers, always remember that it is a privilege to serve.

"In an ever-changing and volatile world, you will be facing daunting challenges," Borkowski continued. "You have all my faith that you will meet all those challenges."

Dunbar echoed that sentiment.

"In our world, where we have to defend freedom and our country trusts us to do the right thing, to lead men and women potentially into combat, to stand ready, they rely on men and women — to be ready at any moment," Dunbar said. "As you stand here about to take that



Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, left, Wisconsin adjutant general, and Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, right, deputy assistant general for Army, join Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch with six Wisconsin Army National Guard officer candidate school

graduates — Matthew Christiansen, Joshua Doro, Amber Garfoot, Colin Griffin, Kayla Krueger and Dustin McCormick — Aug. 10 at the 426th Regional Training Institute, Fort McCoy. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Vaughn R. Larson

momentous step and become an officer in the finest Army National Guard the country has to offer, in the finest Army the world has ever seen, I want you to know that I have full faith that you are ready, and I challenge you to stay ready. It's a bond of trust between us and the American public, a trust I know you will meet head on."

Kleefisch recalled the events of the Battle of Gettysburg 150 years ago, and credited the graduates with picking up the mantle of leadership to defend freedom at home and abroad.

"There is a deep sense of confidence in the future of leadership in the United States military, thanks to you all," Kleefisch said. "Thanks to your dedication, your sense of duty, your vigorous virtues, your principles that you have lived out and have

brought you to this day. Thank you for your willingness to serve in this capacity. You have tremendous courage. Your families have tremendous confidence in you and willingness to sacrifice time with you."

Retired Lt. Col. Ron Butler, a graduate from the Wisconsin Military Academy's inaugural officer candidate school, presented the second lieutenant gold bars to Lt. Col. Mike Murphy, commander of the 426th Regiment's 2nd Battalion, on behalf of the Military Officers Association of America. For more than three decades the Wisconsin Military Academy operated out of Camp Williams.

"It's hard to believe that it was 55 years ago we were sitting in places sort of like that, and instead of a beautiful building we

were in the old officer's club," Butler told the candidates. "But it's been a wonderful 55 years and I trust you all are going to do a good job."

Christiansen and Krueger will be platoon leaders with Detachment 1, 229th Engineer Company in Platteville. Doro will be a platoon leader with Company D, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry in Baraboo. Garfoot will be a platoon leader with Company B, 132nd Brigade Support Battalion in Mauston. Griffin will be a fire support officer with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry in Appleton. McCormick remains a full-time member of the Madison-based 54th Civil Support Team.

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)

Walker swears in new general officer

Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

MADISON — The path to becoming the Wisconsin National Guard's assistant adjutant general for readiness and training led from one open door to the next, Brig. Gen. Kenneth Koon explained during a formal promotion ceremony June 28 in the Senate Chamber of the state capitol building.

"You have to be sure that when somebody opens that door that you're ready to step through," Koon said, "to have the wherewithal to take that chance, to try and do a little better than you did yesterday, and continue to take our Guard to a place we've never experienced."

Koon, of Waunakee, enlisted in the Army in 1977 as a military policeman. After three years he joined the Army Reserves, which led to signing up for the Reserve Officer Training Corps. Receiving his commission in 1982, he transferred to the Wisconsin Army National Guard and received his first assignment as a support platoon leader in the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment's headquarters company.

During his time in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, Koon has served as a company commander, battalion commander, commandant of the 426th Regional Training Institute at Fort McCoy, Wis., and chief of staff under Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, deputy adjutant general for Army. Koon also commanded Forward Operating Base Grizzly and Camp Ashraf in Iraq, and served in many key roles as a military technician.

Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, praised Koon as an officer of great caliber.

"This man has had such a great career — he has served his state and country so well," Dunbar said. "He's one of those



Above, Gov. Scott Walker administered the oath of office to Brig. Gen. Ken Koon as his wife Luanne stands beside him during a formal pinning ceremony June 28 in the Senate Chamber of the state capitol building. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Vaughn R. Larson

officers that is a deep, deep thinker, strategically. He has done command tours where he has dramatically improved the unit and left it far better than what he inherited. That's just the kind of officer he is. He represents everything that is good about our military."

Gov. Scott Walker, who administered the oath of office to Koon, observed that recent natural emergencies in Wisconsin underscored the need for a ready and well-trained National Guard.

"You are worthy of being promoted, not only for what you have done, but in equal measure for what you will do going forward," Walker said.

Koon, who joined when military service was not highly regarded, said he has seen the Army National Guard transform into a "really, really good" organization over the course of his career.

"That's taken a lot of work from a lot of people to focus our readiness to a laser point," Koon said. "Seventy-eight percent of our Soldiers have joined post-9/11 — they've known nothing but the point of the spear. It wasn't if they would go to war, it was when. Every day I try to remember that they wrote that check up to and including their lives." ■

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)



Brig. Gen. Kenneth Koon's sons Jacob and Jonah place rank on his epaulets.

Meritorious service



Tech. Sgt. Chontelle Southworth, a crew chief with the 115th Fighter Wing, was honored with the Army Combat Action Badge for her duties while assigned to the 97th Agribusiness Development Team at Camp Wright in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, during early 2013 in a ceremony at Truax Field, Madison, Aug. 23. Southworth was deployed as a veterinary tech and animal husbandry specialist with the ADT when the base came under an indirect fire attack. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airmen Andrea Liechti

Airman receives Army Combat Action Badge

Senior Airman Andrea Liechti
115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Tech. Sgt. Chontelle Southworth, a crew chief with the 115th Fighter Wing, was honored Friday with the Army Combat Action Badge for her duties while assigned to the 97th Agribusiness Development Team at Camp Wright in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, during early 2013.

Southworth, who was deployed as a veterinary tech and animal husbandry

specialist with the ADT, was in her room when the base came under an indirect fire attack.

“In more than 30 years of military service, I can only think of one or two other times one of our Airmen have received this,” said Col. Donald Hamilton, commander of the 115th Maintenance Group and who presented the award. “This award reflects your commitment and dedication to duty.”

Continued on Page 48

Knuppel named Warrant Officer Mentor of Year

Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

FORT MCCOY — Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Knuppel of Campbellsport received the 88th Regional Support Command’s Warrant Officer Mentor of the Year Award during an Aug. 10 ceremony at the Wisconsin Military Academy.

“It’s gratifying,” Knuppel said. “It says that what I do is recognized and appreciated.”

A senior warrant officer with more than 30 years in service, Knuppel has been a flight instructor in the Wisconsin Army National Guard since 1990, where he has had the opportunity to lead and mentor numerous pilots and enlisted crew members. He has logged more than 6,300 flight hours of training, mission and combat time in 11 different aircraft, helicopters and airplanes.

Knuppel was honored for his recent work as standardization instructor pilot, and then commander, of the newly organized Detachment 2, Company D, 1st Battalion, 112th Aviation Regiment in West Bend, Wis. That unit fielded the UH-72 Lakota light utility helicopter in late 2011, a commercially available aircraft intended for domestic operations such as medical evacuations. Last October, a U.S. Army Forces Command Aviation Resources Management Survey Team evaluated Knuppel’s standardization program for the Lakota and found no deficiencies.

The 88th RSC encompasses 19 states and its Warrant Officer of the Year program is open to active duty, Army National Guard, Army Reserve or Coast Guard.

Knuppel received the award immediately following a song and hat-hanging ceremony by the 426th Regiment’s Warrant Officer Candidate School Class 13-001. The song, in which



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Mike Knuppel received the 88th Regional Support Command Warrant Officer Mentor of the Year award from Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Claggett during an Aug. 10 ceremony at the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 426th Regiment at Fort McCoy. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Vaughn R Larson

candidates detail their drive to become warrant officers, is a team-building activity and a tradition at the Warrant Officer Candidate School. Hanging the hat — a specially designed cap bearing the class motto and logo — signifies the candidates’ transition to the final training phase. ■

[Story online](#)



MIKE WILLIAMS

New state chairman named for Wisconsin Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

Mike Williams, a retired colonel with 30 years of service in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, was selected as the next Wisconsin Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) chairman, an official Department of Defense volunteer position.

As state chairman, Williams will serve a three-year term at the pleasure of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. This position is considered the military protocol equivalent of a two-star flag officer — a major general or rear admiral upper half.

Williams, a Fort Atkinson resident, replaces Dick Vallin, who retired after a three-year term as Wisconsin ESGR chairman.

In addition to this appointment,

Williams works as the Wisconsin National Guard state insurance administrator. He also is the chairman of the Insurance Committee for the National Guard Executive Directors Association, and is a member of the National Guard Payroll Deduction Coordinating Board. For 36 years he was the director of leisure services for the city of Janesville, retiring from that post in 2009.

Williams received his Army officer commission in 1972 and retired a colonel in 2002 as commander of the 264th Engineer Group in Chippewa Falls. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1972 and a master's degree in 1994 from Cardinal Stritch University. He is active

in his church, belongs to the Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters and is deputy commander of the 32nd Red Arrow Infantry Division Ol' Timers. He and his wife Pam have two children and four grandchildren.

ESGR facilitates and promotes a cooperative culture of employer support for the Guard and Reserves by developing and advocating mutually beneficial initiatives, recognizing outstanding employer support, increasing awareness of applicable laws and policies, resolving conflicts between employers and their service member employees, and acting as the employers' principal advocate within the Department of Defense. 

[Story online](#)

Airman receives Army Combat Action Badge

Continued from Page 47

The award came as a surprise.

"I had no idea I was getting this," Southworth said. "At the time, we were getting hit for like four or five days straight — I really didn't think I was going to get an award out of it."

Southworth was less than 75 feet away from a large mortar round that exploded, and even though her life and the lives of those around her were at stake, she put little emphasis on the incident — even

after receiving the award, her focus was all about the mission she was sent there to complete.

This is the second CAB awarded to a 115th Fighter Wing member in recent years.

1st Lt. Stephen Montgomery was previously awarded the CAB for his service with the 82nd ADT while assigned as its public affairs officer at Camp Wright. The 82nd ADT, the first ADT Wisconsin sent, preceded the 97th ADT in Kunar.

"As a commander I am very proud," said Col. Jeffrey Wiegand, commander of the 115th Fighter Wing. "It is not every day you see Airmen stepping up to deploy for a year with the Army — I have two that answered that call."

The CAB is awarded to anyone not eligible for the Combat Infantryman Badge while performing duties in an area where hostile fire pay or imminent danger pay is authorized and who are personally present and actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy. The CAB may be awarded to a service member from any branch of service; however, is only authorized for wear in the U.S. Army. 

[Story online](#)

Retiree Activities Office

The Retiree Activities Office (RAO) is located in the Office of The Adjutant General at 2400 Wright Street, Room 160, Madison, Wis., 53704. The office is open Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:30-11:30 a.m., except on holidays.

Our phone number is (608) 242-3115, our toll free number is 1-800-335-5147, ext 3115; DSN number is 724-3115. If you call at a time when the office is closed, please leave a message on our voice mail. Please be sure to leave your name and phone number. Our e-mail address is: widma.retiree@wisconsin.gov 

Program aims to assist recovering service members

The Office of Warrior Care Policy (WCP) is committed to helping to reduce unemployment among recovering service members by assisting in the critical steps associated with returning to active duty, or transitioning to civilian life. To that end, we have established the Education and Employment Initiative (E2I) and Operation Warfighter (OWF) to facilitate a transition to employment as part of the recovering service member's rehabilitation lifecycle. These efforts are implemented on a regional basis by E2I and OWF regional coordinators, whose primary role is to engage with key stakeholders, federal agencies and private sector companies in the community to identify education, employment, and internship opportunities at the regional level.

E2I operates with the goal of assisting service members to engage early in their recovery process to identify skills they have, career opportunities that match those skills, and any additional skills they will need to be successful and participate in

desired educational and/or employment opportunities.

The regional coordinators who oversee this process collaborate with the military departments and the local offices of other federal agencies to integrate existing efforts and ensure service members are guided and supported in their education and employment needs throughout their recovery, rehabilitation and return to duty or ultimate reintegration into successful and productive civilian lives.

Operation Warfighter Program (OWF) is a federal internship program for wounded, ill and injured service members. Participation in OWF is an ideal way for service members to maximize their recovery time, get valuable work experience and develop new skills to benefit their transition to civilian life. An OWF internship can be part of the larger E2I process.

We invite RCCs to support both E2I and OWF by referring eligible service members to participate. Contact us at E2Iinfo@osd.mil or PR-OperationWarFighter@osd.mil. 

Parting shots

“Country Enough,” a specialty ensemble consisting of members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 132nd Army Band, gave its first performance in the Joint Force Headquarters courtyard July 1. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Spc. Alex Lopez

