



# @ease Express

July-August 2011

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# @ease Express

2010 NGB Media Contest winner

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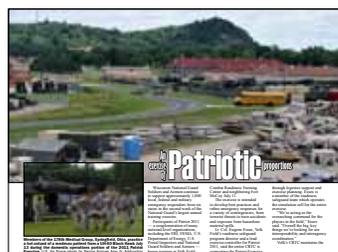
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M119A2 towed 105-mm howitzer crews from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery, fire powder charges in time with Tchaikowski's "1812 Overture" during the grand finale of the 2011 Rhythm and Booms fireworks show at Madison's Warner Park on July 2. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

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# From the TAG

This year is a notable year for remembrance and reflection.

Already this year we have observed the 20th anniversary of Desert Storm and the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War. In the coming months, we will mark the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks that launched the global war on terror, and the 50th anniversary of the Berlin Crisis — both events that significantly impacted the Wisconsin National Guard. And December brings the 70th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack that brought the United States into World War II, as well as the 375th birthday of the National Guard.

You may ask — why commemorate these events? After all, these events involve hardship, tragedy and death. I think how we choose to remember pivotal moments in our history says a lot about who we are as a nation.

In 1861 Wisconsin still resembled the western frontier it was carved from, and its standing militia was small and mostly ceremonial. But, when the nation called, Gov. Alexander Randall tapped the patriotism of Wisconsin's citizens and raised 13 infantry regiments, one cavalry regiment and eight artillery batteries in 1861. Wisconsin would eventually provide more than 50 regiments for the war between the states. This spirit of service and determination, forged early in the history of Wisconsin, has remained a strong characteristic in the Badger State and is evident in today's Wisconsin National Guard. As bloody as this conflict was — more U.S. citizens died fighting this war than in any other — victory preserved the republic and was a seminal moment in equality for all of our citizens.

One hundred years later, East German and Soviet authorities sought to halt the “brain drain” of engineers, physicians, technicians, teachers and other professionals to West Germany — and address other sources of East-West tension —



Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar  
The Adjutant General

by closing East Berlin to the rest of the world. The United States responded by staging Army divisions — to include the Red Arrow Division at Fort Lewis, Wash. — for a year of training in case the Cold War was to boil over. That conflict did not occur — in part, because divisions like the Red Arrow proved ready and accessible for overseas service and in part, because Pres. John F. Kennedy demonstrated the resolve to mobilize our nation by mobilizing our National Guard and showed commitment to defending Berlin.

Thirty years after the Wisconsin National Guard's largest troop mobilization since World War II, Wisconsin Guard members again answered the call and shipped overseas — not to

Europe or the South Pacific, but Southwest Asia to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. More than 1,400 Soldiers and Airmen — refuelers, transporters, engineers, maintainers, military police, historians and medical providers — demonstrated that the National Guard was fully capable to serve shoulder to shoulder with its active duty counterparts.

A decade later, the largest terror attack against the United States mobilized the nation to utilize the National Guard like never before to defend our nation at home and abroad. Since 2001, every unit in the Wisconsin National Guard has deployed in whole or in part in support of the global war on terror. Most of our units' Soldiers and Airmen have deployed multiple times. Without the National Guard and our evolution into an operational force, the United States simply could not prosecute its campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq in so robust a manner. And the Wisconsin National Guard continued its state mission even as the demands of its federal mission increased.

Why choose to remember events like these? Because, freedom isn't free and it must be preserved by citizens willing to stand up for our nation. Wisconsin did just that in 1861, 1941, 1961, 1990, and since 2001. We remember those who went before and allowed us to inherit our freedoms and we honor those who continue to serve today, preserving that very freedom for future generations. Let us also remember who we are — as individuals and as a nation — and remember what it is a privilege to serve this great nation.

It is truly an honor to serve with you.

# Wisconsin aviators back on home soil



The approximately 300 men and women of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's [1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment](#) returned home June 17 to family, friends and welcome home celebrations in Madison.

"On behalf of the 5.6 million people here in the state of Wisconsin, welcome back to not only the land of beer, brats and cheese, but in the last year the home of the Super Bowl champion Green Bay Packers," Gov. Scott Walker, commander-in-chief of the Wisconsin National Guard, said to Wisconsin's newest combat veterans. "We are so pleased to have the men and women of the 147th back ... It's important to remember that freedom isn't free."

The 147th "Iron Hawks" mobilized one year ago and deployed in September in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. They were among the 50,000 U.S. troops to remain in Iraq after Operation New Dawn began, and were responsible for all aviation operations — including troop and cargo movements, medevac and attack missions — in United States Division-South, which covers nine provinces of Iraq, including the area south of Baghdad.

"Our nation, the United States Army, the Army National Guard and I owe you guys all a debt of gratitude that I can never repay," Lt. Col. Marty Pond, commander of the 147th, told his battalion as well as family and friends gathered for the brief welcome home ceremony at the 64th Troop Command headquarters in Madison.

"The accolades for the 147th keep rolling in," said Chief Warrant Officer

**Continued on Page 5**

**Approximately 300 members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment returned home June 17 to family, friends and welcome home celebrations in Madison following a deployment to Iraq.** Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue

# 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment completes high-tempo Iraq deployment

Continued from Page 4

4 Craig Krenz, state command chief warrant officer. Krenz acknowledged the battalion's recognition as the [2010 Army Aviation Association of America National Guard Unit of the Year](#) for its accomplishments over the past 12 months.

Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, also praised the 147th, noting that the battalion essentially replaced 2,000 aviators in Iraq as they assumed a larger role following the safe and responsible drawdown of forces during the transition from Operation Iraqi Freedom to Operation New Dawn.

"They flew more hours and did the job better," Dunbar said. "It is extraordinary what you have done."

Lisa Brown, whose husband Spc. Adam Brown was among the returning Soldiers, savored the end of the deployment.

"It was a long year with him being gone," she said. "But now that I look back at it, it seems like it flew by. I'm just glad he's back."

The Soldiers were released from active duty following the ceremony, having already completed their demobilization at Fort Bliss, Texas, before returning to Wisconsin.

**Gov. Scott Walker, commander in chief of the Wisconsin National Guard, greets Lt. Col. Marty Pond, commander of the 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment, upon the regiment's return to Wisconsin June 17.** Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue



**Spc. Kari Villa-Rivera, of the Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment prepares to embrace her family during a homecoming ceremony for the battalion on June 17. Villa-Rivera, the first Soldier off the plane during the homecoming, deployed to Iraq in 2010 in support of Operation New Dawn.** Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette

# Milwaukee Air Guardsmen support Operation Unified Protector

**Capt. John Capra**

*313th Air Expeditionary Wing*

Members of a Wisconsin Air National Guard unit based in Milwaukee have deployed for 90 days in support of [Operation Unified Protector](#), the NATO-led operation in Libya.

Col. Ted Metzgar, commander of the 128th Air Refueling Wing, and a team consisting of a number of 128th ARW members and senior staff, departed Milwaukee on June 10 on a Kansas Air National Guard KC-135 Stratotanker supporting the same mission.

Metzgar assumed command of the 313th Air Expeditionary Wing on June 17 from Brig. Gen. Roy E. Uptegraff, commander of the 171st Air Refueling Wing, Pennsylvania Air National Guard. The 313th AEW provides air refueling to NATO aircraft enforcing the no-fly zone over Libya.

Operation Unified Protector, formerly known as Operation Odyssey Dawn, is a NATO operation enforcing United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973, which call for protecting the Libyan civilian population from the Libyan military. The resolutions impose sanctions on members of the Moammar Khadafi regime, authorize international embargos, a no-fly zone and all means necessary short of foreign occupation to protect civilians. The operation, which began on March 23, is supported by a coalition of 18 nations.

Metzgar said his personal goal is to provide leadership opportunities for members of the 128th during this mission.

“This experience will provide them with valuable lessons for future command positions in the Wisconsin Air National Guard,” Metzgar said. “The 128th ARW will be in good hands when I depart after going through this field experience.”



**Brig. Gen. Roy E. Uptegraff, commander of the 313th Air Expeditionary Wing (left) and Col. Ted Metzgar, commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling**

**Wing, discuss operation dynamics at the 313th AEW prior to Metzgar assuming command of the wing on June 14 in Western Europe. U.S. Air Force photo by Capt. John P. Capra**

# Red Arrow Soldiers prepare for Afghanistan deployment

**Spc. Shelby Swansinger**

*32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team*

Six Soldiers from the Tactical Unmanned Aerial System (TAUS) platoon of the [32d Infantry Brigade Combat Team](#) said goodbye to family and friends in Madison June 18 before leaving for Camp Shelby, Miss., where they will train for a deployment to Afghanistan in support of active duty Army units there.

Gov. Scott Walker, Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, and Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, joined brigade leaders Col. Martin Seifer and Command Sgt. Maj. Rafael Conde at the small, private ceremony.

The deploying Soldiers are members of the 32nd IBCT's Company B, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, who specialize in flying the RQ-7 Shadow 200 unmanned aerial vehicle. While often referred to as a drone — a generic term for all UAVs — the Shadow should not be confused with a Predator, which is a larger unmanned aircraft with weapons.

"The job of the Shadow is proven to save lives," said Warrant Officer Candidate Lucas Gordon, UAV platoon leader. He said the Soldiers have been preparing for this deployment for the past two years, gaining the UAV equipment in August of 2009 and taking part in a [NATO exercise](#) in August 2010.

According to Dunbar, smaller groups of Soldiers are being deployed as part of an effort to more effectively perform certain tasks.

"I would always prefer to send an integral unit, but if we need to send something smaller, the Wisconsin National Guard is always there," Dunbar said, adding that the number of Soldiers does not affect the support they receive. "It's important that every Soldier knows that whether it's six or 6,000 going overseas, the leadership is here for you."

The Soldiers were joined by family members at the sendoff ceremony. Many family members, including Kaleigh Lake, the niece of one of the Soldiers, shared their feelings about the upcoming deployment.

"I feel sad," she said. "I'll write him e-mails and letters."

The Soldiers also rely on their family for support throughout deployments. Staff Sgt. Matthew Sargent, who was leaving for his second deployment, said "[Family] is extremely important. They take care of the odds and ends so I can stay focused on my job."



Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette

"Family support is imperative," Walker agreed. "If families are taken care of, the Soldiers will be better prepared and more focused on the task at hand."

Walker also thanked the Soldiers and their families.

"We all know that freedom isn't free," he said. "It takes individuals to stand up and defend it. We can't thank you enough for what you do."

The group will spend the next phase of their training at Camp Shelby before deploying with the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment of the Tennessee Army National Guard. The Wisconsin Soldiers will be attached to a Maryland Army National Guard unit that is part of the 278th ACR.



At top, Command Sgt. Maj. Rafael Conde, command sergeant major for the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, speaks at a sendoff ceremony for six Soldiers of the Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team in Madison June 18. Above, Gov. Scott Walker presents a state flag to Staff Sgt. Matthew Sargent. 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team photo by Spc. Shelby Swansinger

# Female Wisconsin Guard Soldiers prepare to make history

Former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger once told President Ronald Reagan that women were too valuable to be in combat.

"I will tell you that I think women are too valuable *not* to be in combat," Command Sgt. Maj. Eddie Noland, the top enlisted Soldier in the 3rd Ranger Battalion, told 56 females who graduated from the inaugural Cultural Support Training Course at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, N.C. July 19.

Females like Wisconsin Army National Guard 1st Lt. April Nelson of Viroqua, Master Sgt. Karen Dumke of Waupun, Sgt. Sonia Buchanan of Cottage Grove and Sgt. Kristen Elegeert of De Pere who were among the graduates. All are now trained to do what Special Forces troops have great difficulty doing — contact and communicate with Afghan women and children. The Guard Soldiers left Wisconsin in May to complete training and will soon be en route to their deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with an Army special operations unit.

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, Wisconsin Army National Guard commander, and State Command Sgt. Major George Stopper attended the graduation.

"We all should be proud of the professional and dedicated manner that these ladies conducted themselves," he said. "It is not only a testament to the quality of each of those Soldiers, but a reflection on the [Wisconsin Army National Guard] as a whole on the type of Soldiers we have in our formations. This continues to be just another indicator on the tremendous strides the Wisconsin Army National Guard has made over the past few years."

Noland remarked that 240 females signed up for the program. Only 106 were selected for [assessment](#), and 59 of those attended the [Cultural Support Team](#) training.

"You are writing the history of women in combat as you fight," Noland told the graduates. "You are redefining the role of females in combat and in the military."

"You are going to embark on a long, tough but rewarding journey," he continued. "The fact that you volunteered — fully knowing the hazards of this assignment — says a lot about your character, selfless service and values as a leader."



**Four female Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers — Master Sgt. Karen Dumke, Sgt. Kristen Elegeert, Sgt. Sonia Buchanan and 1st Lt. April Nelson — graduated from the Cultural Support Training Course July 19 at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, N.C. At left, Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, presents a commander's coin to Master Sgt. Karen Dumke as Sgt. Sonia Buchanan, who received a coin moments earlier, looks on.** Wisconsin National Guard photos by Lt. Col. Julie Gerety

The Cultural Support Training Course educates selected female enlisted, warrant and commissioned officers in the basic capabilities required to access relevant female and adolescent populations in support of Army special operations forces. The training focused on general culture, regional culture and language, mental and emotional endurance, engaging local populations, medical skills, tactics, reporting and use of interpreters.

State Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper said this mission represents a historic leap forward for the U.S. armed forces.

"These Soldiers will not only be assigned to operate in austere conditions with combat troops, they may be among the first female Soldiers to *be* combat troops," he said.

Cultural Support Team members will go out on missions with Army Rangers and Special Forces Teams

and will interact with Afghan citizens on a daily basis. As females, they can interact with Afghan women and children without violating cultural taboos. Taking part in these missions requires the female Soldiers to be in peak physical condition as well as mentally strong.

Stopper said he was extremely proud that four of the graduates came from the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

"Proud of their commitment, their performance, their extreme dedication and selfless service," he explained. "I am honored to serve alongside Soldiers of this caliber — leaning forward, setting the example and making history."

"They epitomize the best of what the Wisconsin Army National Guard has to offer," Anderson added. "We wish them the best of luck [and] a safe deployment."

Cultural Support Team members are expected to deploy with an Army special operations unit shortly after graduation. The deployment is expected to last approximately 10 months, for a total commitment to the Cultural Support Team program of 12 months. 🇺🇸

# 'Buddy platoon' recruits draw interest from senior Wisconsin Guard leaders

Basic training is where most Soldiers first learn about the "battle buddy" concept — a partnership where two Soldiers watch out for each other in training, combat and non-combat environments. This mutually beneficial arrangement provides accountability, safety and companionship.

If two is good, two dozen might be even better. Last week, senior Wisconsin Army National Guard leaders visited 24 of their young Soldiers assigned to the same basic training company at Fort Benning, Ga., to see the "buddy platoon" concept in action.

According to Lt. Col. Eric Killen, recruiting and retention battalion commander, the buddy platoon is not a new concept, but the Wisconsin Army National Guard has not employed it since 1985.

"In fact, I was a member of a buddy platoon in 1985," Killen recalled. "Maj. Gen. Raymond Matera, the adjutant general, came to visit us."

The idea is to ease the sometimes daunting transition from civilian to Soldier by surrounding young recruits with others that may be in their same National Guard unit or from the same hometown.

"[The Recruiting and Retention Battalion] decided to bring it back as we felt it would be a good way to provide our Soldiers instant camaraderie and a support structure," Killen said.

The concept may have merit, considering that the 24 buddy platoon recruits will be high school seniors less than a week after graduating basic training.

"The sense I got ... was that they liked being in a buddy platoon," Killen said, adding that the recruits he asked liked having someone at basic that they knew, and indicated the buddy platoon system should continue.

"I'm actually having fun with it," Pvt. Jonathan Huston of Algoma, Wis. — a member of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry in Green Bay — said about boot camp.

"I've been learning a lot," added Pvt. Jordan Hauge of Willard, Wis. — a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry in Arcadia, Wis.

"It's been fast, but hot," said Pvt. Stephan Shambrook of Argyle, Wis. — a member of Troop C, 105th Cavalry in Reedsburg, Wis.

"I can't wait until we're done. Overall, it's hard, but if I could choose to do it over again, I would."

All three indicated that they are considering serving for 20 years. Hauge said he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather Jim Hauge, a World War II veteran who served more than 20 years in the Army.

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, commended the Wisconsin National Guard recruits during the visit.

"The fact that you signed up while our country is actively engaged in two wars says a lot about your character," Anderson said. "Thank you."

State Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper told the recruits that they had matured as a result of good leaders who guided them to the right path. He urged them, once they return to the Recruit Sustainment Program before attending their advanced individual training courses next summer, to help their fellow recruits.

"Take the time to share what you've learned," he said.

32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Command Sgt. Maj. Rafael Conde cautioned the recruits — who all belong to subordinate units of the 32nd Brigade — that their classmates will seem different.

"When you get back, you'll have changed," he said. "You'll be a Soldier. When you get back to school, you'll see things that will make you shake your head. You're different, so relax and let it go."

Huston indicated that he would feel like a "tough guy — superior to my peers" upon his return to high school. Hauge said he felt he would be "more developed" than his classmates.

"We'll have accomplished more than our friends," Shambrook said.

Conde told the recruits he was proud to wear the same uniform. Col. Martin Seifer, 32nd Brigade commander, noted that less than one percent of Americans wear the uniform of the Armed Forces.

"I'm looking forward to having you in our formations and being part of the Red Arrow," he said. 📷



**Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, addressed 24 Wisconsin Guard recruits during their basic training at Fort Benning, Ga., on Aug. 5. Anderson was among several senior Wisconsin Army National Guard leaders to visit the Soldiers who are part of the "buddy platoon" concept — Soldiers from the same units or major commands in Wisconsin assigned to the same basic training platoon or company. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson**

# Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers aim to be Best Warriors

Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers Sgt. Steven Dahl, of Oconto, and Sgt. Brandon Swanson, of St. Croix Falls, share the same unit — 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry — and the same long-term goal: to be command sergeant major for the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

They also shared the same short-term goal — to win the National Guard Bureau's Best Warrior Competition, which concluded Aug. 8 at the Warrior Training Center in Fort Benning, Ga.

Dahl and Swanson came up short of their goal this year, but not for lack of effort. The winners — Spc. Ryan Lindberg of the North Dakota Army National Guard and Sgt. Guy Mellor of the Utah Army National Guard — were announced Aug. 12 in Washington, D.C.

This is the third straight year that the Wisconsin Army National Guard has sent a competitor to the national Best Warrior contest, but the first year that it has sent two competitors. Dahl — who was a specialist with the Menomonee-based Company A when unit-level competition began last fall — is competing for Soldier of the Year honors, while Swanson, of Detachment 1, Headquarters Company in Chippewa Falls, is competing for Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. The National Guard Bureau's Soldier and NCO of the Year will advance to the Army-wide Best Warrior Competition at Fort Lee, Va., in October.

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, and other senior leaders traveled to Fort Benning on Aug. 5 to encourage their Soldiers.

32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Command Sgt. Maj. Rafael Conde, whose job Dahl and Swanson covet, said he expected they would do well at the competition. But to be safe, he said they arrived at Fort Benning a week early to acclimate to the hot and humid Georgia summer.

The competition began the evening of



**Above, Sgt. Brandon Swanson is tested on his crew-served weapons skills knowledge on Aug. 5 during the National Guard Bureau's Best Warrior Competition at the Warrior Training Center, Fort Benning, Ga.**

**At left, Sgt. Steven Dahl of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, uses a cross-armed method to check the seal of his protective mask as part of a series of tests on basic Soldier skills Aug. 5.** 112th Mobile Public Affairs photos by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

Aug. 4 with an essay and written exam. Friday began early with a physical fitness test, followed by weapon qualifications and something called "Warrior Stakes" — a series of tests on various Soldier skills such as clearing, disassembling and reassembling various crew-served weapons, as well as ensuring they function properly afterward. Other tasks tested in Warrior Stakes included medical, communication and protective actions for chemical, biological or nuclear environments.

Both Dahl and Swanson said the event was going well.

"It's not more difficult, but there are changes" from the regional Best Warrior competition, Dahl explained.

Staff Sgt. Matthew Ward, Dahl's sponsor, said that competitors were asked to train each other on some of the upcoming events, which is a change in the competitive mindset.

"When faced with changes, Soldiers adapt and overcome," Ward said.

Conde acknowledged that the competition level was very high and that Dahl and Swanson were competing against the best Soldiers and noncommissioned officers in the National Guard.

"At this level, the difference between number one and number seven is more mental than anything," Conde said. "They understand that this competition is a marathon, not a sprint."

State Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper wished Dahl and Swanson success.

"We have total confidence in you," he said. "You just have to have confidence in yourselves."

Anderson said that Dahl and Swanson had already accomplished much.

"Whether you're first or not, you're in the top 14 in the entire National Guard," he said. "That's pretty good."

"We're really proud of you," added Col. Martin Seifer, commander of the 32nd Brigade. 🇺🇸

# Senior Wisconsin Army Guard leaders visit recovering Wounded Warriors

Senior Wisconsin Army National Guard leaders recently met with two of their Soldiers in the [Warrior in Transition](#) Program who are receiving treatment closer to home — literally and figuratively.

The Army's Warrior Transition Command has two components — installation-based care and community-based care. The Wisconsin Army National Guard currently has 34 Soldiers in the Warrior in Transition program, of which six are assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Knox, Ky., for lengthy complex medical management. The remaining 28 are receiving treatment near their home, with regular follow-up by case managers at the [Community-Based Warrior in Transition Unit at Rock Island Arsenal, Ill.](#)

That follow-up includes regular visits, or “musters,” to Rock Island that allows Soldiers to meet with their case managers and Warrior Transition platoon sergeants. While attending the musters — typically held four times a year — Soldiers complete post-deployment health assessments, review their cases, and take part in training for career development, Veterans Administration benefits, transition assistance, financial readiness and suicide prevention.

When not at Rock Island, Warrior Transition Soldiers remain on active-duty status and work at assigned duty stations — usually a local armory.

Spc. Roosevelt Mullins of Milwaukee, a member of the Madison-based Company B, 105th Cavalry, suffered a right rotator cuff injury while mobilizing two and a half years ago and never deployed. He spent about six months at a Warrior Transition unit at Fort Bliss, Texas, and the remainder of his time with Rock Island Arsenal.

“I’ve been to three musters,” he said. “They seem like they care here — they know where we’re coming from.”

Because much of the staff at Rock Island Arsenal's Community-Based Warrior in Transition Unit is either National Guard or Army Reserve, issues common to reserve component Soldiers are better understood and addressed.

Mullins said that when he was assigned to the Fort Bliss Warrior Transition program, he felt lost in the system.



**Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, left, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, and Wisconsin Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper listen as John Campbell, deputy assistant secretary of defense, comments on information briefed at the quarterly muster. Campbell oversees the Army-wide Warrior Transition Command.**

“They kind of forget about you,” Mullins said. “Here, they’re on it.”

Sgt. 1st Class Lyle Spurgeon of Phelps, a member of the 951st Engineer Company in Rhinelander, has been in the Warrior Transition Command since he survived a roadside bomb attack on his route clearing convoy in October of 2009 in Afghanistan. He spent a year at Walter Reed Medical Center before transferring to community-based care through Rock Island Arsenal.

“They care about the Soldiers at Walter Reed,” Spurgeon said, “but the guys here know what the National Guard is about. They always think about keeping you busy, keeping you from getting stale.”

Senior National Guard leaders also appreciated the care given to their Soldiers by Rock Island Arsenal, describing the community-based Warrior Transition unit as the premier organization of its type.

“This company has taken care of the Soldiers and their families,” said Maj. Gen. Dennis Celletti, Illinois assistant adjutant general for Army. “They’re not just a number here — they are set up for success.”

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, agreed with Celletti. Anderson said that Wisconsin National Guard senior leaders do not hear the same issues at Rock Island Arsenal as those concerning Warrior Transition battalions.

“The organization here is better,” he said.

Guard leaders expressed concern that the scheduled relocation of the Rock Island Arsenal Warrior Transition company to Fort Knox might mean the loss of case managers knowledgeable about reserve component issues.

“You can’t fix community-based problems with installation-based solutions,” remarked Michael Connor, Warrior Support chief for the National Guard Bureau.

[John Campbell](#), the deputy assistant secretary of defense — who oversees the Warrior Transition Command — appreciated the input from senior National Guard leaders.

“I think the message is pretty clear,” he said. “This is clearly an issue that warrants my office’s attention.”



# An exercise of Patriotic proportions



**Members of the 178th Medical Group, Springfield, Ohio, practice a hot unload of a medevac patient from a UH-60 Black Hawk July 13 during the domestic operations portion of the 2011 Patriot Exercise. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Amy N. Adducchio**

Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers and Airmen continue to support approximately 1,000 local, federal and military emergency responders from six states in the second week of the National Guard's largest annual training exercise.

Participants of Patriot 2011 — a conglomeration of many national-level organizations, including the FBI, FEMA, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Postal Inspectors and National Guard Soldiers and Airmen — began training at Volk Field

Combat Readiness Training Center and neighboring Fort McCoy July 11.

The exercise is intended to develop best practices and refine emergency responses for a variety of contingencies, from terrorist threats to train accidents and exposure from hazardous material spills.

Lt. Col. Eugene Essex, Volk Field's readiness safeguard program director and a lead exercise controller for Patriot 2011, said the entire CRTC is supporting the Patriot Exercise

through logistics support and exercise planning. Essex is a member of the readiness safeguard team which operates the simulation cell for the entire exercise.

"We're acting as the overarching command for the players in the field," Essex said. "Overall the big, key things we're looking for are interoperability and interagency coordination."

Volk's CRTC maintains the

**Continued on Page 13**

# Wisconsin National Guard supports international exercise at Volk Field

Continued from Page 12

staffing and infrastructure needed to host such a large-scale exercise, including taking in all of the exercise participants and equipment. The landscape of Volk Field allows for many different emergency response scenarios to play out.

“The exercise exactly mirrors what happens in real world scenarios,” said Joel McDearmon, Patriot exercise planner.

“The scenarios provide an immediate time of high stress and high frustration, and a tentative response, followed by a fast flow of escalating confidence and response interoperability.”

About 10 members of the Regional Emergency All-Climate Training Center (REACT), are supporting the exercise by setting up and facilitating emergency response scenarios on REACT’s 15-acre training ground — which provided realistic scenes, such as collapsed facilities, wrecked vehicles and unstable terrain.

“The realism of it, the facilities, the manpower, it gives the exercise the ability to do multiple training exercises without having to secure facilities in a public setting,” said Steve Berg, senior instructor for the REACT center. “We can customize all our training to whatever they want.”

Patriot 2011 is the National Guard’s pinnacle emergency response training exercise each year and focuses on increasing domestic and combat readiness and capabilities of National Guard units along with collaboration between local, state, federal and military agencies in times of crisis.

“I believe it has gone as smooth as any other year,” Berg said. “Practicing for the ‘real deal’ — it’s why we train.”

## Related stories:

[11 111a](#), [11 111b](#), [11 111c](#)

# Rhythm & BOOMS



Staff Sgt. Arnold Viljevac of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery demonstrates the firing mechanism of an M119A2 towed 105-mm howitzer to Jadon Swan, 8, of Madison during the 2011 Rhythm and Booms celebration at Madison's Warner Park on July 2. Wisconsin National Guard photos by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

The Wisconsin National Guard had a blast helping tens of thousands of people celebrate Independence Day weekend during the 19th annual Rhythm and Booms celebration at Madison's Warner Park July 2.

Four M119A2 towed 105-mm howitzers were on hand for hourly reports, as well as to play a role in the fireworks finale, courtesy of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's [1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery](#), headquartered in Wisconsin Rapids with subordinate units in Marshfield and Stevens Point. This is the first year the Wisconsin National Guard has not used ceremonial, or "salute," 105-mm howitzers for the event.

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**Staff Sgt. Brandie Phillips, a member of the U.S. Army's Golden Knights parachute team, carries the Wisconsin flag as she approaches Warner Park during a skydiving demonstration at the 2011 Rhythm and Booms celebration at Madison's Warner Park July 2.**

See more photos at:  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/wiguarpics/sets/7215762699985065/>



**Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers raise the U.S. flag as well as a Rhythm and Booms flag designed by a Madison 8th-grade student.**

## Wisconsin National Guard supports Rhythm and Booms celebration with cannons, helicopters and fighter jets

**Continued from Page 14**

This was the first Rhythm and Booms event for Spc. Christopher Kau of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery in Stevens Point.

"The powder canisters are a little different than the [high explosive] rounds — a lot more smoke," he said, referring to the standard howitzer round fired in training and combat missions. Inert dummy rounds were on display for the public to see between hourly cannon reports.

1st Sgt. James Ward, a National Guard field artillery subject matter expert taking part in his sixth Rhythm and Booms, said he keeps coming back because he wants to see the event continue.

"We get different Soldiers to work this every year," he explained. "Keeping some continuity is important."

Ward also "conducts" the firing line during the closing of Peter Illytch Tchaikowski's "1812 Overture,"

played as the grand finale to what is billed as the largest fireworks show in the Midwest. Playing music as a student provided the ability to read a musical score, which is how he directs the cannons to fire in time with the composition.

But musical performances and military missions both require rehearsals, which Ward and his crew took seriously hours before the fireworks began. As the overture swelled through small speakers, Ward cued each cannon.

"Oh, you've got to be a little bit faster," he chided one cannon crew. "There are five shots in this passage — you're the first and the fifth."

The Wisconsin Army National Guard's UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter proved as popular among visitors as the cannons. Crowds thronged the aircraft shortly after it landed and powered down at Warner Park. The helicopter's crew was on hand for much of the afternoon to answer questions as children took a closer look inside

the passenger section of the aircraft.

The U.S. Army's Golden Knights parachute team returned for a second year to Rhythm and Booms, performing day and night skydives from 12,500 feet overhead. Following the daylight jump, Golden Knights members coached children how to properly roll the parachutes. The Black Hawk ferried the Golden Knights back to the airport between jumps.

The Wisconsin Air National Guard's F-16 Falcons were not on hand nearly as long as the cannons or the helicopter, but their presence was certainly memorable enough. Four Falcons roared overhead in the twilight as the National Anthem reached the words "o'er the land of the free," prompting a thunderous ovation from the multitudes attending the event.

Ward admitted to one other reason he keeps coming back to support Rhythm and Booms.

"You can't get a better view of the fireworks than right there where the howitzers are," he said. 📷

# Wisconsin National Guard aviation assets on display at EAA

**Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue**  
*Wisconsin National Guard*

The event referred to as the “World’s Greatest Aviation Celebration” takes place in the heart of the badger state, so naturally the Wisconsin National Guard would be on hand to take part in the fun and celebration.

Soldiers and Airmen from across the state converged on AirVenture 2011 from July 25-31 in Oshkosh to display their own aviation assets during the 59th annual event, which incorporates more than 10,000 flying platforms and draws nearly 250,000 visitors each year.

“We’re not here in a recruiting mode, but, when we put the uniform on it gives us the opportunity to tell the National Guard story,” said Lt. Col. David Tessmer, mission support group director and comptroller at Volk Field Air National Guard Base.

While Soldiers from the 135th Aviation Regiment are currently flying UH-60 Black Hawk missions in Iraq, another Wisconsin Army Guard helicopter unit was able to unveil one of the Army’s newest helicopters — the UH-72A Lakota.

Landing with less than 50 flight hours and with a look noticeably different than the Black Hawk, the Lakota attracted many spectators.

Ronald Schleicher, of Big Bend, Wis., was drawn to the Lakota’s unique appearance. While initially inquiring about the helicopters’ capabilities, he walked away with a better understanding of the Wisconsin National Guard’s stateside mission.

“Whenever there’s a catastrophe, these guys are around to assist with patients, and that’s a very nice thing to have,” Schleicher said.

That’s exactly what the Lakota crew was looking for from their AirVenture visit.

“I think after people talk to us they start to realize, ‘the Wisconsin National Guard doesn’t just stay in Wisconsin, they help out everywhere,’” said Chief Warrant Officer Dirk Brandt, UH-72A pilot. “I think being out here is beneficial to the public’s perception of the Guard.”

Airmen from the 128th Air Refueling Wing offered tours of a KC-135 Stratotanker while flight personnel from the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing displayed an F-16 Fighting Falcon.

Soldiers from the 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion showed many unfamiliar spectators around the RQ-7 Shadow 200, the unmanned aerial vehicle often mistakenly referred to as a Predator or a drone.

“We just get clobbered with people as soon as we get the Shadow out here,” said Pfc. Waylon Brunsell. “People just start crowding.”

Other Wisconsin Guard members promoted Wisconsin Guard aviation in different ways.

Master Sgt Angela Koberle, Volk Field Air National Guard Base deputy airfield manager, utilized AirVenture to address many general aviation community members about flying safety concerning military aircraft and restricted air space.

“We want to ensure general aviation aircraft aren’t running into our aircraft and this is a great venue to get our information out,” Koberle said. “Safety is our primary goal.”

Airmen from the 128th ARW brought their expertise in aircraft parking ramp procedures to assist with ground operations for the week. The team of four aircraft maintainers brought Air National Guard equipment and helped move nearly 300 airplanes to set up the event and stayed busy throughout the week towing and providing logistical support to countless aircraft in the Conoco Phillips Plaza.

“I like seeing the old war birds like the B-29 — it’s not often you get to help move something like that,” said Master Sgt. Matt Kuspa, inspection section supervisor for the 128th.

Many of the Wisconsin Soldiers and Airmen working EAA agreed — work and play at EAA go hand-in-hand.

“I love to be out here talking about our mission, but a lot of times, people are telling their stories too,” Brunsell said. “It’s all around good for everyone.”



**Chief Warrant Officer Dirk Brandt, a UH-72A Lakota helicopter pilot with the Wisconsin Army National Guard, discusses the rotary wing aircraft with a visitor to the Experimental Aircraft Association’s AirVenture 2011 in Oshkosh.** Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue

# New career planning tool launches for Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers

**HOME**

**ACT is Live!**

Thanks to your commitment, requests and feedback, Army Career Tracker (ACT) is LIVE for Enlisted Active, Army Reserve and Army National Guard forces. ACT will be deployed to CMFs on a rolling basis throughout the remainder of FY 11, Army Civilians in Aug 2011, the Recruiting community in Sept 2011 and Officers and staff in Nov 2011.

ACT is a new Army portal that will significantly change the way training, education and experiential learning support is provided to the Army. It combines seventeen existing data sources into one easy to use and customized portal simplifying the career management process for the Army user.

Get on the Right Path! Take advantage of all this tool has to offer to see if you are on the right path!

**SEARCH** multiple resources in one easy to use portal;  
**SEE** accomplishments, career development opportunities, and multiple training and education resources in one location;  
**UNDERSTAND** career maps, recommendations, and upcoming development deadlines and options; and  
**ACT** by registering for classes, creating professional and personal goals, and receiving personalized advice from Leader and Mentors!

Don't Wait...ACT Now! Check out Army Career Tracker at <https://actnow.army.mil> to start managing YOUR career today!

**Take ACT Training**

Visit our Training section in order to access video demonstrations, training documentation, and other useful files designed to help you start using ACT right away. [Click here!](#)

**When do I get access?**

Are you wondering when you will have access to the award winning ACT tool? Take a look at the release schedule to see when you will be able to log in and begin down the right path! [Click here!](#)

**Access ACT now!**

If your deployment group already has access to ACT, you are probably excited to start using the tool! Use the following link to visit ACT (ACT will

**My Notices**

**My Career**  
No Messages Available

**My Training**  
No Messages Available

Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers have a new platform to chart their military careers.

The [Army Career Tracker](#) (ACT), which launched Aug. 8, is an online program designed to help enlisted and commissioned Soldiers, as well as Army civilians, plan their careers by selecting mentors and identifying training opportunities for education and leadership development.

State Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper said that a Soldier and his or her mentor can develop a career progression plan that includes benchmarks for attending leadership courses, as well as required actions to reach those benchmarks. Civilian education goals can be plotted on the career map. Also, the ACT shows which Wisconsin Army National Guard units have positions in the Soldier's primary MOS, which can help plan career progression.

"The ACT takes data from multiple existing Army systems and places it at your fingertips," Stopper said. "You can use ACT to build your career path and monitor your progress — no more guessing about what you need to do to be successful."

Additional tabs are available for links and resources, ranging from military benefits to employment information.

Leaders can use ACT to monitor the progress of their Soldiers, and recommend training, schools and even duty assignments.

"Just like any tool in your toolbox, how you use the ACT will determine how effective it will be for you," Stopper said. "The more you know about ACT and its capabilities, the more agile you can be in charting your career path."

# Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp maintains strong pull



Above, a Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp participant is encouraged by her counselor during a tug-of-war tournament at Volk Field on July 29. Below, a Youth Camp participant in the 8-10 age group emerges from the low-crawl stage of an obstacle course at Fort McCoy on July 30. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photos by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

In the 19 years that the Wisconsin National Guard has conducted a weekend summer camp for the children of its service members, many youth have returned again and again. The annual event has grown from approximately 80 in its inaugural year to more than 210 this year.

But many of the approximately 250 adult counselors and volunteers this year have also made the Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp part of their summer schedule — some since the first camp in 1992.

“For me, it’s the kids,” said Maj. Scott

Southworth, who got hooked on the youth camp in its first year and now is the head counselor for the 8-10-year-old group. “When you see the kids getting excited about what we do, learning about the military, really having a drive to develop and be part of a team, it gives you a little perspective.”

For example, after leading more than five dozen youths through an obstacle course at Fort McCoy on a hot and humid Saturday morning, he will have little patience in a few months when he leads his military

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# Youth Camp a summer draw for past 19 years

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unit through the same course.

“I would put some of those 8-year-olds against some of our Soldiers in terms of tenacity and effort,” he said.

Brig. Gen. Scott Legwold, director of the Wisconsin National Guard Joint Staff, observed campers in the 8-10 age group on July 30 and offered a word of advice.

“Stay fit, study hard and you’ll be a great success in anything you choose to do,” he said.

Spc. Anna Handl of Manitowoc, a member of the 135th Medical Company in Waukesha, also cited the campers as her reason for returning as a counselor for a second year.

“These are awesome kids,” she said. “They all had great personalities, and they worked well together. They were just perfect.”

Southworth said the youth camp is a valuable experience for new counselors, many of whom are younger Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers or Airmen.

“Some of our counselors are E-4s that will be team leaders soon, and some are young lieutenants or officer candidates — Soldiers in leadership training,” he said. “Book knowledge cannot replace actual leading. It’s a great training environment for young leaders — it’s a no-fail environment.”

Col. Joni Mathews, a Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp co-director, has been involved in the annual event for 13 years. She said this year’s camp was successful due to the volunteers who return each year.

“Bringing up to 300 volunteers and youth together to pull off a task-intensive event can be difficult, but when you have people who’ve helped out in years past and know the routine, it helps so much,” she explained. “It is wonderful to be part



**Above, Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp participants in the 11-13 age group navigate the ropes course, a series of challenges requiring teamwork July 30 at Volk Field. At right, Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp co-director Lt. Col. Joni Mathews, left, and Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, applaud a marching routine by a squad of children on July 31. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photos by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson**

of an event that puts smiles on people’s faces, both youth and adult, to see youth fight their fears and accomplish whatever task is in front of them, and to see them come together and work as a team.

“Not only do the youth have fun, the adults do as well,” Mathews continued. “I believe the reasons are numerous as to what keeps bringing people back.”

The United Services Organization (USO) was a major supporter of the Wisconsin Youth Camp for the third straight year, and corporations donated food for the weekend camp.

The campers fall into three age categories — 8-10, 11-13 and 14-17 — and are assigned to teams with such colorful names as Lime, Forest, Royal and Ash. Age-appropriate military-themed activities are geared to give campers a sense of serving in the military and

included tug-of-war, obstacle courses, rappelling, swimming, marching, T-shirt designing, dancing, and bonfires.

The ropes course — a series of scenarios requiring youths to work together to proceed to the next event — proved popular.

“We learned to work together in fun ways,” said Linzey Mathews of Sun Prairie.

“We had to think our way through it,” added Madison Whiting of McFarland.

“We got to do a lot of pushups — that was fun,” said Grayson Henson of Sun Prairie, referring to the consequence for making a mistake on the ropes course. “We did way more than 50.”

Grace Daehling of Sun Prairie liked the rock wall, a climbing obstacle often used at recruiting events. “It gave us a chance to build our confidence,” she said.



David Vanderkin of Waupun may have identified the best part of camp.

“My roommates,” he explained. “They were fun to be with.”



# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

**Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers  
and Airmen take advantage of  
time between deployments to  
hone the skills needed for their  
core missions**

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

## ALL TOGETHER NOW: Red Arrow Brigade assembles for annual training



**Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette**  
*Wisconsin National Guard*

For the first time in nearly eight years, the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) conducted annual training as a whole brigade this summer at Fort McCoy.

The 32nd, which includes units ranging from engineers and infantry to military intelligence and medics, has deployed in part or in total to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom between 2005 and 2010. Some of those deployments have required Soldiers to perform missions other than what they normally train for, such as convoy escort, base security or detainee operations.

“We haven’t been able to be together as an entire brigade since 2003,” said Col. Martin D. Seifer, 32nd IBCT commander. “When I took command, I promised we would do our mission, and we are training to function as an IBCT that performs full spectrum operations. We plan for the most difficult mission, and adjust as necessary.”

Seifer, who took command of the Red Arrow Brigade in July of 2010, stressed that with the brigade coming home from a long deployment and several changes in personnel across the nearly 3,200-Soldier-strong brigade, training together as a brigade was an important step.

“It means a lot to an individual Soldier because you raise your hand and take an oath to fulfill a specific job,” Seifer explained. “Infantry wants to be infantry,

**132nd Brigade Support Battalion Soldiers prepare to throw a grenade at the live fire grenade range during the 32nd Brigade Infantry Combat Team’s annual training.** Wisconsin National Guard photo

engineers want to be engineers. It’s a great feeling to be able to do what you signed up to do.”

Pfc. Tonlithed Vang, a signal systems support specialist with Company C, Brigade Special Troops Battalion (BTSB), agreed.

“This is my second annual training,” said Vang, “but this is the first time I’ve been able to do my job. I’m cross-training with other positions and learning new equipment. It makes me more confident in my mission.”

Master Sgt. James S. Fowler, also of Company C, BTSB, explained the difficulty of training on the BTSB’s unique equipment.

“You can’t set up this equipment on a drill weekend,” Fowler said. “There simply isn’t enough space. Out here we can set up our satellite trailers and our line-of-sight systems. Every system we employ requires a mix of jobs to be able to properly set up. This is the first time we’ve been able to do so.”

Fowler, a recent transfer from the Nevada National Guard, has served in the Army National Guard for 19 years and said that he has seen the shift in the past few years to a more focused, Soldier-caring leadership plan.

“The leadership of the Guard since 2001 has become more administrative, more focused on planning,” Fowler said. “It seems like they are asking, ‘What will be best for our Soldiers?’ when they develop the training plan.”

The 32nd IBCT spent the better part of the month at Fort McCoy conducting [training](#) in everything from warrior tasks and squad weapon systems to field artillery missions.

“Everyone is excited about being able to do their mission,” Seifer said. 📷

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

## Soldiers have a blast shooting cannons again after six-year hiatus

**Spc. Alexandria Hughes**  
32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team

The thunderous blast of a 105-mm light towed howitzer and the smell of cannon smoke soon mingled with shouts and cheers from Soldiers in the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery.

The last time the artillery component of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team fired their M119-A2 howitzers was in the spring of 2005. A series of deployments silenced the guns until June 18, as the 120th took part in its first [brigade-wide annual training](#) in years.

"Some of the Soldiers have gone on two deployments since the 120th has fired the howitzers," said Pfc. Jonathan T. Strande, a cannoneer for Battery A, 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery. "Six years is too long. Everybody joined artillery for a reason, and we were all itching to get back on the guns."

Sgt. Alan W. Sazama, a howitzer gunner for Battery A, is part of the team given the opportunity to fire the first shot after winning a "top gun" competition — a contest between howitzer crews to see who could be ready to fire in the shortest amount of time, while meeting all safety measures. The competition reflects the need to be fast and accurate, because in combat a few moments' delay in sending cannon fire downrange can cost the lives of those calling for artillery support.

"The fastest and the safest to lay the piece won," Sazama said. To "lay the piece" means the cannon is properly emplaced and aligned with safety and aiming devices.

"It felt incredible to be number one," Strande said. "The competition was battalion level, with two units and 10 sections, but we were the one's able to



The howitzer crew from Gun 3, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery celebrates as they inspect their cannon following a successful first shot. Deployments have silenced the 120th's cannons for six years. 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat team photo by Spc. Alexandria Hughes

pull together and work as a team."

Sazama agreed. "We are honored to be given the chance to do this, especially when it means so much to the unit," he said.

The 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery is headquartered in Wisconsin Rapids, with subordinate units in Marshfield and Stevens Point.

With renewed motivation, and high

spirits, the 120th continued training. "We're going to expand and build on what we're doing here," Sazama said. "The first shot was just the first step." 

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

## Red Arrow veterans visit current 32nd Brigade field training

**Spc. Alexandria Hughes**

*32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team*

On an early mid-June morning at Fort McCoy, as the last of the mist fades away, there is a flurry of activity at the firing ranges. Sand-colored gravel crunches noisily under worn combat boots, and the sharp smell of gun oil hangs in the air. The crack of weapons fire echoes as round after round is fired downrange, and above all the din the short, direct orders barked from Soldier to Soldier can be heard.

Suddenly, an outburst of laughter and chatter, rough and deep, cuts across the weapons fire, the marching and the yelling, as more than 40 men — some of their faces weathered with age — enthusiastically watch the Soldiers of the 32nd Brigade hard at work.

These men are members of the 32nd Red Arrow 'Old Timers' Club. The veterans of the 32nd Infantry Division and the 32nd Brigade have gathered every June over the past 64 years for their annual reunion. Retired Brig. Gen. Charles Sharine, who once commanded the entire 32nd Brigade, now commands the Old Timers.

"The Old Timers used to be just for officers, with cards and drink," Sharine said. "I started these trips and tours, like on a Mississippi boat, the Soldiers' training — everything."

Sharine shared that, since his retirement from the Wisconsin National Guard in 1986, he has coordinated a number of events for the Old Timers, especially visiting Soldiers of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team during their [annual training](#). This year it included trips to a .50-cal range, a MK-19 range, a prime rib dinner with some of the Soldiers, and visiting the Tactical Operation Center.

"It's all about fun," said John F. Johlrr,

a Berlin Crisis veteran with 15 years of military experience. "We always have fun. I do, and I'm all about fun. I love it."

While the reunion of the Old Timers is a good time for many of the men, it is also about sharing, reliving, revisiting and learning more about the ever-changing 32nd Brigade.

"The equipment is so different from when we were in the Army," said Joel L. Kessenich, who retired as a major after 16 years of service.

Rollie L. Maum, a retired first sergeant with 31 years of duty in the National Guard, was astounded at all the changes to the 32nd Brigade and the Army as a whole.

"All the gear," Maum said, "all the vehicles — it's all new. We had the old 'junkers.' The training days are much better now too. It's much improved.

"I'm impressed with how well all these young people are trained," he continued. "The 32nd Brigade should be proud."

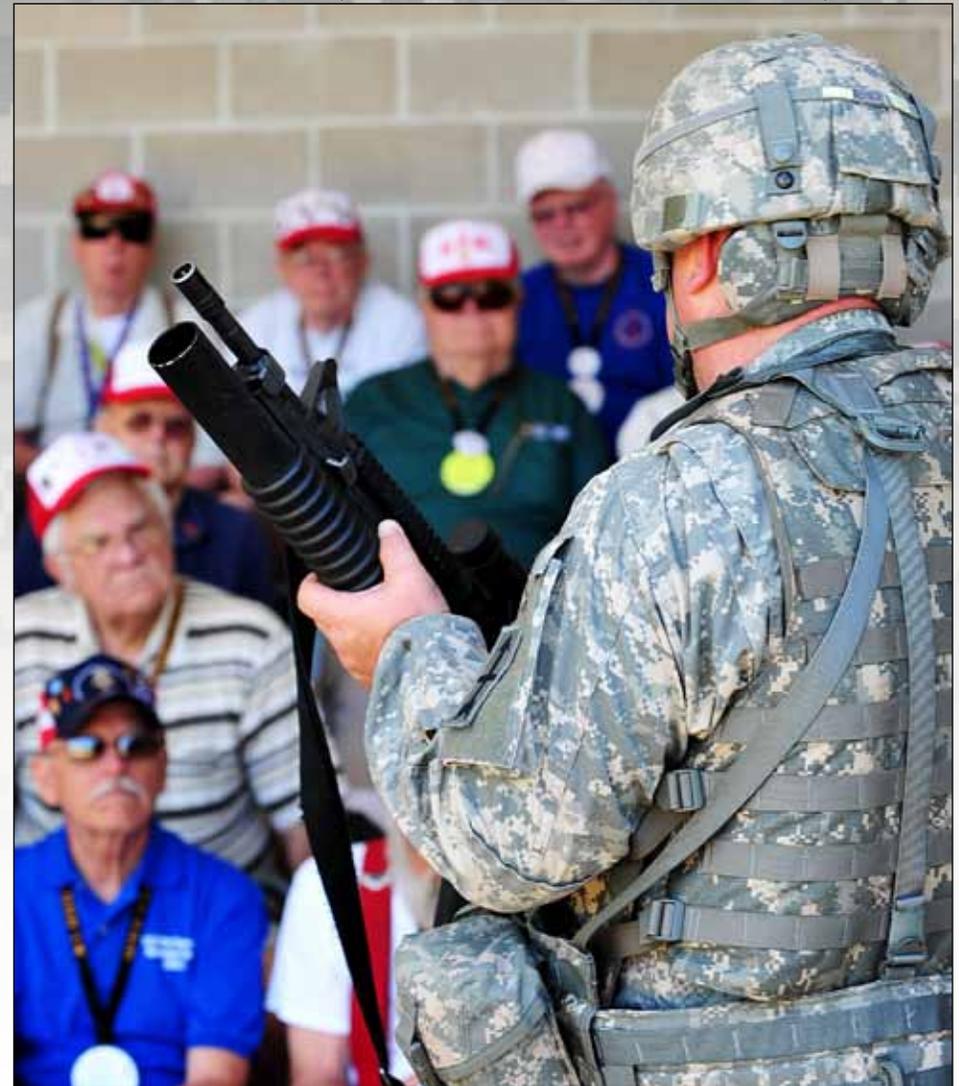
"The facilities are up to speed," said Robert C. Ehrke, who served 26 years as a Guardsman, as well as 26 years with the Old Timers. "The number one improvement is the mess halls — they're fantastic."

Spc. Jennifer A. Zay, a supply clerk for Headquarters Co., 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, said that she really enjoyed listening to all of the Old Timers' stories. Zay was amazed that even though there are many differences between then and now, the bond of camaraderie was still tangible.

"The Army has evolved so much over the years, but the basic Soldier tasks and friendship is still the same," Zay said. "It was very interesting hearing about their service time."

Like Zay, Kessenich's experience visiting the Soldiers of the 32nd Brigade was a good one.

"I am still very proud of this organization," Kessenich said. 🇺🇸



**Members of the 32nd Red Arrow Old Timers receive a weapon and safety briefing by Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 105th Cavalry at a MK-19 40mm grenade launcher range June 13, as part of a visit to the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's annual training at Fort McCoy. 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team photo by Spc. Alexandria Hughes**

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

**Spc. Alexandria Hughes**  
32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team

Employers such as Harley-Davidson Motor Co., Oshkosh Corporation and the University of Wisconsin-Stout experienced a day of annual training alongside their employees June 18 at Fort McCoy.

The 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Boss Day event included a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter orientation flight, a live-fire range visit, the Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer (HEAT) rollover training, a tour of the brigade's tactical operations center, and an MRE lunch in the field with their Soldiers.

"It's phenomenal. Really, it's incredibly interesting," Travis D. Turner, area manager for Oshkosh Corporation, said about the Boss Day.

"The Boss Day was designed to show employers what their Soldiers are doing when they train or mobilize," explained Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Kerry G. Denson, Boss Day coordinator for the Wisconsin Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).

"ESGR also sheds light on the qualities a Guard or Reserve member can bring to the table," Denson continued. "When they hire Guardsmen, they can see all the other jobs and technical training that these employees have received from the National Guard. They are not just infantry Soldiers but mechanics, clerks, and IT technicians as well. They will show up on time, work hard and give 100 percent, because that is what they are trained to do."

"It was fascinating to see what the Soldiers are up to," said Tim A. Streb, a machine shop supervisor. "I really looked forward to it."

Sasha A. King, who works in UW-Stout's telecommunications and networking department, said the day was interesting. "I learned a lot," she said. "I am very grateful to have the opportunity to come here and see the Soldiers."



Above, employers taking part in the 32nd Brigade's Boss Day event June 18 eat MREs with Soldiers during a lunch break. At left, Employer Sasha A. King of UW-Stout's telecommunication and networking department is a passenger on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter orientation flight along with her Soldier, Sgt. Joe Conway of Company D, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry during the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Boss Day on June 18 at Fort McCoy. 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team photos by Spc. Alexandria Hughes

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011



An aircrew member from the 128th Air Refueling Wing's Operations Squadron signals with orange smoke while another aircrew member communicates with the pilot of a U.S. Coast Guard HH-65 Dolphin Search and Rescue helicopter

during an annual training event on June 25. The training event reinforced survival techniques that all Air Force aircrew personnel learn as part of their career field. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Master Sgt. Kenneth Pagel

## 128th Air Refueling Wing crew trains to survive

**Senior Airman Ryan Kuntze**  
128th Air Refueling Wing

The 128th Air Refueling Wing's KC-135R aircrew conducted their annual survival training in the local Milwaukee community on June 25.

The training reinforced combat and water survival tactics in the event an aircrew member is forced to endure such a scenario, said Staff Sgt. Jenna Hildebrand, a 128th Air Refueling Wing life support

specialist who has been with the Wing's Life Support shop for almost five years.

Though all aircrew members attend the Air Force survival school at Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash., Hildebrand said that the most important element of survival is a person's willingness to survive an adverse situation.

This year's survival training differs from past years' programs by incorporating small-group training sessions that use hands-on learning rather than large-

group presentations, Hildebrand said. To further their training throughout the day, the aircrew members had to navigate themselves from area to area, which placed the training's emphasis on utility rather than rote memorization, she said.

The survival training included land navigation (using a compass to move from one map coordinate to another), signal and vectoring (calling in coordinates for extraction via helicopter), open-water raft deployment, and food procurement.

A locally stationed United States Coast Guard HH-65 Dolphin participated in the signal and vectoring training by giving aircrew members the opportunity to use a hand-held radio while leading the helicopter crew to a precise set of coordinates.

"This training is really invaluable," Hildebrand said. "You never know if it will come up in life again, but everything our job [in Life Support] entails involves keeping our aircrews safe." 

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

## Search, recovery training a quest for answers, closure in worst-case scenarios

**Senior Airman Ryan Kuntze**  
128th Air Refueling Wing

A line of Airmen meticulously moves across a grassy field. Step by step, the Airmen lower themselves to the ground while they part the grass with their hands.

Armed only with latex gloves and dust masks, the Airmen continue their search until a voice is heard.

“Find,” an Airman calls out.

As the other Airmen continue their search, a training monitor approaches the simulated remains of an Airman. This is part of the 128th Force Support Squadron’s search and recovery training, conducted June 26 at Gen. Mitchell International Airport.

The search and recovery training is meant to familiarize Airmen from the 128th Air Refueling Wing with assembling the search and recovery team, transitioning to the incident area, scouring the landscape for human remains, and tagging any remains for collection, said Maj. Steve Botsford, commander of the

**Airman Steven Penkert and Staff Sgt. Matthew Bohlen, both assigned to the 128th Air Refueling Wing Force Support Squadron, recover a simulated corpse during a Search and Recovery training exercise while Master Sgt. Angela Napierala, 128th FSS, monitors the training event at Gen. Mitchell International Airport on June 26.** 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Wilson

Force Support Squadron.

While the terrain and location of the incident area determines the amount of preparation needed to initiate a search and recovery effort, Botsford said that base camps are likely needed in remote locations because the recovery effort could be an on-going event.

It’s important for the search and recovery team to arrive at the incident site as fast as possible because nature can work against the team, Botsford said. Decomposition, natural elements, and wildlife can hamper a search, and recovering the remains is of the utmost importance, he said.

Furthermore, a thorough search is very important because the mortuary affairs officer is responsible for notifying the next of kin, Botsford said.

“You don’t want to come back to a family member . . . after they’ve buried their son, parent, daughter, or [spouse] and reopen those old wounds,” he said.

As the mortuary affairs officer, Botsford is responsible for determining how the living relatives want their family member buried. He said that the MAO cannot initiate anything until family members give their consent.

Botsford believes this training is helpful to the members of the Search and Recovery Team.

“It was very, very good training,” Botsford said with regard to the course he attended as the 128th Air Refueling Wing’s mortuary affairs officer. “It was the best one week of training I’ve had in my Air Force career.”



## Unique National Guard unit learning skills to help Afghani farmers thrive

**1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson**  
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The Wisconsin National Guard's 82nd Agribusiness Development Team recently completed three intense weeks cultivating the knowledge and skills needed for next year's Afghanistan deployment.

The 82nd ADT spent more than two weeks at Fort McCoy, Wis., honing basic warrior tasks such as land navigation in the sweltering heat. The unit then exchanged one type of field training for another, taking part in a five-day "Ag 101" crash course through the University of Wisconsin-Madison's [College of Agricultural and Life Sciences](#) (CALs).

"The CALs training was custom-made for where we're going," said Col. Darrel "A.J." Feucht, 82nd ADT commander. "For the first time out, that training went extremely well."

Feucht said the ADT will head to a part of Kunar province with a climate similar to Denver.

"It's not what you see on TV," he explained. "It's beautiful, but it's very difficult to get in and out."

The mountainous area, located along the border with Pakistan, is heavily forested and also rich in mineral resources, representing an untapped revenue potential. One road connects the province to the rest of the country.

Farmers in the region are subsistence farmers, but typically only raise 80 percent of what is needed to live for a year. Additionally, more than three decades of war have cost Afghanistan up to 40 percent of irrigated farmland and a generation of farmers. Farming techniques are rudimentary by American standards. Agribusiness Development Teams aim to improve farming techniques and make farming a profitable venture, but first



**Spc. Kevin Strange of the Wisconsin National Guard's 82nd Agribusiness Development Team prepares kebabs with guidance from UW-Madison food science instructor Beth Button in a UW-Madison food lab on July 26.** UW-Madison photo by Sevie Kenyon

they have to cultivate relationships with Afghani farmers.

"You've got to understand the culture," Feucht said. "The country's been at war for decades — the people aren't very trusting. You don't go right in and start projects. They want to get to know you and trust you — that process takes a long

time."

The CALs training helped the ADT understand the types of soil, weeds and insect infestation they will encounter in Afghanistan, which will help as they continue to operate demo farms that show Afghani farmers how more modern techniques can work. The 82nd ADT

will maintain the demonstration farms currently operated by the Illinois National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team.

CALS instructors indicated that the 82nd ADT members will have their work cut out for them during their deployment.

"As part of their community-building efforts, they will be invited to dinner in Afghan homes," said Beth Button, a food sciences department instructor who led a food safety class for 82nd ADT troops. Eating locally produced meals exposes ADT members to food-borne diseases caused by pathogens to which locals have developed resistance. "We wanted them to come away knowing how to participate in the meals with confidence and gusto so they won't offend anyone but also not get sick."

The fish farming industry in Afghanistan is experiencing some early difficulties, according to aquaculture specialist Terry Barry of the CALs animal sciences department. Beyond the inherent challenges of establishing such a venture, Afghani fish farmers have had fish stolen from their ponds, grenades thrown into their ponds, and fish feed shipments interrupted.

Capt. James Schmitz noted that the 82nd ADT will be in Kunar Province for less than a year.

"We won't even see the entire growing cycle," he said, adding that it's important to pass on farming knowledge to help Afghani farmers develop their capacity.

"We want to help them, work with them, but not do it for them," said Sgt. 1st Class Chris Beron, a beef farmer from northern Wisconsin. "They may teach us a thing or two — they've been farming for thousands of years and they're still there."

Schmitz said some simple practices

**Continued on Page 28**

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

## 82nd Agribusiness Development Team prepares for upcoming Afghanistan deployment

Continued from Page 27

not used in Afghanistan, such as trellising grapes and cucumbers, can result in bigger crops. He also acknowledged that poppies are a problem in the area the 82nd will deploy to.

“Our focus is really on legitimate agriculture,” he said. “If they have some extra they can sell on the market, that’s really our goal.”

Beron said he can apply the soil nutrition knowledge he gained to help Afghan farmers maximize their yields, to include meat and dairy production.

“Afghanistan doesn’t have a lot of developed soils, meaning they’re not very productive,” said Matt Ruark, a soil and fertilizer expert with CALS. “Most of the soils map of Afghanistan shows rocky terrain and desert. However, the area this group is going to is the best in the country — it has the most developed soils.”

The Babcock Institute for International Dairy Research and Development and the Arlington Agricultural Research Station — both part of CALS — organized last week’s classes. Outreach Specialist David Kantor explained that while the Babcock Institute designs custom training programs for numerous groups throughout the year, this training program was different in two ways. Because some of the training topics were not dairy-related — beekeeping and textiles — the institute reached out to a larger field of technical experts for instructors as well as drew from the experiences and knowledge of individuals and other ADTs familiar with Afghan farming practices. Also, as an international organization, the Babcock Institute rarely teaches a U.S. audience.

Feucht said that the 82nd ADT will devote the remainder of its training time, which includes another three-week block



**Above, the Wisconsin National Guard’s 82nd Agribusiness Development team took a field trip to the DNR fish hatchery on July 26.** UW-Madison photo by Bob Mitchell

**At left, the Wisconsin National Guard’s 82nd Agribusiness Development Team completes five hours of hot and humid land navigation training with a walk through the litter course tank at Fort McCoy, on July 18.** Wisconsin National Guard photo by Col. Darrel Feucht

of instruction, to warrior tasks and theater-specific training.

The National Guard has successfully used the agribusiness development team concept in Central America for the past two decades, drawing on the rich farming experience of many Guard members. The Guard brought the concept to Afghanistan in 2007. The initiative capitalizes on the skills of its Citizen Soldiers and Airmen to help a developing democracy find a safer and more productive way to feed its people. The concept also stays true to the image of the Concord Minuteman, with one hand on a musket and the other on a plow.

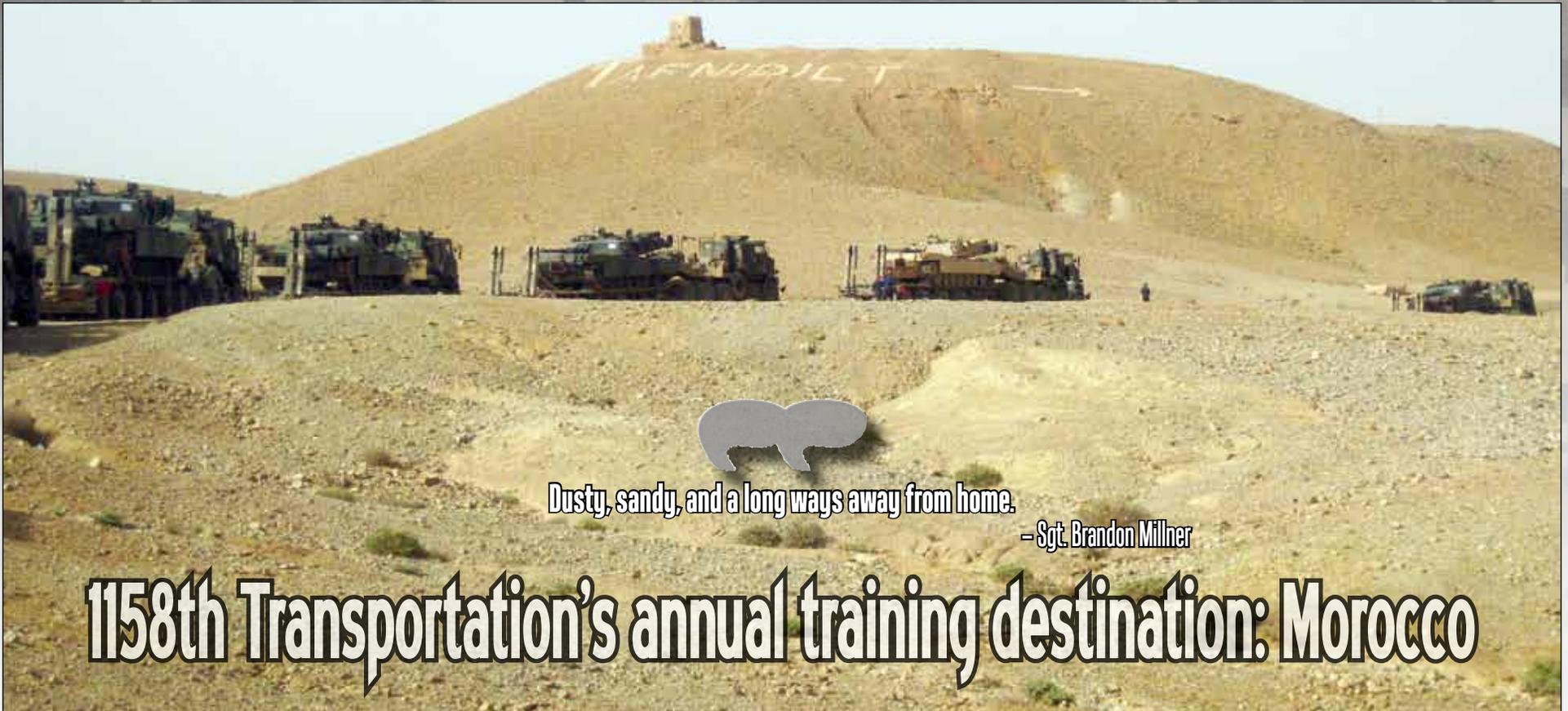
Since 2007, 19 agribusiness development teams have operated in 14 Afghan provinces, contributing to more than 280 sustainable agriculture projects that generated more than \$21 million in revenues for Afghan citizens.

Agribusiness development teams are one part of a broad agriculture strategy being implemented by the U.S. and Afghanistan governments, as well as non-governmental organizations. The initiative’s goal is to help Afghan farmers identify local solutions to local agricultural problems in a region of Afghanistan that one day could be considered the bread basket for that part of the world.

Some members of the ADT will perform a security mission to allow other members to focus on animal husbandry, water and soil conservation, horticulture, irrigation, storage, distribution and agribusiness education. Other ADT projects in Kunar Province include such woman’s programs as poultry production, wool and cashmere spinning, carpet weaving and honey production.

*Some information for this report was provided by the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences public affairs department.*

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011



Dusty, sandy, and a long ways away from home.

- Sgt. Brandon Millner

## 1158th Transportation's annual training destination: Morocco

Heavy Equipment Transporter (HET) systems with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1158th Transportation Company haul U.S. Marine Corps M1 Abrams tanks

from Port Tan Tan to Camp Draa in Morocco May 12. The unit was supporting Exercise African Lion 11. 1158th Transportation Company photo

A Wisconsin Army National Guard transportation unit has returned from an overseas training mission working alongside the Army, Navy and Marines as well as the Moroccan military.

The 1158th Transportation Company, based in Beloit with a detachment in Black River Falls, sent 56 Soldiers over the course of two 19-day annual training sessions to participate in [Exercise African Lion 11](#), a bilateral exercise scheduled by the U.S. African Command. The exercise includes peacekeeping operations, humanitarian civic assistance operations, and construction projects.

According to Capt. Michael Laube,

unit commander, preparation for annual training began in April by convoying 10 M1070 Heavy Equipment Transporter (HET) truck systems and supporting vehicles to Norfolk, Va., for shipment to Morocco. Once in Morocco, the 1158th linked up with Army Task Force 24 and took part in a joint logistics effort with Navy and Marine personnel, unloading all vehicles from the transport ship at the Port of Tan Tan and stage them in a base camp at Camp Draa. This involved running convoys over difficult mountain terrain to an austere location in the Saharan Desert.

The 1158th also provided HET system training to Moroccan service members.

"They currently have the trucks, but not the trailers," said Sgt. Brandon Millner. "We're getting them some good training on that."

The exercise itself involved more than 2,000 U.S. troops and 900 members of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces. The 1158th supported U.S. Marines, hauling a variety of equipment to include M1 Abrams tanks. Following the exercise, the base camp was dismantled and all equipment convoyed back to Tan Tan for the voyage home. The 1158th racked up 44,782 accident-free miles moving 74 pieces of equipment.

"I am extremely proud of the Soldiers'

efforts over the past two months," Laube said. "[They completed] a difficult mission with 100 percent success and a high level of professionalism and enthusiasm. The 1158th represented the state of Wisconsin and the National Guard very well."

Millner compared their training environment to Iraq.

"Dusty, sandy, and a long ways away from home," he said. "Didn't have any showers for quite a while."

The 1158th's annual training actually concluded June 30 when the unit brought its last remaining HET systems back to Wisconsin from Norfolk.  

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

## 135th Medical Company supports Haiti humanitarian mission

As hundreds of service members from the United States and other countries converged on Haiti for the humanitarian mission [Task Force Bon Voizen](#) (Good Neighbors), nearly two dozen Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers played a behind-the-scenes supporting role.

The Waukesha-based 135th Medical Company sent 21 Soldiers to Haiti for annual training June 11-25, providing medical services to the service members building two medical clinics, one school and a latrine facility. The training was the first overseas mission for Spc. Nicole Ellenson of Waukesha.

“The first few days were absolute culture shock,” she admitted. “My first thought was, ‘These people have got to hate us when they know what we have and they don’t.’ I was completely wrong. I complimented one girl I met on how cute her shoes were, and she said, ‘If you want them, they are yours.’ It made me feel instantly guilty for ever wanting material things.”

Staff Sgt. Dennis Wojciechowski of New Berlin also experienced a moment of culture shock as the Wisconsin Soldiers settled into their base of operations — a tent located in a valley on a farmer’s land where the livestock roamed freely.

“I came out of the tent,” he said, “and 25 feet from me was the biggest wild boar I had ever seen in person. I decided to go the other way. On the way back I encountered a smaller pig.”

The Soldiers of the 135th provided round-the-clock medical support during their time in Haiti, seeing up to 10 sick call patients per day as well as injuries that included insect bites, broken ankles and deep cuts.

“This was a very good experience,” Wojciechowski said, noting that most of the medics on this mission had no deployment experience. “They were able to put all their training to the test on a daily basis and were able to enhance their skill sets by interacting directly with a physician’s assistant or nurse that was on duty.”



**Above, 135th Medical Company Soldiers assist troops assigned to Task Force Bon Voizen distribute school supply kits to the Artibonite department of Haiti on June 16. At right, a group of elderly women sit and wait for care at during a medical exercise as part of Task Force Bon Voizen in Desdunes, Haiti on June 18. 135th Medical Company Soldiers assisted one of these clinics.** DOD photos by Fred W. Baker III



“We gave more shots and IVs [intravenous solutions] than I can count,” Ellenson said. “It made me very comfortable within my scope of practice. I felt I had gotten a great deal of medical training.”

The Wisconsin Soldiers also had the opportunity to assist with a medical readiness training exercise, or MEDRETE, which was conducting free clinics for up to 1,700 Haitians in a nine-hour period.

“The lines would start up around 1 a.m., and the doors opened at 8 a.m.,” Wojciechowski said. “In the U.S. you only see lines like that if your waiting to get tickets to a famous person’s concert.”

135th Medical Company Soldiers also helped distribute school supply kits, provided by People to People International and Operation International Children, to Haitian students.

“I have never seen children act like they just received a Christmas present over a packet of school supplies before,” Wojciechowski said. “We felt honored to be a part of the distribution.”

Preparation for this mission began eight months ago, he said. The 135th Soldiers originally planned to conduct a similar mission in Nicaragua, but were chosen to assist Task Force Bon Voizen instead.

Wojciechowski, who was in charge of the Wisconsin Soldiers for this mission, said his group learned a lot in Haiti.

“I believe that every Soldier came away with a deeper appreciation of the life we are allowed to live here in the United States,” he said.

Ellenson agreed.

“Being around the Haitian people made me more grateful for my life than I probably have ever been,” she said.

Task Force Bon Voizen, part of New Horizons Haiti 2011, was a two-month joint foreign military interaction and humanitarian exercise sponsored by the commander of the U.S. Southern Command. The task force was under the command of the [Louisiana National Guard](#).

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

## 132nd Army Band stands in for active duty Army band during AT



Above, Staff Sgt. Michael Meder of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 132nd Army Band marks his place as band members move into position prior to a performance at a welcome home ceremony July 17 for the Warrior Brigade of the 25th Infantry "Tropic Lightning" Division at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. 25th Infantry Division PAO photo

The Wisconsin Army National Guard's [132nd Army Band](#) conducted its two-week annual training in Hawaii filling in for the 25th Infantry Division Band, which is currently deployed to Iraq.

The 132nd Army Band is conducting military training out of Schofield Barracks as well as performances on base and in Honolulu. Performances include a welcome home ceremony for the Warrior Brigade of the [25th Infantry "Tropic Lightning" Division](#) following the brigade's deployment to Iraq; a Patriot Jazz performance at the Hale Koa; a performance at the USS Missouri, and numerous brass quintet, funeral honors and bugler missions.

The 132nd Army Band's experience and skill allowed the National Guard unit to fill in for an active duty band without missing a beat.

"It's always an honor to represent Wisconsin and our nation on an active post," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Anderson, commander of the 132nd Army Band. "I'm proud to showcase the talent and professionalism of our Soldiers and all we do to support the Army's mission."

The 132nd Army Band returned to Wisconsin July 25. Their next performance in the Badger State will be at the National Guard Association of the United States [convention](#) in Milwaukee on Aug. 27. 🇺🇸



At right, members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 132nd Army Band perform an outdoor concert in Honolulu during annual training July 18. Wisconsin National Guard photo



## Successful AT has 121st Field Artillery in high spirits

For many members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, the recently completed annual training may be hard to beat.

"I had 20-year veterans saying — seriously — that it was their best AT ever," said Lt. Col. Steven Sherrod, battalion commander. "You have to take that seriously."

The 121st — a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System ([HIMARS](#)) battalion headquartered in Milwaukee with subordinate units in Racine, Plymouth and Sussex — completed training at [Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center](#), Wyo., the battalion's first annual training outside of Wisconsin since 1998. According to Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Kaluzny, the new training site was more than just a change of scenery.

"We wanted to challenge the troops with a different environment," he said. "Most of the Soldiers know Fort McCoy like the back of their hand — there's no challenge getting from point to point. Also, this post offers the opportunity

for launcher crews to actually fire from multiple locations."

Sherrod said that the lone firing point suitable for rocket artillery at Fort McCoy restricts the battalion to "admin shoots" similar to a standard rifle range, in which technical skills are tested but tactical skills are not. Camp Guernsey's sprawling vistas, challenging terrain and hardy vegetation allowed the battalion to train in realistic conditions — spread out and moving. Each launcher was able to fire training rockets from designated firing positions in its own platoon area, independent of other launchers, firing platoons or firing batteries.

"We also were able to execute logistics support in the field as we should with the 108th Forward Support Company," Sherrod said. The 108th provides maintenance and supply support to firing batteries in the 121st. "In addition, we got the chance to work with the [115th Fires Brigade](#) with whom we are aligned for training. They were a great help in training and logistics support."

Kaluzny said this year's annual training had two distinct phases. The first phase began at Fort McCoy, loading approximately 90 vehicles over the course of two days for transport to Wyoming. Bad weather and unfamiliarity with loading heavy equipment for transport did little to dampen their enthusiasm, he noted.

"They were motivated," he said.

Sherrod said that extensive planning allowed the battalion to meet the challenge of moving both vehicles and approximately 330 Soldiers more than 1,000 miles, as well as ensuring that food, lodging and training areas were prepared.

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**Master Sgt. Dennis Trest of Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, observes the impact zone at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., to ensure that reduced range practice rounds are safely on target June 24.**

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



# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

## 121st Field Artillery Battalion veterans indicate Camp Guernsey annual training may just be best ever

Continued from Page 32

Kaluzny said that battalion Soldiers were looking forward to performing their military occupational skills at this annual training — not just the launcher crews, but the fuelers, maintenance section, water purifiers and anyone else whose job supports the overall mission.

Capt. Randy Gehrke, commander of the 108th FSC, agreed.

“This is my most fun AT ever,” he said. “Just the place, the training, seeing everyone enjoying themselves.”

Pfc. Bartholomew Nowak, a member of Battery C’s fire direction center, enjoyed the training — even wearing the “full battle-rattle” of helmet, body armor vest and weapon throughout the field exercise.

“It’s realistic,” he said. “We’re learning a lot. Whenever we do training like this I feel more prepared.”

The battalion also was afforded the opportunity to shoot 162 training rockets, more than twice the number of rockets for annual training. Kaluzny said the battalion hoped to fire 121 rockets on June 24.

“They knew what they were here for,” he said. “They were going to fire.”

“This is the best attitude at the close of annual training I’ve seen since being the commander,” Sherrod added. “Our [training] goals were largely reached and all personnel are safe and accounted for. Our battalion is ready, relevant and enthusiastic.”

Sherrod appreciated the Wisconsin Army National Guard senior leadership’s support for this annual training, which required more time, effort and money than training at Fort McCoy.

“The experience was worth the effort and money dedicated to it,” he said. “This annual training was everything I had envisioned and more.”



Lt. Col. Steven Sherrod, center, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, describes the battalion’s field location to Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson and other senior Wisconsin Army National Guard leaders June 24. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

## Baby born while dad’s at AT



Capt. Randy Gehrke, left, speaks with Sgt. 1st Class Ricky Edgerton, a noncommissioned officer with the 108th FSC maintenance and logistics section. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

Capt. Randy Gehrke is becoming something of an expert when it comes to being away on orders when the baby is due.

Gehrke, a Grafton resident and the commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 108th Forward Support Company in Sussex, learned that his wife Deanna gave birth to their third child and second daughter around 2:30 a.m. June 24. While she was in the delivery room, he was in the middle of annual training at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center, Wyo.

“I was able to ‘Skype’ with her when she got to the hospital,” Gehrke said. “I could see her and our two other kids.”

Deanna told her husband to get some sleep with the promise that she would alert him when she was ready to deliver. He awoke to a text message, followed soon after by a phone call: “We have a baby girl.”

“She had her sister there, and her mom and dad,” Gehrke said. “She’s being well taken care of.”

This is the second time he has been away on military business while his wife was in labor. His second child, also a daughter, was born in 2006 while he was deployed to Kuwait with the 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery.

“Today, I know after a couple more days I’ll be there,” he reasoned. “I won’t miss an entire year.”

Capt. Mark Brooks, the battalion chaplain, was Gehrke’s roommate in Kuwait, and was also nearby during this annual training.

“[Deanna] said he was the constant element both times,” Gehrke said.

Gehrke acknowledged that he could have opted not to attend annual training, but as a company commander he wanted to ensure that the 108th FSC was on a successful track for the battalion’s first annual training outside of Wisconsin in 13 years.

“She puts up with it,” he said. “She understands all about Soldiers.”

That’s because Deanna is a master sergeant in an Army Reserve unit. The couple met at Fort McCoy when both were enlisted in different Army Reserve units. In 2003, when their first child was born, both were preparing to deploy in separate units. As it turned out, neither units deployed, but the experience left its mark on their son, who was named Jacob McCoy Gehrke.

“The Army is an integral part of our kids’ lives,” Gehrke said.

# ANNUAL TRAINING 2011

## Engineer units help build community relationships

For the 829th Engineer Company — a Wisconsin Army National Guard unit based in Chippewa Falls with subordinate units in Richland Center and Ashland — this annual training is all about getting back to basics and giving back to the community.

The company worked in successive rotations from June 4 through July 25 to build a new concession stand for the Ashland School District's Oredocker Stadium at Weikal Field. As a vertical construction unit, Soldiers in the 832nd are trained as carpenters, masons, plumbers and electricians — the very skills needed for this project.

The stadium itself was renovated a few years ago, but the concession stand — a 30-year-old temporary structure — remained inadequate. The new cinder-block structure will include a ticket window and public restrooms.

A fund-raising effort by the Oredocker Foundation provided the materials, but not the labor. The foundation approached the Guard unit in Ashland about constructing the stand and, after the paperwork was properly processed, the project received a green light.

"We obviously couldn't get the job done without the National Guard," said John McFaul, president of the non-profit Oredocker Foundation. "They've just been outstanding."

"It was a perfect scenario for us," said Staff Sgt. Anthony Wensel, the company training non-commissioned officer and readiness non-commissioned officer for the detachment. "The material was already paid for. This is probably the cheapest annual training the Wisconsin National Guard has had."

Soldiers are lodging at the Ashland armory during their annual training, so

other than Soldier pay, the only real cost to the National Guard is meals.

Capt. Darin Beschta, commander of the 829th, said the project offered a unique training opportunity for the 829th as well as the 824th Engineer Detachment, a Richland Center-based unit specializing in concrete.

"Due to deployment, pre-mobilization and post-mobilization requirements and

lack of building materials, neither unit has conducted quality [military occupational skill] training in over two years," Beschta said in the project memo. "The training offered by this project will provide both units the opportunity to begin the process of becoming proficient at the squad and platoon level tasks necessary for future deployment as a construction asset.

Beschta said the project provided a real-world opportunity to accomplish required training such as engineer company operations, general construction operations, and provide concrete for construction.

Dr. Fred Tidstrom, vice-president of the Oredocker Foundation, said the project seemed to meet the needs of each organization.

"It's a symbolic public/private partnership between the National Guard and the Oredocker Foundation," he said. "It shows what you can do when people share the same vision."

Tidstrom said that in-kind donations and the National Guard labor brought the costs of a \$150,000 project down to about \$30,000.

Tom Grossjean, building and grounds director for the Ashland School District, praised the approximately 120 Soldiers working on the project.

"I've worked closely with [the Soldiers,]" he said. "I'm very pleased — they're great folks to work with. I'd love to do another project with them."

Grossjean noted that the Soldiers readily identify issues during construction and quickly devise solutions to keep the project on schedule.

"There's a lot of qualified folks there," he said.

Wensel said that Soldiers in the unit were enjoying the project.

"They're telling me, 'Hey, we're actually doing our mission,'" he said. During their last deployment from 2009-2010, members of the 829th Engineer Company performed detainee operations.

Approximately 30 members of the 829th were recognized for their efforts at the Oredocker Foundation's annual "Breakfast of Champions" event June 25. 

# Airmen lend a helping hand to Habitat for Humanity



## Senior Airman Ryan Kuntze 128th Air Refueling Wing

Sixty-five Airmen and family members from the 128th Air Refueling Wing volunteered to help Habitat for Humanity renovate four houses on North First Street in Milwaukee on June 4.

The Airmen placed drywall in the houses from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m., said 2nd Lt. Gregory Damask, the logistics readiness officer for the 128th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Damask has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in the past, and he organized a similar volunteer effort last year.

“Let’s find a way to get the 128th’s name out there,” he explained. “Let’s give back to the very community that gives to us.”

Damask said the volunteer efforts were experiences that showcased the Wing’s teamwork and willingness to come together.

“It was a good feeling to know everyone volunteered their own time,” he said. “The home owners were there, and they had nothing but compliments.”

The response from Habitat for Humanity has been very positive, too.

“They asked for us to come back every month,” he said.

Airmen from the 128th Air Refueling Wing are going to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity in 2012, which will make the event an annual volunteer program that assists local Milwaukee citizens.

“[Volunteering] is in my nature,” Damask said. “I was brought up to give. I’ve been blessed with many benefits, and my personal belief is that if I have the ability to help others, I should.”



**Maj. Steve Botsford (right), commander of the 128th Force Support Squadron, Milwaukee, uses a power drill to attach a drywall panel to the ceiling of a home under construction on June 4. Botsford, along with other Airmen from the 128th Air Refueling Wing (above), volunteered to help renovate houses with Habitat for Humanity. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Master Sgt. Kenneth Pagel**

# Airman responds to on-flight medical emergency

**Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue**  
*Wisconsin National Guard*

A flight doctor for the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, assisted a young woman aboard a civilian aircraft while returning home from a NATO training exercise in Iceland.

The situation took place while waiting for takeoff June 12 aboard Delta Airlines flight 1126 from Boston Logan Airport to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

Maj. William Lane, Green Bay, heard an announcement that the plane would be returning to the gate due to a medical issue on board. He immediately switched roles from airline passenger to on-board doctor.

"I looked back and saw a bunch of people standing around," Lane said. "I went back there and pretty much took charge" — something he is used to doing as a full-time emergency room doctor at the Appleton Medical Center.

The woman, in her 20s, experienced a seizure and seemed confused with symptoms of unresponsiveness and respirations, Lane said.

He observed as the flight attendants administered an oxygen mask to the passenger. Lane then stayed with the woman, stabilizing her airway to sustain an oxygen flow for about 10 minutes until the paramedics arrived to treat the woman inside the airport.

Lt. Col. Phillip Bunton, medical administration officer for the 115th Medical Group, wasn't surprised when he heard of Lane's actions.

"He's certainly one of the most dedicated flight docs that we have and he is always ready to step up and volunteer," Bunton said. "He makes himself available, even in between drill weekends, all the time."

This isn't Lane's first experience with helping someone outside of the normal doctor's smock or flight suit he wears



**Maj. William Lane, a flight doctor with the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing, was returning from a NATO training exercise in Iceland when he assisted with a passenger on board who was having a medical emergency at the Boston Logan Airport.** Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue

on a daily basis. In 1998, he was asked by pilots aboard a flight to Florida to assist a flight attendant who was having a panic attack at the rear of the plane. He also assisted emergency responders following a motorcycle accident outside of Milwaukee. He was on his way home from training as a flight doctor with the Milwaukee-based 440th Air Reserve Wing at the time.

Lane, a 1984 graduate of Michigan State University with a doctor of osteopathic medicine degree, admits he really enjoys opportunities to serve as a Good Samaritan.

"I'm proud to have skills that can help other people in need," he said. "I almost like it more on a random basis than when I'm being paid. It seems more pure that way." 📷

# Air Force releases updated dress, appearance instruction

**Eric M. Grill**  
*Air Force Personnel, Services and Manpower*

The Air Force's instruction on dress and personal appearance recently received an appearance upgrade with the July 18 release of the updated instruction.

Air Force Instruction 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance, received the facelift after several years of interim updates as uniform items were introduced and phased out.

The last revision to the AFI was in 2006, prior to the release of the Airman Battle Uniform, which replaces the Battle Dress Uniform and Desert Camouflage Uniform Nov. 1, 2011.

Most of the changes to the AFI are more about mechanics and clarification than new policy, said Ruth Ewalt, the Air Force Uniform Programs and Policies chief at the Air Staff. They are intended to make the AFI more user-friendly.

"The changes are a result of Airmen in the field requesting clarification, leadership approving more specific policy, and the need to integrate information from the 98th virtual uniform board and other wear policy approved since 2006," Ewalt said.

"We added the ABU, green fleece, and physical fitness uniform information not in the previous AFI and corrected instances of conflicting information."

For clarity and ease of reading, the chapters were rearranged and sections were made inclusive to eliminate turning back and forth to configure a single uniform, she said. The difference in the old and new AFI is that the tables are now integrated into the text. Each uniform has its own section, starting with the most formal through the utility, PT, and distinctive uniforms.

One thing Airmen might notice is the amount of pictures incorporated into the revised AFI.

"Individuals learn and retain information differently," Ewalt said. "For some, a photo is a better tool than volumes of text or audio. We wanted to make

this AFI as 'user-friendly' as possible. It covers every Airman -- from the first-day recruit in Basic Military Training to the 30-plus-year career Airman."

Sections are also inclusive, listing all items that may and must be worn with each particular uniform with the exception of outer garments which are covered in their own section.

The first three chapters cover the basic philosophy, appropriate circumstances to wear uniform items, how and where to purchase them, roles and responsibilities, and grooming and appearance standards.

Chapters four through seven cover uniforms worn and maintained by all Air Force members: dress, utility, and physical training uniforms. Chapters four and five include the dress and utility uniforms. Chapter six explains outer garments, headgear, rank insignia and accessories, and chapter seven covers the physical training uniform.

The remaining chapters "customize" the uniforms of unique populations and discuss badges, awards and decorations unique to individual Airmen.

The final chapter contains instructions for recommending changes to dress and personal appearance policy or uniform designs.

The revised AFI also added a tattoo measurement tool to standardize the process for Airmen and commanders to determine if a tattoo meets standards.

"There is also a form to document tattoos that are borderline excessive or require a commander-approved waiver," Ewalt said. "The policy regarding what constitutes an excessive tattoo has not changed. The standard is still not more than 25 percent of the exposed body part."

The revision involved input from individuals of all ranks and components of the Air Force, including Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard members.

For online dress and appearance information, go to the dress and appearance webpage on the Air Force Personnel Center's website at <http://www.afpc.af.mil/dress/index.asp>. 📷

# Challenge Academy cadets take first step toward new life

**Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette**  
Wisconsin National Guard

One hundred and four young Wisconsin adults took another step toward a better life June 11 when they graduated from the [Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy](#).

“I feel like I can accomplish something now, I’ve never had that feeling before,” said David Fongsamout of Waunakee, the distinguished honor graduate of Class 26, who spoke about the changes he went through during 22-week the program during Saturday’s ceremony at Mauston High School. “It makes me wonder what I could have done if I always had this attitude.”

Fongsamout is just one of more than 2,100 cadets to complete the program in Wisconsin since its inception 1998. Challenge Academy re-shapes the lives of at-risk 16-to-18-year-olds using a structured, military-style environment and state-certified teachers and counselors to build cadets’ academic abilities, character, self-confidence, and personal discipline.

“What this Challenge Academy has given you is a foundation,” keynote speaker [Brig. Gen. Donald Dunbar](#) told the cadets. Dunbar is the adjutant general of Wisconsin and commander of the Wisconsin National Guard. “You get to choose what to build on top of it. Make the right choice.”

Cadet Yadira Guadarrama of Beloit received the Character Development and Never Give Up awards, and acknowledged that she made the right choice in coming to the academy.

“It was my decision to come here,” Guadarrama said. “I wanted to get my life together and fix my relationships back home. My attitude has changed a lot during the program. I used to be very angry and let little things bother me. They taught me that it’s not important, and how



**The Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy Class 26 Drill Team prepares to march during the Class 26 graduation ceremony at Mauston, Wis. high school on June 11.** Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette

to let things go.”

Guadarrama currently plans to join AmeriCorps after graduation, then continue her education by joining the Air National Guard and going to college to become a security officer.

Peter Blum, assistant director of the

Wisconsin National Guard’s Challenge Academy, has been with the Academy since 1998 and said cadets gain a level of maturity that most teenagers, and some adults, never reach.

“During the program, a cadet’s perspective changes from ‘What’s

**Brig. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, urged cadets to continue to build on the foundation the Challenge Academy has given them.**

happening Friday night?’ to ‘What are my goals for the next five years?’” he said.

Blum also reflected on what it takes to make it through the program.

“You have to convince the cadets not to quit on the process of change,” he said. “It’s difficult, but you have to get over your fears and do it.”

Cadets will to continue to get support as they navigate their new lives. After graduating from the 22-week residential phase of academy training, cadets are paired with hometown mentors who offer guidance and encouragement.

Twenty-nine states offer similar programs [nationwide](#). More than 80,000 teens have successfully completed the National Guard youth programs since 1993. More than 87 per cent of cadets who finish the program receive their high school equivalency diploma (HSED), and more than 80 per cent stay out of trouble with the law.

Applications are available for future classes by contacting the Challenge Academy at (608)269-4605.  

A photograph of Sgt. Brandon Swanson in a white racing helmet with "indycar.com" and "INDYCAR SPEED" branding. He is wearing a green and blue camouflage patterned racing suit and is seated in the cockpit of an Indy car. The car's bodywork is also covered in the same camouflage pattern and features several sponsor logos, including "Firestone" in large white letters, "TRIWEST HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE" with a red star logo, and an American flag. The background shows a blurred race track environment with other people and equipment.

**Sgt. Brandon Swanson, of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, gives the thumbs-up during his two-seater ride at the Milwaukee Mile as part of Panther Racing's Hometown Hero program June 19. Wisconsin National Guard, photo by Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette**

# A hero's welcome at the Milwaukee Mile

**Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette**  
*Wisconsin National Guard*

WEST ALLIS — The Wisconsin Army National Guard's [Noncommissioned Officer of the Year](#) received a victory lap June 19 at the Milwaukee Mile race track on the Wisconsin State Fairgrounds.

Sgt. Brandon Swanson, of Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, signed autographs with Indy Racing League driver J.R. Hildebrand of Panther Racing before Sunday's race at the Milwaukee Mile. Sgt. Steven Dahl — the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Soldier of the Year and also a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry — was on hand for the event as well. The Soldiers were able to take two-seater rides in Indy cars, tour the pit crew areas and meet Indy car drivers.

The Hometown Hero program, which Panther

Racing CEO John Barnes began in 2008, seeks to raise awareness of the National Guard, their mission and what they can do for communities.

"National Guard Soldiers are not only a part of the community, they are the connection between the community and the military," Barnes said. "America is built on communities, and we want to support them."

This ceremony was the 42nd Hometown Hero celebration by Panther Racing, and they have no plans to stop any time soon.

"Very few people in the nation understand the mission of the National Guard," Barnes said. "National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are the cream of the crop, and America needs to understand the incredible sacrifices these men and women are making in their name."

Hildebrand, who is new to the Panther Racing team,

agreed with his CEO.

"We think we have to deal with long days here on the race track," he said, "but it pales in comparison to the sacrifice our servicemen and women make. Being a part of Panther Racing has given me a new appreciation for how much a part of our lives the National Guard is."

That message may be sinking in with the public, as hundreds of people lined up at the Milwaukee Mile seeking autographs from not only Indy car drivers, but Swanson as well.

"This is a great experience," Swanson said. "It's definitely not something you get to do every day."

Swanson and Dahl will compete at the National Guard's Best Warrior contest in the noncommissioned and Soldier categories, respectively later this summer. If they win, they will advance to the Army's Best Warrior Competition in October. 🇺🇸

## Athletic shoes must toe the Army line

The Department of the Army is putting its foot down on a popular new style of athletic shoe popular for its flexibility and natural feel.

Effective immediately, the style of minimalist athletic shoe sometimes referred to as five-finger, five-toe or barefoot shoe is no longer authorized for wear with the Improved Physical Fitness Uniform (IPFU). More specifically, only shoes which accommodate all five toes in one compartment are authorized for wear.

According to an All Army Activities (ALARACT) message sent June 11 by Sgt. Maj. James McGruder, "Those shoes that feature five separate, individual compartments for the toes detract from a professional military image and are prohibited for wear with the IPFU or when conducting physical training in military formation."

This policy change will be reflected in the next update of Army Regulation 670-1. 



## DoD announces Iraq, Afghanistan campaign stars

**Donna Miles**

*American Forces Press Service*

Bronze campaign stars are now authorized for service members who have served in Iraq since Sept. 1, 2010, or in Afghanistan since Dec. 1, 2009, Defense Department officials announced today.

The new campaign stars, worn on the Iraq and Afghanistan campaign medals, recognize service during Operation New Dawn in Iraq and the Consolidation III campaign phase in Afghanistan.

Operation New Dawn began Sept. 1, 2010, marking the official end of Operation Iraqi Freedom and U.S. combat operations in Iraq and a new focus on advising, assisting and training Iraqi security forces.

The Consolidation III campaign in Afghanistan began Dec. 1, 2009, the date President Barack Obama committed to sending 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan with a plan to begin drawing down that force in July.

The services will announce implementing instructions to their members about wear of the new campaign stars.

Service members who have qualified for the ICM and ACM may

display a bronze campaign star on their medal for each campaign phase in which they participated. A silver campaign star is issued in lieu of five bronze stars.

Six other campaign phases were previously identified for Iraq, and three in Afghanistan.

In Iraq, they are:

- Liberation of Iraq, March 19 to May 1, 2003
- Transition of Iraq, May 2, 2003 to June 28, 2004
- Iraqi Governance, June 29, 2004 to Dec. 15, 2005
- National Resolution, Dec. 16, 2005 to Jan. 9, 2007
- Iraqi Surge, Jan. 10, 2007 to Dec. 31, 2008
- Iraqi Sovereignty, Jan. 1, 2009 to Aug. 31, 2010

In Afghanistan, the previously identified campaign phases are:

- Liberation of Afghanistan, Sept. 11 to Nov. 30, 2001
- Consolidation I, Dec. 1, 2001 to Sept. 30, 2006
- Consolidation II, Oct. 1, 2006 to Nov. 30, 2009

The Defense Department first authorized campaign stars for service in Iraq and Afghanistan in April 2008. 

# Veterans, Families, Retirees

## Nominations sought for Woman Veteran award

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is seeking nominations for the fifth annual Wisconsin Woman Veteran of the Year Award.

The award will be presented during the Women Veterans Conference held Sept. 23-25 at Fort McCoy.

As part of WDVA's ongoing commitment to women veterans, the award recognizes women veterans who have compiled a record of exemplary service as a military service member, a veteran, and an outstanding member of the community.

The 2010 award recipient was Jessica Maple of Mosinee, who has served her country for 14 years in the Air Force and Air National Guard and still serves today. She has supported three major deployments and several military training and professional development events in recent years.

Maple served twice supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. She took time while deployed and volunteered at several base Fallen Warrior ceremonies. She has also been selected as the senior NCO of the Year for the Air National Guard.

Nominations will be accepted from any Wisconsin resident, veteran, County Veterans Service Officer or veterans service organization or group.

Nominations may be submitted at any time during the year for the annual award.

Completed nomination forms for the 2011 award must be received no later than Aug. 31.

Forms must be submitted in writing, with a narrative not to exceed 500 words, explaining why the veteran is being nominated for the award.

Those nominations not selected may be retained for future award consideration.

Nomination forms are available online at [http://dva.state.wi.us/WebForms/WDVA\\_2068\\_Woman\\_Veteran\\_of\\_the](http://dva.state.wi.us/WebForms/WDVA_2068_Woman_Veteran_of_the)

## [Year Nomination.pdf](#)

or can be mailed to those who call to request it by calling toll-free at 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387) and asking for the Women Veterans Coordinator.

To see more information about the award to include the previous recipient, visit <http://dva.state.wi.us/womenvets.asp>. For more information on WDVA programs and services see the website <http://dva.state.wi.us/>.

## TRICARE to expand electronic prescriptions

One of the enduring stereotypes about doctors is that they have poor handwriting, leading to unreadable prescriptions. TRICARE is encouraging use of electronic prescriptions (E-prescribing) to ensure this does not occur while also offering more convenience for beneficiaries.

A report by the Institutes of Medicine estimates that there are 1.5 million preventable medication errors in the United States every year.

Using E-prescribing cuts down on human error and transmits accurate and legible prescriptions in electronic format straight from the doctor to the pharmacy. There is no need to fax, call-in or hand-deliver prescriptions.

TRICARE is encouraging all providers to begin using E-prescribing for TRICARE beneficiaries.

Home delivery allows TRICARE beneficiaries to have their medications shipped to them directly, saving trips to the pharmacy and cutting down further on medication error. Beneficiaries also save 66 percent on a 90-day supply of medications.

Beneficiaries should note that E-prescriptions cannot be routed to Military Treatment Facility pharmacies at this time.

To learn more about Home Delivery, go to [www.tricare.mil/homedelivery](http://www.tricare.mil/homedelivery). For more about e-prescriptions, visit the HHS at <http://go.usa.gov/WSz>.



### Flag officer

Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, speaks at the Flag Day celebration June 14 in Waubeka, Wis. The first formal observance of Flag Day was held in Waubeka in 1885. Wisconsin National Guard photo

# Veterans, Families, Retirees

## New website offers access to benefits information

It's 2 a.m. on a sleepless night, and you want to check the status of a Veterans Administration disability claim related

to your last deployment. A new one-stop website means you won't have to wait for the start of the workday to get the information you are looking for.

**eBenefits** — a VA web portal developed by the 2007 President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors — provides National Guard members and all veterans access to a catalog of direct links to information on services ranging from VA claims to education benefits and life insurance.

Jeffrey Unger, transition assistance advisor with the Wisconsin National Guard, enrolled in eBenefits in January.

"One of the things I like is it allows you, in the privacy and security of your own home, to get access to anything in the Veterans Benefits Administration," he said.

"It's a tool for personal information organization," said Vernell Hill, the National Guard Bureau Interactive Personnel Electronic Records Management System senior access control manager. "The sooner you get in and get up to date, the easier it is for everything to fall into line, especially in the event something unforeseen happens and your family needs information."

Hill said Guard members can sign up using one of four methods: with their common access card, through myPay, a defense enrollment eligibility reporting system real-time automated personnel identification system terminal, or go directly to the closest VA center for face-to-face assistance.

Service members with a common access card (CAC) will be directed to obtain an eBenefits logon either



upon enlistment, reenlistment or by 2013, according to Clifford L. Stanley, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

"The DS [DOD Self-Service Logon] is a secure, self-service logon ID that allows beneficiaries affiliated with the DOD or the VA access to several websites using a single username and password," Stanley said. "DS Logon will allow all service members and veterans secure access through the eBenefits web portal to benefits information specifically tailored to their needs, for the lifetime of their affiliation with the DOD or VA."

Hill recommended that Guard members who are still part of the uniformed service use their common access cards to enter the system since it is easier.

"CAC registration is especially critical for our wounded warriors, since it may be more difficult to travel to a RAPIDS or VA site," he said.

Unger said that eBenefits will soon be even more useful to National Guard members. He noticed that the site linked mostly to the VBA or state veterans affairs departments. Based on his suggestion, the NGB will cooperate with the VA to quickly incorporate transition assistance advisor information for each state, as well as other veterans services provided by state National Guard organizations.

"This will provide direct access to a knowledgeable, in-state resource who will walk the transition process with them," Unger explained, "building their self-esteem and letting them know they are not the first, they won't be the last, and they are not alone in this process." 

*Tech. Sgt. John Orrell of the National Guard Bureau contributed to this report.*

## Veterans job, benefit events scheduled

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

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

Veterans job fairs will be held Aug. 10 at 32 N. 21st Street in Superior; Sept. 22 at 475 N. Water Street in Platteville; Oct. 19 at 833 S. 17th Street in Wausau, and at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center (5000 W.

national Ave.) on a day to be determined in October.

A supermarket of veterans benefits will be held at 1420 Wright Street in Madison Aug. 5-6, and at 1730 North Lane in Eau Claire on Sept. 16-17.

This type of "supermarket" is a one-stop shopping environment where veterans learn about eligibility criteria for state and federal veterans benefits, programs and services including education, medals/records, assisted living and nursing homes, and pre-registration for burial in state veterans' cemeteries.

For more information on the Madison "supermarket," contact David Rueth, agency liaison, at 608-266-1309 or david.rueth@dva.state.wi.us. For more information on the Eau Claire "supermarket," contact Joe Bertalan, regional coordinator, at 608-267-7329 or joe.bertalan@dva.state.wi.us. 

## Services, hours for Retiree Activities Offices

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

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

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

3115. Contact the RAO with questions or for assistance.

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

## Military, veterans recognized at State Fair

Military personnel and veterans will receive free admission to the Wisconsin State Fair on Aug. 14. Simply present a valid military ID, Veterans Administration ID or DD 214 at any ticket window for free admission all day. 

# Parting shot



Staff Sgt. Brandon Gumm of the 128th Air Refueling Wing's fire department listens as Staff Sgt. Brad Butler, U.S. Air Force Thunderbird maintenance operation command, talks about the water retrieval methods of the aircraft's pilot Aug. 5 in the event of a mishap during the 2011 Milwaukee Air and Water Show Aug. 6-7. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Wilson