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Staff Sgt. Benjamin Van Aucken of Headquarters Detachment, 1st Battalion, 426th Field Artillery Regiment in Fort McCoy maneuvers over a wall during the obstacle course portion of the 2011 Soldier and NCO competition. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Sgt. Tyler Lasure

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From the TAG

Our mission is to be there — “always ready for emergency support and national defense.” Our state and nation count on us — citizen-Soldiers/Airmen and civilian employees — to provide outstanding leadership, preparedness, protection and response during a crisis.

We never know when we will be needed. This was true in early February when a major blizzard hit Wisconsin. The governor declared an emergency ahead of the storm and, in anticipation of severe conditions, we staged Guard members and tactical vehicles in armories across Southeastern Wisconsin. We partnered with first responders and the Wisconsin State Patrol to assist motorists stranded due to the severe winter storm. Wisconsin Emergency Management monitored the areas affected by the storm, coordinated with local agencies and led the state response by directing resources to where they were needed.

The governor relies on us to coordinate with federal and local agencies and align key roles and responsibilities concerning initial response and recovery operations. Wisconsin is a home-rule state, meaning that local law enforcement and first responders have primary responsibility to prepare for and respond to emergencies. When those agencies



Gov. Scott Walker, center, Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, and First Lady Tonette Walker, right, meet with Merrill residents April 11 as part of a visit to survey tornado damage to dozens of homes and several businesses there. An April 10 storm system spawned 10 tornadoes in the central and northern parts of the state. Wisconsin Emergency Management photo by Lori Getter

require additional support, the National Guard is ready to supplement with essential military capabilities and emergency management expertise.

Natural disasters such as blizzards, floods and tornadoes are challenges we know well and understand. Others are less familiar

and potentially more devastating, such as terrorism, chemical spills, radiologic incidents, biologic or explosive threats, and cyber attacks. Our state, local and federal partners count on us to lead the state’s effort in support of first responders and civil authorities during disasters and contingencies.

Our fellow citizens rely on you. You add great value to our communities. Thank you for being there and for remaining “always ready — always there.”



Task Force Badger back from Iraq deployment

Commander in Chief Gov. Scott Walker, military leaders, an Army band and nearly 1,000 friends and family braved cold temperatures Feb. 18 to give a warm welcome to about 300 of Wisconsin's newest combat veterans.

"We could not be more proud," Walker said during a [welcome home ceremony](#) for the 724th Engineer Battalion in a packed hanger at Volk Field. "Thank you, and to the families we say thank you as well."

The [724th Engineer Battalion](#) deployed to Iraq last April. Operating as Task Force Badger, the 724th became the only remaining engineering battalion in Iraq and directed a total of eight engineering companies — including Guard units from Pennsylvania and Puerto Rico, active Army units from Fort Lewis, Wash., and Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and an Army Reserve unit from Fort Belvoir, Va.

"You are an amazing group of men and women," said unit Commander Lt. Col. Dave O'Donahue as he struggled to find the words that could sufficiently convey his pride in the unit that had completed a 10-month mission to Iraq. "You did a phenomenal job. It is the greatest honor of my military career to have served with you."

Task Force Badger's principal mission was to provide freedom of movement throughout Iraq. This included 200,000 kilometers of route clearance — searching for and removing roadside bombs. The battalion also removed five major military bridges, completed construction work for Iraqi forces at combined check points near Kirkuk and Mosul, trained Iraqi forces in bridging techniques and procedures, and moved more than \$90

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Four-year-old Annika reacquaints herself with her father, Maj. Billy Kesselring of the 724th Engineer Battalion's headquarters company upon his return to Wisconsin Feb. 18 following a 10-month deployment to Iraq in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. Wisconsin National Guard photos by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

'Men of the North' return to Wisconsin

Continued from Page 4

million of vehicles and equipment out of Iraq as part of the drawdown of forces. In addition, Task Force Badger assisted the State Department in the construction of Contingency Operating Station Erbil in northern Iraq.

O'Donahue accompanied his men on many missions, and saw what it took to get the job done in a country that still poses considerable danger.

"Night after night they put it on the line, keeping other people safe," he said. "So many of our missions were at night — not many people knew all that we did."

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, praised the Men of the North, as the battalion is known.

"You can be extremely proud of what

you accomplished in theater," he said. "You may never know all the people you helped, but they will remember you — they will remember the 724th."

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

"Your accomplishment is now etched in the book of American history," he said.

O'Donahue said that in addition to the great sense of accomplishment, he felt a great sense of relief now that the 724th was back home in Wisconsin.

"We completed the mission," he said. "We did it the right way." 

At right, Gov. Scott Walker and Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, the adjutant general of Wisconsin, talk with family members of returning Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers in a hangar at Volk Field Feb. 18.



Curtis Zimmerman helps Staff Sgt. Brian Young, fire team member for the 115th Security Forces Squadron, learn to juggle on March 6. Wingman Day promoted “living the dream,” and taking care of fellow Airmen. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Tech. Sgt. Ashley Bell

Airmen encouraged to ‘Live the dream’

Tech. Sgt. Don Nelson
115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Acknowledging the impact deployments and other stressors can have on service members and their families, leaders at the 115th Fighter Wing took aim at increasing Airman resiliency – promoting awareness and the tools available to help military families through tough times.

National-level motivational speaker Curtis Zimmerman headlined the “Wingman Day” event at the fighter wing and encouraged more than 800 Airmen of the 115th to take control of the “scripts” in their lives and take care of one another.

“This day is about making smart choices and looking out for each other,” said Brig. Gen. Joseph Brandemuehl, 115th FW commander. “We must continually strive to improve the wellness of our organization, ourselves and our families... resiliency, unit wellness and being good wingmen are the themes of the Wingman Day.”

Zimmerman explained that everyone is the star of their own show ... the stage is theirs and they have control of who and what happens in it.

The event was created to strengthen the morale and welfare of units and its’ members by devoting time to building relationships between co-workers and discussing topics like suicide prevention, responsible drinking behavior, financial management and identification and intervention of troubled Airmen.

Zimmerman’s message was intermingled with games such as juggling and coordination exercises in an effort to induce a message of hope and optimism with a dose of realism that encouraged all in attendance to, “Live the Dream.”

“I use the metaphor that encourages people to be the star in their own life,” said Zimmerman. “Too many of us let our show be dictated by outside influences... we need to give those people less lines in our own show and by doing this our life can get better.”

Growing up in Los Angeles, Zimmerman learned to perform as a mime, juggler and

fire eater before taking his talents to television and cruise ships. His presentation incorporates the juggling to demonstrate a message he calls, “failing successfully,” that includes bringing someone up in front of the large audience and teaching them how to juggle.

That lucky participant was Staff Sgt. Brian Young, 115th Security Forces Squadron. While Young was not able to perfect the skill, he did drop the balls many times en route to nearly perfecting the art; thereby illustrating Zimmerman’s message.

“Obviously it was frustrating, but the point of me struggling through something also gave the same message across to everybody ... no matter how many times somebody fails, you still have to try to pick them up or the lesson is never going to be learned.”

“I think the message he was trying to get across is that ‘You are the only person that can make yourself successful, but if you’re surrounded by people that support you than it helps you is important,’” Young said.

Zimmerman talked about his personal story of childhood illness, poverty and family challenges. When asked what about his story helps him communicate his message, he said that everyone has a story not unlike his.

“I give 100 speeches a year and none will be as important as the one I give today,” said Zimmerman. “I want to help people understand what it means to ‘Live the Dream.’”

Zimmerman stated he is happy when his audience gets the message.

“The process to learn is to believe that ‘I can do it,’” said Zimmerman. “Once you believe you can do it, the next step in the process is to drop the ball, knowing that you have to fail to succeed.”

Zimmerman shuns the idea of lack of “natural ability” as a reason why people can not do certain things and says it is often used as an excuse. He explained that he dropped the ball thousands of times until he was able to succeed at juggling.

Young seems to have grasped the message of “failing successfully.”

“I think when it came to the juggling, it’s probably easier than I was making it,” Young said. “I’ll pick them up from time to time and I’ll just keep practicing.”



Dedication is Airman's secret ingredient

Senior Airman Ryan Kuntze
128th Air Refueling Wing

Staff Sgt. Jamie Schoewe of East Troy, a 128th Air Refueling Wing services squadron specialist, was awarded the Kenneth Disney Award in March following an inspection of the wing's services squadron.

As one of three selected Airmen from throughout the nation, Schoewe will go to the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in Napa Valley, Calif., in September. There, she will work with master chefs, as well as services personnel from the Air Force and Marine Corps, while honing her food preparation and cooking skills.

"[This is] a huge honor, and the fact we were even selected is great," Schoewe said.

The Hennessy Travelers Association inspected the 128th Air Refueling Wing services squadron in February, and the squadron was selected as one of the top three in the nation, Schoewe said. Due to her expertise and skill, the 24-year-old staff sergeant was chosen to receive the Kenneth Disney Award.

"I extended for one year to accept the award," Schoewe said. "It's an honor to be known as someone who goes above and beyond for just doing their job."

"She's like the Energizer Bunny," said Tech. Sgt. Amy Auxier, the fitness program manager with the 128th ARW services squadron. "[Schoewe] never stops working, she always has a smile, and she stays late to take care of any unfinished business."

Schoewe has been with the 128th Air Refueling Wing for six years. When not drilling, she works at the Incoming Call Center for the Great West Retirement Center, where she answers people's questions regarding retirement funds. The hospitality-minded sergeant attended the University of Wisconsin and UW-Whitewater, where she earned a



Staff Sgt. Jamie Schoewe, a 128th Air Refueling Wing services specialist, prepares a kiwi at Sijan Hall in preparation for the Sunday lunch on April 3. Schoewe was awarded the Kenneth Disney Award for her superior performance in the services squadron, and she will travel to Napa Valley, Calif., in September for a nine-day culinary school taught by the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Wilson

bachelor's degree in liberal studies.

Schoewe maintains a positive and upbeat attitude about her job with the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

"[This job] requires a passion for food," she said. "We probably have the most fun out of all the sections on base — we work hard to feed everyone on base, and then we keep the facility clean. I think anyone [in the services squadron] deserves the award." 📷

Wisconsin Air Guard squadron wins Outstanding Unit Award

Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue
Wisconsin National Guard

A group of Wisconsin Airmen stand united in a unique mission — controlling air space from the ground. Now they stand united as one of the nation's top Air Force units.

Air Force officials recently awarded the prestigious Air Force Outstanding Unit Award to the Camp Douglas-based 128th Air Control Squadron, which employs more than 160 members of Wisconsin's Air National Guard.

"I've got outstanding officers, and outstanding NCOs and Airmen that are dedicated to meeting their own individual qualifications ... but they're also dedicated to upholding the traditions of this organization," said Lt. Col. Gerard Iverson, 128th ACS commander. "That's what so great about this award — it's not just one person, it's the entire organization."

The ACS was recognized for their service from Nov. 1, 2008 through Oct. 31, 2010. During this time of highlighted service, the ACS provided theater battle management command and control while deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Recognized for their proficiency during a Unit Compliance Inspection in June 2010, the ACS earned a 97 percent compliance rating from an Air Combat Command Inspector General team. The unit was also looked to for their expertise when they were called upon to provide pre-deployment training to another Air Control Squadron — certifying 40 Airmen prior to their deployments overseas.

"This is a tremendous honor," said Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, "that recognizes the significant contributions of the 128th ACS to the joint war fighter. This is a special group of Airmen and I am very proud of

their performance."

The 128th does not rest on its laurels, however — the squadron remains busy supporting Presidential events across the country and participating in large-scale exercises such as the Patriot Exercise, Northern Lightening and NATO's international exercise, Ramstein Rover.

"We don't let grass grow under our feet. We've continued to reach out and seek out events that challenge us," Iverson said. "You have to be proactive in getting out there. By doing so, it gives everyone experience to further hone those skills that we train for."

In the award's announcement letter, Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt, director of the Air National Guard, highlighted the caliber of the award and its significance to the nation.

"The competition was extremely keen and each winner is commended for having been selected from an outstanding group of nominees," Wyatt said. "The dedication and commitment of the members of these organizations enable the Air National Guard to fulfill its commitment to the mission of peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, domestic improvement and most important of all — defense of America."

This is the fourth AFOUA award the 128th has earned, but the first since the 1980s. The 128th ACS is a mobile radar/communications unit that supports air operations from the ground. The unit deployed immediately following Sept. 11, 2001 and has since deployed twice to Afghanistan and once to another base in Southwest Asia. Meanwhile they continue to support Homeland Defense as part of Operation Noble Eagle.

"We bring a seasoned, well-rounded, experienced and highly motivated control and reporting center to the combatant commander," Iverson said, "and that is a testament to each and every individual in this organization." 📷

Deployed warrior now a citizen



President's Day will likely be a special holiday for a Wisconsin National Guard Soldier currently serving in Iraq — it will be the anniversary of the day the 25-year-old Wisconsin National Guard Soldier became a U.S. citizen.

Spc. Carlos Villa-Rivera, Keil, Wis., is a decontamination specialist deployed to Iraq with Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment. He is also one of 53 Soldiers representing 31 nationalities to take the oath of citizenship Feb. 21 during a naturalization ceremony at Saddam Hussein's Al Faw Palace in Baghdad.

"To become a citizen is something I've wanted to do for a long time," said Mexico-born Villa-Rivera. His family obtained visas and moved to Wisconsin in 2000 when he was 15 years old because the area of Mexico where they had been living was becoming dangerous. "My mother wanted better opportunities for us," he explained.

"It has been called the 'Great American Experience'," said Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, United States Forces-Iraq commander, during the naturalization ceremony. "It is called that because it became a nation of immigrants on a foreign land and none of them knew at the time whether it would succeed or fail."

Austin went on to say that the Soldiers who became citizens in Camp Victory are a reminder that the strength evident in the nation and the Army comes from ethnic and cultural diversity.

Spc. Carlos Villa Rivera, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment, signs his passport application after becoming a U.S. citizen during a President's Day naturalization ceremony at one of Saddam Hussein's former Baghdad palaces in Camp Victory. eCAB Public Affairs photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Troth

Villa-Rivera joined the Wisconsin National Guard for the education benefits, and hopes to make a career in the Guard. 1st Sgt. Jason Hanson, the senior noncommissioned officer in Villa-Rivera's unit, spoke highly of the Soldier he refers to as "Spc. 'V'."

"He is a 'never say die' troop who constantly seeks out more responsibility," Hanson said. "He is an air assault graduate and he made that look easy. He puts a face to the Army values, and I am ever so proud to have him as one of my warriors."

Hanson added that Villa-Rivera is a two-time battalion Soldier of the year winner, and this year was a top-five finisher at the brigade level competition.

The new citizens had a chance to meet each other and trade stories of their journey from their homeland to Saddam's palace the week leading up to the ceremony. All were brought from their bases throughout Iraq to ensure that their citizenship and passport paperwork were in order prior to reciting the Pledge of Allegiance as U.S. citizens for the first time.

Villa-Rivera began the citizenship application process last September in Iraq, and said he received plenty of assistance from unit leadership and military legal advisors. He said he is looking forward to voting for the first time.

"If you don't participate in the democratic process, you don't have a valid reason to complain," he said.

The 147th arrived in Iraq last September following six weeks of training at Fort Hood. The Soldiers are 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.

Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Troth, Enhanced Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs, contributed to this report.



Two Humvees depart the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Oak Creek armory Feb. 1 in response to a call for assistance during the recent severe winter storm. The Guard's tactical vehicles were able to handle road conditions that prevented conventional emergency response vehicles from reaching stranded motorists. Wisconsin National Guard photo

Cold Warriors: National Guard activated to aid in winter storm response

Approximately 100 Wisconsin National Guard members were called to state active duty Feb. 1 by Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, to help state and local officials with blizzard-related emergencies as part of Gov. Scott Walker's [declaration of emergency](#).

"This is at the core of why there is a National Guard," he said. "We provide enduring value by assisting civil authorities when the situation demands and this blizzard was just such an occasion."

The Guard members were stationed at armories in Plymouth, Milwaukee, Oak Creek, Kenosha, Sussex, Elkhorn, Watertown, Platteville and Janesville and dispatched winter response force packages — community and highway assistance teams — Tuesday and Wednesday.

"While I am extremely proud of our Soldiers and Airmen," Dunbar said, "our mission was successful because of our partnership with state and local

agencies including Wisconsin Emergency Management, State Patrol, Transportation, Natural Resources and especially first responders."

Each team's mission varied, but most focused on working with law enforcement agencies and rescuing stranded motorists.

"[The Guard was] able to get to places where our rescue vehicles and even our snow plows couldn't," said Steve Braun, the emergency management director for Grant County, noting that snow was drifting as high as eight feet in some areas. "The Guard was a great asset."

Brad Altman, executive officer for the Wisconsin State Patrol's southwest region, said the National Guard assets at the Janesville armory were able to negotiate treacherous road conditions to reach stranded bus passengers three miles north of Janesville and move them to safety.

"Considering the circumstances, it was a successful mission," said Altman, who requested Guard assistance through the

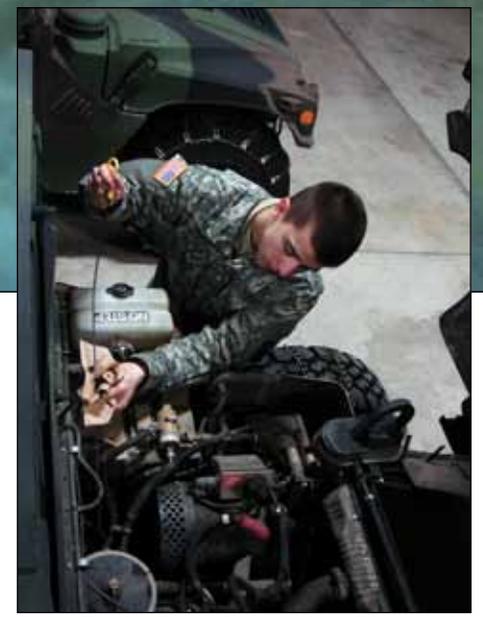
state Emergency Operations Center.

Kurt Picknell, undersheriff with the Walworth County Sheriff's Department, was the operations commander for the night shift Feb. 1 and said Wisconsin National Guard vehicles were utilized all night and into the morning of Feb. 2. He placed a sheriff's deputy in each military vehicle dispatched to assist stranded motorists.

"Combining assets like that worked extremely well," he said.

Shortly after 9 p.m. Feb. 2, the Wisconsin National Guard completed its winter storm assistance missions and returned to home station where they were released from state active duty.

"This is an event that we will never forget," wrote one Wisconsin resident in an e-mail to the Wisconsin National Guard. "I truly want to thank the National Guard and the [Walworth County] Sheriff's Department ... You all will be so very blessed for all you did!"



Pvt. Zach Bersch of the Plymouth-based Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, performs maintenance on Humvees staged Feb. 1 in preparation to assist state and local authorities with weather emergencies. Six Soldiers at the Plymouth armory were among about 100 statewide called to state duty following the state of emergency called by Gov. Scott Walker. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

Rising to the TOP

The Soldier of the Year, NCO of the Year Competition

Sgt. Steven Dahl, the 2011 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldier of the Year, examines his target while being evaluated on the mystery Army Warrior Task of executing proper grenade throwing techniques. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spc. Alyson Swanke



Sgt. Eric Liesse
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Two Soldiers from the same battalion of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat team will represent the Wisconsin Army National Guard at April's regional Soldier of the Year and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition at Camp Dodge, Iowa.

Sgt. Steven Dahl of Oconto, a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry in Menomonee, was named Soldier of the Year from a field of six competitors representing Wisconsin National Guard units across the state.

Though recently promoted, he competed in the junior enlisted category.

Sgt. Brandon Swanson of St. Croix Falls, a member of Detachment 1, Headquarter Company, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry in Chippewa Falls, was named NCO of the Year from a field of nine competitors.

The **three-day competition**, which began April 1, tested Soldiers' abilities in marksmanship, physical fitness, land navigation, Soldier task knowledge and military bearing.

Wisconsin Army National Guard State Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper, who directed the event, praised each

competitor.

"Our state-level competition is a pretty grueling process," Stopper said. "Unfortunately, there can be only one Soldier of the Year, and only one NCO of the Year."

"I'm relieved all the hard work paid off," Swanson said after the closing ceremony. "If you give it everything you've got, no one can take that away from you if you don't win."

"I learned there are other people who can compete at this level, people you wouldn't expect," Dahl said.

Both competitors hold high expectations for themselves.

"We're probably going to start training this week," Swanson said.

"[I'll do] the same thing," Dahl said of his training for May. "I'll go in pretty confident and not get down when the competition gets a little tougher."

That echoed Stopper's guidance to competitors the night before Friday's first event.

"The one tip I have for you is never give up," Stopper said Thursday night. "You'll fail at something, and that's when you need to know to step back and reload."

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Staff Sgt. Charles Hensen of Troop A, 1st Battalion, 105th Cavalry in Ft. Atkinson attempts to free himself from his combatives opponent during the 2011 State NCO and Soldier of the Year competition. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez [Click on this photo to see video.](#)

Fifteen Soldiers vie to represent Wisconsin Army National Guard

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Command Sgt. Maj. Brad Shields, of the Milwaukee-based 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, offered the same advice prior to the obstacle course on Saturday.

“We understand that you may not be able to complete each obstacle,” Shields said. “But what matters the most is that you give it your all.”

Events included a physical fitness test, pistol and rifle marksmanship under normal and stress conditions, combatives (hand-to-hand combat based on mixed martial arts), land navigation in daylight and at night, combat water survival, an obstacle course, common Soldier skills, a written exam, simulation grenade course, a nine mile road march and an appearance board.

The combat water survival event was

new this year, and required competitors to complete a 15-meter swim while holding their weapon above water, a blindfolded jump, and removing a load-bearing vest while submerged. Soldiers completed these tasks while in their PT uniforms, including running shoes.

“They aren’t flippers, that’s for sure,” said Sgt. John Eckert, St. Francis, a member of Racine’s Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery.

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Spc. Wayne Diedrich, of Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery in Racine, holds a weapon above his head to keep it dry during the combat water survival test portion of the 2011 Soldier and NCO of the Year competition April 2. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Sgt. Carlynn M. Knaak





Sgt. Jessica Gray of Detachment 1, Headquarters Company, Brigade Special Troops Battalion low crawls under an obstacle during the 2011 Soldier and NCO of the Year competition. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Sgt. Tyler Lasure

Wisconsin Army National Guard names Soldier, NCO of the Year

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Wisconsin's fickle spring weather factored into the competition: snow fell during Friday's marksmanship and land navigation events, and a cold rain saturated Sunday's road march.

During the closing ceremony, Stopper lauded each competitor's sponsor — another Soldier tasked with preparing and assisting the competitors — and singled one out for special recognition.

"You know I'm pretty adamant with this being a purely enlisted event," Stopper said. "And 99.9 percent of it was."

But one sponsor, officer candidate Randy Fendryk, represented the Wisconsin Army National Guard as a finalist at last year's [National Guard Bureau's Best Warrior Competition](#) as a private first class.

"I wanted him to bring that skill set back and share it

with the other Soldiers," Stopper explained. "You'll never see another cadet here, all right?"

Spc. Kimberly Gass of Wausau, a member of the 106th Engineer Detachment in Tomah, was promoted to sergeant during the closing ceremony.

Stopper also mentioned the many units that supported the competition. "It was because of you that these competitors had an outstanding experience," he said. "A dog-tired experience, but an outstanding experience."

Stopper kept the grueling weekend competition in perspective.

"At the end, it does boil down to great and wonderful Soldiers."

Spc. Joseph Wong of Milwaukee, a member of Troop A, 105th Cavalry in Fort Atkinson was named 1st Alternate for Soldier of the Year. Staff Sgt. Jason Kirch of Prairie Du Sac, a member of the 106th Quarry Team in Tomah, was named 1st Alternate for NCO of the Year. 



Sgt. Brandon Swanson of Detachment 1, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry in Chippewa Falls, seen here on the day land navigation course, was named Wisconsin Army National Guard's NCO of the Year. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez



FLASHBACK: Wisconsin National Guard played supporting role in Desert Shield, Desert Storm

1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard

The Wisconsin National Guard's involvement in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm two decades ago began shortly after Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990.

Of the more than 1,400 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to mobilize for the first Gulf war, the

Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing would be the first. Mere days after the invasion, the Milwaukee-based 128th voluntarily flew refueling missions from Mitchell Field to support the mobilization effort. In late December, the 128th was partially activated and deployed a sizable portion of Airmen and KC-135 stratotankers to a forward operating base in Cairo, Egypt, where they supported the provisional 1706th Air

Refueling Wing.

More than 200 Soldiers with the 107th Maintenance Company, based in Sparta and Viroqua, were alerted Aug. 24, 1990 and called to active duty one month later. They were joined on active duty by the four-member 1122nd Transportation Detachment, based in Madison. The 1122nd was the first Wisconsin Army National Guard unit to deploy to Saudi Arabia, leaving Wisconsin Oct. 1. The

107th followed suit Nov. 8.

Three more units would be alerted in November — the Monroe-based 1158th Transportation Company, the 390-member 13th Evacuation Hospital of Madison, Marshfield and Chippewa Falls, and the three-man 132nd Military History Detachment based in Madison. The 1158th was called to active duty Nov.

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Desert Storm provided Wisconsin National Guard with valuable lessons for following mobilizations

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equipment around camp and around the desert using a forklift and a 5-ton truck, and was trained as a litter team member when patients were delivered to the field hospital by helicopter.

“We were spread out pretty thin,” Foss said, recalling work days lasting up to 18 hours. “Everybody needed me for something, but that was good — it kept me busy.”

Foss described the 13th Evacuation Hospital as a family, and said his deployment experiences developed his skills and changed his life.

“It kept me in the Guard, actually,” he acknowledged.

The Wisconsin National Guard Family Program also proved its mettle during the mobilizations, staffing family assistance centers in a half-dozen locations across the state with volunteers. Kathy Halloran, then the state volunteer for the Wisconsin National Guard Family Program, recalled how her duties changed.

“I had only been selected for this position a few months prior and we were still formalizing training and programs for our volunteers and the military families we worked with,” she said. “Presentations and programs needed to be developed to meet the changing needs of the military, families and the Family Assistance Centers we worked with.”

Adding to the whirlwind, Halloran’s husband Dennis was a Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldier at the time whose unit was on alert but did not mobilize.

“Visits to the hangar at Volk Field for deployments brought on a flurry of emotions — pride, fear and sadness,” she said, “but always the wish to stay strong for the people that I was serving, knowing that the load they carried was a much larger burden than mine.”

As military campaigns go, Desert Storm was brief — the air campaign began Jan. 16, 1991 and the 100-hour ground war ended Feb. 28. One month



Soldiers from 1st Platoon, 229th Engineer Company, repair potholes on Military Supply Route Dodge in Saudi Arabia. Maintaining convoy routes was only part of the 229th’s mission during their deployment in support of Operation Desert Storm. Photo courtesy Col. Jeff Liethen



later, the 128th Air Refueling Wing was the first Wisconsin National Guard unit to return from Southwest Asia. Within days they were followed by the 13th Evacuation Hospital, 32nd Military Police Company and the 229th Engineer Company.

The 132nd Military History Detachment departed Saudi Arabia May 15, followed by the first iteration of the 107th Maintenance Company — a volunteer replacement company deployed in June 1991, allowing the 107th to redeploy home — the 1157th Transportation Company and the 1122nd Transportation Detachment. The replacement 107th Maintenance Company left Saudi Arabia on Oct. 31, 1991.

Col. John Schroeder, deputy chief of staff for logistics with the Wisconsin Army National Guard, was a 1st lieutenant platoon leader in the volunteer replacement company for the 107th Maintenance. The 107th was tasked with helping an active duty maintenance unit from Fort Knox repair vehicles and prepare them for shipment back to Europe or the United States, along with several other smaller tasks.

Due to requirements prohibiting the transfer of foreign soil, cleaning the sand-encrusted vehicles was a critical task. Schroeder said that the wash rack adopted a “third-shift” schedule from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. to prevent heat injuries to Soldiers as well as have vehicles ready for inspection by 8 a.m.

Schroeder said the plan to relieve a unit in place was a prelude to the practice used today in Iraq and Afghanistan when units rotate in and out of theater.

Liethen said his fondest memory was after the unit had returned home, when he was standing on the drill floor and a retired noncommissioned officer approached him.

“He came up to me and said, ‘Good job, Jeff — you brought them home safe,’” Liethen recalled. 🇺🇸

Super Bowl frenzy reaches Packers fans in Iraq

Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette
Wisconsin National Guard

You can take a Green Bay Packers fan out of the frozen tundra, but you can't take the frozen tundra out of a Packers fan — even while serving in a desert more than 6,000 miles away from home.

Just under 1,000 Wisconsin Guard Soldiers and Airmen were serving on active duty during Super Bowl XLV — mostly in Iraq, including about 300 Madison-based Soldiers from the [1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment](#) and approximately 300 members of the [724th Engineer Battalion](#) from several northern Wisconsin communities.

“We’re all excited to watch the game early Monday morning, and we’ll be cheering the Packers on to victory the best we can from Iraq,” said 1st Lt. Joseph Waggoner of Menomonie, who’s currently deployed with the 724th Engineer Battalion.



The full game, including the pre-game show, [was beamed by satellite](#) to American Forces Network viewers and American Forces Radio (AFRTS) listeners in 175 countries and aboard Navy ships at sea. For the special occasion, the Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support (who coordinates meals in the theater) created a [special tailgating menu](#) to include pizzas, cheese sticks, buffalo wings and more. In addition, Wisconsin Guard unit commanders hosted cookouts and donned Packers gear.

Most 724th Engineer Battalion Soldiers were stationed in Joint Base Balad, Iraq, and planned to watch the game at the

base movie theater, in dining halls or at a recreation facility. They also waved “Title Town Towels” sent to them from McArthur Towels of Baraboo.

The Soldiers of the aviation battalion, stationed at multiple bases in Iraq, viewed the big game via projectors in their tactical operations center or on televisions at local dining facilities.

“It is very exciting,” said Capt. Shane Sipiorski, of Sheboygan, Wis. “We are all preparing for a battle with the Steelers.” Sipiorski is the commander of Company E, 1-147th Aviation stationed at Camp Adder.

Packers fans were not the only ones deployed overseas however. Some

Pittsburgh Steelers fans were serving right alongside Packers fans in the 724th Engineer Battalion.

“Within our Task Force, we have a unit from the Pennsylvania National Guard,” said Waggoner.

“Just the other day we received a pictorial note of a Steelers Cheese Shredder shredding a Packers Cheese-Head. We have our share of playful banter going on between the units.”

The Steelers and Packers showed their support for deployed service members with pre-recorded “[shout-outs](#)” from 32 players — 17 Packers and 15 Steelers, including quarterbacks Aaron Rodgers and Ben Roethlisberger — [which aired throughout the game](#).

AFRTS has been delivering the game live to service members, civilian employees and families serving overseas since the first big game was played on Jan. 15, 1967. 



Spc. Cary Warrell of Gratiot, left, Sgt. Benjamin Doucette of Wonewoc, and Staff Sgt. Derek Ramey, right, of Superior cheer on the Green Bay Packers against the Pittsburgh Steelers early Feb. 7 as they watch Super Bowl XLV at a dining facility in Balad, Iraq. 724th Engineer Battalion photo



Sgt. 1st Class Don Eggert of Madison the operations non-commissioned officer for Task Force Badger, basks in the glow of the Lombardi Trophy on television. 724th Engineer Battalion photo



Master Sgt. Paul Gorman, a public affairs noncommissioned officer with the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing, photographs Tech. Sgt. Jamie Mills with the Lombardi Trophy at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison Feb. 24. The Green Bay Packers brought the trophy as a show of appreciation for the Wisconsin National Guard. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

Green Bay Packers show appreciation to National Guard

Many members of the Wisconsin National Guard are fervent fans of the Green Bay Packers. As it turns out, the Packers are pretty big fans of the Wisconsin National Guard as well.

That explains the unique gesture of appreciation Feb. 24 at the 115th Fighter Wing and Joint Force Headquarters, both in Madison — a visit from the Super Bowl XLV Lombardi Trophy.

Tom Bakken, an assistant equipment manager with the Green Bay Packers, brought the trophy to Madison. He explained that he had gotten to know the Guard as a result of coordination for military flyovers at Lambeau Field, and wanted to give Guard members the opportunity to see the trophy up close and personal.

“We play a game for a living, for goodness sake,” Bakken said. “We appreciate all that the Guard does, and this is the least we can do.”

Some Guard members and Department of Military Affairs employees had an opportunity to have their picture taken with the trophy.

“You don’t get an opportunity like this too often,” said Sgt. 1st Class Christina Pagenkopf, who normally works at the U.S. Property and Finance Office at Camp Williams, and was at Joint Force Headquarters for a meeting Thursday. “It’s a once in a lifetime experience.”

“It’s pretty awesome,” agreed Tech. Sgt. Jamie Mills, an administrative assistant for Brig. Gen. John McCoy, commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

“It’s a great thing to share with these folks,” Bakken said.

This is not the first such gesture by the Packers toward the Wisconsin National Guard. In recent years Wisconsin Guard members have been honored on-field at Packers games, and the official Green Bay Packers game day program featured Wisconsin National Guard members and units during the 2010 season. 



WWE helps Wisconsin National Guard muscle into fan base

Inside the darkened arenas at Milwaukee's Bradley Center and Green Bay's Resch Center, ring warriors better known as WWE Superstars battled each other in displays of strength, agility and bravado.

Before the lights dimmed, enthusiastic WWE fans purchased souvenirs and moved to their seats to watch the performances that would be seen that week on Monday Night RAW, WWE Superstars and Friday Night Smackdown. Many of those fans met with Wisconsin Army National Guard recruiters, positioned in concourses with information and promotional merchandise.

"It was like a bull rush at first," said Spc. Zollie Johnkin, a recruiter for the 132nd Combat Sustainment Support

Battalion, noting that free merchandise with the National Guard and WWE logos was quickly snatched up at the Bradley Center. Additional promotional items with just the National Guard logo also proved popular among WWE fans.

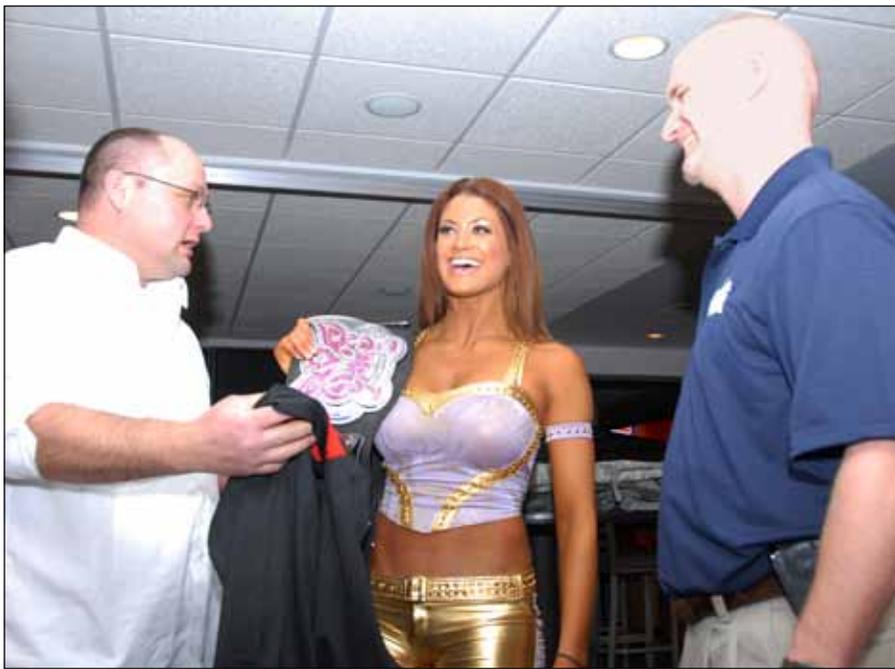
"We're getting our name out there," Johnkin said of his mission that night. "It's definitely a good experience to get out here and meet the people. If we get a couple of leads, that's great, too."

According to Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Martinson, a Wisconsin Army National Guard recruiter based in Green Bay, the National Guard Bureau coveted the WWE's demographics — many fans are in the 18-35 age category — and sought



Wisconsin Army National Guard recruiters Spc. Zollie Johnkin, Sgt. Penny Marsh and Sgt. Jack Wickey pounced on the opportunity to interact with the public at the Feb. 7 Monday Night RAW live event in Milwaukee. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

Continued on Page 19



Wisconsin Army National Guard Master Sgt. Trevor Seitz and Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Rosemore present current WWE Divas Champion Eve Torres with a shirt and an ACU-pattern backpack before the start of the Monday Night RAW live event in Milwaukee Feb. 7. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

WWE helps Wisconsin Guard reach potential recruits

Continued from Page 18

the partnership that began in 2009. The partnership was recently extended for three months.

“[We] are just trying to get the word out about what we are all about,” Martinson said. “We can get in front of a few more faces that can spread the word about the National Guard. If we get some enlistments, it will be well worth our time.” He added that the recruiting effort at the WWE Smackdown event went well.

Joe DelGrosso, senior vice president of partnership marketing with WWE, said the arrangement is a win-win situation.

“The WWE is proud of our nation’s military and the dedicated men and women who serve in uniform, and we believe our fans share this pride,” he said. “Partnering with the Army National Guard is another way we can

continue supporting the military and also help the Guard get its message out to thousands of people.”

In addition to providing promotional opportunities for the National Guard during its live events, WWE promotes fitness as well as Guard youth programs such as Challenge Academy.

Eve Torres, the current WWE Divas Champion, has performed in WWE’s annual special “Tribute to the Troops” dedicated to service men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan, calling the opportunity to do so “an incredible experience.”

“[The troops] are so excited to see us, and we’re excited to be there,” she said during a brief visit with Wisconsin National Guard members and guests prior to the start of the show in Milwaukee.

“We’ve built a good relationship with the National Guard,” Torres said. “The National Guard is a little closer to our hearts.”

State DNR gives green light to Army Guard environmental program

The Wisconsin Army National Guard takes environmental stewardship seriously — so seriously that the state Department of Natural Resources recently accepted the organization into its **Green Tier program**, which holds participants to a higher standard of environmental compliance.

According to Capt. Nathan Olson, environmental branch chief for the Wisconsin Army National Guard, the DNR approached the Guard about joining the program.

“We’re very proactive on environmental responsibilities,” Olson said.

This is due in large part to the rigorous environmental management system required by the Department of Defense. By meeting those requirements — energy and water conservation, recycling, waste reduction and contamination mitigation among them — the Wisconsin Army National Guard already met most of the standards for Green Tier.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard’s **environmental management system (EMS)**, enacted in 2006 and based on the U.S. Army model, established goals to protect the environment and conserve natural resources. Among those goals: assuring that environmental considerations are part of strategic decision making, restore lands and waters damaged by Wisconsin Army National Guard activities, support Army material recycling programs, actively address environmental quality issues with neighboring communities, and maintain a review process for environmental objectives.

“Seldom do we see the level of organization that [Olson and the environmental staff] has brought to this work and the degree to which he has committed to extend the environmental ethic geographically throughout the organization,” wrote Mark McDermid, Green Tier program director for the DNR, in his recommendation to approve the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s entry into the program last month. He also

noted that the Wisconsin Army National Guard, with 85 facilities included in the application, is the largest organization to participate in Green Tier.

Scott Rickard, the environmental performance assessment and environmental management system manager for the Wisconsin Army National Guard, said that the Wisconsin Army National Guard meets the requirements to be at Green Tier’s level 2 but will start at level 1 to acclimate to the program. Among the benefits of participating in a program designed for commercial and industrial businesses is one point of contact with the state for environmental issues, rather than multiple agents. Also, by agreeing to abide by higher standards, Green Tier participants receive greater consideration in areas such as permits and deferred civil enforcements in the event of regulation violations.

But Olson said the payoff goes far beyond friendlier relations with the state DNR.

“EMS gives us a better way to be aware of all of our environmental impacts,” Olson said. “Being in Green Tier shows the citizens of Wisconsin we are serious about our environmental responsibilities.”

Rickard said being a Green Tier participant also sends an important message.

“As the Guard becomes known for being responsive, it changes the public’s impression,” he explained. “A lot of private industry doesn’t have the same level of compliance as the Army does.”

Olson said that the entire organization is involved with environmental compliance — of all the Wisconsin Army National Guard facilities in the program, all but one are classified as very small generators of hazardous waste. The lone exception, the U.S. Property and Finance Office at Camp Douglas, is classified as a small generator of hazardous waste because it collects, distributes and disposes of hazardous materials for all of the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

■ *Strong Bonds program offers couples relationship-building skills*

Militaries have always trained their warriors in the skills needed to survive combat. Not until recently has the U.S. military offered training to its married service members in the skills needed to help marriages survive the rigors of a relationship as well as the strains of deployment.

The [Strong Bonds](#) program began modestly in 1999 with a Hawaii-based infantry division, and today encompasses all of the active and reserve components of the Army. A chaplain-led program for commanders that builds relationship resiliency, the mission of Strong Bonds is to increase service member readiness by strengthening the family relationship through education and skills training in an off-site “getaway” setting.

The Wisconsin National Guard has provided these services to all service members, not only its own Soldiers and Airmen, for the past few years through its [Service Members Support Division](#). Relationship programs include a [seminar for singles on building strong relationships](#), a [workshop for families](#) on developing resilience, a relationship enhancement session for married couples as well as a new offering — “[Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage](#)” by Mark Gungor.

“PREP [Prevention, Relationship Enhancement Program] has been a real strong foundational thing we’ve been doing,” said Maj. Douglas Hedman, state chaplain for the Wisconsin National Guard. PREP teaches couples how to improve communication techniques and explains strategies for resolving problems, but it is considered a workshop and not marital counseling or therapy.

“It’s not the silver bullet,” Hedman said, “but it’s certainly helpful. The Army’s making a great investment.”

PREP has been well attended, and some service members have attended the weekend program more than once for refresher training. Hedman said the SMSD wanted to offer something different in addition to PREP, and chose the popular “Laugh Your Way” seminar. Hedman and his staff completed training to present the video seminar, which was offered for the first time through SMSD Jan. 28-30 at The Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake.

“I love you just the way you are — what a bunch of

baloney,” Gungor, a pastor from Stevens Point, says during one of the sessions. “The truth is we love you in spite of the way you are.”

In another observation, Gungor referenced a biblical proverb about how you can’t have an ox without a messy ox stall, but the ox’s strength is valuable in the field.

“There is no such thing as a poo-free marriage,” Gungor said. “This weekend is not about attaining a perfect marriage — it’s about achieving a good positive-to-poo ratio.”

Hedman said the seminar was well received, with many participants comparing the program favorably with

PREP.

“I had someone approach me during the break and say, ‘My husband and I haven’t laughed this hard in years,’” he said.

The Service Members Support Division Strong Bonds schedule presently includes three marriage enrichment weekends, one additional “Laugh Your Way” weekend, two premarital interpersonal choices and knowledge weekends and two family wellness weekends. Service members can register [online](#). For additional information, contact Carolyn Morgan, Family Assistance Center, at 800-292-9464. 

Field artillery conference in Green Bay a booming success



Maj. Gen. David Halverson, commanding general of the U.S. Fires Center of Excellence at Fort Sill, addresses nearly 200 National Guard field artillery Soldiers during a "Tailgate Dinner" event March 12 in the Lambeau Field Atrium. Wisconsin National Guard photos by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

In artillery parlance, a two-day conference of National Guard field artillery leaders — aimed at improving already strong bonds between the active duty Army, reserve components and Training Doctrine Command, or TRADOC, and finding solutions to common artillery challenges — hosted by the Wisconsin Army National Guard recently in Green Bay was right on target.

"We met all of our goals and objectives," said Sgt. 1st Class Chard Heron, an operations noncommissioned officer with 1st Battalion, 426th Field Artillery — a teaching unit at the Wisconsin National Guard's [426th Regional Training Institute](#) at Fort McCoy. "These conferences are a communication tool for everyone in the field artillery community."

Maj. Gen. David Halverson, commander of the [U.S. Fires Center of Excellence](#) and Fort Sill, Okla. — in essence, head of the Army field artillery — was on hand to address the nearly 200 artillery Soldiers from National Guard units across the nation at the conference.

"Field artillery in the Guard has been very important," Halverson said. "The tightness we have now is such that nobody knows the difference between active duty, National Guard and Reserves. Our reliance on the National Guard field artillery is going to be greater than ever."

He pointed out that President Harry Truman was a National Guard field artillery officer who served in World War I, and brought that experience to bear in the closing days of World War II.

"Fort Sill grounded him for the most important decisions," Halverson said.

Halverson and Brig. Gen. Thomas Vandal, commandant of the Army Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, paid a visit to what some in the Wisconsin National Guard like to refer to as "Fort Sill North" — the 426th RTI, which has three National Guard Bureau field artillery subject matter experts and has been certified a center of excellence for artillery instruction.

"Our goal was to meet or exceed Fort Sill standards," Lt. Col. Kerry Morgan, commander of the 1st Battalion, 426th Field Artillery, said during his briefing to Halverson and Vandal. He detailed how the 426th works closely with Fort Sill and that 426th instructors have taught at Fort Sill to underscore what the Wisconsin National Guard facility can provide.

"As they face challenges, they can see us as an additional resource," Morgan explained after the official visit. "We have these phenomenal resources and Soldiers out here available to them."



Aaron Wallander explains a 50-caliber simulator to Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard; Halverson, and Brig. Gen. Thomas Vandal, commandant of the U.S. Army Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, during a March 13 visit to the Wisconsin Military Academy.

Col. Richard Borkowski, commander of the 426th RTI, added that it was important to show Halverson and Vandal that active duty artillery Soldiers would receive the same standard of training at the 426th RTI as at Fort Sill.

"They are the movers and innovators in field artillery," Morgan continued. "This is an educational process so they can see another tool in the toolbox."

[Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson](#), commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard is also the deputy commanding general for the Army National Guard at Fort Sill's Field Artillery Center. His role there is to advise Vandal and the active duty field artillery community about the capabilities of the National Guard field artillery community as well as regional training institutes in Wisconsin and other states.

"This is a great opportunity for Wisconsin to showcase the collective work of the Soldiers assigned here at the 426th RTI," Anderson said, "the capabilities they bring to the field artillery and the U. S. Army."

As Halverson prepared to leave, it appeared that message had been received loud and clear.

"You have all the skill sets here," he said. "I'm very impressed. The question now is how do we integrate?"

Members of Company E, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment, an Army National Guard unit comprised of Wisconsin and Michigan Soldiers, operate a helicopter refueling point in Iraq. Company E improved the refueling point practice to serve a greater number of aircraft at one site. Wisconsin National Guard photo



Wisconsin National Guard aviators earn national honors

A Wisconsin Army National Guard unit currently deployed in Iraq has been named the best aviation unit in the Army National Guard.

The Madison-based [1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment](#) — a UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter unit that includes Soldiers in Michigan and Indiana — will receive the 2010 [Army Aviation Association of America's](#) John J. Stanko award at next month's AAAA Annual Professional Forum and Exposition in Nashville. This is the first such award for a Wisconsin National Guard helicopter unit.

Lt. Col. Marty Pond, battalion commander, described the award as a great honor.

"It is a reflection of our Soldiers and their families," he said, "[and their] commitment to our nation, our mission and overall excellence in performance."

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, agreed.

"We are extremely proud of the leaders and Soldiers of the 147th Aviation Battalion in receiving this award," he said. "It is a recognition of the professionalism and dedication of the entire team."

The award is presented to the Army National Guard aviation unit that has made an outstanding contribution or innovation to the field of Army aviation above and beyond the normal assigned mission.

However, the nature of the 147th's current mission in Iraq is itself outside of normal parameters. Operating with aviation units from Colorado and Kansas as Task Force Ironhawk, the 147th covers all of the United States Division-South — including six bases — performing the highest number of missions of any battalion supporting the 1st Enhanced Combat Aviation Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division (the Big Red One). During a four-month span, the 147th flew 1,986 missions totaling more than 15,000 combat hours without any accidents. Three of the aviation battalion companies moved more than 5,600 passengers and 660,000 pounds of cargo in that time frame, while a fourth provides round-the-clock medical evacuation coverage at four locations, conducting 102 missions and transporting 109 patients.

On the ground, aircraft from three units across six bases have been integrated into one maintenance program, with

an airframe readiness rate greater than 85 percent. Battalion mechanics have provided expert instruction on the UH-60M to contractors and aviation intermediate maintenance units. Roughly one-third of Company E's Soldiers cross-trained to learn refueling operations, and improved the process so that one refueling point can serve six Black Hawks. Company E dispensed nearly 900,000 gallons of fuel with no environmental mishaps.

Pond said Task Force Ironhawk easily distinguished its leadership in implementing the Black Hawk "Mike" model into the total combat force with the exceptionally high operation tempo.

"Remember, this only accounts for the first four months," he said. "[Things] have not slowed down in any way since."

Prior to deploying, the 147th tackled another daunting task — transforming into the first Army National Guard air assault helicopter battalion, which involved intensive training and fielding new equipment. Flight instructors with the 147th also trained helicopter pilots from numerous other Guard and active Army aviation units, resulting in 25 qualified pilots and eight instructor pilots.

In addition, warrant officers in the 147th from Wisconsin and Michigan formed a communications security team to train up on the new communications system for the UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter. The process they developed became the standard used by the Army.

"Every day they prove themselves with seamless and tireless support," Pond said of the Soldiers of Task Force Ironhawk. "These Soldiers have a well-deserved reputation for excellence."

The 147th reported for active duty last June 17 for their third Middle East deployment. A portion of the battalion first deployed to Iraq in March 2003. The unit also deployed to Kuwait from July 2001 to August 2002 in support of Operation Desert Spring. A portion of the 147th also deployed in support of Task Force Eagle, the NATO peacekeeping operation in Kosovo, in July 2006 for a one-year mission.

The 147th has played an important role in stateside responses, such as the historic mobilization of National Guard units across the country to respond to Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf coast, and the Wisconsin floods of 2008. In 1998 the 147th deployed to Guatemala for several months following Hurricane Mitch. 

Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy graduates attend Champions Gala

The opportunity for a second chance in life has translated into a little bit more — a trip to Washington D.C. to attend the National Guard Youth Foundation Champions Gala — for four recent graduates of the [Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy](#).

Denzel Parker of Milwaukee, Paul Becker of Glendale, Michael Schiffer of West Salem and Tyler Sabel of Fond du Lac were able to mingle with military leaders, members of Congress and celebrities at the March 1 event. They were invited as special guests by virtue of winning the [National Guard Youth Foundation's YouTube video challenge](#). Their [video](#) was featured at the gala.

Two other cadets involved with the winning video — Taylor Jean Maciosek of Stevens Point and Devan Farnsworth of Madison — were unable to attend the gala due to commitments to AmeriCorps' National Civilian Community Corps.

During the gala, the Wisconsin cadets were recognized for their achievement and the winning video was played during the dinner. Gen. Craig R. McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, presented Parker, Becker and Schiffer with \$2,000 scholarships — part of the prize for winning the video contest. Maciosek and Farnsworth will also receive \$2,000 scholarships, and the Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy received a \$5,000 scholarship. The video winners also received Cisco Flip cameras.

Parker, the military honor graduate for Class 25, enjoyed his first airplane flight and sat next to American Idol winner Kris Allen at the gala.

"I never thought I would have a chance to travel to Washington D.C., see everything that I have seen and meet such amazing people," Parker said. "This whole trip was unbelievable."

Parker, Becker, Schiffer and Sabel spent three days touring Arlington Cemetery, Washington's monuments and memorials, the National Archive and the Smithsonian. Cadets received a tour of the Capitol building, arranged by U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl's office, and attended sessions in both the House of Representatives and Senate.

Celebrities in attendance included Allen, country singer Gretchen Wilson, NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt Jr., and actress Karri Turner.

The gala also recognized the 100,000th Challenge Academy graduate, signifying the program's success.

"When you think of the National Guard, you don't think educator, you think warfighter," said Gail Dady, president of the National Guard Youth Foundation. "But



Michael Schiffer, a recent graduate from the Wisconsin National Guard's Challenge Academy, is presented with a certificate of achievement March 1 by Gen. Craig McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, during the National Guard Youth Foundation Champions Gala in Washington D.C. Schiffer and other Wisconsin Challenge Academy cadets were invited to the gala after winning a video competition. Also pictured, left to right: Lt. Gen. Harry "Bud" Wyatt, director of the Air National Guard; Maj. Gen. Raymond Carpenter, acting director of the Army National Guard; and Lt. Gen. (Ret.) John B. Conaway, former National Guard Bureau chief and current chairman of the National Guard Youth Foundation. Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy photos

when you think about it, [no one] is better than the National Guard to create such a successful program."

Gen. Craig R. McKinley, National Guard Bureau chief, said that the National Guard Youth Challenge Program allowed cadets to earn something they might not otherwise have had — a future. 🇺🇸

Sgt. Darron Salzer of the National Guard Bureau contributed to this report.



Challenge Academy graduates Tyler Sabel of Fond du Lac, Denzel Parker of Milwaukee, Paul Becker of Glendale and Michael Schiffer of West Salem in front of the U.S. Capitol on March 2.

Leadership skills key to new promotion, selection process

1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard

Approximately 1,000 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers are up for promotion this year, and await the results of the annual enlisted promotion system (EPS) boards to learn their chances for upward mobility.

“Soldiers will be fairly surprised when the lists are published,” said State Command Sgt. Major George Stopper, who directed this year’s boards.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard volunteered to test the National Guard Bureau’s new promotion board system this year for staff sergeants and higher, which measures different criteria for promotion. The previous system allowed a maximum of 1,000 promotion points based on administrative and leadership achievements — with 60 percent allocated to administrative achievements such as physical fitness scores, marksmanship and correspondence courses. The new system discards the administrative points in favor of leadership ability.

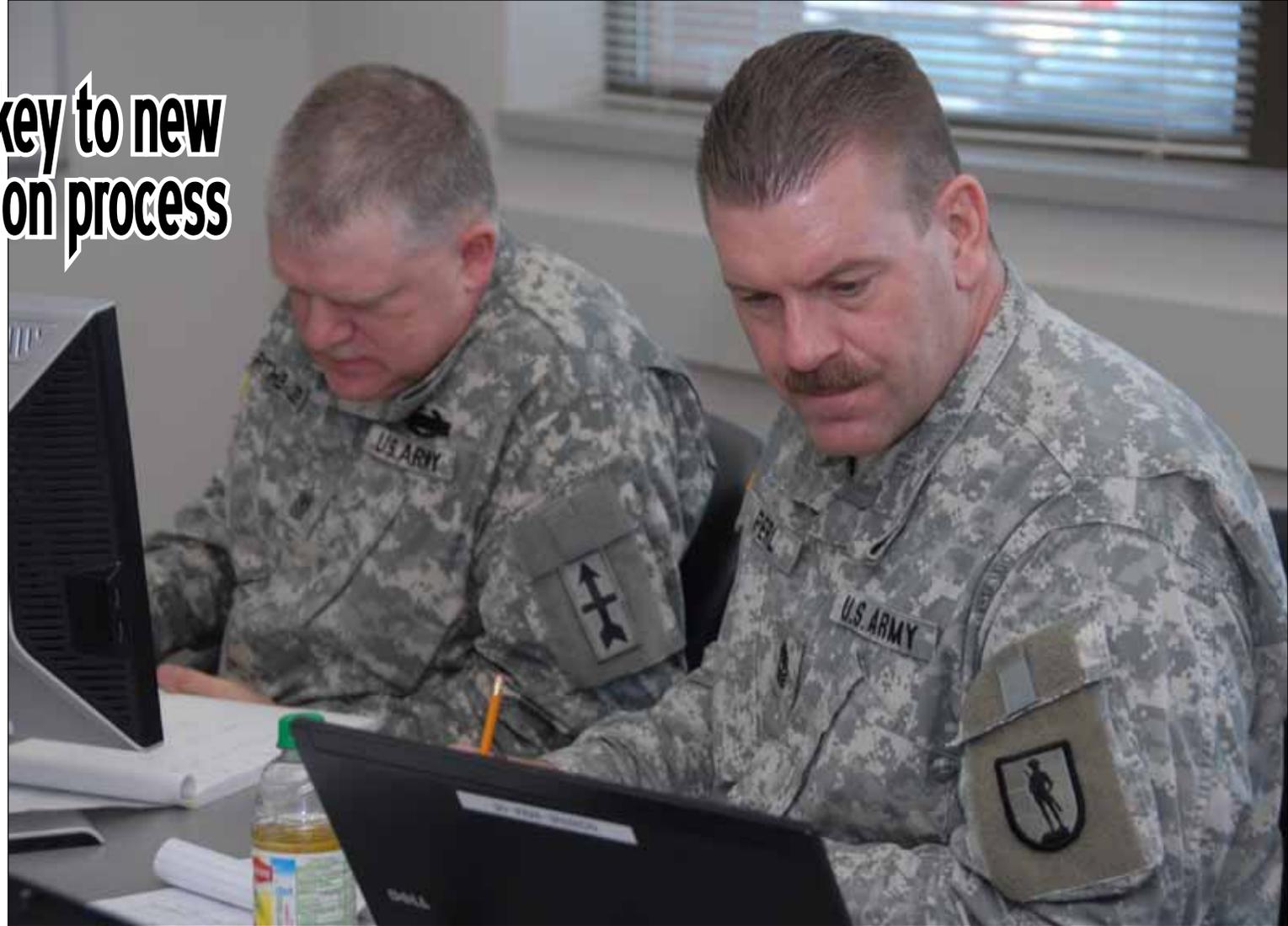
“Some Soldiers have been able to stack up administrative points but have not been the most solid of performers,” Stopper noted. “This changes that balance.”

“Soldiers need to come to work and do their job well,” he continued. “Those solid performers will be the first to earn promotions.”

The new system is more closely aligned to that used by the active Army, Stopper said.

“I don’t know that we can ever perfectly align,” he said. “Some aspects of the National Guard are not the same as active duty, but this brings us closer.”

Some areas of the new process have been identified for improvement, but Stopper said that overall the system is a



Sgt. Major Joel Rothbauer, left, and 1st Sgt. Michael Perl examine evaluations and supporting documents March 16 during the Enlist, Promote and Select (EPS) Boards at the Wisconsin National Guard’s Military Academy at Fort

McCoy. The Wisconsin National Guard was a volunteer test state for a new promotion and selection system produced by the National Guard Bureau. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

good tool to validate Soldiers.

“Honesty and education will be key during this transition,” he explained. “Soldiers will look at the new promotion lists, which will be very different from the past, and they need to understand why. The days after the lists are published will be challenging.”

This year’s board reiterated to Stopper and the approximately 50 senior noncommissioned officers serving on

the boards of the importance of quality noncommissioned officer evaluation reports.

“Good, solid bullets and excellence ratings with measurable bullet statements are easy to read, evaluate and understand,” Stopper explained. He also said that ratings of “excellence” and “needs improvement” need quantifiable statements by the raters.

“It needs to be spelled out,” Stopper

said. He called for supervisors to regularly counsel their subordinates so they understand how to meet or exceed the standards. He also said that the best way to ensure the best candidates are promoted is through honest evaluations.

“We’ve come a long way in the past three years,” he said. “We’ve made a significant change in our thought process. We do a good job — now we have to do a great job.” 📷

Female Wisconsin Guard Soldiers to be part of Special Ops mission

Four Wisconsin Army National Guard female Soldiers have learned that they will be part of an all-female team supporting Army Special Combat forces by interacting with local women in combat zones.

Sgt. Kristen Elegeert of De Pere, a member of the 457th Chemical Company in Burlington, said the demanding five-day assessment and selection process at Fort Bragg, N.C., was unlike anything she had ever experienced. This was not a training environment, but an evaluation of physical, mental and intellectual capabilities required to maintain composure, apply logic, communicate clearly and solve problems in demanding situations.

"It took a lot of resilience, solid work ethic and teamwork," she explained, adding that these same principles will be needed to prepare for the upcoming mission. "Gaining maximum mental awareness and physical strength is a must."

Master Sgt. Karen Dumke of Waupun, a member of the 64th Troop Command in Madison, agreed.

"It was the most difficult and challenging thing I have done in my entire 25-plus years in the military," Dumke said. "I believe it was basically an abbreviated version of what the males must go through in order to be selected to enter the Special Forces."

Sgt. Sonia Buchanan of Cottage Grove, a member of the Madison-based Joint Force Headquarters, said there was no feedback during the assessment process until the final day.

"At that moment, as I was face to face with the assessor, all I wanted to hear was four words — 'You have been selected,'" Buchanan said. "It was all worth it — all the pain, all the hard work."

1st Lt. April Kane of Viroqua, a member of the Wisconsin Medical Command at Camp Williams was the final Wisconsin National Guard Soldier selected for the Female Engagement



Capt. Nicole Zupka of Fair Lawn, N.J., currently a battletwatch captain with Combined Joint Task Force-Paladin, helps an Afghan child with her writing skills during female engagement team training on Bagram Air Field, Feb. 3. Four Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers have recently been selected for this program. Female Engagement Team training teaches Dari and Pashto language, Afghan culture, Afghan religion and many other lessons to prepare for future engagements.

Photo by Sgt. Grant Matthes, Combined Joint Task Force-101 Public Affairs

Team. A total of seven Wisconsin Guard members volunteered for the assessment and selection process.

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, said he was very proud of all seven volunteers.

"This was an extremely demanding selection process for a very demanding and important mission," he said. "They chose the best of the best, and it says a lot to me that they chose four Soldiers from Wisconsin."

The four who were selected will undergo several weeks of specialized training, beginning in May with a week at Fort Benning, Ga., followed by culture

and language training at Fort Bragg, N.C. The training will include cross-cultural communication skills for Afghan and Islamic cultures. They will also learn negotiation and mediation skills, proper use of interpreters and key leader engagement techniques.

Upon completion of training, the four will deploy with either a Ranger platoon or a Special Forces team in Afghanistan as members of a cultural support team working with area villages. Their primary mission will be to interact with women and children to build rapport, foster relationships and establish trust. In this role they will support medical missions, searches and seizures, humanitarian

assistance and civil-military operations.

As Special Forces have very few trained female Soldiers available to interact with Afghan women and children, the cultural support team will fill a vital role in Afghanistan. A total of 50 female Soldiers are sought for the cultural support team. Deployments are expected to last up to eight months.

"I am extremely appreciative to be accepted," Elegeert said. "I am very eager to get to work."

Dumke plans to begin a challenging physical training regimen prior to arrival at Fort Bragg.

"I will also be studying up on Afghan culture and language," she said. 

Ho-Chunk warrior, Guard officer promoted

Tech. Sgt. Sarah Ellis

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

In a ceremony complete with ceremonial Native American raiment and music, a Ho-Chunk Nation warrior was promoted to lieutenant colonel in the Wisconsin Army National Guard March 19 at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison.

David James Whitehorse Klauser of Madison, an assistant staff judge advocate assigned to Joint Force Headquarters and a state public defender in Janesville, was lauded for his 14 years of service to the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

“He is a good example of a Ho-Chunk warrior and officer in the Wisconsin Army National Guard,” Robert Mann, veterans service officer for the Ho-Chunk Nation, said of Klauser. “He served his people, his country, and the Wisconsin National Guard proudly. He has earned the status of warrior ever since he signed up and went into the military.”

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, agreed.

“It was not hard to realize his tremendous effort and dedication, what he has already accomplished, what he has done, what he has been, and the value he has provided to this organization and nation,” Anderson said.

Klauser is one of 74 Wisconsin National Guard members of Native American or Alaskan native heritage. Mann related how, during a 2007 deployment to Iraq with the 332nd Rear Operations Center, Klauser raised the Ho-Chunk Nation flag over the headquarters building.

“That just shows the type of person he is,” Mann said. “He is very proud of his heritage.”



Robert Mann, right, veterans service officer for the Ho-Chunk Nation, presents newly promoted Lt. Col. David James Whitehorse Klauser with a blanket during a ceremony at Madison’s Joint Force Headquarters March 19. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Ellis



Wisconsin National Guard focusing on diversity with opportunities for everyone

The Wisconsin National Guard continues to be a diverse organization — a collection of 10,000 Wisconsin farmers, lawyers, mechanics, doctors and nearly every other occupation from across the state — but leaders believe there is room for improvement.

Recruiters, equal employment officers and the organization's top leaders are focused on diversity — recently creating two councils and attending a national-level conference on the topic.

"I know as an organization we are serious about ensuring that everyone in Wisconsin is aware of the opportunities the Guard has to offer," said 1st Lt. Ronald Adams, WING equal employment manager. "We have an environment where everyone is welcome."

Diversity is often seen as differences in very tangible identifiers such as race, gender, age, etc. Wisconsin Guard leaders are focused, however, on a broader sense of the word ... looking to instill "diversity of thought," where Soldiers and Airmen from different backgrounds, with different skill sets and ideas, are able to contribute to the organization's overall effectiveness.

"The strength of our organization is based upon the quality of our service members and the quality starts with diversity of thought, experiences, culture and background," said Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, Wisconsin Army National Guard commander.

Adams said the Guard is still focused, however, on meeting or exceeding the demographics, in the traditional sense of the word — race, gender, skin color, etc. — and work force statistics that exist in Wisconsin.

"No matter how much we want to take the focus off the obvious, that is always going to be a part of diversity," Adams said. "We work in the demographics of our state and we look at the workplace to get a better idea of where we're at. Hopefully we can represent the population through the state to come close to the rest of the workforce demographics."

Gen. Craig McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, provided credibility to the issue during the National Diversity Conference held in Boston earlier this month.

"Diversity isn't a program you do for a specific period of time and declare victory. It's an everyday thing," McKinley said.

Adams said the Guard is proud to employ Wisconsin citizens — everyone from farmers to politicians.

"Based on the fact that we have members from throughout the state — people of all religions, from rural areas to cities ... we are diverse," Adams said. "We're just trying to figure out how we can assure everyone in the state that they are welcome." 📷


The strength of our organization is based on the quality of our service members, and the quality starts with diversity of thought, experiences, culture and background.
— Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson

New trial defense team to provide Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers with legal services

A newly formed Wisconsin Army National Guard unit will enhance the integrity of the military judicial system within the state's National Guard forces.

The newly formed 505th Trial Defense Team was created to provide Soldiers with a zealous, unbiased, and timely legal representation – without fear of reprisal from the members' chain-of-command.

"We are a tool to be used to make the system more efficient," said Maj. Charles Hartley, lead attorney for the 505th TDT. "This is our only mission ... to provide defense for our clients."

Under the old system of defense services, Soldiers were not always afforded an opportunity to speak with a defense lawyer until the Army appointed them with one, sometimes just shortly before an administrative or courts-martial hearing, Hartley said. The 505th will give Wisconsin Soldiers an immediate avenue to seek help, receive consultation, and gain clarity at the inception of their problem.

Legal issues, depending on factors such as severity, location, duty status, etc., can be handled at many different junctures, from the company level to the state level. The legal office at the state's Joint Force Headquarters – which only sees the tip of the spear in the state's cases – initiated more than 125 administrative separation actions in the last fiscal year.

Legal issues can include situations such as drug abuse, unsatisfactory participation, weight failure, misconduct and other administrative issues.

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defense lawyer until the Army appointed them with one, sometimes just shortly before an administrative or courts-martial hearing, Hartley said. The 505th will give Wisconsin Soldiers an immediate avenue to seek help, receive consultation, and gain clarity at the inception of their problem.

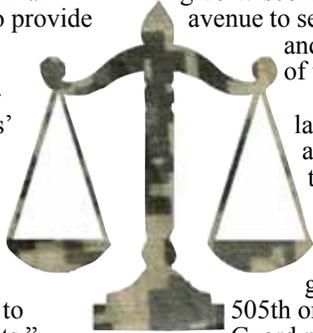
The team consists of two lawyers, a judge advocate and a paralegal. One of the issues the TDT faces is handling a large case load. Each lawyer has seen an average of more than 10 open cases at any given time. Although the 505th only consists of traditional Guard positions, the team finds itself eager to help, often providing services in one form or another every day of the week, Hartley said.

"We've been trying to establish a fair and independent TDT for well over five years," said Col. Julio Barron, Wisconsin National Guard staff judge advocate. "The result is the establishment of the robust defense service provided by the 505th."

"This allows the TDT attorneys to zealously advocate their clients without concern of command influence," said Chief Warrant Officer Miguel Florez, legal administrator for the Wisconsin Army National Guard. "That is the only way the Soldiers can have faith in the system."

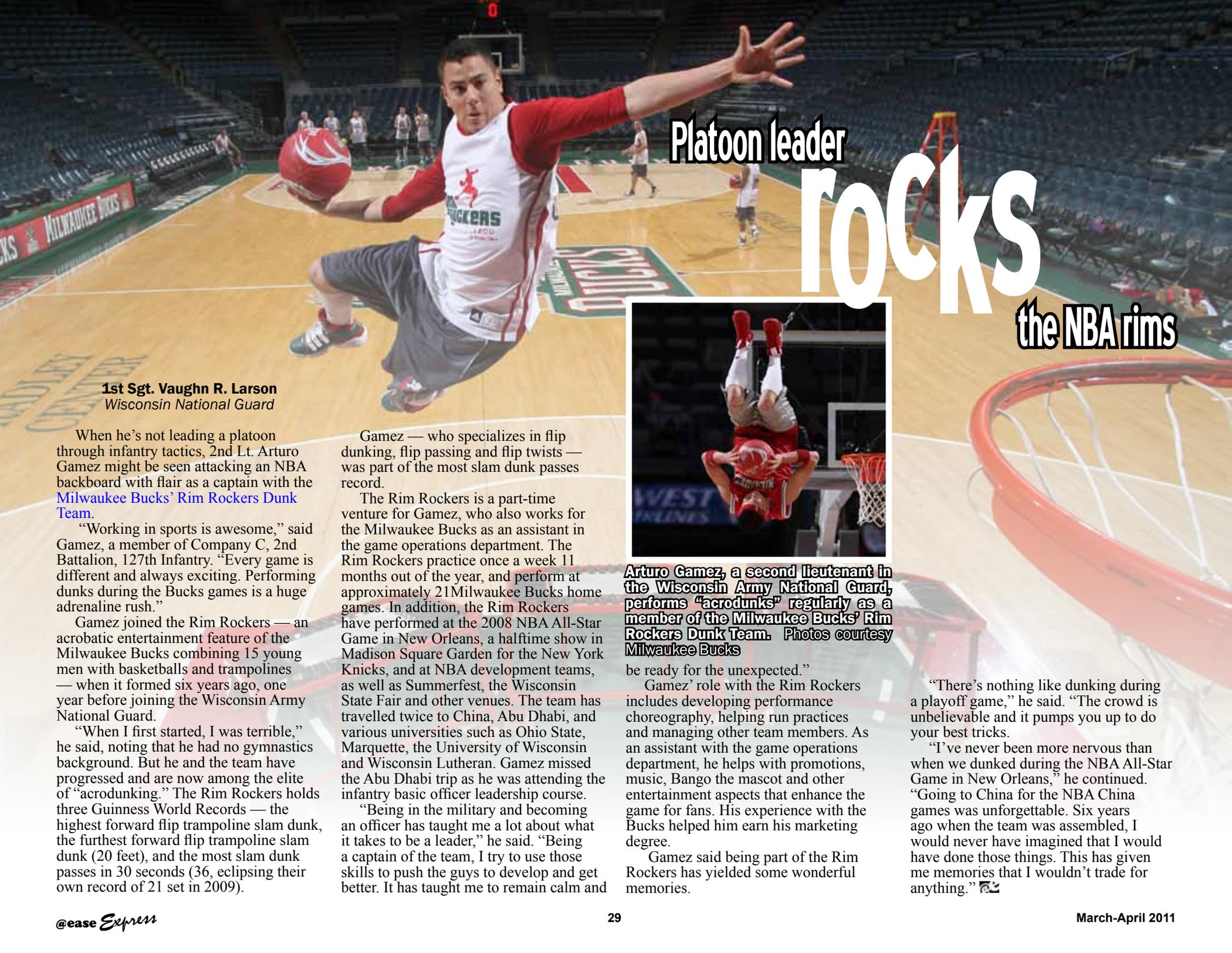
The first step in the defense process is speaking to an attorney who can advocate on your behalf. The creation of the 505th has made that a little easier on Wisconsin's Soldiers.

"Soldiers can feel free to consult with us because they know we don't report to anyone in [the same] chain-of-command," Hartley said. "I have 100 percent confidence in my ability and every member of my teams' ability." 



Be first, be credible, be visible

Dr. Joseph Trahan emphasized the importance of preparation and credibility during a presentation on crisis communications at a recent conference for senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders at the Wisconsin Military Academy. The presentation included a practical exercise where groups would answer media questions concerning a scenario emergency. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson



Platoon leader

ROCKS

the NBA rims

1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard

When he's not leading a platoon through infantry tactics, 2nd Lt. Arturo Gamez might be seen attacking an NBA backboard with flair as a captain with the [Milwaukee Bucks' Rim Rockers Dunk Team](#).

"Working in sports is awesome," said Gamez, a member of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry. "Every game is different and always exciting. Performing dunks during the Bucks games is a huge adrenaline rush."

Gamez joined the Rim Rockers — an acrobatic entertainment feature of the Milwaukee Bucks combining 15 young men with basketballs and trampolines — when it formed six years ago, one year before joining the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

"When I first started, I was terrible," he said, noting that he had no gymnastics background. But he and the team have progressed and are now among the elite of "acrodunking." The Rim Rockers holds three Guinness World Records — the highest forward flip trampoline slam dunk, the furthest forward flip trampoline slam dunk (20 feet), and the most slam dunk passes in 30 seconds (36, eclipsing their own record of 21 set in 2009).

Gamez — who specializes in flip dunking, flip passing and flip twists — was part of the most slam dunk passes record.

The Rim Rockers is a part-time venture for Gamez, who also works for the Milwaukee Bucks as an assistant in the game operations department. The Rim Rockers practice once a week 11 months out of the year, and perform at approximately 21 Milwaukee Bucks home games. In addition, the Rim Rockers have performed at the 2008 NBA All-Star Game in New Orleans, a halftime show in Madison Square Garden for the New York Knicks, and at NBA development teams, as well as Summerfest, the Wisconsin State Fair and other venues. The team has travelled twice to China, Abu Dhabi, and various universities such as Ohio State, Marquette, the University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Lutheran. Gamez missed the Abu Dhabi trip as he was attending the infantry basic officer leadership course.

"Being in the military and becoming an officer has taught me a lot about what it takes to be a leader," he said. "Being a captain of the team, I try to use those skills to push the guys to develop and get better. It has taught me to remain calm and



Arturo Gamez, a second lieutenant in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, performs "acrodunks" regularly as a member of the Milwaukee Bucks' Rim Rockers Dunk Team. Photos courtesy Milwaukee Bucks

be ready for the unexpected."

Gamez' role with the Rim Rockers includes developing performance choreography, helping run practices and managing other team members. As an assistant with the game operations department, he helps with promotions, music, Bango the mascot and other entertainment aspects that enhance the game for fans. His experience with the Bucks helped him earn his marketing degree.

Gamez said being part of the Rim Rockers has yielded some wonderful memories.

"There's nothing like dunking during a playoff game," he said. "The crowd is unbelievable and it pumps you up to do your best tricks."

"I've never been more nervous than when we dunked during the NBA All-Star Game in New Orleans," he continued. "Going to China for the NBA China games was unforgettable. Six years ago when the team was assembled, I would never have imagined that I would have done those things. This has given me memories that I wouldn't trade for anything." 🏀

TRADOC revises Army physical fitness test

Kelly Schloesser

U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command

Soldiers will be better prepared if they train how they would fight. This innovative physical readiness training philosophy, implemented by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, has driven the U.S. Army Physical Fitness School to revise not only how the Army conducts physical training, but also how it will evaluate a Soldier's physical capability.

WHY CHANGE?

Since 1980, the U.S. Army has assessed physical aptitude through the Army Physical Fitness Test, or APFT. Commonly known as the "PT Test," Soldiers are required to complete three events: two-minutes of push-ups, two-minutes of sit-ups, and a two-mile run.

"Today's PT test does not adequately measure components of strength, endurance, or mobility. The events have a low correlation to the performance of warrior tasks and battle drills and are not strong predictors of successful physical performance on the battlefield or in full spectrum operations," said Lt. Gen. Mark P. Hertling, TRADOC's deputy commanding general for Initial Military Training, who holds a master's degree in exercise physiology.

As TRADOC's lead for the test review, Hertling collaborated with a 16-member team headed by Frank Palkoska, director of the U.S. Army Physical Fitness School, resulting in a recommendation to the Army for not just one, but two revised PT tests.

"The goal is to align the training and the tests with tasks that Soldiers have to perform on the battlefield so that the commander has a better tool to measure preparedness and can guide training for the unit," said Palkoska.

WHAT WILL THEY LOOK LIKE?

The proposed tests, the Army Physical Readiness Test, or APRT, and the Army Combat Readiness Test, known as



A Soldier high-steps over obstacles on the second leg of the new Army Combat Readiness Test after completing the first portion of the test, the 400-meter run, during a trial run at Fort Jackson, S.C. U.S. Army photo by Rob McIlvaine

the ACRT, align with Army Physical Readiness Training outlined in Training Circular 3-22.20, which was implemented Army-wide last August providing exercises, drills and activities appropriate for various levels of physical fitness.

The APRT, designed to replace the current APFT, expands from three to five events, eliminates sit-ups, increases the pace of push-ups, and replaces the long-distance run with shorter-faster runs. The five events include: 60-yard shuttle run, one-minute rower (exercise outlined in TC 3.22-20), standing long-jump, one-minute push-up, 1.5 mile run.

These events will more accurately test a Soldier's anaerobic and aerobic

endurance while reducing the risk of injuries. The current test also only provides a "snapshot" assessment of upper and lower-body muscular endurance and fails to identify anaerobic capacity, said Hertling.

In order to better assess anaerobic capacity that drive high-intensity bursts of energy, the run will be changed to 1.5 miles.

"Soldiers will tend to run faster, testing the anaerobic energy system in their body," said Hertling of the 1.5 miles. The shorter-faster run, requiring a significant burst of energy, will better prepare Soldiers for the intensity of today's battlefield, he said.

To better assess muscular endurance, the one-minute rower and push-up events will not allow Soldiers to pause and rest. This will require non-stop muscle movement that will demonstrate immediate muscle fatigue and failure.

TRADOC is also recommending Soldiers take the ACRT, which incorporates warrior tasks and provides a more accurate assessment of the physical readiness training program and the Soldier's individual capability. The ACRT will be executed in the Army Combat Uniform, Advanced Combat Helmet, and weapon, and includes a 400-meter run, hurdles, a high crawl, casualty drag, sprints, and several other movement drills.

The ACRT is designed to not only correlate with readiness training, but also to provide a more accurate picture of a Soldier's ability to perform Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills. The test incorporates several exercises and drills from the physical readiness training circular and provides a testing environment similar to that on the battlefield.

"Previously, we primarily trained for the assessment," said Palkoska. Now our training will drive the test, not the other way around, he said.

WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?

The Army will begin pilot testing at approximately eight locations with multiple units in order to set standards. The pilot currently plans to align age categories for the test scores with the American College of Sports Medicine and Cooper Institute, broadening age categories to under 30, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60 and above, for both genders.

Following the establishment of standards and a thorough review, likely lasting through the summer, the tests can then be approved for Army-wide execution. Implementing the new tests is the final step in the Soldier Athlete initiative to better prepare Soldiers for strenuous training and the challenges of full-spectrum operations. 

Staff Sgt. Jason Kirch of Prairie du Sac, a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 106th Engineer Detachment in Tomah, crosses the finish line en route to a bronze medal finish at the Chief of the National Guard Bureau Championships biathlon competition last month in Vermont. Submitted photo



Wisconsin Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Jason Kirch, second from right, with his bronze medal earned during the 2011 Chief of the National Guard Bureau Championships biathlon competition. Pictured with Kirch are, left to right: Louis Cabrera, National Guard Bureau; Brig. Gen. Steven Cray, commander of the Vermont Air National Guard; and Col. Robert Gingras, construction and facilities management officer for the Vermont National Guard. Submitted photo



Wisconsin Guard member takes bronze in National Guard Biathlon

Tech. Sgt. Mike Zeigle
115th Fighter Wing

A Wisconsin National Guard Soldier competing at his first Chief of the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships earned a bronze medal in the 10K sprint race novice category.

Staff Sgt. Jason Kirch of Prairie du Sac, Wis., a member of the 106th Engineer Detachment in Tomah, Wis., finished with a time of 57 minutes 17 seconds. He was one of four Wisconsin National Guard members to compete March 6-13 at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt. Other team members include Master Sgt. LeRoy DePas, Staff Sgt. John Brown and Tech. Sgt. Mike Zeigle, all members of the 115th Fighter Wing in Madison. Zeigle has been on the Wisconsin National Guard biathlon team for 29 years.

The biathlon combines cross-country skiing and marksmanship skills. The four-day Championships competition includes

four events — two individual and two team — ranging from 7.5 kilometers to 20 kilometers, with stops along the route to shoot targets in both prone and standing position. Competitors are penalized in time or distance skied for shots missed during the shooting stages.

Heavy snow impeded travel to the event for some competitors, and delayed the races by one day. Wind and rain added to the challenge during the course of the competition.

The National Guard sponsors individual state teams which compete in regional and championship competitions each year. The National Guard has also had a representative competing on the Olympic biathlon team every year since the 1980s.

Kirch was also recently named first alternate in the [Wisconsin Army National Guard's state Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition](#). 

Wisconsin National Guard Soldier receives national Army aviation honor

A Wisconsin National Guard Soldier who has logged more than 4,100 flight hours and 30 years of aviation experience was recognized with the prestigious Order of the Saint Michael award.

Col. Jeffery Paulson, deputy chief of staff of aviation, is the first Wisconsin National Guard member to receive the national honor, a joint venture between the Army Aviation Association of America and the U.S. Army Aviation Center.

“It’s pretty humbling that someone felt strong enough to look at what I was doing,” Paulson said. “It’s been more than just a job. I’ve loved every minute of it.”

Paulson was elected by his peers to the national chairmanship for Army aviation. His role enabled him to take issues from the field and work with National Guard Bureau and other agencies to get those issues resolved quickly.

“Aviation has gone through a lot of modernization and transformation in the last six to seven years,” Paulson said.

“We’ve been able to resolve a lot of issues and that’s very satisfying.”

Paulson dealt with that transformation in Wisconsin as well. Within a two-year period every Army Guard aviation Soldier in Wisconsin learned to fly, maintain or support a new helicopter as the state’s fleet was upgraded.

“I’m involved at the strategic level but at the operational level, there are a whole lot of great Americans that do a lot of great stuff,” Paulson said, “The award is more than what I’ve done.”

Paulson joined the Army in 1977 and began pilot training shortly thereafter. He joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard in 1983. Paulson has seen many changes in Army aviation. He himself has flown many helicopters in his career, including the TH-55 Osage, OH-58 Kiowa, UH-1 Cobra and UH-60 Black Hawk.

While serving in West Bend, Wis., from 1983 to 1996, Paulson had the opportunity to command two different



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Mark Grapin, national vice president of aviation safety, Brig Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, and Brig. Gen. Donald E. Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, present the Order

of St. Michael award to Col. Mark Paulson, the Wisconsin state aviation officer. Paulson is the first Wisconsin Soldier presented with this national award. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Andy Poquette

units: the 32nd Brigade Aviation Section and, in 1990, the newly formed 832nd Medical Company (Air Ambulance).

Following his assignments in West Bend, Paulson became the head of training and operations of the Madison-based 147th Aviation Regiment and subsequently the aviation directorate at

Joint Force Headquarters responsible for all the Army Guard aviation units in the state.

The Order of Saint Michael is intended to recognize individuals who have contributed significantly to promotion of Army Aviation. Recipients must have demonstrated the highest standards of

integrity and moral character, display an outstanding degree of professional competence, and served the U.S. Army Aviation community with distinction.

“I pride myself on being an aviator ... not just a Soldier,” Paulson said. “To be recognized on that level is very special to me.”

Meritorious service

Wisconsin Airman awarded for combat actions in Afghanistan

Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue
Wisconsin National Guard

An Airman's heroics were recognized March 5 as Wisconsin National Guard leaders presented the Air Force Combat Action Medal to a member of the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing.

Tech. Sgt. William Williams, 115th Explosive Ordnance Disposal flight, braved hostile fire while on a mission to locate a missing U.S. Sailor in Afghanistan's Logar Province in an effort to blow up an unexploded mortar round at the request of a U.S. Army search team.

As Soldiers laid down suppressive fire, Williams emerged from cover and ran to the mortar. He placed charges, took cover and conducted a controlled detonation. He then picked up his M-4 assault rifle and joined his comrades in engaging the enemy.

Williams is just the fourth Wisconsin Air Guard member to receive the **AFCAM** since the award's inception in 2007. The criterion for the award is that the individual must have been under direct and hostile fire while operating in unsecured space (outside the defended perimeter), or physically engaging hostile forces with direct and lethal fire.

Although Williams' job of eliminating unexploded ordnance is dangerous enough, this was his first experience in combat.

"The first time [getting shot at] is definitely an attention grabber," Williams said. "I'm actually really proud of myself because you never know how you're going to perform in that situation."

Williams' actions came in 2010 while serving on his third deployment as an explosive ordnance disposal technician. He was attached to the Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team operating from Forward Operating Base Altimur, south of Kabul.

Lt. Col. Kevin Philpot, 115th Civil Engineer Squadron commander, said he is



Tech. Sgt. William Williams, 115th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician, shares experiences from his recent deployment to Afghanistan on March 5. Williams was awarded the Combat Action Medal for his actions during his deployment. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Tech. Sgt. Ashley Bell

proud of Williams' actions.

"I'm not surprised at all that he was able to perform extremely effectively in a difficult situation," Philpot said. "That doesn't surprise me because of who he is and the type of training [EOD Airmen] receive."

Williams received small squad tactics, shooting and other technical training as part of 30 days of pre-deployment or "Combat Ready Airman" (COBRA) training at Tyndall Air Force Base, Tenn.

Williams hails from Sun Prairie, Wis., and is married with two children. He enlisted into the active duty Air Force in 1996 and has been stationed around the globe, including Aviano Air Base, Italy; Incirlik Air Base, Turkey; Ramstein Air Base, Germany; Osan Air Base, Korea, and Nellis and Scott Air Force Bases in Nevada and Illinois, respectively. He

joined the 115th in 2008.

Earlier in the deployment, Williams was called upon at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan to "render safe" four suicide bombers with explosives strapped to their chest. Though the insurgents died from gunshot wounds before reaching the Bagram Air Base fence line, the explosives still needed to be cleared.

This is the type of task Williams has come to know and love from his job. He admitted he loves his family and loves his job, but to be a successful EOD technician, a clear mind is a must.

"You can't be distracted while you're doing that," Williams said. "Once you have time to reflect on it, then you definitely thank God you're still around for your family." 🙏

2nd Lt. Steven Montgomery contributed to this story

Guard members awarded for public affairs work

Four Wisconsin National Guard members have received top awards in the 2010 National Guard Bureau Media Contest.

Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue of the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs section took second place in the Outstanding New Broadcaster category.

Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez of the Madison-based 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment received a second-place award in the photography category for an image from the 2010 Rhythm and Booms celebration in Madison.

Spc. Brandon Frederick, also of the 112th MPAD, received a second-place award for a television news report on the 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery firing a new weapons system for the first time in June 2010.

Tech. Sgt. Ashley Bell, also of the 115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs section, received a third-place award for his picture story on the realistic training conducted by the 115th Security Forces.

Spc. Frederick's submission advanced to the U.S. Army's Keith L. Ware competition.

In addition, the Wisconsin National Guard's official publication, *At Ease Express*, received a first-place award for web-based publications in the National Guard Bureau Media Contest, and advanced to the Keith L. Ware competition. Last year the *At Ease Express* won a Keith L. Ware award and the Department of Defense's Thomas Jefferson award. 🙏

Veterans, Families, Retirees

State DVA reaching veterans in new ways

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) has created new outreach tools designed to make it easier for Wisconsin veterans of all ages and eras to learn about important developments and issues that may affect them. The Wisconsin Veterans Registry and the WDVA Facebook page are new approaches to reaching the state's more than 417,000 veterans.

"These are new ways to make it easier for service members to stay up to date on important issues," said Ken Black, WDVA Secretary. "It's our job to help veterans connect with the benefits and services they have earned, and we're focused on bringing new ideas and new technology to bear on that challenge."

Newly-returned veterans are often busy reintegrating back to civilian life. Over time, older veterans may become less connected to service-related news and updates. The voluntary registry helps overcome these challenges by delivering key information directly to veterans via e-mail. Using Facebook as another way to connect delivers good information to veterans, and, perhaps more importantly, allows them to connect with each other through the popular social media site.

The service is an e-mail registry that sends automatic updates whenever significant developments occur on health issues, hazard exposures and state and federal benefits and services. Veterans can find a link to sign up for the free registry at the WDVA website: www.WisVets.com.

The type of information that the Wisconsin Veterans Registry is designed to disseminate can be extremely important. For example, last year the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced key rule changes that provide easier access to entitlements for Vietnam Veterans exposed to Agent Orange.

The registry is designed to deliver information on health issues, including Agent Orange, Depleted Uranium, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);



changes to state programs and services such as the Wisconsin GI Bill and the property tax credit for disabled veterans; and important federal notices on veterans issues.

The Wisconsin Veterans Registry is open to all Wisconsin veterans, their family, friends and anyone concerned about veterans issues. Veterans are encouraged to sign up for the Wisconsin Veterans Registry to begin receiving updates immediately. Updates will occur only when new information is available.

With over 500 active users in less than a year, WDVA's use of Facebook is a growing success. Posts to the social media site include upcoming events, announcements and news items from around the state. Veterans are welcome to post their own messages and events, provided they comply with a basic usage policy.

For more information about the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, please visit www.WisVets.com, or call WDVA toll-free at 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387).

TRICARE mails meds to homes

TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery allows beneficiaries to save time and money by delivering maintenance medications safely and securely to their home through the U.S. mail.

More than one million prescriptions were filled through home delivery in each of the last five months of 2010 – a record. Pharmacy home delivery is available to many categories of beneficiaries, including active duty service members deployed overseas.

Home delivery can be to any U.S. postal address and overseas Army Post Offices (APO), Fleet Post Offices (FPO) and in some cases, U.S. Embassies. Beneficiaries have convenient and secure Internet access to their plan information and can manage their prescriptions online.

Home delivery is especially useful for beneficiaries with prescriptions they need to take on a regular basis – maintenance medications. These medications are used to treat illnesses such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure. If beneficiaries need immediate relief from a pain medication or antibiotics, they should have their prescription filled at a military treatment

facility or retail network pharmacy.

Pharmacy home delivery also features an automatic prescription refill option to ensure beneficiaries are always supplied with the medications they need and checks medical and prescription history to avoid harmful drug interactions. A phone line is available 24/7 to speak directly to a pharmacist.

TRICARE retail network pharmacies fill prescriptions with a 30-day supply. Home delivery fills prescriptions for the same co-payment, but for 90 days. Home delivery costs beneficiaries \$3 for a 90-day supply for generic formulary medications and \$9 for a 90-day supply for formulary brand-name medications.

TRICARE beneficiaries switching to pharmacy home delivery from retail pharmacies in 2010 saved 66 percent on their co-payments, up to \$176 a year for a non-formulary prescription. They also saved taxpayers \$30.7 million.

To sign up for pharmacy home delivery or to learn more about the program, go to www.tricare.mil/homedelivery or call the Member Choice Center toll-free at 1-877-363-1343.

Services, hours for Retiree Activities Offices

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

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

The Madison RAO is located at Joint Force Headquarters, 2400 Wright Street,

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

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



Parting shot

Spc. Jennifer Denhartog of Company A, 724th Engineer Battalion, greets her 18-month-old son Brendan Feb. 18 upon her return to Wisconsin from a 10-month deployment to Iraq. Denhartog was among approximately 300 Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 724th Engineer Battalion who officially completed their duty in Iraq in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson