

A black AH-64 Apache helicopter is parked on a snowy field. A soldier in camouflage gear stands on top of the helicopter. The helicopter has a red cross medical emblem with the number 966 on its side. The background shows a line of bare trees under a clear sky.

aease

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[Click here](#) to find out about an all-female Black Hawk flight crew in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson



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The pages are designed to print out at 8.5-by-11 inches, giving you the option of reading @ease off-line.

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on the cover

Sgt. Cassandra Weiss gives the “thumbs up” sign as the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s first all-female Black Hawk medevac crew takes flight Feb. 1 at Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in West Bend. The lack of female crew chiefs in the past meant that all-female crews were not possible in the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

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From the TAG

In “The Tempest,” Shakespeare wrote, “What’s past is prologue” — or what has happened before sets the stage for important things to come.

For us, midway through fiscal year 2013, the elephant in the room is fiscal. The nation’s debt exceeds \$17 *trillion* and we continue to run substantial deficits. Our elected leaders have been unable to manage the spending imbalance and, failing a compromise, agreed on mandatory cuts — known as sequestration.

The idea was simple — set up something so distasteful that Congress and the President would find a way to compromise rather than allow mandatory cuts to occur. Recently, the “unthinkable” happened — sequestration occurred and our elected leaders now appear set on allowing these mandatory cuts to proceed.

What does that mean? \$1.2 *trillion* in spending cuts over 10 years — 50 percent of which will come out of military spending.

This will affect us near-term and long-term. In the near term, our current operations accounts are being severely restricted. This will



Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar
The Adjutant General

cut flying hours, military training, military education, TDYs, conference attendance, and so on. We may be forced to cut personnel costs by furloughing civilian technicians for up to 14 days between now and the end of Fiscal 2013. While military personnel are exempt, this furlough may affect dual-status technicians — even though they wear the uniform and are the backbone of our National Guard readiness.

Long term, the military is

requesting another BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) round and reviewing the existing ratio between the active duty and the National Guard and federal Reserve. Our military is also recalibrating our national defense strategy to ensure we can meet objectives given the cuts in military spending.

That certainly is grim, but past is prologue. Our nation has been through difficult times before and we will find a positive way forward. The challenge

is to preserve national security during fiscally challenging times. It’s not clear what decisions our elected officials will make, but one thing is clear.

Unlike previous challenges, the United States has a national treasure to hedge the national security risk. That treasure is the National Guard — the most experienced, relevant, accessible and highly skilled National Guard in our nation’s history. Given the efficiency and extraordinary value of the National Guard, it is highly likely that we will be asked to do more — to remain an operational force, to continue our high level of readiness, and be prepared to respond locally, regionally and nationally for domestic emergencies and be prepared to deploy for unforeseen contingencies.

The next few years will be very challenging, but we are uniquely positioned to be an important part of the solution. We remain always ready and always there. It’s a privilege to serve with you.

from the editor

William Shakespeare once wrote, “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” suggesting that a name is less important than that which the name describes.

The wisdom of the bard partially applies to this publication. You may have noticed that the word “Express” is missing from this issue’s title. A brief explanation: Prior to *at ease* releasing its final print edition in 2009, a smaller on-line issue was posted under the name *at ease Express*. When the Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Office

decided to transition the publication from print to online format, the name *at ease Express* was kept, with one small modification — to signal its online presence, *at ease* became *@ease*.

But even though the way we present *@ease* to our readers changed, the mission has not. We still strive to tell the incredible story of the more than 10,000 men and women of the Wisconsin National Guard to the best of our ability — a tradition that began decades ago.

Recognizing that tradition, with this issue we

are returning to this publication’s original name — albeit, keeping the @ to acknowledge that we remain a web-based publication. Our publication will remain interactive, and relevant. We are also resuming our traditional quarterly publication schedule, with issues scheduled to be published at the end of March, June, September and December.

While *@ease* by any other name — or format — would still be *@ease*, names do have significance. We are proud to return the traditional name to this award-winning publication.

Raising HOPE

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

After a yearlong mobilization to Afghanistan, the last remaining members of the 82nd Agribusiness Development Team (ADT) arrived safely back in Wisconsin Feb. 22, leaving behind lessons to help Afghans build a sustainable agricultural infrastructure.

Assembled from the ranks of farmers, soil scientists and science teachers, the 82nd ADT deployed to Afghanistan in April 2012 as members of the International Security Assistance Force to connect with Afghan farmers in Kunar Province.

The team originally consisted of 48 Soldiers and Airmen, but a slew of mission changes resulted in 35 Guardsmen returning home in September 2012. The remaining 13 stayed in Kunar where they became the agricultural component of Kunar's provincial reconstruction team.

"The main theme of our deployment has been flexibility," Master Sgt. Kenton Bauer, the unit's agronomist, said from Afghanistan in January.

Before the 35 Soldiers and Airmen from the original unit were sent home, the unit's focus was on connecting local Afghan farmers with local government and using demonstration farms to teach agricultural techniques. Eventually their focus shifted to the provincial level.

"The relationships we developed with these districts has allowed an improved



Wisconsin Army National Guard Maj. Sarah Bammel and Master Sgt. Kentin Bauer check out crops inside of a greenhouse at the Khas Kunar Demo Farm June 7, 2012. The Provincial Reconstruction Team Kunar agricultural section assists the Demo Farm to show the farmers and other locals

understanding of agriculture, fostered early stages of agribusiness, and promoted a wide-range of training that is now delivered by district extension agents, and their staff," explained Bauer, a science teacher from Sparta.

The unit's personnel worked closely with civilians from the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other entities to advance agricultural initiatives in the region.

Among the 82nd ADT's key projects was establishing an artificial insemination

center for livestock and fostering a partnership between the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and Said Jamaluddin Afghani University. The unit also took on a key role in an effort to increase saffron production while slowing the region's poppy production.

Maj. Sarah Bammel, who holds a bachelors degree in meteorology and served as the officer in charge of the agriculture section, said the unit's mission was frustrated at times by a lack of funding for specific projects and initiatives, but it

found success with most of its enterprises. The unit left a strong legacy in place for its replacement, the 97th ADT, a unit also comprised of Wisconsin Guardsmen.

When the unit left Afghanistan in February, the government was much more active in funding agricultural projects than it was at the beginning of the ADT's tour when most of the funding came from the coalition's provincial reconstruction team.

But the constant theme throughout

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82nd ADT plants seeds of hope for Afghan farming industry



Master Sgt. Kenton Bauer embraces his 3-year-old daughter Sarah and wife Heidi as the remaining members of the Wisconsin National Guard's 82nd Agribusiness Development Team returned to Wisconsin Feb. 22 for a brief ceremony at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Madison. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

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the deployment was change and the unit's ability to adapt. Staff Sgt. Kyle Wickert of Iron Ridge spent the first two months of his deployment as a squad leader for the ADT's security force. He eventually led a quick reaction force squad in Kabul before returning to Kunar Province and the ADT as a force protection non-commissioned officer. Despite the changes, he realized his unit's impact.

"Helping to rebuild, reshape, and try and put Afghanistan's best foot forward to better their country and way of life was part of being deployed to this country," he wrote in an e-mail from Afghanistan. "That in itself is the greatest of all accomplishments that we did as a team."

By the time they returned to Wisconsin Feb. 22, the unit had conducted more than 200 combat patrols and made more than 500 engagements with key local leaders in 13 of Kunar's 15 districts. They also supported more than 40 medical evacuations on their forward operating base and managed more than \$12 million worth of construction projects.

The unit's members collectively earned five Bronze Star Medals, nine Army Commendation Medals — including one for valor, eight Navy Achievement Medals, and one Purple Heart.

"As far as the projects and everything else that the team worked on, they had an impact on over 200,000 Afghans in the Kunar Province," Maj. Fred Oehler, the ADT's officer in charge, said shortly after landing in the U.S. from Afghanistan "I was real proud of them. They did an excellent job and adapted to everything. They pretty much set the standards out there."

The ADT's noncommissioned officer in charge, Sgt. Maj. Greg Millard, lauded the ADT's flexibility as its missions evolved.

"I was just very impressed with all of them," the Tomah native said. "I think they gave 100 percent the entire year. I was most impressed with their ability to stick through all the changes. The mission

wasn't quite what we thought it would be going over. We got split up, especially once we went to the provincial reconstruction team. Just the way they adapted shows every Soldier brings a lot of skills to the table, and they definitely excelled."

After demobilizing at Camp Atterbury, Ind., for several days, the ADT was met by their families, Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, and fellow Soldiers and Airmen at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Madison.

Brenda Sessler of Milton jokingly said she was looking forward to having her son, Staff Sgt. Dylan Sessler, shovel the driveway when he got home. More importantly, she looked forward to the normalcy his return would provide.

"It's great," she said. "I'm very proud of him and all of the Soldiers and what they've accomplished, but it's nice to have them home."

Waiting to greet Master Sgt. Kenton Bauer of Sparta were his wife, Heidi, and his three-year-old daughter Sarah.

"It feels rather surreal," Heidi Bauer said upon reuniting with her husband. "I've been kind of numb for the past year."

"This is great being home," Master Sgt. Bauer said. "It doesn't seem real yet, because the whole time that we were going through the de-mobilization process was on Camp Atterbury, and you walked around other people wearing uniforms. Other than eating lunch today, this is our first chance to be outside of somebody's fence."

Speaking at the unit's homecoming ceremony, Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, the deputy adjutant general for Army, said, "Thank you for your service, for what you have done really in demonstrating the true capability of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, demonstrating the adaptability and the flexibility as you transitioned from one mission, to another mission, to another mission throughout the course of the last 12 months while you've been deployed." 

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

TAKING ROOT

■ 97th Agribusiness Development Team engaged in dynamic mission

The members of the Wisconsin National Guard's 97th Agribusiness Development Team (ADT) have already reached a couple of milestones in their deployment to Kunar Province, Afghanistan — they have taken the place of Wisconsin's first agribusiness team, the [82nd ADT](#), and they have been officially authorized to wear 101st Airborne combat patches signifying at least 30 straight days in country.

Capt. Bill Barthen, officer in charge of the 97th ADT — which functions as part of the [Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team](#) — said the team has transitioned well.

“The 82nd ADT did a great job showing us exactly how they did missions,” Barthen said in a March 1 e-mail. “Each ag team member walked their replacement through project development, the mission request, how to conduct key leader engagements, and how to complete closing reports following missions.”

Those missions involve talking with provincial officials with the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) as well as district extension agents regarding best practices for sustainable and profitable farming, as well as how to apply for funding from Afghanistan's national government.

Barthen said the best part of the deployment for him thus far has been interacting with representatives of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

“I enjoy hearing their personal goals for the families — personal, professional and educational,” Barthen said. “Overall, Afghans are quite similar to us. They have similar goals like having a happy, healthy family with a good education, good employment and safety where they

live, work and go to school.”

Continuing changes in the overall scope of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan may translate into different mission expectations for the 97th ADT. Barthen said he is concerned about how these dynamics may impact the mission the 97th was sent to accomplish — increasing agricultural productivity by improving farmer access to key services, linking farmers with markets and trade corridors, rehabilitating watersheds and improving irrigation, and increasing Afghan farmer confidence in

their government by improving delivery of DAIL services to rural farmers and herders. He said that provincial agencies are seeing success in requesting and receiving funding for specific projects from national government agencies.

“Our team is motivated to get out and work,” Barthen said. “As long as we are over here, we'll be pushing for the opportunity to get out with the people and make sure

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97th ADT engaged in dynamic mission

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there is continuity in projects and sustainability in areas we work.”

Sgt. Michelle Rothaug of Baraboo is the unit’s veterinary technician. She employed “outside-the-box” thinking to prepare for this deployment.

“I actually went to the zoo in Madison and talked to them specifically regarding camels as a potential different animal that I haven’t necessarily worked with previously,” she said. “Other than that, there isn’t a whole lot of difference from what I have handled before. Large animals — typically your sheep, goats and cows, horses, donkeys — they’re relatively the same and I’ve had experience with that.”

Rothaug said she expects to work with Afghan farmers and officials on improved techniques for artificial insemination and other animal care issues.

The 97th ADT left Wisconsin Jan. 3 following a sendoff ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters.

Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, praised the ADT for volunteering to take on such a complex mission.

“To take American fighting Soldiers and Airmen and put them in a situation where they are mentoring Afghanistan’s citizens and farmers and teaching them a better way of life — what an incredible challenge for these folks to be the ambassadors for our country and teach these farmers a better way in addition to the responsibility of being a Soldier or an Airman in the place where they’re going,” he said.

“It is exceptional. I think it’s quintessentially what the National Guard is all about — citizen Soldiers, citizen Airmen answering the call and not only doing the stuff that you would expect, but taking on the difficult missions that they’re going to find themselves in.”

Gov. Scott Walker likened the ADT’s mission in Afghanistan to planting strong roots for agriculture in that country.

“Certainly when you think of agriculture, we think of one of the important things for a good harvest is having deep, thick roots,” the governor said. “Certainly from an agricultural standpoint in Afghanistan, you’ll be helping people understand that, but in a very real sense, those roots aren’t just about growing things. They’re about growing a nation.”



Above, Gov. Scott Walker speaks with 97th Agribusiness Development Team commander Capt. Craig Giese during a Jan. 3 sendoff ceremony at Joint Forces Headquarters in Madison. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato

Left, Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, assistant adjutant general for Army, speaks with officers of the Wisconsin National Guard’s 97th Agribusiness Development Team Jan. 14 while the unit was conducting mobilization training at Camp Atterbury, Ind. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

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

Wisconsin Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar and Gov. Scott Walker welcome home nearly 200 members of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing March 11. 115th Fighter Wing photos by Master Sgt. Paul Gorman

OUT OF AFRICA: 115th FW back from deployment

1st Lt. Stephen Montgomery
115th Fighter Wing

The Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing welcomed home some of its fellow Airmen following a two-month deployment to Africa March 11.

The Airmen returned to a packed hanger at Truax Field in Madison, where they were welcomed by Gov. Scott Walker, the Wisconsin Air National Guard's top leadership, friends, and loved ones.

"This is an outstanding group of Airmen," said Lt. Col. Brian Parker, the deployed detachment commander. "We met 100 percent of our taskings and executed our mission flawlessly."

Parker presented Walker with a Wisconsin flag that had flown over the deployment camp and in an F-16 on a combat support mission, as a thank-you to the governor for his support.

All told, the 115th Fighter Wing flew more than 550 hours, completed more than 275 sorties and participated in more than 25 sorties with French air-to-air and air-to-ground fighter integration.

Col. Jeffrey Wiegand, the 115th Fighter

Wing commander, thanked both the fighter wing members for their hard work and their families for their continued support.

"I'm very proud of the men and women of the fighter wing," Wiegand said. "Welcome home — enjoy your well-deserved time off."

"There is no finer unit for a mission like this than for the men and women of the Wisconsin National Guard," Walker said. "You continue the legacy of those great Americans that came from Wisconsin that knew when duty called, you answer that call."

Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, thanked the families of the just-returned Airmen for their support — "I know firsthand how difficult it can be to say good-bye to your loved ones, whether it's for a day or a couple of months like this deployment," he said — and noted that troop support comes from beyond the family nucleus.

"I want to ask the Airmen, when you go back to your job, please — on my behalf, on your behalf, on behalf of the Air National Guard — thank your employer," Dunbar said. "Because just like your families, without the support of your employers the National Guard just could not do what it does so well for our nation."

While 60 days may not be considered a long deployment to some, many families present couldn't wait to welcome home their loved ones.

"I've done this many times before," said Joy Seibel, whose husband Master Sgt. Peter Seibel has deployed four times previously. This deployment was more difficult for their children, however.

"This is the first time they've been able to understand it," Joy explained.

This is the fourth Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) deployment in the last seven years for the 115th Fighter Wing. The unit previously deployed to Iraq in 2006, 2008 and 2009.

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



1157th TC returns from nine-month Afghanistan road trip

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

After more than 1.8 million miles, 128 missions, 40 Combat Action Badges, nine Bronze Stars, 105 Army Commendation medals, 12 Army Achievement medals and five Purple Hearts, the 1157th Transportation Company completed its Afghanistan deployment and returned to Wisconsin Jan. 18.

“They never hesitated with any mission that came up,” said Capt. Christian Menden, the unit’s commander, upon the unit’s Jan. 7 return to the United States. “They accomplished every single mission that was given to our unit and did it successfully. We were the top transportation unit within our battalion. They would lean on us to get the missions done, and it showed with our Midwestern work ethic that the Wisconsin National Guard is alive and strong.”

1st Sgt. Tom Krueck, of Waukesha, praised the 123 Soldiers of the 1157th for their hard work throughout the deployment.

“I think they’re very resilient,” Krueck said. “Just bouncing back from changes and different things that happened throughout the tour. They just never gave up. I’m very proud of what they’ve done and what they’ve accomplished.”

Capt. Roger Miller, a platoon leader in the 1157th, explained that the unit conducted operations in northern, eastern, and central Afghanistan, providing convoy security on some of Afghanistan’s most dangerous roads for equipment and personnel leaving Afghanistan.

“No mission was too hard. No mission was too dangerous. The 1157th’s dedication to mission accomplishment earned them 40 combat action badges and five purple hearts,” Miller said. “Soldiers are often thanked for their service, and they’re thanked for their sacrifice. Nobody’s more appreciative, and nobody knows that sacrifice more acutely than our family members.

“Thank you for being strong and for working hard through all the adversity,” Miller added. “The state of Wisconsin and the American people should be real proud of you. I’m real proud of you.”

Gov. Scott Walker thanked the members of the 1157th for the dedication, representing Wisconsin, and serving the nation. He also promised the state’s assistance in finding jobs for the returning Soldiers.

“There should be no man or woman coming back from serving our country on a deployment who doesn’t have an opportunity for a job once you get back to Wisconsin,” Walker said.



A Soldier from the 1157th Transportation Company greets his son during a Jan. 18 homecoming ceremony at the EAA in Oshkosh. The unit returned to Wisconsin after a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato

The state’s adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar said, “It takes something special in our world to have enough courage and commitment to this country to put a uniform on and endure the rigor of hard training, and then when your country calls on you, to go into combat, go forth and complete that mission. You are in a rare, very select breed. I hope that you are proud of what you’ve accomplished. I want you to know that I am incredibly proud of what you’ve accomplished.”

Dunbar also recognized the sacrifices of families during a deployment.

“To the families, I know a year is a long time. Your commitment is no less than your Soldier’s to the defense of this country.”

The 1157th first reported to Camp Shelby in February 2012 for mobilization training before arriving in Afghanistan in April. The past year’s deployment was the fifth since 1990 for the unit. The unit mobilized and served overseas during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990, and it provided transportation support in 2002 to Army Special Operations Support Command and other units at Fort Bragg, N.C., for 11 months. In September 2005, the unit was ordered to active duty to support Hurricane Katrina relief efforts in Louisiana, and in 2006, it deployed to Iraq where it logged more than 300,000 miles hauling fuel and other cargo. 📷

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



Fired up for Afghanistan

A High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launcher from Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery sends reduced range practice rounds (RPPR) downrange during certification training Jan. 7 at Fort Bliss, Texas. The unit is conducting fire support missions in Afghanistan. Wisconsin Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Sean Huolihan

Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

FORT BLISS, Texas — Revolutionary.

That is how Capt. Matthew Mangerson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, described the training his unit received here in preparation for its fire support mission in Afghanistan.

"I haven't seen every training exercise in the Army, but this is pretty unique," Mangerson said. "It's neat to be a part of it."

To prepare the Plymouth-based unit to be the first Army National Guard unit to conduct a field artillery mission in Afghanistan, active duty field artillery brigades from Fort Bliss and Joint Base Lewis-McChord joined forces with a 1st Army training brigade and two additional National Guard units to develop a dynamic training environment. This environment also provided training opportunities for the active duty components as well as a chance to innovate.

A winter storm blanketed Fort Bliss in up to five inches

of snow, which curtailed some aspects of the training schedule. But Bravo leadership worked with field artillery subject matter experts from the 5th Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery from Joint Base Lewis-McChord — working from a hotel in nearby El Paso, Texas — to develop a virtual operational theater environment, using available Army online training tools.

"Adversity, which is something we've had a lot of [due to the winter storm], builds character," said Battery B 1st Sgt. Steve Czekala. "Adversity separates the wheat from the chaff. It makes you learn to adapt. Everybody knows during a time of war, you need to adapt. It actually became a valuable training tool."

Master Sgt. Adam Wallander, a master gunner and supervisor for the unit's mission liaison section, suggested that the mobilization training was nearly perfect.

"The [5th Battalion, 3rd FA] has supported us immensely and built a program for us that is to the 'T' what we're going to be doing in Afghanistan," Wallander said.

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Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, presents a challenge coin to Spc. Michael Black of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery during the unit's mobilization training Jan. 6 at Fort Bliss, Texas. Black, a combat medic, performed life-saving measures on a car accident victim the morning of Jan. 5 near the unit's field training site. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Office photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Guard members save woman's life

1st Lt. Joseph Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

Three Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers who came across an accident scene near White Sands Missile Range, N.M., saved a woman's life on Jan. 5.

The Soldiers from Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery were mobilized to Fort Bliss, Texas, in December in preparation for their deployment to Afghanistan. The day of the accident, they were driving to Dona Ana, N.M., to conduct training.

According to [The Fort Bliss Monitor](#), the Soldiers discovered the one-vehicle crash and pulled over to see how they could assist before emergency crews arrived. They found a female passenger pinned inside the vehicle with an open fracture of her right femur. The male driver was walking outside the vehicle. Two other individuals

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Bravo Battery makes most of training challenges at Fort Bliss

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Czekala also praised the physical environment at Fort Bliss.

“The amount of real estate we have is incredible,” he said — important when even the reduced range rockets used for training travel several kilometers. The unpredictable desert weather — sandstorms, snowstorms, high winds, rain, 80-degree high temperatures and 20-degree low temperatures — and mountainous backdrop also aided in training.

“There are only so many HIMARS units in the country, but I’ll bet there’s even a smaller percentage of them that can say they’ve fired rockets in 70-mph crosswinds,” Mangerson said.

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, assistant adjutant general for Army and himself a field artillery officer, was pleased with what he saw during a Jan. 6 visit to Fort Bliss.

“Everything that the battery is doing indicates to me that the training they conducted back here at home station in preparation for their mobilization was spot on,” Anderson said.

Czekala said that beyond the unit’s



Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, assistant adjutant general for Army, and state Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper speak with Capt. Matthew Mangerson and 1st Sgt. Steve Czekala of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery Jan. 6 at Fort Bliss, Texas. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Office photo by Vaughn R. Larson

technical prowess as artillerymen, the Soldiers bring civilian skill sets to the mission from experiences as carpenters, electricians, engineers, farmers and

homeowners.

“What that does is it not only validates our unit, but it validates the National Guard as a whole,” Mangerson said.

Anderson said the favorable impression Battery B has made reflects on the young leadership within the organization.

“When dealt with some difficulty or a complex issue, they were flexible enough and agile enough to come up with an innovative way to continue forward with the mission,” Anderson said.

Czekala agreed.

“I know it’s the first sergeant’s job to beat their chest and toot their horn about the unit, but I am 100 percent convinced we will go out and do great things,” he said. “We have all the key personnel in place. We’re a very mature battery as far as age is concerned and as far as rank is concerned, which makes my life a lot easier. About 60 percent of the battery have deployed before.”

“I know that probably any commander would tell you that when they’re getting ready to go to war, but I don’t know how to express it more honestly — that’s exactly how I feel,” Mangerson added. “There’s no question in my mind that [our Soldiers are] ready to do what they need to do.”

“The HIMARS world definitely knows who Bravo 121 is,” Czekala said.

[Entire story online](#)

Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers save woman’s life at mobilization training site

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had arrived shortly before the Soldiers, called 911 and used a belt as a makeshift tourniquet until the Soldiers arrived with one of their own.

The three Wisconsin Guardsmen — Sgt. 1st Class Todd Richter of Sheboygan, Spc. Michael Black of Brookfield, and Spc. Joshua Aprill of Oconto Falls — acted quickly as Black, a combat medic, grabbed his medical aid bag and began treating the woman.

“It was an open fracture and bleeding pretty well. I grabbed my medical bag out of the vehicle, assessed

the patient, threw a tourniquet on there,” he said. “Medical evac was already en route.”

As Black, a student at UW-Whitewater, treated the woman, Richter helped stabilize her head to prevent a neck injury. He also stayed in contact with emergency crews en route to the accident scene. Meanwhile, Spc. Aprill helped direct traffic and clear the road of debris so emergency vehicles could access the scene unencumbered.

“It was a surprise, to say the least,” Black said. “We did what we had to do.”

What they did was save the El Paso, Texas, woman’s

life. When crews arrived approximately 30 minutes after the accident, they were able to free the victim from the vehicle and transport her to a local hospital. According to the Monitor, the woman sustained two broken legs, four cracked ribs, and a cracked sternum.

The Monitor quoted the driver saying, “God put them in our path, because had they not been there and helped us out the way they did, I don’t think she [the passenger] would be with us.”

The three men were each recommended for awards as a result.

[Story online](#)

104th SFAAT part of transition process in Afghanistan

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

HERAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — After arriving in Afghanistan earlier this year, 16 Wisconsin Guardsmen are already helping to transition responsibility for the nation's security back to Afghan hands.

The Wisconsin National Guard's 104th Security Force Advise and Assist Team (SFAAT) deployed to Afghanistan as a key element of the U.S. military's overall exit strategy for Afghanistan. The strategy depends on establishing an Afghan government, military and police force capable of standing on its own after U.S. forces leave the country in 2014.

Working from a remote outpost within an Afghan border police base, the SFAAT has so far adjusted well to life in Afghanistan, according to Lt. Col. David Larson, the unit's commander.

"Our day-to-day varies, but we have established a good battle rhythm and all are adjusting well to it," he wrote in an e-mail from Afghanistan. "Our team has really come together, and already many have established life-long bonds."

Larson said the SFAAT travels frequently throughout the region in which it operates — conducting weekly logistics runs to acquire food, water, supplies and mail from home. The unit has also worked heavily in the Afghan border regions, assisting its Afghan counterparts in improving border security.

"We interact with our Afghan counterparts daily, and have established a great rapport with them," Larson wrote. "Our mission is to advise and assist the regional border police to improve their capability for self-sustained operations in order to control and secure the region."

The significance of the unit's duties is not lost on the commander, who recognizes the importance of transitioning the security mission to the Afghans.

"This is an important piece of the overall national strategy of turning over security responsibility to the Afghan forces with the drawdown and withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan by 2014," the Baraboo native wrote. "It is a consistent theme here of assessing the Afghans' status and readiness to operate independently."

Formed last year out of an all-volunteer group, the 104th trained at Camp Shelby, Miss., and Fort Polk, La., before deploying to Afghanistan in January. 

[Story online](#)



The 104th Security Force Advise and Assist Team deployed to Afghanistan in January as a key element of the overall U.S. exit strategy. The 16-member Wisconsin National Guard team works with Afghan counterparts to transition security responsibility to the Afghan government.
104th SFAAT photos



Capt. Luella Dooley-Menet checks the engine compartment prior to the Wisconsin Army National Guard's first all-female Black Hawk medevac crew flight Feb. 1 at the Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in West Bend. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

MAIDEN *flight*

Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

WEST BEND — Capt. Luella Dooley-Menet's last flight as a Black Hawk medevac helicopter pilot with the Wisconsin Army National Guard was also the first such flight with an all-female crew.

"It's important to me personally to have my last flight be all females," said Dooley-Menet, who is ending her military service after 13 years. "When I first started, I was always flying only with males."

While the Feb. 1 flight was special for Dooley-Menet, of Milwaukee, a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment, she emphasized that it was not significant strategically.

"The aircraft doesn't know what gender you are," she explained. "It's one of those moments worth noting. Yay for me and yay for women, but really, we're just going to fly an aircraft. It's no big deal."

While this marks the first all-female crew for a Black Hawk medevac flight in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, it is not the organization's first female-only flight. In the 1990s Lt. Col. Tammy Gross and Col. Joane Mathews co-piloted a Black Hawk helicopter with the Madison-based 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment, but did not have an in-flight crew chief.

The flight was a routine 90-minute continuation training to maintain the required number of flight hours for certification. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Rachel Simeth of Shiocton shared piloting duties with Dooley-Menet.

Until now, the three aviation units based at West Bend have lacked the right combination of crewmembers to staff an all-female flight. Dooley-Menet said that crew chiefs — a maintenance section member who flies with the aircraft and troubleshoots any maintenance issues during the mission — have usually been males, until this flight.

Sgt. Cassandra Weiss of West Bend, a crew chief with Detachment 1, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 135th Forward Support, said she chose to be in aircraft maintenance because it was something she had never done before. She enjoyed the all-female flight.

"It didn't seem like a big deal at first, but then coming back [you're] thinking about who you're flying with, especially that it's Capt. Dooley-Menet's last flight," Weiss said. "It was just nice to hear another female. It was a sense of empowerment for me because I've never flown with two females before. I don't think they've had a crew chief in the back who was a female, either."

Dooley-Menet said she was told in flight school — incorrectly, she notes — that she could not fly a Black Hawk with another female pilot. To see more female helicopter pilots, and now more female crew chiefs, means that the playing field is becoming more level, she said.

Weiss agreed.

"It's nice to see that females are getting more opportunities to more jobs," Weiss said. "It's up to us now what we do [with that opportunity]." 📷

[Story online](#)



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Rachel Simeth inspects the tail rotor assembly prior to the Wisconsin Army National Guard's first all-female Black Hawk medevac crew flight Feb. 1 at the Army Aviation Support Facility #1. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson



Sgt. Maj. Curt Patrouille, left, and Lt. Col. Jacqueline Guthrie, right, of the 64th Rear Operations Center, case the unit colors during a Jan. 26 inactivation ceremony. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Lt. Col. John Morgan and Sgt. 1st Class Kirby Frank fold the Berlin-based 332nd Rear Operations Center guidon for the final time during the unit's inactivation ceremony on Feb. 9. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Brian Faltinson

**By Vaughn R. Larson
and 1st Lt. Brian Faltinson**
Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

FINAL FORMATION

Each military unit is represented by some type of banner, be it a small pennant-like guidon or a large flag. Referred to as organizational colors, they indicate what unit is at a particular location. Casing a unit's colors — that is, rolling the banner around its staff and sliding it into a canvas sheath — has traditionally signaled that the unit has successfully completed its mission.

When this ceremony is performed at a forward or contingency operating base overseas, it is a welcome harbinger of the end of a deployment and a flight home. When performed at an armory, however, it often punctuates the final chapter of a unit's history.

Such was the case when two Wisconsin Army National Guard units — the 64th Rear Operations Center and the 332nd Rear Operations Center — cased their colors as part of a formal ceremony during their final weekend drills before inactivation.

"It's a bittersweet day, but there's a lot of celebration going on here today," Sgt. Maj. Curt Patrouille, the 64th ROC's senior enlisted member, said Jan. 26. "There's a great heritage, a great history to the unit."

The unit originated following the

Wisconsin Army National Guard's massive reorganization in 1967, and known then as the 64th Rear Area Operations Center. In the mid-1990s the 64th RAOC became two distinct units, one of which became the 64th ROC.

The 332nd ROC was constituted in 1971 in Milwaukee as the 64th Support Center. The unit relocated to Hartford in 1985 and, in 1992, was redesignated the 332nd Rear Support Center. It moved to Berlin in 1995, and held its inactivation ceremony Feb. 9.

A rear operations center was responsible for the administrative framework behind the front lines and oversaw the essential life support functions that supported the forward units. As the nature of combat changed from Cold War tactics to asymmetrical warfare, rear operation centers adapted how they conducted their missions. While the duties of a rear operations center are still required today, a changing military dictates that those tasks and assets migrate to other units.

Sgt. 1st Class John Tynan, the 332nd

ROC's readiness noncommissioned officer since 2004, was sad to see the unit inactivated.

"I had many opportunities to experience missions that most units don't get to attend," Tynan said. "And with a small unit there is a family-type bond that develops that is different from the larger line-type units."

The 332nd deployed two times — first to Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan from December 2002 to August 2003, and then to Iraq from June 2007 to August 2008. It also supported military exercises across the nation as well as in Japan and South Korea.

Lt. Col. John Morgan, commander of the 332nd ROC, praised the Soldiers and the unit's impact on others during the ceremony by telling the story of Abbas Mousa, an Iraqi man with whom unit members regularly interacted during the ROC's Iraq deployment. Mousa and his sister were interpreters at the ROC's base for several years before both gained U.S. citizenship. Today, Mousa is a student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

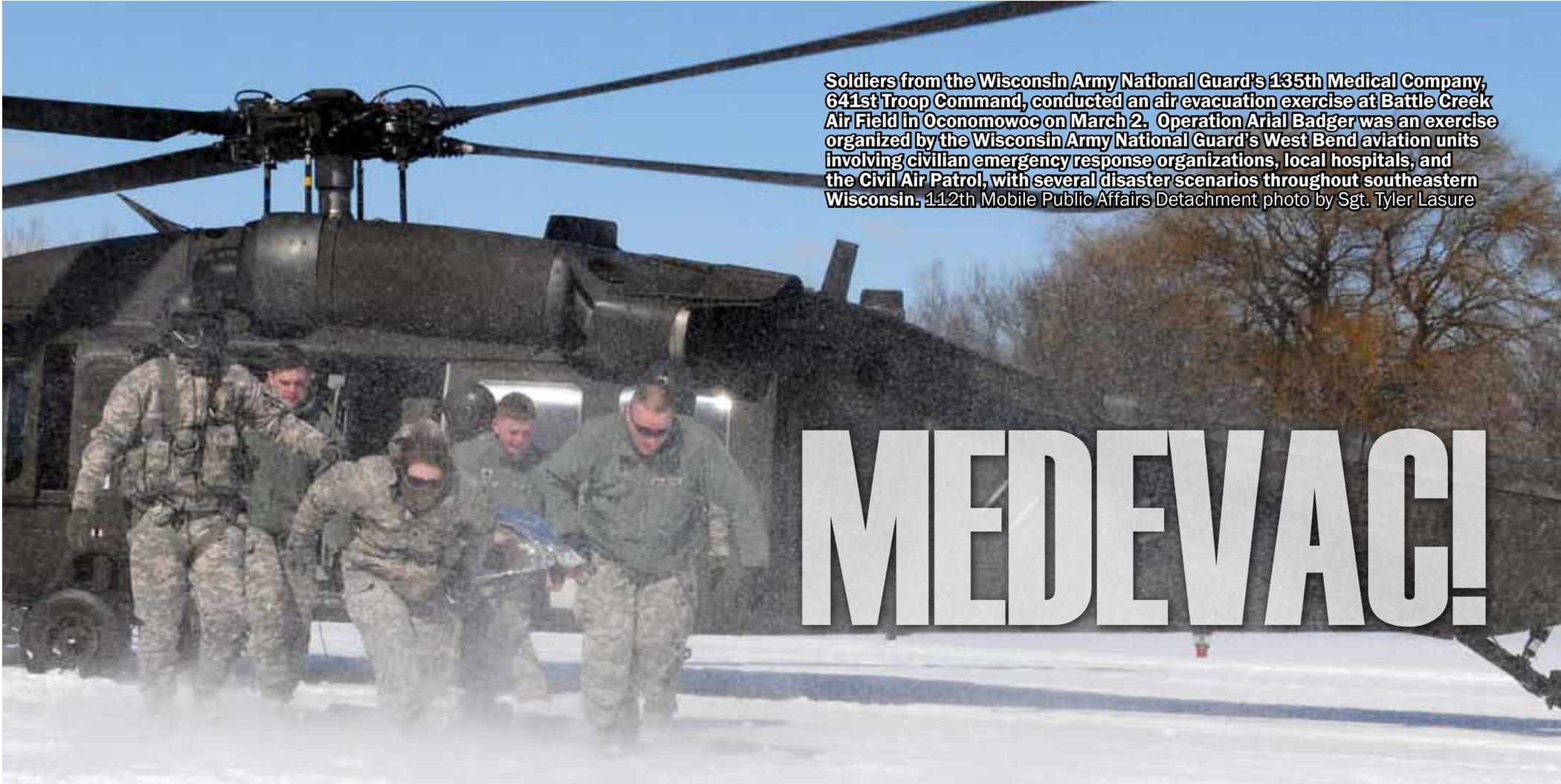
and is also a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard. When asked by Morgan about the ROC, Mousa told him that the "332nd ROC was the only unit that made him feel like he was part of a family," and that the unit "was truly invested in each other and in him, and it changed his life for the better."

The 64th ROC has deployed three times over the years to support Operation Joint Guard in Bosnia from December 1996 to September 1997, Fort Bragg, N.C., to support the global war on terrorism from September 2002 to September 2003, and as part of the Hurricane Katrina response from Sept. 1-18, 2005. Over the years, the 64th ROC has also participated in exercises in numerous states and nations including Germany, Nicaragua, Hungary, South Korea and Japan.

Lt. Col. Jacqueline Guthrie, the final commander of the 64th ROC, charged her Soldiers to carry the unit's history and the skills they learned to other units in the Wisconsin National Guard. Patrouille said the unit has spent the past several months helping its Soldiers find new homes in other units.

"Their skills are still valuable to the Wisconsin National Guard, to our state and to our nation," Guthrie said.

- [Complete 64th ROC story online](#)
- [Complete 332nd ROC story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)



Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 135th Medical Company, 641st Troop Command, conducted an air evacuation exercise at Battle Creek Air Field in Oconomowoc on March 2. Operation Aerial Badger was an exercise organized by the Wisconsin Army National Guard's West Bend aviation units involving civilian emergency response organizations, local hospitals, and the Civil Air Patrol, with several disaster scenarios throughout southeastern Wisconsin. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Sgt. Tyler Lasure

MEDEVAC!

■ Guard, civil agencies fly together for joint training

**Sgt. Megan Burnham
and Sgt. Tyler Lasure**

112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Wisconsin National Guard aviators and medics, along with civilian emergency management agencies, participated in a joint training natural disaster exercise spanning all of southeastern Wisconsin.

For the first time in five years, civilian agencies and National Guard aviation units worked together in a joint exercise March 2 to react to a mass flooding

scenario that tested the Guard's medical evacuation capabilities.

The exercise, dubbed Operation Aerial Badger, combined an array of Wisconsin medical and aviation units to include elements of the 248th Aviation Support Battalion, 112th Aviation, 135th Aviation, 238th Aviation, 135th Medical Company, and cadets from the Civil Air Patrol. Civilian emergency management agencies included area hospitals and a Fond du Lac-based Flight for Life crew from Air Methods, Inc.

"Working with Air Methods and Civil Air Patrol also helps us with our state emergency mission for the Governor," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Mike Knuppel,

112th Aviation commander. "We get to know their capabilities, they get to know our capabilities, and so hopefully together we can support the state emergency mission."

One of the scenarios, conducted at the Flight for Life facility in Fond du Lac, involved Sgt. Philip Stalewski, a new flight medic with the 112th Aviation, assessing the numerous injuries on a mannequin victim and providing the necessary medical aid.

"This is great to do this kind of integrated training with the flight unit having only just recently joined the flight facility myself," Stalewski said. "This is a great way to remember my basics, where I

am coming from, and just not forget [the basics] as I move on and learn new and more exciting, high-speed things."

This scenario also required Stalewski to call for aerial support to have the victim transported to a nearby hospital. A flight operation crew of the 112th Aviation received the call and dispatched a UH-72 Lakota helicopter, the newest medical evacuation aircraft supporting the Wisconsin National Guard.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Barrera, 112th Aviation senior medic, served as the non-commissioned officer in charge for the exercise.

Continued on Page 16

Continued from Page 15

“I wanted to ensure that the ground medic on scene was going to be able to apply all of his skills needed,” he said. “[Stalewski] was able to perform outstanding. He did a great job, was able to stabilize and take care of what needed to happen.”

The training also provided an opportunity for the Soldiers to interact with the Fond du Lac Flight for Life crew to learn how they operate and become familiar with each other’s equipment. If an actual domestic disaster occurred, the two entities would work together to keep Wisconsin citizens safe.

“I think the best part, and the most unexpected part, of this training that I’m taking is actually the civilian input from the Flight for Life folks here,” commented Stalewski. “They have a lot of great things to say, and [I’ve learned] a lot in the last few hours here.”

Meanwhile in Oconomowoc, Soldiers of the 135th Medical Company conducted mass casualty evacuation training at Battle Creek Airfield. This training scenario allowed for Soldiers to practice evacuating injured persons by air.

The training allowed Soldiers to experience what evacuees feel as they are transferred by helicopter. In the scenario, Soldiers acted as simulated casualties and experienced what it’s like to be a patient.

“[In the exercise] I was going into hypothermia, so we got treated and put onto the chopper and got to take an awesome ride,” said Spc. Tamara Eng, a medic with the 135th.

Getting the opportunity to conduct

Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 135th Medical Company conducted an air evacuation exercise at Battle Creek Air Field in Oconomowoc on March 2. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Sgt. Tyler Lasure

realistic training is important for all Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers, and in particular, Soldiers charged with providing life-saving care to wounded Soldiers.

While all the medics in the unit are well-versed in combat procedures, providing medical care in peacetime operations has its own special requirements. Soldiers normally learn procedures for air medical evacuation requests in a combat environment. During peacetime, or natural disasters, the requirements differ, requiring Soldiers to adapt to the unique situation presented to them.

Many Soldiers train with individuals in their own unit, but rarely with other units. For operations requiring good communications between two units – like medics and the aviation support they need to get the Soldier to medical treatment facilities, joint exercises like the one conducted March 2 are vital.

“The Soldiers need to have realistic training,” said 1st Lt. Angela Becker-Bradley. “This is something they wanted and needed, especially working with sister units. I hope they got a good hands-on feel for what should be happening and what their jobs are.”

Throughout the frigid morning Soldiers trained on treating casualties, providing triage care, transporting casualties, requesting air evacuation, setting up a landing zone for air evacuation, and preparing and loading casualties for air evacuation.

“I have never had any opportunity to work with a helicopter before,” said Spc. Mike Glime, a medic with the 135th. “That is something that if you are deployed you will be doing and that is something that all medics should have the chance to do.”

The training reinforced the Guard’s readiness to respond to emergencies statewide in partnership with civilian authorities. ■

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Wisconsin Guard MET visits Nicaragua to plan disaster relief responses

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA — There's a world of difference between tornadoes and winter storms, the natural disasters typical to Wisconsin, and the earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions more common to Nicaragua. But the planning and preparation needed to respond effectively is a similar process, whether in the Dairy State or a Central American nation.

With that in mind, seven members of the Wisconsin National Guard's Military Engagement Team (MET) — representing MET's communications, logistics and operations teams — collaborated on disaster response with officials from the Nicaraguan army's civil defense authority Jan. 28-31.

"Even though they have disasters that we don't experience in Wisconsin, there is a process that takes place," said Lt. Col. Robert Buettner, the MET's officer in charge. "Hopefully we can show them better ways to operate and take what they currently have and improve their communication."

As the conference began, Capt. Joshua Porter, the officer in charge of the MET's operations section, said, "I expect to learn just as much from them as I hope they learn from us."

Armed with lessons from past experiences, the Soldiers from both nations began exchanging ideas and sharing practices. Wisconsin's Guardsmen, fresh off their activation for a major winter storm that blanketed the state with up to 20 inches of snow in December, shared the process by which they coordinated their response.

"We have a lot of similarities in how support to domestic responses works in both of our countries," Maj. Dan Statz, the Wisconsin National Guard's chief of future operations, said while briefing the Nicaraguan leadership.

The visit served as a capstone for the MET leadership's three-day trip to



Capt. Joshua Porter (right) and Lt. Col. Robert Buettner, both members of the Wisconsin National Guard's MET, discuss operations strategies with their Nicaraguan counterparts at a planning conference on Jan. 29. The MET visited Nicaragua

Jan. 28-Feb. 1 to plan its future visits to assist officials from the Nicaraguan Army's Civil Defense in planning and preparing for natural disasters. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato

Nicaragua, and it provided valuable insight into how the nation's civil defense operates in the event of emergencies. Working at the site were civil defense personnel and humanitarian rescue teams from the Nicaraguan army and Managua police.

"There are different agencies that are working collectively — the civilian and the military," said Maj. Myron Davis, the MET's logistics officer, who noted the similarities to how the National Guard works with civilian agencies in Wisconsin.

"So anytime you have two governmental agencies working together, there is always a lot of extra coordination that needs to take place. There are communications breakdowns because of how civilians run operations compared to military."

Davis relished the opportunity to learn from the Nicaraguans as well.

"I think it's a great opportunity," he said of the developing partnership. "I think there is a good opportunity to really share lessons learned and have a good

partnership going forward. I think it's a win-win for both countries."

The MET will return to Nicaragua for approximately one month in February and March. During that visit, each of its three sections will have an opportunity to work directly with their Nicaraguan counterparts in planning and preparing for natural disaster responses. 📷

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Deploying California Guard unit targets 426th RTI for training

1st Lt. Joseph Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

FORT McCOY — Artillerymen from the California Army National Guard spent two weeks braving freezing temperatures here to learn from a group of Wisconsin Soldiers. The training represented a rare opportunity for Wisconsin instructors to train a battery heading off on a deployment.

About a dozen Soldiers from the Wisconsin National Guard's 1st Battalion, 426th RTI, Field Artillery and the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's 1st Battalion 120th Field Artillery trained about 45 members of the Bakersfield, Calif.-based Battery B, 1st Battalion, 143rd Field Artillery. During the first two weeks of February the California Soldiers got hands-on experience with the M777 howitzer, the weapons system they will use in Afghanistan.

While training individual artillerymen in their military occupation specialty is routine for the 426th, it has been three years since the RTI trained a unit — and even longer since the RTI hosted one at Fort McCoy.

"This is the first time we've actually trained up a whole unit going on a deployment, so it's a bit of a big deal for us," said 426th instructor Sgt. 1st Class George McConville. "And we know it's a big deal for them, because they're going to be shooting it downrange [on deployment]."

The California Soldiers are slated to deploy to Afghanistan in June. The 143rd was traditionally trained to fire the M119 howitzer, which shoots a 105-mm round, but in Afghanistan they will use the M777, which fires a 155-mm round.

The 426th RTI offers one of the few M777 training opportunities within the National Guard. After a bit of networking between officers from each state, the California Guardsmen were on their way to Wisconsin, where they spent 15

days learning about the M777 and how it differed from the M119s with which they were familiar. The training culminated with a Feb. 12 live-fire exercise.

"It's good learning more artillery pieces to make us more proficient at our job," said Sgt. Michael Bones of Bakersfield, Calif. "What I'm taking from this is a lot of good training. It's good preparedness for our impending mission, but I'm trying to get acclimated [to the weather]," he added with a laugh.

Pvt. Sam Mabanta, of Fresno, Calif., said even though he is a snowboarder, he had never been in such cold temperatures. He also said the unit previously considered a 60-degree day to be a cold day in the field.

"It's a good time though," he said. "I'm a big fan of cold weather. Some of these guys don't like it, but I love it."

"It's been good training. The [426th RTI] staff is phenomenal, and we just can't wait to shoot these rounds," Mabanta continued. "It's a great experience because being in Afghanistan with the cold weather and all, this will train us to acclimate to the weather and the conditions."

Just as training the artillery battery was a milestone for the 426th instructors, the California unit's mission is a milestone for the California National Guard.

"This will be the first time in their history going into combat actually firing field artillery, and it will be the first time that the California National Guard has fired artillery since the Korean War," explained Sgt. 1st Class Todd Hunt, a platoon sergeant in the unit. "So these guys are actually making history, and they are extremely stoked about it."

Maj. Dale Swanson, the officer in charge of the training, highlighted the personal and professional relationships that facilitated the training and described the two-week course as a "win-win for everybody."

[Complete story online](#)

Soldiers from the California Army National Guard's Battery B, 1st Battalion, 143rd Field Artillery conducted live fire training at the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 426th Regional Training Institute Feb. 12 at Fort McCoy. The California unit requested to train with the 426th RTI, which last year was certified as an Institute of Excellence. Wisconsin National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato



GOING SOLO

■ MRT Center setting the standard for National Guard resilience training

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

FORT McCOY — The Wisconsin Army National Guard concluded its first master resilience trainer [MRT] course without the aid of external primary instructors March 14 at the Wisconsin Military Academy.

Going solo in teaching the course for the first time, Wisconsin's Guard became the only Reserve Component organization in the nation to certify MRTs on its own. It is only the second to do so Army-wide.

Now dubbed the National Guard Master Resilience Training Center, Wisconsin's 426th Regiment Regional Training Institute [RTI] began running MRT courses in summer 2011 at the Wisconsin Military Academy, but the course's primary instructor always came from the University of Pennsylvania, where the Army's resilience program was first developed. Though Wisconsin MRTs ran much of the course, the university's primary instructor was always there to oversee the program.

Now Wisconsin is on its own, becoming only the second self-sufficient course in the nation. The only other solo MRT course is at Fort Jackson, S.C., where the active duty course is



Students and staff of the National Guard Master Resilience Training Center's first solo course. The class, which ran March 4-14 at Fort McCoy, was the first course taught

independently with its own instructor. It is the only self-sufficient resilience training center in the National Guard. Wisconsin National Guard photo

headquartered.

The opportunity came about as a result of Maj. Sylvia Lopez's completion of the MRT level four primary instructor course in January. She is the only member of the National Guard certified to teach the course.

"It's just a sense of accomplishment," said Lopez, who served as the inaugural course's primary instructor. "I guess that is the best way to describe it, because we've worked really hard to get to this place. Everybody has sacrificed so much to get to this point, and we believe in the mission."

"We believe in what we do," she said. "We see how MRT transforms lives, and how it affects so many people."

Lopez immediately credited the hard work of her team at the 426th. There were 20 Guardsmen on orders to run the course, which began March 4. It was the 20th iteration of the MRT course at Fort McCoy, which has now trained nearly 1,100 students from the National Guard, Reserve, active duty and family program civilians.

The 426th is in the process of training additional primary instructors from Wisconsin.

"I couldn't be more proud of her," Lt. Col. Andrew Ratzlaff, the commander of the second battalion, 426th RTI, said of Lopez. "The bigger point is she got to where she is at through the hard work and efforts of that entire staff up there. So there is a reason why she is there, and that's because of the teamwork of everyone."

Arriving at this point was an accomplishment several years in the making for the 426th. In 2009, Lopez and a handful of other officers were asked to attend the Army's new training program aimed at building the resilience of its force through positive thinking.

"The National Guard Bureau sees the fact that soldiers are coming back with issues they need to deal with, and while this is not a suicide prevention program, it does help soldiers avoid negative situations and how to think their way out of it rather than act their way out of it," said Ratzlaff.

There were no National Guard slots for the course, however. Guardsmen who wanted to take the course had to get an active duty slot at either Fort Jackson or at the University of Pennsylvania.

When Lopez and others like Capt. Kristin Boustany returned from the first course, they became believers, and the idea to start the first National Guard resilience course was born.

Wisconsin began to build a staff and add MRTs.

"They're a great group," said Lopez. "They are really living the skills."

"They epitomize the skills, and that's why we're here."

Wisconsin has taken a leadership role in the Army's overall resilience training initiative. Having the first solo National Guard MRT course only cemented its reputation. Instructors from Wisconsin not only teach at the Wisconsin Military Academy, but they have also travelled to other states and most major Army installations to teach their techniques. 📷

[Story online](#)

Wisconsin Guard ROTC cadets part of innovative virtual training exercise

Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

Twenty-seven young Soldiers completed their pre-combat checks and inspections as they awaited the command to move out toward their objective. The order came in short, terse statements.

“Alpha is on my left, Bravo is on my right,” the squad leader said. “Move in a wedge formation — movement to contact, people. Are we ready? Let’s go.”

“Roger that, roger that, roger that,” a team leader replied.

“Bravo, you move through first — Alpha has security,” the squad leader directed. “Heads on a swivel here, let’s go — it’s an open area.”

Even though the Soldiers were advancing through terrain at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State, in reality they were seated somewhat comfortably in two rooms on the second floor of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater’s University Center building. The Reserve Officers’ Training Corps students — which include many Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Company A, 257th Brigade Support Battalion in Whitewater — were among a handful of ROTC cadets nationwide to engage in the Virtual Battlespace 2 training program. The realistic virtual environment includes such ambience touches as buzzing mosquitoes and the sound of helicopters approaching or departing.

“We’ve coordinated with the Army’s Virtual Battlespace team at Fort McCoy to simulate the squad and platoon [situational training exercise] ROTC cadets go through out at Fort Lewis, Wash., at LDAC (Leadership Development and Assessment Course) each summer,” explained Lt. Col. Carl Meredith, military science professor at UW-Whitewater and head of the ROTC program there. “What we’ve done is set up a training program for our candidates and worked with these

guys, take those operation orders and the Fort Lewis terrain map model and gave it to the VBS2 guys to recreate these scenarios in a virtual context so that we could actually train when the weather is inclement and we can’t get outside and train.”

The VBS2 program allows cadets to develop critical leadership skills in tactical environments during the winter months, without the expense of traveling to Fort McCoy. The four 90-minute training scenarios were designed to mirror those that third-year ROTC cadets will face at Lewis-McChord this summer, right down to the same map coordinates.

“The scenarios they’re using right now are really the scenarios they used last year, so they’re relatively fresh,” said Charlie

Fischer, military science instructor at UW-Whitewater. “I had maps from last year’s training area that we sent up to [the VBS2] crew, and they took the maps and built the [virtual] terrain area.”

Danielle Sternberg of Green Bay, a fourth-year ROTC cadet who monitored the exercise as an observer-controller, said this type of training would have been valuable last year before she took part in LDAC.

“Overall, it’s just a great learning tool, something that ROTC programs across the country haven’t had the opportunity to use yet,” the Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldier said. “I think it’s a great alternative to being out in the snow for six hours, crawling around and everybody freezing

and hungry. [Cadets] can focus more on their leadership ability while indoors in a controlled environment, and be able to see it on a screen.”

One key benefit to the VBS2 program is the ability to replay the exercise to allow participants to see how they performed.

Third-year ROTC cadet Cody Rubiego of Delafield, also a Wisconsin National Guard Soldier, served as a team leader in the first scenario and was preparing to take on the role of squad leader.

“It’s pretty good,” he said of the virtual training. “It makes you use everything you would do in a real scenario.

“The first one was kind of a rough run because we were still getting used to the controls and everything,” he continued. “I think you learn a lot from people going before you, the squad leaders, what they did and what they didn’t do.”

Fellow Wisconsin National Guardsman Spencer Burns, also a third-year ROTC cadet, led two teams as a squad leader in the first virtual training exercise.

“It was pretty good training,” Burns said. “I don’t really play video games, but from what I saw, everything was pretty real-life. We can do all of the movements — the arm and hand signals — [and] we can communicate with our headsets. It was pretty spot-on. Being the first squad to go through, we really didn’t know what to expect with the equipment itself. I think as we get more fluent with it, the lanes will run more smoothly.”

Burns indicated that this training would “help us be successful. Keeping that confidence in being able to lead your troops, make sure they know you have confidence in what you’re doing so the mission can get done.”

Meredith said that planning for the virtual training exercise began in late October, and was an extension of what his predecessor, Lt. Col. Brian Wolhaupter, sought to do by incorporating technology into cadet training. 

[Complete story online](#)

OIF: 10 YEARS LATER

From back-filling stateside active component units that deployed in the buildup to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or seeking weapons of mass destruction in the early days of the ground campaign to closing down forward operating bases and turning them over to the Iraqi government, thousands of Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers and Airmen played key roles in the conflict that began 10 years ago on March 20.

Of the more than 11,000 Wisconsin National Guard members to deploy since Sept. 11, 2001, roughly 80 percent — more than 8,800 — deployed in support of OIF. That number is based on the number

Wisconsin National Guard involved in OIF from start to finish

of Wisconsin National Guard members included in each deployment, so Guard members who deployed more than once are counted more than once.

But supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom did not come without cost, beyond the sacrifice of time and safety. Nine of the 10 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers who lost their lives while deployed since Sept. 11, 2001 died in Iraq — including Spc. Michelle Witmer, the first female National Guard Soldier to die

in combat.

Wisconsin National Guard support for OIF began before combat operations commenced. The West Bend-based 832nd Medical Company — an air ambulance company — deployed to Fort Lewis, Wash., in January 2003 to backfill the 54th Medical Company, which was providing medical evacuation support in Iraq.

Another Army aviation unit, the Madison-based 1st Battalion, 147th Command Aviation, was ordered to active duty Jan. 26, 2003 and given six days to report to Fort McCoy, Wis. The unit deployed to Kuwait on March 22,

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An F-16C Fighter Aircraft from the 332nd Expeditionary Wing, Balad Airbase, Iraq performs an afterburner takeoff on its way to fly a combat mission in the skies over Iraq. Wisconsin Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Dan Richardson



Wisconsin National Guard supported OIF from the start

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one day after the ground campaign began in Iraq. Their mission included supporting the 75th Exploitation Task Force with finding evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, flying forensic teams to investigate mass grave sites, pipeline survey teams to inspect sabotaged oil lines, and transporting general officers and dignitaries. The 147th was familiar with the environment, having completed more than 300 missions in the region between July 2001 and August 2002.

The 229th Engineer Company, a horizontal construction unit, received its alert notice and mobilization order within minutes of each other on Feb. 4. The 829th Engineer Detachment, which had sent 12 members to Afghanistan in 2001, was mobilized Feb. 6 for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Richland Center-based unit deployed to Iraq May 30. The Ashland-based 106th Engineer Detachment was also called to active duty on Feb. 6, but major combat operations in Iraq ended so quickly that the 54-member quarry team was redirected to Fort Lewis, Wash., to provide engineer support for the Army's ROTC Advanced Camp.

The 500-member 724th Engineer Battalion on March 1, 2003 became the largest Wisconsin National Guard unit mobilized since 1961. The 32nd Military Police Company of Milwaukee and Madison, and the 1158th Transportation Company in Tomah, Beloit and Black River Falls were also mobilized March 1 and called to active duty March 15.

"We expect to conduct convoy and critical site security, as well as law and order operations," said then-Capt. Scott Southworth, commander of the 32nd MP Company. "We may even get the chance to work directly with Iraqi civilian police officials."

The Wisconsin Air National Guard also was called up in the early months to support OIF, but deployments were typically shorter in duration and did not require the entire unit. About 60 members of the 128th Air Refueling Wing returned May 9-10 from an overseas deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Approximately a dozen Security Forces members of the 128th Air Refueling Wing returned May 29 from an overseas deployment supporting Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Seventeen members of the 115th Security Forces Squadron Wing returned June 17 from an overseas deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

About 140 members of the 1158th Transportation Company began demobilizing in June, after the swift



A member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, above, prepares for a convoy escort mission in the turret of an uparmored Humvee May 2, 2006. At left, Michelle Witmer (far left) with her sisters Rachel and Charity in Iraq in 2004. Michelle and Rachel were both in the 32nd Military Police Company, while Charity deployed with Company B, 118th Medical Battalion.

victory in Iraq reduced the need for hauling heavy military equipment in theater. The remainder of the unit found itself reassigned to stateside missions at Fort Irwin, Calif., and Fort Knox, Ky.

Spc. Michelle Witmer of the 32nd MP Company was killed April 9, 2004 during a firefight in Baghdad. She was the first Wisconsin National Guard casualty in the global war on terror and the first female combat casualty in the entire National Guard. The 32nd MP Company returned to Wisconsin in late July, after 14 months in Iraq, having suffered 23 hostile action injuries — more than any Wisconsin National Guard unit since World War II.

2004 closed on a somber note when Staff Sgt. Todd Olson of Detachment 1, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry died Dec. 27 in Tikrit, Iraq from wounds suffered Dec. 26 by an improvised explosive device in Samarra, Iraq.

Spc. Charles Kaufman of Company C, 1st Battalion,

128th Infantry, was killed in Baghdad June 26, 2005 by an improvised explosive device. The 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery and the 2nd Battalion, 128th Infantry reported for active duty in August. Both battalions mobilized at Camp Shelby, Miss., and weathered Hurricane Katrina later that month.

Spc. Michael Wendling and Sgt. Andrew Wallace, members of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, were killed Sept. 26, 2005 in Safwan, Iraq during a convoy escort mission.

Spc. Stephen Castner of Company C, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery was killed July 24, 2006 by an improvised explosive device near Tallil, Iraq on his first convoy mission. The 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery was replacing the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, and performed convoy escort missions during the "troop

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LEFT: Staff Sgt. Jason Klingbiel, a member of the 115th Fighter Wing deployed with the 447th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron fuels distribution operator, connects a fuel hose from an R14 fuel unit to the bottom loader of his



R11 fuel truck July 20, 2009. CENTER: The 724th Engineer Battalion prepared a "shout-out" video for the 2011 Rose Bowl game. **RIGHT:** Staff Sgt. Dan Dorst of the 1158th Transportation Company in Mosul, Iraq on Sept. 11, 2005.



Roughly 80 percent of Wisconsin National Guard deployments supported OIF

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surge" in the first half of 2007.

Sgt. Ryan Jopek, serving with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, was killed Aug. 2, 2006 by an improvised explosive device in Tikrit, Iraq on his final scheduled convoy mission before the 127th returned home. Presidential candidate Barack Obama would wear a bracelet with Ryan Jopek's name during the 2008 campaign. Jopek's father, Staff Sgt. Brian Jopek, was also a Wisconsin Army National Guard member and had deployed to Mosul, Iraq in 2004-05 as a member of Detachment 1, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, then chief of the National Guard Bureau, met Sept. 1, 2006 with Mr. Stephen Castner, father of Spc. Stephen W. Castner who was killed July 24 near Tallil, Iraq. The meeting was to fulfill Blum's commitment to Mr. Castner and Gov. Jim Doyle to review the quality of training at Camp Shelby, Miss., and theater equipment. In letters home, Spc. Castner was critical of the mobilization training at Camp Shelby.

Staff Sgt. Robert Basham of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, died April 14, 2007 in a non-combat incident in Qatar. Basham deployed to Kuwait in support of OIF with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 128th Infantry in 2005 and volunteered for another tour of duty with the Kansas

Army National Guard for a mission inside Iraq.

Wisconsin National Guard units continued to deploy in support of OIF as the operation advanced to its final days. The 3,200-member 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team deployed to Iraq in 2009 — the Wisconsin National Guard's largest troop deployment since World War II — where its subordinate units were assigned all across Iraq to perform base security, detainee operations and administrative functions in Baghdad's International Zone. During this time the 32nd Brigade handled the responsible transfer of U.S. contingency bases to the Iraqi government. Meanwhile, the 732nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion processed equipment and materiel for return to the U.S. or to Afghanistan as part of the forces drawdown in Iraq.

Sgt. 1st Class Brian Naseman, of the 108th Forward Support Company, died May 21, 2009 in Taji, Iraq from injuries sustained in a non-combat incident while deployed with the 32nd Brigade. He would be the Wisconsin National Guard's last OIF fatality.

The 724th Engineer Battalion deployed to Iraq in 2010 where it would inherit a growing engineering mission as Task Force Badger during the responsible force reduction there. That drawdown would send 23 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers home early in July 2010.

The 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation would also gain an

increasing mission load when it deployed to Iraq in late summer 2010. On Sept. 1, 2010, Operation Iraq Freedom officially became Operation New Dawn, signaling the end of combat operations by U.S. forces in Iraq. Later that year, approximately 30 Soldiers from three West Bend-based aviation units would mobilize for the Wisconsin National Guard's final Iraq deployment in 2011.

Gov.-Elect Scott Walker addressed members of Task Force Badger in Iraq Jan. 1, 2011 via satellite link during halftime of the Rose Bowl. The unit returned to Wisconsin Feb. 18.

The 30 Soldiers from three West Bend-based aviation units returned to Wisconsin Nov. 19, 2011, following a nine-month deployment conducting medevac missions in northern Iraq — and closing down military bases in the process.

"We were the last ones out of northern Iraq," said Staff Sgt. Craig Hoffman, a flight medic. "We actually shut off the lights."

"We got out of there and did something that's never been done before — closing down Iraq," said Capt. Randall Ramm, officer in charge. 🇺🇸

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Guard member returns memento of fallen WWII hero

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

A Sun Prairie Veterans of Foreign Wars post got a priceless piece of history Feb. 28 thanks to a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

The Klubertanz-Trapp VFW Post 9362 received the Purple Heart awarded to one of its namesakes after Sgt. 1st Class Alan Foss donated the medal, which he purchased at a garage sale in the late 1990s.

Foss, a retiree records manager in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, purchased the medal for \$3 at a garage sale in Walworth County. Engraved with the name, "Otto A. Trapp," Foss began researching the medal. It sat in his basement in the interim, and even survived a tornado that partially destroyed his house in 2005.

His search ultimately proved fruitless until February 2013, when a chance conversation with a fellow Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs employee led him to the Sun Prairie VFW post bearing Trapp's name.

When Foss called the VFW post Feb. 26, its commander, Ralph Brandenburg, could not believe what he was hearing. Foss dropped off the medal two days later, and the VFW post could not have been happier.

"To have this, this is like a miracle happening out of the sky," Brandenburg said. "Where has it been for this many years? All of a sudden it's like a boomerang, and it's coming back to us."

According to a certificate furnished to Foss, Otto A. Trapp, a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, was killed near France over the Mediterranean Sea on Aug. 24, 1944. He was a member of the 441st squadron, 320th Bomb Group, and he had participated in the Normandy invasion just a few months before his passing.

Foss's research suggested that Trapp, originally of Sun Prairie, served as a crew chief on a B-26 Marauder. His body was never recovered, but a gravestone commemorates his legacy at an American military cemetery in France.

Sun Prairie's VFW post was founded in 1947, but it never had anything to commemorate Trapp until now, nearly 70 years after his death.

"Being that he is one of the namesakes of the post, it means a lot to have it here," said former VFW Post 9362 commander Phil Gerg.

Gerg said he hoped Trapp's family would someday have the medal.

But tracking down family members has proven a tall



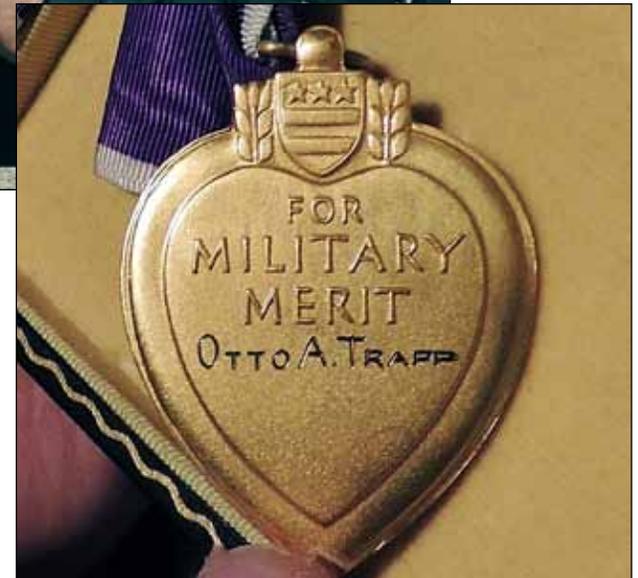
Sgt. 1st Class Alan Foss, of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, and Ralph Brandenburg, commander of Klubertanz-Trapp VFW Post 9362 in Sun Prairie, pose with Staff Sgt. Otto A. Trapp's Purple Heart Feb. 28. The VFW post is named in honor of Trapp, who was killed in action in 1944. Photos courtesy Alan Foss

task for both Foss and the VFW. Foss made several phone calls when he first acquired the medal, but he found no success linking up with a member of the Trapp family. Trapp had no known children, and his parents have long since passed away. Foss also had no way of knowing whether Trapp had any siblings.

The VFW is planning to have a ceremony at the post to commemorate the return of Trapp's Purple Heart, though a date has not yet been set. The post hopes to find a member of the Trapp family with knowledge of Otto and his medal and invite them to that ceremony.

"Really what we want to do is donate it to the VFW for display, so everyone can enjoy it," Foss said. 📷

[Story online](#)



New leadership takes charge at Volk Field



Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

Col. Dave Romuald, of Cottage Grove, formally became the 10th commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's Volk Field Air Base during a Jan. 3 ceremony.

"We are blessed in the Wisconsin Air National Guard with an incredibly deep bench," Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, said during the ceremony. "But nobody is ready for this assignment more than the man sitting right here, Col. Dave Romuald."

Romuald joined the U.S. Air Force in 1981 and the Wisconsin Air National Guard in 1997. He was working as a commercial pilot when Brig. Gen. John McCoy, former assistant adjutant general for Air, contacted him about taking command at Volk Field.

"I was thrilled when Brig. Gen. McCoy called me and asked if I would consider coming out here to Volk Field," Romuald said. "[Then-Col. Ebben] assured me that Volk Field was full of very high-caliber people. I was really put at ease about taking this job.

"That's not to say that there won't be some challenges," Romuald continued. "You know that there are some serious financial challenges for our country, and therefore to the Department of Defense."

Among those challenges: a 25 percent funding cut to Combat Readiness Training Centers, of which one is located at Volk Field. Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, the former commander at Volk Field and the new assistant adjutant general for Air, outlined a plan with Romuald that would structure the funding cuts in such a way as to lessen the impact at Volk Field. Romuald also cited Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's recent emphasis on prioritizing readiness in the defense budget.

"I think we have a bright future ahead of us," Romuald said. "I am confident we have the right people in place."

Ebben recalled some of the significant events during his time at the helm for Volk Field, including the NATO exercise Ramstein Rover and a memorial service for base

Col. David Romuald receives the flag of command from Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, signifying his taking command of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's Volk Field during a formal ceremony Jan. 3. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Office photos by Vaughn R. Larson



Col. David Romuald is congratulated after he officially took command of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's Volk Field during a formal ceremony Jan. 3. Romuald was preceded in command by Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, who is now the assistant adjutant general for Air, Wisconsin Air National Guard.

namesake 1st Lt. Jerome Volk.

"I've been very blessed in my career to have many great assignments," Ebben said. "This ranks right up there at the top. For an aviation guy to come up here and you don't get to fly, that's saying something. It's been an extremely rewarding tour, an honor and a privilege."

Dunbar acknowledged the vision and efforts of retired generals Fred Sloan and Albert Wilkening, who expanded Volk Field's vision and capabilities, and praised Ebben for his leadership at Volk Field.

"Brig. Gen. Ebben, in his tenure here, has done an exceptional job," Dunbar said. "He continued to develop the relationships that we need, and quietly working with the National Guard Bureau and the United States Air Force, setting in place the kinds of procedures and initiatives we need to be relevant in the 21st century. It takes a very special leader to do what Brig. Gen. Ebben has done."

Romuald agreed.

"I stand before you today very humbled, following in the footsteps of Brig. Gen. Ebben," he said. "I know I have a huge responsibility and reputation to uphold. I will give it my best effort." 📷

[Story online](#)

Brig. Gen. Ebbens assumes authority of Wisconsin Air National Guard

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

The man responsible for leading Wisconsin's 2,300-strong Air National Guard force for the last five years formally handed over control to his successor during a Jan. 4 ceremony at Joint Forces Headquarters in Madison.

Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, the former commander of Volk Field in Camp Douglas, took over as the state's assistant adjutant general for Air. He replaced Brig. Gen. John McCoy, who had held the post since 2008. McCoy will continue to serve as the chief of staff for Air.

Speaking for the last time as the deputy adjutant general, McCoy thanked Gov. Scott Walker, Wisconsin's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, the men and women of the Air National Guard, and his family for their support during his tenure as the Air National Guard's top officer.

He also expressed his confidence in Ebben.

"If you have to be replaced, this is the guy to be replaced by — Gary Ebben," McCoy said. "I truly appreciate your friendship and your support."

Walker offered words of praise for both general officers and pointed out that McCoy presided over a period of time in which the National Guard mobilized at its greatest rate since World War II.

"So that underlines exactly just how significant this timeframe of leadership has been both in the Air National Guard and the Army National Guard in terms of the tremendously well-trained, well-experienced men and women of our Wisconsin National Guard," Walker said.

Of Ebben, the governor said, "We know that just as [McCoy] has brought his talents from the 128th [Air Refueling Wing in Milwaukee], we know your experience as a command pilot and working your way through the 115th [Fighter Wing in Madison] and particularly, most recently, your outstanding award-winning leadership

leading Volk Field will be a great tradition followed by [McCoy's] leadership up until this point.

"And we know that on behalf of all the men and women of the Air National Guard, we're in good hands here in the State of Wisconsin."

In his own remarks, Maj. Gen. Dunbar thanked McCoy for his years of service and positive attitude.

"Not every day when you are the deputy adjutant general for air in Wisconsin is the kind of day when the sun is always shining," he said. "There are some challenges. But with Brig. Gen. McCoy, there is always a smile. Brig. Gen. McCoy's calm, steady leadership had a profound and lasting impact on the Wisconsin Air National Guard."

The adjutant general credited Ebben, a former A-10 and RC-26 pilot, with building the legacy of the 115th Fighter Wing as vice wing commander. He also commended him for his leadership while at Volk Field.

"When we choose a new leader for this National Guard, it is very, very important," Dunbar said. "It is not inconsequential. We have to choose the right person. I am confident we have done just that."

Following the formal change of authority ceremony, Ebben addressed the assembled audience of senior National Guard leaders for the first time as the deputy adjutant general for air. He thanked his family and was quick to praise McCoy for his leadership and for encouraging him to step out of his comfort zone and seek challenging positions.

"I'm greatly blessed. The Air National Guard has got some challenges. The country is recognizing some fiscal challenges," Ebben said. "Recapitalization is an issue, and these are serious issues. Some are going to be immediate issues, and there are going to be some longer term impacts, but it is a dynamic time in the Air National Guard."



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Command Chief Master Sergeant Gregory Cullen passes the colors to outgoing Assistant Adjutant General for Air Brig. Gen. John McCoy during a Jan. 4 change of authority ceremony at Joint Forces Headquarters in Madison. McCoy formally yielded his position to Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, above during the ceremony.
Wisconsin National Guard photos by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato

Shields becomes state's top senior enlisted Soldier

1st Lt. Joseph Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

The Wisconsin Army National Guard welcomed its next state command sergeant major in a Feb. 9 change of responsibility ceremony in Madison. It also bid farewell to the man who held the job since 2007.

When retiring Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper formally handed over the noncommissioned officer saber to Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields, it marked the beginning of a new chapter in the Wisconsin Army National Guard's long history. Shields became Wisconsin's seventh state command sergeant major, assuming responsibility from Stopper, who led the Wisconsin Army National Guard's enlisted Soldiers for the past six years.

Stopper was the state's top enlisted Soldier during a tumultuous time that saw the National Guard maintain its highest operations tempo since World War II.

The retiring command sergeant major from Baraboo began his distinguished career in 1979 as a cavalry scout in the 105th Cavalry Squadron before ascending to the role of the state's senior enlisted advisor.

"Your energy, dedication, strategic vision, commitment, and leadership during the highest operations tempo period that the Wisconsin Army National Guard has seen since World War II has been nothing short of phenomenal," Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, assistant adjutant general for Army, said. "And as we transition from your leadership to that of Command Sgt. Maj. Shields, it's important that our Soldiers know just how significant of an impact you have had on the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

"You leave your post with the Wisconsin Army National Guard having achieved unprecedented levels of personnel, training, and equipment readiness and recognition as a state that will always answer the call with some of the best-led, best-equipped, best-trained, and modern and ready Soldiers the Army has to offer," Anderson continued.

"In no small part, that is due to your commitment to our Soldiers, to our families, and an unwavering commitment to the standards. Your legacy will live on in the 7,500 Soldiers that will lead this great organization after we are all long retired."

Anderson, the top-ranking officer in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, called Stopper and his successor, "two of the finest, professional, noncommissioned officers I have had the honor of serving with in my 30 years in uniform."

In his 34 years of service in the National Guard, Stopper served in a variety of roles and units. He spent time in an engineer battalion, an infantry battalion, and as the command sergeant major for the Madison-based 64th Troop Command. He also served in Iraq in 2005-06.

Shields, of Menomonee Falls, has 40 years of military service to his credit. A graduate of Stevens Point Area Senior High School, Shields enlisted in 1972. He entered active duty before transferring to the Wisconsin Army National Guard in 1979. During his long career, he deployed to Korea, Iraq, and most recently to Kosovo, where he served as the command sergeant major for the Milwaukee-based 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

Stressing the importance of maintaining continuity but also inviting change, Shields highlighted the significance of mentorship and leadership development within the force. He also discussed the challenges Guardsmen face in balancing civilian employment, family, and the military.

"The traditional citizen Soldier makes a tremendous commitment as a leader in our organization, balancing family, civilian employment, the National Guard, and friends," he said. "Our operational tempo over the past 11 years added to that challenge. As a traditional Guardsman since 1979, I understand those challenges, because I have lived them as well."

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Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields returns a saber as part of a formal transfer of responsibility ceremony Feb. 9 at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison. Shields was installed as the Wisconsin Army National Guard's state senior enlisted advisor, replacing Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper (inset, below), who is retiring from military service.
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato



112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Pfc. Chris Enderle

Local volunteer carries cavalry association colors in presidential inauguration parade

1st Lt. Joseph Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

One of the only representatives of Wisconsin in January's inauguration parade carried a poignant symbol of the Wisconsin Army National Guard and its cavalry troopers.

Amid the pomp and circumstance of the inauguration parade was a Cottage Grove woman on horseback flanked by two other riders. The trio carried the U.S. flag, the Wisconsin flag and the flag of Wisconsin's Light Horse Cavalry Association — the state's chapter of the United States Cavalry and Armor Association. Stetsons loaned from members of the Light Horse Cavalry Association, many of whose members hail from the ranks of the Wisconsin National Guard's 105th Cavalry Squadron, adorned their heads.

The woman at the center — Paulette Stelpflug, who, along with wounded Vietnam War veteran Ted Schluter, began the At Ease for Veterans program two years ago at Freedom Stables on Schluter's property in Deerfield. The program aims to help wounded veterans, their families, and those struggling with adjusting back to the civilian world by connecting them with horses and other veterans.

"One of the things that becomes difficult is coming home and having that tangible thing to have as a connection with family members," Stelpflug said. "We're kind of hoping to fill that or at least offer that choice. Say a returning Soldier wants to come out and work with the horses, and in the meantime, while they were deployed, their family members could come out and work with the horses. So they've got something to share that's in common."

At Ease for Veterans is an all-volunteer program, and its founders provide the equine therapy at no charge for Soldiers and veterans.

Many of her clients come to Freedom Stables trying to unwind from combat and



Staff Sgt. Dan Killam (left) and 105th Cavalry Squadron commander Lt. Col. Alston with Paulette Stelpflug, of Cottage Grove. Stelpflug rode in the presidential inauguration parade carrying the colors for the Light Horse Cavalry Association of Wisconsin. Submitted photo

the sense of hyper-vigilance that comes with a deployment.

"They'll just plain tell me, 'When I'm out here, I'm not always worried about where the doors are at,'" Stelpflug said. "So they'll give me mental feedback on that, which has helped me understand a little better to some extent where their thinking is from."

Their work earned the respect of the president, as Stelpflug was chosen from 3,000 applicants to ride in the inauguration parade for President Barack Obama on Jan. 21. It also attracted the attention of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Madison-based 105th Cavalry Squadron, whose historical roots lie in horse cavalry.

Many of the unit's Soldiers are members of the Light Horse Cavalry Association of Wisconsin. Vietnam Veteran and association member Dennis Landen originally heard about the At Ease program and began discussing it with

fellow Light Horse Cavalry Association members last summer, who were looking for an equestrian connection to augment their outreach programs with other volunteer organizations. After Staff Sgt. Dan Killam and 105th Cavalry Squadron commander Lt. Col. Jeff Alston visited Freedom Stables for themselves, a relationship was born.

Freedom Stables now has a partnership to work directly with the Light Horse Cavalry Association and the families of its Soldiers. A few of their horses even showed up at an association formal at Monona Terrace in Madison last fall.

"When you bring in people who genuinely love Soldiers and genuinely love the families of Soldiers and really have no other connection to the military except for that and they bring horses and want to play equine soccer ... that reinvigorates things in a way that we don't have in-house resources to do," said Killam, a member of the association and the career counselor

for the 105th Cavalry Squadron.

To illustrate the relationship between the association and Freedom Stables, Stelpflug carried the organization's colors during the inauguration. The flag, a brilliant yellow with three-foot streamers representing the Wisconsin National Guard, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and other affiliated organizations, was perhaps the only parade entrant from the Badger State.

"For the president of the Cav Association [Lt. Col. Alston] to say, 'we'd be honored to have you carry our colors as one of the member organizations of the Cavalry Association,' they're quite touched," Killam said of the stables carrying the flag.

"I'm hoping this is an opportunity for people to learn about Freedom Stables and what they do for my families and my Soldiers," Killam said. 🐾

[Story online](#)

Employment brokers convene for job summit in Madison

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

Midwestern military employment assistance leaders met at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Madison March 7 to share strategies aimed at increasing employment for members of the National Guard and Reserve.

Representatives from employment programs in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin participated in the employment summit, where they discussed best practices to get more service members hired.

Unemployment within the ranks of the Reserve Component of the U.S. military has gotten the attention of the highest levels of the military and at the White House. Unemployment is a readiness issue, according to Frank O'Laughlin, the marketing and operations director for the National Guard Bureau. The issue affects resilience, retention, and ultimately a service member's ability to deploy as an effective member of the military.

"If we can help them with their civilian side of the house and keeping them healthy over there, then they're going to be healthy on the military side of the house and we're going to have fewer issues with our Soldiers," O'Laughlin said before the summit began.

Capt. Joseph Ledger, the Wisconsin Employment Resource Connection (WERC) program manager, agreed. He said unemployed service members are often not mission ready because of the stress unemployment can put on relationships.

"The people I talk to in [a traditional National Guard] status, their employment affects their relationships with their spouse, their family, their kids, and it can really lead to an at-risk service member," he said.

According to Ledger, nine percent of Wisconsin's Army National Guard force and seven percent of the Air National Guard is unemployed.

"That is just the unemployed," said Ledger. "That is not the underemployed or individuals that have two or three jobs that

they're working just to make ends meet."

For Soldiers and Airmen returning from deployment, unemployment is as high as 25 to 30 percent.

With stakes so high, the employment assistance leaders gathered to collaborate and share ideas to reduce those numbers. Each state shared about their individual programs while also discussing how to work with employers and across state lines to ensure every service member is prepared to enter the market for a job.

They also discussed the importance of addressing a growing skills gap nationwide, in which employment shortages are projected in skilled manufacturing, information technology, and medical fields. Strategies for working with employers to train service members to fill those jobs was a key point of the discussion.

Ledger and WERC organized the summit, which is the first regional summit of its kind on employment assistance. Individual states have collaborated with other states, but never in a regional summit with multiple states. Ledger had high expectations as the conference began.

"I'm hoping people come and are open about different programs," Ledger said. "I hope we all leave with lessons learned, so we can better our states. Obviously every state is different. What works in Wisconsin might not work in Iowa, which might not work in Michigan."

"There is not a cookie cutter answer for each one of the states," added O'Laughlin. "Each state is going to be different, but there are some best practices."

Lt. Col. Tim Franklin, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program director for Illinois, hoped summits like the one held in Madison could continue in the future.

"The big value is that there is no one right way, but if each of us can take away something that we like from the other states that they're doing to bring to our state, that'll help us do a better job of finding jobs for our Guard members and their families," he said.

[Story online](#)



Capt. Joseph Ledger, above, the Wisconsin Employment Resource Connection program manager, speaks during an employment assistance summit held at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Madison March 7. Below, Lt. Col. Tim Franklin, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program director for Illinois, and Bob Labadie, the Heroes to Hired program director from Ohio, join the discussion on reducing unemployment among reserve component service members. Wisconsin National Guard photos by 1st Lt. Joe Trovato





Service members representing all branches look on as Gov. Scott Walker signs a statement of support pledging to hire members of the National Guard and Reserve during a March 11 ceremony at the state capitol in Madison. Courtesy photo

Gov. Walker, cabinet show support for ESGR

1st Lt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

Gov. Scott Walker and his cabinet secretaries signed employer statements of support for the National Guard and Reserve in a March 11 ceremony at the state capitol in Madison.

Walker and his cabinet joined Dick Vallin, chair of the Wisconsin Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) in signing the documents that pledge support for hiring members of the National Guard and Reserve. Wisconsin became the first state to have its governor and cabinet sign the documents.

The formal statements of support pledge employers to recognize and enforce the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA) and effectively manage employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve. Employers who sign a statement of support also promise to appreciate the values, leadership and unique skills service members bring to the workforce and encourage the hiring of Guardsmen, Reservists, and veterans.

“This is not just about signing something that goes up on a wall,” Walker said. “This is in line with our employers. It is us, together, recognizing that we will go out of our way to support our service members.”

“Today, supportive employers are critical to maintaining the strength and readiness of the nation’s National Guard and Reserve units,” Vallin said. “I am asking all Wisconsin employers to review and amend their current human resources policies to ensure compliance with USERRA.”

[Complete story online](#)



Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers before the Green Bay Packers’ football game Nov. 4, 2012 at Lambeau Field. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Million Fan Salute benefits Wisconsin Guard

Thanks to National Football League fans and USAA, the Wisconsin Army National Guard will be even more fit for duty.

During November’s “Salute to Service” campaign hosted by the NFL and sponsored by USAA, fans were asked to visit www.millionfansalute.com to create a digital salute for the military on behalf of their favorite NFL team. The three NFL cities to tally the most salutes would earn rewards for their selected military community.

The Green Bay Packers were among the top three finishers, resulting in fitness equipment upgrades at a number of Wisconsin Army National Guard armories across the state.

“We are honored to have such a close relationship with the Green Bay Packers, and their support of our Soldiers and Airmen has been nothing short of phenomenal,” said Brig. Gen. Mark

Anderson, assistant adjutant general for Army. “The additional recreational equipment supported by USAA directly benefits all our service members and is greatly appreciated. We thank USAA for their continued support of the National Guard.”

The Detroit Lions and Houston Texans joined the Packers in the top three. The USAA will reward the Michigan National Guard with equipment upgrades at Camp Grayling’s fitness center, and the Texas Air National Guard by helping construct a jogging trail at Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Houston.

Don Clark, USAA executive director of sports sponsorships and events, congratulated all three winners.

“This program underscores that USAA and the entire NFL community actively stands behind all those who have served,” Clark said.

ESGR honors employer for support of Wisconsin National Guard spouse

Sometimes it's the little things that mean the most.

When Racheale Ward's husband Blair, a major with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, was preparing to deploy to Kosovo in 2011, she informed her supervisors at Security Health Plan in Marshfield.

"It was immediately, 'what can we do to help support you?' knowing she had a young child at home," said Ginger Wolf, then one of Racheale's supervisors. They reduced her work schedule from 40 to 32 hours per week, allowing her more time to manage duties at home. "Our human resources department made it very easy for us to work with her to do that."

"It really was the employer effort — we're just instruments of the employer," added Chris Bruni, another of Racheale's supervisors at the time. "We work for a great employer that really recognizes the service of our military and the needs of the families that are staying behind."

"Throughout the year they were so supportive," Racheale said of her supervisors. "My husband mentioned the Patriot Award when he returned from Kosovo and I jumped at the chance — I wanted to do something to thank them for supporting me, and they were pleasantly surprised."

And so, Wolf and Bruni received "My Boss is a Patriot" awards from the Wisconsin Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) at the company headquarters March 14.

"It's really humbling for me," Bruni said of the award. "We don't feel we've done anything. Blair's the one who's done everything, and Racheale taking care of the family at home. They're the ones that have put forth the effort."

Racheale said that the support she received from her employers made that effort much easier.

"At the time Jocelyn was two-and-a-half years old — I had concerns because our family members live between two and three hours away," Racheale said. "I



Security Health Plan in Marshfield, received the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve's "My Boss is a Patriot Award" March 14 for its support of military spouse Racheale Ward (holding daughter Jocelyn), whose husband, Wisconsin Army National Guard Maj. Blair Ward, deployed to Kosovo in late 2011. Also pictured: Ginger Wolf (left), Chris Bruni, and Brig. Gen. Scott Legwold, director of the Wisconsin National Guard Joint Staff.

Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

had concerns because working five days a week and adjusting to be a good mom, I didn't know how I would do that.

"I had a full day to really take care of things, household matters, regroup and be a good mom," she continued. "It allowed me the time to take care of things I probably would not have been able to take care of — doing the grocery shopping for the week, paying the bills, taking care of appointments."

Her husband Blair, who supported Multinational Battle Group-East as a command judge advocate, said the prospect of being away from his family was an "incredible feeling."

"We had a 2-1/2-year-old daughter and she seemed to take most of our time when it was the three of us," Blair said. "When Racheale told me that her employer was going to reduce her work schedule, that gave me significant peace of mind — not just when she told me but throughout my deployment because I was better able to focus on my mission versus thinking about what was going on back home."

Brig. Gen. Scott Legwold, director of the Wisconsin National Guard's Joint Staff, explained that employer support is essential to keeping the Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve — which account for one-half of the U.S. Army —

ready.

"We represent the citizenry of the nation," Legwold said. "When Congress calls, when the president calls, we go on your behalf and we go execute the nation's will wherever it's required."

According to Tim Flatley, an employer support specialist with the [Wisconsin ESGR](#), the "My Boss is a Patriot" award was expanded in 2011 to include employers of military spouses. Six of the 68 ESGR Patriot awards presented so far this year have been to military spouse employers, and last year accounted for 12 of the 216 Patriot awards. 

[Story online](#)

Meritorious service

Michie promoted to rank of brigadier general

The Wisconsin Army National Guard's assistant adjutant general for readiness and training was formally promoted to the rank of brigadier general during a Feb. 28 ceremony in the Senate Chamber of the state capitol.

Moments after Brig. Gen. Mark Michie's children Brandon and Alex fastened his one-star shoulder boards to his uniform, Gov. Scott Walker administered the oath of office before a gathering of family, friends and senior Wisconsin National Guard colleagues.

Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, noted that Michie's career as a traditional National Guard Soldier — part-time as opposed to full-time — is an example of the Wisconsin National Guard's diversity.

"We don't worry about if you're full-time with us or not, we worry about your contribution in uniform, and we select the best officers to rise to this rank," Dunbar said.

"Today we're adding to the ranks someone who has already been an accomplished leader and now, in a

moment, will be a brigadier general, taking that next leadership step forward," Walker said.

Michie, a resident of Harshaw, thanked Walker and Dunbar for their trust and confidence, and said he looked forward to this new opportunity. In his new role, he will assist Dunbar and Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, assistant adjutant general for Army, in providing an Army National Guard capable of meeting state and federal missions. He will be responsible for the training and readiness of all Wisconsin Army National Guard units, and will serve as needed as a liaison between the Guard, U.S. Army Reserve, state and local officials and associations.

"I'm proud to serve with such fine, dedicated officers and Soldiers that we have here in the Wisconsin National Guard," Michie said. "It's unequalled anywhere in this country. To be able to serve with you at this level is truly an honor, and it's a great challenge."

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



Gov. Scott Walker administers the oath of office to Brig. Gen. Mark Michie upon his promotion, as his wife Barb Michie holds a Bible as part of a formal pinning ceremony Feb. 28 in the Senate Chamber of the Wisconsin Capitol building in Madison. Michie is the assistant adjutant general for readiness and training. Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin Army National Guard names Military Order of St. Barbara honorees

Eleven Wisconsin Army National Guard artillerymen and five others were honored at the Feb. 23 St. Barbara's celebration in Wisconsin Rapids.

Col. Kenneth Koon, Wisconsin Army National Guard chief of staff, and retired Col. David Gapinski were inducted into the Ancient Order of St. Barbara, the more distinguished of the two levels of the Military Society of St. Barbara. The Ancient Order is reserved for those whose careers have embodied the spirit, dignity and sense of sacrifice and commitment epitomized by St. Barbara.

Nine Soldiers became members of the Honorable Order of St. Barbara, including Maj. Paul Gellerup, Capt. Harvey Hubbard, 1st Sgt. Mike Seefeld, Master Sgt. Derek Crowley, Sgt. 1st Class Robert Bowen,

Sgt. 1st Class John Hensley, Sgt. 1st Class Brian Schumacher, Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Buenning and Staff Sgt. Mark Turkiewicz. The Honorable Order of St. Barbara recognizes the highest standards of integrity, moral character, professional competence and selflessness, and promotion of the field artillery.

Five women were inducted into the Artillery Order of Molly Pitcher, which recognizes those who have voluntarily contributed significantly to the improvement of the field artillery community. They are Melissa Grawvunder, Lisa Fickel, Theresa Klemme, Joyce Turkiewicz and Heidi Leahy.

St. Barbara is the patron saint of artillery and an early Christian martyr. Legend holds that her father, a wealthy Roman aristocrat, tortured and executed

Barbara for her conversion to Christianity, and was struck down by lightning in divine retribution. She became regarded as a patron saint for protection against thunderstorms, fires and sudden death, and later as the patron saint for early artillerymen who served on unreliable cannons.

Molly Pitcher is the nickname generally attributed to Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley, who is believed to have replaced her injured husband, Revolutionary War artilleryman William Hays, swabbing and loading a cannon during the Battle of Monmouth in 1778. The nickname refers to what would have been her normal duty during battles — bringing pitchers of water to cannons.

[Story online](#)

Wisconsin's Mannel named country's best Army National Guard recruiter

1st Lt. Joseph Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

Wisconsin's top Army National Guard recruiter is now officially the best in the nation.

Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Mannel, a Wisconsin Army National Guard recruiter from New Richmond, advanced to the national competition for the National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Noncommissioned Officer of the Year award in Nashville. He brought home the ultimate prize.

After advancing to regional competition, which included the top recruiters from Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Iowa and Minnesota, Mannel was named one of the nation's Expert 7, a distinction reserved for the top recruiting noncommissioned officer in each of the nation's seven recruiting regions.

When he arrived in Nashville for the Jan. 15 board, he was well-prepared.

"I felt confident, because I'd been there before, and I did the regional one. But you never know what they are going to ask you," he said. "You don't know if they're going to throw you a curveball, so I was touching up on the [noncommissioned officer] creed, the Soldier's creed and all the questions they've asked in the past and just trying to stay proficient on some questions I thought they might ask."

Mannel's wife, Jill, quizzed him on potential board questions each night before the couple went to bed, and Master Sgt. Jason Meyers, Mannel's platoon sergeant in the Eau Claire-based Detachment 1, Company A of Wisconsin's Recruiting and Retention Battalion, setup a mock board with command sergeants major from Wisconsin to help prepare him for the board he'd face in the national competition.

Meyers is an [award-winning](#) noncommissioned officer himself. He and Mannel became the first duo from the same state in recent history to win both major recruiting command awards.



Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Mannel (center) poses with leadership after the National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition in Nashville on Jan. 15. Mannel went on to win the competition. Photo courtesy Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Mannel

He was named as the region's top noncommissioned officer in charge.

Their hard work paid off in the end as Mannel cruised to victory in Nashville. He had advanced to the national competition once before in 2010 and came up short of the ultimate prize. That experience set the stage for his victorious return trip, where he became the first National Guard Recruiting and Retention Noncommissioned Officer of the Year from Wisconsin in recent memory.

"It's a big accomplishment just to know that Wisconsin can do it, and it just paid off – all the hard work over the last three or four years," Mannel said after the competition.

"We are extremely proud of his accomplishment," remarked Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, Wisconsin's deputy adjutant general for Army. "We recognize that this honor is the result of a lot of hard work on his part. His success in

recruitment and seeing his new Soldiers through their training is a reflection of not only his professionalism, but the type of Soldier and noncommissioned officers we have in the Wisconsin Army National Guard."

Each competitor was judged based on their performance before a board of command sergeants major representing each recruiting region. The judges also assessed each candidate based on a review of their backgrounds, their recruiting prowess, and the total Soldier concept. Each candidate was judged on the number of recruits they signed and the number that made it through the Army's training pipeline.

Mannel was judged to be the best.

He will be formally recognized as the nation's top National Guard recruiter at an awards ceremony in Washington D.C. in April. 📺

[Story online](#)

Wisconsin Guard members recognized for PA work

Wisconsin National Guard public affairs professionals garnered a total of 16 top awards in this year's National Guard Media Contest.

Wisconsin Air National Guard Airmen earned 11 awards for work published in 2012, including the top spots for Outstanding New Writer and Broadcast Journalist of the Year.

Senior Airman Andrea Liechti of the 115th Fighter Wing took first place in the Outstanding New Writer category, followed by second-place winner Staff Sgt. Jenna Hildebrand of the 128th Air Refueling Wing. Tech. Sgt. James Michaels of the 128th Air Refueling Wing took first in the Military Broadcast Journalist of the Year.

Michaels also earned three second-place awards in the Television Spot Production, Television News Report and Television Sports Report. He received a third-place award in the Video Documentary category.

2nd. Lt. Nathan Wallin garnered two second-place awards, in the Illustrative Photography and Military Photographer of the Year categories, and third in Sports.

Staff Sgt. Christopher Wenzel of the 128th Air Refueling Wing earned a second-place award in the Outstanding News Broadcaster category.

The Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Office received two first-place awards — for the web-based publication *@ease Express*, and for the command blog *WisGuard Live*.

Vaughn R. Larson took first place in the news article category and second place in the human interest feature article category. 1st Lt. Joe Trovato of the 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment was awarded second place in the news feature article category.

@ease Express and the news article also placed first in the Army-level Keith L. Ware contest, and advance to the Department of Defense-level Thomas Jefferson Awards.

First-place winners in the Air National Guard contest advanced to the Air Force Public Affairs competition. 📺

Veterans, Families, Retirees

Coping with deployment course offered

The American Red Cross believes it is important to prepare family members to deal with the challenges of serving at home while their loved one is deployed.

Coping with Deployments: Psychological First Aid for Military Families was developed out of the Red Cross' continuing commitment to serving military families wherever they reside. This course provides useful information on how to strengthen your ability to respond to the challenges you may encounter throughout the deployment cycle. It was designed specifically for the spouses, parents, older children, siblings and significant others of service members, as well as for military members who may take the course with their family. Veterans and their family members are also eligible.

This excellent course offers guidelines for increasing resiliency in ourselves and our children and also provides information on how to provide psychological first aid to others experiencing stressful feelings or events. It can also serve as a useful link to connect you with other military families in your community.

Coping with Deployments is available in both English and Spanish as an instructor-led course or an online course through the Red Cross Learning Center. There is no charge for the course. Call your local Red Cross to schedule this training for your Family Readiness Group (FRG), spouses' club or other group or to find out if a course is being taught in your area.

If you are interested in completing the course on-line please visit <https://classes.redcross.org/Saba/Web/Main>. First time users will need to register for a free account. For additional information please refer to <http://www.redcross.org/find-help/military-families/deployment-services/coping-deployment-course> or call your local Red Cross for assistance. 📞

Assistance centers available for military families

When a loved one is deployed, the entire community of family members, friends and neighbors is affected. We at the Military Family Assistance Center are here to help. We understand that uncertainty and separation can create high levels of stress and anxiety.

The Military Family Assistance Centers (FACs) focus is to provide family members information on entitlements and benefits available to them through referrals for assistance.

The Military FACs were formed to assist families of service members with issues that may arise while the service

member is deployed.

The Military FACs provide information sources for a variety of services which the service members and their families may utilize before, during, and following a deployment.

Services are available to all service members called to active duty and their families. No military personnel or family member will be turned away from a Military FAC regardless of their branch of service.

If you need help, you can call 24/7 – 1-(800)-292-9464. (Option 3). The Military FAC staff is bound by confidentiality. 📞

Retiree Activities Office continues to serve

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

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

The RAO mission is to act as an interface between the active duty and retired



communities, keep retirees and widows of retirees (all ranks and services) informed on matters related to their military status, provide appropriate

information and services as necessary including TRICARE, Military ID Cards, Survivor Benefits, Death Reporting and more. The RAO also maintains a list of toll-free phone numbers, Web sites and e-mail addresses for additional information. 📞

Needs of military children addressed

Are you looking for ways to create a unique home-front plan to address the needs of military children? Would you like to learn about national, military and community resources currently in place to support military children? If your answer is yes, then the Military Child Education Coalition's



Living in the New Normal Institute in Madison is what you need.

Participants will learn to differentiate affective aspects of children dealing with change. They will learn to recognize how a family member's military experience affects the child and formulate methods that build resilience and maximizes the natural strengths of children. Visit www.militarychild.org and click on the Training tab to register. 📞

Tricare changes outlined

The new copayments for prescription drugs covered by Tricare went into effect Feb. 1. The fiscal year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act requires Tricare to increase copays on brand name and non-formulary medications that are not filled at military clinics or hospitals. There is no increase to copays for generic medications.

For fiscal 2014 and beyond, the new law directs that copays increase annually by only the same percentage as retiree cost of living adjustments. In years when a COLA increase would total less than a dollar, it will be delayed a year and combined with the next adjustment so increases will always be \$1 or more.

Tricare Pharmacy copays vary based on the class of drug and where beneficiaries choose to fill their prescriptions. The copay for generic medications stays at \$5 when a prescription is filled at a network pharmacy. There is no co-pay when generic prescriptions are filled through Tricare Home Delivery. The new copay for a 30-day supply of a brand name medication purchased at a retail network pharmacy will be \$17, up from the current \$12. Beneficiaries using Tricare Home Delivery will pay \$13 for brand name drugs, up from \$9. However, the Home Delivery price is for a 90-day supply.

Tricare Prime, the military's managed-care option, will end Oct. 1, 2013, for retirees, their family members and for military survivors who reside more than 40 miles from a military treatment facility or from a base closure site, Tricare Management Activity announced.

Most of these 171,400 beneficiaries will need to shift health coverage from Prime to Tricare Standard, the military's fee-for-service health insurance option. For beneficiaries who use more than preventive health care during the year, the shift will mean higher out-of-pocket costs. Defense officials expect the move to save up to \$55 million a year. 📞



JANUARY

■ The 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment's Family Readiness Group was named **best** in the Army National Guard for 2011.

■ The 115th Fighter Wing received the **Air Force Outstanding Unit Award** for the third time in six years, recognizing the Wing's achievements from Nov. 1, 2009 through Oct. 31, 2011.

■ The Wisconsin National Guard takes part in the National Guard Bureau's first **Virtual Diversity Conference** Jan. 18.

■ A portion of the 82nd Agribusiness Development Team spent three weeks in Afghanistan's Kunar Province on a **pre-deployment site survey** in advance of the unit's March deployment.

■ The 332nd Rear Operations Center was part of the multinational exercise **Yama Sakura 61** in Osaka, Japan Jan. 23-Feb. 5.

Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch and senior military officials cut the ribbon Jan. 7 for the \$24 million **Armed Forces Reserve Center** — the first such facility in Wisconsin — on Madison's east side. ▶



◀ The 115th Fighter Wing completed two weeks of **Joint training** with the U.S. Marine Corps at Naval Air Station Key West, Fla., Jan. 7-21.



▲ Wisconsin native PGA golfers Jerry Kelly and Steve Stricker took part in an **orientation flight** aboard a 128th Air Refueling Wing's KC-135 Stratotanker Jan. 25.



◀ Command Chief Master Sgt. Christopher E. Muncy, the Air National Guard's top enlisted member, **visited** the 128th Air Refueling Wing, 115th Fighter Wing, 128th Air Control Squadron and Volk Field Combat Training Readiness Center Jan. 6-8.

FEBRUARY



▲ The 1157th Transportation held a [sendoff ceremony](#) Feb. 4 at the EAA in advance of its deployment to Afghanistan, where the unit will conduct convoy escort missions.

The [82nd Agribusiness Development Team](#) — the Wisconsin National Guard's first such unit — also held a sendoff ceremony Feb. 4 in Hartford. The unit left for mobilization training at Camp Atterbury, Ind., at the end of the month. ▼



▲ President Barack Obama's Feb. 15 Milwaukee [visit](#) began and ended at the 128th Air Refueling Wing.

◀ Tech. Sgt. Cristian Bennett of the 115th Fighter Wing Security Forces Squadron was among 78 service members attending a Feb. 29 [White House dinner](#) honoring Iraq veterans.

■ Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center was one of eight units nationwide to earn the [Air Force Organizational Excellence Award](#). This was the CRTC's second consecutive award and fourth in unit history.

■ Wisconsin was among 31 states and territories to be affected by the Air Force's [force structure realignment plan](#) as part of a 10-year, \$487 billion defense budget cut. While the Wisconsin Air National Guard will lose two KC-135 Stratotankers and the RC-26, the impact on manpower was not immediately known.

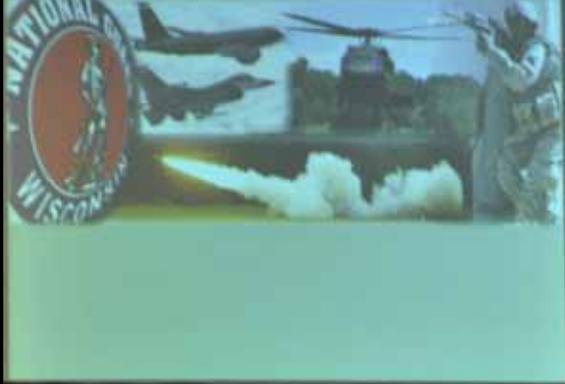
■ The Wisconsin Air National Guard announced its [Airmen of the Year](#).

■ The National Guard MRT Training Center — located at the Wisconsin Military Academy — graduated its [1,000th National Guard master resilience trainer](#) Feb. 13.

■ The 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment's Family Readiness Group received an award as the best in the Army National Guard during a Feb. 17 [ceremony](#) in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes.

■ Wisconsin Army National Guard recruiters used social media to maximize its partnership with [World Wrestling Entertainment](#) during a Feb. 19 promotional event in Milwaukee.

MARCH



Legendary NFL quarterback [Brett Favre](#) visited the [1157th Transportation Company](#) March 26 while the unit was mobilizing at Camp Shelby, Miss.



▲ The first [Wisconsin National Guard Business Summit](#) sought to educate employers about the value of hiring military veterans during a March 30 event at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

◀ Twenty Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers deployed in Kosovo honored Bataan Death March victims in a [memorial endurance event](#) March 26.

■ The Wisconsin Army National Guard learned it was named the [Overall Winner](#) in its category for the Army Chief of Staff Army Communities of Excellence Award for 2011.

■ State [legislation signed into law](#) March 5 would make it easier for military veterans to translate military education, training and experiences into professional credentials.

■ The Wisconsin Air National Guard learned March 6 that it [could lose 114 manpower positions](#) – including 16 full-time – as part of the Air Force's proposed force structure realignment plan. The reduction amounts to about 5 percent of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, and would go into effect Oct. 1.

■ Four female Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers [returned from Afghanistan](#) where they [helped Army Rangers and Special Forces Teams](#) interact with Afghan citizens.

■ For the first time in recent memory, Wisconsin National Guard recruiters hosted an [event](#) on the University of Wisconsin campus March 11, drawing more than 230 and generating nearly 600 qualified leads.

■ Five Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers were among the top finishers in an annual one-day [military skills competition](#) in Winnipeg, Manitoba March 17.

APRIL

1st Lt. Nicholas Plocar, left, was one of seven Army National Guard Soldiers to take part in the grueling 60-hour **Best Ranger Competition** April 14-16 at Fort Benning, Ga. Plocar finished in the top 10.



■ Wisconsin native PGA golfers Steve Stricker and Jerry Kelly **visited the 426th Regional Training Institute** April 17 as part of a Community Center of Influence event.

■ Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, **visited deployed Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers in Kosovo** April 19-23.

■ The Wisconsin National Guard's Drug Control Program **helped collect more than 18 tons** of expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs during a one-day national take-back initiative April 28.

■ The Wisconsin Air National Guard's STARBASE program — designed to improve student skills and experience in science, technology, engineering and math — **graduated its first class** April 30.



▲ The 82nd Agribusiness Development Team formally **took over the mission** of helping Afghan farmers in Kunar Province, Afghanistan April 10



▲ The Wisconsin Army National Guard named its **Soldier of the Year** and NCO of the Year April 22 following a grueling three-day competition.



▲ The 1157th Transportation Company **assumed its convoy escort mission** in Afghanistan.

MAY



▲ Approximately 200 combat medics [take part in realistic training](#) lanes May 19-20 at Fort McCoy.

The 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team takes part in a joint [Warfighter Exercise](#) at Fort McCoy May 7-18. ▶



▲ The Wisconsin Army National Guard [receives the top award](#) in the Army Communities of Excellence competition during a May 1 ceremony at the Pentagon.

■ Four retired officers were [inducted](#) May 5 into the Wisconsin Army National Guard Hall of Honor.

■ Wisconsin Army National Guard Maj. Dave Brown, Jr., and his wife Rachel returned to Wisconsin May 7 as the [winners](#) of the CBS reality show “The Amazing Race.” May 7-18.

■ The 82nd Agribusiness Development Team [conducts its last mission](#) May 9 before the agribusiness specialists join the Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team and the remainder of the unit joins a joint task force in Kabul.

■ Gov. Scott Walker [thanked Wisconsin National Guard members](#) for their commitment to the state and nation May 18, the eve of Armed Forces Day.

■ Capt. Nils Henderson was one of seven Army National Guard officers to receive the [Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award](#) May 24 at the Pentagon.

JUNE

■ Six Red Arrow Soldiers [returned to Wisconsin](#) June 6 following a deployment to Afghanistan where they operated the RQ-7 Shadow 200 unmanned aerial vehicle.

■ More than 100 at-risk teens [graduated from the Challenge Academy](#) June 9.

■ Wisconsin Employment Resource Connection (WERC) [visited deployed National Guard members](#) in Kosovo June 11-15

■ The Wisconsin National Guard's Soldier of the Year was [honored as a Hometown Hero](#) June 16 at the Milwaukee Mile.

No Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers were injured during a [June 1 skirmish in Rudare](#), Kosovo when unidentified individuals fired upon a roadblock removal operation. ▶



■ Local employers encouraged to hire veterans during an [employer initiative](#) sponsored by Panther Racing and the Wisconsin National Guard June 16 at the Milwaukee Mile.

■ State, local and Wisconsin National Guard officials [cut the ribbon](#) June 18 for STARBASE Wisconsin, which opened two months earlier in Milwaukee.

■ Lt. Col. Robyn Blader was named Wisconsin Law Journal's [Woman of the Year](#) June 21.

■ Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard units [conducted joint rescue operations](#) on Lake Michigan with Milwaukee Fire and Rescue personnel.

■ Col. Tim Lawson [took command](#) of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team June 24.

■ Wisconsin National Guard Joint Staff and CERFP representatives [gleaned homeland defense strategies](#) from New York National Guard's Joint Task Force Empire Shield June 27-28.



▲ Approximately 2,500 people attended the [Volk Field Open House](#) June 2.



▲ The Wisconsin National Guard's CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) [was certified](#) for duty June 15.



The Wisconsin National Guard [engaged the community](#) at Rhythm and Booms June 30.

JULY



▲ Volk Field held a [memorial service](#) July 11 for its namesake, 1st Lt. Jerome Volk, a Wisconsin Air National Guard pilot shot down Nov. 7, 1951 during a sortie against communist forces in the Korean War. His remains were never recovered.



■ Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar [reappointed](#) July 3 as Adjutant General of Wisconsin.

■ The 115th Fighter Wing was [deemed mission ready](#) following a demanding Operational Readiness Inspection July 13-18.

◀ The National Guard Bureau's annual [PATRIOT](#) exercise was held July 17-19 at Volk Field.



◀ The 97th Agribusiness Development Team wrapped up a [five-day "Agriculture 101"](#) crash course July 23-27 through the UW College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

■ Marine Sgt. Maj. Bryan Battaglia, the military's top enlisted leader and advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, [spoke with Wisconsin National Guard members](#) about top Defense Department goals July 25 at Volk Field.



◀ Sgt. Zachary Henningsen [sings the National Anthem](#) at a July 26 Milwaukee Brewers game.

AUGUST



▲ The 1st Battalion, 105th Cavalry Squadron kicked off its [Inaugural Spur Ride](#) Aug. 4-5 at Fort McCoy.

15 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers — members of the 112th MPAD, Judge Advocate Office and the state support chaplain — headed to South Korea Aug. 14 to support [Ulchi Freedom Guardian](#). ▶



▲ Four Wisconsin National Guard female Soldiers were [honored at Miller Park](#) Aug. 25 for their service supporting Army Rangers and Special Operations Teams in Afghanistan.

■ 1st Lt. Nicholas Plocar was recognized Aug. 22 as [one of the best National Guard Soldiers](#) in the nation during the 2012 Outstanding Soldier and Airmen of the Year banquet in Washington, D.C.

■ Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers supporting Ulchi Freedom Guardian in South Korea were in little danger as [Typhoon Bolaven](#) brushed the peninsula Aug. 27-28.

■ The 426th Regional Training Institute [received its third certification](#) as an Institution of Excellence Aug. 31.



◀ Nearly 150 Soldiers from the 229th Engineer Company and 106th Quarry Detachment held a [send-off ceremony](#) Aug. 25 in advance of their Afghanistan deployment.

SEPTEMBER



■ Task Force Talon, the Multinational Battle Group East aviation unit that included West Bend-based aviation Soldiers, **transferred authority** for its peacekeeping mission in Kosovo Sept. 1.

■ Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, was **named the new vice-chairman-Air** for the National Guard Association of the United States' board of directors during the annual general conference and exhibition Sept. 9-12.

■ The Wisconsin National Guard Military Engagement Team traveled to Puerto Rico for a **two-week language immersion** class beginning Sept. 9.

■ West Bend-based aviation Soldiers **returned to Wisconsin** Sept. 13 as part of the first wave of Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers returning from Kosovo.

■ The 115th Fighter Wing **helped two Wisconsin volunteer organizations** deliver more than 19 tons of humanitarian supplies to foreign countries

◀ Wisconsin National Guard combat engineers **validated** for Afghanistan mission during late-September training at Fort Bliss, Texas.

■ Approximately 125 Soldiers **returned** to Wisconsin Sept. 27 from a 10-month peacekeeping mission in Kosovo.

■ Brig. Gen. Margaret Bair, the Wisconsin Air National Guard's first female general officer, **retired** Sept. 30 after 32 years of military service.

Gov. Scott Walker and Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, **visited deployed Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers in Kosovo** Sept. 6. ▶



◀ Approximately 35 members of the 82nd Agribusiness Development Team **returned to Wisconsin** earlier than originally expected Sept. 11.

OCTOBER



◀ The 104th Security Force Advise and Assist Team held a [sendoff ceremony](#) Oct. 1 in advance of a deployment to help Afghans take greater responsibility for their national security.

■ The Wisconsin Air National Guard Hall of Fame [inducted](#) retired Command Chief Master Sgt. Thomas Yapundich during an Oct. 13 ceremony.

■ Col. Jeffrey Wiegand [assumed command](#) of the 115th Fighter Wing during an Oct. 14 ceremony.

■ Lt. Col. Douglas Fleischfresser was [named](#) new state chaplain for the Wisconsin National Guard.

■ Two Wisconsin Army National Guard recruiters [won top honors](#) Oct. 15 during a regional recruiting and retention council at Fort McCoy.

■ U.S. Rep. Ron Kind [visited](#) members of the 1157th Transportation Company in Afghanistan Oct. 17.

■ Five Wisconsin National Guard members [competed in the Army 10-Miler](#) Oct. 21 in Washington D.C.

Col. Joane Mathews was named the Wisconsin National Guard's [first female brigade commander](#) Oct. 7 when she took command of the 64th Troop Command. ▶



◀ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Superintendent Tony Evers [visited the Challenge Academy](#) at Fort McCoy Oct. 4.

NOVEMBER

Lt. Gen. Joseph Lengyel, vice chief of the National Guard Bureau, [spoke to senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders](#) at Volk Field during a Nov. 30 conference. ▶

■ The 128th Air Control Squadron held a [sendoff ceremony](#) Nov. 11 at Volk Field prior to a deployment supporting the 727th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron.

■ Mike Murphy, a Wisconsin Army National Guard lieutenant colonel, [became the new director](#) of the Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy Nov. 19.



Sgt. Luis Cortes-Avila of the 1157th Transportation Company [became an American citizen](#) Nov. 2 in Afghanistan. ▶



▲ Sgt. 1st Class Don Grundy was [awarded](#) the Thomas E. Wortham IV Achievement Award during halftime ceremonies Nov. 4 at Lambeau Field.
◀ Lambeau Field and USAA [saluted](#) Wisconsin National Guard veterans during pregame ceremonies Nov. 4.



DECEMBER



- Staff Sgt. Timothy Donnan of the 115th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight was [awarded the Purple Heart](#) for injuries sustained in Afghanistan in January during a Dec. 3 ceremony.
- The Wisconsin National Guard hosted regional National Guard leaders, officials from the 9th U.S. Coast Guard District, state and federal officials and representatives of the Canadian military for a [Great Lakes region emergency response planning session](#) Dec. 7.
- The 128th Air Refueling Wing held its 28th annual [Flight to the North Pole](#) for families of children with life-threatening illnesses Dec. 8.
- Ninety-nine cadets [graduated](#) from the Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy Dec. 15.

▲ Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery held a [sendoff ceremony](#) Dec. 3 in advance of its deployment to Afghanistan, where the unit is to conduct fire support missions.

Gov. Scott Walker [promoted](#) Col. Gary Ebben to the rank of brigadier general during a Dec.

5 ceremony at the state capitol. Ebben is the assistant adjutant general for Air. ▶



◀ The Wisconsin National Guard [staged more than 100 Soldiers and Airmen](#) to respond if needed during a winter storm Dec. 19-21.



Parting shot

Members of the Wisconsin National Guard's 104th Security Force Advise and Assist Team (SFAAT) conduct a patrol in Afghanistan's rugged terrain in February. For more information on the 104th SFAAT, see the story on Page 12. 104th SFAAT courtesy photo