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Express

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Homecoming Week begins on Page 3



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From the TAG

I am proud to report that the Wisconsin National Guard has started out 2010 with several homecoming celebrations, and what celebrations they were!

Thirteen flights carried our Red Arrow Soldiers back to Wisconsin — most to Volk Field and after the last of our Guard members descended the aircraft stairs and were reunited with families, I had a few minutes to just watch and enjoy the excitement that surrounds a reunion. Seeing Soldiers embrace family for the first time in many months, and the genuine smiles on parents, spouses and children. Simple joy to see their Soldier and obvious relief — they are home.

As I quietly observed, so many thoughts competed for attention.

How good our Soldiers are: From the leadership team of Col. Steve Bensed and Command Sgt. Maj. Ed Hanson, to include battalion commanders Lt. Col. Leeland Ward, Lt. Col. Mike George, Lt. Col. Leah Moore and Lt. Col. Brad Anderson, and company commanders and the enlisted leadership — what a superb unit from top to bottom.

The 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, augmented by six other Wisconsin Army National Guard units, was mobilized as a brigade and then quickly learned that they would be deployed in smaller elements — this is not what the Red Arrows wanted to do and is not what any infantry brigade combat team would want to do.

These Soldiers are professional and adjusted to the mission the Army needed us to complete and they performed magnificently. The Red Arrow history has a brand new chapter — it includes near full-spectrum operations, stability operations, and detainee operations among the core mission — and it ends as it did in World War I and World War II with the Red Arrow completing the mission with considerable skill and ability.

This history, however, also includes six units from the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and the 64th Troop Command who were mobilized to ensure that the 32nd IBCT deployed at full strength. These units or elements from these units deployed under the 32nd's leadership and performed superbly. They include the 257th Brigade Support Battalion; the 108th Forward Support Company; the 32nd Military

Police Company, the 829th Engineer Company; the 1158th Transportation Company; and the first Battalion, 121st Field Artillery.

I am grateful for the service of these Soldiers and acutely aware of how much support was provided to the 32nd IBCT by the rest of the Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard. Bravo!

How phenomenal the support in Wisconsin is: Our families and employers embraced our Soldiers from start to finish. The 32nd Brigade's Family Readiness Group was named by the Department of Defense as the best in the National Guard. So many events took place during the year including "Tailgating with the Troops," an event by the private organization "Serving the 32nd" that linked families in Madison with Soldiers in Iraq while the Green Bay Packers beat the Detroit Lions. Many of our employers travelled with us to Fort Hood, Texas before the unit deployed; all of those employers have supported the troops while deployed. The Red Cross volunteers, smiling a warm and friendly smile; and serving hot coffee and wonderful treats for every returning Soldier — regardless of the time of the day, a weekend or a holiday (some returned at 2 a.m., some at 10 p.m.).

The incredible personal and organizational stories: Command Sgt. Maj. Hanson refusing to retire while his unit was deployed, celebrating his 60th birthday in Iraq and completing his fourth combat tour of duty. Lt. Col. Tim Donovan extending his mandatory retirement date to deploy for the first time in his 30 year career, at the young age of 57.

The 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry organizing a humanitarian effort that brought more than 3,200 pounds of supplies (school supplies, clothes, hygiene items, et cetera) to the families of Iraq. The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry winning the Walter T. Kerwin award as the top battalion in our National Guard. Spc. Flavio Cottrell and Sgt. Anna Duncan — both volunteering and serving our great nation as immigrants and being sworn in as citizens while deployed in Iraq.

How blessed we are upon their redeployment: Tragically, we lost a Soldier



Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar
The Adjutant General

during this deployment and we will remember Master Sgt. Brian Naseman and continue to support Peggy and their sons Cole and Carter.

However, despite this tragedy there were no combat casualties, and for this we are profoundly grateful. This reflects the improving conditions in Iraq to be sure, but it also reflects the training and leadership of this excellent brigade and our Soldiers' dedication and attention to detail.

Last, but certainly not least, Company B (Military Intelligence), Brigade Special Troops Battalion, who deployed 18 Soldiers with the Red Bulls (34th Infantry Division, Minnesota Army National Guard) and produced more than 50 percent of the required intelligence products. Led by 1st Sgt. Georgette Hall, who deployed just 11 months after giving birth to her first child, JB. Hall had too much rank to deploy according to the manning document, but rather than see her Soldiers deploy without her, she elected to take a stripe off and deploy as the NCOIC. Another incredible story of leadership and professionalism. Well done!

Soldiers — thank you. I couldn't be prouder of you or the mission you have accomplished. Reintegration starts this month and this is very important to all of you and your families. Because Congress and the U.S. Army understand the difficulties that can be associated with transitioning from a combat zone to the civilian world, we are privileged to have the resources necessary to provide these reintegration events. There will be moments during these events when you will be thinking "This doesn't apply to me," and you may be right — but remember, it may apply to a battle buddy or another member of your formation, or perhaps it will apply to a family member.

You are the most important resource that the Wisconsin National Guard has and we are putting our full focus on aiding you as you transition.

Welcome home and job well done!

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Government, or the Department of the Army or Air Force. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Officer.

the Red Arrow returns

The 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team headquarters officially transferred authority of the Joint Area Support Group-Command to the 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team of the Texas Army National Guard during a ceremony Jan. 7 at the al Salam Palace at Forward Operating Base Prosperity in Baghdad. Following several months of historic transfers of property from U.S. control back to the Iraqis, the 32nd quietly ended its mission with Col. Steve Bensed, brigade commander, and Command Sgt. Major Ed Hansen furling and casing the brigade colors.

“It was only a few short months ago we set foot here in the [International Zone],” Bensed remarked during the transfer of authority ceremony. “I will tell you it was an eye-opening experience. There were things here I had not seen; there were experiences I had not experienced. But once I got into the mission, I found that there were people everywhere, Iraqi and American counterparts and people from all parts of the world working together to make this a better place.”

Bensed thanked Iraqi officials and U.S. Embassy staff for their cooperation with the 32nd during its deployment, noting the challenges they faced and the accomplishments they enjoyed. He also recognized the contributions Air Force and Navy service members made to the 32nd Brigade’s mission.

Bensed had words of praise for Col. Mark Campsey and the 72nd Brigade.

“Col. Campsey, you have assembled an amazing team,” Bensed said. “Your team came in with enthusiasm and took charge, and I have full confidence in what you brought here, Mark. I think you will do a great job.”

But his highest tribute was for the men and women of the Red Arrow Brigade. “To the Soldiers of the 32nd, I am most proud of you,” he said. “This has not been an easy mission, but we did it together. When we departed Wisconsin I asked for your loyalty, your integrity and your initiative, and you gave me much more. Thank you.”

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Click on the image at left to see a video of the transfer of authority ceremony.

When you see captions that begin with Photo 1 or Photo 2, move your mouse over the image to reveal the second photo!

Photo 1: Maj. Gen. Joe Anderson, chief of staff, U.S. Forces Iraq, Wisconsin Army National Guard Col. Steven Bensed, commander of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Col. Mark Campsey and Command Sgt. Maj. Alfred Cordova of the 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, participate in the Transfer of Authority ceremony Jan. 7, in front of the al Salam Palace, Iraq, Baghdad.

Photo 2: Maj. Gen. Anderson presents Col. Bensed with the Bronze Star medal outside the al Salam Palace Chapel. U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Melissa Shaw

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Campsey promised to pick up where the 32nd left off. “The 72nd will continue the superb work of the 32nd, facilitating the responsible drawdown of forces, focusing our efforts on the transfer of property to our Iraqi brethren and to the security of the IZ,” Campsey said. “To the 32nd — thank you for all you have done. You, your families and your employers have sacrificed greatly over the past year, but your accomplishments over the past year have been remarkable. I know that your families and friends anxiously await your safe return. Continue to watch over one another until you arrive back home, and Godspeed to you all.”

Campsey acknowledged that his brigade was prepared to assume the mission, thanks to an 18-month collaboration with leaders in the 32nd Brigade. “72nd, it’s time to go to work,” Campsey said.

Bensend suggested that the 32nd Brigade would not entirely leave Iraq. “As I fold my 3,200 Soldiers of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team back through Kuwait and on to Wisconsin, we will leave a piece of our heart here,” he said. “So it is with mixed emotions today that I step away, but it is with great pride that I am able to give it to such a deserving team as the 72nd.”

The Red Arrow Brigade turned its efforts to returning to Wisconsin in waves. Following an advance party, the first significant return of troops came Jan. 5 when approximately 115 Soldiers from Troop A, 105th Cavalry set foot at Volk Field.

Troop A was stationed at eight different bases in northern Iraq. According to Capt. Matthew McDonald, Troop A commander, the unit directly supported Gen. Raymond Odierno, commander of the Multi-National Force in Iraq, his staff and their operations in Iraq to stabilize the Iraqi government and protect U.S. forces. This involved working with joint Department of Defense agencies.

McDonald, of Prairie du Sac, said Troop A completed more than 1,700 missions in Iraq.

Photo 1: Soldiers from Alpha Company of the Brigade Special Troops Command from Onalaska; Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Brigade from Marinette; Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Brigade from Waupun and Ripon; and Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery Brigade, return to Volk Field from Iraq Jan. 17. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spc. Alyson Berzinski

“It’s still a very dangerous place, but I’m confident your efforts helped make it a better place,” he said. “Your stories are yours to tell, or not to tell.”

Some of the missions that Troop A conducted are still governed by operational security concerns. But senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders made no secret of their pride in the unit.

“You did a phenomenal job on a

phenomenal mission,” said Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard. “What you accomplished will have a lasting effect on Iraq.”

“You have no idea how unbelievably proud we are of the mission you did,” said Command Sgt. Major George Stopper, state command sergeant major for the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

Photo 2: Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, right, adjutant general of Wisconsin, greets Col. Steven Bensend, commander of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, as he returns from Iraq Jan. 11. The brigade’s Headquarters and Headquarters Company as well as Alpha and Charlie Companies of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry also returned that day. Wisconsin Army National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, also praised the group noting that the subordinate units of the 32nd Brigade worked well individually.

“Nobody anticipated slicing and dicing the 32nd, but that’s what was required,” Dunbar said. “You did a phenomenal job.”

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During training and while in Iraq, the brigade was organized into 27 company-sized units. Rather than operating as a brigade, the 32nd was tasked with a variety of missions throughout Iraq.

“Some Soldiers left the wire every day,” Bensend said. “Some never left the FOB [forward operating base]. Each job was equally important.”

These missions included forward operating base administration, base defense, area security, quick reaction forces, freedom of movement security support, detainee guard force operations at theater internment facilities, closing the largest internment facility in Iraq, transferring detainees, operating an academy to train Iraqi corrections officers, inspecting detention facilities, securing and administering the International Zone in Baghdad, and turning over U.S.-controlled properties back the government of Iraq. The brigade’s Soldiers operated around the clock, most of them working at least 12 hours a day — day after day, week after week, for eight full months in Iraq.

Bensend said that senior leaders in Iraq — including Gen. Ray Odierno, commander of Multi-National Forces in Iraq — have made numerous positive comments about Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers.

“Not one time did I ever have any top leaders asking me why my brigade did this or did that,” Bensend said. “They said they were impressed, without exception. That’s indicative of the leadership of these [Soldiers].”

“From the sergeants, the staff sergeants, the company commanders, the focus was on getting the job done,”

Click on these images to see videos of the 32nd Brigade homecoming.



Don Penza shows off a sign for his son, Sgt. Chris Penza, as he awaits his son’s homecoming to Wisconsin at Volk Field Jan. 16 following a year-long deployment with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Penza was among approximately 330 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers to return from Iraq Jan. 16. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spc. Eric Liesse

he continued. “We have a culture in the brigade on leadership, on getting things done.”

While approximately 20 Soldiers remained behind to take care of administrative and logistical details regarding the 32nd Brigade’s departure from the Central Command theater of operations, the bulk of the brigade returned on 11 flights between Jan. 11 and Jan. 18.

“It feels great,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Ed Hansen, 32nd Brigade Command Sgt. Major. “It’s a relief — like a big weight’s been lifted.”

Capt. Daniel Hendershot, commander of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 120th Field

Photo 1: Alesa Buckley smiles as her father, Sgt. 1st Class Ricardo Buckley with the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Eau Claire, returns to Volk Field Jan. 12 from Iraq. Nearly 300 Soldiers from the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team were welcomed home Jan. 12. Wisconsin Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Ryan J. Roth

Artillery — one of the final units to return to Wisconsin — thanked the families of his Soldiers.

“You were just as much a part of the deployment while we were overseas as we were,” he said.

Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, the adjutant general of Wisconsin, also recognized the families who supported their Soldiers during their year-long deployment.

“Soldiers, how great is it to be home?” he asked, drawing a chorus of “Hooah” from the audience. “Families, how great is it to have your Soldiers home?” he continued, prompting a jubilant cheer from family members that dwarfed the Soldiers’ response.

Bensend and other Wisconsin National Guard senior leaders — including Dunbar,

Photo 2: A young boy beams with excitement as the plane carrying more than 300 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers returns from Iraq Jan. 17. The Soldiers are part of the 3,200 Soldiers who deployed with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team who returned to Wisconsin in stages throughout January. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spc. Alyson Berzinski

Anderson and Stopper — cautioned Soldiers that their mission was not quite over. Stopper urged Soldiers to pay attention to their demobilization briefings.

“You need to be able to use all those benefits you are eligible for,” he said.

Bensend said the next step for the 32nd Brigade is to complete demobilization, be recognized for their deployment at an upcoming Freedom Salute ceremony, complete the reintegration process, and finally to “reset” the brigade — part of a three-stage process that prepares the brigade for its next mission. He stressed that the 32nd has not been identified for another deployment.

“We’re just looking at getting the Soldiers back with their units and ease them back into a training cycle,” he said. 🇺🇸



Spc. Melvin Ortiz, a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1158th Transportation Company, located in Beloit and Black River Falls, sprints to the hangar at Volk Field where his wife Johana was experiencing labor pains Jan. 13.

Waiting for returning Guardsman a labor of love

1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson
Wisconsin Army National Guard

The pain Johana Ortiz experienced waiting for her husband, Spc. Melvin Ortiz of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1158th Transportation Company, to return from his year-long deployment to Iraq was more than just longing.

Johana, who was due to deliver a baby Jan. 17, went into labor hours before her husband was to arrive at Volk Field, a Wisconsin Air National Guard facility roughly 20 miles east of Fort McCoy. But the contractions did not keep Johana from making the trip from Milwaukee.

"My doctor said 'don't go,'" the mother of three admitted.

When the plane carrying approximately 300 Soldiers who deployed to Iraq with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team landed at about 4 p.m. Jan. 13, Brigade Commander Col. Steven Bensed and Brigade Command Sgt. Major Ed Hansen boarded and called Spc. Ortiz to the front. They informed him of his wife's condition and directed him to leave the plane first.

Spc. Ortiz bounded down the staircase to the pavement, handed his backpack to another Soldier and sprinted to the hangar where his wife was waiting. The families at the edge of the airstrip, many of

whom were aware of Johana's condition, applauded appreciatively.

Once inside, Spc. Ortiz embraced his wife. "I'm excited," he said moments later. "I just want to go to the hospital."

Earlier, Bensed had promised Johana that her husband would be granted a pass so that he could be with her for the birth of their child.

"This is a great thing," Bensed said. "There's no way I would have missed my child's birth." True to his word, paperwork was waiting for Spc. Ortiz to sign that allowed him to leave with his wife minutes after arriving at Volk Field. They made it safely to West Allis Memorial Hospital, where Johana gave birth to a 7 lb, 8 oz, baby boy the couple named Eduardo.

Capt. Joshua Porter, commander of the 1158th Transportation Company, based in Beloit and Black River Falls, said that Spc. Ortiz would return to complete his demobilization process after his pass expired.

Ortiz was among approximately 500 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers to return from Iraq on two separate flights Wednesday, part of the 3,200 Soldiers who deployed with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team that will return in stages throughout January. 

Photo 1: Spc. Melvin Ortiz is first to leave the plane after learning just moments earlier that his wife Johana was experiencing labor pains. Also pictured are Command Sgt. Major Ed Hansen, left, and Col. Steven Bensed.

Photo 2: Johana Ortiz of Milwaukee would not let labor pains keep her from meeting her husband upon his return Jan. 13 from a deployment to Iraq. Wisconsin Army National Guard photos by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

60 Wisconsin Guard members return from overseas deployments

Approximately 60 Wisconsin National Guard members from three different units returned in late January from overseas deployments.

This latest wave of homecomings began Jan. 21 when approximately 30 Airmen from the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Security Forces Squadron, based in Madison, arrived at the Dane County Regional Airport following a six-month deployment to Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyz Republic, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Airmen supported the 376th Expeditionary Security Squadron at Manas by performing airbase ground defense.

"Our job was security," said Staff Sgt. Philip Steffens, a member of the 115th SFS who worked in the armory while deployed. "We knew our job and did it well."

Their actions were acknowledged by the 115th Security Forces Squadron commander, Lt. Col. Brian Buhler, who welcomed them home.

"This is a wonderful example of quality Airmen successfully applying skills and techniques that they were exposed to in training at the 115th Fighter Wing," Buhler said. "Their accomplishments reassure us that our pre-deployment preparations were right on target and have adequately prepared our Airmen for real-world missions."

Operations at Manas began in December 2001 to support the military's operational needs in Afghanistan while serving as a staging ground for the mission.

Upon returning, the Airmen promptly in-processed at Truax Field and headed home across the Midwest.

"It goes without being said that we missed the individual talent and skills of each and every security force member who volunteered for this deployment," Buhler said. "But thanks to the collaborative efforts of our traditional Airmen, full-time active guard reserve and state security officers, we were able to seamlessly fill the void of our deployed members."

The final band of Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers who deployed for the past year with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team returned from Iraq Jan. 24.

The Soldiers were greeted by Wisconsin National Guard leadership and the 132nd Army Band at the Dane County Regional Airport upon their return.

Just under 20 Soldiers assigned to a "trail party" remained in Kuwait to take care of administrative and logistical details concerning the brigade's redeployment to the United States.

Twelve military intelligence Soldiers, assigned to the Madison-based Company B, 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, also returned from Fort Lewis, Wash., where they conducted demobilization activities following their tour in Iraq.

Company B's arrival brought to a close the year-long saga which began Feb. 1, 2009 when the 32nd Brigade, augmented by six other Wisconsin Army National Guard units, was ordered to active duty. The brigade deployed to Iraq in April and May following two months of training at Fort Bliss, Texas. During training and while in Iraq, the brigade was organized into 27 company-sized units. Rather than operating as a brigade, the 32nd was tasked with a variety of missions throughout Iraq. ☞



Staff Sgt. Jeff Williams of the 115th Security Forces Squadron reunites with son Lane, left, wife Tanya and son Lucas, shortly after arriving at the Dane County Regional Airport Jan. 21 following a six-month mission to Manas Transit Center, Kyrgyz Republic. Wisconsin Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Ryan J. Roth



Sgt. Destiny Goette, 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and Pfc. Ashley Tucker, Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, wait at the Dane County Regional Airport Sunday Jan. 24 before heading to Fort McCoy for demobilization processing. Goette and Tucker flew in as two of the last remaining members of the 32nd to return to Wisconsin. Wisconsin Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue

After the deployment: Caring for veterans

Team Wisconsin comes together to serve state's newest veterans

Ray Perez, director of Mission: Welcome Home with the state Department of Veterans Affairs, speaks to Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Jan. 16 at Fort McCoy during Wisconsin Day, a detailed briefing on available services and benefits.
Wisconsin Army National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson



As the approximately 3,200 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers who deployed with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team returned from Iraq last month, one mission remained — and a team of state agencies were working to give Soldiers the tools they need to complete that mission.

To ensure success on this front, the [Wisconsin Service Member Support Division](#) joined forces with the [state Department of Workforce Development](#) and the [state Department of Veterans Affairs](#), along with several other agencies, to help returning Soldiers and Airmen understand what rights and benefits they have earned as veterans — in particular, education, employment and health care, and the opportunity to file service-related Veterans Administration disability claims before leaving active duty.

This collaboration is a natural outgrowth for the SMSD, created in 2009 as required by Congress to combine the Badger Yellow Ribbon program, Wisconsin National Guard Family Program Office and the Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP). Run by the Wisconsin National Guard, the SMSD offers help previously available through a variety of programs through one office to families and employers of service members from all components, both active duty and reserve.

According to Jeffrey Unger, the [transition assistance advisor](#) for Wisconsin's Department of Military Affairs, many benefits veterans have earned go unused. Beginning Jan. 14, he moderated "Wisconsin Day" — a detailed presentation to veterans back in the state less than 24 hours from a deployment to Iraq, acquainting them with their benefits. These briefings are considered crucial for returning service members.

"We want to make sure we introduce veterans to the core programs and services that are basically life-altering," Unger said.

[Wisconsin National Guard](#) Soldiers and Airmen returning from overseas deployments have been briefed on such benefits in the past, during their demobilization as well as periodic "reintegration" sessions in the year following the end of their active duty tour. The idea for this type of presentation, Unger explained, was modeled after a similar effort last summer at Fort McCoy for the 81st Heavy Brigade Combat Team of the Washington Army National Guard. Jan. 14 was the test run for Wisconsin Day, which was scheduled for several days during the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's demobilization.

"Reports from unit commanders [are] that this is the way to go," he said.

Mike Hallquist, a representative with the [Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve](#) (ESGR) spoke to 32nd Brigade Soldiers about job security in an uncertain economy.

"Your employer cannot discriminate against you because you served your country," he explained. Soldiers have a right to return to the same or similar job at the pay rate they would have received had they not deployed, Hallquist said, and if they have been released due to downsizing at their job, they have a right to know their seniority status with the company to determine if their release would have occurred had they not deployed. These rights are spelled out under the federal Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, or USERRA.

Hallquist cautioned Soldiers that they have certain responsibilities, such as providing their employers with adequate

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State agencies team up to educate returned Guard members about veterans benefits

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notice of their upcoming deployment and returning to work within 90 days following the end of that deployment. If the Soldier believes he or she has been treated unfairly by their employer, they are obliged to contact their chain of command, and then contact ESGR along with the [U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service](#) (VETS). If the complaint has merit and ESGR gets involved, “then it’s the U.S. government versus your employer,” Hallquist said. “You can guess who will win that one.”

Ken Grant, a representative from the state Department of Workforce Development, spoke to Soldiers about various workshops offered to help those without jobs reenter the workforce.

“In these tough economic times, we want to make sure you’re the best prepared job applicant,” Grant said. “We’ll also do all that we can to help you get the right job skills. We want you to be the best prepared and the best qualified.”

Ray Perez, from the state Department of Veterans Affairs, outlined federal and state veterans’ benefits available to returning Soldiers. Some of these include the Wisconsin G.I. Bill, veteran education grants, assistance to needy vets, retraining grants, veteran homes and cemeteries, and the “Mission: Welcome Home” program.

“Listen up, guys — you’re duly entitled,” he said. “You’re eligible for these benefits, but more importantly, you’ve earned them.”

Rebecca Boehlke spoke about [Military OneSource](#), which provides a vast array of services to veterans and non-veteran service members alike. These run the gamut from free counseling sessions for family issues, programs for weight loss and stress relief, financial counseling, and free tax preparation with a professional service through Military OneSource.

“Don’t go to H&R Block and bill

Photo 1: Jeffrey Unger, transition assistance advisor for the state Department of Military Affairs, speaks to Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Jan. 16 at Fort McCoy during Wisconsin Day, a detailed briefing on available services and benefits.

Military OneSource,” Boehlke quipped.

1st Lt. James Khile, the rear detachment chaplain for the 32nd Brigade, spoke to Soldiers about [enrichment programs](#) offered by the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs and administered by the chaplain program. There are programs for marriage enrichment (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program, or PREP), single enrichment (Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge, or PICK) and

Photo 2: Capt. Mike Brandt speaks to Soldiers of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team about post-traumatic stress disorder during Wisconsin Day Jan. 14. Each returning group of Soldiers received the briefing. Wisconsin Army National Guard photos by 1st Sgt. Vaughn R. Larson

family enrichment. These weekend events are not counseling, but workshops to strengthen relationships and make wise relationship choices.

Jean Bardeen, a military [Family Assistance Center](#) representative, spoke about Wisconsin’s Service Member Support Division.

“If you take nothing else away from today, know that we are the portal for all the agencies here today,” she said.

Bob Curry, founder of [DryHootch.org](#),

a support group for veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, also spoke to Soldiers Jan. 14.

“I have a lot of brothers and sisters who want to thank you,” he said. “Your generation gave us our honor back.”

Capt. Mike Brandt, the state behavioral health officer for the [Veterans Health Administration](#), spoke compellingly about post-traumatic stress disorder — what it is, and what it is not.

“What most people come back with is not PTSD, but resiliency,” Brandt said. “A war zone is a prime place to build resiliency — opening your mind, doing what is necessary for the mission and the Soldiers around you. And that will serve you well in civilian life.”

PTSD, he explained, is first a physical phenomenon, a chemical reaction in the brain that affects how one feels. It is caused by repeated exposure to horrifying events accompanied by adrenaline, he said.

“In a combat zone that can happen on a daily basis,” Brandt said. “The brain is not built to handle that amount of adrenaline.”

As a result, those with PTSD release adrenaline inappropriately. This can mean reduced problem-solving ability as well as anger-management issues. PTSD also can result in high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, irritable bowel and psoriasis. Early treatment is crucial, he said, as delaying treatment translates into lengthier treatment.

“Every one of you have changed from the war zone — not everyone in a negative way,” Brandt said. “Many of you have resiliency.”

“The only barrier between you and mental health is you,” he continued. “You will get information on where to get help. Don’t put it off.”

Following the briefings, Soldiers enjoyed a lunch served by American Legion volunteers and visited information booths for veteran service organizations, county veteran service officers and other veteran agencies. ☞

128th Air Refueling Wing members awarded for post-Sept. 11 service

Sr. Airman Ryan Kuntze

128th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

MILWAUKEE — The 128th Air Refueling Wing recognized 253 of its Airmen during a Hometown Heroes Salute award ceremony held at 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 9 at Gen. Mitchell Air Field.

“This is a small thing to do for the things [the Airmen of the 128th ARW] do for us,” said Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, the Adjutant General of Wisconsin.

“We knew this was the right thing to do, to recognize people for their efforts,” Brig. Gen. John McCoy added. McCoy is the commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

Wing members from airman first class to colonel were recognized for their post-Sept. 11, 2001, service in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Noble Eagle.

Nearly 1,000 family members, fellow Airmen and senior leadership officials attended the ceremony in the main base hangar. The recipients received individualized wood-framed letters of appreciation and Centers of Influence medallions, both of which were made possible by the contributions of the National Guard Bureau.

Col. Ted Metzgar, commander of the 128th Air Refueling Wing said his Airmen are rarely all in one place at one time, and that it can be difficult to understand the commitment of the 128th’s Airmen. Furthermore, he said Airmen commit a large amount of time and effort to being qualified for a military career, prepared for a full-time civilian job and ready for a worldwide deployment.

“I am very humbled by today’s experience,” Metzgar said.

The 253 Airmen were announced one at a time onto the stage, where they were received by Dunbar, McCoy and Metzgar. Awards in hand, the recipients shared a handshake with the senior leadership



The 128th Air Refueling Wing and state senior leadership officials present Hometown Heroes Salute awards to 253 Airmen in recognition of their service following the events of Sept. 11, 2001. Brig. Gen. Donald P. Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, Brig. Gen. John E. McCoy, the deputy

adjutant general for Air, and Col. Ted Metzgar, the commander of the 128th ARW, individually thanked the Airmen for their contributions before a crowd of nearly 1,000 family members and fellow Airmen. Wisconsin Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Wilson

officials before returning to their seats.

The Hometown Heroes Salute program was started in August 2008 by

the director of the Air National Guard.

The director’s goal was to celebrate and honor Airmen, families, communities and

special supporters who have significantly contributed to fellow Airmen and to the ANG’s mission. 🇺🇸

32nd Brigade Family Readiness Group among best in nation

The Family Readiness Group for the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team has been named the best in the Army National Guard for 2009, and will be one of seven reserve component family readiness groups to receive a Department of Defense award in February.

"I am so thankful our Red Arrow Soldiers have the best family readiness program in the nation," said Col. Steven Bensend, commander of the 32nd Brigade from Iraq. "Our soldiers did a great job over here because of the great work done to support their families back in Wisconsin."

"It's pretty exciting," said Janell Kellett, lead volunteer for the 32nd Brigade's family readiness group. "I've been calling all my volunteers."

Kellett oversees volunteers representing family readiness groups for 27 units deployed with the 32nd Brigade — including units from the 64th Troop Command and the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade — along with some additional groups representing units that provided individual Soldiers to augment the brigade.

The Department of Defense Reserve Family Readiness Awards were established in 2000 to recognize the top unit in each Reserve component — Army and Air National Guard, Army and Air Force Reserve, Navy and Marine Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve — that demonstrates outstanding family readiness while maintaining superior mission readiness. Each Reserve component selects its winner from among a large pool of nominees; final nominees are forwarded to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs for final approval.

Criteria to be considered for the award includes demonstrating the link between family readiness and mission readiness,



Janell Kellett, lead volunteer for the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's family readiness group, rings bells for the Salvation Army Nov. 25 with the help of her children Jaclene Hanson, left, and Lucas Hanson. Numerous community service projects such as this, organized by the various family readiness groups in the 32nd Brigade, typify the "Moving Forward, Giving Back" ethos that helped the 32nd Brigade Family Readiness Group earn the Department of Defense Reserve Family Readiness Award for 2009. Photo courtesy Janell Kellett

such as having family points of contact and care plans; implementing programs and services that improve quality of life and support attracting and keeping Soldiers; ensuring that unit members have fair access to benefits and entitlements; and ensuring that National Guard families are seamlessly integrated with the total

force, in part by collaborating with local bases or active component units and also by reducing family readiness issues that may interfere with a Soldier's deployment.

According to the Army National Guard panel which determined the final selection, the 32nd Brigade Family

Readiness Group exceeded the criteria guidance.

"The incredible amount of time and effort our family volunteers gave is overwhelming," he said. "There is no award that can adequately thank them for that sacrifice," said Bensend.

Kellett said that the award shows the volunteers that their hard work has been recognized.

"Our unit leads have done some amazing work," she said. "This reinforces that they've been doing phenomenal work. Everyone pitches in to have a successful program. This shows that the Army National Guard leadership here appreciates what we do. We want to serve the families; we want to serve the community."

The 32nd Brigade's Family Readiness Group launched a community service campaign, "Moving Forward, Giving Back" in May 2008 when the brigade began preparing for its current deployment. The initiative was developed to bring together families of Soldiers who have deployed in the past with families experiencing their first deployment, as well as to provide a focus outside of deployment concerns. Kellett reiterated that the program will continue after the brigade returns next year — in fact, even the homecoming will provide an opportunity for families to give back.

"We'll be doing a food pantry collection," she explained. "It's just another opportunity for military families to give back."

The award ceremony will be held in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes at 10 a.m. on Feb. 12. In addition to an engraved plaque and framed certificate, the unit will receive a cash award from the Military Officers Association of America. ☛

Read the entire story at
<http://dma.wi.gov/dma/news/2009News/09170.asp>

Wisconsin Guard family readiness group leader is First Lady's guest at State of Union address

Janell Kellett has found that moving forward and giving back can bring satisfaction and purpose — and a special invitation to the nation's capitol.

Kellett, of Sun Prairie, was selected to attend the State of the Union address Wednesday, Jan. 27 as the guest of First Lady Michelle Obama. Kellett was among 23 guests, civilian and military, to sit with the First Lady as well as Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice-President Joe Biden.

"It's totally awesome," Kellett said. "If you would have told me four months ago, or even four weeks ago, that this was a possibility, I wouldn't have believed it."

Kellett's husband, Maj. Michael Hanson, recently returned from Iraq following a year-long deployment with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. While that 3,200-Soldier unit was training, mobilizing and deploying, Kellett served as the lead volunteer for the brigade's Family Readiness Group, where she coordinated the efforts of approximately 27 subordinate-unit Family Readiness Group volunteers. They launched a community service campaign called "Moving Forward, Giving Back" to bring together families of Soldiers who have deployed in the past with families experiencing their first deployment, as well as to provide a focus outside of deployment concerns.

The Wisconsin National Guard learned late last year that the 32nd Brigade's Family Readiness Group was named the best in the Army National Guard for 2009, and will be one of seven reserve component family readiness groups to receive a Department of Defense award in the coming weeks.

Kellett contends that her volunteer work, both with the Family Readiness Group as well as other organizations, likely played a major role in receiving the invitation. For example, a food drive the 32nd Brigade Family Readiness Group conducted at Volk Field as Red Arrow Soldiers were returning from Iraq netted

Raymond Joseph, Haiti's Ambassador to the U.S., kisses the hand of First Lady Michelle Obama at the U.S. Capitol during President Barack Obama's State of the Union address Jan. 27. Janell Kellett is in the front row, second from left, facing the First Lady. Official White House photo by Samantha Appleton

more than 2,000 pounds of food for the Mauston Food Pantry.

"Our leadership here in Wisconsin, as well as our leadership in Washington, support volunteerism and clearly support these efforts," she said. "It's a lot of hard work, but a lot of rewarding work. I truly believe our volunteers are serving the National Guard, definitely making an important contribution."

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

"We are very proud of Janell and grateful for her tireless efforts on behalf of the 32nd IBCT," Dunbar said. "She has a heart of gold and is the perfect choice to represent Family Readiness Group

volunteers across the military.

"I am also very appreciative of the honor that the First Lady is bestowing to Janell and all volunteers who support our military family," he continued. "Clearly, our First Lady understands the importance of family support to our nation's warriors."

Kellett was nominated by Col. Steven Bensed, commander of the 32nd Brigade, as well as by Jan Van Kirk, lead volunteer for the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, and by Lt. Col. Tammy Gross, director of the Wisconsin National Guard's Service Member Support Division.

She said her husband, who watched

the speech from the theater room of the White House while she is at the Capitol Building, joked that he was the "and guest" part of the invitation. She disagreed.

"If it wasn't for him, I never would have been asked," Kellett, the only National Guard spouse to be invited, said. She described the invitation as a great honor, and said she struggled to justify why she was selected over other deserving candidates.

"At first I was excited, and then I was panicked, and then I was wondering why someone else wasn't picked," she explained. "Then I accepted that I was picked, and then I was excited again." ☺

Wisconsin Army Guard brigade takes major step forward in transformation

Sgt. Andy Poquette
157th Brigade Public Affairs

Changing missions can be difficult. Changing missions after 90 years can be extremely difficult, but that's exactly what the Soldiers of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) are doing. After 90 years as the 57th Field Artillery Brigade, the Soldiers of the newly transformed 157th MEB, headquartered in Milwaukee, are taking on new roles, new responsibilities, and new challenges.

"As a field artillery brigade, throughout the '80s and '90s, we had one mission — field artillery," said 157th MEB Command Sgt. Maj. Brad Shields. "Our annual training was the same each year — go to Fort McCoy and fire. Now, as a maneuver enhancement brigade, we have opportunities for those willing to breathe new life into the organization."

The maneuver enhancement brigade is a new Army concept that focuses on battlefield command and control. Unlike specialized units of the past, the MEB is able to own ground on the battlefield, thereby assuming responsibility of a piece of land. This responsibility can encompass everything from route clearance and military police to civil affairs and air space management.

"A maneuver enhancement brigade is an organization that is designed to provide command and control for a designated area," explained Sgt. Maj. Charles Kirchner, chief operations sergeant for the 157th MEB. "This can be during war or peace time. We are a unit comprised of subject matter experts in the areas of military police, CBRN [chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear], aviation, operations, area management, logistics and engineering."

The brigade began its transition in 2007 with a complete restructuring of the organization. Maintenance, chemical, signal and engineer units were created



Soldiers of the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade participate in the combined arms rehearsal during their first warfighter exercise at The Maneuver Support Center, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Department of Military Affairs photo by Sgt. Andy Poquette

from previously existing field artillery battalions and brigade detachments. This restructuring presented new opportunities for Soldiers, and new training challenges.

"Our biggest challenge during this transition has been getting our Soldiers qualified in the new MOS skill sets that are required for the MEB," Kirchner said. "But it is important to remember that with this transition we are now more relevant to the current world situation both in peace and wartime."

Shields said that change is good. "Change grows an organization," he said. "With this transition, Soldiers have the opportunity to become much more diverse in their skill set. While it has been a challenge for our Soldiers to get the required schools completed, you have to keep your eye on the end state.

"Each new job makes you more

marketable both as a Soldier and civilian, and creates advancement opportunity," Shields continued. "For senior NCOs we are looking for a broad background. Understanding of other jobs is critical to advancement to a leadership position."

With the change to a MEB, officer and senior NCO positions have nearly doubled at the brigade headquarters, and Soldiers have more opportunity to advance than ever before. Soldiers of the 157th can specialize in military police, chemical, air space management, public affairs, civil military operations, engineering, medical and liaison from the rank of private to colonel.

Recently Soldiers in the 157th MEB headquarters element had a chance to test their new specializations at the brigade's first warfighter exercise, held at Fort Leonard Wood's Maneuver Support Center.

The week-long training exercise was designed to establish a baseline for how far the brigade has come in its transition.

"The exercise went very well," Shields said. "It was an opportunity for the MEB to exercise at its elementary stage, its tactical standard operating procedure. It's all been theory so far, and we really haven't had an opportunity to practice."

This exercise was the first of many planned for the brigade, with a corps-level warfighter scheduled for next year. Going forward, the brigade plans to use what it learned at Fort Leonard Wood to refine its training plan, and rehearse the military decision-making process. Focus is now shifting from individual training to section-level training. ☞

Read the entire story at
<http://dma.wi.gov/dma/news/2010News/10125.asp>

Lambeau Field scores big with Wisconsin National Guard families

Senior Airman Ryan Kuntze

128th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

In honor of Military Appreciation Night, four families of deployed Guard members, selected by the Wisconsin National Guard Joint Force headquarters, were recognized by approximately 80,000 roaring fans in a halftime ceremony during the Green Bay Packers' Monday night football game Dec. 7. The families were chosen in part for their extensive military service.

During the half-time presentation, Airmen and Soldiers of the Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard unfurled 10 star-shaped United States flags. The family members were announced as they walked to center field, and were followed by the senior Wisconsin Guard officials.

As the crowd cheered, recorded videos from the deployed family members were played on the stadium's Jumbotron — a pleasant surprise for the gathered family members.

"I don't know if there are any words for my feelings," Master Sgt. LeTexier said after seeing his wife Debra on the big screen. "I was not ready to see my wife on the TV."

The Rockwell family was unanimous in their emotions — the videos brought them to tears.

Thirty-six Airmen and Soldiers from across Wisconsin, all assigned to Army and Air National Guard units, assisted in the ceremony. Senior leadership officials from the Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard also attended the game.

Brig. Gen. John McCoy, the deputy adjutant general for Air, said the event was overwhelming.

"It's an outstanding feeling to know the state is behind us," McCoy said.

The Military Appreciation Night began earlier in the day with recruiting events set up outside the main entrance to Lambeau Field.

Photo 1: The LeTexier family – Staff Sgt. Erin (LeTexier) Holt, her husband Dan Holt, Taylor LeTexier and Master Sgt. David LeTexier – watch a video of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Debra LeTexier, then deployed with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, on the Jumbotron at Lambeau Field.
Wisconsin Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Wallin

Days later, Master Sgt. David LeTexier, stationed at Volk Field Combat Readiness Center, was still beaming.

"It seems like such a blur," he said. "I can somehow remember bits and pieces of the night, and that keeps me smiling." ☺

Photo 2: The Murray family holds a picture of their father and spouse Lt. Col. David Murray during halftime at the Green Bay Packers' Dec. 7 game. Wisconsin National Guard members and their families were recognized during a half-time event at Lambeau Field. Wisconsin Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Rohloff

Read the entire story at <http://dma.wi.gov/dma/news/2009News/09163.asp> and <http://dma.wi.gov/dma/news/2009News/09165.asp>

Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy cadets celebrate achievement

Sgt. Andy Poquette

Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs

One hundred and one cadets cast off the mantle of “truant” or “trouble-maker” and embraced the role of responsible young adult during the graduation ceremony for Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy Class 23 Dec. 19.

The goal of the Academy is to transform at-risk youths who don’t care about school, may be in trouble with the law, or may have been abusing drugs or alcohol, to a responsible young adult who has a high school degree and is a contributing member of their family and community.

The National Guard’s Youth ChalleNGe Program began in 1991, when the House Joint Armed Service Committee tasked the National Guard to develop a plan to help at-risk teens and “add value to America.” By providing values, skills, education, and discipline to young people using the structure and *esprit de corps* of the military model, the Youth ChalleNGe Program began a three-year pilot program in 1993. Fifteen states participated in the pilot program, which became a permanent National Guard program in 1996. In 1998, Wisconsin became one of 26 states to offer the [Challenge Program](#) and has graduated more than 1,900 cadets since.

During the 22-week program cadets learn important leadership and life coping skills while studying for their general education development test. Each cadet undergoes important changes to mold them into responsible citizens who can contribute to the success of their local communities. Much of the change comes as a result of mentorship from their team leaders.

Cadets are broken into 14-person teams and team leaders are responsible for coaching their cadets and guiding them through the program.

“The best thing about being a team leader is being given the raw material of

Photo 1: Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy cadets stand at attention during their graduation ceremony Dec. 19 at Mauston High School. Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photos by Sgt. Andy Poquette

a cadet when they arrive, and shaping them into a young adult,” said Senior Team Leader Shane Mikkelson. “You can always see the disappointment in a cadet’s or parent’s eyes when they arrive, and to see the change in them, the pride at graduation, is a great feeling.

“Cadets take away a personal sense of pride and accomplishment,” Mikkelson continued. “For many of them, this is the first time they have finished anything.”

Cadet William Dorn, of Poynette, agreed.

“It was really difficult being away from home for so long,” Dorn said, “but I took away a sense of discipline I didn’t have before.”

Each cadet received a Challenge Academy diploma and coin to remember their accomplishment.

“Carry that coin with you wherever you go,” said Col. (retired) M.G.

Photo 2: The Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy Rifle Drill Team performs for the Class 23 graduation ceremony Saturday (Dec. 19) at Mauston High School. One hundred and one cadets participated in the ceremony.

MacLaren, Challenge Academy program director. “Whenever you have doubts, are undecided or afraid, take out the coin and hold it. Think back to what you accomplished here by not giving up, and have the courage to make the hard right choice.” 🇺🇸

Read the entire story at
<http://dma.wi.gov/dma/news/2009News/09171.asp>

Meritorious service

Two Wisconsin Air units among nation's best

Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue

Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs

Air Force officials announced that two Wisconsin Air National Guard units would be among top Air Force units to receive the 2009 United States Air Force unit awards.



The Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing was one of only 31 units to earn the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award and the Camp Douglas-based Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center was one of nine to receive the Air Force Organizational Excellence Awards.

"This is a tremendous accomplishment for the men and women of the Wisconsin Air National Guard," said Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin. "These awards reflect the superb leadership at the 115th Fighter Wing and the Volk CRTC, and the quality of our superb citizen-Airmen. It is a privilege for us to serve."

This is the sixth AFOUA for the fighter wing. Col. Joseph Brandemuehl, 115th FW commander, said the award is in line with the wing's motto of "Dedicated to Excellence."

"It's that motto that has built the culture of excellence we have today and that allows us to perform at such a high level," said Brandemuehl. "I think this award is validation that Wisconsin citizen Airmen are the best in the Air

Force."

Col. Gary Ebben, Volk Field CRTC commander, credits a great staff, great work ethic and vast experience as the recipe for his unit's tremendous success.

Of only four CRTCs in the nation, Volk Field was the only one selected for the award in 2009.

"All of the CRTCs provide a valuable service to our nation in supporting Guard, Active Duty, Reserve and interagency training and operational needs," said Ebben. "I can't speak to the specific tempo of the other CRTCs, but Volk Field has never been busier when all mission sets are considered."

A total of 40 units were recognized throughout the country.

The AFOUA was first authorized by the Department of the Air Force in 1954. It is awarded by the secretary of the Air Force to numbered units that have "distinguished themselves by exceptionally meritorious service or outstanding achievement that clearly sets the unit above and apart from similar units."

The AFOEA critiques nearly identical criteria but is awarded to units who are unique, unnumbered organizations that operate or perform missions like a numbered unit would.

Volk Field won the AFOUA in 2007 but National Guard Bureau determined the CRTC was more appropriately placed in the AFOEA category.

"This is a group of incredibly dedicated and committed individuals who collectively combine, forming an extremely effective team," said Ebben. "They do a tremendous job performing a very challenging mission." ☞

Adjutant General named advisor to FEMA council

Wisconsin's Adjutant General has been appointed to a national group to advise the Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) on all aspects of disaster preparedness and management.

Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin and Wisconsin's Homeland Security Advisor, was named by FEMA Administrator W. Craig Fugate to the National Advisory Council (NAC). The NAC is comprised of emergency management and law enforcement leaders from state, local and tribal government and the private sector to advise the FEMA Administrator on all aspects of disaster preparedness and management to ensure close coordination with all partners across the country.

"I am honored to serve on the National Advisory Council and appreciate the support of Gov. Jim Doyle, the GHSAC, and Wisconsin's First Responder community who supported my nomination," Dunbar said. "The council's mission is timely and important and I look forward to working with Administrator Fugate to help improve our nation's readiness."

The 35-member council was formed in 2007 following Hurricane Katrina. NAC members serve three-year terms and are selected based on their expertise in emergency management and response, public health, infrastructure protection, cybersecurity, communications and other areas related to FEMA's mission.

Dunbar has served as Wisconsin's Homeland Security Advisor and as chair of the Governor's Homeland Security Council since September 2007. The Adjutant General is Wisconsin's senior military officer and commander of the Wisconsin National Guard. He is also responsible for Emergency Management working closely with the Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) Administrator and county emergency managers to coordinate statewide preparedness and response. Since 2007, he has led the response and recovery efforts for two major flooding events and a snow emergency in Wisconsin which resulted in federal disaster declarations. ☞

Wisconsin Airmen of 2009 named

Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue

Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs

Wisconsin Air National Guard officials have announced five Airmen as the Airmen of the Year for 2009.

Winners were chosen among more than 2,200 Airmen from Wisconsin's four ANG units including the 115th Fighter Wing, Madison, 128th Air Refueling Wing, Milwaukee, and the 128th Air Control Squadron and Combat Readiness Training Center at Volk Field.

This year's winners are Senior Airmen Ryan Moll, Stevens Point, 115th FW, Airman category; Tech. Sgt. Andrew Jackson, Tomah, CRTC, non-commissioned officer category; Master Sgt. Jessica Maple, Mosinee, 128th ACS, senior non-commissioned officer category; Master Sgt. Kent Falstad, Pardeeville, 115th FW, First Sergeant category; Master Sgt. Don Milbach, Camp Douglas, 128th ACS, Honor Guard Member category.

"The competition at the state level for these awards was close, which speaks highly about the quality of Airmen at all of our units," said Chief Master Sgt. Jim Chisholm, Wisconsin ANG command chief master sergeant. "Each one of them are glowing examples of the Air Force's core values of integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do."

The winners will go on to compete at the National Guard Bureau level among more than 90 ANG units in their respective categories.

The announcement comes shortly after NGB announced the 115th FW and Volk CRTC as the most recent winners of the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award and Air Force Organizational Excellence Award. ☞

Veterans, Families, Retirees

2009 Retiree Appreciation Day held

The Wisconsin National Guard Retiree Council held its 23rd Retiree Appreciation Day Oct. 2-3 at the Wisconsin Military Academy at Fort McCoy. The event was attended by more than 350 retirees and spouses.

Oct. 2 was arrival and camaraderie, while Oct. 3 was filled with presentations, breakouts and information tables.

Notable presentations were made on the status of our Wisconsin National Guard by Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, and both deputy adjutant generals, Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson and Brig. Gen. John McCoy.

Lt. Col. Michael Murphy covered the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team deployment.

Dr. Ahearn from the Veterans Administration in Madison discussed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Cdr. Katherine O'Neill Tracy of Military Officers Association of America covered their issues.

Great breakout/workshops were held on Retirement Services, Tricare and Tricare Dental, Challenge Academy, and Wills and Trusts.

Much information was available at tables run by MOAA, Wisconsin National Guard Association, Wisconsin National Guard Enlisted Association, Service Member Support, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, and others

Blood pressures and medical advice were dispensed by our medical personnel, led by Col. Shirley Kubiak.

The hard work of many of the "regulars" at the Retirees Activity Office and many members of the Retiree Council, made this event a success. Evaluations by the attendees were excellent overall, but much good critical commentary will lead to an even better event, which is in the very early planning stages for 2011.

The Wisconsin National Guard Retiree Council presented its highest recognition, the Lifetime Achievement Award, to the current president of the council, Col. (Ret) Fred McCormick on Oct. 3.

Brig. Gen. (Ret) Jim Holmes was given the Presidents Award for his leadership in chairing this event and the 2007 Retiree Appreciation Day.

Col. (Ret) Jed Engeler was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for his assistance with the last two Retiree Appreciation days. ☺

Retiree Activities Office

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

Retirees may provide an e-mail address, name, retired military grade and branch of service to widma.retiree@wisconsin.gov to be added to the RAO's e-mail distribution list.

The RAO is located at Joint Force Headquarters, 2400 Wright Street, Room 160, Madison, Wis. 53704. The RAO is open Tuesdays and Thursdays 7:30 to 11:30 a.m. except on holidays. Contact the RAO with questions or for assistance at **608-242-3115** or toll-free at **1-800-335-5147**. ☺

Some Medicare costs to rise

The monthly premium paid by those receiving Medicare Part B (primarily physicians' services) benefits remains \$96.40 for most enrollees. Individual tax filers with incomes over \$85,000 will be subject to a phased-in scale up to \$353.60 monthly. However, certain enrollees under that threshold, including those who don't have premiums deducted from Social Security benefits are subject to a higher basic rate of \$110.50 because of a quirk

in Medicare law that Congress did not address before finishing work for the year. (Source: *Fed Week Newsletter*) ☺

AF records to Archives

Approximately 177,000 official military personnel files from the Air Force were transferred recently to the National Archives and Records Administration, making the historical documents part of the public record. As Air Force personnel files continue to reach maturity at 62 years, they will be transferred to national archives ownership. The ownership of these records by the National Archives now makes them open to the public. While the Privacy Act no longer applies to archival records, exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act continue to protect the personal privacy of the members and their families and Social Security numbers are redacted before release. For more information and the request copies of records from the National Archives, visit the [National Archives' eVetRecs website](http://www.military.com). (Source: www.military.com) ☺

Free tax assistance

Military OneSource is pleased to announce that beginning Monday, January 18, 2010, we began providing free tax consultation and free on-line tax filing services to military service members and their families during the tax season. As in the three previous years, participants will have free online access to the H&R Block At Home (formerly TaxCut) Basic tax product.

A brief overview of the program:

- Participants must register for Military OneSource and log on to the site for access to the H&R Block At Home (formerly TaxCut) Basic product. A separate login for the H&R Block At Home (formerly TaxCut) site is required.
- Those eligible for the program are active duty, Guard and Reserve

(regardless of activation status), spouses and dependent children (authorized in DEERS), family members handling the affairs of a deployed service member, and severely injured service members or family members handling their affairs.

- Participants will have free access to the H&R Block At Home (formerly TaxCut) Basic product. Those with more complicated returns may incur charges if they upgrade to the H&R Block At Home (formerly TaxCut) Premium product.
- Participants can file up to three state resident returns for each federal return that they file with the H&R Block At Home (formerly TaxCut) Basic product.
- Participants can speak with a Military OneSource Tax Consultant if they have tax related questions, or need assistance using the H&R Block At Home (formerly TaxCut) Basic product.

Find out more about the program by visiting the Military OneSource Tax page: <https://www.militaryonesource.com/MOS/FindInformation/Category/TaxFilingServices.aspx>

Also see our FAQ page: <https://www.militaryonesource.com/Default.aspx?tabid=198&action=cat&parentID=25> ☺

Family retreats

The National Military Family Association is happy to announce that we will offer Operation Purple Family Retreats during the winter of 2010. These free, four-day retreats are set in a National Park using nature's classroom, where you and your family will have opportunities to strengthen and renew relationships, explore the natural surroundings, and participate in fun family-focused activities.

Participants will be paired with highly specialized field science educators and staff members who will guide families through various activities. The weekend includes structured activities to highlight areas of strength and resilience in your family and promote family growth. ☺

Military photos must now be scheduled on-line

Beginning immediately, all requests for official DA photos or command photos (head and shoulders) through the Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Office at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison must be made through the Visual Information Ordering Site (VIOS): <http://www.vios.army.mil> This URL will bring you to a map, with the Midwest in blue. Click on Wisconsin to be brought to the Wisconsin ARGN (Air aRmy Guard Network) Visual Information Website. Click on the box at right to open a DA Form 3903 (Multi-Media/Visual Information Work Order). Take your time when filling out this form on-line.

When filling out this form, you will indicate the time you wish to have your photo taken from a schedule of available time slots; you will be informed by the PAO Studio if your time request has been approved. Implementing this new process means the PAO studio will set and abide by a fixed schedule Monday through Thursday for photo studio work (DA Photos from 8:30-10:30 a.m., and command photos from 10:30-11:30 a.m.). Bear in mind that the PAO Studio photographer is not available every day.

The first screen is **customer contact information** and is self-explanatory. The next screen is **type of product and service**. The only services we provide through this office are official DA Photos, command photos and prints. The next screen is **photography**, and this is where you will indicate the reason you need the photo (promotion board, school requirement, special requirement or warrant officer package). It is on the **photography** screen page that you will select your desired date.

If you are ordering prints on the type of product and service screen, that will bring you to the **prints, photos, signs and charts** screen page. The only service we provide though this office is photo prints.

This new procedure is required by the National Guard Bureau. Appointments can no longer be made over the phone, by e-mail or by visiting the studio office.

Contact Matt Jacobs if you have any issues with completing the on-line DA Form 3903. He can be reached at 608.242.3616 or matt.jacobs1@us.army.mil

Step 1: Open VIOS, click on Wisconsin



Step 2: Click on "Work Orders"



Step 3: Fill out Customer Information

Step 4: Select type of product (photography)



Step 5: Select type of photo

Step 6: Complete information

Parting shot

Soldiers and Airmen of the Wisconsin National Guard assist in halftime ceremonies during the Green Bay Packers' Dec. 7 Monday Night Football game. Select Wisconsin National Guard families were recognized as part of "Military Appreciation Night." For additional information, see Page 14. Wisconsin Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Rohloff

