



NEWS YOU CAN USE

Weekly News for National Guard Families

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Have an article, announcement, or website that you'd like to share with the National Guard Family Program Community? Send your suggestions in an e-mail to Richard.Flynn@ngb.af.mil.

The State (Columbia, SC)

March 29, 2004 Monday

S.C. Bases Take Central Role in New Defense

By CHUCK CRUMBO; Staff Writer

South Carolina air bases are playing a key role in trying to prevent future terrorist attacks like those on New York and Washington, D.C., on Sept. 11, 2001.

F-16 fighters at Shaw Air Force Base, including a detachment from the **Vermont Air National Guard**, are flying air combat patrols over the Eastern seaboard, officials said.

Meanwhile, pilots at the McEntire Air National Guard Station, east of Columbia, have been called on to back up Sumter pilots as well as fly patrols.

The role of S.C. airmen is part of the Air Force's effort to revamp its homeland defense mission.

On Sept. 11, 2001, al Qaeda terrorists hijacked three airliners, crashing them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. A fourth hijacked airliner crashed in a Pennsylvania field.

How the military responded to the hijackings has been roundly criticized by the 9/11 Commission, which held public hearings last week and will do so again in April. The panel said Air Force jets were too slow in responding to the emergency because of a lack of communication between civilian and military authorities.

The commission also found the United States was ill-prepared to defend against any attack within its borders. For example, military commanders adhered to federal noise-control rules that require fighters to fly at slow speeds over land rather than racing interceptors to cities under attack.

Since 9/11, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, which is responsible for air defenses over the United States and Canada, has more fighters patrolling U.S. skies and other planes on alert.

"There are pilots in a number of locations sitting there ready to jump into their aircraft and scramble," said Canadian Army Maj. Douglas Martin, a command spokesman. (The Colorado-headquartered command is staffed by members of the U.S. and Canadian military.)

In addition, pilots are being trained several times a week on how to handle hijacked airliners.

The training scenarios include the possibility of pilots having to shoot down an airliner.

Martin declined to discuss how many missions are flown from individual bases or how many planes may be involved in the patrols.

But Air Force magazine reported the Air Force keeps a minimum of 35 fighters, eight refueling tankers and a pair of E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft ready to respond to a threat. Before 9/11, only 14 fighters and no tankers or warning aircraft were kept on alert.

Eighteen bases around the country also have fighters sitting on their runways that can be airborne within five minutes. That's more than double the seven installations that were "alert bases" prior to 9/11.

Since 9/11, planes on North American Aerospace Defense Command missions have flown 35,000 sorties. More than 1,700 times they either have diverted patrols or scrambled to check out a suspect aircraft, Martin said.

While the Air National Guard is in charge of the command's homeland defense mission, active-duty units such as those at Shaw also have been called on to patrol the skies.

Shaw, home of the 20th Fighter Wing, recently got some help from the Vermont Air National Guard.

The "Green Mountain Boys," as the Vermont Guard calls itself, have deployed four F-16s and about 50 airmen to the Sumter base to fly patrols over the southeastern United States.

S.C. Air National Guard jets, based at McEntire some 20 miles west of Shaw, have flown a handful of homeland defense patrols and pilots occasionally have been on alert, said a McEntire spokesman.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command also has taken steps to speed up any alert in the future, Martin said.

During 9/11 civilian Federal Aviation Administration controllers had to pick up the phone to alert the military the hijacked airliners had strayed from their course.

Now, Martin said, the command monitors all FAA communications and would be notified immediately if there was a problem. Also, FAA officials work at command headquarters and could give an immediate approval to military commanders if interceptors needed to violate any noise-restriction rules.

"The FAA is still in control of the airspace but NORAD fighters will respond appropriately," Martin said.

Reach Crumbo at (803) 771-8503 or ccrumbo@thestate.com

Boston Globe

March 25, 2004

He Helped Guard Answer the Call

Keefe came out of retirement to boost morale of force once ranked last in nation in readiness

When Major General George W. Keefe stepped out of retirement five years ago at age 60 to take over the Massachusetts National Guard, he inherited a military force mired in scandal and suffering historically low morale.

The Army side of the guard was ranked 54th, dead last, in overall performance among state and territory Guard units. Only about 20 percent of guardsmen could pass fitness tests needed for mobilization.

The Guard was also contending with an Army investigation of Keefe's predecessor, Raymond A. Vezina, who, among other things, was found to have used a military plane to travel to his vacation home in Maine. Later, Keefe told Vezina he was being fired from the Guard for donning a major general's uniform at a Worcester Veterans' Day parade, although he was only an Army colonel.

"I came here in a very rocky time," Keefe said in a recent interview at the Guard's Milford headquarters. "The image of the Guard was at a pretty good low."

Much has changed since. Since Sept. 11, the Massachusetts Guard under Keefe has mobilized more soldiers and air personnel than at any time since World War II. Roughly 7,000 Guard soldiers from Massachusetts have served on active duty following the terrorist attacks.

F-15 fighter jets from the 102d Fighter Wing from Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod were the first to respond to the World Trade Center attack.

And thousands of Massachusetts National Guard soldiers continue to serve overseas, in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. While combat continues, many soldiers are making their way home, and several hundred are preparing for upcoming peacekeeping missions.

Those conditions led Governor Mitt Romney to file legislation that would allow Keefe, a Northampton resident, to serve another year, even though the general is about to reach the mandatory retirement age for National Guard officers. Next month, on April 24, Keefe celebrates his 65th birthday.

"He said goodbye to them, and I want him to have the right and responsibility to say hello to them," Romney said in an interview earlier this week. "He's the person who knows them, who sent them out, who knows what they're capable of."

Keefe said he is more than willing to answer the governor's call, adding that he takes great pride in serving the country and the state during these times of uncertainty.

He has never served in combat himself; it's one of his deepest regrets. He thought he was close during the Vietnam War. But only about 400 Massachusetts National Guard soldiers were mobilized, and he wasn't one of them.

"Everybody kind of had an empty feeling, because you are not part of that first team," he said. "You really felt bad."

Now, Keefe takes great pride sending soldiers into battle, soldiers he has visited in such places as Iraq, Kuwait, and Guantanamo Bay. He feels great pain when they don't return.

"When you take a 19- or 20-year-old that's about to get married or is married and look at their little kids and their families and the grief-stricken, it really tears your guts out," he said.

Keefe isn't just sending other parents' children to war; he's sending his own.

Three of his four sons are members of the Massachusetts National Guard. Gary, 40, and Jim, 38, a lieutenant colonel and major, respectively, with the 104th Fighter Wing of Westfield, each served in Iraq. And Patrick, 36, a member of the 42d Division Artillery out of Rehoboth, previously served in Bosnia and is scheduled for deployment to Iraq later this spring. His youngest son, Tim, is a police officer in Dover.

Friends and colleagues say there is nothing more important to Keefe than the Guard and his family. His corner office is a testament to that.

Photos of his sons, along with their military honors, line the shelves. His own have been stuffed inside drawers.

Flags line the walls. More flags lie folded in specially decorated boxes that detail the places they were flown. Almost every knickknack is dressed in camouflage, including his Bible and a teddy bear given to him by his girlfriend, Geri, who works at the Department of Correction. Next to a photo of him with Romney is an epaulet from the uniform of a two-star Iraqi general, a gift from a soldier.

Keefe's wife of 41 years, Kathleen, died in October 2000 after a four-year battle with cancer. When she went blind three months before her death, he said, he decided to quit to help her full-time.

Keefe, who survived his own battle against colon cancer in 1992, told colleagues he was leaving, but they wouldn't let him go, deciding instead to take on much of his duties.

"It was a total team effort," he said.

Keefe joined the Guard with six friends as a 17-year-old in 1956. He aspired to be a war pilot, although he quickly realized the Guard would not let him fly because of a 6-inch scar from an appendectomy. At the time, such scars could not be more than 2 inches, out of fear that air pressure would rupture the wound.

The day after his commencement at Northampton High School, he and his friends were shipped off to a Cape Cod military base as classmates celebrated their graduation.

"We couldn't even party that night," said Richard Turban, a Northampton classmate who joined the Guard with Keefe.

After serving 12 years as an enlisted member with the 104th Tactical Fighter Group, based in Westfield, Keefe said, he accepted his wife's counsel that he needed more education if he was ever going to make officer.

She was right, it seems. Two years after receiving a business degree from Holyoke Community College, he was promoted to first lieutenant at the 104th Combat Support Squadron. In 1987, he was named deputy commander, eventually taking the helm at the Air National Guard in 1995.

It was only days after his retirement in 1999 that then-governor Paul Cellucci called him back from a vacation on a South Yarmouth beach to offer him the job of adjutant general for the joint force. He would be the first air guardsman to take over the joint force since its formation in Salem.

The first thing Keefe sought to do was rid any members with the "weekend warrior" mindset, those who signed on with the Guard believing that their commitment would be minimal. He restructured command roles from the top down.

Calling the Guard a "nursing home," he enforced a strict physical health policy, starting with the generals.

"I cleaned house," he said. "We had people hiding in closets, but I found them."

State Senator-elect Scott Brown, a Wrentham Republican and a major in the Army National Guard, said Keefe was "a breath of fresh air."

"Throughout all of that," Brown said, "he was right here working and committed to making the Guard the best it can be."

Today, Keefe proudly states that the Massachusetts National Guard has the highest rate nationwide of Guard soldiers ready for combat.

It's not just self-promotion: Colonel Emory R. Helton, garrison commander of Fort Drum in New York, said his experience with Massachusetts units shows that they are as prepared for mobilization as his active-duty Army units.

"When George Keefe returned integrity to our business, that was what was necessary at that time, and I'm delighted that he did that," said Brigadier General Donald Quenneville, commander of the Massachusetts Air National Guard.

Quenneville said Keefe's success is due in large part to his ability to respect a soldier, regardless of his or her rank.

Keefe said that he had been urging Romney for the better part of last year to find a successor, but that the governor never really responded. Romney then called asking him to remain.

"When the governor asks you, you don't say no. You say, 'You bet your life; I'd love to,' " Keefe said.

The governor's legislation that would allow Keefe to serve past age 65 now sits in the Joint Committee on Public Service. The chairman of the committee, Senator Steven A. Tolman, a Brighton Democrat, said he hoped to hold a public hearing within the next few weeks. On its surface, he said, it appeared to be a noncontroversial issue.

Keefe said he's more than happy to stay and has several things he wants to see through. Noting that more people are leaving the Guard than joining it, he wants to develop a more formal deployment schedule to give soldiers, their families, and their employers a clearer sense of when they will be needed.

But he promises his 65th year will be his last.

"If I'm cleared, I'll gladly stay for another year," he said, adding with a smile, "But that's it. I'm retiring."

Reserve Component Civilian Employment Information Program Begins

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell, USA

Special to American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 31, 2004 – A new Defense Department reporting system has begun so members of all seven reserve components can register their employers.

DoD decision-makers need to know the civilian employers and government agencies of the department's approximately 1.2 million National Guardsmen and reservists, officials explained. The database will, among other things, give officials a better idea of who should, and should not, be mobilized for national emergencies, they said.

The database is called the Civilian Employment Information Program, and it is the way for all Guard and Reserve members to comply with the law that requires them to inform DoD of who employs them and how they are employed when not performing their military duties.

"This program will make it possible for defense officials, including those responsible for mobilizing our traditional Guard and Reserve members, to know who can be called up for active military duty without jeopardizing the civilian forces responsible for safeguarding our country," explained David Chu, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

Members of the Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Navy Individual Ready Reserve can now enter their employment data on the new Defense Manpower Data Center Web site. Members of the Army Reserve, Navy Selected Reserve, Marine Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve will be able to enter their employment data on their existing personnel reporting systems.

To register their CEI information, reserve component members should go to their respective service's CEI program Web sites, officials said.

Guardsmen and reservists must register 10 specific data fields concerning their civilian employers and job skills to meet three requirements mandated by law.

Chu said the Defense Department must:

- Give consideration to civilian workers -- including emergency responders such as police officers, firefighters and medical personnel -- necessary to maintain the national health, safety and interests when considering which Guard and Reserve members should be called to active duty.
- Ensure more members with critical civilian jobs and skills are not retained in the reserve components than are necessary to respond to emergencies.
- Inform the reservists' civilian employers of their rights and responsibilities under the 1994 Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

The information could be another tool to help determine which units or members of the Ready Reserve should be mobilized, defense officials explained.

Information about full-time employers also would make it possible for DoD officials to enhance employer support for the Guard and Reserve, officials said.

"The goal is to maintain a 95 percent accurate data base for the Selected Reserve," explained Thomas Hall, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, "and to maintain 75 percent accuracy for the Individual Ready Reserve database. The department is required by law to maintain adequate and current personnel records on members of the reserve components, including each member's civilian occupational skills."

The law also requires all members of reserve components to notify appropriate defense officials about any changes in their civilian employment.

Officials said the Defense Department knows 13 percent of the Guard and Reserve work for the federal government, and that half of those are federal military technicians.

Surveys have told DoD officials the general sectors of the economy in which the other 87 percent of reserve component members work: About 60 percent work in private-sector firms, 20 percent work for state or local governments, and less than 7 percent are self-employed.

Employees are considered full time for Civilian Employment Information Program purposes if their employer considers them to be employed full time. Self-employed personnel are considered full time if they work for themselves for an average of at least 30 hours per week.

Defense officials do not currently know the specific skills these members possess, or specifically who the employers are. Nor does the Defense Department know which members of the Ready Reserve are employed in the professions related to maintaining the national health, safety and interest, officials pointed out.

The Civilian Employment Information Program, Chu explained, will require all Guard and Reserve members to list on the database their employment status, their employer's names, their employer's complete mailing addresses, their civilian job titles, and their total number of years in their current civilian occupations.

The requirement on the part of the guardsman or reservist to provide CEI data is not a violation of the Privacy Act, added Hall. CEI is the extension of existing personnel data records, and is covered under previous Privacy Act systems notices, he said.

Unlike previous military service efforts to voluntarily gather employer data, registering employer data in the CEI program is mandatory. Guard and Reserve members who knowingly fail or refuse to provide that information, or who knowingly provide false employment-related information, may be subject to administrative action or punishment, officials said.

Link:

[CEI Registration Site for the Army and Air National Guard, Air Force and Coast Guard Reserve \(https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/esgr/index.jsp\)](https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/esgr/index.jsp)

National Guard and Reserve Mobilized as of March 31, 2004

This week the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps each report decreases in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization. The Navy reports a slight increase. The net collective result is 626 fewer reservists on active duty than last week.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 151,745; Naval Reserve 2,680; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 14,329; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,115; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 1,607. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve on active duty to 175,476 including both units and individual augmentees.

A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve who are currently on active duty can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2004/d20040331ngr1.pdf>.

Troop Rotation to Iraq Continues, Units Assuming Control

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 31, 2004 – The largest rotation of U.S. forces since World War II continues in Iraq, Defense Department officials said today.

In all more than 250,000 U.S. service members are affected.

Planning for the rotation began months ago. New units worked with units in Iraq to learn their new missions and to plan the movement. In December, new units began flowing into the region, and in January, they began the relief-in-place process.

Officials expect the rotation to continue through May, when 110,000 U.S. service members will be in place. They will replace the 130,000 Americans who have been serving in the region. When the rotation is complete, about 80,000 soldiers, 25,000 Marines and 5,000 Air Force and Navy personnel will be in Iraq. Fourteen brigades will have replaced 17 brigades.

To date, about 95 percent of the service members deploying to Iraq have arrived in the region. More than 90 percent of the cargo has arrived, and more than 60 percent of the personnel due to return to home stations have done so.

Some moves already have occurred. Task Force Olympia has relieved the 101st Airborne Division in Mosul. The largest unit in Task Force Olympia is the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (called the Stryker Brigade) from Fort Lewis, Wash. The 101st has returned to Fort Campbell, Ky.

Other units leaving the region are the 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Bragg, N.C.; the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Carson, Colo.; the 1st Armored Division based in Germany and Fort Riley, Kansas; the 173rd Airborne Brigade from Vicenza, Italy; and the 4th Infantry Division based at both Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Carson.

Arriving Army units include the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood. The division also will command the 39th Brigade Combat Team from the Arkansas National Guard. The division will relieve the 1st Armored Division in Baghdad, and is due to take over responsibility April 15.

The 1st Infantry Division from Wurzburg, Germany, and Fort Riley, Kansas, has relieved the 4th Infantry Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Tikrit and Kirkuk, respectively. The 30th Brigade Combat Team of the North Carolina National Guard also is part of the 1st Infantry.

Last week, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Pendleton, Calif., relieved the 82nd Airborne Division and the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in the hotspots of Fallujah, Ramadi and the western part of Iraq. The 1st MEF also will command the 1st Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley and the 81st Armored Brigade of the Washington State National Guard.

While the number of American forces is dropping, Iraqi assets will more than make up the cut. A new Iraqi army brigade should be operational by the time the coalition returns sovereignty to an Iraqi government June 30. In addition, units of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps will work with the units. Baghdad officials said more than 210,000 Iraqis are involved in security work in the country.

REUNION

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Aberdeen American News (South Dakota)

March 30, 2004 Tuesday

200th Engineers Receive Grand Homecoming

By Russ Keen; American News Writer

DATELINE: MOBRIDGE

They returned from war unscathed, but were blown away by the homecoming they received on Monday. "It's absolutely amazing," said Spc. Josh Guthmiller, 23, Selby, a member of the Mobridge-based Detachment 2 of the 200th Engineer Co., **South Dakota National Guard**. "It is much more than I ever expected. I really underestimated this."

Associated Press

March 30, 2004

Arizona Army Guard Returns Home

Phoenix -- Members of the **Arizona Army National Guard's** 855th military police company return to Phoenix tomorrow afternoon.

The officers were called up to active duty and served in Iraq for a year.

The guard is scheduled to arrive at the 52nd Street Armory in east Phoenix between 2:30 and 4:30 tomorrow afternoon.

While on duty, the 855th military police unit designed, constructed and managed two enemy prisoner of war holding areas in support of the Army's advance on Baghdad.

The unit also had responsibility for hiring, training and equipping local Iraqi police.

Associated Press

March 31, 2004

National Guard Unit Returns Home

Waterford-AP, Mar. 31, 2004

The **Connecticut National Guard's** 143rd Military Police are on their way home from Iraq.

The 150-member unit is scheduled to arrive at Fort Drum in New York tomorrow, the first stop on its way home Connecticut after a nearly year-long deployment in Iraq.

Thirteen members of the West Hartford-based unit have earned the Purple Heart for wounds from hostile enemy action, the highest percentage of war-related injuries suffered by any of the Connecticut Guard units deployed in Iraq.

The unit will remain at Ft. Drum over the weekend and return to Connecticut next week.

The 143rd is the second Connecticut National Guard unit to return from the war. They join the 1109th, who returned home last month.

Four more units activated last year will be returning over the next four months.

The New London-based 247th Engineering Detachment and Norwich-based 248th Engineering Company are scheduled to return home next month.

The Associated Press

April 1, 2004

600 Welcome Return of Guard's 1555th Quartermaster Detachment

DATELINE: DUBUQUE, Iowa

More than 600 people welcomed home 40 soldiers of the **Iowa Army National Guard's** 1555th Quartermaster Detachment Wednesday afternoon at Dubuque's National Guard Armory.

"It's great to have you back," National Guard Adjutant General Ron Dardis said of the unit that processed 60 million gallons of potable water during their deployment to Iraq. He thanked the soldiers for their "willingness to serve."

Families and friends welcomed the soldiers with hugs, tears and cheers.

"We've been floating for days," said Tim Biedermann, the father of Spc. Laura Biedermann, of Dubuque. "It's tough to sleep. It's unreal. We've been waiting for this all year and we can't wait to get her home."

Biedermann went home in style, along with fellow 1555th soldier Nathan Miller, thanks to her friend Tiffany Bollinger.

Bollinger rented a 16-passenger Lincoln Navigator from Miracle Limousine of Dubuque.

"We just wanted to show her a good time," Bollinger said. "We told her when she left we were going to pick her up in a Lincoln Navigator limo, so we got it. She didn't believe it."

Michael Lopez thought so, too, as he was met by his wife Theresa and their three children, Heather 11, Christopher 9, and Nathan 5.

Lopez, a California native, spent 17 years in the military. The family decided to settle in Iowa, and Michael would enlist in the Army National Guard for three years and earn retirement benefits. In October 2002, the family moved to Epworth from Virginia.

Theresa found a job with Mercy Medical Center-Dubuque's Child Development Center.

"We thought that's a really good sign, so we moved here," Theresa said. "We really took a chance."

Michael joined the 1555th - his first drill was in January 2003. Less than a month later, the 1555th received deployment orders.

The limo that picked up Biedermann was stocked with a cooler of beer and soft drinks.

"We're ready to rock," said Bollinger.

So was Biedermann.

"I feel the weight of the world is off my shoulders," she said. "It was the worst experience. I never want to do it again. Each day you never knew if you were going to live or die. It's great to be back."

The Associated Press

April 2, 2004

Guard's Medical Battalion Returns Home

DATELINE: CORALVILLE, Iowa

A 12-year-old celebrated his birthday Thursday, looking for his dad among the 200 **Iowa National Guard** soldiers marching into the Coral Ridge Mall ice arena after spending more than 14 months on active duty.

"That's him, that's him," screamed Alex Dlouhy of Mason City, who was having difficulty identifying his father, Spc. Jim Dlouhy, through the tears blurring his vision. "This is the best birthday present of my life."

After serving an extended term in Iraq, the for Operation Iraqi Freedom, 150 men and women of the 109th Medical Battalion's Headquarters and Support Company and about 60 members of the battalion's Company A returned home to their families.

"The definition of hero is the 109th Medical Battalion," said Gov. Tom Vilsack, who was one of several state, community and military dignitaries to speak at the event. Vilsack kept his address to less than a minute, expediting long-awaited reunions.

"God bless each and every one of you, and God bless the USA," Vilsack said.

The Headquarters and Support Company, which provides medical care, was activated Jan. 24 and left for Fort McCoy, Wis., for two months of training before shipping out to the Middle East. Company A, working below the Headquarters and Support Company, followed a month later.

Families initially expected the battalion to be gone one year but learned in September that the troops' stay had been extended through March - about three months longer than anticipated.

"This is the end of a nightmare," said Roxanne Delany, 45, who waited with her 16-year-old son Matt for her husband Jim Delany. "I was worried he would be safe."

Maj. Gen. Ron Dardis, adjutant general of the Iowa National Guard, said the battalion suffered no fatalities or injuries.

"They were all brought home safe that's outstanding leadership," he said.

Dardis said that during their service, the battalion treated more than 100,000 patients, evacuated more than 3,400 people during emergencies and provided command and control for 10 subordinate units of about 400 soldiers.

About 20 soldiers with the 109th Medical Battalion remain in Kuwait to ensure equipment is safely transferred to American soil. Dardis said that, in the next four to six weeks, more than 2,000 Iowa soldiers will return home.

"We have been very highly tasked because we have outstanding units," he said. "They were in high demand because of their performance and readiness."

GUARD IN IRAQ

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The Associated Press

March 31, 2004, Tuesday, BC cycle

Two New Hampshire Soldiers Injured in Iraq

DATELINE: CONCORD, N.H.

Two **New Hampshire Army National Guardsmen** have been injured during a firefight in northern Iraq.

Sgt. Jason Weaver, 30, of Franklin, was shot in the left leg, and Spec. Gerard Lamson, 26, of Ashland, suffered shrapnel wounds to both hands when their police patrol was attacked in Mosul on Sunday.

They were injured during a firefight with four insurgents, whose vehicle they stopped because it matched the description of one used in an earlier drive-by shooting at U.S. forces in the city, a military statement said.

Earlier in the day, Weaver and Lamson were part of a three-vehicle patrol that had been fired upon by a passing truck.

When the patrol returned to the area of the attack later, the soldiers spotted what they believed to be the same truck approaching from the opposite direction. The patrol blocked the truck's route, ordered the insurgents out of the truck, and killed the rebels when they began firing.

Inside the vehicle, soldiers found assault rifles, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher and other weapons. U.S. and Iraqi security forces were investigating to see whether the rebels "were involved in any of the recent attacks against Iraqi government officials, Iraqi security forces or coalition soldiers," the statement said.

Weaver and Lamson are members of the 2nd Battalion, 197th Field Artillery, Bravo Battery, based in Plymouth. They are the third and fourth members of the New Hampshire Army National Guard stationed in Iraq to be injured in the last week by insurgents.

On March 22, Sgt. Douglas Stone, 38, of Antrim, was cut on his ear, and Spec. Joshua Nadeau, 24, of Vernon, Vt., received a minor concussion when their tractor trailer was hit by an explosion. They are members of the Hillsboro-based 744th Transportation Company.

Associated Press

March 31, 2004

Vermont National Guard Settles In in Iraq

By Wilson Ring

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONTPELIER - The 200 **Vermont National Guard** members who arrived in Iraq earlier this month for a year-long stay are getting settled in.

Some have begun the convoy protection duties they were trained to accomplish while others are helping protect the U.S. base at Baghdad International Airport, said Vermont National Guard spokesman Lt. Veronica Saffo.

But mostly the soldiers from the Williston-based 1st Battalion of the 86th Field Artillery Regiment, which is drawn from armories across northern Vermont, are still learning their way around.

The Vermonters are working with the soldiers they are replacing to learn their duties, Saffo said.

"They are making the transition," Saffo said. "They will be going into their permanent quarters relatively soon."

Each of the soldiers has been issued high-tech ceramic body armor, which can stop bullets and shrapnel. The armor has been in short supply, prompting some soldiers or their families to buy it privately.

Attacks against U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq have increased in the last week. Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said in Baghdad that there has been an average of 26 attacks daily, an increase of about six from recent weeks.

On Tuesday one U.S. soldier was killed and another wounded in a roadside bombing near Ramadi, west of Baghdad, Kimmitt said.

To date, none of the Vermonters have faced hostile fire.

"So far there have been no reports of anything like that," Saffo said.

But the unit has already experienced a loss. Sgt. William Normandy, 42, of East Barre, died March 14 of a heart attack while the unit was training in Iraq.

HOMEFRONT: FAMILY HAPPENINGS

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Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

April 3, 2004, Saturday

Guard Accepting Applications for Camp

The West Virginia **National Guard** is accepting applications from eligible high school students for the 38th Annual Youth Leaders Camp to be held June 19-25 at Camp Dawson in Kingwood.

The camp will expose students in grades 10-12 to military life through character-building and leadership-development opportunities, which will include hands-on experience with military equipment, organized athletic events and supervised social activities.

The cost of the camp is \$ 150 per camper. The funds provide the camper with medical coverage (as a secondary carrier), a hat, T-shirts, and meals and lodging. The **National Guard** will attempt to obtain sponsors for those campers unable to pay the fee. Scholarships may be available.

Military buses and vans will provide transportation to and from the camp. Transportation will be available in major cities and along major roadways, and a schedule will be provided once the number of campers attending is determined.

Applications may be obtained at the Charleston armory on Coonskin Drive or from a guidance counselor at any high school. Applications must be returned, complete with general release, participation agreement and medical certificate, to West Virginia **National Guard** Youth Leaders Camp, ATTN: Maj. Kristine Wood, 1703 Coonskin Dr., Charleston, WV 25311.

April 4, 2004

Mom in Labor; Dad on Phone

Guardsmen stationed in Iraq listens while his wife gives birth to son

By Will Jones, Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

Anne Timberlake pushed twice before the phone rang in her hospital room.

Her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Timberlake, was calling from Iraq for news about the birth of the couple's second child.

He stayed on the line while his wife pushed twice more. Then, at 1:16 p.m. Monday, Asher Davis Timberlake was born, a healthy 7 pounds, 14 ounces.

"He was asking what it was," Anne recalled last week at her home in Powhatan County. "I told him it was a boy."

Jamie asked if his skin was as perfect as 17-month-old son Trey's had been.

Anne told him it was and described how Asher had a surprising amount of dark hair, even a hint of sideburns.

"I don't remember the whole conversation," said Anne, a 28-year-old teacher at Powhatan Elementary School. "We were basically just crying."

Anne and Jamie, who have been married four years, knew he would probably miss the birth when they got word last November that he had been called to active service for the **Army National Guard**. Jamie, 30, works as the zoning administrator for Powhatan.

After a few delays, he finally reported for duty in early January and is currently stationed near Mosul.

Because Anne Timberlake wanted to videotape the birth for Jamie, her doctor agreed to induce labor while she was working last Monday at the Johnston-Willis campus of CJW Medical Center.

Anne had detailed the plan in an e-mail and hoped Jamie would be able to call the hospital sometime that day. He did at 8:30 a.m., before Anne had gotten her shot of Pitocin to induce labor. She suggested he try again in a few hours.

Anne received an epidural shot at noon to numb her for labor and was ready to push 50 minutes later.

"Things got real busy really fast," Jamie's mother, Gail Timberlake, wrote in a journal detailing Asher's birth. "We prayed it would be 3 pushes instead of 3 hours."

As it turned out, Asher needed four pushes.

"Jamie called right when Anne was pushing to deliver! He stayed on the phone the entire time of delivery. I believe in miracles," Gail Timberlake wrote.

Anne's mother, Betty Mason, agreed. "Divine intervention is what we're calling it," she said. "It was wonderful - tears of joy - that he could be part of it by phone."

Jamie stayed on the line for five to 10 minutes after Asher's birth. "He could hear him [cry] even without the phone up to his mouth," Anne said.

The teary nurses quickly weighed and measured Asher in the room so Jamie could get all the details.

While she's grateful Jamie was able to experience the birth in some way, Anne said it was difficult not having him by her side.

"It's hardest for me thinking of him because he can't see the baby," she said, her eyes filling with tears.

The family plans to send a DVD copy of Asher's birth to Jamie so he can watch it on his laptop computer. Photographs have already been sent in e-mails.

At home last week, Anne said she will be OK with the support of so many family members and friends. At one point, Asher rested in her arms, while Trey rode horsy-style on her foot.

Anne plans to take about seven weeks before returning to the classroom. She's not sure when she'll see Jamie again. His activation order was for two years.

"I told him we'd try for a girl when he came home," she said.

HEALTH ISSUES

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New York Daily News

April 4, 2004

Poisoned?

Shocking report reveals local troops may be victims of America's high-tech weapons

By Juan Gonzalez, Daily News Staff Writer

Four soldiers from a **New York Army National Guard** company serving in Iraq are contaminated with radiation likely caused by dust from depleted uranium shells fired by U.S. troops, a Daily News investigation has found.

They are among several members of the same company, the 442nd Military Police, who say they have been battling persistent physical ailments that began last summer in the Iraqi town of Samawah.

"I got sick instantly in June," said Staff Sgt. Ray Ramos, a Brooklyn housing cop. "My health kept going downhill with daily headaches, constant numbness in my hands and rashes on my stomach."

A nuclear medicine expert who examined and tested nine soldiers from the company says that four "almost certainly" inhaled radioactive dust from exploded American shells manufactured with depleted uranium.

Laboratory tests conducted at the request of The News revealed traces of two manmade forms of uranium in urine samples from four of the soldiers.

If so, the men - Sgt. Hector Vega, Sgt. Ray Ramos, Sgt. Agustin Matos and Cpl. Anthony Yonnone - are the first confirmed cases of inhaled depleted uranium exposure from the current Iraq conflict.

The 442nd, made up for the most part of New York cops, firefighters and correction officers, is based in Orangeburg, Rockland County. Dispatched to Iraq last Easter, the unit's members have been providing guard duty for convoys, running jails and training Iraqi police. The entire company is due to return home later this month.

"These are amazing results, especially since these soldiers were military police not exposed to the heat of battle," said Dr. Asaf Duracovic, who examined the G.I.s and performed the testing that was funded by The News.

"Other American soldiers who were in combat must have more depleted uranium exposure," said Duracovic, a colonel in the Army Reserves who served in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

While working at a military hospital in Delaware, he was one of the first doctors to discover unusual radiation levels in Gulf War veterans. He has since become a leading critic of the use of depleted uranium in warfare.

Depleted uranium, a waste product of the uranium enrichment process, has been used by the U.S. and British military for more than 15 years in some artillery shells and as armor plating for tanks. It is twice as heavy as lead.

Because of its density, "It is the superior heavy metal for armor to protect tanks and to penetrate armor," Pentagon spokesman Michael Kilpatrick said.

The Army and Air Force fired at least 127 tons of depleted uranium shells in Iraq last year, Kilpatrick said. No figures have yet been released for how much the Marines fired.

Kilpatrick said about 1,000 G.I.s back from the war have been tested by the Pentagon for depleted uranium and only three have come up positive - all as a result of shrapnel from DU shells.

But the test results for the **New York guardsmen** - four of nine positives for DU - suggest the potential for more extensive radiation exposure among coalition troops and Iraqi civilians.

Several Army studies in recent years have concluded that the low-level radiation emitted when shells containing DU explode poses no significant dangers. But some independent scientists and a few of the -Army's own reports indicate otherwise.

As a result, depleted uranium weapons have sparked increasing controversy around the world. In January 2003, the -European Parliament called for a moratorium on their use after reports of an

unusual number of leukemia deaths among Italian soldiers who served in Kosovo, where DU weapons were used.

I keep getting weaker. What is happening to me?

The Army says that only soldiers wounded by depleted uranium shrapnel or who are inside tanks during an explosion face measurable radiation exposure.

But as far back as 1979, Leonard Dietz, a physicist at the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory upstate, discovered that DU-contaminated dust could travel for long distances.

Dietz, who pioneered the technology to isolate uranium isotopes, accidentally discovered that air filters with which he was experimenting had collected radioactive dust from a National Lead Industries Plant that was producing DU 26 miles away. His discovery led to a shutdown of the plant.

"The contamination was so heavy that they had to remove the topsoil from 52 properties around the plant," Dietz said.

All humans have at least tiny amounts of natural uranium in their bodies because it is found in water and in the food supply, Dietz said. But natural uranium is quickly and harmlessly excreted by the body.

Uranium oxide dust, which lodges in the lungs once inhaled and is not very soluble, can emit radiation to the body for years.

"Anybody, civilian or soldier, who breathes these particles has a permanent dose, and it's not going to decrease very much over time," said Dietz, who retired in 1983 after 33 years as nuclear physicist. "In the long run ... veterans exposed to ceramic uranium oxide have a major problem."

Critics of DU have noted that the Army's view of its dangers has changed over time.

Before the 1991 Persian Gulf War, a 1990 Army report noted that depleted uranium is "linked to cancer when exposures are internal, [and] chemical toxicity causing kidney damage."

It was during the Gulf War that U.S. A-10 Warthog "tank buster" planes and Abrams tanks first used DU artillery on a mass scale. The Pentagon says it fired about 320 tons of DU in that war and that smaller amounts were also used in the Serbian province of Kosovo.

In the Gulf War, Army brass did not warn soldiers about any risks from exploding DU shells. An unknown number of G.I.s were exposed by shrapnel, inhalation or handling battlefield debris.

Some veterans groups blame DU contamination as a factor in Gulf War syndrome, the term for a host of ailments that afflicted thousands of vets from that war.

Under pressure from veterans groups, the Pentagon commissioned several new studies. One of those, published in 2000, concluded that DU, as a heavy metal, "could pose a chemical hazard" but that Gulf War veterans "did not experience intakes high enough to affect their health."

Pentagon spokesman Michael Kilpatrick said Army followup studies of 70 DU-contaminated Gulf War veterans have not shown serious health effects.

"For any heavy metal, there is no such thing as safe," Kilpatrick said. "There is an issue of chemical toxicity, and for DU it is raised as radiological toxicity as well."

But he said "the overwhelming conclusion" from studies of those who work with uranium "show it has not produced any increase in cancers."

Several European studies, however, have linked DU to chromosome damage and birth defects in mice. Many scientists say we still don't know enough about the long-range effects of low-level radiation on the body to say any amount is safe.

Britain's national science academy, the Royal Society, has called for identifying where DU was used and is urging a cleanup of all contaminated areas.

"A large number of American soldiers [in Iraq] may have had significant exposure to uranium oxide dust," said Dr. Thomas Fasey, a pathologist at Mount Sinai Medical Center and an expert on depleted uranium. "And the health impact is worrisome for the future."

As for the soldiers of the 442nd, they're sick, frustrated and confused. They say when they arrived in Iraq no one warned them about depleted uranium and no one gave them dust masks.

Experts behind News probe

As part of the investigation by the Daily News, Dr. Asaf Duracovic, a nuclear medicine expert who has conducted extensive research on depleted uranium, examined the nine soldiers from the 442nd Military Police in late December and collected urine specimens from each.

Another member of his team, Prof. Axel Gerdes, a geologist at Goethe University in Frankfurt who specializes in analyzing uranium isotopes, performed repeated tests on the samples over a week-long period. He used a state-of-the-art procedure called multiple collector inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry.

Only about 100 laboratories worldwide have the same capability to identify and measure various uranium isotopes in minute quantities, Gerdes said.

Gerdes concluded that four of the men had depleted uranium in their bodies. Depleted uranium, which does not occur in nature, is created as a waste product of uranium enrichment when some of the highly radioactive isotopes in natural uranium, U-235 and U-238, are extracted.

Several of the men, according to Duracovic, also had minute traces of another uranium isotope, U-236, that is produced only in a nuclear reaction process.

"These men were almost certainly exposed to radioactive weapons on the battlefield," Duracovic said.

He and Gerdes plan to issue a scientific paper on their study of the soldiers at the annual meeting of the European Association of Nuclear Medicine in Finland this year.

When DU shells explode, they permanently contaminate their target and the area immediately around it with low-level radioactivity.

April 4, 2004

Soldiers Demand to Know Health Risks

By Juan Gonzalez, Daily News Staff Writer

Doctors at Walter Reed Army Medical Center recently told Staff Sgt. Ray Ramos that a biopsy revealed his rash comes from leishmaniasis, a disease spread by sandflies and contracted by hundreds of G.I.s in Iraq.

Until last week, however, Army doctors refused requests by Ramos and a few others in the 442nd Military Police to have their urine analyzed for depleted uranium, a procedure that can cost up to \$1,000.

Three of the nine tested in the Daily News investigation — Sgt. Herbert Reed, Spec. William Ruiz, and Spec. Anthony Phillip - also were tested by the Army in November. But the results were withheld for months despite repeated inquiries.

Last week, after Army officials received press inquiries about the 442nd and discovered that a group from the company had sought independent testing, an administrator at Walter Reed told Reed and Phillip that their tests from November had come back negative for depleted uranium.

The News' tests also showed negative results for Reed and Phillip, but Ramos tested positive. The soldiers of the 442nd are not the only ones to raise questions about depleted uranium in Samawah.

In August, a contingent of Dutch soldiers arrived in the town to replace the Americans. Press reports in the Netherlands revealed that Dutch authorities questioned the U.S. beforehand about the possible use of DU ammunition in Samawah. According to Sgt. Juan Vega, senior medic for the 442nd, the Dutch swept the area around the train depot with Geiger counters and their medics confided to him they had found high radiation levels. The Dutch unit refused to stay in the depot, Vega said, and pitched camp in the desert instead.

And in February, after Japanese troops moved into the same town, a Japanese journalist equipped with a Geiger counter reported finding radiation readings 300 times higher than background levels.

"There'd been a lot of fighting in Samawah before we got there," said Staff Sgt. Ray Ramos, 41. "The place was dusty as hell, and the sandstorms were hitting us pretty good."

Felled at first by what he thought was the sweltering Iraqi heat, Ramos expected to recover quickly.

"My health just kept getting worse," he said. "I tried to work out each day to get through it but I kept getting weaker. A numbing sensation hit my hands and my face, and the migraine headaches became constant. I was afraid I was having a stroke."

He was sent first to a Baghdad hospital for treatment, but with no neurologist available, he was shipped out to Germany and eventually to the U.S.

"I had rashes on my stomach for four months," Ramos said. "And now, whenever I [lie] down, my hands fall asleep."

Doctors at Walter Reed have been stumped. They've given Ramos braces to wear on his arms at night to try to prevent his hands from falling asleep, and they've prescribed a host of muscle relaxants and painkillers, but nothing seems to work.

"I have four kids. What happens to them now if I can't work?" said Ramos, who was looking forward to a transfer from the NYPD Housing Bureau to the robbery unit in Brooklyn's 75th Precinct once he returns from active duty. "I need them to investigate what's going on with my body."

Cpl. Anthony Yonnone, 35, a cop with the Veterans Administration in Fishkill, N.Y., has the highest DU levels of the four soldiers who tested positive, said Dr. Asaf Duracovic, who performed the testing funded by The News.

Yonnone said his nausea, skin rashes and migraines began in Samawah. "The headaches are constant and they don't want to stop," he said. "The rashes seem to come and go.

"We were always passing blownout tanks when we were out doing patrols."

He recalled that American units in the town burned trash and waste each night in big drums near the train depot. "The combination of smoke and sand when we lit those fires covered everybody," he said.

Evacuated from Iraq in August for minor surgery, Yonnone was sent first to Germany.

"They gave us a questionnaire. I marked that I wasn't exposed to depleted uranium because nobody had even told us what it was back in Iraq," he said.

BENEFITS

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The Common Denominator

March 25, 2004

Norton Seeks College Aid for D.C. National Guard

The District's delegate to Congress is proposing that D.C. National Guard members serving in Iraq be given college tuition assistance similar to benefits provided for regular military members under the federal G.I. Bill.

"Many states, including Maryland and Virginia, already are providing college financial aid to members of the military," Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton said in a statement issued today by her office.

She said the D.C. National Guard College Access Act, which was co-introduced by House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee member Dave Hobson, R-Ohio, would provide up to \$2,500 in tuition assistance per year for members of the D.C. Army and D.C. Air National Guard.

Norton said families of D.C. National Guard members who are serving in Iraq face heavy financial burdens as a result of their absence from home and the federal assistance would make it "easier for them to meet escalating college expenses" when they return.

"These hard-pressed residents have been precipitously torn from their families and jobs to serve without a vote [in Congress]," said Norton, who is elected to represent D.C. residents in the House of Representatives but is not permitted to cast a vote.

"At the very least, they deserve every opportunity available to other members of the armed forces at a time when they face financial hardship arising from war," she said.

Norton described the proposed aid as similar to the assistance provided to D.C. high school graduates under the D.C. College Access Act through the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant program. Under that program's first five years, more than 6,000 D.C. students have received annual grants of up to \$2,500 to attend private colleges or out-of-state colleges at lower in-state tuition rates.

During a hearing today before the House Government Reform Committee, Norton called for permanent reauthorization by Congress of the D.C. College Access Act grants and increased funding for the program.

The Associated Press

April 4, 2004

National Guard Tuition Aid Fall Short

DATELINE: ALBANY, Ore.

National Guardsmen returning from duty in Iraq are finding that the funds promised them for tuition reimbursement are in short supply.

The federal program that is supposed to defray up to 75 percent of their college expenses is short of funds, and until recently had no new funds in sight.

National Guard Col. Mike Caldwell said money recently was found for spring and summer students but that the fund remains about \$180,000 short for fall term.

That's put Oregon **National Guard** leadership in an awkward position, as soldiers were promised the 75 percent tuition deferral, up to a maximum of \$4,000 per soldier per fiscal year, as an enlistment incentive.

The benefit is described in **National Guard** literature, and new enlistees are still being promised this benefit when they sign up.

"This could not have happened at a more critical juncture," wrote Brig. General Raymond C. Byrne Jr. in a March 22 letter to Army **National Guard** Director Roger Schultz.

"Presently we have 380 soldiers receiving funding from this program without the addition of the returning soldiers mentioned above, many of which plan on re-entering college this term."

He went on to say that the recent return of B Company, 52nd Engineers, from their deployment in Iraq, and the pending return this month of three more units - 1st Battalion, 162nd Infantry; the 1249th Engineer Battalion and the 82nd Rear Operations Center - were likely to stress the fund.

"With a large number of mobilizations from the State of Oregon, we find ourselves in a crisis situation of not being able to keep our commitments to our members due to funding restraints from the **National Guard** Bureau," Byrne wrote.

Three-quarters of the tuition assistance fund is financed by federal dollars, with state funds making up the balance.

This fiscal year, the fund was allocated a total of \$625,000.

Col. Cameron Crawford said that if the shortfall in the tuition program goes unfixed, it could impact the Guard's ability to retain experienced troops.

"It's fair to say that we have a grave concern that many of our folks will choose not to re-enlist. Long term, that's not healthy. These are the people we want to re-enlist, because they have the most experience and training," Crawford said. "It just affects our overall ability to stay viable. By not keeping this promise to our soldiers, it sends a real negative message."

Official Urges More Balanced Treatment for Reserve Components

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, USA

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 31, 2004 -- With Reserve and National Guard forces now critical elements in the global war on terrorism, the Defense Department's senior reserve affairs adviser told a Senate subcommittee here today that the country must do more to care for Reserve and Guard members and their families.

Thomas F. Hall, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, addressed separate sessions of the Senate Personnel Subcommittee and the House Total Force Subcommittee today. He went to Capitol Hill to provide the reserve affairs fiscal 2005 posture statement and to detail the department's budget request.

"While we ask our people to do more, we must never lose sight of the need to balance their commitment to country with their commitment to family and to their civilian employer," Hall said in prepared statements to both bodies. "That is why rebalancing of the force is so critical, the continuum of service is so crucial, and relieving the stress on the force is absolutely essential."

He said that although "morale is high" among Reserve and Guard members, increased mobilizations, longer deployments and the war on terrorism are affecting the force.

"We are in the midst of one of the longest periods of mobilization in our history," Hall told lawmakers. "However, one certainty remains: that when called upon, the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve will respond promptly and perform their duty."

Reserve components perform 46 percent of military operations, ranging from homeland defense and the global war on terrorism to peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, small-scale contingencies

and major crises, he said. And the balance of capabilities in the active Army and Reserve components is "not the best for the future." "There is a need for rebalancing to improve the responsiveness of the force and to help ease stress on units and individuals with skills in high demand," he said. "Repeated mobilizations are not a major problem—yet."

Hall said that for DoD to achieve its policy goals of assuring allies, dissuading military competition, deterring threats against U.S. interests and decisively defeating adversaries, it must maintain integrated capabilities of the "Total Force."

"Only a well-balanced, seamlessly integrated military force is capable of dominating opponents across the full range of military operations," he said.

Hall explained that from Sept. 11, 2001, through December 2003, 319,193 reserve component personnel were mobilized for duty in the global war on terror. He said that as of Dec. 31, 181,459 were on active duty.

"They are providing a very broad range of capabilities, from special operations and civil affairs to personnel and finance support," he said.

Tour lengths for reserve components have increased for every operation since Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the early 1990s, when tour lengths averaged 156 days, Hall said. For operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Southwest Asia, that average was about 200 days, and current contingency operations have averaged about 320 days, he added.

However, Hall said DoD is monitoring high-demand reserve components closely, and is identifying actions to reduce that demand. Increasing international military participation in Iraq, developing Iraqi capacity to conduct police and security tasks, and increasing actionable intelligence to disrupt threats to stability in Iraq are among the steps being taken, he said.

Other options, Hall added, call for rebalancing the active and reserve force mix and capabilities, and identifying some 100,000 manpower positions for possible restructuring over the next several years. He also said the Pentagon is hoping to "civilianize" more than 300,000 military positions.

"All these actions are high priorities for the department, since they will provide greater stability and predictability for reservists, their families and employers, and will optimize the forces available over what is anticipated to be a long war," he said.

The assistant secretary also spoke on the need for better compensation for Reserve and Guard members and their families. "The compensation system must be equitable to support the current employment of the reserve force, and it must be flexible enough to respond to any emerging or future trends that result from the increased use of the Guard and Reserve," he said.

"We strongly believe that pay and benefits must be focused on those members who are bearing the burden of mobilization and deployment," he continued, "and that the department must have the tools to respond quickly and decisively with a compensation and benefits package that supports our mobilized and deployed troops."

Hall vowed the department would continue to address areas of the compensation system that work against reservists, such as differences in housing allowances, which are generally lower for reservists on active duty for less than 140 days.

"The bottom line is that we must compensate our Guard and Reserve members fairly, ensuring comparability—that is, equal pay for equal work—for those who are currently sustaining the burdens of reserve service."

Hall said taking care of Guard and Reserve members and their families continues to be a top priority for the department, adding that the department is constantly examining its policies and programs to ensure that reservists do not feel "disenfranchised" and that family-support systems are in place.

"We are constantly looking for opportunities to improve the support that our Guard and Reserve members and their families need and deserve," he said. "We expect the best from them, and they should expect and get no less from us."

One improvement the department has implemented is better health care access and benefits.

He said the military's Tricare Prime health care system has been made available to the families of reservists ordered to active duty for more than 30 days, a significant improvement over the previous 179-day threshold. At the same time, Hall added, reserve component eligibility for Tricare Prime Remote has been expanded to include eligible family members who lived with the reserve member before mobilization and deployment.

Also, he said, reserve members may now be eligible for Tricare upon receipt of a "delayed effective date active duty order" of greater than 30 days in support of a contingency, or 90 days prior to mobilization, whichever date is later.

The period of transitional medical assistance for reserve members separated from active duty of more than 30 days in support of a contingency operation—previously 60 or 120 days—has been extended to 180 days.

Detailing the 2005 reserve affairs budget request, which is set at \$33.3 billion -- about 2.8 percent more than the last fiscal year -- Hall told the House and Senate subcommittees that Congress the country would be making a good investment.

The funding will cover reserve component personnel, operations and maintenance, military construction, and procurement accounts. Included also are increases to support about 870,900 full-time and part-time personnel, as well as sustainment of operations.

"Significantly, this is only 8.3 percent of the overall DoD budget, which represents a great return on investment," he said, citing the size of the reserve components' contributions to military operations.

Other key components of the Reserve and Guard budget include:

- \$1.6 billion for equipment such as multiple-launch rocket systems for the Army and aircraft modifications for the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve F-16 fighter jets, C-5 and C-130 airlift transports and HH-60 helicopters. The Naval Reserve would get additional

funding for its C-40 aircraft, while the Marine Corps Reserve would invest in high-mobility artillery rocket system, night-vision equipment, and amphibious assault vehicles.

- \$590 million for military construction affecting all reserve components, about 6.2 percent of DoD's overall military construction and family housing request of \$9.4 billion.
- \$950 million for facility sustainment, restoration and modernization.
- \$253.6 million for environmental programs, including \$125.2 million for environmental compliance requirements.
- \$81.2 million for civil military programs.

Hall told the lawmakers his "acid test" for the Guard and Reserve remains unchanged:

"Ensure that the Guard and Reserve are assigned the right mission; have the right training; possess the right equipment; are positioned in and with the correct infrastructure; are physically, medically and operationally ready to accomplish the assigned tasks; are fully integrated within the active component; and are there in the right numbers required to help fight and win any conflict."

Operation Freedom Lodging Offers 1,000 Nights to Returning Troops

Release Date: 3/29/2004 4:29:00 PM

From North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command Public Affairs

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. (NNS) -- Vail Resorts in Colorado is offering 1,000 free nights to service members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, as part of "Operation Freedom Lodging."

Members from any branch of service who served for 30 or more days in these countries are eligible for up to three consecutive nights of lodging at Vail Resorts-owned and -operated hotels in Breckenridge and Keystone.

"Operation Freedom Lodging is a gesture of our appreciation for the courageous men and women who have been serving our country in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Tony Piringer, vice president of hospitality for Vail Resorts.

Qualified service members wishing to make reservations for Operation Freedom Lodging can call: Breckenridge at 1-800 832-3694, and Keystone at 1-800 270-4690.

After making reservations, service members must verify their status by faxing a copy of their orders or a letter from their commander or senior enlisted supervisor to Fort Carson Morale, Welfare and Recreation at DSN 691-9453 or (719) 526-9453. Documents may be sent via e-mail to OutdoorInfo@carson.army.mil <<mailto:OutdoorInfo@carson.army.mil>>.

For more information on the verification process, call Fort Carson Morale, Welfare and Recreation at DSN 691-2083 or (719) 526-2083.

For more information on the NORAD and USNORTHCOM, visit www.norad.mil <<http://www.norad.mil>> and www.northcom.mil <<http://www.northcom.mil>>.

Dallas Morning News

April 4, 2004

For Divorced Troops Abroad, a Little Backup at Home

Officials aim to ease custody disputes, child support for civilians

By Associated Press

NEW YORK – While the aftermath of divorce can be difficult for any parent, those called up from civilian life for military duty in Iraq or elsewhere often face extra headaches ranging from long-distance custody disputes to more onerous child-support burdens.

Those concerns aren't always a priority in the military's many family-support programs, but federal and state officials are trying to help. Specifically, some states are streamlining the process through which activated military personnel – facing a cut in pay compared with civilian wages – can request a temporary reduction in child-support payments.

"We're not going to send a soldier into harm's way with this nagging, pesky problem hanging over him," said Nick Young, a former Army colonel who heads Virginia's child-support enforcement division. "We're going to send him with the knowledge that the right things are happening back home."

Roughly 175,000 **National Guard** and Reserve personnel are now on active duty, part of the biggest overall civilian call-up since World War II. No official figures show how many are divorced parents, but almost certainly there are thousands.

Shirley Calhoun of the National Military Family Association said the military is confronting an increasing array of divorce-related problems because of its extensive use of citizen-soldiers in their 30s and 40s.

"The last time we had such big call-ups, you didn't have as many divorces," she said.

Ms. Calhoun said she knew of situations in which an ex-spouse had sued to gain custody of children that an activated parent was forced to leave behind.

And custody disputes figured in two notable cases last year:

- Spc. Simone Holcomb was released from active Army duty after she refused to return to Iraq so she could care for her children in Colorado. She and her husband had both been deployed in Iraq but returned home to settle a custody dispute involving the husband's ex-wife.
- In Nevada, James Denson II temporarily lost custody of his child when he missed a court hearing after being called up for Navy duty in Kuwait.

"Divorced men have their challenges anyway. You add being on active duty, and you're doubling those problems," said Dianna Thompson of the National Family Justice Association, which advocates on behalf of noncustodial parents.

Advocates say a widespread problem involves child-support payments owed by activated personnel whose military pay is less than their civilian pay.

"Once a soldier or airman gets deployed, trying to get the child-support order changed is not easy," said Michael Cline, executive director of **Enlisted Association** of the **National Guard** of the United States. "You can't be there to run down to the court."

There are no mechanisms for automatically reducing court-ordered support payments in such cases; activated troops must request temporary reductions and file paperwork to support their claims.

Paula Roberts, an attorney with the Washington-based Center for Law and Social Policy, said the difficulties faced by some citizen-soldiers were linked to broader shortcomings with the child-support system.

"People get caught in this web and can't make the quick changes they need," she said.

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES

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St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

March 26, 2004 Friday

Honoring Florida's Fallen

Even though major combat in Iraq ended on May 1, the death toll continues to climb for U.S. soldiers. More than 580 American service men and women have died in the struggle. Twenty-five of them were from Florida. As part of the continuing coverage of the first anniversary of the war's start, we pay tribute today to those Floridians.

Army Spc. Jeffrey M. Wershow was shot during an ambush on July 6, 2003, in Baghdad.

Wershow, of Gainesville, joined the Army and served for three years before going to community college and joining the Florida National Guard. He was deployed to the Mideast in late January 2003.

Even as a boy, Wershow displayed great passion for the military. Friends said he often eschewed schoolwork in favor of military history books and became a self-taught military historian.

He was 22.

Army Sgt. Mason Douglas Whetstone was shot in a non-combat incident July 17, 2003, in Baghdad.

Whetstone, of Jacksonville, was serving as an air traffic controller at the Baghdad airport.

Whetstone grew up in Alaska and graduated from high school in Anchorage in 1990. He immediately enlisted in the Army and served in Desert Storm before leaving the military in 1994. He re-enlisted in the Army in 1999. While attending college in Daytona Beach and serving in the Florida National Guard, Mason met and married Heather Curatolo. Whetstone was cremated and his ashes scattered over a favorite part of Alaska.

He was 30.

Army Spc. Robert A. Wise was killed by a roadside bomb on Nov. 12, 2003, in Baghdad.

The National Guardsman was based in Tallahassee, his hometown. Wise's unit was deployed to Kuwait and Iraq in February.

Even as a Junior ROTC cadet in high school, Wise stood out among his peers, becoming the student commander of his unit.

"He was the person who would show up one hour early, and stay three hours late to do whatever needed to be done," said Senior Master Sgt. Stephen Sullivan.

He was 21.

The Associated Press

March 30, 2004

Doctor Presents Portraits of Fallen Soldiers to Families

By LAURA WALSH, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: HARTFORD, Conn.

Dr. Stuart Calle said it has been important for him to put a face to the name of each Connecticut serviceman who has died in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Coventry man is an emergency room physician at Mount Vernon Hospital in Westchester, N.Y. But he's also an artist and photo engraver.

In a memorial ceremony at the state Capitol on Monday, Calle presented portraits he engraved in black marble to the families of 10 soldiers and Marines who have died while on duty in southeast Asia.

"It gives this all more meaning and makes them live forever," Calle said.

For Steven D'Agostino, it is another way to remember his son. Army Pfc. Anthony D'Agostino, of Waterbury, died in November when a helicopter he was in was shot down over Iraq.

"It's also a way to meet some of the other parents who lost soldiers," he said. "It's comforting to know we're all going through the same thing. We can go through it together."

The gathering was the first opportunity for families to meet and talk, said Maj. Gen. William Cugno, adjutant general of the **Connecticut National Guard**. Cugno presented the families with coins that are given to service members for exceptional service.

While some family members swapped stories and phone numbers, others chose to sit quietly by themselves and admire the memorials.

"This is just still very emotional for me," said Debbie Granahan, Anthony D'Agostino's mother.

Army Staff Sgt. Richard Eaton Jr., of Guilford, died of an illness in August while stationed in Iraq. His mother, Sharon Eaton, said it's particularly hard for her right now because her son's battalion is returning home this week.

"That's difficult," she said softly. "But, you know, we've received a lot of letters from the soldiers who knew him and they tell us stories. That always helps."

A number of scholarships and memorial funds have been created in memory of the servicemen. A scholarship at Norwalk High School was set up in honor of Army Pfc. Wilfredo Perez Jr., and a fund for a children's orphanage in Honduras was established in Army Pfc. Jeff Braun's name.

"Sometimes I forget and I think he's still there working, doing his job," said Kemapasse Chanawongse, whose brother, Marine Cpl. Kemaphoom Chanawongse, of Waterford, was killed in Iraq a year ago. "He's still with me though. I think about him everyday."

Eleven servicemen with ties to the state have died since the start of the war. Calle has made portraits for 10 of them and is in the process of finishing a memorial for Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Chapman of Windsor Locks, who was killed in Afghanistan in March 2003.

The Associated Press

April 1, 2004

Army National Guard Soldier from Maine Killed in Iraq

By JERRY HARKAVY, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: NORTH BERWICK, Maine

A New Hampshire Army National Guard soldier was killed in an explosion in Iraq when his vehicle ran over a roadside bomb.

Spc. E-4 Jeremiah Holmes, 27, a member of the New Hampshire Army National Guard 744th Transportation Company, was killed Monday while driving a truck in Ramadi, the Department of Defense said Wednesday.

Holmes, of North Berwick, was in a convoy west of Baghdad when the bomb detonated, knocking the tractor-trailer he was traveling in off a bridge, New Hampshire Gov. Craig Benson's office said in a news release. The death was first reported by Foster's Daily Democrat.

The military notified family members of his death early Tuesday afternoon.

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to Jeremiah's entire family," Benson said. "These tragic events should remind us to thank the soldiers serving abroad."

Another New Hampshire soldier from the 744th, Sgt. Randal S. Frotton, 41, of Newmarket, suffered injuries to his ribs and ankle, the news release said.

The 744th has 150 members and is headquartered in Hillsboro, N.H., with detachments in Claremont and Somersworth, N.H.

The unit was deployed for training in late December, and sent to Iraq in February for 18 months to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. Two other members of the unit were wounded in a similar incident about a week before Holmes was killed.

During the departure ceremony two weeks before Christmas, Holmes' wife, Kimberly, held their infant son, Kaleb. When asked how she felt about his deployment, she told the newspaper, "Not good. I feel bad for the baby."

Holmes, a 1994 graduate of Noble High School, was no stranger to tragedy. He was 13 when his mother, Sheila Holmes, 31, of Barrington, N.H., was murdered in Dover, N.H., in 1990.

Her death broke up the family, he said, and Holmes was raised by his grandparents in North Berwick. His four brothers and sisters went to two other families.

Holmes never gave up hope that his mother's killer would be prosecuted.

"I'd like to see a little bit of closure for us," he said two years ago. "You're not going to forget about your mother, you're not going to forget about your sister. You're not going to forget the 12 years or how many other years it takes to find a conviction. Nothing will ever be closed totally."

Holmes served on active duty from 1994 to 1999, when he joined the New Hampshire Guard.

A couple of years ago, Holmes and his wife bought a duplex a few houses down the street from his grandparents. Family members did not wish to talk to reporters, but neighbors expressed shock and sadness at his death.

"Jay was just a wonderful individual, a keeper," said Patsy Koelker, using the name everyone knew him by. "He was kind and caring," she said, and if there was an errand to be done, he was "at the head of the line."

Koelker and her husband Tom, who have seven children, were like surrogate parents to Holmes when he moved onto their street, she said.

"Jay was number eight. He was always here. Things we did, if we could fit him in the car, he went," she said.

Koelker said everyone was thrilled when Holmes and his wife moved back to the neighborhood.

"He was so happy to be back on this street," she said. His life was going well, and he enjoyed his job as a manufacturer's representative that involved some day travel but allowed him to go home each night to the family he loved, Koelker said.

In addition, Holmes was reunited with all four of his siblings at a wedding a year or two ago, she said, and they had gotten to know each other.

Holmes and his wife had been selected by Foster's Sunday Citizen for a series of stories showing how one family copes with a military deployment.

"I'm worried about losing my best friend and not being able to see the person I've spent every day with for a year and a half," Kimberly Holmes told the Dover newspaper in January. The day before her husband's death, she was in the process of setting up a second interview.

Holmes is the sixth soldier with Maine ties to die during the Iraq conflict.

Saffo didn't know the precise location where the Vermonters will be stationed for their year tour in Iraq, but she said it's in the vicinity of Baghdad.

The year the United States has occupied Iraq has given the military time to set up quarters for the American soldiers. The Vermonters get to take advantage of the improvements.

"The accommodations are quite good. They have air conditioning. They have showers, they have flushing toilets," Saffo said.

Within the next few weeks the Vermonters will have more regular access to computers and telephones, which will enable them to e-mail or call home more frequently.

GENERAL

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The Coventry Courier (RI)

April 2, 2004

National Guard Counter-Drug Support Program

COVENTRY - The **Rhode Island National Guard** Counter-Drug Support Program offers the LifeSkills Program to public and private middle schools in Rhode Island. The LifeSkills Training program is a uniquely designed substance abuse prevention program, in that its tenets are grounded in science. LifeSkills combats the primary underlying cause of substance abuse use by covering three critical domains found to promote drug use. The three critical components covered are drug resistance skills, personal self-management skills, and general social skills. This year more than 30 students at the Flat River Middle School, in Coventry, have completed this 15-unit course.

Lt. Col. Jeffery Coons, Counter-Drug Coordinator, explained just what this program is all about.

"This year two members of the RI National Guard Counter-Drug/Drug Demand Reduction Program along with teachers from Flat River Middle School have been teaching selected sixth, seventh, and eighth graders classes about LifeSkills," he said. "The LifeSkills Training program is based on statistics and research compiled over the years. The program instructs the students about three different areas: drug resistance, personal self-management, and general social skills."

Coons added, "For the past 16 weeks Sergeants Robbie Vale and Thomas Aabee have been instructing students here at Flat River Middle School about the dangers and how to make intelligent decisions, not just with drugs but with life too. These two sergeants answer questions the students might have. This program is different from other drug prevention programs because it is based on solely on proven methods and scientific facts."

Alan Yanku, Principal of Flat River Middle School, explained he feels that the Counter-Drug Support Program is a wonderful way to teach students about the negative impact drugs can have on their lives.

"Two years ago, the National Guard contacted me and asked me if the school would be interested in participating in the Counter-Drug Support Program. Our first year, the class was small with only 15 students, this year we have more than double that," Yanku said. "I feel this program is very worthwhile because it could impact these kids for the rest of their lives. The things that they are taught in this course they will be able to utilize for many years to come. I just think it's a wonderful program and I'm glad that we are affiliated with the Rhode Island National Guard in this way."

Today the 36 participants of this year's Counter-Drug Support Program graduated in a ceremony held in the Auditorium of Flat River Middle School. Col. Charles Walsh gave a speech and presented the certificates to each of the graduating students.

For more information on the LifeSkills Program, contact Sgt. Robbie Vale at 392-0832, or visit www.lifeskillstraining.com.

The Associated Press

April 1, 2004, Thursday

Hutchison: Deal Close on Military Units' Move to Ellington

DATELINE: HOUSTON

Military reservists based near a research hospital would be moved to historic Ellington Field, where President Bush enlisted in the **National Guard**, protecting the military base from possible closure and making room for the health institution's planned expansion.

Army, Navy and Marines reserve units totaling about 2,300 troops would move to 30 acres owned by the city of Houston at Ellington. The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, one of the world's top cancer research institutes, would acquire the city land, appraised at about \$980,000, and transfer it to the military, said Harry Holmes, hospital vice president for governmental relations.

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, chairwoman of the Senate military construction appropriations subcommittee, plans to meet Monday with Mayor Bill White in Houston to discuss its details.

"We have a basic agreement from all the (reserve) units - Army, Navy and Marines," Hutchison told the Houston Chronicle in Thursday's editions. "It's a huge boon for Houston and, of course, for Texas."

The proposed deal, also involving the U.S. Department of Defense, calls for the hospital to buy about 18 acres occupied by the reserve units on Old Spanish Trail, said Holmes. The land has been appraised at about \$19.3 million.

Moving the military units to Ellington would take several years, consolidating military operations as well as making the field a joint-use facility, key to protecting it from possible

closure by the federal government to save money, Hutchison said. She said having the reserves at the field would also help coordinate homeland security in the Gulf Coast region.

"Clearly, Ellington became a choice for everyone because we want it to be more viable," said Hutchison.

The plan would allow M.D. Anderson to expand its 125-acre research park and potentially attract private businesses for developing medical technologies and treatments. M.D. Anderson officials say there their facilities now are overcrowded.

"It would be important for the economic development here on OST as well as to keep Ellington opened for security reasons," said Holmes.

Bush enlisted in the **Texas Air National Guard** at Ellington Air Force Base in May 1968 and spent much of his service time based near Houston.

The 147th Fighter Wing of the Texas Air National Guard, a Coast Guard search-and-rescue unit, a Texas Army National Guard helicopter unit and Johnson Space Center's aircraft operations are based at the airfield, which contributes about \$350 million annually to the area's economy, said Marie McDermott, chairwoman of the Ellington Field Task Force, a coalition of businesses and residents devoted to preserving the base.

Alton Telegraph, IL

April 1, 2004

National Guard Recruits Enlist on Historic Anniversary

WOOD RIVER -- Crystal LeMaire stood at attention Wednesday morning as she took the oath of enlistment into the **Illinois Army National Guard** -- 200 years to the day after Lewis and Clark enlisted their Corps of Discovery.

LeMaire, 17, of Raymond in Montgomery County, standing only in a short-sleeved cotton T-shirt and blue jeans, raised her right hand and solemnly swore to be honest and faithful and support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. She promised her allegiance and that she would obey the orders of those above her. "So help me God," she said.

LeMaire took the official oath along with 20 other Illinois and Missouri Army National Guard recruits and the Lewis and Clark Discovery Expedition, the national re-enactors for the bicentennial celebration. The event marked the 200th anniversary of the day the original corps members were selected by Capt. William Clark to go on the journey.

Clark evaluated soldiers and volunteers who wintered at Camp Dubois and swore the individuals into service on March 31, 1804. Today, a similar evaluation process takes place for pre-military personnel and includes the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery and physical exams prior to enlistment.

As recruits stood in the 40-degree weather, Brig. Gen. George Shull, adjutant general of Missouri, took off his camouflage Gore-Tex jacket and handed it to an assistant.

"If those soldiers can take it, so can I," Shull said.

Shull told the recruits, along with a crowd of more than 75 people, about the importance of the day.

"Two hundred years ago, young people did the same thing as you are today," he said. "They volunteered for their country. It is wonderful to still have young people committed to doing the same thing today."

"Hooah," yelled several National Guard members standing in the crowd.

Shull told the recruits how proud he was of them and how proud they should be of themselves.

"God bless you for raising your right hand," he said.

LaMaire, who is still a junior in high school, was one of three women who took the oath. She said it was pretty remarkable to enlist on the anniversary of such a memorable event.

Clint Hilligoss, 21, of Edwardsville, said he was excited about enlisting. He is in the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

"I am looking forward to being in the military," he said. "I know it will be an experience."

--End--