



# NEWS YOU CAN USE

Weekly News for National Guard Families

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- National Guard Family Program Online <http://www.guardfamily.org/>  
Communities for families and youth: <http://www.guardfamilyyouth.org/>
- TRICARE** website for information on health <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/>  
benefits

**Civilian Employment Information (CEI) Program Registration** for Army and Air National Guard, Air Force, and Coast Guard Reserve

<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/esgr/index.jsp>

**Cumulative roster** of all National Guard and Reserve who are currently on active duty

<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2004/d20040331ngr1.pdf>

**Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC)** contains links and information about schooling, distance education, scholarships, and organizations devoted to the military family

<http://militarychild.org/index.cfm>

**Militarystudent.org** is a website that helps military children with transition and deployment issues. It has some great features for kids, parents, special needs families, school educators, and more—even safe chatrooms for kids.

<http://www.militarystudent.org>

**Disabled Soldiers Initiative (DS3)**  
This website provides information on the new DS3 program. Through DS3, the Army provides its most severely disabled Soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy and follow-up.

<http://www.armyds3.org>

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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](mailto:Richard.Flynn@ngb.af.mil).

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## READINESS

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ARNEWS

### **Guard Well Equipped in Field**

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by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

Fort Bragg, N.C. (Army News Service, April 27, 2004) -- A few hundred Virginia Army National Guard Soldiers, who are preparing to serve in Afghanistan, would like to set the record straight.

They are getting more equipment than they know what to do with. They are getting the best equipment that the Army can buy. They are getting the time and the opportunity to train with it. They do not consider themselves second-class Soldiers.

In short, the 550 or so Soldiers in the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry at Fort Bragg, N.C., are convinced they will look just like every other active-duty Soldier if and when they deploy to Afghanistan this summer to do their bit for the global war against terrorism.

"Oh, it's like Christmas. I came here with two duffel bags. Now I've got four," said Spc. Bobby Peasley of Inwood, W.Va., a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, before drawing his Interceptor Body Armor vest here at Fort Bragg, where the Virginia battalion has been training since early March.

Everything each Guard Soldier gets, including four sets of desert camouflage uniforms, body armor and state-of-the-art sight systems for the new M-4 carbines, dispels rumors that the Army is not outfitting its reserve-component Soldiers for this war as well as it does the active-duty people.

"We always hear rumors," Peasley scoffed. "Rumors fly like birds."

The rumors have, however, been persistent. People like Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston have done their best to make sure they are not true and that every Soldier sent into harm's way gets everything they can get to stay warm and dry and alive in places like Afghanistan and Iraq.

"We just deployed three [National Guard] brigades. The 30th, 39th and 81st are the best equipped, best prepared brigades the Army has ever deployed," Preston said. "They've got the Interceptor Body Armor, the Rapid Fielding Initiative which [includes] the knee pads and the Moisture Wicking underwear, and the new optics for their weapons. They've got all of the latest equipment. "Each Soldier was issued \$3,300 worth of equipment in preparation to go over there," Preston added.

"The Army has done a good job of getting the stuff we need. There has been no resistance for anything we've asked for," said Lt. Col. Blake Ortner, the Virginia Army Guard battalion's commander. "It has only been a matter of how quickly they can get it to us."

That seems to have happened pretty quickly.

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Every Virginia Guard Soldier in sight here was wearing his body armor vest during the April week before Easter when it was still cool enough in North Carolina to get accustomed to the extra weight.

And the Soldiers were zeroing their carbines with brand new M68 Aimpoint Sight Systems during the same week, about three months before they are scheduled to complete their training and go to Afghanistan.

They like those new sights.

"You put the red dot on a target and you will hit it. It is going to go down," marveled Sgt. 1st Class James Shepard who pulled a peacekeeping tour on the Sinai Peninsula as an 82nd Airborne Division Soldier for the first half of 1995.

The Virginia Guard Soldiers are also in line to get the Army's advanced combat helmet which weighs about a pound less than the standard Kevlar helmet. It is a bit shorter in the back and above the eyes to make it easier to fire from the prone position, explained Ellen Perciaccanto, a Fort Bragg fielding officer.

But those are only the big ticket items, pointed out Capt. Jeffrey Sink, the Virginia battalion's supply officer.

The basic clothing list includes at least two sets of brown boots and a pair of black cold-weather boots, three sets of polypropylene underwear and silk-weight underwear, gloves, Camelbak water containers and knee and elbow pads.

"I'd venture to say that we're getting as much, if not more, new clothing and equipment than the active-duty guys," Sink said.

It's quite all right with the grunts like Spc. Bobby Peasley, who know they could be dealing with harsh weather, tough terrain and an unpredictable enemy if they do go to Afghanistan.

"This makes us feel a lot better for our personal safety," he said. "We'd like to see all that we go with come home."

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Agence France Presse

## **Pace of National Guard Deployment Threatens Homeland Defense: Officials**

Charles Hoskinson

Washington, April 29

The largest deployment of **National Guard** troops since World War II could leave the US homeland vulnerable unless steps are taken to ensure the force is up to the task, senior officials told lawmakers Thursday.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States forced US defense planners to rely on the **National Guard** more than at any time since 1945, officials told a House Government Reform Committee hearing.

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Since the attacks, more than 51 percent of the 350,000 **Army National Guard** soldiers and 31 percent of the **Air National Guard** troops have been called to active service either in support of homeland defense or for deployment to Iraq, Afghanistan and other battlefields in the global war on terrorism.

The call-ups have stretched thin a force designed to serve US states in peacetime missions such as disaster relief and controlling civil unrest while remaining prepared to back up regular US military forces in time of war.

Each state has its own **National Guard**.

"Unless (the Defense Department), Congress and the states work closely to address these challenges, guard units may continue to experience a declining readiness that could affect their ability to meet future requirements both at home and overseas," Janet St. Laurent, director of defense capabilities and management for the General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of the US Congress, told the committee.

Senior defense officials said the Pentagon is working on restructuring the National Guard and developing a homeland defense strategy, but admitted they are years away from completing either project.

"The threat posed by well-financed, sophisticated and determined international terrorist groups has raised the bar as to what the **National Guard** must be able to do," said Thomas Hall, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs.

The fight against terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, the Islamist militant organization responsible for the September 11 attacks, has also stretched thin an active-duty US military force much reduced from Cold War levels.

That in turn has put increased pressure on **National Guard** troops, who are currently spending an average of one year away from their civilian lives on active duty, according to Pentagon figures.

The Pentagon's fiscal year 2005 defense budget appropriates 33.3 billion dollars for the **National Guard** and reserve, an increase of only 2.8 percent over fiscal year 2004, which ends September 30.

State officials said that might not be enough to keep the **National Guard** prepared to defend the US homeland, fight wars overseas and mitigate the impact of service on its members.

"The **Army National Guard**, in particular, is so thinly resourced it cannot take on new missions 'out of hide.' Properly resourcing the guard for domestic threat and vulnerability assessments, contingency planning, training, exercising and employment of force functions is essential," said Major General Timothy Lowenberg, adjutant general of the Washington **National Guard**.

New York Governor George Pataki touted a package of benefits his state has offered guard members on active duty, and urged other states to follow that lead.

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"The sacrifices our military men and women make while serving on active duty should not be compounded by their families having to make additional sacrifices at home," Pataki told the committee.

Concerns about the continuing demands on US military forces has even spurred one leading Republican lawmaker to consider reviving the military draft, abandoned in 1973 after the Vietnam war.

"Why shouldn't we ask all of our citizens to bear some responsibility and pay some price?" Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska said last week, arguing that restoring compulsory military service would force "our citizens to understand the intensity and depth of challenges we face."

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### **Troop Supply Getting Thin**

Associated Press

April 29, 2004

Washington - If required to send additional combat forces to Iraq this spring or summer, as seems increasingly likely, the Pentagon and the Army would have several options - none good.



It's not yet certain that U.S. commanders in Iraq will ask for more troops beyond the 135,000 there now, but if they do, the Army would have to resort to extreme measures to answer the call.

Of the service's 10 active-duty divisions, all or parts of nine are either already in Iraq to serve 12-month tours of duty, or have just returned home in recent weeks after a year's duty.

If more troops are needed, soldiers may get less time at home before going back, one top general says. The Army might also have to consider sending troops who help defend South Korea against North Korea. **National Guard** and Reserve combat forces would simply take too long to train.

"It's getting thin," said Pat Towell, a defense expert at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

It would even be difficult to keep the force at the current level beyond June or so, when 20,000 soldiers whose yearlong Iraq tours were extended by three months are due to go home. The Army has not said which units it would call upon if it needs to replace those soldiers this summer.

The only Army division not now in Iraq or just returned is the 3rd Infantry Division. That unit is not expecting to get the Iraq call again until about January 2005, since it already has done one grueling tour there. Its soldiers spent months training in the Kuwait desert before spearheading the Iraq invasion in March 2003 and capturing Baghdad, along with the 1st Marine Division, in April. The 3rd Infantry returned to its bases in Georgia late last summer and is in the midst of a top-to-bottom reorganization and refit.

Lt. Gen. Richard Cody, the Army deputy chief of staff for operations, said recently that the 3rd

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Infantry is scheduled to finish reorganizing by midsummer and could deploy after that if necessary.

Cody said if extra troops are needed, the Army would have to abandon its goal of allowing soldiers at least one full year at their home station before returning to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Although Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has said the Iraq commitment does not prevent the military from defending U.S. interests elsewhere in the world, a substantial portion of U.S.-based troops who are earmarked as reinforcements for a conflict in Korea or elsewhere in Asia are tied down in Iraq.

Looked at another way, the Army has 33 active-duty brigades within the 10-division structure. Of those brigades, 27 are either in Iraq or Afghanistan or just returned home. Of the six others, three are in the 3rd Infantry, and two are on duty in South Korea.

The only other brigade not otherwise occupied is the 172nd Infantry Brigade, based at Fort Richardson and Fort Wainwright in Alaska. It is "waist deep" into a fundamental reorganization, spokesman Lt. Col. Ben Danner said, and has yet to receive its new Stryker vehicles, which travel on wheels rather than steel tracks and make the Army more agile.

That leaves several other possibilities, none of which the Army thought it would be facing at this point, almost a year since President Bush declared major combat over last May 1.

Among the options:

- Send the 3rd Infantry back to Iraq ahead of schedule. Even while the division has been reconfiguring, it has kept one brigade ready for a short-notice deployment in a crisis.
  - Early deployment of the 1st Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, which just completed training in its new configuration with Strykers. A brigade spokesman, Capt. Tim Beninato, said the unit has received no deployment order but is ready to go. The Army had planned to dispatch the 1st Brigade next fall, but could accelerate that.
  - Send more elements of the Fort Drum, N.Y.-based 10th Mountain Division, which has been tapped extensively for Afghanistan and currently has some soldiers in Iraq as well as Afghanistan.
  - Take some troops from the main Army force permanently stationed in South Korea - the 2nd Infantry Division - and send them to Iraq. That would be a radical step, because the soldiers in South Korea have long been considered untouchable so long as communist North Korea poses a threat.
  - Use members of the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force, based on the Japanese island of Okinawa, in Iraq, even though they normally are considered reinforcements for Korea.
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Boston Globe

May 2, 2004

## **Guard Training for Terror**

*Maine mill used in convention prep*

By Mark Baard, Globe Correspondent

An abandoned paper and textile mill that sits on a island in the Penobscot River in Orono, Maine, will be a training ground this week as Army and Air Force **National Guard** troops get ready to respond to a terrorist attack as part of their preparations for the Democratic National Convention at the FleetCenter this summer.

The team, the 11th Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team, based in Waterville, Maine, will be on call in July to respond if authorities suspect that radioactive, chemical, or biological materials, or explosives, might be released at the FleetCenter during the convention, military officials said.

The troops will hold the drill on the 62-acre Ayers Island site, near downtown Orono and the University of Maine campus.

The mill, which closed in the 1990s, will present the team with many of the same challenges they will face if terrorists use weapons of mass destruction inside a large urban building such as the FleetCenter, said Dr. George Markowsky, director of the homeland security lab at the University of Maine. Soldiers wearing protective suits and carrying monitoring equipment will have to navigate the mill's many structures and operate under changing lighting conditions.

"I compare the basement of the building to catacombs," said Markowsky, who also is president of Ayers Island LLC, the company developing the island as a homeland security research and development center for Orono.

Lieutenant Colonel James D. Campbell, commander of the support team, said the exercise will not be a simulated attack on the FleetCenter. Instead, he said, the exercise "is designed to assist the unit in preparation for operations in any building that might be found in an urban environment."

The unit plans to be in Massachusetts during the Democratic National Convention to reduce the time it will take to respond to a suspected use of weapons of mass destruction at the FleetCenter, Campbell said. The unit will coordinate with the First Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team based in Natick if there is an attack at the FleetCenter.

There are more than 30 **National Guard** such teams in the United States, and all conduct regular training exercises. Campbell said his unit typically conducts four to five drills every three months, most of them in rural or suburban settings.

"We don't get many opportunities to work in large urban areas," Campbell said. The exercise provides an opportunity to retrain the troops "by working in built-up areas, in buildings, and in basements."

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Campbell will lead about 15 people, including a nuclear medical scientist assigned to his team, as they respond to the release of one or more simulated weapons of mass destruction at the Ayer site.

Team members wearing hazardous-materials suits will collect samples of suspect materials and test them inside a mobile laboratory, Campbell said, and soldiers also will be able to check people and equipment for contamination with handheld chemical agent monitors.

Campbell said he will check to see whether his troops can accomplish this without tearing open their hazardous-materials suits on protruding nails or bits of rubble, which could expose them to contamination in a real event.

This will be the unit's second exercise on Ayers Island.

"These skills are perishable," Campbell said.

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## DEPLOYMENT

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The Associated Press

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April 29, 2004

### **Honeymoon in Iraq**

Dateline: Lafayette, La.

Jeff LeJeune and Nerissa Carr LeJeune got married over the weekend, but haven't gone on their honeymoon yet. Instead, they're headed to Iraq.

Both are members of a **National Guard** unit recently mobilized for duty in Iraq. Just five days after their marriage, the couple - who met in the **National Guard** - leave Thursday for Fort Hood, Texas, where they will spend two weeks in training before leaving for Iraq.

Family and friends gathered in Lafayette for the official farewell ceremony Wednesday for the 256th Military Intelligence Company and Charlie Company, 199th Support Battalion of the 256th Infantry Enhanced Separate Brigade. The 256th has a total of 3,800 soldiers.

Major General Bennett C. Landreneau, adjutant general of the guard in Louisiana, said the soldiers of the Tiger Brigade are known across the nation.

"These soldiers are ordinary citizens, yet they are extraordinary patriots," he said. "It is no surprise you have been mobilized in support of Iraqi Freedom. You are simply the best this country has to offer."

He said the soldiers have had to battle their own emotions to prepare themselves and their families for their departure.

"They are heroes today," he said. "But the day they first joined the ranks of heroes was that day when they first put on a uniform and said, 'When you need me, I will be there.'"

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The recently married LeJeunes said they have mixed feelings about being deployed together. Jeff is an X-ray technician and Nerissa is a post-op technician.

"We're worried about going together, but we would be worried if we weren't going together," Jeff LeJeune said. "It's probably for the best. We're just going to put this in God's hands."

Nerissa said she believes the deployment will be easier for her than other wives because she know where her husband will be.

"We work in different sections, but I'm in charge of the section she works in, so I'll be able to keep tabs on her," Jeff LeJeune said.

Another member of Charlie Company, Spc. Jennifer Busby, 23, spent time with her children Kobe, 1, and Kyah, 2, after Wednesday's ceremony.

She said the children just don't have an understanding of where their mother is going.

"I told (Kyah) the other night, 'I'm going away.' She said, 'OK, see you later.' She doesn't understand," Busby said.

Busby's mother, Glenda, will be helping with the kids while Jennifer is gone.

"Thank God for the Internet," she said. "I'm going to be sending her care packages, and drawings the kids do, things I think she will appreciate. That's going to be my job - keeping her spirits up and praying for her."

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## REUNION

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### **Emotional Homecoming Greets Returning Conn. National Guard Unit**

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Dateline: Windsor Locks, Conn.

A Connecticut **National Guard** unit returned home Sunday to an emotional reception, 14 months after leaving for Afghanistan to fight the war on terrorism.

With a police escort, two buses brought about 70 members of Company G, 104th Aviation Regiment, into the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Locks. The unit had been at Fort Dix, N.J., the previous week.

"This is the best day in 14 months," said Marcy Klattenburg, whose son Michael, was among the returning guardsmen. "It's been really difficult, but being able to receive e-mails has really helped us get through it," she told The Hartford Courant in editions prepared for Sunday.

Except for a brief visit during a Christmas leave, Sunday's return was the first time the Klattenburgs had seen their son since his unit departed from the

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Windsor Locks facility on Feb. 19, 2003.

Ronald Klattenburg, a Middletown councilman, said there were some tense moments over the past year, particularly after news reports of a Chinook helicopter crash in Afghanistan.

The soldiers of Company G flew and maintained the helicopters that carry U.S. troops and supplies from the base at Kandahar to mountain regions along the Pakistan border where al-Qaida and Taliban forces have concentrated.

Michael Klattenburg joined the Connecticut **National Guard** more than six years ago after graduating from Middletown's vocational-agricultural school program.

"It was a long year but everyone came together as a close family and we really did a great job," he said.

The 104th Aviation Regiment was honored as the outstanding Army **National Guard** aviation unit of the year in 2003.

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The Associated Press

April 27, 2004

### **1057th Troops Get Warm Welcome Home in Panhandle**

By The Associated Press

Residents of Panhandle communities came out in large numbers to greet the returning troops of the 1057th Light-Medium Truck Company of the Nebraska **National Guard**.

The unit was dismissed from Camp Ashland on Monday morning, and a few hours later spontaneous celebrations erupted as 37 troops returned after their yearlong deployment to Iraq.

During the send-off from Camp Ashland, between Lincoln and Omaha, state leaders told the troops that they appreciated their service.

"We are so happy that you are home safely and we know things are not done, not over with," state Sen. Curt Bromm of Wahoo said. "But you've done your part, more than your part, and for that we shall always be grateful."

In Kearney, the troops' bus was greeted by school children and residents waving American flags and yellow ribbons.

Before their arrival in Chadron, the troops rolled out of their bus about a mile outside of town and hopped on fire trucks. The convoy rode down crowded Main Street to the 1057th Armory on the Chadron State College campus.

A more casual parade and public barbecue is planned for Sunday in Chadron.

Thousands of people lined the streets waving flags, clapping and shouting as the unit rode through the Scottsbluff-Gering area.

Church bells sounded prior to their arrival and many people pulled over just to yell "thank you" to the company as they made their way to the **National Guard** Armory.

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As the bus rounded the corner to the armory, family members and friends filled the air with cheers along with red, white and blue balloons released by children from a local preschool.

"This is wonderful," said Sgt. Scott Krul, who was away from home for more than 15 months.

After giving his wife, Rachel and son, Jacob, a hug and kiss, Krul said he now plans to spend time with his family. Rachel said she's been counting the days for her husband's return.

"I missed the American people and I missed being home," he said. 1st Sgt. Glenn Muhr called the homecoming "overwhelming." He said the troops' morale was constantly uplifted by the care packages and support they got from home.

State Sen. Adrian Smith of Gering thanked the soldiers and their loved ones for being "true American heroes."

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Washington Post

April 28, 2004

### **A Solemn, Ecstatic Homecoming**

*D.C. Guard Unit Celebrates Return After Year in Iraq*

By Manny Fernandez, Washington Post Staff Writer

City leaders, commanders and family members gathered yesterday at the D.C. Armory and struggled to sum up the mix of emotions they felt. So as they toasted about 150 men and women in desert fatigues, they kept things simple, embracing them tightly and saying, over and over again: Welcome home.

"I'm a little bit like a parent whose children have come home from the war," said Maj. Gen. David F. Wherley Jr., commanding general of the **D.C. National Guard**. One of Wherley's units, the 547th Transportation Company, had returned from a year of duty in Iraq to a homecoming celebration at the armory, the headquarters of the two-century-old **D.C. National Guard**.

The men and women, who left their jobs and families in the District, Maryland, Virginia and elsewhere after being activated for duty, served in Iraq from April 10, 2003, to April 10, 2004.

They had a dangerous job. The Army Guard unit's motto sums up its mission: "You Call, We Haul." The truck-driving unit logged more than 564,000 mission miles, conducted 1,200 combat missions, took part in raids that yielded 600 prisoners, relocated a desert combat hospital -- oxygen tanks, doctors and all -- to Baghdad and escorted more than 1.4 billion pounds of letters and packages to troops throughout Iraq.

All the while, they withstood mortar attacks, roadside bombs, sniper fire and rocket-propelled grenades.

"You name it, these soldiers endured it," said Capt. Malik J. Freeman, 29, of the 547th and a resident of Jessup.

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Not all made it back. On the morning of Aug. 26, Spec. Darryl T. Dent, 21, boarded a five-ton truck at Baghdad International Airport with two colleagues, Specs. Vincent Short and Kevin Lockard, to provide security for a mail run. About 16 miles northwest of Baghdad, Dent's truck struck a makeshift, remote-detonated explosive device. Lockard and Short were injured but survived; Dent was killed.

Dent, a D.C. resident and graduate of Roosevelt High School in Northwest Washington, became the first **D.C. National Guardsman** killed in combat since the Vietnam War. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Dent's death made yesterday's homecoming a bittersweet event. In the cavernous armory, soldiers seated on the red-carpeted floor and relatives in bleachers decorated with yellow ribbons bowed their heads in silence to honor his memory. His father, Vernon Dent Sr., received a standing ovation.

"It's a special day to me," the father said in an interview. "I wish my son was back."

In speeches by District Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D) and Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), and in quiet conversations with relatives, the men and women of the 547th were welcomed back. They were hugged, thanked for their service and each given an armful of tokens of appreciation, including folded American flags in display cases.

"A lot of prayers have gone out of this region and city for your safe return," Norton told the troops.

She spoke of the dedication of the nation's Guard and Reserve troops, noting that 20 members of the 547th had been wounded in Iraq and 70 Guard members from across the country had been killed. "The American people need to understand where the troops are coming from," she said.

The 547th is the only unit from the D.C. Guard that served in Iraq. The 274th is in Afghanistan, and the 273rd remains at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Unlike the 547th, they are military police units.

Many of the soldiers of the 547th had seen their families about two weeks ago, when most of the unit arrived at Fort Eustis in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia, to undergo demobilization. Ten soldiers who had stayed behind to make sure the unit's equipment was loaded onto ships arrived via helicopter yesterday morning.

"Blessed, blessed," said Carrie Jeter, 71, of Hyattsville, describing her emotions after seeing her son, Spec. James Jeter, in a third-floor conference room shortly after he stepped off the helicopter that landed outside the armory. She had talked with him on the phone and sent him care packages, but it wasn't the same. "I just put my arms around him and hugged him," she said.

The soldiers' children and spouses were never far from their sides throughout the day, which began with a news conference and ended with a concert in honor of all D.C. Air and Army National Guard personnel. Teenage daughters walked hand-in-hand with their fathers as the soldiers walked single file to their seats. Some wives sat next to their recently returned husbands, the bleacher seats just too far away.

"We were first-class combat troops when called upon," said Sgt. Lisbon Blaylock. "We're now at home, attempting to become again first-class spouses and parents."

Freeman called the family and friends of the 547th -- including his wife, Akiba, and his 2-year-old daughter, Asiya -- the unit's "secret weapon." Freeman, an agent with the U.S. Department of Transportation, added: "That's one weapon that the enemy didn't know we had."

Soldiers spoke with humility about the perilous year in Iraq. Sgt. Joseph Boyd, 42, of Capitol Heights said the mail runs often came under attack. "Every day, every morning when I would go out that gate, I'd pray," Boyd said.

Staff Sgt. Douglas Hall, 46, of Laurel broke his arm trying to unload Iraqi prisoners from a vehicle, but returned to Iraq after surgery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. "My conscience wouldn't let me," he said, when asked why he didn't stay in the states.

One day in November, Spec. Antoinette Scott, 34, recalled, she was driving a five-ton vehicle with eight troops in the back. The eight soldiers were on their way to the airport, headed home for R&R. An explosive hit the vehicle, and Scott's jaw was broken by shrapnel, but she kept control of the wheel and brought the truck to a safe stop, avoiding a ravine on her right and a 300-foot cliff on the left.

"I tried my best to keep calm and focused," said Scott, a District resident and mother of four who was awarded the Purple Heart. "I knew my life was not the only one in danger."

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Miami Herald

April 28, 2004

### **GI Who Lost Legs to Return to New Home**

Milton (AP) -- A soldier who lost both legs in Iraq will return to a new home, built and paid for by the residents of Santa Rosa County.

When Dustin Tuller, 28, returns to Northwest Florida in mid-May, he'll have a newly constructed home for him, his wife and four children on 40 acres his parents own in Allentown.

Tuller, a member of the **Florida National Guard's** Company B, 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry, lost both legs after he was shot four times while leading a Dec. 23 raid in Baghdad.

The now-retired Army staff sergeant is undergoing intensive rehabilitation at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington.

"His spirits are good, and he's highly motivated and ready to come home," Santa Rosa County Commission Chairman Don Salter said Monday. "And we're going to help him."

Construction of the 3,400-square-foot home is expected to be completed in about a month. It will have four bedrooms and be tailored to meet Tuller's demanding physical needs.

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Santa Rosa County officials said hundreds have donated to the cause, such as Whitworth Builders Inc., of Fort Walton Beach, which designed the house, as well as various companies and individuals who have promised everything from free labor to insulation, an irrigation system, plumbing, wiring, heating and air conditioning, termite treatment and even interior design.

Pete Gandy, chief executive officer of Santa Rosa Medical Center, said the hospital will offer Tuller a yet-unspecified job.

A trust fund in his honor has raised about \$18,000 to help cover family expenses.

"People do believe in the effort," said Tuller's father, David. ``They do believe in supporting the troops."

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The News & Observer (Raleigh, North Carolina)

April 30, 2004 Friday

### **82nd Comes Home**

Fayetteville can be a lonely place when the 82nd Airborne Division goes to war. Although there are thousands of troops stationed at Fort Bragg, it is the storied 82nd that is most symbolic of the post and the city it calls home.

For the first time in more than two years of battling terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq, the entire 82nd is back in its barracks. The return of 12,000 battle-tested paratroopers has breathed new life into Fort Bragg and Fayetteville. Their return serves to remind us that those brave soldiers we read about and watch on our television screens are not just faceless warriors in desert camouflage. They are our neighbors, our little league coaches, our bowling buddies, our friends. And as anyone who runs a business in Fayetteville will testify, they are a vital cog in the economic engine that keeps Fayetteville humming.

The 82nd was bloodied in Iraq, with 36 division troopers killed and 400 wounded. Their loss is felt deeply, not only in the homes where there are only memories and photographs left to mark their lives, but in the ranks where they served and in the communities where they lived.

The division performed brilliantly in spite of the hardships it endured. They organized Iraqi units to take responsibility for security in their own country. They rebuilt the infrastructure that was falling apart long before Iraq was liberated.

This war is personal for North Carolinians. The 30th Separate Heavy Brigade of the **North Carolina National Guard** has taken its place beside the full-time soldiers stationed in Iraq.

Marines from Camp Lejeune along with airmen from Seymour Johnson and Pope air force bases have played a vital role in this war. Next week, the Morrisville-based 1st Battalion, 130th Aviation Regiment, N.C. National Guard will come home after 15 months on active duty.

They will enjoy the embraces of their loved ones, and expressions of gratitude from their fellow citizens. They've earned it.

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They've also earned the private tears and hugs that await them at home. For no amount of public flag waving and patriotic music can touch the sweet homecoming that takes place when someone they love whispers to a happy soldier, "I missed you."

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April 30, 2004, Friday, BC cycle

### **Santa Fe Unit Saved Soldiers, Children**

Dateline: Santa Fe

New Mexico National Guard members were greeted by tearful family members as they returned home after eight months of saving wounded soldiers and maimed children in Afghanistan.

"We saw a lot of death and destruction. Blood. Shredded limbs," said Sgt. David Moya, 42, of Albuquerque, the first soldier to hug his awaiting family on the tarmac

Working since August under the Army's 10th Mountain Division, the Santa Fe-based 717th Medical Company returned Thursday aboard its five Black Hawk helicopters. They passed over their Santa Fe base in a V formation as hundreds of family, friends and fellow Guardsmen waved hands, flags and signs.

The soldiers returned unhurt and none of their helicopters was lost.

"What a great day it is to be home," said Maj. John Fishburn, commander of the unit. "There is nothing better than being home, believe me."

The Afghanistan deployment was the second overseas mission for the company in three years. In 2001, the 717th performed a peace-keeping mission in Kosovo.

Afghanistan proved much more exhaustive. Crews flew 1,600 combat hours in 302 missions and are credited with saving 525 lives. The injured included coalition troops and civilians. About 80 were children.

Moya is credited with saving a 31-year-old man suffering a heart attack, while a pilot gave his own blood for an injured 12-year-old girl.

Santa Fe offered the 717th a rousing welcome home. Loved ones and fellow Guardsmen offered one round of applause after another, while Brig. Gen. Kenny Montoya praised their work.

The soldiers were clearly happy to be home, having finished one of the hardest jobs of their Army careers.

Crew chief Manuel Lucero, another staff sergeant from Santa Fe, called Afghanistan "a primitive country that hasn't quite caught up with the rest of the world."

"They're fighting for their own survival," he said. "I think we take for granted what we have here."

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## BENEFITS

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American Forces Press Service

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### **Comptroller Nominee Says She'd Target Troop Pay Problems**

By Gerry J. Gilmore

Washington, April 29, 2004 – The presidential nominee tabbed to replace former DoD Comptroller Dov. S. Zakheim told a Senate committee April 27 that she'd look into pay problems that have plagued some National Guard members deployed overseas in the war against terrorism.

Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Capitol Hill, nominee Tina W. Jonas pledged to make it a "first priority" upon her confirmation to investigate why some deployed National Guard troops have experienced delayed or inaccurate paychecks.

Jonas has served as the FBI's chief financial officer since Sept. 6, 2002. Before that, she was the deputy undersecretary of defense for financial management.

Colorado Sen. Wayne Allard pointed out to Jonas that a recent General Accounting Office report cited pay problems among some National Guardsmen being deployed overseas. Allard pointed out that many affected troops came from his state. The senator asked Jonas if she'd "get on top" of the issue.

Jonas responded she'd "be very happy to look into" the pay issue. "There's nothing more important than a paycheck for our men and women in uniform, and particularly the Guard issues," she said.

Virginia Sen. John Warner, the committee chairman, observed to Jonas that DoD is expected to ask for more supplemental funding to prosecute the war on terror – specifically to fund military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. He then noted that Jonas had previously told him she hadn't worked with budget supplemental issues during her prior stint at the Pentagon.

The chairman said supplemental budget requests from the Defense Department are "critically important" to the war effort. "You just can't anticipate with the certainty that's necessary to put down in a presidential normal budget request what is needed, he explained. Saying he supports the supplemental process as it is, and that he believes it will continue, he told Jonas she'd "be very much involved in the forthcoming supplemental."

Jonas told the committee that, if confirmed, she'd continue efforts to modernize DoD's financial accounting infrastructure, and that she'd investigate a troubled air tanker leasing program.

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## Understanding Tricare Benefits While Traveling

By Airman 1st Class Katie Booher

5th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

Minot Air Force Base, N.D. (AFPN) -- It is easy for a person to access his or her health benefits at home, but it can get complicated when they going on vacation across America or overseas.

Emergencies, including injuries threatening someone's life, limb or eyesight, are covered by Tricare Prime; but, the beneficiary still has some responsibility for getting in touch with the medical facility at his or her home base, said Terri Bell, 5th Medical Support Squadron beneficiary counseling assistance coordinator.

"If a Tricare Prime beneficiary, whether active duty, retiree or family member, is confronted with an emergency while traveling, they should seek immediate care at the nearest hospital emergency room," she said. "However, members should be sure to notify their primary care manager within 24 hours to initiate a record of the care they are receiving. Members on the personnel reliability program or flying status must notify the PRP section or flight medicine as soon as possible after receiving treatment."

Urgent care is also covered; however, all Tricare Prime beneficiaries must contact their primary care manager to obtain authorization before seeking care, Ms. Bell said.

"If a beneficiary seeks care from a civilian provider and doesn't receive a prior authorization for the care, they'll be billed under the point-of-service option, and they will pay a higher cost-share and a \$300 deductible," she said. "Active-duty members will be responsible for the total charges."

Beneficiaries should take their prescription medication and immunization records with them on vacation, but if they are on maintenance medication, they can receive a 90-day supply, Ms. Bell said.

"If people are traveling within their Tricare region and need medication, they only have to pay the copayment by using a network pharmacy," she said. "If members must fill a prescription while outside of their region, they will have to pay the entire amount and seek reimbursement from Tricare once they return."

Under the new pharmacy contract, Ms. Bell said there will be only one claims processor for pharmacy claims. When beneficiaries use a network pharmacy, their claims will be processed online; however, they are also responsible for covering their \$3, \$9 or \$22 copayment.

When traveling outside the United States, patients pay the bill upfront, but Tricare will reimburse them when they return, Ms. Bell said.

"Because the Code of Federal Regulations doesn't permit direct payment of medical or dental claims to a foreign provider, the patient must pay the bill upfront," she said. "When the patient gets home, (he or she can) file a claim directly with Tricare."

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For more information on these and other military health-care benefit issues, call the local Tricare office.

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## Media Releases

### **Army Announces New Disabled Soldiers Initiative**

The Department of the Army announced today a new initiative that gives Soldiers wounded during the Global War on Terrorism an additional means of getting help once they are medically retired from the Army. The program is called the Disabled Soldier Support System, or DS3.

Through DS3, the Army provides its most severely disabled Soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy and follow-up to provide personal support and liaison to resources, to assist them in their transition from military service. DS3 is a holistic approach program that provides them with assistance. DS3 is an extension of the philosophy that the Army takes care of it's own – once a Soldier, always a Soldier. DS3 links the Army and the organizations that stand ready to assist these Soldiers and families, such as the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the many Veteran's Service Organizations, to the Soldier.

One key element of DS3 is the ability to provide a network of resources to severely disabled Soldiers, no matter where they relocate and regardless of their component, be it active, reserve or National Guard. The goal is to ensure Soldiers, families, and communities receive responsive support services that meet their needs. The Army realizes many of these Soldiers were not planning to make the move back to civilian life so abruptly. DS3, in partnership with the VA and the VSO's, provides a much-needed cushion for that transition.

The benefits of DS3 are numerous. Severely disabled Soldiers and families are able to better understand what their future holds, and how to access the services they may require with a phone call or mouse click at 1-800-833-6622 or on the web at <http://www.armyds3.org>. Additionally, Constituent Liaisons work individually with our nation's heroes to monitor and follow up, ensuring their needs are met. The DS3's outreach is ongoing and proactive.

News Media representatives interested in learning more about the Disabled Soldier Support System should contact the Army's Well-Being Public Affairs Office at (703) 696-5205 or (703) 696-5207.

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News Release: 04-031

April 30, 2004

AAFES Media Contact: Judd Anstey - [anstey@aafes.com](mailto:anstey@aafes.com)

### **Troops in Iraq and Afghanistan Can Now Call Home for Just a Quarter a Minute**

Dallas - In the harsh and austere conditions of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF), few things take on greater importance than phone calls home. Because of this, The Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) and its contractor AT&T have worked diligently to offer affordable phone service throughout Iraq and Afghanistan. Because of these efforts, Soldiers, Airman, Sailors and Marines have been able to keep communication open between the front lines and the home front.

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Beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>, deployed troops will get to talk longer, for less, when AAFES reduces the price per minute of Armed Services calls originating from Iraq and Afghanistan. The new price per minute for calls from both countries, when using AAFES' 550-Unit AT&T Global Prepaid Card, will be reduced from \$0.32 cents per minute to only \$0.25 cents per minute. This special rate applies only to calls from call centers in Iraq and Afghanistan to the United States with prepaid phone cards purchased from any AAFES PX/BX, tactical field exchanges or Imprest Fund sites in Iraq and Afghanistan.

AAFES and AT&T are committed to offering the lowest phone rates possible for troops in Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. SPC Joshua R. Hopkins of HHS 2/20 FA, whose daughter was born while he was in Iraq, is just one of the troops who speaks of the importance of telecommunication services for deployed troops. "Having been in Iraq at the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom activities, I can attest to the importance of phone calls home. The morale benefit affordable calling options offer our troops can not be overstated," said Hopkins.

"We are always excited when we are able to extend more calling to military personnel," said AT&T's director of Military Markets Bill Baumann. "I'm proud of AAFES and AT&T's support to deployed troops. It gratifies me to see how our collaboration has progressed from virtually no telecommunications infrastructure a year ago to where we are now operating call centers throughout Iraq and Afghanistan that offer calls for just a quarter a minute."

Today, AAFES and AT&T operate 35 call centers in Iraq and Afghanistan. AAFES and AT&T continue to work together to open call centers throughout Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom while keeping costs down. 550-Unit Military Exchange Prepaid Phone Cards are available at any of AAFES' 35 contingency locations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

AAFES and AT&T also operate nine Internet Cafes in Kuwait that are proving very popular. Troops who visit the cafes are enjoying video teleconferencing, Internet access, gaming and email 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The rate for this service will also drop from 10-cents/minute to 8-cents/minute on June 1<sup>st</sup>. This new rate will reduce the cost per hour from \$6 to \$5 dollars.

The Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) is a joint command of the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force, and is directed by a Board of Directors who is responsible to the Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force through their Chiefs of Staff. AAFES has the dual mission of providing authorized patrons with articles of merchandise and services and of generating non-appropriated fund earnings as a supplemental source of funding for military Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs. To find out more about AAFES' history and mission or to view recent press releases please visit our Web site at <http://www.aafes.com/pa/default.asp>.

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## GUARD IN IRAQ

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USA Today  
April 28, 2004

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### **Soldier Sisters Choose Not to Rejoin Army Units in Iraq**

By Debbie Howlett, USA Today

The two Wisconsin sisters of a female soldier killed this month in Baghdad said Tuesday that they will not rejoin their **Army National Guard** units in Iraq.

The Pentagon gave Spc. Rachel Witmer, 24, and Sgt. Charity Witmer, 20, the option of finishing their service without returning to their tight-knit units in a war zone. Their ordeal drew national attention when their father called on the Army to stop his surviving daughters from returning to Iraq.

The sisters had been weighing their options at home in New Berlin, Wis., a suburb of Milwaukee, since accompanying their sister's body back from Iraq for her funeral April 16.

They said at the time that they were torn between their two families — the one in Wisconsin and their military family in Iraq. They said their decision not to return was in part because of the Army's concern that the media attention might make the women and their units targets.

"We have been faced with a profoundly difficult and complex decision. It is, by far, the most difficult decision we have ever made," the sisters said in a statement read at a news conference in Madison, Wis.

Their sister, Spc. Michelle Witmer, 20, was killed April 9 when her Humvee was attacked. Michelle, Charity's identical twin, served in the same military police unit as Rachel.

Pentagon policy states that if a soldier dies while serving in a hostile area, other soldiers from the family may be reassigned outside the war zone. The request, however, must come from the surviving soldier.

The Army gave the sisters 15 days to decide whether to return to Iraq. Earlier this week, the deadline was extended another 15 days.

It is "a simple policy ... but excruciating decisions," Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening, commander of the **Wisconsin National Guard**, said in a statement. "At the same time they mourned their sister ... they wrestled with this enormous decision while under the spotlight of international attention."

Their parents, John and Lori Witmer, were outspoken in their wish that the surviving sisters not return to a war zone. He told the Associated Press: "The sacrifice that this family's made can never be understood by someone who hasn't gone through it. It's a burden I can't bear. My family can't bear it."

Neither parent could be reached for comment Tuesday.

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Wilkening said he spoke with the sisters Monday and suggested they request the exemption from war-zone service. He said the commanders of both women's units concurred. "It was not only based on the needs of two grieving families, but also for the welfare of other troops," Wilkening said.

In the end, the sisters followed Wilkening's advice.

"Although he said he could not 'order' us to request reassignment, he was very clear to point out that a decision to return to Iraq might expose our fellow soldiers to increased danger. This we will not do," the sisters said in their statement. "We especially treasure the friendship, camaraderie and heartfelt sympathy shared with us by (our units). We know you mourn the loss of Michelle with us. Our thoughts and prayers are with you until you return home safely."

Their new assignments, which might be in Wisconsin, haven't been decided yet by the Army.

Seattle Times

April 29, 2004

### **State's 81st Brigade to Focus on Security at Iraq, Kuwait Bases**

By Hal Bernton, Seattle Times staff reporter

The **Washington Army National Guard's** 81st Armor Brigade, now in the Persian Gulf, will be involved primarily in providing security for more than a half-dozen U.S. military bases in Iraq and Kuwait, according to a Guard spokesman.

Most of the 4,500 members of the 81st arrived in Iraq earlier this month just as fighting flared in Baghdad, Fallujah and other areas. U.S. soldiers mostly stay at bases — known as "green zones" — where access is restricted and maximum security is maintained. Most of the 81st will aid in that security effort, according to Master Sgt. Jeff Clayton with the **Washington Army National Guard**.

The 81st brigade has about 3,200 soldiers drawn from all over Washington, in addition to Guard soldiers from California, Minnesota and other states.

Clayton offered this breakdown of where the units are stationed:

- 1-161st Infantry Battalion is providing security at Forward Operating Base Gunner in the Baghdad area.
- 303rd Armor Battalion is providing security at Camp Victory, which includes Saddam Hussein's Abu Ghraib palace on an artificial lake outside Baghdad.
- 1-185th Armor Battalion is providing security at three locations south of Baghdad.
- 2/146th Field Artillery has one battery providing security at a Saudi base and the rest at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait.
- 181 Support Battalion is providing base security at Camp Anaconda north of Baghdad.
- 898 Engineer Battalion is supporting other units in several unspecified locations.

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- Troop E 303rd Calvary is providing base security at Camp Doha in Kuwait.
- D 216th Air Defense Artillery is providing air defense at Baghdad International Airport outside of Baghdad.

The Washington National Guard yesterday also announced 25 Washington Air Guard soldiers of the 254 Red Horse Squadron have been called up. They are mostly from the Puget Sound area and will be sent to Djibouti in Eastern Africa between Eritrea and Somalia, to improve roads, construct food warehouses and work on other projects.

That brings the number of Washington Guard soldiers on active duty to more than 3,700 out of a total of more than 8,200 soldiers.

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Raleigh News & Observer  
April 29, 2004

### **Nature Is Balm, Torment In Iraq**

*N.C. Guard unit adjusts to territory*

By Charles Crain, Correspondent

Balad Ruz, Iraq -- Sometimes the small annoyances crowd out thoughts of danger in Iraq.

At the end of last week, the big crisis at the **N.C. National Guard's** Camp Caldwell was a windstorm that flattened the mess tent and sent satellite dishes flying off roofs and rolling down hills.

Farther north, at Camp Cobra, the same storm knocked down the metal-frame dining facility and wrecked the post exchange, or PX. By the end of the weekend, a sturdier wooden-frame PX was taking shape as the soldiers ate under the sun at plastic tables. A new dining facility is next on the construction list.

The troops of the Guard's 30th Heavy Separate Brigade are adjusting to their new surroundings northeast of Baghdad, but they haven't quite settled in. At Caldwell, they live in tent cities while awaiting the move to buildings or trailers.

The men at Camp Cobra have it a little better. They've been moved into container housing units and have outfitted them with televisions, DVD players and posters. The shower trailers are conveniently located, but hot water is intermittent. Soldiers can boil water, though.

At Cobra, the men unwind from a day's work with a few glasses of tea in front of their trailers.

It's a habit many have picked up from their trips into town. Locals are quick to offer tea and meals, and refusing hospitality is not an option.

"You can't leave without eating," said Sgt. Cary Hathcock of Albemarle.

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Capt. John McArthur of Willow Spring said eating local food and drinking the tea is safe. Still, he said, after a lunch of beef kebab, "it kind of freaks you out when you see the cows eating trash."

Despite the occasional garbage pile, much of the 30th's territory is beautiful -- a far cry from the sandy desert that surrounds Baghdad.

The area's most striking feature is its variety. Flat desert stretches to the horizon around Camp Caldwell, and the road north to Cobra is dotted with pyramids and low mesas the wind has carved out of the sandy soil. Farther east, at Camp Carpenter-Wyatt, soldiers work in view of the mountains of Iran.

In the fields between towns and even on village streets, old men and young children herd sheep, goats and cattle.

The towns in which the 30th works and patrols have remained relatively peaceful. That's especially true farther north, where Kurds, who were oppressed under Saddam Hussein, often greet Americans with waves, thumbs up, and cries of "Hello mister!" and "America good!"

But the soldiers remain alert for attacks and roadside bombs, particularly in more volatile areas to the south. Still, said Hathcock, most of the men have no use for the explosive ordnance disposal unit's careful procedures for dealing with suspected bombs.

The preferred procedure, he joked, is simpler and quicker: "Whoever sees it gets to shoot it."

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## **Troops Encountered Former Captive By Chance, Commander Says**

By Gerry J. Gilmore

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 3, 2004 – The commander of the U.S. soldiers in Iraq who found escaped captive Thomas Hamill May 2 said today in Baghdad that his troops came across the contractor by chance.

Thomas Hamill, 43, an American contractor captured by insurgents April 9, was found by members of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment of the **New York Army National Guard**.

Army Col. Randall Dragon, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team that discovered Hamill, noted to reporters at a news conference that his soldiers had happened upon the 43-year-old Macon, Miss., during a routine patrol.

"I was glad that we were able to participate in the recovery of Mr. Hamill," Dragon said. The U.S. patrol found Hamill in an area south of Tikrit, and area Dragon said the unit patrols frequently.

Dragon told reporters they'd have to speak to Hamill to obtain the story of his escape.

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Hamill approached the American troops and identified himself, the colonel said. The former captive then took the soldiers to the house where he'd been held. At the building, the soldiers found and detained two Iraqis who had an AK-47 assault rifle.

The U.S. soldiers gave Hamill water and first aid for his injured arm and transported him for further medical care. He is now at a U.S. military hospital in Germany.

The contract employee was driving a truck for Kellogg Brown & Root when he was captured during an insurgent attack on his supply convoy west of Baghdad. Six other contractors and two U.S. soldiers also were taken during the incident. The bodies of four of the contractors and one of the soldiers have been found; the rest remain missing.

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## HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

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Dallas Morning News  
May 2, 2004

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### **Guard Program Sends Volunteers to Aid Troops' Families**

By Sarah Post, The Dallas Morning News

Dozens of volunteers came to the aid Saturday of the military's strongest unit – the family – to learn how to offer support to the loved ones of deployed service members.

The **National Guard's** Family Readiness Program matches families facing hard times with resources among other Guard families and in the civilian community. The idea has been around since 1986, but 9-11 prompted new Web sites, materials and a renewed enthusiasm for the effort.

"The military is trying to find new and creative ways to care for families during deployment," said Lt. Col. Timothy Red, the State Family Programs coordinator for the Texas National Guard.

The volunteers will help families deal physically and emotionally with a variety of tasks, from preparing for deployment to handling finances and child care during a spouse's absence.

A military and a civilian volunteer from each Guard unit have been assigned to coordinate volunteer efforts. The pair might serve as liaisons for between 50 and 200 families who live on military installations or elsewhere.

Sgt. 1st Class James Wage, who attended Saturday's workshops in Dallas, has served in the Army for 16 years. He was recently assigned to help lead a Family Readiness Program in Marshall, Texas, and he said that for people who are just beginning to work as volunteers, "it can be overwhelming."

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Civilian Shirley Krueger has volunteered to help military families for 4 1/2 years. She said her work took on a new focus and urgency when the military began mobilizing last year. As a military wife, she knew the issues those families faced and how to comfort the spouses now struggling by themselves to hold their families together.

"Sure, there will be lonely days," Ms. Krueger said. "The main thing is to encourage them that they will get through it. After a while, the programs start to build on each other, and it all comes full circle."

Volunteers with the Family Readiness Program help improve morale among soldiers and their families, and that helps soldiers focus on their missions, workshop instructors said.

But the skills they bring have value beyond times of mobilization.

"They're just good life skills," Col. Red said. "Making sure that both caregivers know how to use the insurance and pay the bills is just good sense."

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The Associated Press

May 2, 2004, Sunday, BC cycle

### **A Year Later, Public Safety Staffers Still Lost to Military Duty**

By Samira Jafari, Associated Press Writer

Dateline: Montgomery, Ala.

As a lieutenant colonel in the **National Guard**, Ralph Hooks had expected the war in Iraq to take a toll on his unit. It hasn't yet. But as warden of St. Clair prison, he's feeling pressure on his depleted prison staff a year after the U.S. invasion.

Hooks currently has a dozen corrections officers away on active duty, and like other state and local agencies, he's still trying to plug holes as the need for troops in Iraq continues into a second year of fighting.

Hundreds of Alabama's public safety workers also serve in the **National Guard** and Army Reserve units, many called up for active duty in the Iraq war.

"We fortunately allocated overtime to make up for military losses. It still taxes the facility," Hooks said. "Historically, we're always short of corrections officers anyway, so this is just an added burden." A burden that has no immediate end in sight.

In recent weeks, the Bush administration has stood firm on keeping troops in Iraq and redeploying units to the theater for an indefinite period of time.

Meanwhile, the return of several units - including the 1165th Military Police unit out of Fairhope - has been delayed for at least another three months.

Alabama, which has one of the largest **National Guards** of any state, deployed 1,400 troops to the theater in January and February while another 2,000 are on duty and awaiting return home.

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Of the 15 units that were deployed last year, eight have come back and now have returned for a second tour in the Middle East, said Col. Bob Horton, spokesman for **the Alabama National Guard**.

"As our president has stated, the war on terror will be long term," Horton said. "The Alabama National Guard is committed to the war on terror and we will continue to prepare our units to support future operations."

The added burden on state and local agencies has caught the attention of Gov. Bob Riley, who by office is chief of Alabama's National Guard. While concerned, Riley said the soldiers' military obligation outweighs the local staffing difficulties.

"It is putting a strain on us, not just on our law enforcement, but on our municipalities as well," Riley said. "But it's worth it."

Hooks' own Birmingham-based logistics unit has yet to be deployed, but he's watched nearly 50 military members of his prison staff cycle through tours around Iraq over the past three years. And Hooks suspects he'll be called into active duty by the winter.

Corrections has 173 of its 485 military employees on active duty. The Department of Public Safety and individual sheriff, police and fire departments have also had to find ways to fill position left behind.

Maj. Patrick Manning, chief of the Highway Patrol division, said the deployments have forced his troopers to scale back on preventative patrols, including catching speeders. Nearly 30 of his 320 highway patrol employees are on active duty.

Troopers, like Trooper Michael Britton, say they will likely do another tour by next year.

"It reduces us to becoming almost totally reactive, instead of proactive," Manning said. "Our duty is preventative patrol, but that's hard when troopers are bouncing from one wreck to another."

Manning called the end result a "vicious cycle," where fewer troopers lead to more accidents, and more accidents strain the troopers.

Most law enforcement agencies have relied on their employees to work overtime to keep up with the workload. But, during a statewide budget crunch, that proves to be a very costly option.

Both Corrections and the Highway Patrol also have stepped up efforts to recruit more officers to training academies. Yet, with some training sessions taking about six months, that has not filled the drop in personnel.

Local sheriff, fire and police departments - especially in Jefferson, Mobile and Montgomery counties - are struggling as much as state agencies.

Montgomery County has one of the largest deployment groups, with 194 guardsmen on active duty.

"We absolutely feel the impact," said Sheriff D.T. Marshall. "When you have a small office with seven or eight folks gone, you have other people taking up the slack."

The sheriff has asked his deputies to work overtime and take on larger workloads, which he says they do gladly.

"All we can do is best is filling in for them while their fulfilling their duty for their country."

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St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

May 1, 2004 Saturday

### **Sergeant's Wife Knows How to Keep Home Fires Burning**

By Harry Levins

Last Sunday's New York Times carried a front-page story about the tribulations of the Tennessee wives who stayed behind when a military police company from the **National Guard** went off to war in Iraq.

The story brought to mind Sal Alvarado, my long-ago Army buddy who is now in Iraq as the first sergeant of the 1775th MP Company, Michigan National Guard.

When I met Sal, he was an 18-year-old clerk-typist at an Army post in Germany. Now, he's the father of seven (and grandfather of two), and he'll turn 58 this month.

Four of his kids - ages 8 to 15 - are still at home in Dearborn. After I read the story in The Times, I called Sal's wife, Kathy, to ask whether she and the kids were OK.

"Oh, sure," she said. But she was struck by my description of the woebegone attitude of the wives in Tennessee.

In the Army, first sergeants don't lament problems. They solve problems. The same goes for a first sergeant's wife.

Kathy Alvarado keeps active in the family support group for the 1775th.

Before her two youngest kids were born, she ran it. Now, she's the top aide to the group's chief - Thea Vigilates, the fiancée of the company commander, Capt. Douglas McQuarie.

Vigilates feeds an e-mail network with word she gets from the captain. Now that the 1775th has moved into Iraq from Kuwait, e-mail has become dicey. But Kathy Alvarado talks often by phone with Sal and then uses the e-mail network "to tell the wives what the soldiers are doing - and how they're doing."

The wives use their phones to call Kathy with their own problems - financial, domestic, emotional.

"The wives are young, mostly from their mid-20s to early 30s," says Kathy, a motherly 47. "Sometimes they're overwhelmed with worry about their husbands' safety, and what to tell their kids.

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"I tell them what I tell my own kids: 'Think of it as a schoolwork assignment. You're obliged to get it done. Well, your father is a soldier. He has a mission - and he's obliged to get it done.'"

Kathy confessed to her own middle-of-the-night moments, "even in the middle of the afternoon." Still, she keeps her game face on around the kids, "although I sometimes let myself cry along with the wives, just to show them I'm not made out of steel."

The article in *The Times* included financial horror stories from National Guard wives. Kathy said, "I'm sure it's rough on some of the lower-ranking soldiers here, but I haven't heard much of that."

Instead, most of the calls she handles involve emotional problems – or practical problems.

#### *VFW to the rescue*

"We're negotiating with the Wayne County Board of Commissioners on lawn service," she said, "and we think we'll get it."

Under this setup, minor criminal offenders who get sentenced to community service can pay their debt to society by mowing the lawns of the families of the 1775th.

"We had it last summer, but there wasn't too much demand," Kathy said. "But this year, now that the soldiers have been extended for 120 days past their return date, a lot of the women are at wit's end."

Some wives call to report household repair chores beyond their skills. "I tell them to call the VFW," Kathy said.

"Every VFW post has lots of guys who are carpenters, or electricians, or plumbers - and they've told us they want to help out as a way of showing their support for the troops."

(At the VFW's national headquarters in Kansas City, spokesman Jerry Newberry said VFW posts in almost every city took part in the group's Military Assistance Program. He said military families who needed help could call the national headquarters at 1-816-756-3390 to get a local referral. Information is also available on the VFW's Web site at [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org), under the headline "Programs.")

Kathy also tells the wives who call her about the help available from an even higher level.

"My own feeling is that if you have a religious background, a lot less anxiety will come into play," said Kathy, a Roman Catholic. "I try to show them strength - but I tell them that my strength comes from God."

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## HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH AFTERMATH

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Los Angeles Times  
May 2, 2004

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### Toll in Iraq Weighs on Tiny Town

*Arkansas' 39th Infantry Brigade has lost seven soldiers in the war, more than any National Guard unit, leaving a void in one community.*

By Scott Gold and Rone Tempest, Times Staff Writers

Hazen, Ark. — Stacey Craig Brandon was a doting husband, married to a schoolteacher, and a loving father to two children, happy to let his wife play the disciplinarian while he roughhoused and made goofy faces. He went to church three times a week, listened to country music and enjoyed a good fish fry.

And like thousands of others across the nation, on weekends, give or take, he was a soldier — a staff sergeant in the **Arkansas National Guard**.

Saturday morning, a sizable faction of the 715 families in Hazen crammed inside the First Baptist Church to mourn his death.

His funeral marked the beginning of a four-day expression of grief, pride and anger in this pocket of Arkansas, which is home to the 39th Infantry Brigade — Brandon's unit — which has lost seven soldiers in Iraq, more than any **National Guard** division.

Four of them, including Brandon, died in a single day last weekend, when insurgents raked their Taji base camp with mortars. Another member of the 39th was killed the next day; earlier in the month, another lost his life. Their deaths, along with 10 others in separate incidents, made April the deadliest month for the National Guard since the Korean War.

On Saturday, as light poured through 18 stained-glass windows, those gathered in the church rose when Brandon's 32-year-old widow, April, walked past his flag-draped coffin. Military representatives stood against the wall, the toes of their buffed shoes nearly touching the edge of the pews. Friends passed around boxes of tissues. "It just hurts," one woman said to no one.

Brandon, 35, who worked as a prison guard, was remembered as a friend, a trusted confidante, a voice in the church choir who tried to hit both the low and the high notes and a family man who had so many framed pictures of his children in his house that they spilled into the bathroom.

The Rev. Ron Malone assured the crowd that Brandon was in a better place — "transferred to another base of operation," the preacher said. But the region's loss was palpable.

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"Five minutes after you met him, you felt like you knew him your whole life," Lt. Col. Don Brooks, a friend and National Guard comrade, told the crowd. Brooks, in his dress uniform, wiped away tears with a white handkerchief. "There is a place in our ranks that will never be filled."

At the end of the service, after songs and prayers and parables, those gathered stood and sang "My Country, 'Tis of Thee."

Later, hundreds of people huddled under umbrellas and waited for Brandon's widow and the hearse to leave for the cemetery.

In what feels like a single procession, four more funerals will follow among the wheat fields and cornstalks of central Arkansas.

The next procession will be this afternoon in Mammoth Spring, near the Missouri border, for the funeral of Spc. Kenneth A. Melton, 30. Then it will wind back down to the National Guard Armory off Highway 63, where Billy J. Orton, a 41-year-old staff sergeant, will be remembered, before making two more final stops.

The loss here was a stark and somber illustration of why civic leaders and politicians had been loath to send National Guard troops into combat for nearly 50 years.

"It's just unreal," said David Duch, 46, a Hazen crop-duster and the town's part-time mayor for the last six years. "These are people we grew up with, went to school with. To get hit so hard ... what are the chances?"

*They are growing.*

National Guard police, engineers and civil affairs soldiers were used extensively as support personnel in Bosnia, Somalia and other hotspots in recent years. But in Iraq, as the invasion has degenerated into insurgency and unrest, with the U.S. military stretched increasingly thin, the role of the National Guard has changed quickly.

"Weekend warriors" have been deployed overseas for 12- and even 18-month tours, ordered to ditch their support roles and integrated into front-line combat positions, alongside "regular" soldiers.

The three "enhanced" brigades that have been sent to Iraq — considered the best-trained and equipped in the National Guard, and including the Arkansas brigade — were the first Guard combat soldiers to be sent overseas since Korea. In all, more than 43,000 National Guard troops are among the 130,000 U.S. soldiers in Iraq.

U.S. presidents have long been reluctant to put the National Guard in harm's way. Guard soldiers tend to be older; 22% of them are 40 or older, compared with 6% of active-duty Army troops. Many are rooted in their communities, assigned to a particular unit not because they got ordered there but because they grew up down the road from the armory. Many work full time as police officers or firefighters.

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Casualties among **National Guard** units can have a different effect on the public than losses of active-duty service members, said Michael O'Hanlon, a defense expert at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

"The death of a 20-year-old soldier is just as tragic as the death of a 45-year-old schoolteacher, but we feel the deaths in different ways," he said.

"The first is a young man who had his whole life in front of him and had it taken away. The tragedy of the citizen-soldier casualty is a loss of a member of the community who is usually a parent, husband or wife. It adds to the national pain when you see people from all different walks of life dying in combat. In that sense, the death of Guardsmen in Iraq compounds the national pain."

Guard units also tend to ship out to their assignments en masse, which is largely why few Guard members fought in Vietnam. President Johnson was fearful of the consequences if large numbers of soldiers from the same community were killed. That was precisely what happened in Arkansas.

The five soldiers from the 39th Brigade killed last weekend lived within an hour's drive and had served together for years. One was a youth minister, another the coach of youth sports teams. Brandon was not a cherub-cheeked soldier from a recruiting poster. He was four days short of his 36th birthday, with buff muscles but a receding hairline. The youngest of the five was 30, and the oldest, Chief Warrant Officer Patrick Kordsmeier, was 49 and the father of three grown children.

The other members of the 39th Infantry Brigade killed in Iraq were: Capt. Arthur L. Felder, 36, of Lewisville, Ark.; Sgt. 1st Class William W. Labadie Jr., 45, of Bauxite, Ark.; and Felix M. del Greco, 22, of Simsbury, Conn.

As questions swirl over the decision to send **National Guard** and reserve troops to Iraq — and as many question whether American soldiers should have invaded in the first place — Hazen is trying to stand firm, to remain resolute in the belief that their Guardsmen died for a just and righteous cause.

"As far as me and my house, I serve this country, I love this country and I will do anything I can to help protect this country," said Marvin E. Mathis, a sergeant first class in the National Guard who joined in 1987 and is based in North Little Rock. "You might think that's just a saying, but it's not. It's the truth."

More than half of Arkansas' 8,000-plus National Guard troops have been activated, and that has taken a toll on the region's children, said Bambi George, 35, of Searcy, Ark., whose husband, Jerome George, a sergeant first class, recently began a lengthy tour in Iraq. "Your daddy's going to die," one classmate told one of the couple's three children recently.

"Children can be cruel," she said. "You have to explain that what he is doing is necessary for our country to function as a whole. And my children are very proud. They miss their daddy. But they are very proud of him."

In the wake of Arkansas' losses, many in the region who have been supportive of President Bush's decision to invade Iraq are beginning to question that assessment.

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"When the first assault started, we didn't lose that many troops. Now we're losing a lot," said Duch, Hazen's mayor, who described himself as a fervent Bush supporter. "We're losing all these troops and we aren't even supposed to be in a full-scale war anymore. It makes you start questioning it. Are we protecting our troops? Do these people not want us there? Should we not be there? Something is not right. They are not telling us the whole story."

In South Carolina, another state where more than half of the Guard troops have been mobilized, Gov. Mark Sanford, a Republican and a captain in the Air Force Reserve, said the future of the Guard could be at risk.

"In the short run, it's meant that a lot of daddies who thought they'd be home at their son's or daughter's softball game ... or birthday party aren't there," he said.

"In the long run, the verdict is out. A lot of people who thought they were signing up for some college training or serving their country on a limited basis, it has proven to be a much broader role than they anticipated. They are not going to sign up again. That story will be told with how the story in Iraq plays out."

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Orlando Sentinel (Florida)

May 1, 2004

### **“There Is No Glory in War”**

Lois K. Solomon South Florida Sun-Sentinel

**Army Sgt. Seth Cole** was no ordinary show-and-tell guest at Banyan Creek Elementary School. At 6-foot-3, in a pressed, beribboned uniform and just back from Iraq, the infantryman was the son of teacher Allyne Cole and the school's yearlong pen pal, home at last.

But what began as a school-wide homecoming celebration became an emotionally charged catharsis Thursday when during visits to several classrooms Cole spoke candidly of the disillusionment he felt after 12 months in the combat zone, and urged the pupils not to be fooled by notions that warfare is glorious.

"You'll never see me in this uniform again," Cole, 30, told a roomful of fifth-graders as his mother fought to hold back her tears. "There is no glory in war. Seven hundred people are not coming back. A lot more don't have eyes, arms or legs."

Allyne Cole said that she knew little about the horror and danger of her only child's service with the 115 Military Police Company in Baghdad, Fallujah and Balad until he spoke to the students at the school where she has taught for 20 years. "This was not easy to hear," she said. "He tried to protect me. He knew I was worried."

Cole's visit began with what looked like a patriotic festival. More than 900 students -- many wearing red, white and blue -- cheered when Cole arrived, and mobbed him for autographs. The school cheerleaders were there, a flag-decorated cake was rolled out and a fourth-grade student sang The Star-Spangled Banner.

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But it was only when he began to talk to the students, beginning with his mother's kindergartners, that he revealed how troubled he was over his experiences in Iraq.

"In the beginning, I was keen to go. I couldn't wait to do my part," Cole said. "But then my philosophy changed. I thought what we were doing was just, but I didn't like the way the military was treating its soldiers."

Cole had trouble getting enough water to drink and weapons that worked well. He said he participated in 550 combat missions, including raiding Iraqis' houses and snatching suspects for interrogation. After he was told he could go home, he received an order to direct traffic in downtown Kuwait City, a three-week assignment he described as "a kick in the teeth."

Speaking deliberately, in the accent of his native Boston, Cole tried to temper students' enthusiasm for guns and bombs by detailing his struggle to do what he believed was right for the United States. Describing Iraq as "a weird country that's difficult to understand," he said he had served four years on active duty, then volunteered for the Rhode Island National Guard, in part to follow the example of his father, a Vietnam veteran.

But Cole was sharply critical of the way the military manages its fighters, and he complained of poor equipment and inadequate training.

Sgt. Scott Keegan, 36, a Boston reservist who returned from Iraq with Cole just two weeks ago, agreed with his longtime buddy's assessment.

"They sent us on some crazy missions, night patrols without night-vision goggles, in old Humvees that were always breaking down," said Keegan. "We were told to wear bulletproof vests, even though there were no bulletproof ceramic plates to put in them."

Keegan said three members of their unit were killed in Iraq and several more were wounded.

The Army sent teams of counselors, such as the 113th Army Combat Stress Unit, throughout Iraq to prevent mental breakdowns in the field and post-traumatic illnesses when soldiers returned home. The unit treated 20,000 soldiers. The Army also has adopted a new reintegration program for returning soldiers after problems erupted last year at Fort Bragg, N.C., when returning Iraq veterans of the 82nd Airborne Division were involved in instances of domestic violence, including several slayings.

Still, Cole said he felt little support for his fellow soldiers' personal traumas on the battlefield and numerous acquaintances went home because their mental health deteriorated.

Students said they were surprised the people who served had become psychologically scarred by their experiences.

"I had never thought of that before," fourth-grader Chrislyn Corvil said.

Even though recounting his wartime experiences was painful, Cole said he owed it to the children who sent him hundreds of cards and letters in a campaign his mother admitted organizing to help allay her fears about his safety.

"I read every single letter," he said.

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"I'm proud of what I've done," he added. "It was a pleasure to serve my country. But it's not like I want to go down to a bar and talk about it more."

Neither does Cole plan to extend his commitment to the **National Guard** when his enlistment ends in three months.

Cole's mother said her son conveyed some of his feelings during occasional calls home, but she knew almost nothing about his experiences. "He told me that after today, he wasn't going to talk about it again," she said.

"He put everything into context, the reality of violence," she said. "And I said to him later, this is one of those things from elementary school they will probably remember forever."

Cole asked the students not to be impressed with his stories about guns and bombs but to go home and give their parents a hug.

"Life is short and life is very precious," said Cole, a salesman who lives in Boston. "If you remember anything I've told you, please remember that."

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## HEALTH ISSUES

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Health & Medicine Week

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April 26, 2004

### **Soldiers Say Their Health Suffering from Uranium-Filled Weapons**

Six Iraq war veterans charged that the Army ignored their complaints about uranium poisoning from U.S. weapons fired during combat.

"We were all healthy when we left home. Now, I suffer from headaches, fatigue, dizziness, blood in the urine, unexplained rashes," said Sgt. Jerry Ojeda, 28, who was stationed south of Baghdad with other **National Guard** members of the 442nd Military Police Company, which is based in Rockland County.

He said the soldiers' symptoms also include shortness of breath, migraines and nausea.

The soldiers held a news conference in the garden of Ojeda's Queens apartment house, joined by U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, D-NEW YORK, who said he would fight to get the victims extended health benefits after they're discharged.

New York's other senator, Hillary Rodham Clinton, said April 8, 2004, that as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, she would ask U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to require health screenings for all returning troops.

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Five of the men said they also were recently tested by an independent physician, Asaf Durakovic, MD, a former Army doctor and nuclear medicine expert. He found traces of depleted uranium in their bloodstream, with four registering high levels.

After their return from Iraq, "the Army was unfortunately not cooperative when they asked for testing," Schumer said. "To stonewall this, which is what has happened, is not the American way."

In Washington, Army spokeswoman Cynthia Smith said that the military would do "the right thing" and test any soldier who expressed concerns about uranium exposure.

Sgt. Herbert Reed, 50, who works as an assistant deputy warden at the city's jail on Rikers Island, said that when a dozen soldiers asked for treatment last fall, they initially "were turned away."

Three of them persisted and were tested in December, said Reed, who has yet to receive his results.

The men said that Army officials at Fort Dix, in New Jersey, and Walter Reed Army Medical Center, in Washington, are now testing urine samples they supplied. Results are expected in about 3 weeks.

Since the start of the Iraq war, U.S. forces reportedly have fired at least 120 tons of shells packed with depleted uranium.

Depleted uranium, far less radioactive than natural uranium, is left over from the process of enriching uranium for use as nuclear fuel. The extremely dense material has been used by the U.S. and British militaries for tank armor and armor-piercing weapons.

Once fired, DU shells melt, vaporizes and turns to dust.

The soldiers said the uranium apparently mixed with sand and dirt in Iraq, then entered the soldiers' bloodstream after they inhaled it.

Veterans started reporting health problems as a result of DU shells in 1991, after the first Gulf War. Since then, the debate over the use and effects of depleted uranium munitions has escalated.

Some experts believe the nuclear component used in warfare is practically harmless, while others blame DU for cancers and other illnesses.

This article was prepared by Health & Medicine Week editors from staff and other reports. Copyright 2004, Health & Medicine Week via NewsRx.com & NewsRx.net.

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The Associated Press

April 30, 2004, Friday, BC cycle

## **Pentagon Says Depleted Uranium Did Not Harm New York Unit**

By Adam Ashton, Associated Press Writer

Washington

A **National Guard** soldier who said he fell ill after exposure to depleted uranium in Iraq was not comforted by the Pentagon's announcement that the metal did not cause his ailments.

Sgt. Ray Ramos plans to pursue more independent tests to determine whether his contact with depleted uranium, a heavy metal used to penetrate tanks, could lead to long-term health damage.

"When I become ill, or possibly become ill later on, I want to have things in place," said Ramos, 41, of the 442nd Military Police Co. based in Orangeburg, N.Y.

Ramos and three others from his company took private tests earlier this month that suggested contact with depleted uranium may have contributed to the migraine headaches and other complications they suffered.

The Pentagon took further tests and said Thursday that the levels of uranium in soldiers' urine samples were normal, indicating their illnesses were not caused by exposure to the metal.

"People should be assured that this substance, this depleted uranium, does not pose a major risk for their health," said Dr. William Winkenwerder, the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs

Depleted uranium is the hard, heavy metal created as a byproduct of enriching uranium for nuclear reactor fuel or weapons material. It is about 40 percent less radioactive than natural uranium, said Dr. Michael Kilpatrick, deputy director of the Defense Department's Deployment Health Support Directorate.

The U.S. military uses the metal in rounds fired by M1 Abrams tanks and A-10 attack jets to penetrate tank armor - a practice that has been criticized for causing unnecessary risks to soldiers and civilians.

"As long as this is exterior to your body, you're not at any risk and the potential of internalizing it from the environment is extremely small," Kilpatrick said.

Most studies have indicated that depleted uranium exposure will not harm soldiers. But a 2002 study by Britain's Royal Society said soldiers who ingest or inhale enough depleted uranium could suffer kidney damage. It cautioned that there were too many uncertainties in the study to draw reliable conclusions.

About 1,000 soldiers returning from Iraq have been tested for exposure to the metal. Of those, three showed unhealthy levels in urine samples. All three had fragments embedded in their bodies, Kilpatrick said.

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Soldiers must choose to take a test for depleted uranium. All members of the 442nd will be able to take one if they ask, Kilpatrick said. Twenty-seven members of the unit have been tested so far.

The Pentagon is monitoring a group of 70 veterans from the first Gulf War who have pieces of depleted uranium embedded in their bodies. Kilpatrick said none of them has shown health problems related to depleted uranium.

Charles Sheehan-Miles, executive director of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute and a Gulf War veteran, said the military should test all soldiers returning from Iraq to determine whether fears about the metal are valid.

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## TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES

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The Associated Press

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April 26, 2004

### **More Than 300 Turn Out to Greet Motorcade Being Fallen Soldier Home**

Dateline: Valentine, Neb.

More than 300 people turned out late Friday to greet a motorcade bringing home a soldier killed in Iraq.

The motorcade transporting the body of Sgt. Dennis Morgan, 22, to Valentine included the Nebraska State Patrol, South Dakota Highway Patrol, a military escort and his family.

The motorcade was greeted around 10:45 p.m. CDT. People along the route held American flags, candles and signs reading "Welcome home, Dennis," "We love you," and "My hero."

A memorial service will be held at 7 p.m. CDT Monday at the **National Guard** Armory in Winner, S.D. The funeral will be 10 a.m. Tuesday in Valentine, with burial will follow at Black Hills National Cemetery in Sturgis, S.D.

Morgan died April 17 when a roadside bomb exploded as a military convoy passed. He was manning an automatic weapon on an armored personnel carrier and was hit by shrapnel.

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The Associated Press

April 27, 2004

### **Fifth Arkansas Soldier Who Died in Roadside Bombing Identified**

By David Hammer, Associated Press Writer

A fifth Arkansas soldier who died in a pair of weekend attacks has been identified as Spc. Kenneth A. Melton of Batesville, who was killed when a roadside bomb detonated near Sadr City.

Melton, 30, was traveling as part of a protection team with battalion leaders when the bomb exploded, according to Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reporter Amy Schlesing, who is embedded with the brigade, stationed at Camp Cooke, Iraq.

The bomb exploded about 9:30 a.m. in a Baghdad intersection where several explosive devices have been detonated since the occupation began.

Melton was one of five Arkansas soldiers who died over the weekend. The other four were killed after a rocket attack hit the base of Arkansas' 39th Infantry Brigade in Taji, Iraq, just north of Baghdad.

The soldiers who died Saturday are Capt. Arthur "Bo" Felder, 36, of Lewisville; Chief Warrant Officer Patrick W. Kordsmeier, 49, of North Little Rock; Staff Sgt. Stacey C. Brandon, 35, of Hazen; and Staff Sgt. Billy Joe Orton, 41, of Humnoke.

Kordsmeier was trying to help other wounded soldiers from the Arkansas brigade, his daughter Jennifer Kordsmeier-Legate said. She said her father, "died helping his friends, which was very appropriate for the type of man he was. We're just very proud of him."

Kordsmeier-Legate said an Army casualty officer told her and her brothers, Jason and David, that their father was tending to soldiers injured in the first blast when he was killed by a second attack.

"My dad ... said, in some way, he hoped to help free the Iraqi people," Kordsmeier-Legate said. "He was there for a higher purpose. Unfortunately, there's evil in the world. He taught me that's just how life is. He wouldn't hold a grudge because of what happened."

Kordsmeier was born in Little Rock and attended Little Rock Catholic High School before enlisting at age 17. In Iraq, he was in charge of keeping track of military supplies and issuing weapons and equipment to soldiers, Legate said.

Felder had served in the **National Guard** since 1986, the year after he graduated from Lewisville High School. He attended Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia and later transferred to East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas.

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Felder's mother, Cheryl Stuart, said Felder never let on he was in danger.

"He would say that he was safe behind his desk," Stuart told the Banner-News of Magnolia on Monday. "You would have thought he was calling from Little Rock."

He is survived by his ex-wife, Brenda Felder, and their two children, Jaelun, 8, and Amari, 4.

Brandon was born in Kingsland and recently lived in White Hall until he and his wife, April, moved to Hazen, the home base of the 39th Infantry Brigade. Frank Lightfoot of White Hall, a family friend, said Brandon was a prison guard for the Arkansas Department of Correction and later worked at the federal prison in Forrest City.

"He was a very outstanding young man whose loss will affect a lot of people," Lightfoot said. "He was one of the young people you could admire."

Orton's mother, Dorothy, told Little Rock television station KTHV that her son used to make cabinets and work on her house.

"What I'm going to miss the most is him coming in the house," she said. "I won't see him no more - he's gone."

Westbrook Funeral Home in Hazen is making funeral arrangements for both Brandon and Orton, although dates and times have not been set.

Two 57mm rockets slammed into the base at around 5:30 a.m. Saturday, Air Force Lt. Col. Sam Hudspath told The Associated Press. The base is home to the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division, served by 3,000 members from the 47 Arkansas units of the 39th.

In Saturday's attack at Camp Cooke, at least seven soldiers were wounded, three critically.

Chicago Tribune

April 30, 2004 Friday

### **Marine Was Moved By the Poor of Iraq; Green Beret, 45, Delayed Retiring**

By Gina Kim, Tribune staff reporter.

Marine Lance Cpl. James A. Casper learned early that you must earn what you have. At 5, he raked leaves and picked up garbage in his neighborhood to earn the money so he could buy Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

He worked all his life, baling hay, building fences, mowing yards, washing cars and then getting a job at a Wal-Mart so he could buy a car, a customized chrome and brushed-aluminum truck and a 1 1/2-acre piece of property.

So when Casper saw the poor of Iraq begging for food, he was deeply disturbed, said his mother, Darlene Mitchell.

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"Those people over there, they're just stuck. They can't work for it," his mother said. "That's what he was fighting for, the poor people in Iraq."

Casper, 20, of Coolidge, Texas, died March 25 in a non-combat incident in Al Asad during his second tour in Iraq. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force.

Casper enlisted in the Marines as a way to pay for college, his mother said. After spending six months in Iraq last year, he stayed another month to help pack up so other Marines could return home to their wives and kids, his mother said.

Army Master Sgt. Richard L. Ferguson could have retired twice during his 28-year career in the military that included stints in 27 countries. But he passed it up because he felt he still had work to do.

"He just wanted to help and that's why he was there," said his father, Lee.

Holmes, 27, of North Berwick, Maine, missed much of his son's infancy after he was activated in the **Army National Guard's** 744th Transportation Company in December and sent to Iraq in March. Holmes was killed when his truck fell off a bridge after a makeshift bomb exploded March 29 near Balad.

Raised by his grandparents, Holmes enlisted in the Army soon after high school graduation, following in the footsteps of his father and other male relatives. He spent 4 1/2 years in Texas and Colorado and returned to Maine in 1999 and joined the National Guard.

He was reluctant to leave his young son and wife but felt obligated, his wife said. A week before his death, he told his wife about the pressures of service in Iraq.

"He said you take all the stress you've ever had in your whole life and put that into one day, every day," his wife said. "You're always looking over your shoulder and being worried."

Ferguson, 45, of Conway, N.H., died March 30, during his fourth tour in Iraq, when his Humvee rolled over in Somara. A Green Beret, he was assigned to the Army's 10th Special Forces Group.

A bright child who hated homework, he dropped out of school his junior year in high school after a teacher told him he wouldn't amount to anything, his father said. He joined the **Army National Guard** at 17 and switched to the Army and soon became a Green Beret.

He became an expert in blowing up bridges, his father said.

He is survived by his wife, Marianne, their three sons and a daughter from a previous marriage.

The red hair, mannerisms and looks of Army Spc. Jeremiah J. Holmes are manifested in his 1-year-old son, Kaleb.

"I'd find them sleeping on the couch together. They were like twins," said his wife, Kim. "They'd be sleeping the same way, mouths open."

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Portland Press Herald (Maine)

May 2, 2004 Sunday, Final Edition

### **Emotional Service Pays Tribute to Gelineau**

*The Maine Army National Guardsman was killed 12 days ago when insurgents attacked his convoy in Mosul, Iraq.*

By Kevin Wack Staff Writer

Lavinia Gelineau rested her head on her husband's flag-draped coffin. Then she gazed at, kissed and gently touched his framed photograph.

Among many sad moments at Saturday's memorial service for Sgt. Christopher D. Gelineau, nothing was more touching than the composed grace and eloquence of the wife who loved him.

Gelineau, a member of the **Maine Army National Guard's** 133rd Engineer Battalion, was killed 12 days ago when Iraqi insurgents ambushed his convoy in Mosul.

The 23-year-old college senior was the unit's first combat casualty since World War II, and many uniformed guard members were among hundreds of mourners on hand for the 90-minute service on the University of Southern Maine's Portland campus.

Gelineau, who died with the rank of specialist, was promoted to sergeant posthumously. And Brig. Gen. John W. "Bill" Libby, head of the Maine Army **National Guard**, awarded him both the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.

Gelineau, who grew up in Vermont, met his wife at USM three years ago. The two were married last May in her native country, Romania.

On Valentine's Day, the newlyweds met up at Fort Drum in New York, where Gelineau assured her they would see each other again. And he gave her a pink teddy bear that she embraced as she spoke at the memorial service.

"I haven't cried for three days, and you must be holding me, must be supporting me, because I used to cry every time that an ambulance went by," Lavinia Gelineau said.

The two were hopeless lovers, she said, kissing before and after every class at USM.

"You showed me what perfect love was when other people could not even dream of true love," she said. "I used to call you my sweet American pie. You used to call me your sweet Romanian chocolate."

"I traveled half the world to meet you, and I found you," she said. "You must be carrying me now because my heart is very light."

Lavinia Gelineau remembered how the couple planned to avoid the bustle of modern American life enough to eat three meals together each day. And she recalled how they talked about choosing a song that would be their own. She wanted it to be a love song, but he knew how to play only one song on his guitar, and it was a sad one.

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Before the crowded gymnasium, Lavinia Gelineau's voice trembled as she played the song, "Right Here Waiting" by Richard Marx, while mourners dabbed their eyes.

Earlier, **Maine National Guard** Chaplain Andrew Gibson spoke about Gelineau's high standards as a guardsman. He said Gelineau had been pursuing - on his own time - ways to increase the efficiency of convoys in Iraq.

The idea - made poignant because of how Gelineau died - was that increased efficiency would reduce the number of convoys, making soldiers less vulnerable to attack, Gibson said.

Other speakers included Gelineau's mother, Victoria Chicoine, and an uncle.

Friends and relatives wore buttons with the slain soldier's photo and the words:

"Chris Gelineau Always in our Hearts." Others pinned yellow ribbons to their lapels.

Gov. John Baldacci presented Lavinia Gelineau a Maine flag that had flown over the state capitol, and U.S. Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins also gave their condolences.

At the end of the memorial service, six soldiers wheeled the coffin out of the gymnasium. Lavinia Gelineau, trailing just behind, reached out and touched it again.

Following the service, Gelineau was buried with full military honors at Evergreen Cemetery in Portland.

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Philadelphia Daily News

May 3, 2004

### **Rites Set for Sgt. Sherwood Baker**

Services will be tomorrow for Pennsylvania Army **National Guard** Sgt. Sherwood R. Baker, a Philadelphia native who was killed in action in Baghdad last week. He was 30 years old and a devoted husband, father and caseworker for mentally handicapped people.

Baker lived with his wife and son in Plymouth, Pa., near Wilkes-Barre. He was sent to Iraq March 8 with his **National Guard** unit, the 1st Battalion, 109th Field Artillery in Wilkes-Barre.

He was one of two American soldiers killed in a Baghdad building explosion on April 26.

His mother, Celeste Zappala, is a noted peace activist in Philadelphia.

As a child, Baker lived in Mount Airy and graduated from Roman Catholic High School.

Later, he earned a degree in early childhood education from Kings College, in Wilkes-Barre.

He enlisted in the Army **National Guard** seven years ago.

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In addition to his mother, who is director of the Mayor's Commission on Services to the Aging, he is survived by his wife, Debra; their son, James-Dante Raphael Baker, 9; his father, Al Zappala, a retired federal worker; two brothers, Dante Zappala, of Los Angeles, and Raphael Zappala, of Philadelphia. A viewing will be today at 4 p.m. at the Kings College gym in Wilkes-Barre. Services will be tomorrow at First United Methodist Church of Wilkes-Barre, 47 N. Franklin St., at 12:30 p.m. Burial will follow. A memorial service in Philadelphia will be at 7 p.m. on Wednesday at First United Methodist Church of Germantown, 6023 Germantown Ave. Contributions may be made to the James-Dante Baker Fund, c/o Mellon Bank, David Rowe, 1735 Market St., 3rd Floor, Philadelphia, PA, 19103.

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## GENERAL

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### **Congress, Nation Designate Military Appreciation Month**

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By Gene Harper

American Forces Press Service

Washington, April 30, 2004 – Both chambers of the U.S. Congress have adopted a resolution calling for Americans to recognize and honor U.S. service members during May's National Military Appreciation Month.

Virginia Rep. Tom Davis, along with 16 cosponsors, introduced Concurrent Resolution No. 328 in the House in November. The Senate agreed to it without amendment and by unanimous consent April 26.

The resolution states that the House, with the Senate concurring, "supports the goals and objectives of a National Military Appreciation Month." It also "urges the president to issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States, localities, organizations and media to annually observe" the month "with appropriate ceremonies and activities. Finally, the resolution urges the White House Commission on Remembrance to "work to support the goals and objectives" of the month.

The Senate first passed a resolution in 1999 designating National Military Appreciation Month. That declaration summoned U.S. citizens to observe the month "in a symbol of unity, ... to honor the current and former members of the armed forces, including those who have died in the pursuit of freedom and peace."

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Traditionally, May has focused on the military in many ways. For example, Public Service Recognition Week, celebrated the first full Monday through Sunday in May since 1985, recognizes the roles of public servants, including the military, at local, state, regional and federal levels. As a part of PSRW, communities across America showcase military equipment and service members from U.S. installations. The largest PSRW event takes place on Washington's National Mall, where more than 100 federal agencies, including the military services, put their activities, people and equipment on public display. This year's mall event is May 6-9.

Armed Forces Day, created in 1949, is an annual event held on the third Saturday in May, with activities at U.S. military bases around the world. This year's celebration occurs May 15.

The month culminates with Memorial Day, a federal holiday on the last Monday in May. The day, dating from the Civil War era, traditionally has marked recognition of those who have died in service to the nation. Each year on Memorial Day, the White House Commission on Remembrance promotes one minute of silence at 3 p.m. local time to honor the military's fallen comrades and to pay tribute to the sacrifices by the nation's service members and veterans.

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Columbia (MO) Daily Tribune

### **Female Air Guardsman Awarded Bronze Star**

Published Sunday, May 2, 2004

ST. Joseph (AP) - An air-traffic controller from northwest Missouri is the first woman in the **Missouri Air National Guard** to receive the Bronze Star for her work in northern Iraq.

Master Sgt. Lettia Whitaker received the medal yesterday for establishing the first air-control service in northern Iraq that supported about 4,800 combat sorties.

Whitaker, of Gower, is part of the 241st Air Traffic Control Squadron. She was one of the first airmen on the ground at the Kirkuk Air Base.

Gen. Hal Hornburg praised Whitaker for developing explosive ordnance disposal procedures at the Kirkuk airbase. She also supervised covert flight operations using tactical radios and night-vision goggles.

Yesterday's award ceremony also honored other personnel who have returned from Iraqi service.

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### **DOD Launches Expanded Communications For Servicemembers**

The Department of Defense announced today that it is expanding its internal communications efforts with two initiatives during National Military Appreciation Month in May 2004. An electronic version of the "Stars and Stripes" newspaper will be available for downloading at no cost beginning on May 1, while the Pentagon Channel, the department's news and information television service, will become available to all U.S. military installations on May 14.

Making the electronic "Stars and Stripes" available world-wide allows servicemembers to view exact replica copies of the newspaper's European, Pacific and Mideast editions, providing timely theater news and information for and about deployed forces. For the first time,

servicemembers in the United States have access to this online newspaper, where the hardcopy newspaper is not printed.

The electronic version of the newspaper is available online at <http://estripes.osd.mil>.

The Pentagon Channel will begin its expanded service with a live broadcast from the May 14 Armed Forces Day opening ceremony at Andrews Air Force Base, Md. A portion of the live coverage will include remarks by senior military and civilian leadership.

The Pentagon Channel's daily programming will strengthen DoD's commitment to keeping America's 2.6 million active duty, National Guard and Reserve servicemembers the best informed military in the world. Previously available only in the Pentagon and through the American Forces Radio and Television Service for servicemembers assigned overseas, the Pentagon Channel now will also be distributed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to military installations in all 50 states via a domestic satellite. DoD is also offering the Pentagon Channel to all cable and satellite providers.

Information on how to receive the Pentagon Channel via satellite, cable or the worldwide web is at <http://pentagonchannel.mil>.

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