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**National Guard Family Program Online
Communities for families and youth:**

<http://www.guardfamily.org/>
<http://www.guardfamilyyouth.org/>

TRICARE website for information on health benefits

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/>

**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://www.militarychild.org/index.cfm>

Militarystudent.org is a website that helps

<http://www.militarystudent.org>

military children with transition and deployment issues. It has some great features for kids, parents, special needs families, school educators, and more—even safe chat rooms for kids.

Disabled Soldiers Initiative (DS3)

<http://www.armyds3.org>

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.

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.ang.af.mil.

READINESS

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National Guard Training To 'Invade' Wolf Creek Facility

Wichita Journal

May 24, 2004

By Ken Vandruff

Approximately 200 **Kansas Army National Guard** troops on a training mission will move into the area surrounding the Wolf Creek Nuclear Generating Station starting June 5.

The training exercise gives soldiers of the 130th Field Artillery Brigade experience in protecting Wolf Creek if necessary, according to Joy Moser, director of public affairs for the Adjutant General's office.

For years, the **Kansas Guard** had two units designated as the primary units for Wolf Creek in case of an accident or to provide additional security.

Moser says one of those units is currently on active duty and the other is about to be activated. So this training exercise will give the **Guard** an additional unit to use at Wolf Creek.

The first day of the exercise will rehearse the state's emergency response plans for Wolf Creek. Moser says the remainder of the training will focus on anti-terrorism measures.

"They'll do nuclear, biological, chemical (training) and first aid," Moser says.

The public will notice checkpoints on the highways around Wolf Creek, which is located just north of Burlington in Coffey County. Moser says the brigade will also establish a base camp on the Wolf Creek grounds.

The training exercise will continue until June 10 when the soldiers will return to Fort Riley for the remainder of their annual training period.

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Army, Strapped For Manpower, May Tap Training Units For Combat Duty In Iraq

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San Francisco Chronicle

May 26, 2004

By Robert Burns, AP Military Writer

Washington (AP) -- In a sign of the Iraq war's strain on the U.S. military, the Army is planning to send into combat thousands of soldiers whose normal job is to play the role of the "enemy" at training ranges in California and Louisiana, defense officials said Tuesday.

The Pentagon also is considering adding yet another **National Guard** brigade, the 155th Separate Armored Brigade from Mississippi, to the mix of active-duty and reserve units designated for the next rotation of ground forces into Iraq this year and in early 2005, other Army officials said.

With nearly every other major combat unit either committed to or just returned from Iraq or Afghanistan, the Army is planning to call on two battalions and one engineer company -- about 2,500 soldiers -- from the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, which serves as a professional enemy force at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. The regiment last saw combat in the Vietnam War.

The Army boasts of the "tough and uncompromising standards" of the 11th Armored Cavalry, which it says makes it the premier maneuver unit in the Army and "the yardstick against which the rest of the Army measures itself."

Similarly, the 1st Battalion of the 509th Infantry, which acts as the Opfor, or opposition force, for light infantry and special operations training at Fort Polk, La., is being called to Iraq, according to two Army officials who discussed the matter on condition of anonymity.

The 509th Infantry has not seen combat since World War II, although five members of the unit served as "pathfinders," or advance scouts, during the 1991 Gulf War; two were killed and one was taken prisoner.

Both the National Training Center and Fort Polk's Joint Readiness Training Center will remain open, the officials said, with **National Guard** soldiers expected to fill in for the units going to Iraq.

The Navy said Tuesday that it is sending a second aircraft carrier, the USS John C. Stennis, into the western Pacific, apparently to compensate in part for the planned deployment to Iraq this summer of an Army combat brigade based in South Korea.

The Stennis, which left its San Diego home port Monday, will participate in an exercise off Alaska in June and then join the USS Kitty Hawk, which is permanently based in

Japan, in the western Pacific.

The next U.S. troop rotation in Iraq will kick off this summer, not long after the June 30 turnover of partial political control to an interim Iraqi government and a coinciding change in the U.S. military command structure in Iraq.

Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, who has been the top commander in Iraq since May 2003, is to be replaced this summer by a four-star general, most likely Gen. George W. Casey, officials said.

The move is part of a restructuring of the U.S. command in Iraq. The idea is to have a four-star there to focus on the bigger picture, including working with U.S. and Iraqi political authorities, while a lieutenant general handles the day-to-day command of combat.

Although the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse happened on his watch, Sanchez's departure is not related to that, said Larry Di Rita, chief spokesman for Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. Any suggestions to the contrary, he said, are "just wrong." Sanchez has testified to Congress that he was not aware of the abuse until it was reported to him in January.

Rumsfeld's original plan was to replace Sanchez this summer with Rumsfeld's senior military assistant, Lt. Gen. Bantz Craddock, and to nominate Sanchez for a fourth star and the command of U.S. Southern Command, a senior defense official said. Because of the prisoner abuse controversy, Rumsfeld decided it would take too long to get Sanchez confirmed by the Senate, the official said, and so decided on the noncontroversial Casey for the Iraq post, probably leaving Craddock for the Southern Command job.

Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, spokesman for the U.S. military in Baghdad, told reporters Tuesday that Sanchez's 5th Corps headquarters, of which he is the commander, left Iraq in February.

"We have always expected Gen. Sanchez to depart some time after the transfer of sovereignty," Kimmitt said. "My personal expectation was, like me, he would be departing in the July time period."

Casey would be an unusual choice for the top military post in Iraq, in part because he has served for less than a year in his present position as vice chief of staff, the No. 2 staff job in the Army.

In his 33-year Army career, Casey has never served in combat. During the final years of the Vietnam War he served with the 509th Infantry, based in Germany and later in Italy, and during the 1991 Gulf War he was in the Pentagon as special assistant to the Army chief of staff.

Prior to becoming the Army's vice chief of staff last October, Casey served as director of the Joint Staff.

President Bush praised Sanchez during an appearance before reporters in the Oval Office. "Rick Sanchez has done a fabulous job," he said as he met with a group of Iraqis. "He's been there for a long time. His service has been exemplary."

National Guard Will Be Ready If Disaster Strikes

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Biloxi Sun Herald

May 27, 2004 Thursday

By Patrick Peterson

Dateline: Gulfport

Though the Mississippi **National Guard** faces massive mobilizations this summer, its leaders are sure the Guard would still be able to mobilize and help South Mississippi if a major hurricane strikes.

"Both of our engineer battalions are back. We would have ample forces," said Lt. Col. Tim Powell, spokesman for the Mississippi **National Guard**.

About a tenth of the state's 10,000 Army Guardsmen are mobilized for service in Iraq. However, about 4,000 soldiers from armored and infantry units in the northern part of the state have been alerted they might be mobilized this summer.

Powell said that even if half the state's Guardsmen are mobilized, a portion of the remaining 5,000 could help in the event of a storm on the Coast.

While military bases have hurricane plans, Keesler Air Force Base and the Naval Construction Battalion Center at Gulfport do not normally provide troops to Harrison County during hurricanes. However, those troops could be called to help the county in a dire emergency, said a spokesman for the Harrison County Civil Defense Department.

"If the **National Guard** could not respond immediately, then we could go to Keesler or the Seabee base," said the spokesman. "With the military now, their resources are limited."

Hurricane Georges in 1998 was the last time the state **National Guard** was called on to help the Coast. The governor activated about 1,000 **National Guard** members. They patrolled Coast neighborhoods, directed traffic, rescued victims stranded by floodwaters and delivered vital equipment.

During the storm and its aftermath, soldiers delivered almost 40,000 meals to local residents huddled in shelters. The Guard units worked on the Coast for about seven days in 1998.

Despite the mobilizations, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency has not reduced its expectations of the state **National Guard's** role in a disaster.

"We're aware there are a lot of units deployed, but the Guard has not expressed to us a concern in that area," MEMA spokesman Amy Carruth said.

When a hurricane threatens South Mississippi, the **National Guard** can be vital to protecting lives and property.

"They assist in evacuating people. They have trucks that are tall enough for rescue missions in flooded areas. And they help with securing areas, to keep people from looting and stealing," Carruth said.

"They also help with traffic control. The MP units can help with escorting people into neighborhoods."

During a major disaster, state officers from the Department of Transportation, the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks and the Department of Public Safety could be called to the Coast from other regions of the state.

"They exhaust their resources and we exhaust our resources, then you ask for federal resources," Carruth said.

Carruth said MEMA officials trust that the state **National Guard** will be ready in case of a national disaster.

"We really don't keep up with a count of who's activated," she said. "We'll just have to deal with the situation when it comes up."

Powell said that if additional Guard units are mobilized this summer and sent to Iraq, the Guard would make an alternate plan so it can supply troops in case of a hurricane.

"We've deployed forward to the Coast many times," said Powell. "We have a state emergency plan in place."

Remaining Guard units would fill the place of any mobilized unit that would normally be called up for hurricane duty.

Said Powell, "If that unit were deployed, it would just be replaced by another."

Patrick Peterson can be reached at 896-2343 or at pfpeterson@sunherald.com

DEPLOYMENT

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National Guard Duty Volunteers To Keep Peace In Kosovo

The Toledo Blade, OH

May 26, 2004

Bowling Green - Ten Ohio **Army National Guard** soldiers from a Bowling Green unit - who didn't have to go - volunteered to leave Sunday for a peacekeeping mission that eventually will take them to Kosovo.

They are among 950 Ohio Army National Guard soldiers to be deployed to Kosovo with formal send-off ceremonies next week, including 65 members of a Sandusky-based unit, which has its send-off June 5. It is the largest group for the Ohio Guard ever sent to Kosovo in southern Serbia, Guard spokesman James A. Sims II said.

Ohio already has 2,700 **National Guard** soldiers and airmen deployed - the most since World War II - to Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Europe, and local air bases, Mr. Sims said. That's 18 percent of Ohio's approximately 15,000 **National Guardsmen**.

In Kosovo, the 10 Bowling Green unit volunteers, all but one of whom are from

northwest Ohio, will be among thousands of soldiers assigned to security duties. They will be part of the 1-148th Infantry, based in Xenia.

Like the Sandusky unit of 65 soldiers in Troop C, 2-107th Cavalry, which includes a few members from as far away as Youngstown, Cincinnati, and Indiana, and the Headquarters and Headquarters Company 1-148th Infantry Battalion, based in Lima, Ohio, they are part of the 37th Armor Brigade.

Soldiers are to leave next week for Camp Atterbury near Indianapolis, go on to Germany in mid-July for additional training or duties, and arrive in Kosovo in September.

They are to be away from home for a year to 18 months. It is unlikely that they would be sent from Kosovo to Iraq, nor are they directly replacing a unit now in Kosovo that is being sent to Iraq, Mr. Sims said.

The United States became involved in Kosovo in the spring of 1999 when NATO started bombing Yugoslavia in an attempt to stop it from driving ethnic Albanians out of the Kosovo region. A peace accord was reached late that spring and NATO peacekeeping troops have been there ever since.

Send-off ceremonies for local guardsmen are to begin Sunday at 3:30 p.m. at the Apollo Career Center, Lima, for the Lima-based group and at 5 p.m. at Xenia High School in southwest Ohio for the Bowling Green unit volunteers and their Xenia-based group.

The Sandusky-based group's ceremony will be at 9 a.m. June 5 at the Sandusky AMVETS post, 307 Putnam St.

Army May Tap Into More Fort Polk Troops

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By Robert Burns/AP Military Writer

Leesville Daily Leader, Leesville, LA

Washington (AP) -- In a sign of the Iraq war's strain on the U.S. military, the Army is planning to send into combat thousands of soldiers whose normal job is to play the role of the "enemy" at training ranges in California and Louisiana, defense officials said Tuesday.

The Pentagon also is considering adding yet another **National Guard** brigade, the 155th Separate Armored Brigade from **Mississippi**, to the mix of active-duty and reserve units designated for the next rotation of ground forces into Iraq this year and in early 2005, other Army officials said.

With nearly every other major combat unit either committed to or just returned from Iraq or Afghanistan, the Army is planning to call on two battalions and one engineer company -- about 2,500 soldiers -- from the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, which serves as a professional enemy force in training other units at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. The regiment last saw combat in the Vietnam War.

The Army boasts of the "tough and uncompromising standards" of the 11th Armored Cavalry, which it says makes it the premier maneuver unit in the Army and "the yardstick

against which the rest of the Army measures itself."

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The move is part of a restructuring of the U.S. military command in Iraq. The idea is to have a four-star there to focus on the bigger picture, including working with U.S. and Iraqi political authorities, while a lieutenant general handles the day-to-day command of combat.

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Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, spokesman for the U.S. military in Baghdad, told reporters Tuesday that Sanchez's 5th Corps headquarters, of which he is the commander, left Iraq in February.

"We have always expected Gen. Sanchez to depart some time after the transfer of sovereignty," Kimmitt said. "My personal expectation was, like me, he would be departing in the July time period." He added that he had heard nothing official from the Army on the timing.

Casey would be an unusual choice for the top military post in Iraq, in part because he has served for less than a year in his present position as vice chief of staff, the No. 2 staff job

in the Army.

In his 33-year Army career, Casey has never served in combat. During the final years of the Vietnam War he served with the 509th Infantry, based in Germany and later in Italy, and during the 1991 Gulf War he was in the Pentagon as special assistant to the Army chief of staff.

Prior to becoming the Army's vice chief of staff last October, Casey served as director of the Joint Staff.

Di Rita said no final decisions had been made on who will replace Sanchez and what job Sanchez might have next.

President Bush praised Sanchez during an appearance before reporters in the Oval Office. "Rick Sanchez has done a fabulous job," he said as he met with a group of Iraqis. "He's been there for a long time. His service has been exemplary."

Eastern Oregon Soldiers Get The Call

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The Associated Press

May 30, 2004, Sunday

Ontario, Ore.

More than 300 members of the Oregon Army **National Guard** will be mobilized and sent to Texas, where they'll train before heading to Iraq.

The soldiers are mostly from eastern Oregon and part of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry, Oregon Army **National Guard**.

The 3rd Battalion consists of soldiers from The Dalles, Hermiston, Pendleton, La Grande, Baker City and Ontario.

The battalion will arrive at Fort Bliss in early July to begin training for a deployment to Iraq later this year.

The 3rd Battalion is part of Idaho's 116th Cavalry Brigade. The Army defines the brigade's role as "assisting civil authorities, foreign and domestic, as they prepare for or respond to crises and relieve suffering."

The commander of eastern Oregon's 3rd Battalion, Lt. Col. Dan McCabe, told the Argus Observer newspaper that the mobilization order is not a surprise.

"We've been expecting it and we are prepared to begin the initial process to reach our first training site at Fort Bliss," he said.

Mississippi Air National Guard's 186th Air Refueling Wing Headed to Iraq

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Associated Press

May 29, 2004, Saturday

Meridian, Miss.

About 90 members of the Mississippi Air **National Guard's** 186th Air Refueling Wing will deploy for Iraq this week.

They are part of more than 270 members of the 186th headed to Iraq in phases over the next month, said Maj. Brad Crawford, a spokesman for the unit.

The group will depart from Meridian's Key Field.

Tours of duty will range from 14 days to 60 days, depending on each guardsman's responsibilities within the unit.

"This deployment is part of a normal rotation that comes up at a particular time and the members have known that they were leaving for quite some time," Crawford said.

Crawford said the troops will leave in groups of 30 on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The troops are a combination of full-time and part-time guardsmen.

An advance team of 30 members left for Iraq on Tuesday.

The 186th will support Operation Iraqi Freedom's flying missions. Crawford said it will be a good opportunity for members to use their training in real-world conditions.

"They are going to help protect our national security and they are happy to be able to do it," Crawford said.

Full Mobilization Announced for Cavalry Brigade

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Associated Press

May 29, 2004, Saturday

By Dan Gallagher

Boise, Idaho

A full mobilization of the Army **National Guard's** 116th Cavalry Brigade was announced Saturday, including the eventual shift of 2,000 Idaho members to Iraq, Gov. Dirk Kempthorne said.

It's the most extensive call-up of Idaho's **National Guard** for overseas military deployment in the state's history.

"This is an operation other than war. It's an operation of stability and support," Guard spokesman Lt. Col. Tim Marsano said. "It's not the kind of thing we're seeing on the television in places like Fallujah."

The Army defines the brigade's role as "assisting civil authorities, foreign and domestic, as they prepare for or respond to crises and relieve suffering."

"They know they will be doing historic work in a place that desperately needs their help," Kempthorne said. "It's possible these men and women could be away from home for up

to two years."

An initial, partial mobilization order came on May 8. Previously, military officials expected 3,500 brigade members to travel, including 2,600 Idaho residents. The full order now involves 4,300 citizen soldiers from seven states, including 2,000 from Idaho.

The other states include Oregon, Utah, Montana, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The North Dakota soldiers are members of F Battery of the 188th Air Defense Artillery unit, based in Grand Forks, Guard spokesman Rob Keller said. The unit was put on alert March 1.

Keller did not immediately know when the North Dakota soldiers would be leaving.

The change in numbers reflects new national requirements and a clarification of the eligibility for the brigade's soldiers, who have been on federal active duty to this point, Marsano said.

The initial wave of the soldiers will mobilize June 7 and travel to Fort Bliss, Texas, by June 10 for the next level of training. The brigade then will undergo a mission readiness exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La.

It was scheduled to serve in Iraq for 12 months. While the soldiers are expected to be away from home for 18 months, the mobilization could last up to two years

REUNION

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Murfreesboro Guard Unit Returns

The Associated Press

May 26, 2004

Dateline: Fort Campbell, Ky.

A C5A Galaxy plane carrying 65 members of a Tennessee **National Guard** unit landed at Fort Campbell at dawn Wednesday.

A second plane with another 65 members of the 269th Military Police Company was expected in early afternoon. The unit is based in Murfreesboro and has been at Fort Campbell, then in Iraq since December 2002.

"They've just landed and I'm looking at the plane right now," said Jim Hinnant, public information officer at Fort Campbell at 5:25 a.m., CDT, as the huge transport taxied after landing.

Judy Roberts told The Daily News Journal of Murfreesboro this week the moment her husband, Raymond Roberts, again touched U.S. soil would rival child birth in their family's history.

"They've been over there a very long time," Judy Roberts said.

All Members of Florida National Guard Unit Make it Home Alive

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Associated Press

May 31, 2004, Monday

North Miami, Fla.

War sent 126 soldiers from a local Florida **National Guard** company to Ramadi, Iraq, a place one described as "the worst place on earth." But after 14 months of rocket attacks, ambushes and explosions, they all made it back to South Florida.

Part of the Guard's 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, Charlie Company came home with 23 Purple Hearts, more than any other company in the 12,000-member state military force. The battalion didn't have a single combat death.

The North Miami-based company had one man absent when it returned in March: Sgt. Camilo Mejia, who was convicted this month of desertion.

Charlie Company was posted to a remote scrap yard in Ramadi, daily targets of a guerrilla network that made bombs from cell phones and toy cars. They had to keep the peace, search vehicles and houses, confiscate weapons, get the infrastructure working and hire and train police.

Ramadi has more residents than Miami, packed into a smaller geographical area. The guardsmen found it a hot, dusty, smelly city of open sewer lines and strewn garbage, a place where fruit merchants and bomb-makers were often the same.

"If hell physically exists, if there is in fact a hell . . . it is Ramadi," said Edouard Gluck, a battalion photographer. "It's the worst place I've ever been to on the face of the earth, and I've been to a lot of places."

Still, the 1st Battalion and Charlie Company were known for their good luck.

On June 14, a bullet penetrated the flak jacket of Spc. James Bissett as he sat in the rear of a vehicle. It hit his cross and his dog tag and went no farther. The impact cracked Bissett's sternum. He was the first in Charlie Company to earn a Purple Heart.

An explosion at one intersection a month later was one of the company's worst experiences. Spc. Ramiro Mayorga lost several fingers. Sgt. Jason Recio lost a leg below the knee. Sgt. Jose Mateo took shrapnel to the left knee, left arm and head and lost hearing in both ears.

The engagement changed the way Charlie Company looked at the war.

"But that was the first time we had very major injuries," said Spc. Esteban Lora, a Miami Dade College student. "The whole 'I'm Superman' mentality, 'I'm invincible,' that went away."

The last man from Charlie Company to be wounded in battle, on Feb. 19, was its leader. Capt. Tad Warfel was searching a hospital with his men when someone hurled a grenade from an upper floor. The blast caught him in the right arm.

When the company flew home, it was down from 126 men to 95, mostly because of injuries.

Mateo, a former auto technician with shrapnel up and down his left side and bulging discs in his neck, is battling depression and post-traumatic stress.

"It's OK," Mateo said. "I'm alive, you know? We're all alive."

BENEFITS

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Senators Want Military Health Insurance Extended To Guard members, Reservists

The Associated Press

May 24, 2004

By William C. Mann

Washington — Members of the **National Guard** and Reserves should have military health insurance partly because their lack of insurance makes one-fourth of them unable to answer the call when their units are mobilized for service in Iraq, two lawmakers said Sunday.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, who is sponsoring insurance legislation with Sen. Hillary Clinton and others, said it would “make sure that every Guard and Reserve member becomes a member of the military health care system just like an active-duty person and family.”

“If you join the Guard and Reserves, you are being asked to do more things than ever in the history in the country,” Graham, R-S.C., told “Fox News Sunday.”

But, he said, “One in four people called ... are unable to go on active duty because of health care problems.”

Graham and Clinton, D-N.Y., pledged to push hard for the legislation despite opposition from the Bush administration and Pentagon generals.

Clinton said the 25 percent unfit rate is occurring because the reservists worked in jobs without health insurance and made too little money to provide it for themselves.

“At a certain point, you say to yourself, if you’re going to shift all of this responsibility onto our Guard and Reserve members, then don’t we want to invest in them so that they can be ready when they’re called?” Clinton asked.

Graham said putting reserves insurance into law would help recruiting, readiness and retention.

“It’s about \$4 billion over five years. They have earned it. They need it,” Graham said. “And we’re going to fight for it in a bipartisan way.”

Last year’s \$87 billion law to finance continued military operations and reconstruction in Iraq was amended to include military health care for activated guardsmen and reservists. The new legislation would extend the protection to all members of the Reserves and

National Guard.

Pay Issue Concerns For Some Oklahoma National Guard Members

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KOTV, OK

May 24, 2004

Some **Oklahoma National Guardsmen** want to know why they haven't been paid all the wages Congress approved for active-duty soldiers.

National Guard Specialist Bryan Akins left his wife and son in Stillwater to serve at Fort Polk, Louisiana. During his year long deployment, Bryan says he and 140 other soldiers received base pay.

He says he did not get a \$28 a day per diem for food and living expenses. "We're not complaining about getting deployed at all. Every one of us signed up for that. What the problems is, we got down there and we're supposed to get this per diem and these families didn't. Now you got people who are late on their mortgage!"

The News on 6 tried to contact officials at Fort Polk, but no one has returned our calls.

US Senator Jim Inhofe and Congressman Frank Lucas say they're investigating the matter.

DOD Begins TRICARE Retail Pharmacy Program June 1

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United States Department of Defense News Release

May 28, 2004

The Department of Defense announced today that on June 1, 2004, the new Tricare Retail Pharmacy (TRRx) contract takes effect for Tricare beneficiaries located in the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. The contract, awarded last year to Express Scripts Inc. of Maryland Heights, Mo., has approximately 53,000 civilian pharmacies in the nationwide network. In the past, the Tricare regional managed care support contractors provided retail pharmacy services and most beneficiaries should not notice the change in services with the new contract. To use the new retail pharmacy program, as with all other DoD health programs, beneficiaries must be eligible and enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System or DEERS.

"The new single contract integrates the previous regional contracts into one uniform retail pharmacy benefit across all Tricare regions," said Army Col. William Davies, director, DoD pharmacy programs.

The TRRx program has many new enhancements. Pharmacy claims processing is now

centralized and beneficiaries no longer have to mail pharmacy claims to multiple sites for processing or call various telephone numbers to get assistance filling a prescription when using the retail network. Patient safety has also been enhanced by use of the Pharmacy Data Transaction Service to process all pharmacy claims, including paper claims.

For a single co-payment of \$3 for generic or \$9 for a brand-name prescription, eligible TRRx beneficiaries may continue to receive a 30-day supply of their prescription medication from the new network of retail pharmacies. To use this benefit, a written pharmacy prescription and a uniformed services identification card are required. Tricare beneficiaries who used a retail pharmacy last year will receive, by mail, a pharmacy identification card, a TRRx benefit guide and a letter listing the twelve network pharmacies close to their home.

The TRRx benefit is now portable. Beneficiaries traveling outside of their designated Tricare region who need to fill a prescription are no longer required to pay the full prescription price, or file a Tricare claim to get reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses when they use a Tricare retail network pharmacy. Pharmacy co-payments are the same in every location where the TRRx is available.

To locate a network pharmacy, beneficiaries may use the Tricare pharmacy locator service available on the Express Scripts Web site at <http://www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE>, or they may call (866) 363-8779 or, using the letters on the telephone keypad, spell (866) “DoD-TRRx.”

For eligible beneficiaries with other health insurance (OHI), Tricare pays after all other insurance plans have paid. To use Tricare as the secondary payer or to obtain reimbursement for their out-of-pocket pharmacy expenses, beneficiaries will need to submit a Tricare claim form (DD Form 2642) and a receipt for their prescription medication to Express Scripts for processing. If the medication under the beneficiary’s OHI is not a covered benefit or if the beneficiary’s prescription coverage has ended for the year, Tricare will pay as the primary insurance payer.

The TRRx benefit is not available for beneficiaries who reside or travel outside the U.S. or its territories. These beneficiaries are encouraged to use a military treatment facility, if available, or the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy program to fill their prescription medications. Express Scripts can mail prescription medications to any U.S. postal address or to an APO/FPO address. However, Express Scripts cannot send prescriptions to a private, foreign address. Prescriptions mailed to beneficiaries in overseas locations must be prescribed by providers who are licensed to practice in the United States.

A downloadable Tricare claim form is available on the Express Scripts Web site at <http://www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE> or on the Tricare Web site at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/claims>. Pharmacy claims filed with Express Scripts should be mailed to: Express Scripts, P. O. Box 66518, St. Louis, Mo., 63166-6518.

Beneficiaries residing in overseas locations, other than Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Island, do not have access to Tricare retail pharmacy networks. Therefore, they must pay for their prescription medications upfront and submit a claim with Tricare overseas claims processor to be reimbursed. For reimbursement rates or assistance processing a non-network overseas retail pharmacy claim, beneficiaries may contact the

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

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Iraq War Reserve Call-Ups Taxing Local Governments

Los Angeles Times

May 25, 2004

Los Angeles -- The deployment of more than 10,300 **California National Guard** members and military reservists has become a burden to state and local government coffers, forcing service cuts and unplanned spending on replacements or overtime.

From the California Highway Patrol down to the city of Carmel-by-the-Sea, all levels of government have been making up for lost personnel as their workers head overseas.

State agencies may be hit hardest by the loss of employees. They are required by California law to make up the difference between civilian and military pay, and continue to pay full benefits to deployed troops.

Controller Steve Westly estimates activated reservists cost the state an average of \$1,500 a month, with monthly differential payments ranging from \$5.25 to as much as \$4,757.

It's cost the state Corrections Department nearly \$2 million since July to replace prison guards on military leave. The agency has 148 employees on active duty.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has had more than 150 deputies called up for military duty since the 2001 terror attacks. Currently, 35 deputies are activated.

The California budget crisis worsens the situation for many agencies.

CHP Capt. Steve Beeuswaert said three patrol officers of the 106 in his Santa Ana office are now serving in Iraq.

"We just run short," he said. "With the budget situation, we can't hire anyone. We don't have reserves. It just means we have three less officers out on the road."

Most cities and counties offer some sort of supplementary compensation to troops, with no reimbursement from the federal government.

In Carmel-by-the-Sea, building maintenance specialist John Hanson recently left to begin a one-year tour in southern Iraq. His absence will force the city to spend an additional \$13,000 a year, mainly on hiring contractors to do his work, said city administrator Rich Guillen.

"We miss him," said Guillen. "In a small city like ours, everyone has to pull together to fill his shoes."

In San Diego County, the Poway school district has hired a temporary replacement for American history teacher Curtis Lewis, a **California National Guard** platoon leader

who left in April for Iraq.

The district continues to pay Lewis half his salary and full benefits, and estimates the extra cost during the teacher's one-year deployment will be about \$28,000.

But for Poway High Principal Scott Fisher, the cost goes beyond money.

"We don't even think about the financial part," Fisher said. "Curt was a top teacher on campus. When you take him away, you can't replace him immediately."

Reserves Make Sacrifices To Serve Country

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Redlands Daily Facts

May 23, 2004

By Andrew Moyle
Staff Writer

Sunday, May 23, 2004 - At any moment, Dr. Wendell Findley could get the call to serve overseas with his Montebello-stationed Army National Guard unit.

Getting the call could mean disaster for Dr. Findley's Pain Clinic, the Pomona medical office Findley owns and runs alone.

"It would be devastating," Findley said. "It's hard to say, but sometimes I think that the reservists and **National Guard** can be gone as much as 16 or 18 months. There have been other reservists that own their own businesses who have had to close down."

While the stakes for most employers of National Guard and Reserve members are not as high as Findley's, deployment can mean a strain on the resources of any business, offset only by the pride entailed by employer support and the skills reservists and Guard members bring to the production line, boardroom or medical office.

The number employers having to make the sacrifice of the reservists - often their best workers - for months on end is going up.

Last week the Army, Navy, and Air Force each reported increases in the number of reservists on active duty, while the Marine Corps reported a slight decrease.

The net result was 3,044 more reservists on active duty than the week before, according to a May 19 Department of Defense press release.

The total number currently on active duty for the **Army National Guard** and Army Reserve is 148,442; Naval Reserve 2,504; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 11,411; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,075; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 1,568, the release said.

That's almost 169,000 people who are no longer contributing to the economy in the traditional employer-employee sense.

And because reservists and members of the **National Guard** are more integrated into society than full-time soldiers, Marines and airmen, their deployment affects society and

the economy more deeply, said Tom Bullock, spokesman of the National Committee for Employer Support of Guard and Reserve.

"Here, we're affecting cities on a grand scale. It brings it home to the families, to the employers," Bullock said. "It has a big impact."

That impact can be seen even in the national employment picture.

"Once the reservists are called up, they're active military. They would no longer be counted in the civilian labor force," said Thomas Flournoy, spokesman for the California Employment Development Department. "If they were employed prior to being called up... they would reduce the number of individuals in the civilian labor force. As far as employers and payrolls, it's up to the employers as far as what they report to us."

As often as not, the vacant positions are then filled with temporary workers who will have to give up their jobs when the reservists return from duty.

Those temporary jobs have the effect of decreasing unemployment roles, Flournoy said.

When one of his mechanics was called up for active duty near the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Mike Scanlon, owner of Ontario's Certified Aviation Services, filled the man's spot with just such a temporary worker.

It was nothing Scanlon wasn't used to. The reservist was one of three working at Certified's operation at Ontario International Airport, and Scanlon was long used to rearranging schedules in an effort to make things work.

"Sometimes we go without (a replacement), sometimes we move things around," he said. "It is difficult. It's costly to retrain people, especially mechanics, but its part of the territory. It's my duty."

Not just duty, but law as well.

According to the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Act signed by President Clinton in 1994, employers get a raw fiscal deal in return for their patriotism.

When a reservist or **National Guard** member gets a call for mobilization, they aren't required to give any lead time notice before they have to ship out. Uniformed services members don't even have to provide their employers with a copy of their deployment orders.

Employers must also give benefits to uniformed services personnel similar to the benefits given to employees that are laid off or on some other kind of non-military leave, such as jury duty or educational time off.

The conditions that come with hiring a reservist or Guard member are no surprise to diligent business owners, Bullock said.

"Most of the employers are aware of the situation. They stand behind these young individuals they've seen fit to hire," he added.

In Scanlon's case, accepting the risks and extending benefits is entirely worth it.

"Aside from the background of the physical training, they come with a really strong work ethic," he said. "They're very reliable. They very rarely call in sick. You ask them to do something once and they do it."

Financially speaking, it's the government that benefits most from the National Guard and Reserves. When not deployed, reservists and Guard members cost the government one-third as much on average as a full-time soldier, Bullock said.

And right now, those discount fighters make up approximately 46 percent of the country's entire deployed fighting force, Bullock said.

Almost a quarter of the total California's National Guard and armed forces reserve units are currently deployed, a pittance compared to the 81 percent of Idaho's part-time uniformed services personnel not currently working their day jobs, Bullock added.

The potential of leaving his own day job and heading overseas hangs daily over Dr. Wendell Findley's head.

A former full-time Army medic, Findley will be ready if the call comes.

"You think about it, but there's not really much you can do to prepare," he said. "What can you do? The bills are still there, and there's not much you can do about that. They'll let us know if, and when, it's time to go."

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH AFTERMATH

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Members of National Guard Returning to Civilian Life

Associated Press

May 29, 2004, Saturday

Honolulu, Hawaii

The largest contingent of Hawaii Army **National Guard** soldiers to be deployed overseas since the Vietnam War returned to civilian life Friday after more than nine months on duty in Afghanistan.

Fifty-four members of Bravo Company, 193rd Aviation, returned to Hawaii earlier this month. Soldiers had been servicing helicopters in Kandahar since leaving Wheeler Army Air Field on Aug. 10.

Soldiers stood in their last formation Friday at Wheeler. Bravo Company commander Maj. Margaret Rains, a nurse practitioner at the Department of Veterans Affairs primary care outpatient clinic, said soldiers will be on military leave until the end of June.

On Friday, soldiers' thoughts were on their colleagues still serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"They are our close friends," said Sgt. Gilbert Pascua, 35, a member of the Hawaii Army **National Guard** for 14 years.

Bravo Company members who returned this month were replaced by another 60 aviators and mechanics who left Wheeler on May 5. About 200 members of the 193rd's other unit,

Charlie Company, have been in Balad, Iraq, since April 14.

Brig. Gen. Vern Miyagi, commander of the Hawaii Army **National Guard**, asked the formation of soldiers "to support the families of the other members of their unit still in Afghanistan and to pass on what you have learned to soldiers who will be going."

Officials had said Bravo Company made up the largest unit of Army citizen soldiers from Hawaii to be mobilized overseas since the 29th Infantry Brigade was sent to Vietnam in 1968.

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROS

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Military Families Mourn Daughters

Washington Post

May 26, 2004

20 Female Service Members Have Been Killed in Iraq

By Darryl Fears, Washington Post Staff Writer

El Paso -- When Sgt. Isela Rubalcava's body arrived at the airport from Iraq, her mother wailed like a child. "I don't want to see her like this," Maria Isela Rubalcava cried out in Spanish, a priest at the scene said. "Why, Isela, why? Get up, get up! Let's go home."

By the time a funeral Mass was celebrated last week at St. Patrick's Church in nearby Canutillo, the Rev. Manny Marrufo said, Maria Rubalcava had accepted the reality that her daughter was gone, dead of shrapnel wounds she suffered when a mortar round exploded during an attack in Mosul on May 8. It was three days before her 26th birthday.

Rubalcava was one of 20 female U.S. service members to die in Operation Iraqi Freedom -- the highest number of U.S. military women to die in a combat operation since World War II, military historians said. The dead include Pfc. Lori Piestewa, 23, who was killed in an ambush in the first days of the invasion, and Pfc. Leslie D. Jackson, 18, of Richmond, who was killed Thursday when her vehicle hit an improvised explosive device. Others died in helicopter crashes, or vehicle accidents, or when guns accidentally went off, or while trying to defuse bombs.

In addition, 162 women have been wounded in Iraq, 99 of them too badly to return to duty, according to the Defense Department. And two of the most prominent faces of the war belong to Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who was taken prisoner and then rescued early in the war, and Pfc. Lynndie England, who recently turned up in photographs documenting the abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison.

For decades, Defense Department regulations kept military women away from direct action, out of fear that the American public would echo the cries of Maria Isela Rubalcava -- "I don't want to see her like this" -- when it came to women dying in combat. But when those rules changed in the mid-1990s, few people complained. And

now, with more women serving in what the military calls "at-risk" jobs in Iraq, and more of them becoming casualties, the public has largely remained silent.

Women who monitor gender roles in the military are divided over what this means.

Supporters of equality between men and women in the ranks say it reflects a great leap forward for a society striving for equal rights. "There's a shift in the feeling about women," said retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Wilma L. Vaught, president of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation. "People think she's doing her own thing."

"There's been a rethinking by parents," Vaught said. "They ask themselves, 'Do I value my daughter's life more than my son's life?' As a parent, I don't know how to answer that question."

As far as Phyllis Schlafly is concerned, the answer is simple. "I think it's uncivilized," said Schlafly, president of the conservative Eagle Forum. She called gender equality in the military a giant step backward.

"I think it's social experimentation, and I don't think it's going to help us win the war," she said. "They want to masculinize the women and feminize the men, so that we're a gender-neutral society."

If women continue to die, said Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness, a think tank based in Livonia, Mich., the debate will almost certainly be sharpened.

"What we're seeing now with the use of women in the military is unprecedented, but here we are," Donnelly said. She said one of her concerns is that single mothers are being killed. Piestewa, for example, left behind two children.

"We are asking these policies to be reassessed," Donnelly said.

Women's current place in the military may be traced to legal changes beginning in 1948, when Congress passed the Armed Forces Integration Act, which gave women regular and reserve status in the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. At the same time, the law limited women's presence in those branches to 2 percent of the forces and stipulated that women could not serve on ships and aircraft that engaged in combat.

Twenty years later, the ceiling was lifted on the number of women who could serve, but the other restrictions remained. It was not until 1992 that the United States repealed the laws that kept women out of combat aircraft. Two years later, then-Defense Secretary Les Aspin led a repeal of the Defense Department risk rule. The definition of direct ground combat changed, and new rules allowed women to serve in all units except those directly involved in fighting, such as armor, infantry, Ranger and field artillery battalions.

In 1991, women made up only 11 percent of the military, but now they account for 15 percent, according to the Defense Department. One of seven U.S. troops in Iraq is a woman. Women there have served on Patriot missile batteries, on military police patrols and in other support roles that place them dangerously close to the enemy. In Iraq, moreover, the dangers have been compounded by the guerrilla nature of the postwar insurgency.

Parents of women who have died there speak of their daughters -- and other military women -- with pride. "Personally, I think some of them are better than men," said Lisa Frye, mother of Nicole Frye, an Army reservist from Wisconsin who was killed in February at age 19 after a mortar round struck her convoy. "She was really good with a rifle, an expert marksman. Her fiance wasn't that good. He's in the **National Guard**."

Nicole's death "ripped my heart right out of my body," Frye said, but in the same breath she added: "We were really proud of her and what she accomplished, really proud, and we still are."

Frye's sentiment was echoed by John Witmer, whose daughter Michelle was shot to death atop a Humvee while laying down ground fire to protect her unit, the 32nd Military Police Company. She was 20.

John Witmer said Michelle and his other two daughters, Rachel and Charity, Michelle's twin, knew exactly what they were getting into when they volunteered with the **Army National Guard** in New Berlin, Wis.

"They were clear . . . that they were going to be in that situation," Witmer said. "Out of respect for my daughters, they knew what their job was going to be, and they did the job well."

Not every woman is doing a great job, Schlafly said. She said the photograph of England holding a leash attached to the neck of an Iraqi prisoner appalled her. "This later picture is a feminist fantasy," she said. "That's how feminists think about men."

Retired Navy Capt. Lory Manning, director of the Women in the Military Project, said the photographs have nothing to do with gender. They show only that women are capable of making the same mistakes as men.

"We are seeing women POWs, women with their legs blown off, women who are heroes," Manning said. "And we're also seeing the dark side of it. . . . The pictures themselves are horrific. You think, 'Oh, my God, how is this going to be translated?'"

The fact that England is a woman helped inflame the Arab world, where the sight of men being humiliated by women is anathema, Donnelly said.

Sgt. Susan Sonnheim, who was wounded when a bomb detonated in Baghdad and threw her 10 feet into the air, said women are as prepared as men to take their place in the ranks. "We did the same training as men," said Sonnheim, 45, of Franklin, Wis., who served with Michelle Witmer in the 32nd Military Police Company before she was sent to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the District. "If you can't pull your weight, you wouldn't be there. I had a heavy backpack. A heavy ammo belt. It weighed more than me. But I did it."

"I'm sure they're saying that because women never really encountered combat, and now that they are, it's hard for them to fathom," Sonnheim said. "But they're fighting, and they're dying."

Supporters and opponents of placing women in "at-risk" jobs agree on at least one thing: Women do have a place in a volunteer military. Whenever American men have marched to war, women followed, according to a thumbnail history compiled by the Defense

Department.

Margaret Corbin took charge of a cannon after her husband fell in the Revolutionary War. Two years later, in 1778, Deborah Samson disguised herself as a man, enlisted in the Continental Army, and was twice wounded in combat. Both women were awarded military pensions.

Women fought in the War of 1812, the Civil War and the Spanish-American War. At least 36,000 women served in World War I, and 400,000 took part in the second. In the Pacific theater, 458 women died and 80 nurses were prisoners of war.

Spec. Tyanna Avery-Felder had been afraid to go to Iraq, but she toughed it out, said her father, Ray Avery. She seemed safe behind the front lines, working as a cook and a helper in the mess hall. But her convoy was hit by an improvised explosive device on April 7, the Army said, and she died at 22.

"I couldn't really believe it," Avery said. "She was nine days from coming home."

Sometimes, he said in a breaking voice, "I feel that females shouldn't be in that situation, shouldn't be in combat. They're capable. People who haven't been put in this situation don't know how really painful it is to lose someone, whether it's a son or daughter."

Lori Witmer, mother of Michelle, said she believes that losing a daughter is harder than losing a son, but that she would never have intervened in Michelle's decision to serve.

Isela Rubalcava was the only daughter in her family. As her body arrived at El Paso International Airport last week, Marrufo led the family in prayers. "She is the first woman from El Paso that had died in combat," Marrufo said. "I think she's unique in that sense."

One of Twin Brothers Serving Together Killed In Iraq

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The Associated Press

May 26, 2004

By Jim Paul, Associated Press Writer

Dateline: Maroa, Ill.

The Ridlen twins seemed to always be together, at church, on the softball field, even in the recruiter's office when they enlisted with the Illinois **National Guard**.

The brothers were stationed with the same unit in Iraq when a truck rigged with explosives detonated Sunday next to a convoy, killing Army Spc. Jeremy L. Ridlen, 23.

Guard officials wouldn't say if his identical twin, Jason Ridlen, was with the convoy at the time, but he is expected to accompany his brother's body home to Illinois.

Friends said Tuesday they worry about how he will deal with the loss.

"They just clung to each other. You can't talk about one without talking about the other," said Diane Daggett, one of the brothers' teachers at Maroa-Forsyth High School, where

the twins graduated in 1998.

The same year, they joined the Illinois **National Guard** and were assigned to the 1544th Transportation Company.

Jeremy Ridlen was part of a convoy traveling a supply route in the Fallujah area Sunday when a dump truck rigged with a bomb exploded, according to the Illinois **National Guard**.

The boys grew up in nearby Maroa, a central Illinois town of about 1,600 residents 30 miles south of Bloomington. Both were students at Illinois State University when their unit was activated last year.

Major Tim Franklin, a Guard spokesman, said it isn't unusual for relatives to serve in the same military unit.

When a soldier from Wisconsin was killed in Baghdad last month, her older sister was serving in the same unit and her twin sister was also in Iraq. Under Pentagon policy, when a soldier is killed while serving in a hostile area, close family members may request non-combat assignments. Both surviving Wisconsin sisters were reassigned.

The Rev. Marlin Jaynes, who is acting as a spokesman for the Ridlen twins' family, said it will be up to Jason Ridlen whether he returns to a combat zone in Iraq.

He said the twins' parents and sister do not want to talk to the media.

Jaynes said the twins were very active in the church, played on its softball team and were included in its weekly prayer list after they deployed to Iraq. He said they looked so much alike that "I was not always sure which one I was talking to. They could trick me."

Their high school math teacher, Erin Morrison, said Jeremy Ridlen always tried hard in school.

"Teenagers these days can be really attitude-filled, but he didn't ever have an attitude. He was just a really good kid," she said.

"They were always together," she said. "I wasn't surprised that they were together over there as well."

A Small-Town Family Grieves As The State Loses Its First Guardsman From a Combat Unit

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Los Angeles Times

May 27, 2004 Thursday

'My Son Was Not Going to Let Someone Else Die in His Place';

Byline: Rone Tempest, Times Staff Writer

Dateline: EXETER, Calif.

A little over two months ago, Spc. Daniel Unger was among several hundred California **National Guard** soldiers assembled at an Army desert training post outside Barstow to

hear Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger send them off to battle in Iraq with a rousing speech on patriotism and valor.

"You guys are the true terminators," Schwarzenegger told the cheering soldiers, the first National Guardsmen from California since the Korean War to be sent overseas in a combat capacity.

On Wednesday morning here in this orange-growing Central Valley farming town, Army officials informed Daniel Unger's parents that their 19-year-old son had been killed in Iraq, the first member of a California **National Guard** combat unit to die in action.

"I was at a friend's house," said Daniel's mother, Lynda Unger, 53. "My husband called and said, 'Come home. Just come home.' When he opened the door he was crying and I saw the chaplain and the other officers, and of course I knew it was Danny."

Unger, a center fielder on his high school baseball team who worked as a missionary in youth prisons, died Monday during an apparent mortar attack on his base 25 miles south of Baghdad. The attack also wounded 10 other reservists, including eight men from Unger's 1-185th Combat Group, headquartered in San Bernardino.

Unger's death was confirmed Wednesday by California **National Guard** media relations chief Maj. Denise Varner. By late Wednesday, the military had not yet released any information about the names and conditions of the wounded soldiers.

Once the news of the soldier's death began to spread along the quiet streets here, friends poured into the modest, pale-blue stucco home to console the soldier's parents, 17-year-old brother and 11- and 13-year-old sisters.

The van in the family driveway bore a bumper sticker: "Proud Parents of an Army **National Guard** Soldier." Carport posts were festooned with yellow ribbons and a large American flag flapped in the light breeze while two big German shepherds in the backyard barked at arriving mourners.

The father, Marc Unger, a storefront Southern Baptist pastor and karate instructor, alternated between fits of deep booming sobs and quiet periods of philosophical acceptance.

"I remember driving down [Highway] 198 talking with him about the dangers of war," recalled his father, a bearish figure who holds a sixth-degree karate black belt.

"Danny turned to me and said: 'Dad, I love Jesus and I know God has a plan for my life. If his plan is for me on Earth I know that there is no terrorist and no enemy who can take me out.'"

No matter how deep their grief, both parents said their support for the campaign in Iraq, like that of their son, is unflagging. "He loved what he did and was very proud of serving," said Lynda Unger. "I want everyone to know that. No misquotes! He believes in what he was doing. He was glad to be there."

Marc Unger picked up a Bush-Cheney campaign poster from a nearby table.

"We support our president. We support our military," he said, waving the poster. "I'm terribly sorry that it was my son who lost his life as a hero in the service of his country. But someone's life is going to be lost and my son was not going to let someone else die in

his place. My son honestly felt before God that God wanted him to join the military."

After getting his parents' permission, Daniel Unger joined the California **National Guard** at the beginning of his senior year in high school. He went to boot camp at Ft. Benning, Ga., two days after graduation. Before leaving for Iraq in late March, he stopped by his alma mater, Exeter Union High School, in his Army fatigues to say goodbye to his friends, teachers and his baseball coach.

"He was one of the only students I ever met who knew exactly what he wanted to do in life and was doing it," said coach Steve Garver, who also taught Unger in English courses. "He felt that he had been called by God. He was a fine young man."

Said Exeter Police Lt. Cliff Bush, a family friend: "Danny avoided all the drugs and other issues that plague other kids his age. He was mature from the age of 12."

The California soldiers involved in the Monday night incident are part of a massive rotation in Iraq in which regular Army forces are being replaced by reservists and **National Guard** troops. The California 1-185th Combat Group is part of the 81st Brigade, headquartered in Ft. Lewis, Wash. Unger was attached to Alpha Company, based in Corona.

Unger was the fifth California **National Guard** soldier killed during the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The other soldiers who died were serving in noncombat support companies -- transportation, military police and intelligence units.

Since the major rotation of reservists for regular Army troops began this spring, some **National Guard** units have suffered significant casualties. The Arkansas 39th Brigade, which patrols Baghdad streets, has lost eight soldiers in less than two months.

Honoring The Fallen

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Chattanooga Times Free Press

May 31, 2004 Monday

By Dorie Turner

Chattanooga, TN

Since her husband's death in December 2003, Amy Edgerton has had two visits by Army soldiers carrying large, bronze boxes.

She expects her third any day now.

The 25-year-old Sequatchie County resident buried her husband, Sgt. Marshall Edgerton, in Dalton, Ga., five months ago, but the Army has sent two urns with some of his remains since then.

"It was a really bad accident," Mrs. Edgerton said of her husband's death. "It makes me feel sad for all the people who have lost their loved ones, because I understand what they went through in other wars."

Sgt. Edgerton died Dec. 11 in an explosion in Iraq while serving with the Army's 82nd

Airborne Division.

Mrs. Edgerton said she will spend today with her husband's family and her children, Hunter, 7, and Alyssa, 2, at a Memorial Day ceremony in Rome, Ga.

Around the Chattanooga area and across the country, families will gather to mourn the 802 U.S. military personnel who have perished in the Iraq war, as well as the hundreds of thousands of others who died in wars.

Families also will spend today welcoming troops who recently returned from Iraq and preparing to send others into action.

The Tennessee Army **National Guard** 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment's 1st squadron based in Athens, Tenn., departs in June for training at Camp Shelby, Miss. By December, the squadron expects to be in Iraq, Capt. Mitch Murray said.

"We are ready to deploy whenever they pull the trigger," he said.

Tennessee **National Guard** officials said about 3,000 soldiers will be mobilized in June. Georgia officials couldn't provide similar numbers.

Today commemorates military people "who have sacrificed more than we're going to," Capt. Murray said.

"We're going to be away from our families for 18 months," he said. "The people who fought World War II and Korea, their orders were, 'You're going to fight until the mission is done.' Our grandparents did a lot for us so we can have this life."

Some soldiers home from Iraq are spending the day quietly healing from wounds.

Pfc. Brian Carroll walks gingerly, trying not to disturb the hole in his side where a piece of shrapnel ripped through his torso last month.

The 20-year-old Athens, Tenn., native returned earlier this month after just three weeks with the Army in Iraq. Soon his name will appear on a brick at the town's Veterans Memorial Park, near a World War II marker with his grandfather's name.

"It's very weird," Pfc. Carroll said. "I'm one of those guys now."

Memorial Day has a more personal meaning this year, he said.

"I appreciate it a lot more," Pfc. Carroll said. "I'm more appreciative of the people who have been in war and given us what we have today."

He was injured when a roadside bomb exploded next to his Humvee caravan about 40 miles southeast of Baghdad.

His mother, Sheila, said the doctors told her that her son is lucky to be alive.

"We attribute it to God," she said. "God's got some purpose for Brian down the road."

Spc. Joshua Bailey, a University of Tennessee at Chattanooga student from a farming community near Columbia, Tenn., returned on April 17, his birthday, after 10 months with the Tennessee Army **National Guard** in Iraq. One of the first things he did was join his local Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter.

"I'm the young whippersnapper there," the 23-year-old said. "No matter how old we are,

we have the same experiences."

For him, Memorial Day is about the sacrifices both great and small that people in the military make during war.

"It's not necessarily life or death, but every kid that goes over there is giving up something," he said. "Some people are giving up limbs, legs."

About 138,000 military members are serving in Iraq, with some 17,500 in Afghanistan. More than 9,000 Tennessee and Georgia reservists and **National Guard** members are on active duty.

Since military operations in Iraq began in March last year, 802 U.S. service members have died. Of those deaths, 587 were caused by hostile action and 215 by nonhostile causes, according to U.S. Department of Defense records.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq ended, 662 U.S. military personnel have died -- 476 as a result of hostile action and 186 of nonhostile causes, DOD records show.

For family members like Ms. Edgerton, who lost her husband in Iraq, the Army asks them how they want the remains of their loved ones handled, said Lt. Col. Stan Heath, with the Army's human resources command in Alexandria, Va.

"If the first set of remains was not complete for whatever reason, we would ask ... if we find any other remains, 'How would you like them delivered?'" Lt. Col. Heath said. "The procedure is always to follow up with whatever we find."

Staff writer Duane W. Gang contributed to this story.

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GENERAL

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Soldier Fights Wife's Deportation

Florida Today
May 24, 2004

By John A. Torres, Florida Today

PALM BAY-- John Santos loves his country, but he loves his wife more.

The Palm Bay resident is stationed in Oklahoma with the **Army National Guard**. He enlisted after serving the previous four years in the Marines.

Now, without a congressional pardon, he plans to expatriate if the government deports his wife.

Santos' wife, Nancy, came to this country illegally from Mexico more than four years ago in order to find work and send money home to her family in Mexico City. During the four years, she has worked, paid taxes, married and is now expecting the couple's first child in

September.

Barring intervention by Congressman Dave Weldon, R-Melbourne, Nancy Santos will be forced to leave the country next March.

"It's like this: If they deport her, I have no choice," John Santos, 34, said. "I will have to follow."

But Santos will still have a year of commitment left in the **National Guard** before he can leave the country he has served.

Santos, a radar repair technician, is dumbfounded that his service in the military counts very little in his effort to keep his wife in this country.

"How can we, as Americans, let this happen?" he said. "Now we have one year and time is ticking."

His wife Nancy, 37, has learned English and was working as a food server in Brevard County. She said moving to Mexico will be hard for her husband.

"He says we can move to a border town, like Tijuana, so he can commute to San Diego," she said. "But I don't like that idea. This is his home, this is where he lives."

The fact that the couple has a year to try and rectify the situation is somewhat of a lucky break. Nancy Santos was already being deported and was incarcerated in the Orange County Jail when her husband was able to win her a temporary stay.

That gives them a year to convince the congressman she should stay.

Weldon confirmed working on the case and is continuing to do so. However, citing the open case and privacy issues, he refused to comment specifically on it.

Santos would like to stay in the military and continue living in the United States -- but only if his wife can stay as well. The couple's first baby will be an American citizen if it is born in the United States but would move to Mexico with Nancy Santos if she is deported.

Ernestine Fobbs, spokeswoman for the Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, confirmed that Santos' only real hope is a private bill sponsored by a member of congress.

"Re-entering the country after a deportation is a criminal offense," she said. "Usually they would have to go through congressional offices and those efforts are out of our hands."

Fobbs, who would not comment directly on Santos' case, said Nancy Santos would likely receive a 10-year or lifetime ban from re-entering the U.S.

John Santos has not waited until the last minute to work on trying to make his wife's presence here legal.

In fact, on July 17, 2000, he filed and was granted a Petition for Alien Relative, asking that Nancy remain in this country because he is her spouse. Then, less than a year later, Nancy Santos submitted an application to Register Permanent Residence. But that request was rejected. Meanwhile, she has received work permits through immigration and has filed taxes.

Throughout the nearly four years the Santos' have worked with immigration, John Santos said he was under the impression his wife was turned away at the border during her first attempt, not actually deported. He is angry that immigration officials collected fees for processing paperwork without letting him know there was basically no chance of Nancy earning legal status.

Then on March 15, the couple met with immigration officials for what they thought would be the final meeting to make her status legal. Instead, she was arrested and deportation proceedings started.

Families Organize To Assist Troops - Funds Will Aid Communication To U.S.

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The Washington Post

May 27, 2004 Thursday

By Susan DeFord, Washington Post Staff Writer

Even though Suzanne Mauris was seven months pregnant, she understood that her husband, Stephen, had to go to Iraq with his Maryland **National Guard** unit when it was deployed for 18 months in January.

"It's what he's trained for," she said. "I fully support him in what he's doing."

But since then, Mauris's resolve sometimes has given way to anxiety as Iraqi insurgents have launched sporadic rocket attacks at Camp Cooke, where her husband's unit is assigned, along with thousands of other soldiers.

Nine soldiers with the 39th Brigade Combat Team at the camp, 15 miles north of Baghdad, have been killed in the past two months, according to the **National Guard**. Mauris and others who have family members there worry about their loved ones walking through the sprawling camp and standing in long lines to call or e-mail home.

"We felt that made them a target," said Jill Reese, a College Park resident whose brother-in-law serves with the 629th Military Intelligence Battalion, which is headquartered in Laurel and draws soldiers from Maryland, Northern Virginia and the District.

Though they are half a world away, Mauris, Reese and other family members have formed a nonprofit group to raise money to help purchase more telecommunications equipment for the unit's 19 soldiers based at Camp Cooke.

"What we wanted to set up for them was more for the families' benefit," said Mauris, who spoke at her Fulton home while she doled out treats to her 23-month-old son, Alex, and Reese held the Maurises' 2-month-old daughter, Emily. "They haven't heard from loved ones as much as they wanted to. It makes it harder for families to function without knowing if their soldiers are safe."

The unit's 18 men and one woman work as analysts for the 39th Brigade Combat Team at Camp Cooke, trying to assess weaknesses that would make coalition forces vulnerable to attack, said Maj. Charles S. Kohler, public affairs officer for the Maryland **National**

Guard.

In the last few months, Camp Cooke has grown from about 2,000 to 10,000 soldiers, according to Capt. Kristine Munn, speaking for the **National Guard**.

Although workers are rushing to install more telecommunications facilities, she said, they have not kept up with the camp's rapid expansion.

"The infrastructure just wasn't there to support that many people," Munn said. "It's just like building a brand-new city."

An April 24 rocket attack at Camp Cooke that killed four soldiers and seriously wounded five others "definitely got us moving," said Mauris, who also volunteers as lead coordinator for the unit's family support group. After the attack, one quick call to a spouse came from a member of the 629th Battalion to report the unit was okay. Nothing else was heard for a week.

"I try not to watch the news all the time," Mauris said. "When you do see it, your heart drops out of your chest. You sit there waiting for the phone to ring or a knock on the door."

The soldiers of the 629th Battalion have talked about trying to obtain their own satellite dish, but that would cost about \$21,000, she said.

"We didn't want our soldiers to go into personal debt just to call home," said Mauris, a former social worker for a nonprofit health care organization in Washington.

The new nonprofit organization, Friends of the 629th MI Battalion Inc., has applied for federal status as a charitable organization. If granted, donations to the group would be tax deductible.

Debra Jung, a lawyer with the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations, said she is not aware of any other military families organizing themselves as a nonprofit group. "That more people are trying to think of ways to help their soldiers -- that doesn't surprise me," she added.

Kohler said the Maryland **National Guard** supports the initiative by the families but wants to make sure they know the guard has its own nonprofit foundation that may be able to help.

Mauris said the Friends group wants to pursue other goals such as emergency financial assistance for families and scholarships for children if a parent is killed in combat. Already, members have raised a few thousand dollars selling baked goods and teddy bears and are planning pizza fundraisers and a yard sale in the coming weeks.

In the wake of the abuses of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison, potential donors occasionally have backed off when they learn that the unit is involved in military intelligence, Mauris said.

"Our guys provide information to safeguard American and Iraqi lives," she said. "We have to support our soldiers over there. They have jobs to do."

She added, "There are people left behind who still have to find a way to go on."

To learn more online about Friends of the 629th MI Battalion, visit

<http://www.friendsof629.org/>.

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