



NEWS YOU CAN USE

Weekly News for National Guard Families

Index of Articles

Note: Topics below are now bookmarked! Click on the underlined topic below to link to the pages on that topic.

<u>READINESS</u>	3
Army and Air Guards to Standardize Recruitment Reporting; Air National Guard Meeting 99 Percent Of End-Strength Goal For FY-05	
Hospital, Military Trade Trauma and Disaster Techniques	
Historic Pool at Camp Dodge to Be Razed	
<u>DEPLOYMENT</u>	6
Guard's 278th Regiment Begins Deployment to Iraq	
Rice Lake Unit Girds For Combat; IRAQ: Battalion Will Be First State Combat Unit Overseas Since WWII.	
Kirtland Airmen Going to Iraq	
Guard Unit Braces For Tour	
National Guard Brigade Alerted for Possible Callup	
Three Cousins Prepare for Military Service Overseas	
<u>REUNION</u>	13
Newton Guard Unit Returns	
<u>BENEFITS</u>	14
Soldiers Get Property Tax Relief	
<u>GUARD IN IRAQ</u>	15
Alabama's Citizen Soldiers In Charge	
The Guard Goes to War; Untimely Death Rattles Fellow Soldiers	
<u>HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT</u>	20
Money Pouring Into Soldiers' Return Fund	
Guard Duty Changes Business Partner's Work Routine	

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH AFTERMATH22

New Veterans Adjust From Battleground to Workplace Some Don't Recover Jobs

Town Supports Departing Troops

Dads On The Homefront; When Mom Goes Of To War

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES30

Love Of Military Drove Soldier

GENERAL31

Missouri Bosses Get a Taste of the Army Life

Websites:

**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
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.

<http://www.militarystudent.org>

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

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Army and Air Guards to Standardize Recruitment Reporting; Air National Guard Meeting 99 Percent Of End-Strength Goal For FY-05

Inside The Air Force

June 11, 2004

By Cynthia Di Pasquale

Washington

The **Air National Guard** is on target to meet over 99 percent of its end-strength goal because retention rates are up so far this fiscal year, according to the **National Guard Bureau**.

Although Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Peter Pace told lawmakers last week that **Air Guard** recruitment rates are down by 23 percent compared to smaller drops by the **Army National Guard** and reserve forces, NGB spokeswoman Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke explained that the **Air National Guard** calculates its recruitment differently than the other organizations. Understanding the difference results in a much different impression about the numbers.

The **Air Guard** has an end-strength goal this year of just over 107,000, and is now at 99.78 percent of that goal. It regularly adjusts recruitment rates based on what retention rates are. Additionally, NGB figures put the **Air Guard** recruitment rate down by 9.4 percent for the year, not 23.

The **Army National Guard**, on the other hand, sets quarterly recruitment goals, in addition to an overall end-strength goal. That organization had met 93.1 percent of its mission in the second quarter of this fiscal year, but only met 71.6 percent in the first quarter, Krenke said. Numbers were down because the active Army strength increased and there was a reduced interest in the Guard by active duty soldiers, Krenke said. Stop-loss policies were also an issue, she added.

Because of some confusion over statistics, the NGB will standardize **Air and Army National Guard** recruitment and retention calculations and release quarterly reports,

Krenke told *Inside the Air Force*. The first report will be released June 14.

At a June 2 Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee hearing on the FY-05 Iraq and Afghanistan Emergency Reserve Fund request, Pace said he was “not satisfied with what the numbers portend.”

“We need to be very attentive to the way that we’re using especially our Guard and Reserve,” he continued. “We need to be sure that when we ask these great Americans to put their lives on hold and serve their country, that the mission we are giving them is a valid mission, that we are up front with them as far as when we are going to call them to active duty, how long we are going to keep them on active duty, when they will be returned to their employers, and that we do as quickly as we can the rebalance of the force so that we do not rely on the Reserves for things that active forces should be doing.”

His comments did not express worry about recruitment and retention rates, but advised caution with the volunteer forces, Pace’s spokeswoman said.

Hospital, Military Trade Trauma and Disaster Techniques

[Back to Table of Contents.](#)

Associated Press

June 20, 2004

Poenix, Ariz.

Military medics and the staff at a Scottsdale hospital are trading trauma and disaster techniques in a pilot program.

While doctors, nurses and technicians with the Arizona Air **National Guard** are gaining hands-on experience with trauma medicine, the hospital staff at Scottsdale Healthcare Osborne is learning how to prepare for a disaster.

Since May, medics with the Guard's 161st Air Refueling Wing have been working in the hospital's emergency room to receive classroom training while learning how to treat injuries they could face in combat.

"You can't get that kind of experience in a trauma unit," said Guard Capt. Darcy Swaim.

At the same time, the hospital is training in disaster preparedness. Staff there want to gain expertise that would make the hospital the disaster relief hub for the region.

The hospital has three rooftop helipads and a new trauma unit that can covert quickly from four trauma bays to dozens.

Historic Pool at Camp Dodge to Be Razed

[Back to Table of Contents.](#)

Associated Press

June 19, 2004

Johnston, Iowa

The Iowa **National Guard** plans to raze the historic Camp Dodge Pool to make way for a training facility for soldiers.

The new plan, disclosed in a letter to the city, ends a campaign by some Johnston residents to renovate the 82-year-old pool located in the heart of the **National Guard** base.

Guard officials said there is no firm date when the pool, which needed about \$8 million in repairs, will be razed. The pool closed nearly three years ago after attendance and profits dwindled.

Created in 1922 to provide recreation for soldiers, several Iowans remember it as a place for the late Ronald Reagan to cool down during his days as a sportscaster for WHO radio. Longer than a football field, it is believed to be the largest outdoor filtered pool in the world.

"This is very sad for me," said Mary Davis, a Johnston City Council member who wanted to restore the pool. "We have had such a connection to our president that just died, that was a popular man and a man of good character," she said in reference to Reagan.

"We are going to lose something very, very important."

Davis said a group met last month to brainstorm on how to create a nonprofit organization to raise money and lobby for the pool's restoration. The next day, the Iowa **National Guard** notified Johnston city officials of plans to morph the area into a place to train soldiers, she said.

Davis gave up her efforts, saying she was worried the group would raise a large chunk of cash but then have its plans ruined with insistence from the Guard to turn it into something else.

Brig. Gen. Mark Zirkelbach told Johnston leaders the grace period was over for pool restoration after hearing that the City Council did not want to raise taxes to pay for the work.

A private consultant hired by the city in February said the price to renovate the pool would be \$7.8 million.

"This is the third season it's been closed," Zirkelbach said. "There's been a lot of discussion but no serious money. Talk is cheap."

Council members have said they prefer to build a regional aquatic center with Urbandale and Grimes.

Zirkelbach said the **National Guard** has no plans to resurrect the Camp Dodge Pool, but would like to preserve the outline of the pool by creating a gathering place or a garden in that footprint.

By fall, he said, Camp Dodge officials will complete a master plan for the area. Discussion has centered on transforming the locker rooms in the historic pavilion into classrooms.

"Our soldiers are going into combat situations," Zirkelbach said. "Our focus on the installation is to prepare those soldiers for what they experience."

Preliminary cost estimates show it would cost \$1 million to create the training area and renovate the concession stand.

National Guard officials said they plan to work with state preservationists to maintain the look on the outside of the pavilion and concession stand. They have also discussed creating an area in the new training facility to memorialize Reagan and the life of the pool.

"I know there's groups that remember swimming in Camp Dodge Pool and have the nostalgia," Zirkelbach said. "The best we can do is preserve the memory."

Ray Schleih, 87, of Johnston said he used to swim in the pool in the 1930s to escape the heat of homes and offices without air conditioning.

"One summer I got a season pass - five bucks," he said. "I used to hitchhike from down here."

On some afternoons, he said he saw Reagan hang out with co-workers from the radio station.

DEPLOYMENT

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Guard's 278th Regiment Begins Deployment to Iraq

Associated Press

June 15, 2004

Knoxville, Tenn.

Units from the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment of the Tennessee Army **National Guard** began their phased-in deployment to Iraq early Monday, with units from Knoxville to Springfield leaving for Camp Shelby, Miss.

Knowing they face a tour of active duty that could range up to two years, members of the units spent the last week spending time with their families and taking care of last-minute tasks.

Spc. John Ogren, 39, spent Sunday doing things like cutting the grass at his Clarksville home and showing his wife how to change the oil in their tractor, since mowing will be her job for a while.

"It can destroy you if you let 18 months or two years fall flat on your back," Ogren said. "A lot of soldiers try and push that out of their mind. That's the only way to tackle what we're fixing to tackle."

At 4 a.m. Monday in Knoxville, Jennifer Benson said goodbye to her 14-month-old daughter, Riley Benson, as dozens of military vehicles rumbled by in the background.

"She is so young that she really doesn't know what's going on, but she senses something isn't normal," Benson said.

The 278th, with units in cities from Bristol to Jackson, is the only fully armored cavalry regiment in the **National Guard**. It has about 4,000 soldiers outfitted with enough tanks and armored vehicles to fill 585 rail cars. The last time the full regiment was deployed was the Korean War.

About 3,000 soldiers in the 278th are involved in the mobilization, Tennessee **National Guard** spokesman Randy Harris said. Some soldiers from various units in the state are already in Camp Shelby, making preparations for the regiment's arrival in the coming days.

Capt. Matthew Smith of the Springfield unit said the Department of Defense has said the 278th is headed to Iraq after training.

"Most soldiers look at this as being the job you signed up for," said Spc. Derek Johnson, 23, of Hendersonville. "If you try and dig too deep, it will get to you. You don't try and overdramatize it too much."

A contingent of Knox County sheriff's deputies led a convoy early Monday down several streets before a lineup of Humvees, ambulances and 5-ton trucks merged onto the interstate.

"I served in Vietnam, so it's an honor for me to escort these soldiers out," deputy Joe Cate said. "I would have been here at one o'clock or any other time they needed us."

While the nearly 500-mile drive down Interstates 75, 24 and 59 to southern Mississippi may appear routine to a civilian, the regiment's commander considered it one of the most dangerous aspects of the mission.

"I have told my troops that the three most dangerous parts of this deployment will be the convoy to Camp Shelby, the convoy into Iraq and the convoy out of Iraq," Col. Dennis Adams said last week. "I trust our soldiers, but it's the other drivers on the road who aren't used to military vehicles that worry me."

Once the 278th organizes at Camp Shelby, two units from Texas and Wisconsin will join the regiment for several months of training at the nation's largest pre-deployment installation.

The soldiers will then load their equipment on ships for passage to Kuwait and fly to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., for a final set of training exercises. The regiment is scheduled to depart for Iraq sometime near Christmas.

Spc. Richard Clifford spent Sunday celebrating his daughter's fifth birthday, even though it's not really until Friday.

"I said, 'See you when I get home.' It's hard to say those words when you know it's going to be a long period of time," Clifford said.

Be First State Combat Unit Overseas Since WWII.

Duluth News-Tribune

June 17, 2004

By Gail Gibson; Baltimore Sun

Rice Lake, Wis.

When they leave next week, headed to training in Mississippi and then, almost surely, to a posting in Iraq, the men who make up this town's **National Guard** unit will cross a daunting historical marker: Their light infantry battalion is expected to be the first combat Guard unit from Wisconsin deployed overseas since World War II.

As they leave behind their lives as farmers, police officers, students and schoolteachers in Northwestern Wisconsin, the men of what now is a detachment of Company B, 1st Battalion, of the 32nd "Red Arrow" Infantry Brigade, do not focus on history. They worry about what is ahead, about signing wills and arranging for mortgage payments and explaining to their children where they are going.

"There's definitely a sense of concern, because this is something we just haven't experienced," said Staff Sgt. Daniel Olson of the Rice Lake unit, who joined the Guard 14 years ago, mainly as a way to help pay for college. Now a high school government and history teacher, Olson's deployment means he will miss his second wedding anniversary in August, the birth of his first child in July, and the next school year.

"It's going to be difficult missing those things," said Olson, 34, who has adopted a steely pragmatism about the mobilization: "It's a prepare for the worst and hope for the best kind of attitude."

The past is left to men such as Bob Andrews and Charles Jachim, among the last surviving members of Company D, 128th Infantry, 32nd Division, which left Rice Lake by train in the fall of 1940 and eventually fought the Japanese army in New Guinea.

"I feel sorry for them. I do," Andrews, 85, said last week. "It's unbelievable what I see when my eyes are closed."

Jachim, now 83, joined Company D when he was a 17-year-old senior at Rice Lake High School, lying about his age to make the 18-year-old requirement. It was 1938, the middle of the Great Depression, and weekly Guard drills paid \$1.

The prospect of fighting a war seemed remote when the unit was mobilized in October 1940, more than a year before the United States entered World War II.

"I don't think we thought much about that. At the time, the majority of young people weren't working -- that was a job," said Jachim, who served in the Wisconsin **National Guard** for 31 years, including as commander of the Rice Lake unit in the 1960s.

Daniel Olson said goodbye to his colleagues and students late last month at a party thrown by the school where he teaches in St. Croix Falls, on the Wisconsin-Minnesota border. One of his fellow soldiers in the Rice Lake unit, Staff Sgt. David Wilson, 32, is leaving behind a job as a patrol officer in the tiny town of Shell Lake, where city hall leaders a week ago held a "Send-off for Officer Wilson."

About 680 soldiers make up the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, which is scheduled to mobilize on Sunday. The battalion has headquarters in Eau Claire, Wis., with units in Rice Lake and six other small towns in Northwestern Wisconsin.

The 1st Battalion's mobilization order is for an "initial period of 18 months," including a year overseas. The exact destination is uncertain: Lt. Col. Tim Donovan, a Guard spokesman, said only that it will be "related to military operations in Iraq."

The mobilization brings the number of Wisconsin Guard soldiers and airmen on active duty to 1,380. Almost half of the Guard's total force in the state have served on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001 -- a strain repeated across the country as the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have stretched thin the military's ranks.

The toll has been high. In just the first week of June, nine of 13 announced U.S. troop deaths in Iraq were **National Guard** or Reserve soldiers. Wisconsin drew attention earlier this year, when Spc. Michelle Witmer, 20, with the 32nd Military Police Company, died April 9 in an ambush in Baghdad.

She was the first Wisconsin **National Guard** member to be killed in combat since the end of World War II and the first female Wisconsin Guard member ever to be killed in combat.

The Rice Lake unit has a storied history and a shifting face.

The Company D men who left in 1940 found themselves a year later sailing from San Francisco to Australia and then flown to combat positions in southern New Guinea. The 32nd Division logged 654 combat days in the South Pacific, more than any other U.S. division during World War II.

Unlike two generations ago, when the Rice Lake Guard unit was made up almost entirely of men from the town who had grown up and attended school together, the unit now is made up of soldiers from across the region.

Rice Lake is a town dotted with yard signs reading, "We Support Our Troops," and where, Guard member David Wilson says, "People have been really supportive, no matter how they feel about the war."

That is truest among the men who have seen war for themselves.

"To me, I was against (the Iraq war) all the time. I didn't want to see that war. I think they hit it at the wrong time," said Donald Veit, now 85.

"I don't like to see them go over," Veit said of the Guard soldiers. "You don't know what's going to happen. You could lose a lot of fellows from around here and don't know if it will come out all right in that country or not."

Kirtland Airmen Going to Iraq

[Back to Table of Contents.](#)

Associated Press

June 17, 2004

Albuquerque, N.M.

The New Mexico Air **National Guard's** fighter wing has launched its first large-scale deployment since Vietnam.

The nearly 300 F-16 fighter pilots and support personnel from New Mexico will work with their counterparts from Colorado and Montana to provide support for Army convoys and patrols.

"This is what they train for," Maj. Kim Lalley said.

This is one of the largest activations in the air guard unit's 57-year history, Lalley said. About 450 served in the Korean War, and more than 250 served in Vietnam.

"The air guard here has a long history of responding to the nation's call," said Lt. Col. Joe Martinez, wing chief of planning. "This is just one of our opportunities to serve overseas."

On May 27, an undisclosed number of airmen and F-16 Falcons from the 150th Fighter Wing - known as the "Tacos" - landed in Kirkuk and Balad Air Base.

In addition to pilots, deploying New Mexico guardsmen include maintenance, civil engineering, support, communication and medical personnel.

Another 350 airmen from Holloman Air Force Base will also serve in the Middle East and Southwest Asia for a regular 90-day rotation, scheduled to end in September. None of Holloman's F-117A Nighthawk stealth jets deployed for the assignment, said spokesman Tom Fuller.

Citing security concerns, officials with the 150th wouldn't say when most of those deploying will leave New Mexico. The wing is housed at Kirtland Air Force Base.

At the height of operations this summer, the guard wing will have roughly 400 of its 1,000 airmen on federal missions. The Iraqi-bound airmen are scheduled to return in September.

About 400 soldiers from the state's **Army National Guard** are deployed to Iraq.

Guard Unit Braces For Tour

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Philadelphia Inquirer

June 18, 2004

Iraq-bound soldiers say goodbye to family and friends at Cherry Hill Armory.

By Edward Colimore, Inquirer Staff Writer

Tracy Wolf had talked with her husband about the day his Army National Guard unit would be called to duty in Iraq. She knew it was coming.

But when the troops filed into the Cherry Hill Armory yesterday for a departure ceremony, Wolf was far from ready.

"Nothing prepares you for this," said Wolf, 30, of Eatontown, N.J., as tears ran down her cheeks. "You don't know what to think. You don't know what to feel or what to do."

She snapped a photo as her smiling husband, Sgt. Joseph Wolf, marched past with more than 100 other members of New Jersey Guard Company A of the 250th Signal Battalion.

The unit is scheduled to leave Sunday for about 30 days of training at Fort Shelby, Miss., before heading overseas.

"This is my first deployment," said Wolf, 31. "I'm ready to go - I have the training - but I'm not ready because I just got married in April."

The large assembly hall of the armory was filled with hundreds of spouses, children, parents, and other family members who were weeping, applauding and waving small American flags.

They stood with hands over their hearts as the flag was brought in and the national anthem was sung. And they watched a music video, "American Soldier," featuring country singer Toby Keith.

"Today, over 166,700 Guardsmen have been called to duty," Brig. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth told the crowd. "Let's give these great soldiers another hand. These young Americans are taking care of national business and need our support."

Cherry Hill Mayor Bernie Platt added, "For their service, dedication and support, we thank them."

The deployment comes at a difficult time for some of the troops and their families.

Specs. Michael Lowman, 22, and Celiann Santiago, 21, were married in April and will now be deployed together. They had been living with Santiago's family in Lindenwold and Lowman's family in Haddon Township.

"I didn't plan it this way; it's a little strange," Lowman said. "I just take it a day at a time."

Santiago added, "I would like to have a real honeymoon, but both of us know the job we have to do."

Lowman's mother, Debbie Gifford, 46, said the whole experience was emotionally draining: "It's hard to send away your child and his wife to a very dangerous situation."

Across the room, Lydia Garcia of Egg Harbor City, N.J., got a preview of the days to come as she tried to single-handedly quiet her four children.

"I don't feel ready for this," said Garcia, 27, who must now depend on family to help her care for Christopher, 2 months; Angel, 1; Dominik, 5; and Lionel, 6.

Her husband, Pfc. Angel Garcia, 32, said the deployment "is part of the job. I think we can do it," he said. "But it's real tough because I'm leaving a 2-month-old son. It would have been better a few years ago, before I got settled."

Some soldiers seemed unfazed. Pfc. Vincent Carr, 20, of Blackwood, said, "I'm not worried about myself. I was expecting this for some time. I'm more concerned about my family and my fiancée."

His mother, Charlene Ritz, 49, of Blackwood, said, "I'm already missing him."

Pfc. Melissa Ramos, 19, of Jackson Township, was actually looking forward to the deployment. "It's not that bad; it's fun," said Ramos, who joined the service a year ago. "Everyone gets their turn."

Her father, Michael, a Navy veteran of the Vietnam War who lives in Brick Township, N.J., said he was proud of his daughter.

But her mother, Joyce, 43, is worried: "This is my only daughter. I'm kind of scared."

For some relatives, the tension turned to laughter during the ceremony as Bob Hope and Marilyn Monroe impersonators put on a USO show spoof.

When it was over, reality set in. The soldiers remained with their unit, and their families went home without them.

"I expected this," Tracy Wolf said, "but that doesn't make it any easier."

National Guard Brigade Alerted for Possible Callup

By Wilson Ring,

Associated Press Writer

Montpelier -- A Vermont Army National Guard combat brigade made up of about 1,500 soldiers has been notified that it might be called to active duty, Guard officials said Thursday.

It is the first time the entire 86th Brigade has been alerted for possible mobilization, said Brigade personnel officer Maj. Samuel Gould.

The alert notification says the soldiers could be called up to serve in Iraq, Afghanistan or within the United States. Alert notifications comes within 90 days of an actual mobilization order, said Guard spokeswoman Lt. Veronica Saffo.

The notification given to the Northfield-based brigade does not mean the unit will be called to active duty. Saffo said parts of the brigade have been alerted twice for possible mobilization since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, but no order followed.

"It's just an alert, a warning order," Saffo said. It means the units are "to take this opportunity to be sure your troops are in order."

And she said that if a mobilization came it did not mean that all soldiers in the brigade or all the units that it is composed of would be called to active duty.

Three Cousins Prepare for Military Service Overseas

[*Back to Table of Contents.*](#)

Associated Press

June 20, 2004

ARCADIA, Wis.

Three men about to be deployed overseas with the Wisconsin Army **National Guard** know they have someone to watch their back.

Kyle Bushman, 21, Scott Andre, 19, and Ryan Bushman, 18, are cousins and will spend the next 18 months together as soldiers.

"You've got somebody you can count on," Andre said. "You should be able to count on everybody (in the unit), but it's even better there is somebody there you know really well."

Kyle Bushman and Ryan Bushman are in the same squad of eight to 10 soldiers, so they will see each other even more.

"It gives you a couple of good friends, and makes home not seem so far away," Kyle Bushman said.

Company C of the Wisconsin Army **National Guard's** 1st Battalion's 128th Infantry, based in Arcadia, leaves Wednesday for five months of training at bases in Mississippi and California before heading overseas, possibly to Iraq.

The cousins are among the unit's 135 men who have been activated. Arcadia, in Trempealeau County, has about 2,400 people.

Two are college students who grew up in Dodge, Wis., while the youngest just graduated from Arcadia High School.

Kyle Bushman's mom, Lisa, said she had mixed feelings about the three going overseas together.

"On the one hand, it's nice they have their family with them," she said. "But on the other hand, instead of worrying about one, we have to worry about three.

"I'm glad they have each other, but it's kind of scary that you stand a bigger chance of something happening (when they) go out on a mission."

REUNION

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Newton Guard Unit Returns

The Commercial Appeal (Memphis, TN)

June 19, 2004

By The Associated Press

Jackson, Miss.

About 120 Mississippi Army **National Guard** soldiers returned home Friday and will be welcomed with hometown celebrations this weekend.

The soldiers are from the 1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery unit in Newton.

They were scheduled to arrive at the Air **National Guard** Base at Thompson Field in

Jackson.

Homecoming celebrations are set for today in Newton, Morton, Forest and Bay Springs.

In April 2003, soldiers in the unit left for mobilization as part of the homeland defense mission in the continental United States.

While at Fort Bliss, Texas, the soldiers trained on the new Avenger Missile Defense System before deploying to the Washington area to replace an active-duty air defense battalion.

The mission of the Air Defense Artillery is to defend against low-altitude aircraft.

BENEFITS

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Soldiers Get Property Tax Relief

Associated Press

June 15, 2004

Houston, Texas

A Texas lawmaker called into active military duty has put in a request for property tax deferral and urged other state residents to take advantage of the benefit.

Rep. Rick Noriega was scheduled to report to Camp Mabry in Austin on Wednesday. He said he expects to be deployed to Afghanistan by August, adding his family will have less money while he is on duty and he and his wife are putting a child through Texas A&M University.

Noriega, D-Houston, said Monday he plans to put money aside for property taxes each month but will save it in case it is needed for a family emergency. If it is not, he will pay his taxes when he comes home, he said.

Noriega and Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector Paul Bettencourt said they wanted to publicize the law allowing those serving out-of-state to defer tax payments because so few of the 6,500 Texans serving in Iraq and Afghanistan with the **National Guard** or military reserve units know about it.

"It allows us some flexibility with our family budget," Noriega, a major in the Army **National Guard**, told the Houston Chronicle in Tuesday's editions.

Those qualified are taxpayers on active military duty who are transferred out-of-state during a war or national emergency. They have 60 days to pay property taxes after they are discharged, return to the state for more than 10 days or are switched to nonactive duty.

"The last thing I want as a tax assessor is for them to be concerned about tax payments," Bettencourt said.

Alabama's Citizen Soldiers In Charge

Mobile Register

June 14, 2004

By Mike Marshall

Baghdad, Iraq

"They want that report back at battalion headquarters."

"That's an order from back at battalion."

"You gotta report back to battalion."

In old war movies as well as in real-life soldering, it seems that "battalion" is normally located somewhere in the back, in a comfortable rear area where paper-pushers and bean-counters occupy tranquil quarters, and issue impossible orders with easy bureaucratic ineptitude.

And there is usually an implicit derision, as if the rank-and-file soldiers were really saying, "Those SOBs back at battalion ..."

But imagine that battalion headquarters consists of **Alabama National Guardsmen**, and the troops under their command are members of the regular Army who typically disdain such citizen soldiers, berating them as "weekend warriors."

That is the challenge that Prattville's 231st Military Police Battalion faced when its members took command of three regular-Army companies as well as one **National Guard** unit out of Pennsylvania.

For starters, the 68 soldiers who make up the 231st Battalion Headquarters are not in the rear with the gear. They have been stationed for nearly three months at Camp Graceland, on the south side of Baghdad, right next to two of the regular-Army units under their command.

Mortar rounds have exploded on the roof of their combined barracks and office space, as well as right next to the masonry building. The windows of their not-so-tranquil Tactical Operations Center are now covered with sandbags.

The 231st may be breaking other stereotypes as well.

Master Sgt. Joseph Harris, 44, of Queens, N.Y., is a square-jawed, no-nonsense soldier with 24 years in the regular Army. When members of his unit, the 410th MP Company out of Fort Hood, Texas, heard that they would be commanded in Iraq by **Alabama National Guardsmen**, there was apprehension aplenty, he said.

"When we found out it was a Guard unit, the basic feeling was, this is gonna be interesting," Harris said Sunday. "And then when we heard that they were a unit from

Prattville, Ala., we all said, "This should be really interesting."

Once his company got to the desert and began working for the 231st, Harris said those concerns quickly evaporated.

"This group is very professional in how they do business. They think things through, they are very supportive; in fact, they bend over backward to support you."

Harris said that may be in part because the Guardsmen are trying harder to earn the respect of the regular army soldiers.

"I can tell you that there are active-duty battalion headquarters that are not nearly at their level," said Harris. "And the 231st are right here with us, working as hard as we do, in as much danger as we're in."

Equally complimentary was Capt. Kevin Hanrahan, 30, of Whitman, Mass., commander of the 127th MP Company based in Hanau, Germany.

"They started with a disadvantage because there is an active-duty network that you have to penetrate to get things done," said Hanrahan. "It's as simple as this: Regular-Army people know other regular-Army people. But the 231st is very high up on that learning curve."

Commanding the battalion headquarters, and therefore calling the shots for the over 500 men and women in the companies under his command, is Lt. Col. Chuck Gailes. Back in the real world, Gailes is chief of campus police at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. He lives in Huntsville with his wife, Susan, and their children, 11-year-old Chip and 18-year-old Monica.

"I knew we'd have to prove ourselves," said Gailes. "I'd like to think that we have exceeded expectations."

But Gailes said his soldiers don't try harder just to please the regular Army folks.

"I think we are doing our best because of this environment," he said Sunday. "We're over here in a war and there's very little tolerance for error."

Sgt. Major Billy Lee, 55, who lives in Tuscaloosa with his wife, Jacki, and son, Adam, said he expected some friction with the regular Army units. He had heard that some active duty soldiers would not take kindly to orders from the Guard.

But Lee said that the only problem Guard soldiers have encountered had to do with observing military formalities.

"Some of our younger ones didn't properly address some of their NCOs (non-commissioned officers) and they got their butts chewed, as they should have," said Lee, a biology teacher and football coach at Caledonia High School in Caledonia, Miss.

"Otherwise, we all just fell right in."

Lee said the Guard's soldiers gain an edge because they can draw on richer life experiences. "For instance, if we have a professional carpenter working for us, when we get in a place like this where we need something built, we can draw on that expertise," said Lee. "The regular Army troops are usually younger and they've known only one job, and that's being a soldier."

Spc. Kenneth Harrison, 22, who lives in Mt. Vernon, Ala., with his wife Sunny, is a chaplain's assistant for the battalion.

"One of the main differences between us and the regular Army is that there is more of a family environment," said Harrison, a student at the University of Mobile and youth minister at Lockler Memorial Baptist Church. "We're closer knit."

He also observed that the Guard's informality can sometimes clash with the regular Army's spit and polish. "They are at one extreme and I suppose we are at the other, and there is a happy medium somewhere in the middle."

Spc. Charmelle Luckie, 19, agreed.

She joined the Guard the day before graduating from Montgomery's Sidney Lanier High School, and now serves as a communications specialist for the battalion. She works mainly on computers.

"The regular Army is more intense and uptight, and the soldiers seem to be kind of tense," Luckie said. "I think we're more relaxed and a little more friendly."

That may be due in part to Southern manners, said Luckie, who lives with her mom, Rosa Wright of Montgomery.

"Those other soldiers are from all over the place."

Lt. Col. Gailes said the primary mission of his battalion is to train and coach Iraqi police officers. His soldiers also run convoy and prisoner escorts, and provide security for the Iraqi Survey Group, the task force that continues to comb Iraq for weapons of mass destruction.

The affable and mannerly Gailes, often seen in the chow hall chatting with younger soldiers, said he spends most of his days dealing with the Iraqi police leadership and visiting their stations in Baghdad.

In other words, he spends most of his time outside the relative safety of Camp Graceland.

Since the battalion headquarters arrived in March, his MP companies have suffered seven casualties. One soldier was wounded by a rocket, one was injured by a mortar round, and two were hurt by roadside bombs. An explosion at a chemical factory wounded two soldiers and killed another. What caused that explosion isn't known.

"It's been tough, but we've also been lucky," he said.

**The Guard Goes to War; Untimely Death Rattles
Fellow Soldiers**

[Back to Table of Contents.](#)

Los Angeles Times

June 21, 2004

By Monte Morin

Iskandariyah, Iraq

Blackouts are ordered at night. Even flashlights are forbidden. Conspicuous landmarks are dismantled. Officers tell their men not to salute them, for fear they will be targeted by lurking snipers.

In the wake of a mortar barrage that killed California **National Guard** Spc. Daniel Paul Unger nearly four weeks ago, life has changed drastically at Forward Operating Base Kalsu, a scar of bulldozed earth and rubble that is home to Corona's Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 185th Armor Regiment.

Life is also different at the unit's brigade headquarters in Balad, about 68 miles north of Baghdad. There, on Wednesday, a rocket streaked into the Anaconda logistical base and exploded in a crowd of off-duty soldiers, killing three and wounding 26 others.

The explosion, which hurled shrapnel through walls, plate glass windows and vehicles, prompted commanders to order their soldiers to wear flak vests and helmets at all times. That particularly uncomfortable precaution was instituted as temperatures climbed well above 100 degrees.

There were no Californians among the casualties from Wednesday's attack, although a number are based in the camp, which is home to about 17,000 troops from several units.

Base Kalsu, roughly 20 miles south of Baghdad, is along the bottom of the volatile Sunni Triangle. The camp is just east of the Euphrates River in the heart of the Fertile Crescent, a vast swath of lush farmland and grape orchards nourished by a network of canals. Although the rural countryside the soldiers patrol is breathtaking, the base itself is bare of all vegetation and is home to only a cluster of tents.

The tents are riddled with shrapnel holes, but living quarters have been reinforced with a triple layer of sandbags. And the death of the first California National Guardsman in a combat role since the Korean War has weighed heavily on the minds of some soldiers.

Four other California **National Guard** troops, assigned to support units, also have died since the U.S. occupation of Iraq began.

"When you get attacked, that's a life-altering event," said Maj. John McBrearty, executive officer of the 1-185th, and a screenwriter in civilian life. "You realize quick that this isn't fun and games. This isn't summer camp anymore."

"A lot of guys look up at the ceiling of their tent a lot," said Platoon Sgt. David Harpst, 38, a postal employee from Oceanside. "They're wondering what's going to come through it."

Still other guardsmen complain bitterly that the attack was made all the more deadly by bureaucratic inertia within the Coalition Provisional Authority, the U.S.-led entity that now governs Iraq. The coalition, soldiers and officers say, prevented the Army from removing a towering network of antennas that once populated the base. The structures, they say, were probably used as reference points in guiding the mortars onto Kalsu.

"You could see those things seven kilometers away," said one soldier. "To have them

there was just asking to be hit."

The towers were a remnant of the first Gulf War, when the base was an Iraqi air defense and radar station that was heavily bombed. About a dozen antennas survived. Towering more than 300 feet over the base, they were connected by a Rube Goldberg network of wires and piping.

Before the **National Guard's** arrival in Kalsu roughly two months ago, the 82nd Airborne Division had occupied the base and requested permission to remove the towers on the grounds that they made the small base visible from a great distance. The request was denied by the coalition, according to 81st Brigade Combat Team officers, because the towers were part of Iraq's infrastructure.

After the May 25 mortar attack, another request to remove the structures was approved within days. Explosives were strapped to the base of each antenna and detonated, sending the structures crashing to the ground.

Soldiers in Unger's unit said they felt more at ease, but were still troubled that the towers had not been removed earlier.

"I guess it took three deaths for them to change their minds," McBrearty said.

As part of the 81st Brigade Combat Team, members of Unger's unit, Alpha Company, are among the more than 4,000 California and Washington **National Guard** troops charged with defending strategic points along the military's main supply route between Kuwait and Baghdad.

As the U.S. occupation drags on, regular Army and Marine units have been replaced by "citizen soldiers" from the reserves and **National Guard**, who now make up nearly half of U.S. forces in Iraq. The guard units include more than 1,000 soldiers from Southern California.

Alpha Company is stationed in one of Iraq's most rustic forward operating bases, a place that even commanders describe in stark, scatological language.

At Kalsu, water shortages caused by insurgents are commonplace. One Iraqi contractor who delivered water to the base was ambushed and killed last week. Another had his hands chopped off as punishment for aiding Americans.

Unger's unit had been stationed at Kalsu for almost two months before the May 25 attack, and up until then, soldiers said they had faced only haphazard launches of mortars and rockets, which caused few casualties.

"They were pretty much amateurs," said Sgt. Daniel McNasby, 30, of Norco. "On the 25th, though, they were dead center. These guys were professionals."

The attack began shortly after 3 p.m., when soldiers at Kalsu's front gate heard the hollow thump of mortars being launched. At first, they thought the mortars were being fired from the base by U.S. soldiers.

But within seconds, the shells began exploding inside the camp, landing on tents, slamming into vehicles and flinging deadly shrapnel through the air.

At the time of the initial blasts, Unger was supervising a group of Iraqis who were

cleaning the camp's showers. As the first mortars exploded, the workers appeared stunned and did not move. Unger shouted at them to run and directed them to a nearby bunker.

Just as the Iraqis found cover, a chunk of shrapnel punched through Unger's chest, dropping him to the ground. As Unger lay mortally wounded, the barrage continued, keeping medics and fellow soldiers pinned inside their bunkers or sending them dashing for cover.

A medic, Sgt. Les Mershon, 43, of Blythe, said he was tortured by the sounds of men screaming for help.

"The worst feeling you can ever have is to be running for a bunker or sitting in a bunker when the mortars are dropping," said Mershon, who works in a prison psychiatric unit in civilian life. "There's nothing you can do, and guys are calling for a medic."

In five to ten minutes, 20 mortar shells crashed into the base, killing two Vermont National Guardsmen from another unit and injuring a dozen others. The barrage also destroyed a makeshift mess hall and wrecked more than 20 vehicles.

Once the mortars stopped falling, medics struggled to keep Unger alive, but his wounds were too serious. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.

Unger, who friends say was cheerful and deeply religious, has been greatly missed by his fellow soldiers, some of whom went to high school with him. A skilled center fielder, Unger had dreamed of playing college baseball, but passed on a scholarship so that he could serve in Iraq.

McNasby, who played college baseball, said Unger once challenged him to a throwing contest to see who had the better arm. The two hurled practice grenades as far as they could.

"He out-threw me by 2 or 3 feet," said McNasby, who works for Aon Corp. in Los Angeles. "It was like he won a million dollars. He was gloating and so happy that he out-threw someone who played college ball. He would have made a great baseball player."

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

[Back to Table of Contents.](#)

Money Pouring Into Soldiers' Return Fund

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

June 18, 2004, Friday, BC cycle

Baton Rouge, La.

Louisianians have given \$146,221 and pledged another \$67,531 in a fund-raising drive for buses to bring home the 256th Infantry Brigade home from Fort Hood, Texas.

The 3,000 **National Guard** soldiers are in Texas training for deployment to Iraq. Soldiers normally must pay their own travel while on leave, and many planned to stay at Fort

Hood, about 55 miles north of Austin, to save money for their families. Many are dealing with tighter budgets because military pay is often lower than what guardsmen earn in their civilian jobs, and their employers are not legally required to make up the difference.

The total of \$213,752 is more than the estimated \$192,000 cost of picking up the soldiers, busing them to 17 communities through Acadiana and north Louisiana on July 1 and returning them to the Texas base July 8.

Any excess not spent on the buses will go into a special fund to pay for any emergencies the families might face during the 18 months the troops are expected to be deployed, said Melissa McCormick of the governor's staff.

"If, say, a daughter needs surgery while the soldier is deployed, the Office of Family Services could pay for it."

The goal of Operation Independence Day was \$175,000 when the fund-raising drive was announced two weeks ago. But that was based on early estimates. The 256th has its headquarters in Lafayette. President Bush mobilized the unit in May.

Guard Duty Changes Business Partner's Work Routine

[Back to Table of Contents.](#)

Associated Press

June 20, 2004

Birmingham, Ala.

Army Maj. Curtis Faulk's departure Monday for Alabama **National Guard** duty leaves his business partner with a vacancy that will be filled by a friendly competitor.

Faulk, preparing for at least a year of duty in Afghanistan, is half of the two-man J.K. Terry & Co. landscape architecture and land planning firm.

"We've struggled to stay small, but I didn't want to get this small," Terry said.

When the heads of Dungan Nequette Architects heard about J.K. Terry's predicament, they helped Terry come up with a solution.

While Faulk is away, Terry will operate out of Dungan Nequette's offices. Through an alliance, the companies will operate together with Dungan Nequette giving J.K. Terry the assistance it needs to complete work for its clients.

"We have respected and admired their work for so long now and have even toyed with the idea of bringing the companies together before," said Jeff Dungan, principal with Dungan Nequette. "It may never have happened if Curtis's situation hadn't occurred."

Faulk said the arrangement is reassuring, knowing he's not leaving Terry in an impossible position.

Faulk heads for mobilization preparation in Indiana and expects to go to Afghanistan in April.

He joins 32 Alabama Army **National Guard** members who make up the 62nd Troop Command Combat Support Battalion Two Forward. Those soldiers will be working with the 76th Infantry Brigade out of Indiana to train Afghanistan's military forces to be the country's own standing army when the U.S. military eventually pulls its troops out.

Terry said he always knew there was a chance Faulk would be activated. He said he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I know when Curtis was interviewing with other firms before he came to work with me, they looked at his resume and asked him how much longer he had his **National Guard** obligation," Terry said. "I looked at it and realized it was part of who Curtis is and I embraced it."

For eight years, Terry said the two have worked around Faulk's **National Guard** obligations and it has never been an inconvenience until now.

Terry said although his change of scenery will not be as dramatic as Faulk's, he is excited about what the next year could mean for his company.

"I'm looking forward to surrounding myself with the creative environment this new place offers and use it as an opportunity to let me and Curtis grow," he said.

But there should be no concern about Faulk's job when his active duty military service ends.

"The day Curtis gets back, he's going to already be behind with work to do," Dungan said. "I can promise him that."

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH AFTERMATH

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

New Veterans Adjust From Battleground to Workplace Some Don't Recover Jobs

USA Today

June 18, 2004, Friday through Sunday

By: Stephanie Armour

Just more than a year ago, Larry Tentinger was a Navy reservist in Iraq overseeing medical care for nearly 1,000 Marines. The senior corpsman passed his days riding a Humvee into combat and surviving the gunmen who lurked in the city.

Today, he is back at his job as an assistant professor in the education school at the University of South Dakota. Now, his biggest concern is mentoring students; once, it was keeping soldiers alive.

"Coming back to work is a bit of an adjustment," says Tentinger, 54, of Beresford, S.D., whose platoon was one of the first to enter Baghdad. "A soldier has to accept his own mortality. I had time to reflect on what's really important. I find myself wanting to spread

the message not to take what we have for granted."

In the largest troop rotation of reserve forces since World War II, tens of thousands of reservists and **National Guard** members who served Iraq and Afghanistan are returning to civilian jobs -- making the transition from the battlefields to the workplace.

Many of these civilian soldiers are trying to pick up where they left off. More than 387,000 people have been called up since Sept. 11, 2001. Nearly 233,000 have been demobilized; about 155,000 remain on active duty. Most are members of the Guard or reserves called up for the war on terrorism.

In the first Iraq war, 265,000 were called up for Operation Desert Storm.

Returning to work is a radical shift. These soldiers have spent months at war, where they've helped establish elected government councils in cities in Iraq, tended to wounded soldiers, built schools for children whose only homes are mud huts, gone weeks without showers and ridden across the desert in dusty convoys for days. Now, in a matter of days or months, they're transformed back into employees.

They are grade school teachers, chemical engineers, mail carriers, state senators, members of the clergy and trial lawyers. Some are retirement age; others are young mothers and fathers.

"Most companies welcome them back, and that's good," says Lou Leto of the Reserve Officers Association, a member-based non-profit in Washington. "But a lot of time, there is friction. Getting back -- often it's a psychological challenge. Your life has been in jeopardy every day, you've seen things you'd rather not see. It helps put work and other things in perspective."

Some jobs gone

Many get a hero's welcome from employers, including being showered with extra benefits, letters of praise from CEOs and gifts for their families.

Others have returned to find that, in this competitive economy, their companies have closed and their jobs are gone. Some have fought in Iraq only to face an equally tough battle at home: legal entanglements with employers who deny them their jobs or benefits.

Brandon Ratliff, 31, survived his nine-month tour in Afghanistan as an Army reservist. It was the fight to get his job back that cost him his life, his family says.

Before deploying, Ratliff had been told, according to his mother and the family's lawyer, Jason Blue, that he would get a promotion with the Department of Health in Columbus, Ohio, where he worked as a coordinator overseeing programs aimed at reducing sexually transmitted diseases. His promotion would have elevated him to management, Blue says. But when he returned, he was denied the promotion and assigned mostly menial tasks, they say.

On March 18, Ratliff shot himself. Veterans groups and his mother say his death shows the need for greater attention to issues facing those returning from service.

The problems getting his job back "played a great role" in his death, says his mother, Susan Coats. "He'd hoped to make a career at the health department. He'd seen horrific things. He saw a buddy blown up by a landmine. He saw men skinned alive. He carried

body parts . . . then he learned his job had been given to someone else. He was very upset."

The city attorney's office says Ratliff was returned to his current position, as required by federal law, and that the position he had thought he'd have was eliminated because of city budget cuts. The Department of Labor continues to investigate the case.

Since Ratliff's death, the mayor's office has stepped up efforts to assist returning veterans.

Reservists' rights

The returning reservists present the largest test of a 1994 law strengthening employment protections for uniformed service members. The law basically ensures that employees called to do military service for a stretch of less than five years have a right to their jobs back. Returning soldiers can get up to 90 days off before going back to work, and they're entitled to the same pension benefits as if they had never been away.

While more soldiers are filing complaints against employers, the increase can be traced to the higher number of reservists and Guard members serving today, government officials say. Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, about 3,500 complaints have been received by the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, which enforces the 1994 law. The rate of complaints is more than 20% lower, however, than in Desert Storm.

The National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, which mediates complaints from soldiers and handles requests for information about the law, fields about 2,000 inquiries a month. Most of those are for general information.

"As our troops defend our freedom and security around the world, we are doing everything we can to protect the employment rights of guardsmen and reservists here at home," Department of Labor Secretary Elaine Chao said in a statement. "These brave men and women are putting their lives on the line in the war against terrorism, and supporting them is an integral part of our commitment to the effort."

Facing legal battles

But some returning Guard members and reservists are hiring lawyers and filing lawsuits in an effort to secure jobs or draw attention to the issues facing returning veterans.

Reservists' rights

The returning reservists present the largest test of a 1994 law strengthening employment protections for uniformed service members. The law basically ensures that employees called to do military service for a stretch of less than five years have a right to their jobs back. Returning soldiers can get up to 90 days off before going back to work, and they're entitled to the same pension benefits as if they had never been away.

While more soldiers are filing complaints against employers, the increase can be traced to the higher number of reservists and Guard members serving today, government officials say. Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, about 3,500 complaints have been received by the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, which enforces the 1994 law. The rate of complaints is more than 20% lower, however, than in Desert Storm.

The National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, which mediates complaints from soldiers and handles requests for information about the law, fields about 2,000 inquiries a month. Most of those are for general information.

"As our troops defend our freedom and security around the world, we are doing everything we can to protect the employment rights of guardsmen and reservists here at home," Department of Labor Secretary Elaine Chao said in a statement. "These brave men and women are putting their lives on the line in the war against terrorism, and supporting them is an integral part of our commitment to the effort."

Facing legal battles

But some returning Guard members and reservists are hiring lawyers and filing lawsuits in an effort to secure jobs or draw attention to the issues facing returning veterans.

They're soldiers such as Ron Vander Wal, of Pollock, S.D., who in March returned from active duty in Iraq. He sought to return to his telephone customer-service job at a Bismarck, N.D., facility of Sykes Enterprises, but was told "there were no positions available to him," according to a lawsuit. The lawsuit also says Sykes sought to replace veterans with lower-paid workers.

A Sykes spokesman says Vander Wal was told he'd have a job, but not the one he'd left, and that he would get training for the new job. He is currently working at Sykes.

Some have no recourse.

In March 2003, National Guardsman Michael Dickenson, 24, was called to active duty in Iraq. He had just bought a house in Superior, Wis., and his son, Nicholas, was almost 1. He left before moving into the new place or witnessing Nicholas' birthday.

He left his home for the desert of Nasiriyah. There, he worked as an administrative specialist helping to rebuild schools and irrigation work. He was comforted knowing that his full-time union job in the warehouse of Fleming Foods was secure. Then his wife got a letter. His employer had gone bankrupt and was closing. His job was gone.

"It was a concern for me. It was a good job, with health benefits, and it paid \$18 an hour," Dickenson says.

He returned home in April and decided to focus full time on college; he hopes to graduate next year with a degree in chemical engineering. His wife, Jaimi, is also a full-time college student and Guard member. A state program for displaced workers is paying his schooling, and he collects unemployment, but that's \$329 a week, less than half what he made before.

And he worries that being in the Guard might hurt him when it comes time to find work again.

"Being a Guardsman may hinder employability. An employer can't legally hold it against us, but it's got to be in the back of their minds, that you could have a year deployment and be away," he says. "I'm concerned."

Workplace friction

But for many, the return to work is more about getting up to speed and fitting in again. For some, there is stress: Returning reservists may displace the employee who held their

job in their absence, creating friction.

"It's difficult for doctors, who can lose their practice, or people who run their own business. It's hard," says Leto.

Some return better leaders because of what they've seen and done; others say the workplace can seem trivial after focusing on life-or-death decisions every day.

"They've been in a rough-and-ready and aggressive mood. They'll have to shed that way of doing things," says Stephen Colarelli, professor of psychology at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant and author of *No Best Way: An Evolutionary Perspective on Human Resource Management*.

Some go back quickly. John Pippy was running as a Republican to fill a new seat in the Pennsylvania Senate when he was called up to serve in the reserves. He was elected while on active duty. He took the oath of office during a leave of absence in March 2003 and then was sent to Kuwait and Iraq to serve as a commanding officer on a road-building project.

After about nine months, he returned to the USA and political office. The day after he came home, he was in meetings.

"If you'd told me I'd be called up in the middle of an election, I wouldn't have believed you," says Pippy, 33. "The hardest part of returning is, it's hard to separate my feelings as a soldier from the political issues. You always think about the people who are still over there."

Others take more time to make the transition back. In June, Jeff Cantor returned to his job as a district sales manager at AstraZeneca after 15 months in Iraq. His company has made it easy: While he was gone, co-workers sent him care packages, and AstraZeneca flew his wife and children to a national product-launch meeting in Hawaii to address his co-workers about reservist issues.

After a year of helping build a new local government in oil-rich Kirkuk as a civil-affairs commander, Cantor now oversees a sales team.

In some way, he says, the jobs are similar.

"There, I sold democracy to the people. I used my sales skills," says Cantor, of Marlboro, N.J., father to Samantha, 7, and Nicole, 4. "I've learned things that will serve me the rest of my life, such as dealing with different types of people.

"And at least I don't have people shooting at me."

Town Supports Departing Troops

[*Back to Table of Contents*](#)

Chattanooga Times Free Press (Tennessee)

June 20, 2004

By Edward Lee Pitts

Athens, Tenn.

When hundreds of **National Guard** soldiers here begin their deployment Friday, they will be taking a community with them.

Since members of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment first learned they were heading to Iraq, donated items have poured into the armory. Now parts of the concrete building look more like a Wal-Mart stockroom than a military installation.

"I didn't even know there were that many churches and businesses in the county," said Donna Cagle, whose husband is in the unit.

Boxes overflow with toilet tissue, sunblock, toothpaste, foot powder, snacks, deodorant, shaving cream, chewing gum, journals, envelopes, playing cards and even baby wipes.

"Whoever invented baby wipes, I could kiss them in the face," said Capt. Reid Brock. "I've taken many a bath with just baby wipes."

He said the soldiers will cram as many items as they can into their packs before leaving.

Churches already have held tribute musicals, a local motorcycle club planned a tribute ride through town this weekend and the local VFW is hosting a barbecue. The final send-off for the troops Friday will include bands, and streets all the way to Interstate 75 are expected to be lined with crowds holding balloons and flags.

"People want to make sure these guys have the best," Mrs. Cagle said. "Even people who can't afford it are going out of their way to support us."

Families also have kept busy by helping with deployment preparations, according to Pam Duggan, whose two sons are in the 278th.

"A lot of us don't watch the news or listen to the radio," Mrs. Duggan said while taking a break last week from sorting through the donations. "We don't want to be involved with what's going on in Iraq, because that could really drag us down."

Pfc. Terry Walker, 40, said he is going to rely on his local church to help raise his four boys, ages 10 to 15, while he is gone.

"I'm the main force in their lives. We do everything together," he said. "If their grades start slipping or their behavior is bad, I know it will be directly related to my being away. I only hope they will adjust."

Spc. Jake Whatley, who joined the **National Guard** to pay for college, said he is lucky to be single so the deployment only will disrupt his education.

"I was 20 years old going to school for free, and who in their right mind would want to leave that?" he said. "I was enjoying myself."

Spc. Whatley said he was a little apprehensive about the deployment.

"But I'd rather do this while I'm young," he said. "A lot of guys have been here 20 years, and this is their first deployment. I've been in the unit for 18 months, and my bags are packed."

Staff Sgt. Ronald Price, who still has his great-great-grandfather's discharge papers from the Civil War, said he is not surprised by the community's support because Athens has a

great military tradition.

"Citizens in this state have paid a lot of money for me to wear this uniform," Sgt. Price said. "It is time for me to pay back. I owe that."

Dads On The Homefront; When Mom Goes Of To War

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

June 20, 2004

By Richard Wronski,

Tom Remakel is part of a phenomenon in American families, though at the moment he is more concerned with getting his children to T-ball, day care and bed.

Because his wife, Jody, is on an 18-month deployment with the U.S. Army overseas, Remakel is a father temporarily on his own, raising Michael, 3, and Katie, 6, in the small Kane County community of Hampshire.

"It's a little odd that she's the one that's gone and not me," said Remakel, 38. "But I think that has a lot to do with what's happened in the world and how roles have changed."

Remakel is one of untold thousands of American men at home this Father's Day while their wives are on military duty. Figures are not available on the number of female soldiers married to civilians, but in 2002 about 29,000 married women with children were active-duty soldiers, according to Army figures.

Researchers are just beginning to study how families are affected by women going off to war, a circumstance first widely noted in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, experts say.

"Fathers face more of a challenge [with deployment] because many moms do most of the child care and coordinating the household," said Shelley MacDermid, director of the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University.

"When mom gets deployed, dad gets a fairly unfamiliar task. Coordinating trips to the doctor, day care--it can be a complicated puzzle," she said. "There's also an opportunity here for dads to develop a better relationship as a primary parent."

Couples in general can experience a high degree of conflict over work and family issues, especially over the father's contribution compared with the mother's, said Joan Williams, director of the Program on WorkLife Law at American University's Washington College of Law.

"A reason the fathers don't do more is they are not clued in and don't know what the mothers are doing," Williams said. "That ends abruptly when a mother goes off to war."

The Remakels' carefully choreographed home life might make a good case study. Iowa natives, they've lived in the Chicago area for several years, the last five in Hampshire. The placid community abounds with grass, bikes, children and helpful neighbors.

Before Jody Remakel went overseas, the couple worked out a detailed schedule of day

care and baby-sitters, and they lined up lawn care, housekeeping and laundry services to give Tom as much time with the children as possible. They felt it was important to maintain their children's routine.

"One of the things Jody did before she left was basically try to set things up so that when I do get home, I don't have to worry about a lot of household stuff," Remakel said. "Jody did an excellent job so I can spend time with the children."

Remakel's bosses at Metropolitan Family Services, a social service agency in downtown Chicago where he is a computer consultant, have given him somewhat flexible hours. "They've been very understanding of my situation," he said. "It's been a good relationship."

Jody Remakel, 37, is a chief warrant officer and member of the **National Guard's** 33rd Area Support Group. She was called to active duty in February and is a liaison officer on a base in Uzbekistan, near Afghanistan. Many of her duties involve humanitarian efforts. An 18-year military veteran, she previously served in the Army Reserve and spent time in South Korea and Germany.

"We support what she's doing and think what's happening [in Iraq] is the right thing," Remakel said. "Are we glad she's in a safer area? Absolutely."

The couple keep in touch by telephone once a week and by e-mail every day or two. Most satisfying, Remakel said, are the digital photos they regularly e-mail each other.

It all helps Michael and Katie cope well despite their mother's absence, Remakel said. "We've explained [to them] that it's the right thing for her as part of her military career," he said. "Jody was doing the stay-at-home-mom thing prior to getting deployed. But we tell them Mom now has to go work overseas and help fight the bad guys."

Elaine Donnelly, head of the Livonia, Mich.-based Center for Military Readiness, which opposes women in combat, said studies are needed over the long-term effects on children and parents who are separated because of military service.

"There are an awful lot of single parents or unstable families who have makeshift arrangements. The military has very little concern for them," Donnelly said. "We need good studies and good data especially now that these deployments are more common."

Cases like the Remakels' are part of the evolution of the American family, said Jay Lebow, a clinical associate professor at Northwestern University and president of the Division of Family Psychology at the American Psychological Association.

"All gender roles are in flux, and there is now a very high percentage of families where mothers and fathers work," Lebow said. "Women have more jobs these days where they travel for work, and some have very demanding work schedules."

Families are quite resilient and typically find ways to adapt to new circumstances, he said.

"Men are light-years away from where they were a century or even a generation ago," Lebow said. "Men are more able to adapt these days."

On a warm June evening, Michael is riding a battery-powered miniature motorcycle with a neighbor across the street. In between complaining about her sandals--"They drive me

nuts," she says--Katie draws and plays a game with Dad.

On Sunday, Remakel and the children will visit the grandparents in Dubuque. While the youngsters play with their cousins, Remakel will get a respite.

"My little Father's Day present," he said, "will be to go with my brother-in-law to rent a Harley and do some riding."

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROS

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Love Of Military Drove Soldier

Washington Post
June 17, 2004

Sergeant Killed in Iraq Had a Lifelong Desire to Serve

By Jason Ukman

Washington

The military was life for Sgt. Ryan Doltz, 26, of Mine Hill, N.J., something he lived and breathed, something he believed in. He attended Virginia Military Institute and joined the New Jersey Army National Guard. When the call came for his unit to go to Iraq, he went, even though heel injuries had threatened to keep him stateside.

"He loved the military. He always wanted everything military," said his mother, Cheryl Doltz. "It only seemed fitting that he be buried at a military cemetery."

Her son was laid to rest yesterday at Arlington National Cemetery, two weeks after being killed in Baghdad's Sadr City with another member of the National Guard's 3rd Battalion of the 112th Field Artillery. He and Sgt. Humberto F. Timoteo, 25, of Newark died June 5 in a roadside bombing.

Under cloudy skies, scores of New Jersey National Guard soldiers and VMI cadets lifted their hands in salute to Doltz, the 68th casualty of the Iraq war to be buried at Arlington. The funeral party was a sea of uniforms, and the cortege comprised countless cars and five buses. Both U.S. senators from New Jersey were there.

Doltz, a specialist who posthumously was given the rank of sergeant, had political aspirations of his own. He had said he wanted to run for mayor of Mine Hill, a town of 3,700 about 35 miles west of New York City, and the words "president of the United States" had passed his lips on occasion. He thought he could make a difference, his mother said.

After his graduation from VMI and a stint in the Virginia National Guard, he returned to his home town, where he and his brother, Greg, 25, were members of the volunteer first aid squad there. His sister, Anne, is 31.

Doltz kept in touch after he shipped out to Iraq. He would call home once or twice a week, usually after he returned to base from a mission. "We're doing the right thing," he

would tell his family. "This is where we should be."

In his view, many of Iraq's problems could be traced to teenagers, whom he saw as troublemakers. He wanted to make an impression on the next generation. "If we can convince them that what we're doing was right, it will change everything," his mother recounted him saying. He carried candy around Baghdad and distributed it to children, hoping they would see Americans as their friends and not their enemies.

If Doltz called and no one was home, he wouldn't leave a message, but caller ID always tipped off his mother. He had called on June 4, she said. Two members of the New Jersey National Guard had been killed that day, and Cheryl Doltz later realized that he had called to let her know he was okay. The next day brought worse news, however, and Cheryl Doltz said she knew it the moment she saw the chaplain and military officer at her door.

At the burial, she and her husband, Raymond, sat with the rest of their family in chairs covered in crushed green velvet. After remarks by a chaplain, seven riflemen fired three volleys into the air. The adjutant general of New Jersey, Brig. Gen. Glenn K. Reith, knelt near Cheryl Doltz and presented her with the flag that had draped her son's coffin, as well as testaments to his service, a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart.

Most of the funeral party left Doltz's grave site shortly after the presentation, but his family remained for a few moments before the coffin was lowered.

GENERAL

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Missouri Bosses Get a Taste of the Army Life

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

June 20, 2004

By Repps Hudson

Fort Benning, Ga.

Pentagon program flies managers and owners to military bases to observe training, with the hope that they'll support employees called up.

Dudley Miller, a businessman from Mexico, Mo., said he'd never had contact with the military. His ideas about the armed services were based largely on popular movies and TV shows, such as "M*A*S*H."

"I probably had more of a bad impression of the military as being wasteful. I just felt it was poorly run," said Miller, 59, who owns Mexico Heating Co., which installs commercial and industrial heating systems.

But a three-day trip this month to an Army infantry-training center was an eye-opener for Miller and 33 other Missouri employers, managers and a few spouses.

The trip, Missouri Bosslift 2004, is an annual event. Last year, a different group of bosses visited Whiteman Air Force Base near Knob Noster, Mo.

The purpose is to educate and woo employers whose workers might be called to active duty as members of the **National Guard** or Reserve.

"Without the draft, a lot of people have not been subjected to getting military experience at all. No one in their family has been in the military," said Steve Vanderhoof, a lieutenant colonel in the Missouri **National Guard** and a program-support specialist with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

Operation Bosslift is organized, led and sponsored by the Missouri Committee for the ESGR, which is part of the Defense Department. Other states have similar programs.

"We want you to come away with a better idea of what the military does," Loran Schnaidt, chairman of the Missouri committee and a retired major general of the Missouri Air **National Guard**, told the group from Missouri.

The employer-support group works to ease tensions for reservists and Guard members who must leave their civilian jobs. Such call-ups can cause big headaches for companies. It can be worse for small companies that lose one or more key people to active duty.

The message from the Army to the business owners and managers reinforced the often-heard plea that employers should find ways to support reservists and Guard members who are on active duty, sometimes for a year or more.

"We appreciate your support," said Capt. Jonathan E. Miller, the group's escort officer. "Army, **National Guard**, Reserves. It's all one fight."

Federal law protects workers called to active duty. They must be able to return to a job or position of similar pay. Employers cannot discriminate against reservists or Guard members when hiring.

The two-hour flights to Georgia and back to Lambert Field were in a Missouri Air **National Guard** C-130H transport from the 180th Airlift Squadron, based at Rosecrans Field in St. Joseph.

Like many civilians on the trip, Miller learned about basic training as well as the new fatigue uniforms and the protective combat gear soldiers wear in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He sat through classes on how soldiers use simulators to train for the Abrams tank and the Bradley fighting vehicle. He ate noon chow at the mess hall with first-day trainees at Sand Hill, this post's basic and advanced infantry-training area.

He watched trainees in camouflage rappel down a wall, wriggle along a suspended rope in an obstacle course under a 95-degree Georgia sun and fire their M-16 rifles at pop-up targets.

He saw trainees learn how to enter a building, rifles at the ready, then low-crawl along a house -- all in preparation for urban warfare in Iraqi and Afghan villages and cities.

"We're real serious," said Lt. Col. John McCarthy, commanding officer of the training battalion. "From here, some of these men will draw desert fatigues and be on their way to Iraq."

During a question session with the Missouri visitors in a barracks, First Sgt. Earl Moore of Delta Company was asked what problems he sees in new soldiers.

Some have not learned self-discipline, he said. Sometimes he calls a problem trainee's home and asks a parent to talk with the son or daughter. Another issue: Many new recruits are out of shape.

The bosses and managers had plenty of other times to ask questions, too.

Why do soldiers join the military when there's no draft?

Capt. Kimball Lewis, whose company of trainees was learning how to fight in cities, said each trainee must fill out a questionnaire that asks that question.

"They say, 'My life wasn't going anywhere.' Only a few of them say they want to get educational benefits," he said. "Most of them want to get their lives on a different track."

Capt. Randy Garcia, whose training company was firing live ammunition at pop-up targets shaped like human torsos, said he advises trainees to make a new life in the Army.

"In civilian life, people hold what you did against you," said Garcia, 33. "Here, if you do well, you can start over."

Susan Green, 48, emergency management coordinator for Cole County and Jefferson City, said the trip strengthened her support of those Reserve and **National Guard** members who must go on active duty. She works with firefighters, emergency medical technicians and law-enforcement personnel, some of whom are in the Reserve and **National Guard**.

"We like the way we live," Green said. "We should be willing to honor the person who was chosen" for active duty.

On the return flight to St. Louis, Miller expressed a new respect for the military.

"It is more organized than I thought," he said. "Those guys were more professional than I thought they'd be. . . . They eat and sleep this stuff."

=== Called to duty

Source: Defense Department

The total **National Guard** and military reserve personnel on active duty, as of June 16:

Missouri 4,455

Illinois 4,049

United States 160,956