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Weekly News for National Guard Families

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Websites:

National Guard Family Program Online Communities for families and youth:

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

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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> (Note to those viewing this page in **Word or PDF format:** You must copy this address and paste it into your browser's address window.)

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)

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

<http://www.armyds3.org>

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.

'Red Arrows,' Straight and True; Wisconsin National Guard Unit Enjoys a Quiet Night Before Deployment Overseas

Saint Paul Pioneer Press

June 22, 2004

By Kevin Harter

ST. Paul, Minn.

There was no flag-waving fanfare for the departing soldiers of the River Falls-based **National Guard** Company D, 1st Battalion 128th Infantry on Monday.

But that's exactly what the 66 Guard members wanted, said Capt. Michael P. Lindvall, 38, a computer programmer from White Bear Lake.

"They just wanted some time together," said Lindvall of his charges, who include at least five sets of brothers and a host of University of Wisconsin-River Falls students.

"This is a good group, and we've had good community support," said Lindvall, who will be leaving behind his wife, Lisa, and 3-year-old daughter, Abigail.

The anti-armor company and five others make up the Eau Claire-based 1st Battalion, which totals about 680 soldiers. They have been activated for up to 18 months, and after training in Mississippi and California will go overseas to one of several destinations, including Afghanistan or Iraq.

The mobilization brings the number of Wisconsin Guard members and air personnel on active duty to 1,380. Almost half of the Guard's total force in the state has served on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001.

If it is deployed as expected, it will be the first time since World War II that a Wisconsin Guard combat unit has served overseas. Known as the "Red Arrow" Infantry Brigade, the Wisconsin Guard then saw combat for 654 consecutive days.

"Our history goes back to the Civil War," Lindvall said. "It's a proud history."

Current Guard members and several hundred family and friends gathered Monday in the **National Guard** Armory on Division Street in River Falls for quiet conversation and dinner.

Sgt. Brian Jorgensen, 25, an Afton, Minn., native now living in New Richmond, sat down on a folding chair for a farewell dinner of hot dogs, scalloped potatoes, watermelon, vanilla ice cream with strawberries and more.

He was joined by several family members, including his dad, Greg, his wife, Tammy, who is 9-months pregnant with their second child, and his daughter, Casey, 3.

"I really feel honored to defend my country and be part of history," said Jorgensen, a carpenter, who will miss his sister's wedding Saturday, and unless his wife gives birth

today, son Michael's entrance into the world.

"It's breaking my heart that he won't be here for that," said his dad, Greg. "But I'm also very proud."

"I believe God has a reason for everything," said Tammy Jorgensen. "And we've got a lot of family close, so that helps."

Spc. Abraham Garcia, 23, of St. Paul, sat at one of the cafeteria tables with his girlfriend, Cassandra Wilke. Like most, he said he had so far kept a tight rein on his emotions.

"It's like family here," he said, scanning the surrounding tables. "I'm excited and a little scared. I know a lot of people think it's not the right thing, but the president called us up, and it's our duty."

Guard Members Prepare For Action In Afghanistan
Members of the 62nd Troop Command will train Afghan soldiers in several military occupations

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Montgomery (AL) Advertiser

June 19, 2004

By Johnny Johnson

Montgomery, Ala.

Members of the Montgomery-based 62nd Troop Command at Fort Taylor Hardin Armory will deploy Tuesday to train Afghanistan's newly formed army and offer relief to American troops.

"They're taking their alert very seriously and they're diligently preparing for the task at hand," said Brig. Gen. Gary Quick, commander of the 62nd.

"As always, the 62nd Troop Command and the Alabama Army National Guard are honored to be able to contribute to the war on terror," Quick said. "Morale is extremely high."

"It's a positive reflection on Alabama that our soldiers are involved in a task force to train Afghanistan soldiers," said Sgt. Martin Dyson, public affairs spokesman for the Alabama National Guard. "I'm certain we'll give them the best training possible.

"We're sending over instructors in several different areas, such as medical equipment repair and motor vehicles. Some have been instructors before. Generally, those who will train in Afghanistan are mid-level to senior NCOs, staff sergeants and so on."

Formation of an Afghan army is expected to reduce the strain on American troops serving in the mountainous nation where the ruling Taliban regime and Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda militants were ousted by U.S. and allied forces.

"By training the Afghanistan army, it's helping to augment the U.S. military forces there in Afghanistan," said Lt. Col. Bob Horton, public affairs officer for the Alabama National Guard. "The purpose is to provide stability in Afghanistan by helping the country to

establish a viable and effective military force. We'll provide leadership training, task training, with the objective of helping the Afghan army become a more effective and efficient military force."

In all, 32 members of the Alabama Army National Guard will deploy as part of a 225-troop unit culled from 18 states. A deployment ceremony for the Montgomery-based troops will be held at 3 p.m. Tuesday at the Fort Taylor Hardin Armory.

The unit, serving as Task Force Phoenix, will mobilize under the direction of the 76th Infantry Brigade of Indiana.

According to Horton, the Army National Guard identified the training need in Afghanistan and chose specific bases around the country that were equipped with special training programs. Once those bases were announced, the Alabama National Guard chose individual soldiers who were qualified to participate in training an Afghan Army.

Members of the Alabama Guard will form two teams of 16 and will report to Camp Atterbury, Ind., for 45 to 60 days of specialized training before leaving for Afghanistan. Each team has different specialties.

"It is indicative of the capabilities that the Alabama National Guard can provide the national Army," Horton said.

The Afghanistan Army was created in 2002 and went through 10 weeks of basic combat skills training in Kabul with U.S. Army Special Forces.

"These are professionals who are very capable of carrying out their mission," Dyson said. "It's a great honor that Alabama is involved in a program like this."

Florida National Guard Company Mobilized for 2nd Time

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Associated Press

June 24, 2004

Marianna, Fla.

The Florida **National Guard's** 144th Transportation Company was mobilized for the second time since fighting began in Iraq, less than a year after being released from active duty.

About 130 truck drivers and crews from the company will soon begin training in Fort Bragg, N.C., before going to Iraq later this summer.

It is the first Florida **National Guard** unit to be called up twice during the conflict in Iraq.

Last year, the unit spent four months on active duty in Fort Stewart, Ga., before being released in July. They were never sent overseas.

In May, soldiers received recall notices.

"It was a shocker," said Callie Johnson, of Miami, whose husband William Johnson serves in the company. "I thought it could be possible again, but you really don't think it will happen."

Authorities said they recognize the apprehension many soldiers feel.

"It is a difficult situation, difficult for their families, but we are confident they are going to do well," said Assistant Adjutant General Michael Fleming. "They were called because they are well trained and the Army needs them."

Beginning the Road To Iraq

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Chattanooga Times Free Press (Tennessee)

June 26, 2004 Saturday

By Edward Lee Pitts; Staff Writer

Brian Culberson made a final farewell request after long embraces with each of the more than a dozen family members and friends surrounding him Friday in the still-dark morning.

"Thank you all for coming. I'm going to talk with Steph alone for a while now," he told them through tears.

Then Sgt. Culberson of Cleveland, Tenn., took his wife Stephanie by the hand and walked away to a quiet spot outside the **National Guard** Armory.

Hundreds of similar goodbyes occurred at dawn Friday here and in other Southeast Tennessee towns as area guardsmen began an 18-month journey with the active Army that ultimately will lead them to Iraq.

The 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment's deployment officially is scheduled for 545 days, according to military documents. About 3,000 guardsmen from the 278th are involved in the largest Tennessee Guard mobilization since World War II.

There are now 3,601 state guardsmen on active duty out of about 14,000, according to Tennessee Military Department spokesman Randy Harris. Of that total, 813 are deployed outside the United States, he said.

But the 278th is not the nation's largest Guard mobilization, as there are now several units deploying in excess of 4,000 guardsmen, according to Maj. John Toniolli with the **National Guard**.

The 278th, the state's largest **National Guard** unit, is one of the handful of units being mobilized in a different configuration than they usually operate, Maj. Toniolli said. The brigade, trained to take Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles into combat, will rely on lighter-armored vehicles in Iraq.

Col. W. Mark Hart, squadron commander of 278th troops in this region, said the next

several months of training in Mississippi and California will be crucial, as the regiment must learn peacekeeping tactics.

"A lot of the training we had previously done was directed toward the shock-and-awe-type operation," he said. "This is more of a security and support operation where the battlefield is not front and rear and there are no clear lines of good and bad."

The departing guardsmen represent area auto mechanics, carpenters, construction workers, city employees, salesmen, schoolteachers and plant managers.

"We just know them as Joe Citizens," said McMinn County Mayor John Gentry, whose superintendent of schools, John Forgety, has left with the 278th. "We don't picture them as GI Joes. This war is now personal for this county."

Facing a long road ahead, a number of the 100 to 150 soldiers leaving with the Athens, Tenn., unit said it was a relief finally to begin the deployment after weeks of intense preparation and anxiety.

Besides working long hours at the Armory, the guardsmen spent time this week unloading personal items, such as cars, they no longer will need. Capt. Reid Brock said he is trying to sell his 1999 Nissan pickup truck.

"If it is going to be sitting for 18 months, you might as well get rid of it and pay some bills," he said.

About 60 military vehicles left the Athens Armory before linking up with convoys from similar 278th units based in the Tennessee cities of Cleveland, Sweetwater, Lenoir City, Maryville, Dayton, Harriman and Sevierville.

Police cars and fire trucks blared their sirens as they escorted the vehicles out onto the highway where more people braved the rain, lining streets to catch a glimpse of the guardsmen. Oversized American flags, yellow ribbons and banners of support hung from cars and interstate overpasses all the way through Chattanooga.

Supporters of the guardsmen gathered at Interstate 75's Exit 20 near Cleveland, where parts of the traveling 278th convoy stopped for more goodbyes. The crowd included families, co-workers, Vietnam veterans and area firefighters and emergency service workers.

"We want them to know we're taking care of home while they're taking care of us," said Capt. Stephen McGuffey of the Bradley County Fire Department, who was there to show support for fellow firefighter Jody Baxter.

And while support for the troops was high among those who gathered along Decatur Pike, some wondered what the situation in Iraq would hold for American troops after the changeover of power next week. On Wednesday, U.S. officials will transfer power to an Iraqi interim government.

"It's a scary situation," said Sue Dauber. "It's a new transition, and the insurgents will try to take over the new government. But hopefully by the time our troops arrive, it will be better."

Daniel Green, a Vietnam veteran, said memories came flooding back after watching

members of the Cleveland unit pass along the U.S. 64 bypass.

"When I came home from Vietnam, we didn't get all this. We came home as individuals," Mr. Green said. "I don't want these guys to go through what we went through."

Before departure, family members huddled under umbrellas in a light drizzle to watch the Athens unit's final formation. Many relatives tried to hide their tear-streaked faces from their uniformed loved ones.

But Diane Ownby could not keep her eyes off her only son, Michael.

"I had to see his daddy go to Vietnam, and now I'm seeing him off," she said. "It's just real hard."

After the formation broke, children ran to be with their fathers as they walked to their military vehicles to begin the trip to Mississippi.

Seven-year-old Reese McCroskey, wearing a plastic top hat adorned with stars and stripes, lost his battle to stifle tears and buried his head in the chest of his father, Sgt. Jeff McCroskey.

"They are putting on a good front," said Kathy, Sgt. McCroskey's wife, about her son and daughter, Deidra. "But when you talk about it they get real emotional."

Once inside the trucks and Humvees, soldiers continued their goodbyes as mothers and wives reached through the windows to touch the guardsmen one last time.

Despite the painful separation from family, Sgt. Culberson, 27, said going to Iraq is the right thing to do.

"Everybody's nervous, but it is also our time," Sgt. Culberson said of his first deployment after nine years in the **National Guard**. "Those guys over there have been there long enough."

Sgt. Culberson said that since members of the unit have combat experience in Vietnam and the first Gulf War, he is not worried about the 278th's ability to handle insurgent attacks in Iraq.

Mrs. Culberson said her husband is most worried that their 16-month-old son, Ty, will forget about his father.

"But we are going to show him a lot of pictures and videos to remind him," she said.

The last vehicle left the armory before 7 a.m., and remaining family members, many with American flags tucked in their back pockets, slowly walked to their cars.

Staff writers Beth Rucker, Ron Clayton and Randall Higgins contributed to this story.

Army Announces Modularization Schedule Through FY07

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By Joe Burlas

Washington (Army News Service, June 24, 2004) -- Now that the 3rd Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, Ga., has reset into the first modular combat force -- growing from three brigade combat teams to four -- the Army is readying to modularize other divisions that will be reconstituting after operations in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

Speaking on background to members of the Pentagon press corps June 22, a senior Army official announced the schedule to convert the nine other divisions to modular brigade-plus sized units of action through fiscal year 2007.

The 101st Airborne Division, based at Fort Campbell, Ky., will convert this fiscal year. In FY05, the 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo., and the 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y., will reset into a modular force. In FY06, the 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, the 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and the 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., will convert.

Pending funding and approval by the Department of Defense, the Army plans to modularize the remaining three divisions -- the 2nd Infantry Division, South Korea; First Infantry Division, Wurzburg, Germany; and the First Armored Division, Wiesbaden, Germany -- in FY07.

Funding has already been secured for the first seven division conversions, including the 3rd Infantry Division, through the Army's operation account and emergency supplemental bill passed by Congress.

The **Army National Guard** will also modularize its brigade combat teams into more robust units of action, starting with three brigades next year, the senior Army official said. An addition six **National Guard** brigade conversions are planned each year FY06-10. The FY07-10 **National Guard** modularization schedule is also pending DoD approval and appropriate funding.

The modularization will rely heavily on the Training and Doctrine Command as modularization will impact some 100,000 positions, many requiring Soldiers in less needed Cold War formations like field artillery and air defense brigades to retrain for positions in more demand today. That demand is for more infantrymen, military police, civil affairs specialists and truck drivers, the official said.

The official called the Army's resetting and restructuring efforts the most massive change the Army has seen in 50 years, but will ultimately create an Army with a deeper pool of units to deploy for the global war on terror. That deeper pool could eventually mean shorter unit deployments -- six or nine months rotations, he said.

This is about resetting the Army for continuous operations, not contingency operations,

the official said. In addition to moving artillery, military intelligence and other combat support/combat service support assets normally found at division or above level down to units of action, modularization also beefs up the number of combat troops compared to most Cold War structured brigades.

"We have a plan and we're moving out," the official said, referring to the Army Campaign Plan that has established strategic guidance, priorities and goals for transforming the Army into a more effective and efficient force in the global war of terrorism.

BENEFITS

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Effort To Help Families Of Guardsmen, Reservists Pay The Bills Gains Steam

European Stars and Stripes

June 24, 2004

By Patrick Dickson

Washington

A movement to get all 50 states to enact financial aid measures for Guardsmen and reservists called to active duty got a boost Wednesday when one of its key proponents testified before Congress.

Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn was among the first to propose a "Military Family Relief Trust Fund" which was signed into law in February 2003.

Since then the state "has paid out \$1.3 million to 2,500 families — so far," Quinn said in a Tuesday telephone interview.

With more than 150,000 Guard and Reserve members activated in the war on terrorism, the House Committee on Veterans held the hearing to examine federal laws protecting those service members' legal, financial and job rights while they are away and when they return.

In addition to any federal efforts, 13 states are pursuing legislation [see sidebar].

Quinn and others want laws such as those that would prevent schools from charging out-of-district rates for children who have moved in with caregivers when a parent, perhaps a single parent, is called up.

He also is pursuing a public education campaign, citing abuses by employers who are unaware of the law, or unwilling to follow it.

"We want to make sure shop foremen, line supervisors and others understand that when one of their employees is called up, when they come back, they have a job" or are not

otherwise penalized, Quinn said.

He cited the town of Rockton, Ill., which has terminated Spc. Jeremiah Johnson of the 333rd Military Police Co., serving in Iraq.

“They intend to test the law,” Quinn said. “We’ve called the mayor, the City Council, the police chief ... we’ve asked them repeatedly to comply with state and federal law,” he said. The Illinois attorney general has filed suit on behalf of Johnson.

But the focus is on the trust funds, Quinn said.

“You’re always going to have a situation where [a deploying reservist’s] pay is reduced. Our concept in Illinois is that this is a token of appreciation,” he said. “Anyone can apply for a \$500 grant, and if there’s a hardship — your gas is turned off, you’re defaulting on the mortgage — then we can give you as much as \$2,000.”

Quinn quotes Abraham Lincoln’s second inaugural address when pushing legislation: “[L]et us strive on ... to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan.”

Service members and concerned citizens can go to www.operationhomefront.org for more information.

Legislators Increase Benefits for National Guard Members

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Associated Press

June 24, 2004

Albany, N.Y.

Legislation that increases the pay for **National Guard** troops and increases their other benefits will soon become law in New York state. The Assembly on Tuesday passed the Patriot Plan II, which increases the income for New York military personnel on active duty from \$100 to \$125 a day, while exempting their pay from state taxes for their service in the war on terrorism. It also extends tuition benefits to veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The state Senate has already passed the legislation, which only needs Gov. George Pataki's signature to become law.

"Those who choose to serve in the military sacrifice a great deal, as do members of their families," said Assemblyman Jeff Brown, an Onondaga County Republican and a captain in the 174th Fighter Wing of the **Air National Guard**. "Today, with this agreement, we are increasing the level of support for military personnel and helping them fulfill their obligations at home as well as overseas."

Pataki, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and other Republican lawmakers first announced the measure in March.

"We're unclear why it took so long for the Assembly to act," said Todd Alhart, a Pataki

spokesman. "We're relieved they finally did. This is the single most important measure they could pass to support our brave citizen soldiers and their families and recognize the sacrifices they are making to protect our freedom."

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and fellow Democrats, in a news release announcing the bill's passage, also took credit for the law, which expands the 2003 Patriot Plan. That bill made it illegal to deny someone a job, mortgage or lease because they are in the military and could be called to service.

According to a 2002 adjutant general's report, there were 24,000 members of New York's Guard and militia forces.

In March the 42nd Infantry Division was notified that about 1,000 of its soldiers would be called to active duty later this year. Known as the "Rainbow Division," the 42nd was created in World War I from elite guard units across the country.

At the same time, about 115 members of the 107th Air Refueling Wing based in Niagara Falls were deployed to Turkey to help fight the war on terror. It marked the third time the **New York Air National Guard** unit has been activated since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Free Child Care for Soldiers on Leave

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The Denver Post

June 24, 2004

Soldiers from the Army Reserve and Army **National Guard** who are home on a two-week leave from Iraq and Afghanistan may take advantage of free child care through volunteer providers.

Colorado joined other states across the nation in Operation Child Care to give soldiers time to take care of family business or spend time with their spouses.

Lt. Gov. Jane Norton launched the program Wednesday in Colorado. So far, 218 licensed child-care providers have volunteered.

The child-care providers have been asked to provide a minimum of four hours of service.

Reserve and **National Guard** soldiers home on leave should call 800-424-2246 or visit www.childcareaware.org. The program is not available for active-duty troops or other military branches.

Grit, Optimism Lift Ceremony; Iraqi Guard Takes Over Base

The News & Observer (Raleigh, North Carolina)

June 27, 2004 Sunday Final Edition

By Demorris Lee, Staff Writer

KHANAQIN, Iraq-- Iraqi Talib Jisim proudly wore a cap he received from a U. S. Army lieutenant on Saturday.

Jisim, a lieutenant in the Iraqi **National Guard**, said the desert-colored hat with a single bar in the center was a symbol that in just a few days Iraqis will be in charge of their destiny.

"It's a sign of cooperation and brotherhood with American soldiers," Jisim said through a translator as the dust and the heat of a 100-degree day danced around his face. "Wearing it reminds me of our aim. We share the same aim of cooperating and freedom."

U.S. Army dignitaries and Iraqi officials looked on Saturday as Capt. Sean Moser of the N.C. **National Guard's** 30th Heavy Separate Brigade began the transfer of security responsibility for the Diyala Province to the Iraqi troops with a symbolic gesture.

Moser, a Clayton resident and member of the 30th's Bravo Company, 1st Battalion 252nd Armored Regiment, removed the company's flag from in front of a building at an old Iraqi army base.

It was the first time a U.S.-led coalition unit had ceded security responsibilities to an Iraqi force.

Capt. Bandar Ali Murad of the Iraqi **National Guard's** 206th Battalion replaced the Americans' flag with the Iraqis' purple company flag. The base, with a few skeletal brick buildings, had become the Guard's Forward Operating Base Wyatt for its mission in the mostly Kurdish area of Khanaqin in northeastern Iraq.

Now the base, with the help of U.S. dollars, will become home of the Iraqi **National Guard** in the area.

"This is an important day in Iraq," said Lt. Col. Gary Thompson of Sanford, N.C., the 252nd's company commander. "It's the start of a new Iraq. I'm proud and privileged to be here for the transfer of authority from the coalition to the Iraq **National Guard**."

Also attending the ceremony were Gen. John R.S. Batiste, commanding general of the Army's First Infantry Division (the 30th is attached to that army division in Iraq), and Gen. Dan Hickman, commander of the 30th Brigade.

"Today is a symbol of the future," Batiste said. "Over time, there will be more and more ceremonies like this, where we transfer security of Iraq to Iraqi forces."

About \$2.3 million will be spent to upgrade the base for the Iraqis. It will be home to two Iraq guard units with 198 men each. The improvements will include barracks, classroom

space and a mess hall.

"We still need the coalition forces' assistance, but this a very important first mission," said Lt. Col. Ali Kaki, commander of the Iraq guard's 206th Battalion. "But now we will have to make our own decisions, and being in charge of the base will help us more."

Security issues

A key component of Iraq sovereignty will be the country's ability to provide security and to police itself.

The 30th Heavy Separate Bridge has been instrumental in the training of the Iraqi guard units set to have authority throughout Diyala Province. The Iraqis were trained individually for about two weeks, usually by an Army drill sergeant from Fort Sill, Okla., or from Fort Benning, Ga.

Members of the N.C. Guard's 252nd Regiment provided three to four weeks of platoon and squad training. The North Carolina Guardsmen have trained the Iraqis in everything from weapons maintenance to conducting proper checkpoints to how to administer emergency first aid.

More than 1,400 Iraqi National Guardsmen in Diyala have completed the training and are now getting on-the-job training patrolling with the U.S military. There are about 300 more in boot camp in Tikrit.

Hickman said many of the Iraqis are former military men and are learning quickly.

"In some ways," he said, "they are better prepared in that they understand the language and the terrain and they don't have to operate with an interpreter, whereas one of my soldiers has to work with an interpreter, and that's an impediment at times.

"There is value in having those skills, and they are learning the teamwork and combat skills to go with that every day."

Coalition forces have spent millions on the area's infrastructure to help the Iraq force, said Capt. Michael Verdi, the training supervisor from the 1-113th Field Artillery Battery out of Charlotte.

Verdi has been teaching the Iraq guardsmen how to manage the security forces' logistics. He said a lot of new equipment has been bought for a new army. This includes thousands of AK-47 weapons, which have been distributed throughout the country; 800 new 9 mm Glock pistols and ammunition; trucks; radios; and flak jackets. The Iraqis' forces also have new uniforms and boots.

Verdi said the 30th alone spent \$30,000 for computers, traffic cones, refrigerators, fire extinguisher, digital cameras and backpacks. The results of the coalition dollars could be seen Saturday as Iraq guardsmen sported new blue Motorola radios, new desert-colored uniforms and gleaming new AK-47s.

One Iraq guardsman tapped his knuckles on the bulletproof flak jacket he was wearing and, in broken English, said with a smile: "New, from the U.S."

Last week, down at Forward Operating Base Caldwell, Capt. Robert Boyette was beaming after members of the Iraq guard at a checkpoint discovered a load of weapons

concealed by onions in a pickup truck. Artillery rounds, tank rounds and mortar rounds were discovered.

"I'm pretty surprised, and I didn't think they would come together this quick," said Boyette, a resident of Dunn who is the 30th Brigade's coordinator with the Iraq guard. "They grasped it pretty well, and I'm glad to see it happen. They worked hard for a long time. It's like watching a baby walk for the first time."

While there is enthusiasm over the progress, some are still skeptical about the area's future. Maysam Taha, 26, who has been working as a translator for U.S. forces, is concerned about what will happen once coalition forces leave the area.

"It's not a very easy thing for a country to lose its government," Taha, said. "We can't feel stability. It's going to take at least three, four, five years for that to happen. Right now, I'm not very optimistic about our future."

Capt. Robert Steele, of the 252nd, has worked with Iraq's new soldiers and said the men are ready for the challenge. The fact that they are risking their lives to be a part of the nation's new **National Guard** is proof of dedication, he said, adding that many have already been tested in battle.

"They fought a nearly 10-year war with Iran," said Steele, a Raleigh police officer from Wake Forest. "They are not new to the environment, and this is their home town, they are ready to try and protect their area."

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

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National Guard Families Deal With Deployments

Fayetteville (NC) Observer
June 24, 2004

By Venita Jenkins

Pembroke, N.C.

Nearly a month after Jessie Locklear's father deployed to Iraq, Jessie lost her desire to go to school or to participate in her favorite sports.

Jessie, who is 11, stayed in her room for about a week. She became withdrawn. She didn't want to go outside or get dressed.

Her mother, Tonya Locklear, became concerned and took Jessie to a doctor.

"She had a mild form of depression because of her daddy being gone," Locklear said. "She was not motivated, and she was sleeping more. That was not Jessie."

Tonya Locklear's husband, Gary, works for the U.S. Postal Service in Laurinburg. He is also a member of the 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment, of the Army National

Guard. His unit was activated in September and left for Iraq on Feb. 29.

Locklear said she and her three daughters were not prepared for her husband's one-year deployment.

It is the first time that Locklear's duties with the **National Guard** have taken him away for an extended period of time. For the past three years, his Guard duties involved one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer.

"It has been hard on all of us," Tonya Locklear said.

Locklear is an assistant principal in Hoke County. She has assumed many of the responsibilities usually handled by her husband - such as paying the bills and maintaining the house - in addition to raising their daughters: Jessie, 14-year-old Skyler and 17-year-old Whitney.

Locklear, who is 35, said the stress of keeping the family stable is sometimes too much.

She said she gets support from friends, family and other wives whose husbands are members of the National Guard.

"All the wives have kind of leaned on each other to get through this," she said.

There are support groups for families of **National Guardsmen** at Fort Bragg, which is about 50 miles from the Locklears' home in Pembroke. Because of the distance, Locklear said it isn't always practical for her to take advantage of the support groups.

"With my schedule and the girls' activities, I stay busy," she said.

Locklear said she has also experienced bouts of depression. She tried to deal with it by staying busy and buying a Harley-Davidson motorcycle and a puppy.

But at night, she said, she still worries about her husband. She recalled a particularly bad dream in which her husband came back in a coffin.

"In my mind, in a sense, I feel like he is going over there, and he is not going to come home," Locklear said. "I know I shouldn't think that way. He tells me in his letters that he is not worried about anything. He knows he is coming home."

Jack Crain is a psychologist and the employee assistance program coordinator at Southeastern Regional Medical Center in Lumberton. The program provides counseling for hospital employees and their families.

Reservists and guardsmen are in a unique situation, Crain said.

"People in active duty are constantly training for war. They know what to expect," he said. "It's a little different for folks who are in the Reserves or National Guard. Although they are very patriotic, they don't join thinking they are going to end up in the desert thousands of miles away from home fighting a war.

"I am not sure the family of reservists or guardsmen have the same preparation for the person being gone," Crain said. "... There is a rush to get people over there and the preparation is not comparable to those who are active military."

Home for graduation

Gary Locklear, who is 38, returned home this spring to attend Whitney's high school

graduation May 28. He spent two weeks doing chores around the house and eating steak.

The visit has lifted the spirits of Tonya Locklear and her daughters.

The day before Gary Locklear was scheduled to return to Iraq, the family sat down for brunch in their dining room and talked about Locklear's deployment.

"I didn't know how well Tonya would do while I was gone," Gary Locklear said. "But she did pretty good. She is doing a lot of the things I couldn't get her to do before."

Locklear said his wife failed to mention the stress she was under during their telephone conversations and in her e-mails.

"She didn't want me to worry," Gary Locklear said. "I didn't know how rough things had gotten until I came home. Things will be changing once I come back."

Gary Locklear, who left June 12 to return to Iraq, said there is a need for a local community support group.

"There are a lot of women here whose husbands are deployed that could get together," he said. "They need to start one right here."

Crain, the psychologist, agreed.

"When there is a loss, usually depression arises," Crain said. "This is quote 'normal.' And to get through this, you need support groups. Some, unfortunately, turn to chemicals - drugs and alcohol - to help them through this."

The **North Carolina Army National Guard** provides assistance to families that are having difficulties while their loved ones are deployed. There are Family Assistance Centers throughout the state, including one on East Mountain Drive in Fayetteville.

"The **National Guard** is unique. We don't have large installations. With the Family Assistance Centers, we go to families," said Spc. Robert Jordan, a spokesman for the National Guard. "These centers have professional staff who know everyone in the community to assist families. Also, they are there to listen. These are citizen soldiers. They have jobs, family, churches and civic organizations that they are members of. They put all that down and picked up arms."

The centers have an informal network to help families with basic needs such as baby-sitting or doing repairs around the home, Jordan said. There is also a special fund to help with emergency needs such as food and electricity.

"Mowing someone's lawn, doing their taxes or letting them know you have an empty slot at a day-care center goes a long way," he said. "These are things people in their communities can do that could really make a difference in the families' lives. They are your friends, family and neighbors."

Tonya Locklear now receives monthly packets with information about pay, legal assistance, and programs and services provided by the **National Guard**.

Some of the wives in Robeson County have started holding their own support meetings, she said.

"We are within a 10-mile radius of each other. I think that will help. We may not be getting all the information that we need, but at least we are there for one another," she

said. " ... We sometimes have to rely on each other for support."

For more information about services provided by the Family Assistance Center, call the center at (910) 672-5143.

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROS

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'My Country Needs Me,' Soldier Said

Chicago Tribune

June 22, 2004

By Sean D. Hamill

Sgt. Sherwood Baker's parents, longtime peace activists in Philadelphia where he grew up, let him know seven years ago that they weren't happy he was joining the Army **National Guard**.

His wife, who also doesn't support the war in Iraq, had tried to get him to leave the Guard when his first, six-year stint was up.

But through it all, Baker "had his own mind," his wife, Debra, said, never revealing his feelings about the war to anyone in the family.

"He only said: 'My country needs me. This is what I have to do,'" his wife said.

Baker, 30, of Plymouth, Penn., died April 26, in Baghdad while providing site security during inspection of a suspected chemical weapons plant. He was assigned to the Army **National Guard's** Company B, 2nd Battalion, 103rd Armor Regiment, from Tamaqua, Pa.

Baker, a caseworker who worked with mentally challenged adults, joined the Guard in 1997 after helping with flood preparations.

Even if he never said how he felt about the war, Baker, a gentle man, held the same general beliefs about peace as his family.

"He believed in being a citizen in a democracy," his mother, Celeste Zappala, said. "It's part of what we're trying to do--carry that belief."

Most likely to succeed: Darral Brooks still doesn't know how his son, Army **National Guard** Staff Sgt. Cory Brooks, 32, died in Iraq.

The Army said it is still investigating his death April 24 in Baghdad and the family has been told only that it was a "non-combat related injury."

"He was my only son," said Brooks, a rancher in Philip, S.D. "He was the greatest kid I ever knew."

Cory Brooks was assigned to the Army **National Guard's** 153rd Engineer Battalion from Wagner, S.D., a unit that disarms mines and bombs.

He quarterbacked the Philip High School football team, was a shooting guard on the

basketball team and played shortstop on the baseball team. His senior year, Brooks was named "Most Likely to Succeed."

And, after nearly non-stop college work and holding down jobs as a carpenter and legal assistant, he was succeeding.

He received a bachelor's degree in psychology, and in December 2000 Brooks received a law degree and a master's in administration, all from the University of South Dakota Law School in Vermillion.

Brooks had decided to move home to become a small-town lawyer, his father said.

Patrick McCaffrey Joined the National Guard In the Days After the Sept. 11, 2001, Terrorist Attacks.

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Contra Costa Times (Walnut Creek, CA)

June 24, 2004

Bay Area Native Dies

Tracy, Calif.

McCaffrey, a native of the Bay Area who now lives in Tracy, was killed Tuesday, along with a member of his unit from Riverside, while they were patrolling in Iraq.

"I'm really proud of him," his wife, Silvia McCaffrey, told the Tracy Press. "He was a hero to me, and I guess all my family."

McCaffrey, a 34-year-old Army Specialist, and Army Second Lieutenant Andre Tyson were ambushed by enemy forces near the city of Balad, located 85 miles north of Baghdad, according to a California **National Guard** news release Wednesday.

Both soldiers were members of the Alpha Company, 579th Engineer Battalion based in Petaluma.

"This is the hardest time in my life," Nadia McCaffrey said about losing her son. Nadia runs a support organization for people at the end of their lives.

McCaffrey's family said he was training Iraqis to become military police before he died.

"He was absolutely inadequately trained and equipped," family friend Elizabeth Drowne told the Tracy Press. "I think this is just a tragic waste of a young man's life."

McCaffrey was born in Santa Clara. He was married and had a son in Silicon Valley before moving away with his second wife about four years ago. His first son, Patrick Jr., lives with his mother.

Tyson went to elementary and junior high school in Los Angeles and attended Santa Maria High School in Santa Maria from 1984 to 1988, joining the Army a few years later.

Air Force Awards Colorado National Guard Soldiers

Associated Press

June 24, 2004

Colorado Springs, Colo.

Its rare when the Air Force recognizes Army soldiers for their service, but that's exactly what happened at the Air Force Academy on Tuesday. Currently, there are 27 soldiers from the **Colorado National Guard** working at the Academy. The soldiers have been manning the gates, and supporting the security forces at there since 2002.

As Air Force Lt. Col. Kit Lambert explains, the soldiers have now earned the right to wear an Air Force badge on their uniforms. "This represents a period of time spent supporting security forces. In addition, they qualified as certified Air Force entry controllers for Air Force installations," Lambert said.

The badge can be given to any non Air Force military personnel who demonstrate exceptional skills and honorable service. The **National Guards'** tour at the Academy ends in November.

Firm's Gift to Aid Military Families

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June 24, 2004

By Emily Ann Brown

A company announced Wednesday that it would donate \$1.25 million to the Veterans of Foreign Wars to help service members and their families with unexpected financial needs.

Vermont American, which makes power tool accessories, said it would donate the money over five years for the VFW's Unmet Needs Program. The partnership was announced outside the VFW national headquarters at 406 W. 34th St.

The program will help pay for daily financial burdens such as vehicle and appliance repairs, and more critical expenses such as medical fees for more than 700,000 active-duty military families, said Ron Browning, VFW assistant adjutant general. The help is needed, Browning said, because nearly half of military families earn less than \$20,000 a year in basic military pay.

The VFW assists all veterans and their families in obtaining veterans' entitlements and other services. It also assists active-duty members in the **National Guard** and Reserves.

Gary and Tammy Fugate of Moberly, Mo., are the first family in the nation to receive aid from the program for medical needs. Gary Fugate, a 27-year **National Guard** reservist,

needed help paying for a seven-day trip to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., for his wife.

Three years ago, Tammy Fugate, 45, had a stroke. Her health problems worsened. She later had two more strokes, three heart attacks and neurological complications, she said.

After being referred to the program by a friend, the couple received a phone call one day later from an Unmet Needs staff member assuring that financial help was on its way.

Her insurance covers hospital fees, but Unmet Needs has agreed to pay for airfare, hotels, food and a rental car.

To reach Emily Ann Brown, call (816) 234-4899 or send e-mail to ebrown@kcstar.com.

ARA helps Soldiers Switch To Active Duty

By Pfc. Chris Stump

Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan (Army News Service June 24, 2004) --Service to country, a steady pay check, college benefits or retirement at a young age; whatever the reason for choosing to go on active duty, many Army Reserve and **National Guard** Soldiers are taking advantage of an easy route to become a fulltime Soldier. And the career counselors of the U.S. Army Reserve Affairs Office supply aid for the transition.

Soldiers who begin the switch while still deployed with the assistance of a reserve affairs NCO, Soldiers must complete an application packet. The packet includes information such as time in service, rank, grade and other personal information that is essential for enlisting in the Army.

To convert from the reserves a deployed Soldier must have more than 30 days left on his or her deployment, but less than 90 days when requesting a transfer to active duty, said Master Sgt. Greg Jacobs, Army Reserve Affairs retention NCO.

The change to active duty is actually made once the Soldier redeploys and then separates from his or her unit, he said. Once the Soldier separates, he goes on leave as an active duty Soldier with PCS orders to report to an active-duty unit. Soldiers may start their packets before the 60-day window, but they cannot submit them until they hit their 90-day mark.

The packet is not difficult to fill out, Jacobs said, but anyone wishing to make the switch to active duty is advised to start the paperwork as soon as possible. This gives the reserve affairs NCOs more of an opportunity to assist the Soldiers, without having to rush through the process.

“We are here to help the Soldiers any way we can,” he said. “From filling out the packet, to linking them with active duty career counselors, we will do whatever we can.”

After the application is completed, it is sent to active duty career counselors who verify information, like rank and time in service, and send the packet on to the Army Human Resources Command in Alexandria, Va. for approval.

Upon final approval at Alexandria, the Army begins the process of finding an opening for the Soldier, he said.

All ranks and military occupational specialties are eligible to leave the Army Reserve and **National Guard** to transfer to the active Army, but there must be a slot open for the Soldier, he said.

“Depending on the needs of the Army, some Soldiers may need to reclass,” said Jacobs.

Because of the differences in jobs and positions available between the reserve and active duty components, a handful of Soldiers might lose rank or have to reclassify into another MOS, he added, but for the most part, Soldiers retain their rank and job in transitioning to the active component.

In addition, many are also eligible for bonuses for making the switch. Bonus eligibility applies to those Soldiers who reclass to join active duty.

“The enlistment bonuses are paid by the active Army component,” said Jacobs. “In some instances, Soldiers may qualify for whatever bonus the Army has available.”

Often these bonuses also depend on the length of an enlistment. According to Jacobs, an enlistment contract can range anywhere from two to six years.

“How long your enlistment has to be is usually determined by your MOS,” Jacobs said. “Critical shortages can affect the length of an enlistment, as well as the training you are receiving if you reclass.”

An example is military intelligence, because this field is considered to have a critical shortage, combined with training time and cost, many Soldiers are required to enlist for five years.

While bonuses are a great incentive to joining the military, they aren’t the only reason people switch to active duty, said Jacobs. Many Soldiers simply find they enjoy the active Army experience of service.

“Some Soldiers come on active duty for a deployment and realize they like the active Army and decide to stay,” he said. “Others may have jobs that won’t be available when they redeploy.”

Others just like the steady paycheck or career benefits, he added.

“There are great career benefits,” said Staff Sgt. Jack O’Neal, 320th Psychological Operations Company, who plans on making the transition after his tour here.

One of those benefits is being able to retire at an early age, he said.

“And they have 100-percent (college) tuition reimbursement while you’re on active duty,” he said.

Regardless of the reason a Soldier wants to go active, the Army Reserve Affairs office is here to help, said Jacobs.

“The Soldier must be willing to take the time to put together the packet,” he said. “The legwork is done by the Soldier, but we will do whatever we can for him.”

For more information on switching to active duty, contact the Army Reserve Affairs office at (800)-874-8451.

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