



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.

READINESS

National Guard Says It's Ready For Emergencies, Despite Mobilization
Military Post's Training Includes Urban Combat

DEPLOYMENT

Ala. Doctor Reactivated For Iraq War at 68
Nevada Guard Squadron Called To Active Duty

REUNION

Joyous Cheers For Troops; Guard's 32nd MPS Welcomed Home From Iraq

BENEFITS

Defense Says Steps Taken To Fix Guard, Reserve Pay Problems
Kernan Urges Increased Aid For Guard Members, Reservists
Farmer Backs Better Benefits For Guard, Reserve

GUARD IN IRAQ

Soldiers Receive a Dream Delivery; Care Packages: Books, Tapes, Games and 2,500 Pillows
Minnesotans Sour On Reported Proposal To Extend Guard Tours
Refueling Teams Keep Operations Booming

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

Left Behind On The Home Front

Military Dads Must Readjust To Growing, Changing Families

Greenwood Single Parent Prepares Son For His Possible Mobilization

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH AFTERMATH

Transition Difficult For Returning Guard Troops

HEALTH ISSUES

Soldiers Being Sent Back To Idaho For Medical Reasons

Treatment Available To Troops Suffering From Combat Stress

GENERAL

Just Back From Iraq, Man Hits Jackpot

Camp Gives Youth a Taste Of National Guard Life

Salute To Freedom; National Guard Thanks Its Soldiers -- And Their Families

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> (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 helps military children with
transition/deployment issues. It has great features
for kids, parents, special needs families, 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 Michelle.Bohlen@ngb.ang.af.mil.

READINESS

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

National Guard Says It's Ready For Emergencies, Despite Mobilization

The Associated Press

July 19, 2004, Monday, BC cycle

By Holbrook Mohr, Associated Press Writer

Despite thousands of **National Guard** troops being mobilized throughout the country, officials across the South say there's ample manpower to respond to hurricanes and other natural disasters.

Dealing with disaster - natural or manmade - is an ongoing challenge for every state, especially those with extensive coastlines. Bill Gray, a noted hurricane forecaster at Colorado State University, predicts a 71 percent chance of a major hurricane hitting the United States this year.

In Mississippi, officials told The Associated Press the **National Guard** remains strong, even though nearly 1,700 troops have been deployed - 900 to overseas hotspots.

Guard Col. Tim Powell said the remainder of Mississippi's 13,000 Guardsmen are trained and ready. The last time the Guard was called out in large numbers was after Hurricane Georges pounded the coast in 1998. Maj. Joe Hargett said 1,100 troops were activated then.

Even during the current mobilization, the Guard has stepped up a new counterterrorism program called Operation Eagle Eye and found time to assist in the surveillance of a major drug ring that was brought down in Jefferson Davis County last month.

Mississippi Emergency Management Agency spokeswoman Amy Carruth said even if there were a disaster of a magnitude the Guard could not handle, there are agreements between states to share manpower and resources. Carruth said every state but California is part of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

Lt. Col. Douglas Hart, director of public affairs for the California **National Guard**, said it was not a military decision keeping California out of the EMAC agreements. He

said the state's new gubernatorial administration is considering the EMAC agreements now and he expects California to soon join the rest of the country.

California has about 20,000 **National Guard** soldiers, with 2,300 currently mobilized. Hart said there's never been a time when the California Guard was called to duty and couldn't respond.

Frank McCorten, chief deputy director of California's Office of Emergency Services, said "EMAC is something that California is considering."

But, McCorten said not being a part of the EMAC agreement is "not jeopardizing Californians or jeopardizing the mutual aid agreements that we have with other states."

California recently sent 50 teams to Nevada to fight wildfires that are threatening 8,000 acres and at least 100 homes near Carson City, McCorten said.

"This EMAC is not holding us back by Californians being in jeopardy nor by us being able to give mutual aid to our surrounding neighbors," he said. "It's not stopping us from protecting our borders or protecting other areas of California."

Officials in other Southern states also expressed confidence in the ability of their troops.

In Georgia, Lt. Col. Jim Driscoll said his state's **National Guard** troops were able to perform all of their duties, even when 5,000 were mobilized last month to ensure security at the G-8 Summit in Savannah.

It's not an emergency but "the G-8 Summit falls under the same umbrella of tactical response," Driscoll said. "By all accounts, that was a success."

Driscoll said at the height of mobilization in Georgia, about 30 percent, or 3,000, of the state's 12,000 troops were deployed.

"We still felt we could have taken care of any emergencies," he said.

John Myatt, a civilian public affairs officer for the Florida Department of Military Affairs, said there's no need for concern in his state.

"We haven't been mobilized ever in our history that would cause us not to be able to support the governor if he called," Myatt said. "In Hurricane Andrew, we mobilized about 1,200 - or 10 percent - of our troops without missing a step in other things we needed to do."

Hurricane Andrew, the most destructive recorded hurricane to hit United States, plowed across south Florida with 165-mph winds in August 1992 before crossing the Gulf of Mexico and striking the Louisiana coast. At least 43 people died in Andrew's fury and the deadly storm caused \$31 billion in damage.

Myatt said the Florida **National Guard** has been mobilized at different levels since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, with the most soldiers - about half - being deployed before Operation Iraqi Freedom. About 900 Florida Guard troops are now deployed overseas - 340 in Iraq and the rest in Afghanistan, Myatt said.

Myatt said that even if there were a total Guard mobilization in Florida and disaster struck, he is confident in the EMAC agreements. The compact agreements, he said, have proven effective in the past when firestorms struck Florida and other states sent

equipment, including Blackhawk helicopters from Mississippi.

In Alabama, where 3,000 **National Guard** soldiers are mobilized in Cuba, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo, Sgt. Martin Dyson said there's no need for concern. Dyson said there are about 12,000 guard soldiers in Alabama.

"Currently there are over two-thirds, or about 8,000 or 9,000 soldiers, that would be able to respond," he said. Even in Louisiana, where nearly 5,000 of the state's 11,000 soldiers are mobilized, Col. Jay Mayeaux, deputy director of Homeland Security, said the state is prepared. "We feel comfortable that should a disaster of any kind take place in Louisiana we could respond promptly and efficiently," he said.

Military Post's Training Includes Urban Combat

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Associated Press

July 19, 2004, Monday, BC cycle

Roadside bombs, sniper gunfire and angry crowds are part of the training these days at the military's largest post, where about 3,000 **National Guard** soldiers and reservists from Louisiana, Manhattan and elsewhere have to learn what to expect in Iraq.

Citizen soldiers are taught during summer training at Fort Hood to watch around every corner for so-called "improvised explosive devices" where booby trap meets bomb and search for insurgents firing whatever weapon is available. A mock ambush of a convoy in an Iraqi village and other drills in soldier school are based on occurrences that inexperienced troops could soon face in the Middle East. One officer preparing for his first deployment to Iraq emerged from the convoy drill with an appreciation of the dangers.

"It's about as real as we can get without having two-way live fire," 2nd Lt. Dan Hover of the New York **National Guard** said. "It provides good challenges for the leadership and for all the Joes on the ground to apply what they've learned in class and put it out on the street level.

"I have high standards and high expectations. I understand they're going to fall, they're going to stumble," he told the Houston Chronicle in Monday's online edition. "But you get back up and you try it again. You keep doing it until you're in country (Iraq). Then it's too late to make mistakes. As (the late Gen. George) Patton would say, a pint of sweat now saves you a gallon of blood later."

Federal contract workers were role-playing as a mob led by a Muslim cleric confronted the convoy on a rubble-strewn street just before another bomb explosion and more sniper fire.

The troops were members of the 256th Brigade Combat Team from the Louisiana **National Guard**, which is preparing to deploy to Iraq. Their teachers were members of the Texas **National Guard's** 75th Division (Training Support) based in Houston, whose

citizen-soldiers have assumed a key role in mentoring about 4,000 guard members heading to Iraq.

"This is important work for our nation," Brig. Gen. Walt Zink of Houston, the division's assistant commander, said.

But no soldier can be prepared for every eventuality, said analyst Richard Stark, who studies military reserves for the Washington think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"There are a lot of aspects of operations in Iraq that, despite doctrine, are learned locally," Stark told the Waco Tribune-Herald in Monday's online edition. "There is always the fog of war. There is always a series of unknowns."

DEPLOYMENT

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Ala. Doctor Reactivated For Iraq War at 68

The Associated Press

Decatur, Ala. (AP) - At 68, many people are slowing down. Not John Wicks: He's going to Iraq. Wicks, a psychiatrist, has been called out of military retirement by the Army to fill a shortage of mental health experts needed to help soldiers cope with combat. He could be gone as long as a year.

The Army hasn't told Wicks what his exact assignment in Iraq is, or where in the country it will send him.

"I believe that the morale in general is not that good since the scandal at that prison," he said, referring to the allegations of abuse at Abu Ghraib prison. "When morale is high, you have fewer of these kinds of problems. And when morale is low you have more."

Wicks, who is beginning a week of training in Texas, will have the rank of colonel. His previous military experience includes two years active duty with the Marines and 18 years in the Alabama National Guard.

Wicks is a veteran of the U.S. war with Iraq in 1991, but his wife said things are different this time.

"In Desert Storm, he was in the 109th Evacuation Hospital and they had drilled together for years," said Jan Wicks. "He felt good about going with this team that he knew. He doesn't have that support this time."

Wicks figures he will be among the oldest U.S. soldiers in the Iraq war. Martha Rudd, a

spokeswoman for the Army at the Pentagon, said she has no way of knowing if Wicks would be the oldest. She said she had heard of one other doctor who was 68 and went to Iraq. Wicks' latest assignment started with a postcard the Army sent last fall that explained the need for specialists and asked if he felt he was fit to serve.

``I stuck the thing in my pocket and carried it around for several weeks agonizing on how I should respond," he told The Decatur Daily in a story Sunday. ``The truth is I consider myself fit to serve, so that's how I marked it and sent it back."

``My wife said 'You'll never hear from them.' Well, it was no time at all till I heard from them," Wicks said.

Wicks said recruiters initially hinted he could go to Europe or a stateside base to relieve a younger psychiatrist who would go to Iraq. The Army even gave him three choices should that scenario play out, and Dr. Wicks chose Italy, Germany and England.

``Well, I now wonder if this was just to get me hooked. Because there's no way I'm going to Italy or any of these places," he said. ``I'm going to Iraq."

Nevada Guard Squadron Called To Active Duty

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Associated Press

July 21, 2004, Wednesday

About 600 Nevada Army **National Guard** members will leave next month for an 18-month deployment in California, state military officials said Wednesday.

The 1st Squadron, 221st Cavalry headquartered in Las Vegas will leave Aug. 16 for duty at Fort Irwin, Calif., where they will help train other troops being deployed to the Middle East. The squadron has detachments in Fallon and Yerington, as well as three troop units in Las Vegas.

Members of the squadron currently on domestic deployments providing security at Nellis Air Force Base and the Air **National Guard** Base in Reno will not be affected, officials said.

Maj. Gen. Giles Vanderhoof, Nevada's adjutant general, said with the latest activation, nearly half of the soldiers in the Nevada Army **National Guard** will be deployed out of state by fall.

Joyous Cheers For Troops; Guard's 32nd MPS Welcomed Home From Iraq

Capital Times (Madison, WI)

July 24, 2004 Saturday, All Editions

By, Amelia Buragas The Capital Times

Camp Douglas

It's good to be home.

The 32nd Military Police Company of the **Wisconsin National Guard** returned to the state Friday afternoon, welcomed by the joyous cheers of families and friends.

The crowd held up homemade signs and waved American flags. Children were boosted onto shoulders for a better view. After climbing down the steps of the plane, the returning soldiers literally ran from the runway to the hanger where families waited at Camp Douglas' Volk Field near Tomah.

Robin and Jeffrey Harmon of Oak Creek greeted their daughter, Spc. Andrea Harmon, with a bouquet of roses and hugs. Robin Harmon said frequent communication helped her get through the past 14 months.

"Thank God for e-mail," Robin Harmon said. "She's my best friend and I've missed her."

Andrea Harmon will return to school this fall as a sophomore at UW-Milwaukee, picking up where she left off more than a year ago.

The 150-member unit went on 35 combat missions in Iraq and brought home 23 purple hearts. Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson, commander of the **Wisconsin Army National Guard**, said there was "great concern" about the safety of the unit because they were in a high risk area and almost daily came in contact with the enemy.

"They are proud of what they did, and they should be," Denson said.

Spc. Richard Thompson of Sun Prairie looks forward to relaxing, riding his Harley and planning his much-delayed wedding. However, Thompson said he will always remember his time in Iraq.

"Everything we did over there benefited the Iraqi people," Thompson said. "I will keep that in my heart."

Sgt. Cathy Tietz of Franklin said she is optimistic for Iraq's future.

"There was a change in the country," Tietz said. "I saw it in the people, they take more pride. It's going to be a long haul for them, but I think they are going to make it."

One of the unit's duties while in Iraq was training Iraqi police officers.

Spc. Erik Dalma of Madison said it was a chance for them to show Iraqis that "not all Americans are George Bush."

Dalma said that under Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi people had been told what to think and

how to live, and now they are adjusting to new freedoms.

"They have to find their own future, their own destiny," Dalma said. "But I think they'll do just fine."

Dalma's 5-year-old daughter, Sofia, hung onto his arm as he talked. His wife, Laura, said Sofia had not let go of her dad since he got off of the plane. While he was in Iraq, Dalma missed two of Sofia's birthdays and he looks forward to celebrating number six next year.

On hand to welcome the soldiers home were Gov. Jim Doyle and U.S. Sens. Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold, D-Wis. They made brief comments, thanking the soldiers for their service to the state and the country.

The politicians also took time to praise the unit for their work at an orphanage outside of Baghdad. The soldiers found time to make the half-hour trip, bringing the kids toys and playing with them. They also threw a Christmas party for the orphanage.

Sgt. 1st Class Bob Wiedel of Wauwatosa said the children, many of whom were amputees, greeted the soldiers warmly.

"They were all happy and smiling," Wiedel said. "They loved it. Nobody else came to visit them."

The speakers also took time to reflect on the unit's losses. Spc. Michelle Witmer was killed in an April 9 ambush in Baghdad.

Harmon said the unit became very close while in Iraq and lost not only a soldier but also a friend.

"I'll never forget all of these people," Harmon said. "We formed lasting friendships that we will have for the rest of our lives."

The returning soldiers will spend the next five days at nearby Fort McCoy being debriefed. They will be released from active duty at a ceremony July 28 at Madison's Warner Park.

BENEFITS

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Defense Says Steps Taken To Fix Guard, Reserve Pay Problems

GovExec.com

July 20, 2004

By David McGlinchey

Defense Department finance officials told Congress Tuesday that they had taken tangible steps to resolve ongoing pay problems in the **National Guard** and Army Reserve, but several reservists testified that the troubled system had damaged morale.

In January, senior Pentagon officials told the House Government Reform Committee that

the large-scale mobilization of reservists had derailed the pay system. As a result, thousands were being overpaid, underpaid or paid late. During a hearing Tuesday before the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Government Efficiency and Financial Management, officials said the Pentagon had installed a number of short-term reforms, including a military pay "safety net" to catch mistakes.

"Within the last six months, we have collectively made great strides in improving processes and procedures within the finance community," Patrick Shine, the director of military and civilian pay services at the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, said in prepared testimony. "We are already seeing results from our action plan ... hundreds of soldiers' accounts have been corrected as a direct result of this safety net."

Shine told the subcommittee that the Defense Department is looking to install a temporary pay system - called Forward Compatible Payroll - across the military reserves by the spring of 2006. The FCP, officials said, will resolve many of the problems caused by the existing overburdened system. Ultimately, the Pentagon's solution is a single integrated personnel and payroll system known as the Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System. Last year, Northrop Grumman was awarded the contract to develop that system.

During the subcommittee hearing, however, several reservists said pay problems hurt morale in Afghanistan and Iraq, and some of the issues are still unresolved. Deployed reservists often did not receive their full pay after being activated but then received active duty pay long after they returned to their reserve status, according to the soldiers. Sgt. Melinda DeLain, a medic for the 948th Forward Surgical Team, said soldiers in her unit were constantly dealing with flawed paychecks while supporting combat operations in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

"Fellow soldiers began receiving e-mails from home regarding the inability to pay creditors," DeLain said. "As time passed without full pay, the morale of the unit fell, and the stress levels increased."

DeLain, a single mother, said her parents were forced to make house and car payments for her while her pay was being resolved. DeLain said she asked personnel officers in Afghanistan how to resolve her unit's pay problems but was told the issues could only be addressed by finance units in Uzbekistan.

"Around the end of March, my mother, who was handling my bills, e-mailed me and asked about the status of my pay," DeLain said. "My commander at this time e-mailed her a memorandum of record to send to my creditors requesting that they work with my mother on payment plans until our pay issues were fixed."

George Riggins, a recently retired Army major, was activated and sent to Qatar in March 2003. While deployed, he was underpaid and overtaxed, he said. When he returned to the United States, his pay returned to the correct level but did not stop after he was deactivated. He attempted to return the overpayment several times, he said, but military officials were unable to tell him exactly how much he owed.

Riggins said his family was able to handle the underpayments while he was deployed, but all military personnel are probably not in the same position.

"It is easy to see that issues such as these could be financially devastating to young

soldiers whose sole income supporting their family is derived from their military paycheck," he said. "These soldiers are already deployed to the far reaches of the world, facing life-and-death decisions on a daily basis. They should not also be burdened with wondering if their spouse at home will be able to make a car payment or feed a child."

At the hearing, the Government Accountability Office released the results of a pay survey conducted for seven reserve units. More than 90 percent of personnel in the units experienced pay problems.

Kernan Urges Increased Aid For Guard Members, Reservists

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

The Associated Press

July 22, 2004

By The Associated Press

Indiana Gov. Joe Kernan said he believed the federal government needed to find ways to ease the stress that long activations of **National Guard** and reserve units have had on military families.

Kernan and Florida Gov. Jeb Bush spoke Wednesday before two U.S. Senate subcommittees in Washington. Both Kernan and Bush told the senators that long deployments in recent years also have taken a toll on businesses where Guard or reserve members work.

Kernan pointed to the troubles faced by three **National Guard** units from southern Indiana, where only a third of the members have re-enlisted after returning home from their overseas deployment.

It is too soon to tell whether that pattern will continue as other Indiana units return from Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia, as the state's usual retention rate is about 82 percent, Kernan said.

"What we don't want to do is lose these men and women with combat experience," he said.

Indiana has 14,000 members of its **National Guard** force, the fifth-largest in the country.

Because deployments are so long - sometimes 18 months - employers end up filling vacancies created when Guard members are on active duty, Bush said.

"For a small business, even with the best of intentions, with five employees, you have to move on in some cases," Bush said.

Bush and Kernan said a top priority of **National Guard** members and their families and employers was better predictability about the length and frequency of deployment.

"That uncertainty is at the heart of retention right now," Kernan said.

Kernan also recommended:

- Shortening the "boots on the ground" deployment of Guard soldiers from 12 to nine months so that, combined with training, the total length of deployment would be about a year rather than 14 to 18 months.

- That Congress make up the difference between a **National Guard** member's civilian and military pay.

Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind., said he has heard many military personnel talk about how difficult it is for them to make ends meet.

"We shouldn't put them in a position of having to choose between doing right for their loved ones and doing right for the country they love," said Bayh, who attended the hearing as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Farmer Backs Better Benefits For Guard, Reserve

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Kansas City Star

Posted on Fri, Jul. 23, 2004

By Matt Campbell

U.S. Senate candidate Nancy Farmer called Thursday for expanding health care and other benefits for **National Guard** and Reserve troops and their families.

"They're in Afghanistan and Iraq, but their families are still right here in Missouri," said Farmer, the Democratic treasurer of Missouri. She is challenging Republican Sen. Kit Bond.

At a news conference in Kansas City, Farmer said 40 percent of the troops in Iraq are members of the Guard or Reserve, 5,000 of them from Missouri. They face tough economic pressures while serving their country, she said.

Farmer proposed a six-point program that she said would cost \$260 million a year. Her campaign later acknowledged that that amount would represent new appropriations. Her plan also depends on using more than \$1 billion a year from the Iraq Reconstruction Fund.

In all, Farmer's campaign said, the six proposals would cost \$6.9 billion over five years, or \$1.38 billion a year.

A key element of the proposal would allow Guard and Reserve members permanent access to the same health care system provided to regular members of the armed forces. Farmer criticized Bond for voting against an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill that would have done that.

Bond's office responded Thursday that he supports extending coverage for Guard and Reserve members who are unemployed or without other health coverage, and extending it

to all members for a period before and after deployment. But Bond opposes making that access permanent because of the cost and because of battlefield spending needs.

Other items in Farmer's proposal:

- Granting 100 percent tax credits to employers who voluntarily make up the difference between Guard or Reserve members' civilian pay and their duty pay, up to \$12,000 per person.
- Auditing the military payroll system to solve problems of delayed paychecks to **Guard** and Reserve members.
- Requiring colleges and universities to carry over tuition balances for **Guard** and Reserve members called to duty during a term and to waive re-enrollment fees.
- Doubling the child tax credit for families with **Guard** and Reserve members on duty.
- Extending the Family Medical Leave Act to include spouses of serving **Guard** and Reserve members.

GUARD IN IRAQ

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Soldiers Receive a Dream Delivery; Care Packages: Books, Tapes, Games and 2,500 Pillows

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The News Tribune (Tacoma, Washington)

July 21, 2004, Wednesday

By, Miriam Gottfried, The News Tribune

Thousands of Washington **National Guard** soldiers in Iraq will have a soft place to lay their heads thanks to a donation delivered Tuesday to Camp Murray.

Jan Sass, director of a Tri-Cities-based organization called U.S. Troop Care Package, said a photograph sent by a soldier inspired her to start making the 12-inch square pillows. Now the group is sending 2,500 of them.

"We got a picture of a soldier sleeping on his helmet," she said. "Since I'm a mom, I said, 'We've got to get some pillows over there.'"

Though the pillows took up a lot of box space, it was the 3,000 books, more than 100 boxes of food and many more boxes of hygiene items, videotapes and puzzles that accounted for most of the weight of Tuesday's 4,000-pound delivery.

"It's fantastic to be able to know that the folks back home are reaching out," said Col. Phillip Glise, deputy commander for the 81st Brigade Combat Team, who oversees services and programs to aid the families of deployed soldiers. "It's always heartwarming to have someone say, 'You got mail.'"

U.S. Troop Care Package sends weekly shipments to troops and hospital patients in Iraq, as well as to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The group has sent more than 5,000 care packages since forming in March 2003, when U.S. troops went into Iraq.

Most shipments are sent from the Tri-Cities headquarters, but this donation is being distributed by the Washington **National Guard** Family Program directly to its own troops.

"In the end, I don't think it matters what they get," Sass said. "It's just important that they know we're supporting them at home."

Sass and fellow volunteers brought 1,000 pillows to Camp Murray and McChord Air Force Base in February to distribute to 81st soldiers as they left for Iraq.

Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Johnson, who was among those receiving Sass's donation Tuesday, got his own pillow when he was in Iraq early this year. He said soldiers usually don't ship pillows with them, and though they can buy them in Iraq, many end up sleeping without one for the first month or so.

Receiving any kind of care package, Johnson added, is a morale booster.

"Mail call is a high point in most soldiers' day," he said. "It's a really nice feeling to know people are thinking about you."

The Washington **National Guard** Family Program aims to ensure that all 3,600 deployed troops get at least one care package, said program assistant Chris Kunzelman.

She added that outside donations help defray steep postage costs for families who can't afford to send many care packages.

Obtaining donations is just the first step, Sass said. Packing, sewing and distributing the items require hundreds of volunteers and a lot of money for postage - \$ 10 for a regular care package, nearly \$ 20 for a hospital-bound version.

Sass said finding enough volunteers has never been a problem.

"I've never seen anything like it," she said. "The American Legion heard we needed to make all these pillows, and they donated us a room. When I walked in, that room was full of people, many of whom I had never seen before."

Sass said she has no relatives in the military, but she doesn't lack for motivation.

"I just love my country," she said. "We have people who come into our shop and leave crying. It's so inspiring."

Minnesotans Sour On Reported Proposal To Extend Guard Tours

The Associated Press

July 22, 2004, Thursday

When Gov. Tim Pawlenty visits Minnesota **National Guard** troops stationed in Kosovo this week, he might find them concerned about reports of a Pentagon plan to extend Guard mobilizations beyond the current 24-month limit.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld denied the report from the Los Angeles Times on Wednesday, with a caveat. "No, we don't plan at the moment to extend people beyond the 24 months," he said, adding: "Although one should never say never. And we are at war."

However, in an appearance before the House Armed Services Committee, Gen. Peter Schoomaker, the Army's chief of staff, seemed to indicate that the matter was about to be resolved. "The decision is in progress," Schoomaker said.

Word that such a policy was even being discussed worried some Minnesotans, including Dean Esala, a Minnesota **National Guard** member recently home from a six-month peacekeeping tour in Bosnia.

"It's hard to be taken away from your life for six months, and more than 24 months would be a long, long time," said Esala. "I signed up to be a part-time soldier. We're all soldiers, but nobody expects something like that."

Other Minnesotans who have recently endured long overseas Guard deployments agree, and two prominent Minnesota officials who deal with the Pentagon said that active-duty forces are in dire need of expansion to relieve unprecedented pressure on Guard and Reserve forces.

"It's broke, and we've got to fix it," said retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Denny Schulstad, chairman of the Minnesota Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. "The active-duty force just isn't large enough. Everyone in the military is a volunteer, but you don't join the Guard or Reserves to be an active-duty person. You joined to serve in an emergency, and then it's off you go."

That was the message Schulstad delivered last month before a panel of the House Armed Services Committee, where he also said employers are hard-pressed to weather long, open-ended deployments. "Employers are starting to say, 'Wait a minute,'" Schulstad said. "Beyond 24 months would be devastating."

U.S. Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., a member of the committee, said he couldn't get confirmation from the Pentagon that the change is officially in the works, but he said it underscores his contention that "the size of the active-duty force is too small, forcing us to rely excessively on the Guard and Reserve."

The Pentagon's policy is to not keep members of the **National Guard** and Reserve on active duty for more than 24 months, although Rumsfeld noted Wednesday that the law defines the limitation as 24 consecutive months, whereas the Pentagon's practice has been

to limit it to 24 cumulative months.

Currently, about 2,000 Minnesota **National Guard** members are deployed, primarily in Afghanistan and the Balkans. Pawlenty was scheduled to leave late Thursday on a trip to Kosovo to visit about 800 Minnesota Guard members stationed there.

No members of the state's Guard have come close to serving 24 months, a spokesman said.

Getting rid of that 24-month limit probably would upset many long-serving soldiers and their families, and it could cripple the military's recruitment and retention efforts.

"In general, if potential Reservists and Guard members see members pulled away from their jobs and families, the service simply won't be as attractive," Kline said.

Sgt. Steven Tyler, of Sleepy Eye, is in the first few months of a yearlong deployment in Afghanistan, and having him gone for more than twice as long "wouldn't make me very happy," said his wife, Doreen.

"We're used to this happening, but it doesn't get any easier," she said. "This is what he does, but at a certain point, enough's enough - once he's done his time, let him come home."

Refueling Teams Keep Operations Booming

European Stars and Stripes

July 22, 2004

By Lisa Horn, Stars and Stripes

Air Force boom operators claim they're the only airmen flown to work every day. And Tuesday's refueling mission 20,000 feet above the Black Sea was no different for Master Sgts. Glenn Hancock and Sonny McCarra, boom operators for the 186th Air Refueling Wing, 153rd Air Refueling Squadron from Meridian, Miss.

"That's what their job is - to take me to work," McCarra joked, pointing to pilots Lt. Col. David "Doc" Glisson and 1st Lt. Rob Garrison.

The **Air National Guard** unit - part of the 385th Air Expeditionary Group - is staging its refueling missions from Rhein-Main Air Base until the end of the month while the runway at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, is closed for repairs.

Since August 2003, the 385th's crews have been gassing up C-17s, E-8Cs and C-5s around the clock as they fly to and from downrange, said Lt. Col. Twayne Mobley, commander of the 385th AEG.

"[The receivers] need the gas to be able to minimize their time on the ground at their stops," Mobley explained.

Glisson, Garrison, McCarra and Hancock took off Tuesday from Rhein-Main to meet up

with a C-17 on its way to Balad Air Base, Iraq.

Capt. Lance Spear and Eduardo Emmanuelli, pilots of the C-17, had taken off from Rhein-Main shortly before the KC-135. Two and a half hours later, the aircraft rendezvoused over the Black Sea, just off the coast of Turkey.

During the mission, Glisson and Garrison stayed in constant contact with Spear and Emmanuelli to ensure both planes were able to meet at the predetermined refueling time.

Lying on his stomach in a small pit at the plane's tail, Hancock had his hands at the controls. As he lowered the boom to a point just above the C-17 cockpit, he filled the plane with 65,000 pounds of fuel, or roughly 9,700 gallons.

The 11 minutes of refueling went flawlessly. As the C-17 pulled away to continue its flight into Iraq, Hancock waved to the crewmembers and they disappeared into the horizon.

Flying directly into the setting sun, the KC-135 turned to head back to Germany. Glisson and Garrison attached Post-it notes to the windshield to deflect some of the sun's glare.

"It's redneck sunscreen," Glisson joked in his Southern drawl.

Before Incirlik's repairs began, a similar refueling mission would take three hours, or about half the time it took on this day. In addition to adapting to the longer flight time, pilots have also had to adjust to maneuvering in and out of Frankfurt's busy airspace.

Glisson had to fight to break into the Frankfurt radio chatter as an air traffic controller provided instructions to the endless number of incoming and outgoing aircraft.

"The three big challenges [flying from Rhein-Main] are getting out of Frankfurt, the timing of the refueling itself and finally getting back to Rhein-Main and landing," Mobley said.

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Left Behind On The Home Front

The Sunday Oregonian

July 18, 2004 Sunday

By Mark Larabee - The Oregonian Mike Francis - of The Oregonian staff contributed from Iraq

Summary: As more **Oregon Guard** troops deploy, families cope with a void that can seem larger in smaller towns

Carrie and Natalie Fox of Lebanon and Nichole Powell of Albany are related by

marriage. Among them, they have six daughters, play on the same softball team and share the same unrelenting worries as they lie awake at night, alone.

Their husbands, all Oregon **National Guard** soldiers, are away from home as part of the massive national deployment of citizen soldiers to Iraq.

Twin brothers, Staff Sgt. Tim Fox and Sgt. 1st Class Kim Fox, 40, are attached to G Troop, 82nd Cavalry, based in Redmond. Two weeks ago they left home for training in Texas and are expecting an early winter deployment to Iraq. They'll be gone at least 18 months.

Their nephew, Spc. Jedadia Powell, 23, is in Baghdad with the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry. He left last fall and probably won't be home until spring.

The women have become a lot closer as the reality of the deployment hit home. With no family support program in Lebanon -- which the **National Guard** sponsors for most units -- the women help one another as well as other wives and families left behind.

"I live over here," Natalie Fox, 37, said during a conversation last week in her sister-in-law's living room. "I don't want to go home to an empty house."

Her eldest daughter is attending college in Arizona, and another is visiting for part of the summer. "I have nobody," Fox said.

All three said they've felt such isolation.

When U.S. soldiers deploy, especially to a war zone, the occasions are marked with emotional going-away ceremonies. Politicians pontificate, commanding officers salute and families band together.

But once the troops are gone, the ceremony fades and those left behind have to deal with the reality of day-to-day life without husbands, fathers, mothers, friends and co-workers for a year or more.

At sizable military bases such as Fort Lewis in Washington and Camp Pendleton in California, large numbers of families are all dealing with the loss at the same time. There, services and support groups are created to help with everything from paying the rent to finding baby sitters to avoiding loneliness.

Not so with the **National Guard**. Most Oregon towns have only a handful of soldiers called to active duty at any one time, so once the parade is forgotten those left behind can feel increasingly alone.

The Oregon **National Guard** has called 1,333 soldiers to active duty, most of whom are or will be cogs in the U.S. security force in Iraq. Overall, more than 156,000 military reservists and **National Guard** troops are in Iraq, 40 percent of the force there.

Many of the Oregon troops are from small towns, where weekend Guard pay supplements jobs in the service industry, mills, factories or on farms.

"It affects small towns a lot more visibly, and a lot of people know that Mr. Smith, the guy that runs the bakery, is also Specialist Smith on the weekend," said Maj. Arnold Strong, spokesman for the Oregon Guard. "It's a lot more seriously felt by a small community. You deploy out of Portland and nobody notices because you're rolling out of

a town with millions of people."

The wives' frustration has some roots in recent, increased demands that have forced the Oregon Guard to cobble together some units, taking soldiers out of one town to fill a gap in a unit across the state.

The Fox brothers and their nephew were attached to F-Troop, a unit based in Albany and Lebanon, until they and others were reassigned to units based in Redmond and Woodburn. While armories in towns where units are based have good family support programs, the families of soldiers who live hours away feel cut off.

Carrie Fox said the bonding among families that regularly goes on as soldiers train together over the years has been lost. "It's really hard to keep families together and supporting each other when they pull units apart," she said.

Nichole Powell said her husband was one of five from F-Troop reassigned to a Woodburn-based company. Although she is invited to support group functions there, she said the program doesn't really work for her.

"It's an hour and a half away," she said. "Nobody knows me from Woodburn, and I don't have any family support there. You feel like nobody else knows what you're going through."

Support in towns limited

When Albany-based Bravo Company, 52nd Combat Engineers went to Iraq last summer, the Linn County sheriff's office collected food, sunblock and other comfort items and sent regular care packages to the unit. And when "B-52" came home in March, their convoy was greeted by people in every town between Eugene and Albany.

That parade, said Sgt. Scott Nyquist, "can only be described as a Roman triumph. They did everything but put olive branches in our hair."

But the usual buzz that exists when a community sends a larger group of soldiers overseas is not there for the 46 men from Albany and Lebanon now deployed.

There are sprinklings of support. Smokecraft in Albany donated a pallet of beef jerky. Carrie Fox said her church has offered to help with anything she needs while her husband is away, and her neighbors have been great. Most local businesses are supportive of employees called up.

"People are supportive once they know," Carrie Fox said. "But for the most part, we don't have wide community support because the word is not out."

Fox said she has become the contact for families in Lebanon, Albany and other nearby small towns after complaining to the **National Guard** about the lack of coordination. She's just been given a telephone list and is making contact, helping families cope with everything from separation anxiety to home repair problems to questions about military health insurance.

"She's great," said Charity Smith, 23, of Sweet Home, a 20-minute drive through the grass seed farms and cattle ranches that help define the area. "I know I can call her anytime."

Her husband, Staff Sgt. Tommy Smith, 28, is also training in Texas with G-Troop. They have two children, ages 4 and 2, and recently discovered a third is due in March.

"It's hard," said Smith, who is also attending nursing school at Linn-Benton Community College. "I don't have the backup with their dad not here to support my decisions."

She said she has help from family and friends, but doesn't know too many people in town and figures few know her husband is gone. But she said her husband's employer, Chambers Construction in Eugene, has been very supportive, helping with insurance costs and calling to make sure things are OK.

Such hardships are the norm, said Diane Gooding, the Guard family support coordinator for Oregon. The problems that typically arise are financial.

"When the breadwinner is gone from the picture, the spouse may have to quit their job to take care of the children, and that causes a strain," she said. "We've had people that have gotten \$60,000 less a year. It's not typical, but it happens."

While on active duty, a soldier also might lose employer-sponsored health insurance. Some employers make up the difference. By law, companies cannot fire Guard members called to active duty, but they don't have a financial responsibility to them either.

Nichole Powell said she quit her job as a customer service representative because her request for time off to see her husband was causing conflict. She also realized it was difficult to take care of two children and do all the housework by herself. They're surviving on her husband's Guard pay.

"We're not saving any money," she said.

Weyerhaeuser, which runs an engineered wood products plant in Albany, is at the other end of the spectrum. The company employs 57,000 worldwide and has hundreds serving in the Guard, including Spc. Tracy Muse, a forklift operator from Albany, who recently deployed with the Redmond-based unit.

Weyerhaeuser will pay him half his base salary for the first six months of his deployment and continue his health and dental insurance for him and his family for that time as well. He continues to accrue vacation time. His co-workers at the plant pitched in and bought him a laptop so he could regularly e-mail home.

"We recognize the sacrifice that our employees and their families are making, and we do what we can to ease the burden," said Jackie Lang, a Weyerhaeuser spokeswoman in Portland.

Hard on children

A thunderstorm blew through Lebanon one night last week, sending Tanezia Fox, 13, into her mother's bed. Carrie Fox said her daughter misses her father and worries about him as much as she does.

"I always want to call him and talk to him and (ask) how things are going, but I can't," Tanezia said. "It hurts a lot when people ask about him, and they don't know he's gone."

The younger children don't understand.

Charity Smith said her son still thinks his father is staying at a hotel. "I'm trying to teach

him that his daddy is going to help little kids like him," she said.

Dianne Barricklow, 34, of Lebanon is raising two daughters, Tammie, 16, and Nikki, 14, without the help of her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Phil Barricklow, 37. A full-time active duty guardsman, he is also training for Iraq with the Redmond unit.

She keeps her husband's wedding ring and dog tag on a chain around her neck and said it's been emotionally tough since that 20-minute hug before he climbed aboard a plane to Texas.

"He's very involved with these girls," Dianne Barricklow said of her husband, who coaches softball. Tammie Barricklow said she misses her father and will worry once he lands in Iraq.

"I don't think about what he's going to do in Iraq," she said. "That would just make me cry."

Her sister, Nikki, is confident.

"He knows what he's doing," she said. "Of course, I'm scared for him, but I know he's going to come back."

Mike Francis of The Oregonian staff contributed from Iraq. Mark Larabee: 503-294-7664; marklarabee@news.oregonian.com

Military Dads Must Readjust To Growing, Changing Families [*Back to Table of Contents*](#)

Chattanooga Times Free Press (Tennessee)

July 25, 2004 Sunday

By Aline Mendelsohn; The Orlando Sentinel

Orlando, Fla.

When Army Staff Sgt. John Howington left for Iraq 18 months ago, his son Logan was just forming his first words. When he returned a year later to Daytona Beach, Fla., 3-year-old Logan was speaking in full sentences.

Howington didn't see as dramatic a change in his older son, John. Still, the 11-year-old was guarded, and "there was more of a distance between us than there had ever been before," recalled his dad. It would take weeks for Howington, 32, and his children to rebuild their relationship.

Like Howington, military dads across the country are coming home to find that their kids have grown up -- without them.

Extended separations, particularly military absences, can change the parent-child dynamic. After deployment, returning to normal is rarely simple.

Families go through an adjustment period that can take weeks or months.

"There's no picking up just where you left off," said Shelley MacDermid, co-director of the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University. War is unlike any other separator. Families must cope with the fact that their loved one is in a combat zone—an inherently dangerous place.

Briann Spielmann, 14, sometimes cried at night after her dad, Chief Master Sgt. Fred Spielmann, left their Longwood home for Oman in December 2002. He was serving in the 202nd Red Horse unit of the **Florida Air National Guard**.

"It's very scary seeing your father go to war, not knowing if he'll come home alive," Briann said.

When a parent goes to war, older kids tend to grow up faster because they take on more responsibilities, MacDermid said.

Sometimes that means freeing up mom to take care of tasks dad used to do. Briann pitched in around the house, helping with cleaning and laundry.

All members of the family change while the service member is away," said Mady Wechsler Segal, associate director of the Center for Research on Military Organization at the University of Maryland.

'YOU CAN'T LEAVE'

Sgt. Sanford Dixson's 12-year-old daughters, Ebony and Ariel, started making their own lunches while their father was serving in Afghanistan.

"They became more mature, more self-reliant," said Dixson, of Orlando, who served in the **Florida National Guard** Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion of the 124th Infantry Regiment.

But younger children don't always understand the implications of the parent's absence. Logan toted around a snapshot of Howington while he was away. When the child saw soldiers on the news, he would put his hands on the TV set -- and cry.

The first time he saw his dad in uniform after Howington returned from Iraq, Logan clung to him, saying, "You can't leave, Daddy."

Even now, the sight of his dad in camouflage -- Howington sometimes wears his uniform for special events -- frightens Logan. Before a reunion, it's common for all family members to feel anxious.

Soldiers must adjust to civilian life as well as family life. For instance, Howington had to re-establish his role as the disciplinarian. "I had to be the bad guy sometimes," Howington said.

TIME FOR FAMILY

Parents can change just as much as kids during a separation caused by military service.

When Chief Warrant Officer Kyle Repp returned from serving with the Army Reserve at the 801st Combat Support Hospital near Talil, Iraq, in April, he had become blonder -- and shorter. At least that's what Repp's three kids noticed the first time they saw him

after his 16-month deployment. Repp's hair was bleached by the desert sun, but he certainly hadn't shrunk. It just seemed that way to his children, who had grown taller.

Alex, 17, hovered an inch over Repp; Adena, 14, shot up 8 inches to 5 feet 2 inches -- "not like the little kid that I left," Repp said. Other things changed: Alex now carried a driver's license in his wallet, 16-year-old Marina had braces, Adena's voice had matured.

"They kind of had their own life," said Repp, of Longwood, Fla. "I was worried they wouldn't have time for me."

As it turns out, they do have time for Repp -- and are even helping with his junk-removal business.

Howington, who served with Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry

Regiment of the **Florida National Guard**, also has spent lots of time with his kids, including fishing trips and visits to his workplace. He has gained a new perspective on family life.

"I appreciate my family more than I ever have before," Howington said. "I try to make the best out of every minute."

COMING HOME

The Orlando Sentinel

Advice for soldiers returning to their families after deployment:

- *Be patient. Starting over will be difficult for everyone.

- *Approach others as equals. Avoid the "I'm home, and I'll take charge" attitude. Focus on the fact that you can now do things together.

- *Find out what new skills everyone has learned. Learn how everyone has grown during the deployment -- and use it as the starting point for rebuilding relationships.

- *Arrange quiet time. For the first month or so, set a regular time to talk with family members about concerns that have come up.

- *Stay positive. Keep criticism to a minimum; if it can't be avoided, keep it constructive. Even if you don't agree with decisions made in your absence, remember that you probably don't know all of the circumstances.

- *Don't expect old problems to have gone away. It's unlikely that your absence solved problems you left behind. On the other hand, being away can give you a chance to look at things with a new perspective.

Greenwood Single Parent Prepares Son For His Possible Mobilization

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

July 25, 2004, Sunday, BC cycle

By Bob Darden, Greenwood Commonwealth

Greenwood, Miss.

Maj. Johnny Waldrop keeps a large ring binder near his desk at the 1st Battalion, 114th Field Artillery of the **Mississippi National Guard** in Greenwood.

The binder does not contain the unit's order of battle or reams of mundane Army procedures. Instead it contains Waldrop's personal "Family Care Plan," in the event he is mobilized for active duty.

Waldrop, 38, of Greenwood, the 114th's executive officer and full-time administrative officer, has never been mobilized for active duty, but that does not mean that essential things, such as a valid will or power of attorneys for financial and health care, have been left to chance.

"I'm no different than any other single parent in the Army. Single parents are required to have a plan. They are required to put it in writing, on very specific forms, who has guardianship of their children" Waldrop said, also adding that little things such as a mortgage or car payment must be taken care of, as well, before a soldier is mobilized.

The 114th received an alert notice in May. It is rare that a unit that receives an alert is not eventually mobilized.

Waldrop said his Family Care Plan was updated long before the alert notice was handed down.

An 18-year veteran of the U.S. Army Reserve and the **Mississippi National Guard**, Waldrop knows mobilization goes with the territory, with being a soldier.

"Anytime you're wearing the uniform, you're subject to getting called," he said.

Waldrop thinks about his son, Will Waldrop, 15, and what his mobilization means to him.

"He's 15, so he's not a child anymore. He's concerned. He and I are all the family we've got here in Greenwood," said Waldrop, a native of Biloxi.

Waldrop's binder contains the minutiae of everyday life. Things such as birth certificates, immunization records, Social Security cards, insurance policies, bank statements, marriage certificates and mortgage deeds and car titles.

With a minor child, the requirements are even more stringent. They cover the child's medical records and school enrollment records.

"This is good not just for single-parents but for anyone.," Waldrop said. "You're going to be gone, and somebody has got to be left to take care of it. Personally, I have most of that stuff done on drafts because I don't want to burden anybody."

The binder will become a part of Waldrop's "readiness packet" if he is mobilized. Legally

binding copies of important documents will be entrusted to a trusted friend when and if the time comes, he said.

"They'll have everything that they need," he said. Having someone to take care of Will in his absence is comforting to Waldrop.

"Most folks are left with family members. Our particular closest family is two hours away. We made the decision that we didn't want to uproot him from school.

"If we are mobilized, he would probably stay local. He would stay with friends in Greenwood. They're some precious friends who have helped me out already," Waldrop said.

The binder concept is something everyone - military and civilian – should think seriously about, he said.

"Everybody needs to have a will. You have no idea what is going to happen. The most dangerous thing you do is drive in an automobile every day," he said.

Waldrop said he has heard all the excuses people give to procrastinate on having a will drawn up.

"People will say, 'Well, I'll get around to it.' You don't know if you have one minute, one hour or one more day. You could be taken in an accident before you ever get around to it."

He said the Army has the soldier's best interest at heart in making sure things in their personal lives are neat, legal and in order.

"That's why the Army forces your hand to do this. They know you're not going to be effective if you're worried about who's taking care of things back home. It's just good planning," Waldrop said.

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH AFTERMATH

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Transition Difficult For Returning Guard Troops

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

July 25, 2004, Sunday, BC cycle

By Scott Craven, The Arizona Republic

Phoenix

A year ago, Robin Kempton lived the same kind of life as his friends and neighbors, working hard all week at his job before coming home each night to a family who needed him. On weekends, he mowed the lawn and washed the car.

That was before war took him to Afghanistan. Now everything's different.

The 40-year-old Goodyear helicopter mechanic, an E-4 Specialist who returned in May, is one of more than 500 **Arizona National Guard** members who have come home after serving up to a year or more in the war on terror, a Guard spokesman says. Hundreds more are expected to return in the next few months.

They face an adjustment that can take weeks or months, at times exacerbated by the changes that have occurred while they were gone. "Transition is difficult even in the best of situations," said Maj. Robert Ditchey, spokesman for the Arizona Army National Guard. "Those in the regular military come back to their base, but those in the Guard must transition back to families, the community and their jobs. They have to pick up where they left off, and that's not an easy thing to do."

Kempton's adjustment started the second he saw Becky, his wife of 15 years, among the hundreds of friends and family members gathered to welcome the soldiers at the Arizona Army National Guard Armory.

Her long hair was gone, replaced by a shoulder-length cut. He hardly recognized her.

Then, after a baseball game and dinner out, Kempton accompanied his wife and their 15-year-old son, Tyler, to a home he had never seen. It was a perfectly nice house, but it didn't feel like home. "It looked great, but I didn't know where anything was," he said. And the new neighborhood was too quiet.

"The silence was unnerving," Kempton said. "It had hardly ever been that quiet at camp, and if it was, you knew all hell was about to break loose."

Little things can lead to the biggest problems, said Ken Benckwitz, team leader at the Phoenix Veterans Center, which offers counseling to former soldiers.

Benckwitz said soldiers are coming home to spouses who have learned to fend for themselves. Men and women who others counted on for survival just a month before come home to find their roles in the family diminished, with other family members doing chores they once performed.

This change in the family affects men more acutely, Benckwitz said:

"They come home and realize their wives have done fine without them. The kids are OK, the budget is in good shape and all the household things are taken care of. There's a bug in the bathroom and the wife kills it and the guy is thinking,

'Hey, that's my job.' Little things make him say, 'I'm not wanted here anymore.'"

Kempton considers himself lucky. Afghanistan doesn't stalk his dreams. He doesn't wake up in a sweat to explosions only he can hear. For him, the changes are subtler.

War taught Kempton to be alert to suspicious people and situations.

"You never knew who was out there, if they meant you harm," Kempton said. "Anything could happen at any time."

That vigilance remains. Kempton sits with his back to the wall in restaurants. He avoids large crowds.

His wife has noticed other small changes: The way Kempton was constantly picking up after everyone, because, in camp, he had to know where everything was at all times. The

way he tightly tucks in the covers on the bed, a habit he developed to keep out scorpions, snakes and camel spiders. The way he can't relax, going outside to wash his car at 9 o'clock at night, because at camp there was always something to do.

Kempton still wakes up at 4 a.m., even though he may not have gone to bed until 11 the night before, his sleep interrupted by unfamiliar noises.

But Becky Kempton has changed as well. She is more independent, doing chores that her husband used to do. As he adjusts to civilian life, she must adjust to him.

"He's always on the go, and it can tire me out sometimes," she said. "There are times when I need him out of my hair, so I'll go take a nap and tell him to go do whatever makes him happy."

Dr. Dennis Grant, a clinical director at the Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs

Medical Center in Phoenix, said marriages often suffer most after combat situations.

"The impact on wives and children can be significant," he said. "A lot of marriages broke up after Korea and Vietnam. We're trying to place emphasis on the family aspect as these soldiers come home."

The adjustment can take weeks or months, and families must realize that there is work ahead once the joyous reunion is over.

Arizona National Guard officials have seen the need, offering support for soldiers to aid in the reunion process.

Before they are released from active duty, Guard soldiers undergo a three-day process designed to transition them back to civilian life, said Chief Warrant Officer Jody Reidenhour of the Arizona Army National Guard's Soldier Support Center. They are told about the changes at home that likely have occurred in their absence. Most importantly, they are reminded to take it slowly, because the families they've left behind have had to learn to live without them.

Good things also have come from the time apart. Kempton is closer than ever

to Tyler, who suffered during his father's absence, earning D's and F's at school rather than his usual A's and B's.

Now the teen goes to his father whenever he has a problem, sharing whatever's on his mind. He seeks out his dad for games on the Microsoft Xbox. Halo is one of their favorites, a game Kempton nearly mastered in Afghanistan. Becky hopes that, in time, Tyler will forgive the military. "All he sees is how the military stole his dad," his mother said. "Maybe one day he'll understand."

Soldiers Being Sent Back To Idaho For Medical Reasons

The Associated Press

July 22, 2004

By Chuck Oxley, Associated Press Writer

After weeks of training in Fort Bliss, Texas, the Army plans to return 95 Idaho **National Guard** soldiers to their home bases next week, primarily for medical reasons.

Army spokesman Maj. Marshall Gordon, who is training with the federalized Idaho troops in Fort Bliss, Texas, said some of the soldiers being returned from active duty have physical problems related to weight, such as diabetes, cardiac problems and sleep apnea.

However, none of the Idaho soldiers were being sent home for failing to meet Army weight standards, Idaho **National Guard** Lt. Col. Tim Marsano said.

Marsano said the returning soldiers have medical issues, some of which are temporary, that would not allow them to perform in a combat environment, Marsano said Thursday.

The returning soldiers include three officers and 92 enlisted personnel, Gordon said. They will return to Idaho individually on commercial aircraft and should all be back by July 26.

Marsano said he expects several dozen Idaho soldiers will rejoin the 116th Brigade Combat Team later this summer after they overcome whatever temporary medical issue caused them to be returned.

"We would like to emphasize that we have been told by the Army that our REFRAD (Returned from Active Duty) percentages for Idaho Citizen Soldiers are significantly less than other states' **National Guard** units that have undergone this same situation," Marsano said in an e-mail to The Associated Press.

"We worked hard to prepare our men and women for the training they're undergoing in Texas, and would not have sent them to Texas if we thought they were not going to pass muster there."

Approximately 2,000 part-time members of the Idaho **National Guard's** 116th Cavalry Brigade were called up earlier this year to prepare for deployment in Iraq. They shipped out in June and earlier this month for several months of training at the Texas camp.

It was during those more intensive field exercises that physical issues became more evident, Gordon said.

"It's easy to do. Sometimes you get down here and it brings out a medical condition," he said. "For example, the heat, stress and extra equipment being carried can induce a back problem."

Marsano said the soldiers returning to Idaho will be individually evaluated for their ability to remain in the **National Guard**, whose physical standards are the same as the regular Army.

Those with serious and irreversible medical problems may be discharged. Others could be reassigned to non-combat positions, he said.

The vacancies created in the 116th will be filled either by substitute Idaho Guard troops or, if needed, from other reserve units around the country, Gordon said.

Treatment Available To Troops Suffering From Combat Stress

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

by Army Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample
American Forces Press Service

Washington (AFP) -- The service member who goes to combat and the one who comes back are never the same person, the Defense Department's director of mental-health policy said July 14.

"No one comes back unchanged," said Army Col. (Dr.) Tom Burke.

Dr. Burke and other DOD health officials try to reach out to those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who may be suffering from combat-related mental-health problems or post-traumatic stress disorder, he said.

Recently, the Army released a first-of-its-kind medical report that showed frontline action had adversely affected the mental health of some service members. Dr. Burke, who advises DOD leaders on mental-health issues, said combat veterans and their families should watch for changes in behavior that can range from mild depressive and anxiety symptoms to trouble sleeping and nightmares.

"In the majority of the cases, these symptoms are transient; they are common and diminish with time," he said. Service members may have the occasional sleepless night or memories that come back out of nowhere for years, "and that's normal."

Other symptoms to look for, he said, are sad and withdrawn moods, tearfulness, problems sleeping -- too much or too little -- and problems with appetite, memory loss and concentration. Drug and alcohol abuse also are symptoms of a problem.

But the problems are not always mild, and the symptoms are not always subtle.

"If (people start) talking about hurting themselves [or] killing themselves, it's important

to not panic but to take that kind of talk very seriously and get them to help," Dr. Burke said, "even if it involves calling 911."

The doctor said that mental problems can go on for years if not treated, and that symptoms of combat-related mental illness do not always happen right away.

"They develop over time," he said.

An Army study published in the July edition of the New England Journal of Medicine showed that 6 percent of soldiers and Marines returning from combat duty experienced mental health problems. Dr. Burke said the low number did not amaze him, based on what the Army has learned from studying prisoners of war suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

"The number of 6 to 12 percent is not surprising," he said.

"The experience in the past among POWs," he said, "is (that) about 50 percent have PSD; among Vietnam veterans, over the years, about 30 percent; (Operation Desert Storm), 10 to 15 percent."

He said that declining percentage of combat-related mental-health concerns might be attributed to the military's approach to getting better mental-health services to service members before, during and after deployment.

"I would like to believe that part of that is because of the proactive care on the battlefield and the full range of services by the military health-care system," he said, "and the proactive preventive services that are provided (to) combat units."

Also, he said, screening now takes place before deployments, preventive service is provided during deployments, followed by more screening during redeployments and follow-up care at treatment facilities.

Dr. Burke said the low percentage also indicates that the majority of service members surveyed are faring well under combat conditions. That may be because of realistic training and having the "best equipment in the world," he said.

He said that tougher training and better equipment, along with a more stable rotation schedule "has contributed to the resilience of (service members) and their ability to handle the stresses of combat."

Dr. Burke said that Defense Department does not "want to see the Soldiers of today live through years of suffering when there's help available now."

The military has a number of resources to help those seeking assistance, he said, starting with the service member's chain of command. He also encourages them to talk with comrades or their chaplains.

He said that DOD "really cares" about its servicemembers and their families, and he encouraged them to take advantage of the various programs that are available.

"The help doesn't work if you don't come in to use it," he said. "Mental-health problems are problems that have solutions."

Service members can get confidential counseling through the military's "One Source" program. The 24-hour-a-day service is for service members and their families, and provides quick, professional assistance with problems.

GENERAL

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Just Back From Iraq, Man Hits Jackpot

United Press International

July 21, 2004 Wednesday

A member of the Massachusetts **National Guard** just returned from Iraq and who had to file for bankruptcy has won a \$200,000-a-year scratch-off lottery jackpot.

John A. Morrissey bought a \$10 scratch-off ticket at a neighborhood convenience store and won one of the top prizes of the Lifetime Spectacular game. Lottery officials were to deliver the first \$140,000 check -- Morrissey's prize after taxes -- this week.

"It's just incredible," Morrissey told the Boston Herald. "That's the real deal; one of those rags-to-riches.

"I was married and I got divorced. And I had to file bankruptcy. Then after that years went on. I went to Iraq and then I came home and got lucky."

Morrissey returned from Iraq about five weeks ago. He had been stationed at the Tallil Air Base near Nasiriyah for about 13 months, working with vehicle parts supplies.

Morrissey told the Herald: "I don't consider myself a lucky Irishman. I just want to say it's been a rough go of it through my life. And I guess I've been lucky enough to be lucky. The biggest thing (is to) send my daughter to college."

Camp Gives Youth a Taste Of National Guard Life

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

July 25, 2004, Sunday, BC cycle

Rapid City, S.D.

For six days, 72 children awoke each morning to reveille and returned to their racks each night at taps.

The children were at Camp Rapid for the fourth annual **South Dakota National Guard** Youth Challenge, a weeklong camp designed to give children with family members serving in the Guard a sense of pride and understanding for what their loved ones do when they are away from home.

The children went to a shooting range, practiced marching drills, learned land navigation and used the same flight simulators in which their adult counterparts train.

Staff Sgt. Kristie Palmer, South Dakota National Guard youth coordinator, said that although many of the children have expressed a desire to join the military when they get older, the program is not a military recruiting exercise.

"It's an appreciation program," Palmer said, "and a way for the children to use each other in a support network."

Palmer said it's a way for the **National Guard** to say thank you for the sacrifices the youths make when they have a parent in the service.

Sixty-five percent of the children attending the camp currently have a loved one deployed overseas.

Rachel Eisenbraun, 11, of Black Hawk said this is her second year at the camp.

"Making friends is the best part because we need friends for support," she said.

Her father, David Eisenbraun, was deployed to active duty in April with the Army National Guard's 109th Engineer Group, which is stationed in Afghanistan.

Rachel doesn't anticipate seeing him for another year.

"The toughest part is not having him there," she said, "especially at this age because he's not there to watch us grow."

Established in 2000, the challenge has seen 216 young faces come to share in a week of educational fun.

There is a \$75 admission fee, but donations help cover the cost. More than 40 volunteers helped this year, most of them National Guard members or spouses of Guard members.

Salute To Freedom; National Guard Thanks Its Soldiers -- And Their Families

Grand Forks Herald

July 25, 2004 Sunday

By Brenden Timpe; Herald Staff Writer

With her husband and youngest son deployed with two different **National Guard** units, Cathy Desrosier sometimes struggles to maintain her family's farm near Crookston.

"We've got a mess of critters out there, and the weeds get carried away," she said.

Desrosier was in Grand Forks on Saturday so the **Army National Guard** could show its appreciation for her sacrifice. She accepted awards in her husband's absence for his service at a Freedom Salute that honored the soldiers and families of the 131st Quartermaster Detachment.

Sgt. 1st Class Linus Desrosier, a 32-year Guard veteran, was mobilized with the 131st, which specializes in water purification. The unit never made it to Iraq, but Sgt. Desrosier did - he was mobilized again in December with the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion Corps.

Meanwhile, Cathy stretches to keep up the farm at home. It's nothing new, she said. She's lived through many deployments, though this is the first to send her husband to war. It's all part of life in the military, Cathy shrugs.

"That's what these guys do, and that's what they like," she said. "That's Linus. He's an old soldier, that's all you can say."

Sgt. Desrosier will be back between December and March, Cathy said. She's excited for a time when she has only one soldier to worry about in her son, Spc. Trevor Desrosier, who is with air defense artillery unit currently training in Texas.

Already she and her husband are talking more often - he calls every two weeks now instead of once a month. Then there's the care packages, which cost her \$20 in postage every week. This week, Sgt. Desrosier has asked Cathy to send the bread machine.

'Thank you'

The Freedom Salute was a way for the Army National Guard to say "thank you" to the troops and their families and employers, Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen of the **North Dakota National Guard** said.

"The heart of the individual soldier, airman or sailor is backed up by a lot of people," Haugen said.

Members of the Guard unit were given an American flag in a wooden display case and a Defender of Freedom certificate. Spouses were given pins, employers medallions and children a foot locker kit complete with **National Guard** board game, trading cards and comic books.

Terri Hintz showed off the foot locker given to her children, Meghan and Matthew. Terri said Meghan, a "girly girl," is a long shot to follow the footsteps of her father, commander of the 131st. Matthew may be a different story - he comes from a National

Guard bloodline, and even dons a pair of camouflage shorts.

"I think he's destined (for the Guard)," Terri said. "It's probably inevitable."

Down time

The 131st was mobilized in March 2003, but returned after three months when it was decided that water purification was not needed. The news they would be sent home was met with mixed reactions, said Spc. Kristy Simmons.

Some were relieved that they would not be sent into harm's way. But many were disappointed, having looked forward to the opportunity to travel and serve the country on the front lines.

Instead of a war, the unit got a heavy dose of re-training. Then they worked hard to stay busy at Fort Lewis in Washington while waiting for orders.

"We thought about our families a lot, but we had each other," she said.

End

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