



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

Homeland Security To Train In Indiana

DEPLOYMENT

Lucedale, George County Show Appreciation For Deploying Guard Members

Soldiers will join Guard in Iraq;3rd Brigade Combat Team to deploy under 42nd Infantry Division

Connecticut National Guard Unit To Be Deployed To Iraq

5,000 Troops To Bolster Cleanup; The Florida Guard Is Helping Local Police and Federal Emergency Experts In The Aftermath Of The Storm.

S.C. Guard Helps Out In Florida

REUNION

Guard Members Returning To State This Weekend

Members of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment Returned Home

National Guard Soldiers From Several Communities Return Home

Some Montana Air National Guard Members Home From Iraq

BENEFITS

Democrat Urges Guard Benefits

Help For Military Families

National Guard Pays Tuition For 750 Students Program Helps Members Go To College

[GUARD IN IRAQ](#)

Glens Falls -- Guard Veterans Home from Iraq Decide to Re-Enlist

[HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT](#)

Families of National Guard Troops In Iraq Stick Together

[HEALTH ISSUES](#)

Guard Officials Step Up Post-War Help For Returning Vets

A Soldier's Injuries Separate Him From Family

[TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES](#)

Guardsman Loved Serving Others

[GENERAL](#)

Policy Change Sought For Guard Complaints From Wounded Fort Lewis Soldiers Spur Action

Alabama Bill To Let Overseas Soldiers Cast Votes By Fax

Insurance There Are Reasons To Retain A Policy Even If Your Car Is In Storage

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 may have to 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,

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

distance education, scholarships, and organizations devoted to the military family

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 Michelle.Bohlen@ngb.af.mil.

Homeland Security To Train In Indiana

wndu.com

Sept. 1, 2004

Jennings County, Ind.

A former state developmental center in southern Indiana will soon become a training ground for the country's Homeland Security Agencies.

The Indiana National Guard will use the buildings and grounds of the Muscatatuck Developmental Center in Jennings County to provide training for military and civilian agencies. Governor Joe Kernan signed the agreement Wednesday with Purdue University and the Military Department of Indiana that will transfer 850 acres of land for the facility.

The **National Guard** hopes to have the center open by next summer. Officials say the size and scope of Muscatatuck's grounds and 66 buildings offer a variety of training and equipment-testing opportunities.

Adjutant General Martin Umbarger of the Indiana **National Guard** explains, "Were not thinking just locally, we're not thinking just state. We think there are several great opportunities here."

Also, as part of the deal, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources will transfer 1,000 acres nearby to Purdue, who will use the land to conduct forestry research.

Lucedale, George County Show Appreciation For Deploying Guard Members

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

August 30, 2004, Monday, BC cycle

Lucedale, Miss.

National Guardsmen of the 150th Battalion, Company B, accompanied their families Sunday to a Soldier Appreciation Day organized by Lucedale and George County.

Members of the Mississippi **National Guard** unit are deploying Thursday to Camp Shelby for training, and they anticipate being in Iraq by January. Only then will their

year's obligation of service begin.

Nancy Dyer's husband, Kirk, probably will miss his son's graduation from George County High School. On Friday night, he heard his son, Andrew, play in the school band for what will probably be the last time.

The troops received their notice one day before Mother's Day, Nancy Dyer recalled. The next day, all she could do was cry.

"Your heart goes down to your stomach. But you pick up and you deal with it," said Nancy Dyer, who's chairing the family support group for local **National Guard** members.

When the Guard members leave, their partners face many different challenges they may not have expected, Nancy Dyer said.

"Many mothers are thrown back into single parenthood," she said, including herself in this category. Other spouses must grapple with smaller budgets and tax problems.

Government officials at the Appreciation Day expressed their willingness to help with the families of the deployed soldiers.

Soldiers will join Guard in Iraq;3rd Brigade Combat Team to deploy under 42nd Infantry Division

Columbus Ledger-Enquirer

September 1, 2004 Wednesday

By Angelique Soenarie; Staff Writer

Fort Benning's 3rd Brigade Combat Team will join a New York-based **National Guard** Division when they deploy to Iraq later this year or early next year. When the some 3,000 soldiers leave to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom III, they will be under the umbrella of the 42nd Infantry Division, best known as the historic Rainbow Division that dates back to World War I and World War II.

Fort Stewart's 1st Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division will also be joining the **National Guard** Division. The two brigades are two of four in the Army's 3rd Infantry Division. The other two -- the 2nd and 4th brigade at Fort Stewart, Ga., will also be deployed to Iraq but will remain under the direction of the 3rd Infantry Division.

Moving the two brigades from the 3rd Infantry Division to a **National Guard** Division is a result of the Army's reorganization to become smaller and the ability to deploy units faster. Called units of action, they also are capable of integrating with any military organization in support of the war on terrorism.

Also attached to the 42nd Infantry Division will be the Idaho Army **National Guard's** 116th Brigade Combat Team and the Tennessee Army **National Guard's** 248th Regimental Combat Team. In north central Iraq, the Rainbow Division will replace the 1st Infantry Division, based in Wurzburg, Germany, sometime between December and

February.

"We have experience in working with other organizations. We have been working with the leaders of the 42nd Infantry Division," said Col. Steve Salazar, commander of the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division at Kelley Hill. "They are a great organization with a great history from back to World War II with Gen. Douglas MacArthur."

The Rainbow Division was organized in 1917 under MacArthur. The Rainbow division and the 45th Infantry Division in World War II liberated a Nazi concentration camp called Dachau. In 2001, the **National Guard** Unit was one of the first units to respond and provided security in New York City following 9/11. Soldiers of the division served in Operation Enduring Freedom and homeland security in Operation Noble Eagle. Also, the division's artillery units from New York and New Jersey are currently serving in central Iraq in Task Force Baghdad for Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

The division's motto is, "Never forget."

This month, the 1st and 3rd Brigade will head to Fort Drum, N.Y., for two weeks, conducting a command post exercise with the 42nd Infantry Division, said Maj. Richard Goldenberg, division public affairs officer.

Contact Angelique Soenarie at (706) 571-8516 or asoenarie@ledger-enquirer.com

Connecticut National Guard Unit To Be Deployed To Iraq

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

September 3, 2004, Friday, BC cycle

Hartford, Conn.

About 130 soldiers from a Newington-based **National Guard** unit, including Gov. M. Jodi Rell's deputy press secretary, will soon be deployed to Iraq.

Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno, commander of the Connecticut **National Guard**, announced Thursday that members of the 143rd Area Support Group are the latest Guard troops from the state to be mobilized.

The group will provide support to combat-ready forces in Iraq. Members are scheduled to depart Sept. 20 for Fort Drum in New York before heading overseas.

John Wiltse, 39, deputy press secretary for Rell and former Gov. John G. Rowland, said the unit expects to provide some logistical support and coordination to military forces and private contractors in Iraq.

For Wiltse, a 17-year member of the **National Guard**, it is the first time he has been deployed. But the Bristol man said he has always understood it would be a possibility.

"I think if you wear the uniform today, part-time and full-time, you realize this is your obligation," he said. "When they call, you go. It shouldn't be a surprise."

"It's really an honor to be called," he said. "That's why we do what we do."

Wiltse began working for the state in 1998 as the spokesman for the Department of Children and Families. He has worked in the governor's communications office since May 2003.

He said Rell, who has members of the military in her family, has been very supportive.

"She's been there," he said. "She knows what it's like for families left behind."

Wiltse's unit is scheduled to be on active duty for up to 18 months.

Currently, two Connecticut Army **National Guard** units are stationed in Iraq. They include the 118th Medical Battalion of Newington and a detachment of C Company, 102nd Infantry Battalion of Bristol.

Fifty soldiers from the 189th Aviation Regiment of Windsor Locks have already been mobilized. Rell is scheduled to conduct a special departure ceremony for the members and their families on Sept. 8.

5,000 troops To Bolster Cleanup; The Florida Guard Is Helping Local Police and Federal Emergency Experts In The Aftermath Of The Storm.

The Miami Herald

September 6, 2004

By Carol Rosenberg; crosenberg@herald.com

The Florida **National Guard** is calling up as many as 5,000 people, including Green Berets and veterans of Iraq duty, to help with the Hurricane Frances cleanup.

Thousands of citizen-soldiers were fanning out across the state on Sunday to help the Federal Emergency Management Agency assess damage, and later will help Floridians by policing cleanup operations, Lt. Col. Mark Prewitt said from an emergency operations center in St. Augustine.

Among them are members of the 53rd Infantry Brigade's 1/124 unit, based in South Florida, which returned in February from Iraq.

"We do have units from all over the state, moving up behind the storm into the East Coast," Prewitt said.

"The first thing we'll do is reconnaissance on the ground by our Special Forces team, and also from the air to do reconnaissance by the air."

Later, he said, "we'll move in to do the security mission . . . directing people to start cleaning the roads up, and get the electricity grids back on. We'll also do humanitarian missions, bringing water, ice and emergency foods into the area."

With storms still swirling in parts of Florida, a timetable was still unclear at midday

Sunday.

"It's all going to happen in the next day or so," he said.

In Hurricane Charley's cleanup, he said, the Guard called up about 4,600 people, and is mobilizing 4,500 to 5,000 this time.

Anticipating Frances' ferocity, Prewitt said, the Guard began calling up Reservists on Thursday.

By Saturday, 3,000 troops were arrayed in armories throughout the state.

About 75 percent of the forces mobilized for Frances are veterans of either the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts, Guard spokesman Lt. Col. Ron Tittle said from Tallahassee.

The troops are using about 1,500 "tactical vehicles" -- Humvees and five-ton trucks -- to cruise through any debris-strewn areas.

They will be focusing on security operations, preventing looting, perhaps directing traffic and may be engaging in search-and-rescue missions if any residents are found in dangerous situations.

Another 1,000 Florida **National Guard** members, Tittle said, are still serving overseas -- mostly in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.

S.C. Guard Helps Out In Florida

The State (Columbia, SC)

September 6, 2004

By Chuck Crumbo; Staff Writer

Four Black Hawk helicopters of the South Carolina **National Guard** will take off for Florida today to help in the aftermath of Hurricane Frances.

The helicopters are part of an S.C. Guard contingent that is assisting Florida authorities in determining the extent of damage caused by the storm.

Sunday, a C-130 transport plane took off from McEntire Air **National Guard** Station to pick up Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and emergency officials in Tallahassee.

They planned to fly the Bush entourage to Miami where they would start work on assessing how badly Frances battered the state, Guard spokesman Lt. Col. Pete Brooks said.

Also Sunday, the Air Guard deployed 10 members of the 240th Combat Communications Squadron in a five-vehicle convoy to Florida. The airmen will set up a satellite communication network so officials can talk and share information in case regular lines of communication are damaged, Brooks said.

The Black Hawks, which are assigned to Company L of the Army 1st Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment, will be used to ferry emergency officials to various locations as they

assess Frances' damage, Brooks said.

South Carolina's help is offered as part of an agreement called the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, through which states outside a disaster area share their equipment and personnel with other states, Brooks said.

More help from South Carolina could be headed to Florida once officials there get an idea of what assistance is needed, he said.

REUNION

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Guard Members Returning To State This Weekend

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

September 1, 2004

3:14 AM Eastern Time

By The Associated Press

Tulsa, Okla. (AP) - All but 10 Oklahoma Army **National Guard** members whose mission was to help train the Afghan military have returned to the United States, officials said.

About 150 soldiers from the 45th Infantry Brigade arrived at Fort Carson, Colo., this week and should return to Oklahoma by the weekend., Col. Pat Scully, the Guard's chief spokesman said Tuesday.

The remaining 10 members, who are part of an Oklahoma City-based public affairs detachment of the 45th, are scheduled to return to the United States in May, Scully said.

Elements of the 45th have been in Afghanistan since November. It was the commanding unit of a multistate task force that trained the Afghan national army.

A task force headed by the 76th Brigade of the Indiana **National Guard** is now in charge of training the Afghan army in advance of Afghanistan's scheduled Oct. 9 election.

An estimated 520 of the Oklahoma civilian-soldiers came home earlier.

Scully also announced that the Oklahoma **National Guard**, which includes Army and Air Force components, has been streamlined to a force that can be deployed instate within four hours of notification.

Members of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment Returned Home

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

September 3, 2004, Friday, BC cycle

Knoxville, Tenn.

Soldiers from the 4th Squadron of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment returned to Tennessee after spending nine months on patrol in Kosovo.

Families gathered Thursday at the McGhee Tyson Air **National Guard** Base in Knoxville to greet the 50 men and women.

The unit started at Fort Steward, Ga., where it linked up with five other aviation squadrons from the **National Guard**. Four months later, the soldiers were deployed to Germany.

The Army recently renamed the Tennessee regiment the 278th Regimental Combat Team for its deployment to Iraq. More than 3,600 **National Guard** troops are attached to the 278th, the state's largest Guard unit.

National Guard Soldiers From Several Communities Return Home

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

September 5, 2004, Sunday, BC cycle

Sergeant Bluff, Iowa

About 140 Army **National Guard** members are back home after more than a year in Kosovo.

The soldiers were welcomed home by more than 1,000 friends and family members who gathered Saturday at the Sergeant Bluff community center.

The soldiers were part of the First Squadron, 113th Cavalry Headquarters. Most were from the Sioux City and Le Mars areas.

Homecomings were also held in Johnston and Waterloo, where the 113 Cavalry has other units.

The soldiers left home in August 2003, trained, then headed to their peacekeeping mission in Kosovo.

Their mission was to provide security and stability in Kosovo for the turnover of authority to the local government.

Brig. Gen. Jodi Tymeson told of the efforts to help farmers back onto their land, develop

youth employment programs and take part in international joint operations.

"You left one job to do another to defend our freedom to keep peace in the world, and you did it so well," Tymeson said. "Thank you for your sacrifices. Thank you for your support. Thank you for your service to Iowa and to America."

Some Montana Air National Guard Members Home From Iraq

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

September 4, 2004

Great Falls

Seven members of the Montana Air **National Guard** returned home Friday after 100 days of missions in Iraq.

"Just to have been a part of all that through the heat, the dirt and the mortar fire, it was an incredible experience," said Lt. Col. Vinnie Bakke of Great Falls. "But I don't miss it a bit."

Two pilots, five maintenance crewmen and their F-16 fighters joined other service members from Colorado and New Mexico in the 332nd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron at Balad Air Base outside of Baghdad.

"The mortar fire coming in was very irritating," Bakke said. "They didn't hit very much, but just knowing they were coming kept you from ever relaxing."

The squadron's main duties involved either combat or patrolling oil pipelines, electrical lines and roads. Among the unit's 1,000 sorties and 4,000 hours airborne, Bakke said one support mission stands out. He said they helped U.S. soldiers in a battle for an Iraqi town.

"They called us in to take out a building from which the bad guys were firing on our troops," Bakke said. "We destroyed it."

Each jet carried a 1,000-pound bomb guided by a global positioning system, two 500-pound bombs guided by laser systems and a heavy machine gun.

"Strafing is a very small part of what we did. It's very inefficient," said Bakke, who added a low pass was sometimes enough to disperse a crowd.

Pilots said they didn't encounter formidable air defenses.

"Their radar-guided missiles had all been taken out," said the Montana Guard's Maj. Norm Dimond of suburban Seattle. "There are still quite a few of the older, shoulder-mounted missiles, but we were able to dodge them when they were fired at us."

Democrat Urges Guard Benefits

Chattanooga Times Free Press (Tennessee)

August 29, 2004 Sunday

By, The Associated Press

Fargo, N.D.

National Guard and Reserve soldiers deserve better health care and other benefits from the federal government, said North Dakota Democrat Rep. Earl Pomeroy.

In his party's weekly radio address Saturday, Pomeroy said Congress should pass a bill he introduced to provide them increased benefits.

"These soldiers don't want out," Pomeroy said. "They just want to make sure families don't suffer as a result of their service."

The **National Guard** and Reserve Fairness Act would provide for increased access to Tricare, the military health care system, and more education benefits through the GI Bill, Pomeroy said. The legislation also has incentives for employers who continue to pay Guard or Reserve soldiers after they are deployed.

"At a time when we are asking so much of the members of our **National Guard** and Reserve, we have to take action to increase these benefits provided in return for their courageous service," Pomeroy said.

Forty percent of **National Guard** and Reserve soldiers between the ages of 19 and 35 do not have health insurance, Pomeroy said.

Both Democrats and Republicans in Congress have expressed worries about the stress on reservists. Rep. Duncan Hunter of California, Republican chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said last month that the ratio of Reserve to active-duty soldiers in Iraq was increasing.

Help For Military Families

The San Francisco Chronicle

September 1, 2004

If there is any one truth about military life it is that the pay is lousy. Often more like a stipend than a salary, military wages have been the butt of jokes and the subject of songs ridiculing and lamenting the plight of soldiers probably dating back to the mighty armies of ancient Rome.

But there is nothing funny or even remotely romantic about the financial desperation that many families of reservists and **National Guard** soldiers have experienced since U.S.

troops were amassed for the invasion of Iraq.

In California, 3,100 of these men and women have been shipped to the unexpectedly long and distant war, leaving spouses, children and -- maybe worse -- good-paying civilian jobs that had provided their families with a comfortable, if modest, living.

But extended deployments have cut some household incomes nearly in half, making many family essentials unaffordable. A Central Valley mother of six children, beset with financial problems after her husband's **National Guard** unit was sent to Iraq, could no longer pay the home mortgage and had to file for bankruptcy.

It's a harsh and unfair price for a soldier's family to pay. AB2205, authored by Assemblywoman Jenny Oropeza, D-Long Beach, would soften such financial blows by at least offering soldiers' families some help with child care.

The bill, the California Helping Heroes Child Care Program, would provide child-care vouchers worth \$6,700 per child. Only families with a parent in Iraq and incomes of 75 percent of the state median are eligible. And, because it is federally funded, contingent on a similar bill pending in Congress, it won't drain the state budget.

AB2205, while no panacea, will lessen the monetary miseries of military families. It has no downside: The Legislature has passed it and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger should sign it.

National Guard Pays Tuition For 750 Students Program Helps Members Go To College

Delewareonline.com

September 1, 2004

By Vanessa Miller

Time is up.

Tuesday was the deadline for Iowa students interested in taking advantage of the Iowa **National Guard's** tuition program this fall, and about 750 students across the state submitted applications.

"It's a nice number for us," said Lt. Col. Greg Hapgood, public affairs officer with the **National Guard**.

The program offers Iowa students the opportunity to receive full-tuition reimbursements under certain circumstances, Hapgood said. If applicants are members of the **National Guard** and remain in good standing, are residents of Iowa, attend Iowa schools and have been through basic training, they qualify to receive about \$2,700 a semester, or about \$5,400 a year.

That nearly covers full-tuition to a public university, which is more than the Guard has been able to provide in the past.

"Part of that is the funding has been increased by the Iowa Legislature," Hapgood said. "It was funded at a 50 percent rate (with students receiving about \$2,700 a year). This pushes it to nearly full tuition."

For the current school year, the Guard received \$2.9 million from the state, and carried over about \$200,000 of unused funds from last year. That surplus, pushing the total available funds this year to about \$3.1 million, is due to the number of Guard members on active duty.

"It was because we had so many students deployed that would have been using it," Hapgood said.

Sgt. Duff McFadden, with the Iowa **National Guard**, said that historically the average number of applicants has been about 800. He said those numbers have decreased of late because of the increasing deployment rate. Hapgood said the pool is strong this year in part because of the improved benefits.

"It's an excellent number for us," Hapgood said. "And we have a number of soldiers back from Iraq that were deployed, so that helps that number as well."

Of this year's applicants, McFadden said that about 20 attend the University of Iowa, 60 go to the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls and about 100 attend Iowa State University in Ames. The remaining applicants attend smaller institutes around the state, officials said.

McFadden said more applicants attend ISU because of its proximity to Camp Dodge, an Iowa **National Guard** training facility outside Des Moines.

"What it allows us to do is bring excellence to a whole new level," Hapgood said.

"Students are excited about the National Guard and getting a level of education that might not have been had."

Hapgood said the program is available to both full- and part-time students. He said tuition reimbursement for part-time students is about \$200 a credit hour.

Although the deadline has passed to receive aid for the fall semester, McFadden said the deadline for students interested in getting reimbursed for the spring 2005 semester is not until after October.

GUARD IN IRAQ

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Glens Falls -- Guard Veterans Home from Iraq Decide to Re-Enlist

By Leigh Hornbeck

First published: Friday, August 27, 2004

Rolling back his sleeve, Sgt. Robert Landry revealed a pockmark-size scar on his right forearm, the only evidence on his body of the months he spent among the infantry in Iraq.

Nearing the end of his tour of duty during a two-week leave this month, Landry took the opportunity to sign up for three more years in the Army **National Guard**. Landry and Spc. James Brann, who also extended his service for three years, re-enlisted Thursday on the grounds of the Glens Falls armory. The men, who have been in Iraq since February, are soldiers with Company C of the 2nd Battalion, 108th Regiment. In Iraq, the unit is attached to the 1st Infantry Division.

Landry, 25, hopes his luck will hold out as he returns to Iraq on Saturday. A newly planted tree near the armory and a plaque bearing the name of Pfc. Nathan Brown are reminders that not all the soldiers in his unit have been as lucky. Landry was riding in the same truck as Brown on Easter Sunday when a rocket-propelled grenade hit the vehicle, killing Brown, 21, of Glens Falls and injuring four others. "I don't know if it was an angel beside me or what," Landry said, trying to explain why he wasn't hurt.

Before the attack, Landry said most

by movies like "We Were Soldiers" and "Black Hawk Down." On the day the vehicle was hit, the blood, the smells and the deafening noise were all real, he said. "It's unreal, you tell yourself it's not happening." of his images of battle were shaped

Another soldier with Charlie Company, Spc. Ken Comstock, 23, a Ballston Spa High School graduate, suffered head injuries when an explosion went off under his armored Humvee. The unit patrols from a base outside Samarra in Iraq. He was sitting in the passenger seat where Landry said the mission commander sits. Two other soldiers injured in the attack have already returned to duty.

Both Landry, a 1998 graduate of Saratoga Springs High School whose family lives in Greenfield, and Brann, 27, a 1995 graduate of Ballston Spa High School, said they re-enlisted because they are career soldiers.

"I couldn't think of not going to drill, not wearing the uniform," said Brann.

Brann said after his tour of duty is over with the infantry, he will become a mechanic for the Army, a job he does in civilian life at Automasters on Route 9.

Eight other soldiers were present while Landry and Brann took the enlistment oath. Five of them, recruiter Sgt. Arthur Coon said, will be deployed to Iraq this weekend.

John Farndell, Landry's neighbor in Greenfield, was also at the armory. Farndell's son Jason is a specialist with Charlie Company. John Farndell said that in a conversation last week, his son sounded upbeat. The Farndell family is responsible for care packages sent to the unit to relieve the soldiers from the Army's menu of meals-ready-to-eat.

"We do anything we can to avoid the MREs," Landry said. "We eat a lot of tuna, Triscuits, cheese -- we look for normal food."

Second Lt. Richard Redmond traveled from New York Army **National Guard** headquarters in Utica to give Landry and Brann the oath. Standing in front of a

Humvee, the men vowed to support the and defend the U.S. Constitution and the state of New York and to "bear true faith and allegiance to the same."

Watching her husband talk to reporters, Tracy Brann said his decision to switch jobs may have been for her. Brann will be safer, she hopes, if he is no longer on patrol with the infantry.

"I told him it was his decision (to re-enlist)," Tracy Brann said.

Her fear is mixed with pride, Tracy Brann said, but when her husband is at war, she doesn't watch the news

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Families of National Guard Troops In Iraq Stick Together

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

August 28, 2004

By Joseph B. Frazier, Associated Press Writer

Salem, Ore.

For Jessica Hildebrandt, whose husband Scott is an infantry captain in Iraq, it's what she doesn't see that helps her keep going.

"I know he's OK as long as no bad men come to the door," she said, referring to casualty call officers.

Other families of the 700 or so Oregon **National Guard** troops in Iraq are under similar stress, and many have banded together to help ease it.

"If someone says, 'gosh, I miss him so much' a lot of people can't relate to that," she said. "But we wives know what they're going through because we all are in the middle of it."

The deployment to Iraq is the Oregon **National Guard's** biggest mobilization since World War II. Another 513 Oregon Guard troops are scheduled to go in February. Another 550 returned earlier this year.

There are no victory gardens or scrap metal drives for this war, but another kind of home front is opening. Families left behind are finding different ways of dealing with separation and uncertainty, and they're getting help.

Hildebrandt is the volunteer coordinator for the support group for Delta Company of the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry which her husband, Capt. Scott Hildebrandt, leads.

Support groups have formed at various levels of the **National Guard** but vary in size and activity level. Not all units have them.

"I tell (wives) to do anything they have to to get through it as long as it isn't drugs, alcohol or men," she said.

The group drew closer when three Oregon guardsmen were killed in an ambush in Iraq on June 4.

"You pray beyond prayer that yours will be the miracle unit that will bring everyone home," she said. "The loss took away that safe place in our minds. There is no safe place anymore. It has been shattered."

The 1st Battalion of the 162nd came home with no fatalities. The 2nd Battalion has suffered five deaths so far.

Guard families met in the armory in Woodburn after the news of the three deaths.

"Maj. (Arnold) Strong was there with a chalk board to tell us that to the best they knew, this is what happened," Hildebrandt said. "That was just two days later."

Hildebrandt said her family has a tradition of military service but that many don't.

"The military is not their life," she said of the families. "Some wives don't know what their husbands do in the Guard. They don't know what unit they are in."

Hildebrandt likes to talk to her husband about every three days. A daily call, she said, is a daily reminder that he is gone. After three days, she begins to get a little nervous.

The calls, she said, are "like a shot of adrenaline to the head."

"It's rough," agreed Carrie Hughes whose husband, Staff Sgt. J.D. Hughes, is a vehicle commander in Iraq.

"I have up days and down days, every day is different. We tell people to call any time. It's never too late. Every day we talk."

"Depression is a very private thing but we don't feel so alone," Hughes said.

With pre-deployment training, a year in Iraq and demobilization, the guardsmen will be away about 18 months, with a home leave or two to break up the absence.

Hughes said she has been "blown away" by the support from members of the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, where her husband works in corrections.

"If you need something fixed, just give them a call and they will help out," she said.

Bob Elliott, a retired colonel who heads the Oregon Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, said his office tries to help in similar situations.

"If someone calls and says 'my fence blew down' the **National Guard** isn't going to fix it, but we might find Home Depot or some other company to do it," he said, adding that many businesses pitch in.

"If we hear of a problem it typically gets handled," Elliott said.

A national program has piled up more than 520 million frequent flyer miles for use by soldiers on unpaid emergency leave or by families visiting a wounded soldier.

Guard wives get their husband's checks, which are boosted with family separation and

hazardous duty differentials. Sometimes it doesn't stretch far enough.

The **National Guard** has grants and interest-free loans, mostly donated, for family members who need them.

"Utility companies have offered reduced rates for families of deployed guard members," said Dianne Gooding, who heads Oregon's **National Guard** Family Program.

The "Hometown Heroes" program on Portland radio station KXL features plumbers, electricians, mechanics and others who provide services for area family members of deployed guard troops free or at a reduced rate, she said.

In tiny Adams near Pendleton, residents began Operation: Homeland Compassion, to finish work on the manufactured home of Pendleton police officer Ryan Lehnert, not due back from Iraq until late next year. His wife is expecting their first child.

Volunteers are doing the work. Local businesses are donating everything from lumber and landscaping materials to American flags and yellow ribbons.

"The Red Cross offers counseling and emergency funding for food," Gooding said. "The Salvation Army has donated \$75,000-plus to families in the area.

"Anything we need is taken care of by the community," she said. "If I put out a call for it, it comes."

She said people who need help and don't get it either don't know of the programs or are not using them.

A toy drive last Christmas for children of deployed guardsmen netted more than 10,000 toys, she said.

Hildebrandt said family members meet monthly at the armory in Woodburn to shore each other up. Increasingly, she said, the parents of single soldiers also attend.

In June, she said, a group of 27 went for a getaway to the Oregon Coast. Hughes said another group recently went to Sunriver, without the kids.

"There were no responsibilities beyond doing the dishes," she said.

Hughes, too, is in touch by cell phone. "When I see things on the news, I need to talk to him," she said.

"Conner (her 6-year-old son) asks what we will do if his daddy is 'D,' "she said. "He won't say the word. He can handle the conversation if we speak in code."

Hildebrandt wears copies of her husband's dog tags. "I told him I won't take them off until he comes home."

She says she sometimes turns out the lights and plays a song by Jimmy Buffett, a favorite entertainer, that contains the words, "I have good days, I have bad days, I have going half mad days."

"I couldn't put it any better than that," she said.

Frequent flyer program: www.heromiles.com

Guard Officials Step Up Post-War Help For Returning Vets

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

September 5, 2004

Newington, N.H.

The suicide of a New Hampshire Air **National Guard** member, the day after he returned from the war last month, has prompted the guard to offer counseling sooner to returning airmen and women.

Sgt. Dave Guindon of Merrimack died after returning from six months in battle.

In addition to counseling and screening for possible signs of post-traumatic stress, the guard says a chaplain now will provide the names and phone numbers of available counselors to returning guard members, minutes after they get off the plane.

The gesture is the latest addition to the Air **National Guard's** reunion-and-reintegration program, and an Air Force suicide-prevention program that were in place for Guardsmen before Guindon's death, said Chief Master Sgt. Ron Nadeau, the 157th Air Refueling Wing's command chief.

The Army **National Guard** provides comparable services to N.H. Army **National Guard** members, according to guard Adjutant Gen. John Blair.

Air Force officials investigating Guindon's death don't yet know if he suffered from combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder, but Guard officials have developed a program to help members returning from combat readapt to civilian life and to identify whether they may have developed the disorder.

The program includes talking to family members about how to watch for signs of the illness.

Before Guard members complete a mission, they fill out a medical form that screens them for possible signs of the disorder, according to Nadeau.

One to two days after airmen and women return, officials from the Veterans Administration Center meet with members of a unit, as a group and individually.

"The main thing is not only to begin screening these folks, but to make them familiar with the person from the Veterans Center," Nadeau told The Portsmouth Herald.

An individual session with a VA counselor is mandatory within three weeks of the return, he said.

Nadeau and Blair stressed its important for Guardsmen and women to know that it's OK for them to ask for help.

Blair, a Vietnam veteran, said the suicide-prevention programs have come a long way,

but still can be improved.

"We're going to have to continue to be vigilant and continue to do better," he said. "When I came back (from Vietnam), there was nothing like this - you were just supposed to suck it up. I don't know how many people we lost (because of that)."

A Soldier's Injuries Separate Him From Family

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

September 5, 2004, Sunday, BC cycle

By Andrew Kramer, Associated Press Writer

Fort Lewis, Wash.

Sgt. Rick Harvey spends his days walking in the woods and photographing the gleaming peak of Mount Rainier from the grounds of this sprawling military base and hospital, where he is recovering from a spinal injury he suffered in Iraq.

He has doctors' appointments about twice a week. Other than that, he has no duties.

"I just want to go home," Harvey said. "I want to be demobilized."

Harvey, 46, of Milton-Freewater, is among a dozen or so Oregon **National Guard** soldiers who say they have been languishing at this Army base for months, in one case more than a year, because the Army had no policy for allowing them to convalesce at home.

National Guard officials conceded it was an oversight in the military's plans for the Iraq war. Those relied heavily on **National Guard** and reserve units, but did not write specific policies for treating the wounded in their home communities when they returned.

Like wounded regular Army soldiers, wounded guard members are sent to military hospitals on base to convalesce. But unlike regular Army soldiers, the families of guard members do not live on or near the bases.

"They gear and train to go to war," said Harvey, whose back is hunched over in pain from an injury suffered when he fell off a fuel truck. "But they don't have any clue what will happen when we come back. They got hundreds of injured people they don't know how to deal with."

The discontent of these wounded soldiers is not the first slight felt by members of the Oregon **National Guard** - which has about 700 soldiers serving in Iraq. Troops and commanders have grumbled that their needs take a back seat to those of the regular Army.

Around the country, close to 5,000 reserve and guard soldiers are receiving medical care at military bases, 49 of them Oregon **National Guard** soldiers. Of these, 39 were wounded in Iraq. Fort Lewis in Washington is temporary home to 26 wounded Oregon

Guard soldiers, whose injuries range from a broken back to a strained shoulder.

Some require specialized care best provided by military hospitals but many do not, said Col. Douglas Eliason, chief medical officer for the Oregon **National Guard**.

The problem of wounded soldiers stranded far from home has cropped up in other states, and is sometimes resolved by transferring them to bases near home. Around half a dozen wounded Nevada **National Guard** soldiers, for example, returned from Fort Lewis for treatment at Nellis Air Force Base near Las Vegas, said spokeswoman April Conway. That option is not available in Oregon, which has no military bases.

National Guard soldiers on medical hold can choose to resign active duty status to return home while recovering, but lose their military pay if they do so. Leaving a base also can delay their consideration for permanent disability status.

Harvey, who has lived nine months in a Fort Lewis barracks near a firing range, drives home on weekends to visit his fiancée in Walla Walla, Wash. He says if he didn't report for duty each weekday at Fort Lewis, he'd forfeit his military pay.

Harvey and other Oregon soldiers met this past week with their commanding general, Brig. Gen. Raymond Byrne, in a hospital chapel here to voice their concerns. Byrne said the guard will ask base commanders to resolve complaints, while lobbying for changes in state and federal laws to provide benefits to wounded soldiers who wish to convalesce at home.

Sgt. Garth Leighton, of Bend, is recovering from a broken back. He told Byrne he cannot return home without losing military pay his family relies on.

"I want out of here, I can hardly stand it," he said at the meeting. "When I did this thing, I put myself at risk. I accepted the potential for death. I did not sign up to put my family at risk."

The soldiers' concerns prompted Gov. Ted Kulongoski to ask the Pentagon to clarify why the soldiers cannot be released for treatment at home.

A Pentagon spokesman referred a reporter's question to the Army public relations office. Spokesman Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said he was unable to research the question Friday.

Officials at Fort Lewis said options are improving for wounded soldiers who wish to convalesce at home. The Army releases soldiers when their medical conditions can be treated safely at local hospitals, and when demands of duty allow, said Fort Lewis spokesman Jeff Young.

However, soldiers are typically kept at base until doctors decide nothing more can be done for their injuries. They are then evaluated for disability pay. "Our goal is to provide the best care we can," he said.

For those who are being sent back to their home states for treatment, over the past couple of months the **National Guard** has embarked on a new program to assist them.

Under the Community Based Health Care Initiative, soldiers are provided with a job suited to their injuries at a **National Guard** armory, and given treatment options at a Department of Veterans Affairs clinic or with private doctors.

The first Oregon soldier entered the program last month. Injured guard soldiers in many other states have also been brought into the program, said Eliason, chief medical officer for the Oregon **National Guard**.

Harvey, clad in a gray Army T-shirt, leaned on a cane during his meeting with his commander.

He said his temper flares at unpredictable times, and once he smashed furniture in his hospital room.

Harvey's fiancée, Lori Roberts, said in a later interview that she's noticed a worrisome change in Harvey during his stay at Fort Lewis.

"He was very upbeat, in a good mood," upon returning to the United States, Roberts said from her home in Walla Walla.

"He was having a hard time physically, but he expected to get an answer pretty quick on his situation. How can it take nine months to have doctors' check you over and decide what to do with you?"

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROS

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Guardsman Loved Serving Others

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Chicago Tribune

September 3, 2004 Friday

Chicago Final Edition

By Sean D. Hamill and Shia Kapos, Special to the Tribune.

When Jeffrey Shaver signed up for the Army **National Guard** in 1999 to become a medic, he was assured by his recruiter in Spokane, Wash., that "they haven't sent the Guard out of the state for about 50 years," his mother recalled.

But five years later, as Shaver, 26, was about to head to Iraq with the Guard's 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry, he didn't see it as a bad thing.

"He felt we wouldn't be safe here until terrorism was taken care of and it was worth it to go for that reason," his mother, Jane, said.

Spec. Shaver died May 12 in Baghdad when his convoy vehicle hit an improvised explosive device.

When he died, he was on his way to an Iraqi town with a doctor he worked with so that they could provide medical services to Iraqi citizens.

"He always had a desire to reach out to others, to serve others," said former roommate

Craig Schafer. "And that's what he was doing when he died."

Helping others had long been a part of Shaver's life. He served as a trainer in high school, a lifeguard at Boy Scout camp, and a volunteer at a church.

"We have pictures of him in Cub Scouts doing first aid," his mother said. "He really enjoyed that kind of work."

"Everything led in that direction," she said. "He just loved to help people."

Marine Lance Cpl. Andrew Dang, 20, was known for helping establish one of his high school's programs: the robotics team.

"He loved building things and brought a lot of enthusiasm to the team. He had energy to spare," said Kirk Black, Aragon High School principal, recalling Dang's work "in the pit" during the team's first competition.

They won the rookie team award that year.

The native of Foster City, Calif., was killed in combat near Ar Ramady, Iraq, on March 22, less than two weeks into his tour of duty.

He was assigned to the 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force based in Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Dang was a star athlete who wrestled and played defensive lineman. But it was math and science that had interested him since childhood. He planned a career in avionics and engineering.

In a tribute, his mother, Antoinette Medina, wrote she will miss the "mad scientist wild look" in her son's eyes when completing a rocket launch, one of his favorite hobbies.

Black said friends and teachers will miss Dang's upbeat attitude.

"He was the kind of student who wanted to learn," he said. "He wasn't afraid of problems. He wasn't afraid of anything."

Dang's high school alma mater plans to name a scholarship in his honor.

Policy Change Sought For Guard Complaints From Wounded Fort Lewis Soldiers Spur Action

The Associated Press

Sept. 1, 2004

By Andrew Kramer

Portland -- The Oregon **National Guard** is pushing for changes in Army policy and state and federal law to address complaints raised by wounded soldiers in a meeting with their commanding general.

About a dozen soldiers met with Brig. Gen. Raymond Byrne, acting adjutant general of the Oregon National Guard, in a chapel at Madigan Army Medical Center at Fort Lewis on Monday. The soldiers said they waited hours for doctors' appointments, felt abandoned by their units on a remote Army base, and had little chance to visit with their families through months of convalescence.

The problems show a lack of planning for the large number of wounded **National Guard** and reserve soldiers returning from Iraq, even as the military is relying more heavily on these units to fight the war, Oregon **National Guard** officials said yesterday.

"We're transforming the way we fight wars. That's one element of military transformation," said Guard Maj. Arnold Strong. "The other element is transforming the way we feed and care for soldiers, and that includes the medical treatment.

"In the Cold War program, the Guard was one of the last to be fielded. Now, we are fielded alongside the Army," but the military has not been as quick to forge specific policies for the returning wounded, he said.

Active-duty soldiers who suffer serious injuries return to their home base to recuperate with their families.

Wounded Guard soldiers also recuperate at the base they deployed from -- but that can be hundreds or thousands of miles from home, because the Guard deploy to an active duty base for training before heading overseas.

Away from their families, some wounded Oregon Guard soldiers said they have little to do but languish in the barracks between doctor visits. Some soldiers said they spent months, one more than a year, at the base.

The Guard announced yesterday it will lobby the Oregon Legislature to provide unemployment benefits to disabled soldiers.

Alabama Bill To Let Overseas Soldiers Cast Votes By Fax

Chattanooga Times Free Press (Tennessee)

September 2, 2004 Thursday

By, The Associated Press

Montgomery, Ala.

A state senator says he will introduce a bill in the Alabama Legislature that would make it easier for military personnel deployed overseas to vote, including allowing them to cast votes by fax machine.

Sen. Gerald Dial, D-Lineville, a retired **National Guard** general, said Wednesday his bill would allow Alabama soldiers overseas to participate in a federal program that allows military personnel to apply to vote and cast ballots by fax.

Dial said the current system of mailing applications and ballots does not always give soldiers in places like Iraq or Afghanistan time to vote by Election Day.

He said many soldiers will be unable to vote in upcoming municipal runoff elections because there is not enough time between the general elections and the runoffs.

"It's terrible to tell the guys and gals trying to defend our right to vote that we don't have a system to let them vote," Dial said.

Dial's bill also would allow a soldier to send in one application to request absentee ballots for all elections to be held in the next two years, including federal, state, county and city elections.

Insurance There Are Reasons To Retain A Policy Even If Your Car Is In Storage

Kiplinger's Personal Finance

September, 2004

By, Kimberly Lankford; Christine M. Varner

* Army surgeon Robert Dean kept minimal coverage on his BMW while he was deployed in Iraq.

After serving more than a year in Iraq building bridges, fortifications and base camps, two engineering units of the North Dakota **National Guard** came home in March. But several returning soldiers had a rude homecoming when they tried to reactivate their auto-insurance policies.

Many of the unmarried soldiers had decided to store their cars and drop their coverage while they were deployed. But instead of saving money, they were threatened with penalties because they had not maintained continuous coverage. Some found it tough to get auto insurance at all; others were treated as new customers--losing long-term-

customer and good-driver discounts.

Insurers are permitted in some states to penalize people who don't have uninterrupted coverage. The reasoning, the insurers explain, is that the break in coverage may be evidence that the car owners had been driving without insurance. But these men and women were away at war.

"It's insensitive that insurers would do this," says Jim Poolman, North Dakota's insurance commissioner. Poolman did more than complain. He challenged insurers to treat returning **National Guard** soldiers as if they had no break in coverage. After some bad publicity, most of the companies promised special dispensations for those who dropped coverage while they were deployed abroad.

But the soldiers' experience is a warning to anyone who plans to drop their coverage for any reason while away from home. Saving money by dropping a policy can backfire if the company raises your rates or turns you down when you try to reinstate your coverage. There are, however, ways to save money and avoid future problems.

Keep minimal coverage. Even if you aren't driving your car, keep some coverage. That's what Robert Dean, an Army surgeon from Washington, D.C., did while he was stationed at a combat-support hospital in Iraq. Before he left, Dean called his insurer, USAA, to report that he'd be storing his BMW convertible in a garage. "They recommended not stopping the coverage because the car could still be damaged," he says. Keeping the policy active would protect him in case the car was stolen, vandalized, destroyed in a fire, crushed by a fallen tree or damaged in some other way.

Because nobody would be driving the convertible while Dean was in the desert, though, USAA slashed the mileage limits, which lowered the premium by about \$150 every six months. And there was no issue about his resuming full coverage at the regular rate when he returned.

You may be able to lower your premium even further with "lay-up coverage." That eliminates all coverage except comprehensive, which protects against theft, fire and other damage even when the car isn't being driven. Ratcheting down to just comprehensive coverage can cut your premium by about 75%, says Diane Cottingham, an insurance agent in Underwood, N.D., who worked with many of the Guard members. But this isn't an option for everyone: Some states require that you keep liability insurance unless you turn in your tags. And even if state law doesn't demand it, some lenders do until your loan is paid off. In that case, you can at least reduce your premium by cutting your liability limit to the bone and raising your deductible while your car is being stored.

If you have dropped coverage, be sure to explain your situation when you apply for a new policy. Say, for example, that you canceled a policy and left your car in a garage during a six-month assignment in New York City, or dropped your insurance for several months while you were recuperating from surgery and unable to drive. "I would strongly recommend that you share these details with the company because it could very well make a difference," says Bruce Maynard, senior assistant vice-president for Amica Insurance. "That differentiates you from an individual who has been operating a vehicle regularly without insurance."

And be sure to shop around. If your original automobile-insurance company tries to raise

your rate when you attempt to restart a policy, see what other insurers will offer you. Companies vary widely in the way they treat a break in coverage.

End

[Back to Table of Contents](#)