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

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

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

<http://www.militarystudent.org>

Disabled Soldiers Initiative (DS3)

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

<http://www.armyds3.org>

Have an article, announcement, or website that you'd like to share with the National Guard Family Program Community? Send your suggestions in an e-mail to Michelle.Bohlen@ngb.af.mil.

Nevada National Guard Helps Deploying Troops Train For Iraq

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

March 23, 2005

By Keith Rogers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

FORT IRWIN, Calif. - Before U.S. soldiers head overseas, their last lessons on how best to fight terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan are taught by would-be enemies played by a Nevada **National Guard** combat team.

From laser-tag jousting with M1A1 Abrams tanks and a gamut of firearms to posing as gun-toting insurgents wearing traditional robes and headdresses, 500 Nevada soldiers have been leading the opposing charge at this 1,000-square-mile National Training Center.

Nevada's 1st Squadron, 221st Cavalry inherited the job six months ago when the regular Army's 11th Armored Cavalry regiment was deployed overseas.

Commanders say, Nevada's citizen-soldiers have played a vital role in preparing troops sent to bolster elections in Iraq.

"I think they were very successful," Lt. Col. Johnny Isaak of Las Vegas said while his soldiers honed their tank-firing and lifesaving skills at the post, a 165-mile drive southwest of Las Vegas.

"The people back home need to know they're doing a good job for their country," he said.

Before their active duty assignment is up in February 2006, the Nevada squadron will train the 1 millionth soldier at the National Training Center since it opened northeast of Barstow in 1982.

In the last several years, the center has transformed from one geared to battling Soviet-style forces to what Army leaders call the "contemporary operating environment."

That's where Nevada's soldiers conduct sophisticated ambushes that match the constantly changing tactics used by insurgents who blend with Iraqi civilians.

Using after-action reports from attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan, Isaak said commanders at the training center adjust, for example, to new tactics used by terrorists who detonate improvised explosive devices.

"They're burying them in the ground, sticking them in animals and putting them in telephone poles. ... They're detonating them with cell phones," he said.

Isaak said the training "replicates combat as close as you can get without firing real bullets at each other." During training stints, success of the deploying units is charted by experienced combat veterans and measured by MILES - the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System - a sophisticated, laser-tag network. Rocket-propelled grenade launchers like those used by insurgents also are equipped with lasers.

With 1,700 targets on its battlefield as well as a dozen mock cities and towns, some with tunnel complexes, the center with its Mojave Desert conditions can create almost any warfare scenario except nuclear weapons, explained Maj. Carl Michaud.

"We have a climate much like southwest Asia," he said. "We've added 12 urban villages in the desert and 250 Iraqi Americans come to play role-players."

At one urban training ground known as Tiefert City, Capt. John Woosnam, a Las Vegas police officer, described what happens when 50 soldiers from the regiment join with 100 Iraqis, Kurds and Lebanese to live a traditional Middle Eastern lifestyle for two full weeks, 12 miles from the main post.

"A lot of them have family over there. They know if they acclimate us to the attitude and the culture, that's the only way they can help their country ... to come here and help us train," he said.

Most of the foreign role-players recruited by a defense contractor, Titan Corp. of San Diego, are U.S. citizens. All of them have passed security screenings.

"You learn your role," Woosnam said about being part soldier, part actor. "You have to learn who your brother is, if he's the taxi driver, which town is he in?"

To simulate what is happening in Iraq today, trainees living in tents at a forward operating base are subject to simulated mortar attacks, sniper fire and roadside bombs.

When their patrols enter Tiefert City on routine missions they never know what to expect from the townspeople. Sometimes they're friendly, sometimes they protest the invaders, other times they're angered that Americans have drawn insurgents into their camp.

Everything from Arab customs to infiltration by local and international television news crews is replicated.

Woosnam said the training stresses the importance of learning about the cultures and the language and how to be diplomatic across the ranks from privates to colonels.

"We're winning the war over there with the town leadership and the religious leadership," he said.

In another part of the training center, some 30 miles from Tiefert City, four men from Nevada's Alpha-66 tank crew sit in chairs going through motions and verbal commands in a dry run before they hop inside their tank and roll to a target range to fire live rounds.

"Our mission is to be a tank company. Whether we're preparing for war or not we want to make sure our skills are the highest level," said troop commander Capt. Randy Lau of Las Vegas.

Lau said training with live rounds is essential to dial in the accuracy and timing for firing the tank's main gun and its other weapons. A 120 mm, armor-piercing Sabot round shoots through the air at more than one mile per second.

"It's awesome. It's unimaginable power," he said after the crew hit four targets in a row nearly a mile away.

Back at the main post, a squad practiced their combat lifesaving skills in what they called the "room of doom."

Inside, six hypothetical casualties lie on the floor moaning and shouting, "Over here! Help! Medic, hurry up!" Their fellow soldiers crawl to reach them, identify their wounds and administer first aid.

Fog shrouds the victims in the darkened room while lights flash and weapons fire thunders over loudspeakers.

"You have to concentrate on what you're doing," said Spc. Marco Reyes, 36, of Las Vegas.

Cpl. Genaro Martinez, 25, said the commotion is a test of nerves.

"It does get stressful out there," he said. But he said his wife in Las Vegas was enduring another stressful challenge, taking care of their daughters ages 4 and 18 months while he's away.

"She says, 'You don't know what it's like to be mom and dad at the same time,'" Martinez said.

Georgia's Guard: Training the 48th: Hardened for Iraq; Intense Training Absorbs Georgia's Citizen Soldiers

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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

March 23, 2005

By Moni Basu

FORT STEWART --- Pvt. Miquia Humphrey peered through her ballistic goggles and looked Osama bin Laden in the eye. Until that moment, when she and three other soldiers burst into the seven-room house, she had never confronted the enemy face to face.

"Enemy to the left!" screamed one of her comrades, firing a barrage of bullets at the mastermind of terror. To the right was an unarmed civilian. In between was a doorway and the "fatal funnel," a blind spot where she was vulnerable to insurgent fire.

But there was no return fire, and Humphrey came out alive.

Even though this was just practice --- the shoothouse, as it is known, had bullet-absorbing walls made of shredded tires, and the elusive bin Laden was a paper target with his photo on it --- the exercise was a heavy-duty jolt of reality.

It was another step forward on the long and strenuous road to Iraq for these soldiers of the Georgia Army **National Guard's** 48th Brigade Combat Team.

"When I first got here, everything was new to me. We've come a long way," said Humprhey, 21, who joined the **National Guard** two years ago because she "wanted something to do."

The roughly 4,500 soldiers in the Guard's 48th Brigade reported for active duty at Fort Stewart in January, leaving behind their "other jobs" as mothers and students, police

officers and firefighters, teachers and nurses, shopkeepers and truck drivers.

For the past two months, the brigade has been undergoing a new program called "Theater Immersion Training." The lifelike war games have forced them to endure Iraq-like conditions on South Georgia soil.

The soldiers gave up the Fort Stewart mini-mall food court for Meals Ready to Eat, the pre-packaged rations known as MREs. They also traded in heated rooms and clean sheets in the barracks for sleeping bags and tents set up in remote bases designed to resemble the forward operating bases in which they will live in Iraq.

Next month, the 48th Brigade will test its newly learned skills at the Army's National Training Center in the California desert. If they meet Army standards on combat readiness, Georgia's citizen soldiers will begin shipping out to the Middle East on May 15.

"It's been hard not knowing what to expect in the long road ahead of us," said Spc. Lisa Mathis, 36, a mother of three who works for YKK, the zipper manufacturer in Macon. "The training has opened our eyes to the mission and what we are about to encounter. There has been a real transformation."

The Guard soldiers admit that no amount of physical training can prepare them for the uncertainties of the Iraqi conflict. Many said they were about "70 to 80 percent there" on combat skills.

But they all know they will have to be 110 percent ready once they ship out. They talk about how the burden of the conflict has come to rest increasingly on the competency of soldiers from the **National Guard** and Reserve, which now make up more than one-third of the 150,000 U.S. troops in Iraq.

"They know what they have to do. And they've been putting in 110 percent," said Capt. Raymond Segarra, the trainer in charge of the shoothouse exercises, after weeks of shouting of orders and demonstrating techniques.

The brigade's commander, Brig. Gen. Stewart Rodeheaver, said every one of his soldiers is being readied to fight, no matter what his or her assigned task will be in Iraq.

Humphrey, for instance, is with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 48th Support Battalion, out of Macon. Staff Sgt. Glen Johnson said his company will be managing supplies and equipment and will probably take on security duties such as guarding the gates of the base where the 48th Brigade will be stationed.

"But we have to be ready to fight when they need us," said Johnson, 42, of Mansfield. "For a lot of us, this will be our first combat experience."

Johnson estimated his soldiers are about 95 percent ready on individual training but that they are only a little over halfway there on group tasks, such as urban operations, setting up and running a forward operating base and ground assault convoys. The shoothouse training was an example of the kind of teamwork that will be needed in Iraq, he said.

February and March have been filled with ups and downs for troops learning to traverse harsh terrain and confront an ever-adapting enemy. The hollows of Fort Stewart ring out with the distinctive chatter of an AK-47 in a make-believe Iraqi town.

"Sniper! Sniper!" shouted one of the soldiers of the 148th's company of medics as they cautiously prowled among the shipping containers doubling as the town's hospital, mosque and other buildings, looking for Iraqi insurgents. Within seconds, Spc. Tamar Driskell, 19, of Macon is down in the street, taken out by a well-concealed gunman.

"This is so hard for the infantry, much less the medics, who don't do this very much," said Maj. Ray Polk, 40, of Dahlonga, the company commander. "When the sniper fired, they were like, 'Oh, no, what do we do now?' This was the first time they reacted to a sniper. I think they did pretty well."

Driskell, 19, said she feels more comfortable after the training sessions. But they don't erase her fears.

"I pray," she said. "A lot. I mean a whole lot. A lotta, lotta, lotta times a day."

Rodeheaver said he is determined to provide his soldiers with the best training possible. Once the brigade enters Iraq, he doesn't want to leave himself room to wonder what he might have done better.

The brigade commander stays in constant touch with his counterparts now in Iraq. The material in the three-ringed training manuals at Fort Stewart change constantly in response to the fluid nature of the conflict.

The 48th Brigade is also sitting through classes on roadside bombs, known in the military as improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, which have caused roughly one-fifth of the fatalities among American forces in Iraq.

Segarra said insurgents used to place IEDs mainly on guardrails, but after coalition troops began to remove the rails, the bombs started showing up on power poles or buried in the median or on the road's shoulder.

"They got smart. They now use wireless remotes to detonate the IEDs," the trainer said. "I've never had to deviate so much from the standard training manual. This stuff changes every day."

The seriousness of the situation has hit home.

Pfc. Carlton D. Newman, 21 and straight out of boot camp, died in a Humvee accident two weeks ago, shortly after arriving from Maryland to join the brigade.

Two days later, Capt. Stephen Tucker, a company commander in the 148th Support Battalion, got an urgent message out in the field: "Real world emergency!"

One of his soldiers had fallen off a makeshift Iraqi building and was evacuated in a chopper to the base hospital. "You know it's bad if he has to be taken out of here in a helicopter," Tucker said. The soldier was alive but seriously injured.

With departure day getting closer, the troops soldier on. Sgt. Ernest Soria of the 148th HHC said it has been difficult making the transition from civilian life to full-time military.

"We've come one hell of a long way," said Soria, 42, of Lilburn. "From January, these guys have done a 180. They've gone from never being deployed to actually getting ready to leave."

"They're acting more like soldiers," he said. "You know, you gotta get the civilian out of you and get in the military mindset. It's a 24/7 job. And you don't quit until the mission is done."

DEPLOYMENT

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14 More Guard Members Headed Overseas To Iraq

Associated Press

March 24, 2005

COLCHESTER — Fourteen Vermont Army National Guardsmen are expected to leave Thursday to replace guard members who were deemed unfit for combat in Iraq and to join missions in Kuwait.

Seven men from the 1st Battalion of 172nd Armor Regiment from around the state will serve on an 18-month combat mission in Iraq. They will join the 400 Task Force Saber soldiers who have been training at Camp Shelby, Miss.

The other seven men and women will join security force missions in Kuwait. About 600 Vermont Army National Guard members currently are stationed there.

The soldiers heading to Iraq will train in Mississippi and at the National Training Center in Irvine, Calif., said Vermont National Guard spokeswoman Lt. Veronica Saffo.

"These folks have a particularly interesting mission," Saffo said Wednesday. "They're down there with the 2nd Brigade of the 28th Infantry division from Pennsylvania. They actually are becoming part of that brigade combat team."

The entire brigade will head to California where they will be certified as a combat team, she said.

"It's a really intense, thorough program," she said.

Some of the Vermonters — the C Company from Morrisville — will eventually operate tanks in Iraq, Saffo said.

Both groups will serve for up to 18 months.

Push Made To Publicize Fund for Military Families

Chicago Tribune
March 21, 2005

ILLINOIS -- Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn is urging communities throughout the state to include informational inserts on military family relief funding in all municipal mailings.

Quinn, Chicago City Clerk Jim Laski and a military family touted the Illinois Military Family Relief Fund and the informational inserts Sunday during a news conference at the Thompson Center in Chicago.

The fund assists families of National Guard members and reservists called to active duty. These families often face financial hardships while one member is on active duty, Quinn said.

"One day they are civilians mowing their lawn, the next day they are activated and called to service," he said. "Most often, military pay is well below what they make in real life."

In May an insert explaining the fund will be included in about 1.3 million Chicago vehicle sticker applications, the largest municipal mailing in the state.

Pentagon To Extend Health Coverage For Reserve Troops[Back to Table of Contents](#)

New York Times
March 25, 2005

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON, March 24 (AP) - The more than 400,000 members of the National Guard and Reserve mobilized since the Sept. 11 attacks will be offered military health coverage for up to eight years after returning to civilian life, officials said Thursday.

Eligibility will be limited to personnel remaining in the Reserve after demobilization, said Thomas F. Hall, assistant defense secretary for reserve affairs.

Mr. Hall said that in discussing health plans with more than 2,000 members of the Guard and Reserve in the Persian Gulf recently, he heard enthusiasm for such transitional insurance. "It targets the young men and women bearing the brunt today," Mr. Hall said.

Guard and Reserve members can now retain health coverage under the Tricare system up to six months after active duty. Under the new arrangement they could retain coverage for at least a year and as long as eight, depending on the length of their mobilization and their commitment to remain in the Guard or Reserve. They would pay monthly premiums of \$50 to \$150 for individual coverage, depending on rank, and \$100 to \$300 for family coverage, depending on rank.

Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant defense secretary for health affairs, said at a news conference with Mr. Hall that he had no firm estimate of the cost of the program.

Later, the Pentagon issued a statement saying that the cost would be \$70 million for the remainder of the budget year, which ends on Sept. 30, and \$394 million for the 2006 budget year. Mr. Hall said he expected a majority of the eligible troops to resume health care coverage offered by their civilian employers.

Dr. Winkenwerder said the Pentagon had no firm forecast of how many people might use the benefit.

"It's going to be many thousand to tens of thousands, we would expect, at a minimum," he said.

House Approves Military Bonuses, Cheers National Guard Iraq Vets

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In-Forum

Associated Press

March 24, 2005

By Dale Wetzel Associated Press Writer

BISMARCK, N.D. -- A group of North Dakota National Guard soldiers, recently back from duty in Iraq, looked on as the state House approved legislation to pay \$5 million in bonuses to veterans of recent conflicts.

The seven members of the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion, which is based in Valley City, were introduced and applauded individually on Wednesday, and lauded in speeches by the House's Republican and Democratic floor leaders.

The Guard members "have taken citizenship to its highest level, and that is to serve this country as citizen soldiers," said Rep. Merle Boucher, D-Rolette, the House minority leader. "We thank you for the dangers that you have faced to serve this country, and protect freedom and democracy."

Soldiers Focus On Aiding Local Iraqi Governments

Chattanooga Times Free Press (Tennessee)

March 27, 2005

By Edward Lee Pitts; Military Affairs

CAMP CALDWELL, Iraq - Last year 278th Regimental Combat Team soldiers spent four months of combat training with full battle gear in both the humid Mississippi woods and the arid California desert.

Now this year in post-election Iraq, front-line commanders say they are spending a lot of time in the Tennessee National Guard unit's sector along the Iranian border gathering with Iraqis over hot tea -- without their Kevlar helmets and body armor.

"The culture here dictates that sitting down with local leaders is the way you conduct business," said Capt. Mitch Murray, commander of 1st Squadron's Deacon Company.

Working with local leaders to introduce the concept of democracy here is forcing many officers steeped in battle tactics to learn what it is like to be a novice politician in a town riddled with problems.

Capt. Dale Bradley, the commander of 1st Squadron's Cleveland, Tenn.-based Apache Troop, attended six meetings last week. He met with city managers, local sheiks, school headmasters, the City Council, the security council and the local Iraqi hunters association in the city of Balad Ruz.

"I might be able to instruct in an urban planning class," Capt. Bradley said of his eventual return home after a year of debates over sewers, landfills and roads.

Capt. Chris Vineyard, commander of 2nd Squadron's E Troop, has 50 villages in his sector around Forward Operating Base Bernstein and the city of Tuz.

"If I let myself do it, I'd have a meeting every day," Capt. Vineyard said. "I didn't expect to have to deal with mayors and city councils."

He now tries to limit meetings to no more than four a week and has given his lieutenants about 12 to 15 villages each so they can monitor the assemblies of local political parties and village elders as well as local governments.

Col. Dennis Adams, the regiment's commander, said the meetings reflect the evolving role of the Army here.

At first during Operation Iraqi Freedom I, the U.S. military conducted aggressive combat maneuvers to oust then-Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. Operation Iraqi Freedom II followed with U.S. forces working toward stabilizing the security of the country with smaller-scale combat missions. Now, in Operation Iraqi Freedom III, units such as the 278th are focusing on infrastructure improvements and supporting local governments and security forces, Col. Adams said.

THE PEACEKEEPER ROLE

The citizen soldiers of the National Guard are better equipped than the regular Army for such peacekeeping missions, Col. Adams said.

"Our soldiers understand how the civics side interacts with the military side," he said. "We can go back and forth as good as anybody."

Concentrating on rebuilding Iraq does not mean days for the 278th are all handshakes and hot tea. The regiment splits its time between catching insurgents and getting together with locals, Col. Adams said.

"You can get up in the morning and do a combat mission or get up in the morning and do a civil affairs mission," he said.

The regiment's more than 3,600 combat patrols during its first 90 days here total more than half of the 6,000 patrols conducted during the 10 months before when the 30th Brigade Combat Team of North Carolina was here.

Because there still are what the military calls Anti-Iraqi Forces, or AIF, working in towns such as Jalula and As Sa'diyah, Capt. Matthew Smith, the commander of 3rd Squadron's L Troop, said the meetings sometimes include strange company.

"I'm doing a delicate balance between talking to city officials, and yet we still have city leaders that are AIF members," said Capt. Smith. "You sometimes dance with the devil."

He said soldiers found bomb-making material at the home of one City Council member.

Capt. Jim Reed, of Cookeville, Tenn., who commands 3rd Squadron's Iron Troop, said the regiment was not completely blindsided by all the meetings. During training 278th soldiers sat through several simulated visits with U.S. civilians, many of Middle Eastern descent, who played the roles of Iraqi mayors or religious leaders.

Capt. Reed said his unit's sector around the city of Khanaqin requires more political expertise than brute combat force. Soldiers of the 278th there help leaders establish budgets and secure both clean water and reliable electricity. The gatherings allow the soldiers to understand the culture better and to discover the projects and needs most important to locals, such as road and school improvements, Capt. Vineyard said. The U.S. soldiers then must teach the Iraqi leaders patience and to expect growing pains.

"It is like they expect so much to happen immediately," said Capt. Vineyard, who plans to use his experiences here in the high school history classes he teaches in Rutledge, Tenn. "These people started with having everything being dictated to them. Now they are faced with issues and possible solutions."

Unit commanders said they have grown accustomed to the meetings routine of Iraqi leaders talking fast to one another, with a U.S. translator struggling to keep up, before the room gets quiet as all the Iraqi officials stare at any U.S. commander present for his or her response.

"They are not real confident in some of the things they are having to do now," Capt. Reed said. "It is a new democracy, and they are kind of scared of it. They are smart people, but they have never had the opportunity to be creative or have their own ideas."

Capt. Reed said there are success stories in Iraqi town management. A committee set up by Khanaqin's mayor decided to create mini gas stations around the city, using the back of trucks, to ease the pressure of long gas lines at Khanaqin's main station. Next month Khanaqin officials hope to secure a transformer that will provide electricity 24 hours a day, according to Capt. Reed.

Capt. Smith, of Nashville, said he has cut back on his number of meetings in hopes of empowering the Iraqis to solve their problems alone.

"If I'm there every week, they will continue to rely on me for all answers," he said.

The 278th officers said having this front-row seat in an emerging democracy is changing their perspectives of their own country and giving them a better understanding of the behind-the-scenes work involved in running a modern city.

"In America, a power outage is a huge inconvenience," Capt. Bradley said. "Here if you just have power for 12 hours, that's a blessing. There are way too many people who take their freedoms for granted."

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES

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He Left For War and Returns A Real Hero

Seattlepi.com

March 22, 2005

By Robert L. Jamieson Jr., Seattle Post-Intelligencer Columnist

A hero soldier from Fort Lewis is home.

People are coming from everywhere to salute him.

They are coming from Tacoma and Las Vegas and all over Iowa. Some are coming from as far away as Germany.

They are bringing two of his favorite toys, his baby blue and black Harley-Davidson motorcycle and the tan-and-gold pickup he saved up to buy before heading for Iraq in late September.

So many people want to be in his presence, his hometown will open up the local school to hold the big gathering today.

His young nieces will be there. He always makes time to have lunch with them at their elementary school when he is on Army leave.

Two childhood pals are flying in. Years ago, he and the duo formed a kid posse called the Three Caballeros, the three gentlemen.

Also planning to be on hand is a pair of 70-something women he always plays cards with. Folks joke that the elderly ladies are his girlfriends, but he's married and has been for

eight happy years.

His wife, Stacy, will be present too, along with his mom, his dad and his six brothers and sisters.

They wouldn't miss this for anything.

Donald Griffith Jr. of Lakewood, with roots deep in small-town Iowa, is back from the war in Iraq, back on U.S. soil.

There are plans to give the 29-year-old sergeant a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart.

People will look at his photos -- the ones where he is swarmed by smiling Iraqi kids grateful for his gifts of candy and school supplies -- and smile with pride. They will think about how this young man with the brown saucer eyes has blossomed into the kind of person that folks point to, saying, "There goes a good man."

A week ago last Friday, Donald was with his Stryker Brigade unit in Iraq when enemy forces pounced in a sneak attack.

Donald came under heavy fire, but he was able to warn his fellow troops, preventing casualties.

His captain phoned long-distance to vouch for Donald's act of valor, calling him one of "the finest and bravest soldiers" the Army has produced.

The wife of another Army mate says Donald has saved the skins of other soldiers during the war in Iraq more than once. "Saved my husband's life," she says.

Those who know Donald will tell you he has always been this way, always putting others ahead of himself, always spreading cheer, always saving someone. Or something.

As an 8-year-old, he noticed a boy who had moved into the neighborhood and had no one to hang out with. Donald marched off to the boy's house and knocked on the door: "Hey, kid, do you want to come out and play?"

Growing up, he worked at a veterinary hospital. It pained Donald whenever the staff had to put animals to sleep.

That explains how his parents' house became home to two dozen birds, a desert tortoise, hamsters, snakes and six cats, including an orange tiger feline named Chester.

Donald, a real life Dr. Doolittle, would get a tattoo of Chester on his arm.

Donald joined R.O.T.C. in high school. After graduation, the Army beckoned, a career move that pays in a lot of ways -- if not always monetarily.

What limited funds Donald did have he didn't mind sharing. During basic training he sent a letter that touched his sister. "I have money saved up," he wrote, "if you need it for your prom dress."

One time Donald walked into the office of Army brass.

"Is there a problem?" a high-ranking official asked.

"No, sir," Donald replied with his patented smile. "Just happy to be here."

Whenever people have asked, Donald will tell them he was happy to be in Iraq, fulfilling

a duty he embraced because it will help the people of Iraq and make the world a bit safer.

A week ago, just hours before he warned his fellow soldiers about the attack in Tal Afar, Donald sent an e-mail to his family.

"It's pretty positive over here right now," he wrote. "Haven't been shot at for over two weeks.

"I guess that's a good sign, isn't it?"

No instrument on Earth can measure the depth of the man they will honor today, one day after his eighth wedding anniversary.

The city fathers have Donald's picture on fliers all over town.

His heroics earned him a 10-second snippet on the local Seattle news, which is barely enough.

But even though not much has been made of it, hundreds of relatives and friends know what Donald did.

And so they are coming to salute him -- including representatives from the 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment who will be adorned in their military finest, as will Donald.

If only Donald could see all these lives he touched.

But he was killed in the March 11 attack.

Today, the brave young soldier has come home for a hero's funeral.

GENERAL

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National Guard Family Program Partners With the American Veterans to Support Families

National Guard News

Date: March 21, 2005

News Feature Advisory

Contact: Dalena Kanouse

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Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum, chief, National Guard Bureau, and William A. Boettcher, AMVETS national commander will sign a Memorandum of Understanding , **Wednesday, March 23 at 1 p.m.**, during a ceremony being held at the National Guard Bureau, 1411 Jefferson Davis Highway, Crystal City, Va.

Under the agreement, the two organizations will use the AMVETS Family Support Network to assist National Guard Service members and their families.

As part of the National Guard Bureau's continuing efforts to better support the families of service members, the National Guard Family Program, or NGFP, will formalize a partnership with the AMVETS that allows the two groups to share informational materials, resources, and work together to build a stronger network of volunteers.

The AMVETS Family Support Network is an essential tool for providing family support services — especially for soldiers and airmen isolated from normal military and civilian support networks as a result of the National Guard's unique structure.

“The partnership has the potential of increasing the awareness of AMVETS ” throughout the country, while allowing “widest spectrum of support” for returning Guard members and their families,” said Lt. Col. Anthony Baker, chief of Family Programs for the National Guard Bureau.

Baker also said the partnership is not meant to replace military family support programs or to circumvent the chain of command, but rather to augment them to ensure that families receive needed support.

The NGFP is a joint force initiative that serves as the foundation of support to families of Army and Air National Guard members.

A strong Joint service family support network, organized in each state and territory by the State Family Program directors and Wing Family Program coordinators at each Air National Guard Wing, allows all units and states to readily communicate with one another and ensure (with appropriate support from community agencies) that no family falls between the cracks, said Baker.

The State Family Program directors and 88 Wing Family Program coordinators are the primary providers of family readiness support to service members and families regardless of component. To learn more about the NGFP or to locate your State Family Program Office, please visit the NGFP's Web site at www.guardfamily.org.

California's First Lady Holds Fact-Finding Meeting With California National Guard Families

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by Lt. Col. Stan Zezotarski
17 March 2005

Maria Shriver gained valuable insight and learned useful tactics to help California National Guard families cope with the hardships of deployment and re-entry into civilian life during a productive meeting at the State Capitol on Monday, March 14, 2005. California's First Lady took particular interest in how the soldier's families in the 579th Engineer Battalion bonded together and coped with an 18-month deployment, the unique challenges that they overcame in accessing resources to help compensate for loss of

income, how the children coped with the deployment, and what Californians can do to help its deployed families.

Spec. Sean Farley and his fiancée Kathy Rhodes, Spec. William Fennel, his wife Joann and son Tanner, Staff Sgt. T.J. McClurg, wife Teri and daughter Dakota, Louise Goodwater, family support coordinator for the 579th Engineer Battalion, her grandson Sage Smith-Cummins, Teri Currier, Operation Ready Family Coordinator, and Spec. Sarah Miller represented the families of the 579th Engineer Battalion and the California National Guard.

Shriver zeroed in on the children, asking them how many times they saw their deployed parent, how they coped, how they felt about their return and how they were adjusting now that they had both parents at home. She also made them very aware of their contributions to the state and nation.

“The whole family serves,” Shriver said. “You too (speaking to Dakota McClurg). “You had to get through it.”

One communication tool that the 579th, and the entire California National Guard, used to connect children with their deployed parent was the Guardian Bear. The battalion and [Operation Ready Family Representative](#) Terri Currier presented three Guardian Bears to Maria Shriver with the promise of a fourth on the way so that each of the Schwarzenegger’s four children would have one. In McClurg’s case, Dakota’s father tucked a letter into a special pocket on the bear’s vest that Dakota’s mother read to her daughter several times during his entire deployment.

“We also used the bear to pass hugs between us,” explained McClurg.

McClurg, an accountant in civilian life, told Shriver that reacquainting with his family was his first priority, explaining that relationships in finances and child rearing have changed in his absence—issues through which he and his wife are working. He also explained that he has not returned to [work](#) because he remains on leave through this military orders. He said that he would like to wait three months to return to work, but will have to return to work before that.

“I don’t know if I will be ready, but that’s the way it is,” McClurg said mater-of-factly.

Shriver empathized by relating her own personal experiences when her husband was away for three-month stints making movies. She explained these absences created changes in household habits and responsibilities that required minor readjustments between her husband, herself, and the children. But she marveled that these absences are comparatively minor compared to family separations that lasted more than a year with perhaps only a two-week period where the family was with their soldier.

The First Lady asked the soldiers what [counseling programs](#) were available for them to help their transition into family life. The troops explained that they received a family awareness briefing before coming off active duty about available services but that they were on their own to access them. When the first lady asked what Californians can do to help with the soldiers’ transition into civilian life, Louise Goodwater, wife of the 579th Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Walt Goodwater explained that many psychiatrists, and social workers have volunteered their services to work at armories through the Chaplains and Sergeant Major associations and that the State Military Department has created the

[Military Family Relief Fund.](#)

“We just received our first \$100 donation last week,” Goodwater explained. Unlike its active duty brethren, the California National Guard units are not consolidated onto or near one central military installation. Members of California National Guard units are often spread out over the entire state, coming to drill one weekend per month at their unit armory. Outside occasional social events, many guard families often do not even know one another.



Representatives from the 579th Engineer Battalion met with Maria Shriver to talk about the unique deployment hardships of California's citizen soldier. (Left to Right) Kathy Rhodes, Spec. Sean Farley; Teri McClurg; Staff Sgt. T.J. McClurg, Tanner McClurg; Joann Fennel, Spec. William Fennel; Maria Shriver, Dakota Fennel; Sage Smith-Cummins; Louise Goodwater, Terri Currier; and Spec. Sarah Miller.

“I barely knew Teri McClurg before the deployment,” Joann Fennel told Maria Shriver. “Now we have become very close friends.” Goodwater said that her and her husband installed a 1-800 number at her home so that the families left behind could call around the clock for any reason at all. “I told my husband, you take care of the soldiers, I will take care of the families,” Goodwater said.

Maria Shriver asked Goodwater how she funded the 1-800 numbers, to which Goodwater said out her own pocket. “It’s worth it,” Goodwater said.

Maria Shriver said that she planned to do what is in her power to support deploying soldiers. She talked with the group about strategies to seek private donations for shipping packages to soldiers. The First Lady also issued more than 5,100 pre-paid phone cards to members of the California National Guard and challenged “corporations, organizations, businesses, community groups, schools and faith-based groups to step forward and volunteer their time on behalf of military families. ” The First Lady's "Heroic Families Program" currently has more than \$70,000 telephone time available in phone cards and

deployed soldiers can access the cards through the Office of the First Lady and the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) at www.heroicfamilies.org. Troops receive 66 minutes of talk time to call loved ones back home.

Armed with new information about the challenges of the state citizen soldier, Maria Shriver said she plans to launch similar efforts tailored to the specific needs of the California National Guard family.

For more information on Maria Shriver's programs to support military families, visit <http://www.firstlady.ca.gov/state/firstlady>.

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