



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

Drill at Connecticut Nuke Plant

Volunteers Needed Anti-Terrorism Training Exercises Start Today

BENEFITS

More Medical Coverage Available For Guard Members

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

Servicemen Must Make Own Provisions for Pets

Woman Awaits Word about Wounded Mate

Soldier's Welcome; Member of "Fighting 69th" from Brooklyn Meets Baby Daughter for First Time during Break from Duty In Iraq

HOMEFRONT DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH

Some Guard Vets Facing Fight for Jobs

HEALTH ISSUES

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: Vietnam Vets Help 39th Cope

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

National Military Family Association and Sears Expand Free Camp Program for Children of Deployed Servicemembers

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES

Widow Says Guard Soldier Proud

GENERAL

Son Home on Leave to Visit Deaf Mom; Father Still in Iraq
Mother, Son Honored for Service to Military
New Campaign Medals Recognize Iraq, Afghanistan Service

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

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

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.ang.af.mil.**

Drill At Connecticut Nuke Plant

5 April 2005

NEW LONDON, Conn. A specialized group of soldiers was set to provide security at the Millstone nuclear power plant complex in Waterford on Wednesday as the nation's largest-ever terrorism drill entered its third day.

The Pentagon was to deploy the quick reaction force from Fort Bragg, N.C., after a briefing at the Camp Rell National Guard facility in Niantic. The drill, which is also being run in New Jersey this week, is designed to evaluate homeland security response plans developed after the 2001 terrorist attacks. Federal officials said Tuesday that those plans have passed their first test.

The National Response Plan was approved recently to close the communication gaps seen in 2001 and ensure that accurate information was quickly available during a crisis.

“This is not a minor improvement. It is a quantum leap,” said Coast Guard Rear Adm. David Pekoske, the primary federal official at the scene of a simulated chemical weapons attack in New London on Tuesday. “You'd be amazed at how good the information sharing is and how robust the discussion is.” Hundreds of federal agents spent most of Tuesday in New London looking for evidence in a pile of rubble on the city's waterfront. Search and rescue teams looked for dummies representing dead bodies and actors who played victims.

Under the new response system, the primary federal official's job is to coordinate all federal agencies and be a single point of contact between Washington and local officials.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell praised the state's response on Tuesday, but said there were times when she wanted information faster than she could get it.

Officials said there have been some communications problems, but added the drill has been a success overall. Leonard Boyle, the state's commissioner of public safety, said investigators developed a number of leads Tuesday while reviewing the fake chemical weapons attack, some of them fruitful and others not. It could take weeks to know whether differing reports were part of the drill or part of the chaotic nature of responding to a disaster, he said.

Officials operating the drill made it look like a mustard gas attack. They confirmed nearly 200 mock deaths, more than 4,600 supposed injuries and some missing people.

Three mock arrests were made on the Canadian border, and the FBI got four arrest warrants as part of the investigation. Details were not made available on the arrests.

Federal homeland security officials hoped the drill, which is called TOPOFF, would put the national response plan to the test. It was the first congressionally mandated drill since the plan went into effect. Officials will carefully review results in the coming week and make some changes as necessary.

Volunteers Needed Anti-Terrorism Training Exercises Start Today

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Garden Island

11 April 2005

The Hawai'i National Guard's 93rd Civil Support Team (CST) is scheduled to conduct its annual anti-terrorism training exercises on Kaua'i from today through Thursday, April 14.

The Kaua'i Civil Defense Agency is cosponsoring this training with the federal Transportation Security Administration and the Kaua'i District Health Office. The exercise aims at insuring that first responders - Civil Defense, fire, police, public works and water departments along with state, federal and private industry - will be prepared in the unlikely event of a terrorist attack on Kaua'i. "The County takes threats seriously," said Mark Marshall, head of Kaua'i's Civil Defense Agency. "We have plans in place and we're going to exercise those plans."

The training exercises will help to test local, state and federal antiterrorist response plans through various scenarios and to coordinate all responding agencies should there be an attack. One scenario will test the effectiveness of the state's Kaua'i District Health Office plan in the event of a bioterrorist attack. A mock drive-through clinic, the first of its kind in the U.S., will be activated at Vidinha Stadium on Thursday, April 14 from 10 a.m. to noon.

"This is one of the places where residents and visitors would go for medicines and supplies during a bioterrorist incident or other health emergencies," said David Lane, bioterrorism preparedness planner with the Kaua'i District Health Office. About 600 people are needed for this exercise. Participants need to fill out forms, be evaluated and receive make-believe medication. In exchange, they'll receive a \$5 voucher redeemable at Foodland, Ishihara Market, Kmart, Kukui Grove Shopping Center or Star Market. "In the event of a bioterrorist attack, our goal is to dispense Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) medication to everyone on Kaua'i within 48 to 72 hours," Lane said.

The SNS is a program of the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control. There are about 12 caches of medication and medical supplies at secret locations that would be delivered to any location in the U.S. within 12 hours after presidential approval.

BENEFITS

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

More Medical Coverage Available For Guard Members

Associated Press

April 06, 2005

RAPID CITY, S.D. - More than 2,500 South Dakota **National Guard** soldiers will benefit from increased medical coverage this spring, according to the **National Guard**.

The new Tricare Reserve Select plan, which takes effect April 26, will benefit **National Guard** members who have mobilized since Sept. 11, 2001.

"This will provide good medical coverage to service members and will give them something back for their sacrifices," said Michele Anderson, the family assistance coordinator for the South Dakota **National Guard**.

Under the new Tricare Reserve Select plan, soldiers returning from active duty are eligible to buy a year's coverage of Tricare for every 90 days of service on active duty if they remain in the select reserves. Guard members can buy the insurance for \$75 per month for the individual soldier and \$233 per month for family coverage.

Currently, returning soldiers are eligible for health care coverage under Tricare for 180 days after they are released. The new program will cover returning soldiers for at least one year and up to eight years.

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Servicemen Must Make Own Provisions for Pets

Beaver County Times

5 April 2005

Bobbi Mercadante, Times Staff

Army Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie Reid of the Oakland section of Pittsburgh thought she had found a temporary home for her two cats when she was called to active duty 16 months ago with the 630th Transportation Co. from Washington County. After all, who could watch her beloved pets better than her own mother?

But then her mom, Maj. Linda Reid, an Army nurse with two cats of her own, was deployed as well.

Fortunately, the deployed duo were able to place two of the cats with friends and family members and give another away to a good home, but finding a temporary home for the

fourth cat, Gabby, was a problem.

Gabby, a 9-year-old calico, is shy in the extreme. She hides by light of day and then prowls by night. Fortunately, Stephanie Reid's rear detachment commander, 1st Lt. James Tyrpin of Scenery Hill, Washington County, opened his home to Gabby for the duration of her deployment.

Servicemen are on their own when it comes to making arrangements for their pets, Jack Gordon, spokesman for the 99th Army Reserve Base in Moon Township, said recently. If a soldier does not have family at home to care for the pet, a member of his or her immediate family will usually step up to the plate to care for the animal, he said.

Similarly, Lt. Karen Knoerdel of the 171st Airlift Refueling Wing in Moon said the Pennsylvania Air **National Guard** does not to her knowledge make any provisions for the animals of military personnel.

Several kennels in close proximity to local military bases said they have not seen an increase in business since war began in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they do not offer discounts to serviceman. John Patarini, co-owner and operator of Parkway Kennels in Findlay Township, said he has boarded the animals of military personnel for short periods of time but never for a six-month deployment.

Delbert Lemmon of the Beaver County Humane Society said very few animals have been surrendered to the shelter by deployed military personnel.

Animals become a big part of the family unit. In fact, Bill Ohleger of Independence Township said his deployed son Chris's dog, Vader, a shepherd mix, is going to be in Chris' wedding. A family member will walk 6-year-old Vader down the aisle, and the canine will serve as ring bearer with the wedding rings tied around his neck.

Chris is a member of the Third Armored Cavalry out of Fort Carson, Colo., and he was deployed earlier this month. His father is watching Vader while he is away. No wedding date has been set.

Just in case a family member is unable to care for a soldier's pet in his time of need, help is available online at operationnoblefoster.org and NetPets.org. Both military personnel in need of foster care for their pets and potential foster caregivers can register at the site.

Operation Noble Foster is mainly designed for the placement of cats.

NetPets has a program that provides links to foster homes for all the pets of military personnel, even if they are creatures as large as a horse or as small as a rodent.

Steve Albin of South Myrtle Beach, S.C., director of NetPets, started the military foster program after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

He estimated his group and satellite groups have placed tens of thousands of military pets in the United States, Asia, Europe, Canada and Cuba.

The idea for stepping in to help deployed military members came after Albin read about how many soldiers had to give away or abandon their pets during the Persian Gulf War a decade before. He said conservative estimates are that 25,000 military pets were euthanized at the time.

"What kind of morale builder was that?" Albin said. "In order for you to serve and protect this nation, you have to put your best buddy to sleep."

Albin said he stopped counting how many military pets he helped place after 8,000, and he said the affiliated groups have placed three times as many. "I had no idea what I was getting into when I started this," said Albin, who has been overseeing NetPets since 1996.

NetPets has become the official pet assistance provider for all Department of Defense agencies, and Albin has been told that officials would like him to continue the military foster program even in peacetime.

Albin said the success of his program even has changed military policy. Up until April 2002, pets were classified as family property. Now, pets are classified as family members and even qualify for travel allowances.

Woman Awaits Word About Wounded Mate

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Shreveport Times

6 April 2005

By John Andrew Prime

The wife of Staff Sgt. Michael McCrary, a Shreveporter who was wounded over the weekend in a flurry of terrorist attacks in Baghdad, awaits word on how serious her husband's injuries are and when and how she'll be able to see him.

"They put him on 'non-serious' status (Sunday), which meant that the government wouldn't pay for my travel," Michelle McCrary said late Monday. "But today in Germany, they put him back on serious status because they had to open his wounds to clean them out. So if he stays in Germany for a certain number of days, there is the possibility they will fly me there."

If he returns to the United States before McCrary has an opportunity to fly out and his conditions again is downgraded to non-serious, the Army won't pay for her travel. But she will get help from the Louisiana **National Guard's** family support network, she said.

"I will get there one way or the other!" McCrary said. "I am just waiting on word from the doctor in Germany as to how long he will remain there or when he will go to Walter Reed." That's the Army's main medical center in Washington, D.C.

McCrary's husband and a fellow tank commander in Shreveport's 1/156th Armor Battalion, Sgt. Gary Bourgeois, were wounded Saturday in responses to the series of terrorist attacks across Baghdad that eventually caused injuries or wounds to more than 40 soldiers, according to press reports.

McCrary's husband had shrapnel wounds to his head and face, a broken arm and jaw injuries. Bourgeois at first was thought to have a broken wrist, but X-rays indicate no fracture occurred, wife Amy Bourgeois of Bossier City said Monday. The extent of injury to his hand has not been officially disclosed.

It could be months or longer before details of the unit's involvement in actions over the weekend become known.

"Obviously, there is a tremendous amount of (operational security) involved with the whole series of events that occurred 2-3 April," said Maj. Scott Adams, executive officer of the 1/156th Armor Battalion.

"What I can and will tell you is that the soldiers of Task Force Geronimo acted with gallantry and an overwhelming amount of selfless duty in response to enemy actions on 2-3 April. Indeed, there were many instances of soldiers normally 'down' for crew rest responding to the need for a presence (armored) in our area of operations.

"The actions of all of soldiers of Task Force Geronimo were key to the successful conclusion of operations on 3 April," he said. "We are extremely proud of the performance, sense of duty and professionalism of all of the soldiers of Task Force Geronimo."

Soldier's Welcome: Member of 'Fighting 69th' From Brooklyn Meets Baby Daughter For First Time During Break From Duty In Iraq

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

Newsday (New York)

April 10, 2005

By Luis Perez
Staff Writer

It was the first time since leaving for the war that Sgt. Michael Vassallo would touch his 6-week-old baby girl, and now he was walking toward her at LaGuardia Airport, a broad smile on his face.

Vassallo dropped his heavy duffel bag at his wife's feet and came within an inch of the child, Alyssa, cradled in her arms.

"Thank you, God," whispered Miriam Feliciano, his wife.

In front of his wife's double-stroller sat 1-year-old Alan, who was 6 months old when his father left, and beside it stood Jordan, 7.

Together the young family from the Canarsie section of Brooklyn shared a tender moment dreamed of for six months, a moment that will end when Vassallo returns to Iraq in two weeks.

Vassallo, 36, is a truck commander with the storied 69th Infantry Regiment, which has lost eight soldiers from the city since the fighting began. He drives a Humvee on what the soldiers refer to as Route Irish, a mine-and-sniper laden airport road where several of the "Fighting 69th" have fallen.

While every U.S. soldier takes a vow to willingly place themselves in harm's way,

Vassallo's journey to the fighting fields of Baghdad is particularly brimming with sacrifice.

Vassallo, who volunteered for duty, returns with the knowledge that Alan will not likely remember his father, and that his little man of the house, Jordan, who he speaks to by phone once a week, will most likely remember only his voice.

When Vassallo left, on Nov. 15, his wife was five months pregnant with Alyssa.

Vassallo hugs Jordan, Feliciano's child from a previous relationship, then leans down to place a kiss on Alan's head.

Then he holds his wife in a prolonged embrace, lifting her off the ground. They sway in a kiss.

It wasn't easy watching Vassallo go, said Feliciano, 32, an emergency medical technician who says she and her husband are soul mates. Then again, she knew it was going to be this way coming into the marriage.

Vassallo was a Marine for 10 years before joining the New York City Police Department. He took a leave from that to join the Army **National Guard** after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. When the war arrived, he volunteered and he was shipped off last November.

"I wasn't crazy about him going," Feliciano said, "but this is his life."

Vassallo says he knew some of the men who died, but declines to share stories, for fear that his wife will read them in this article.

But he holds no reservation about volunteering for the war.

"Basically, everything I do I do it for my family," he said.

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH

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

Some Guard Vets Facing Fight For Jobs

Media General News

April 10, 2005

By James W. Crawley

WASHINGTON – **National Guardsmen** Charles Goodreau, Benito Colon and Michael McLaughlin are fighting not Iraqi insurgents but their employers.

They join the growing ranks of part-time warriors who lost jobs or say they faced discrimination when they returned from military service.

During the past three years, more than 4,400 service members have filed complaints with the Labor Department charging employers have fired, demoted or discriminated against

them – possible violations of the 11-year-old Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Such complaints have risen 62 percent since the Sept 11, 2001, terrorist attacks as the Pentagon mobilized 483,000 part-time troops – some more than once – to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan or guard the homeland. It has been the largest call-up since World War II.

Thousands more in the reserves and **National Guard** have sought help from volunteer ombudsmen for the Defense Department's Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve to retain jobs, get delayed promotions or receive pay raises. Since September, Justice Department civil rights attorneys have joined the battle, suing on behalf of reservists. Goodreau, Colon and McLaughlin are the first three represented by the Justice attorneys.

"The last thing I want is a soldier or sailor worrying about his or her job," said Brad Schlozman, the deputy assistant attorney general who oversees civil rights cases.

Pentagon and Labor Department officials maintain that their public relations programs have educated employers so well that only 1 in 67 who were mobilized have filed a complaint, and about 95 percent of complaints get resolved without an employee going to court.

Representatives of business and human resource management groups say their members are patriotic and support the law. But some who help service members in employment binds say privately that employers have become more hesitant to hire reservists and try to find loopholes in the law.

"It's hard to prove that a company didn't hire you because you were in the Guard," said an ombudsman who asked for anonymity. "And, who would want to go to work for a company that you had to threaten to sue to get a job?"

While federal officials see no trends in the complaints, Schlozman said long and recurring military deployments are likely to increase employment complaints. Justice has received 69 referrals from the Labor Department for further investigation and possible lawsuits in the last six months, officials said. Within 90 days, Justice officials must decide whether a case has merit. Previously, cases could have languished for years.

"We've tried to ratchet this up," Schlozman said.

Starting last month, all employers must inform workers about the re-employment law and its guarantees and place a poster in the workplace outlining employee rights.

"Once they understand the law, the overwhelming majority of employers do the right thing," said John Muckelbauer, chief of staff for the Veterans Employment and Training Service.

The first line of defense for service members is hundreds of volunteer ombudsmen with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. The ombudsmen interview the affected service members and talk to employers. Often, once they remind company officials about the reemployment law, the worker is reinstated.

If persuasion fails, a worker can file a complaint with the Labor Department.

About one-third of complaints are tossed out because they lack merit, said department

spokesman Mike Biddle. Another third are abandoned because the worker goes back on active duty or fails to follow through. The rest are resolved through settlements with employers or are referred to the Justice Department. During the past three years, the Labor Department has collected \$3.2 million in back wages and benefits for service members.

An affected worker can hire a private attorney or let the government sue on his behalf. Goodreau, Colon and McLaughlin chose the latter. A rubber mixing machine operator at a Bridgestone-Firestone tire plant in Clarksville, Tenn., Goodreau was a staff sergeant in the Tennessee **National Guard** when his military police company deployed to Iraq in 2003.

When he returned last year, the company put him back to work at his old wage, \$17.44 an hour. Goodreau argued that he should be paid \$18.60 an hour, the amount he would have received had he not been mobilized.

On March 29, Justice officials brokered a settlement between Goodreau and Bridgestone-Firestone. Without admitting fault, the tire maker paid back wages of more than \$6,000 and agreed to comply with the reemployment law. Goodreau could not be reached for comment.

The lawsuits involving Colon, a pharmaceutical sales representative in Puerto Rico, and McLaughlin, a plant manager for a Pennsylvania box maker, are pending in federal courts. Efforts to contact them were unsuccessful.

While Justice has filed only three lawsuits, additional lawsuits are likely.

"We get the very tip of the spear – the ones that can't be resolved any other way," said David Palmer, chief of Justice's employment litigation section.

HEALTH ISSUES

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: Vietnam Vets Help 39th Cope

FOX 16

April 6, 2005

Soldiers of the 39th are returning home, returning to their families, returning to their jobs, resuming their lives. And with everything they've seen and experienced in war, the full journey home is far from over. And Vietnam veterans say they are here to help.

Vietnam veterans gather to honor war heroes at the Vietnam memorial at the capitol.

It's a day of thinking back and then looking forward to what our troops are going through right now.

Fred Steube, works with fellow veterans at the Department of Veteran's Affairs. Steube says Vietnam veterans have taken a stand to make sure troops coming home from Iraq are given special consideration.

Something Vietnam vets did not get, when they returned home directly from the battlefield.

"You were from a combat zone, back to the states, and with your family."

When that happened, post traumatic stress disorder set in. Steube says many Vietnam vets would come home individually, rather than in groups.

"Did not have comradeship of a group, a company of marines coming back together, they do that different now, if you'll notice they bring 250 of the **national guard** together back to the states."

And Steube says...even more needs to be done, and Vietnam veterans are working through veterans affairs to help.

We need to work with these men and women because there's no more stress, I don't care what job you're in, there's no more stress you'll ever find than in combat situation, it's second to second, to kill or be killed.

Steube says helping the soldier's transition back into society is a challenge his organization is actively working on. And he says progress is made largely through the experiences and efforts of Vietnam veterans.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

National Military Family Association and Sears Expand Free Camp Program for Children of Deployed Servicemembers

PR Newswire

7 April 2005

Nationwide Registration for Operation Purple Summer Camps Begins April 15

ALEXANDRIA, Va., -- The National Military Family Association (NMFA) and Sears, Roebuck and Co. today announced the sites for the 2005 Operation Purple Summer Camps. The camps provide unique experiences to more than 2,000 children whose parents are deployed in the U.S. Armed Forces. The 22 Operation Purple Camps provide children from U.S. military families with fun and memorable opportunities to learn new skills for coping with deployment-related stress. The camps are funded through the Sears American Dream Campaign, a \$100 million commitment to strengthen families, homes and communities.

Operation Purple is the only summer camp program that focuses on helping kids deal

with deployment-related issues and is open to children of personnel from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces ("purple" is a military term representing inclusion of all branches). Applications for the camps will be available April 15 through May 15 on the NMFA web site at <http://www.nmfa.org> . Sears, Roebuck's funding enables children to attend the camps at no charge.

NMFA developed Operation Purple camps last year in response to the need for increased support services benefiting children of men and women serving in the Armed Forces, especially those whose parents are or will be deployed.

With funding from Sears, Roebuck in 2004, NMFA conducted 12 camps reaching nearly 1,000 young people. This year, the program has expanded to host more than 2,000 kids. NMFA estimates that more than 135,000 children are experiencing the absence of a parent due to a deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. This statistic does not include children who have parents deployed elsewhere around the world.

"Operation Purple Summer Camps fulfill a critical need in the military community," says Candace Wheeler, Chief Executive Officer of NMFA. "We have been overwhelmed by the messages of support and gratitude we've received from children, parents, the Department of Defense, the **National Guard** Bureau and Members of Congress. We are thrilled to be able to expand the program this year."

"Sears prides itself on serving the needs of homes and families, and our affiliation with the NMFA provides advocacy programs for the families of men and women actively serving in our armed forces," said Alan J. Lacy, vice chairman and CEO of Sears Holdings Corporation. "Our support of the summer camps enables a fabulous developmental experience for thousands of children and enriches the lives of their families."

One in four American children will grow up to serve in the military or marry a servicemember, according to the Defense Manpower Data Center, making an investment in today's military kids important for positively affecting tomorrow's military community.

Operation Purple Camp Details

The camps, which last from five to seven days, give kids ages eight to 18 an exciting and memorable camp experience, providing tools to help them deal with the stress resulting from a parent's deployment. Each camp is joint and "purple" -- encompassing all service branches, including the National Guard and Reserve -- and offered free of charge to all participants.

Interested children from military families are encouraged to apply for the camp located nearest their home. More than 30 weeks of Operation Purple camps are offered in 18 states (Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas and Utah), three international locations (Germany, Italy and Japan) and one unincorporated U.S. territory (Guam). A list of camp dates, sites and other information is now available on NMFA's web site. Applications will be available on April 15.

About NMFA

The National Military Family Association, a nonprofit organization, is the only national organization whose sole focus is the military family and whose goal is to influence the development and implementation of policies that will improve the lives of those family members. The association's mission is to serve the families of the seven uniformed services through education, information and advocacy. For more than 35 years its staff and volunteers, comprised mostly of military family members, have built a reputation for being the leading experts on military family issues.

About Sears, Roebuck and Co.

Sears, Roebuck has a long tradition of support for the men and women of the armed forces and their families dating back to 1916. Today, for qualified Sears, Roebuck employees activated for duty through the **National Guard** or Reserves, the company pays the difference between the soldiers' Sears, Roebuck salary and military pay and offers extended employment benefits for up to 60 months. Since 2003, Sears, Roebuck has provided NMFA with more than \$2 million to address the unique challenges faced by military families.

Sears, Roebuck and Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of Sears Holdings Corporation (Nasdaq: SHLD), is a leading broadline retailer providing merchandise and related services. Sears, Roebuck offers its wide range of home merchandise, apparel and automotive products and services through more than 2,400 Sears-branded and affiliated stores in the United States and Canada, which includes approximately 870 full-line and 1,100 specialty stores in the U.S. Sears, Roebuck also offers a variety of merchandise and services through sears.com, landsend.com, and specialty catalogs. Sears, Roebuck offers consumers leading proprietary brands including Kenmore, Craftsman, DieHard and Lands' End -- among the most trusted and preferred brands in the U.S. The company is the nation's largest provider of home services, with more than 14 million service calls made annually. For more information, visit the Sears, Roebuck website at <http://www.sears.com> or the Sears Holdings Corporation website at <http://www.searsholdings.com>.

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Widow Says Guard Soldier Proud

Associated Press

6 April 2005

LEWISTOWN - The Montana **National Guard** soldier who died in Iraq on Thursday was proud of his military work, according to his wife. "He believed in what he was

doing," said Annette McNary. "He chose to go to Iraq to be with his soldiers." Sgt. 1st Class Robbie McNary, 42, died during operations near Hawijah, the Guard said. Survivors include his wife and three children. His death raises to six the number of Montanans killed while in Iraq on military duty, according to U.S. Department of Defense records.

McNary's oldest son is in the **National Guard** and is on active duty at Fort Riley, Kan., said Maj. Scott Smith, a spokesman for the Montana **National Guard**. His youngest son also has contemplated joining the military, Annette McNary said. She said the past few days have been tough, and it's hard for her to think about her oldest son continuing with his Guard duties. "But we're a very patriotic family," she said. In his civilian life in Lewistown, McNary worked for a concrete company, Smith said. McNary was born in Rockford, Ill., according to Annette McNary. Cloyd Funeral Home in Lewistown is handling arrangements.

When McNary left for Iraq in November, he left a collection of paperwork, including his own funeral arrangements. "He took care of everything," Annette McNary said. "He was always one step ahead, and he always took care of his family."

GENERAL

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Son Home on Leave to Visit Deaf Mom; Father Still in Iraq

Great Falls Tribune

April 5, 2005

By Eric Newhouse, Tribune Projects Editor

Coming home Monday night from patrol in a Humvee in Iraq for two weeks' leave was sweet for Pfc. Ben Braille of the 163rd Infantry Battalion.

It was even sweeter for his mom, Laura Braille (pronounced Bray-LEE). "Since I'm deaf, I don't get to hear his voice," Laura Braille said through her interpreter, Cheri Frick of Best Interpreting Services of Montana.

Two other Great Falls soldiers — Sgt. Joe Wombolt and Spec. Joshua Nicholson — were also on the plane, returning for two weeks of leave. Braille and his father, Frank Braille, have been serving together in Iraq since last November. Frank is based near Kirkuk.

"Right now, I'm patrolling most nights, making sure there's nobody out there that's going to be harming our guys or innocent civilians," he said.

When his unit was based near Samarra, they were shot at daily, Braille said.

"But since we left there, it's been about a mortar attack a week," he said. His father plans to take his leave in December, cutting the last two weeks off his tour of duty to return home early. Laura Braille said her husband has a regular routine as a supply sergeant so

he can e-mail her fairly regularly, but it still has been difficult since he has been her main interpreter.

Her son, Tony, has taken over, but he is a member of the Air **National Guard**, reporting for basic training in June. "It's not going to be easy for me as a mother, knowing that my three men are gone," said Laura Braille.

"But I have to be strong because I know they'll be back and things will get back to normal soon," she said.

Mother, Son Honored For Service to Military

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Chattanooga Times Free Press (Tennessee)

April 9, 2005

By Randall Higgins; Cleveland Bureau

CLEVELAND, Tenn - A Cleveland soldier has returned home with an award from the U.S. Army and another for his mother.

Spc. Mark Thompson was named Soldier of the Year by his military police company based in Stuttgart, Germany. And he returned with a Patriot's Award from the Tennessee **National Guard** for his mother, Evelyn Thompson.

During her son's deployment, Mrs. Thompson organized the first Tennessee chapter of Blue Star Mothers, a national support organization for women with children in the military.

"It means a lot for anyone deployed, but especially the guys downrange, to know people back home are not forgetting their service while they are gone," said Spc. Thompson, who nominated his mother through his company for the award..

A member of the 278th Regimental Combat Team, Spc. Thompson was deployed to Germany with a West Tennessee Guard group months before the 278th was activated and sent to Iraq.

Home again, Spc. Thompson may enlist in the active Army or he may re-enlist with the 278th. He's waiting for word from the Army as to where he can best fit in.

Either way, he knows it's likely his next deployment would be Iraq.

"We've talked about that," he said of his family.

"I love being home. We've got tickets to Lookouts games. It's been great. But there's that part of you inside that says that's what the service is for," he said.

Spc. Thompson first joined the Guard at 17, he said, and completed a 10-year enlistment. He had worked for several small East Tennessee newspapers, gotten married and started a family. He had gone back to school at Tennessee Technological University when the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks happened.

"I felt like I had to get back in," he said. "When 9/11 occurred something in me said you have a little bit of military knowledge and they are going to need people."

"I told myself if I could lose a hundred pounds I would get back in. Which I did," he said. In 2003 he became a 30-year-old private first class. In January, 2004 he was deployed to Germany.

"Getting back in reminded me what I really appreciate about the military," he said. "You meet some really good guys. Everybody worries about younger people. But the guys I've met just reaffirmed my faith in Americans of any age."

Mrs. Thompson remembers the Vietnam War era and public reaction to soldiers then. Her Marine husband was spat upon when he landed in Hawaii before he could get changed out of uniform.

"I said, I don't want that for my son and these young people who are serving now," she said. "I want people to know it's a noble cause, what they are doing. In their hearts, they know they are doing the right thing by serving their country."

"I think we need to be proud to let people know we have children serving in the military," she said.

For Spc. Thompson, the homecoming has been far different. His outfit was met with applause at the airport and gift bags.

"The yellow ribbons mean something," he said. "It is about supporting the troops. Don't get the politics confused with supporting the troops."

New Campaign Medals Recognize Iraq, Afghanistan Service

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

American Forces Press Service

April 7, 2005

WASHINGTON— Two new campaign medals announced today recognize servicemembers for their contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Each military department will serve as the awarding authority for the new Afghanistan Campaign Medal, top, and Iraq Campaign Medal, and will issue regulations for processing, awarding and wearing them. (Click photo for screen-resolution image);high-resolution image available.

The Defense Department announced the Afghanistan Campaign Medal and Iraq Campaign Medal for military members who directly support Operation Enduring Freedom between Oct. 24, 2001, and a date to be determined in the future or Operation Iraqi Freedom between March 19, 2003, and some future date.

The new campaign medals were established by presidential order for servicemembers who have been assigned, attached or mobilized to units operating in these areas, officials said. Until now, servicemembers deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq during the designated

timeframes were awarded the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

"By awarding separate medals, we will recognize the specific contribution that our servicemen and women have made in Afghanistan and Iraq," said Bill Carr, deputy undersecretary of defense for military personnel policy. "It's appropriate that we present them with an award that truly honors their heroic service in these operations."

Servicemembers with the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal remain qualified for it, but officials said they may apply for the appropriate new campaign medal as well.

Military personnel may receive both of the new campaign medals if they meet the requirement for both awards. However, officials said the qualifying period of service for one award can't be used to justify eligibility for the other. Just one award of each of the new medals is authorized, as no service stars are prescribed.

No servicemember is entitled to wear all three medals for the same act, achievement or period of service.

The area of eligibility for the Afghanistan Campaign Medal includes all the country's land and air spaces. The Iraq Campaign Medal applies for service in Iraq, its waters out to 12 nautical miles, and the airspace over Iraq and its 12-mile water area.

To qualify for the awards, servicemembers must have served in the appropriate region for 30 consecutive days or 60 non-consecutive days, officials said.

Servicemembers also qualify for the medals if they have been engaged in combat during an armed engagement, regardless of the time spent in the area of eligibility, or were wounded or injured and required medical evacuation from the area of eligibility while participating in an operation or on official duties.

Regularly assigned aircrew members flying sorties into, out of, within, or over the area of eligibility in direct support of military operations also qualify, with each day of operations counting as one day of eligibility.

On the uniform, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal will be positioned below the Kosovo Campaign Medal and above the Iraq Campaign Medal. The Iraq Campaign Medal will be positioned below the Afghanistan Campaign Medal and above the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

Each military department will serve as the awarding authority for the new campaign medals and issue regulations for processing, awarding and wearing them, officials said.

End

[Back to Table of Contents](#)