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Weekly News for National Guard Families

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TRICARE website for information on health benefits

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/>

Civilian Employment Information (CEI) Program Registration for Army and Air National Guard, Air Force, and Coast Guard Reserve

<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/esgr/index.jsp> (Note to those viewing this page in Word or PDF format: You 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.af.mil.

Special Guard Team Trains For Terror Attack Response

The Salt Lake Tribune

22 April 2005

By Matthew D. LaPlante

Salt Lake Tribune With four massive engines slung under the 220-foot wingspan of a C-5 Galaxy cargo plane providing the background noise, a group of service members who fancy themselves to be the first warriors in a new and frightening kind of war prepped for their first training deployment as a unit.

The 85th Civil Support Team, a specialized group of medics, scientists, surveyors and communication specialists, was formed last year in response to congressional concerns that the nation is unprepared to respond to chemical, biological or radiological attacks.

Members of the 22-person Utah **National Guard** unit left Thursday for their first stint of training at the U.S. Army Chemical School in Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. If successful there - and during an extensive training cycle that will begin when they return home in two weeks - the team will win certification to respond to what its members euphemistically call "events."

No one gets a job with the 85th by chance. Some members competed with dozens of others for their spots.

Capt. Dean Roberts left his job as an Apache helicopter pilot to take a slot as the unit's operations officer.

"As a war fighter, you always want to be on the pointy tip of the spear," Roberts explained as he oversaw the loading Thursday of the C-5 on the tarmac of the Utah Air National Guard base at Salt Lake City International Airport.

"This is a different kind of war and a different kind of war fighting, but it's definitely on that pointy tip," he said.

But it is a tip fraught with unknowns - microscopic dangers that U.S. soldiers have not faced before.

Capt. Carol Scott, a medical officer, said she wouldn't have taken a job with the team unless she believed the risk of a weapons of mass destruction attack was real.

"It's possible for it to happen," she said. "For me, it's a higher calling for my country. We need to be better prepared - and the better prepared we are, the less likely it is that we will have an incident."

If that means running into the epicenter of an "event" while others are running out, Scott said she and her team are ready.

Georgia Guard Earns High Readiness Marks

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution

April 23, 2005

By Ron Martz

Fort Irwin, Calif. -- Army officials responsible for ensuring Georgia **National Guard** soldiers are properly prepared for the war in Iraq are giving the unit high marks for its last dress rehearsal. Final certification of the combat readiness of the 48th Brigade Combat Team is expected in about two weeks. But trainers here at the National Training Center say Georgia's citizen-soldiers came well-trained and will leave even better-prepared to face the rigors of combat.

"This is a good unit. I'd go to war with them," said Brig. Gen. Robert Cone, commander of this sprawling desert training center. Cone has been monitoring the progress of the 4,300 soldiers of the brigade for the past three weeks, including two weeks of intense combat exercises in mock Iraqi villages scattered across the Mojave Desert.

Their final exercise was Friday and today Cone will sit down with Brig. Gen. Stewart Rodeheaver, the brigade commander, and his staff to assess the 48th's strengths and weaknesses. The unit is scheduled to begin a yearlong deployment to Iraq in mid-May.

"They came in here at a very high training level and that allows us to take them to the next higher level," Cone added.

Gen. Dan McNeill, who has the final say on the certification, visited the unit Thursday and came away impressed. "They have progressed further and faster than several units we've had here under similar circumstances," said McNeill, commander of Fort McPherson-based Forces Command.

Officials are reluctant to compare units that train here but the 48th's progress and the level of preparation is a far cry from 14 years ago, when the brigade came to Fort Irwin to prepare for the first Persian Gulf War. The Georgia unit had to spend extra time in training and was not certified ready for combat until the day the ground war ended.

The fallout left many soldiers in the 48th bitter. But it forced the Army to re-evaluate its training practices and now **National Guard** and reserve units are given about four months of intense, full-time training before being committed to combat.

Rodeheaver, of Forsyth, was with the unit in 1991 and said there is no comparison between then and now. "It was a different Army then," he said. "This time we've cleared every hurdle they've thrown at us and our soldiers are ready to go."

When the 48th gets to Kuwait, it will spend 10- to 12 days in urban warfare training, Rodeheaver said. Then, it's on to Baghdad in early June where the unit will be under the control of the Fort Stewart-based 3rd Infantry Division. It will be patrol portions of the Iraqi capital.

"What we're seeing is that this is the kind of unit that soldiers want to be in," Cone said.

Revamped Training Has Guard Fit To Fight; At Desert Base In Calif., Realistic Exercises Ready Part-Time Soldiers For War; Teaching How To Fight Insurgents

The Baltimore Sun

April 25, 2005

By Tom Bowman

FORT IRWIN, Calif. -- Dusty and sunburned like his troops, Brig. Gen. Stewart Rodeheaver came to this sprawling desert training base to prepare for a year's duty in Iraq -- and finally put to rest a 15-year-old slight.

In the fall of 1990, Rodeheaver and fellow soldiers of the 48th Infantry Brigade, a Georgia-based **National Guard** unit, arrived at the Mojave Desert proving ground to gear up for war with Saddam Hussein's forces. But after weeks of exercises, the Army said the unit had poor leadership, could not maintain its vehicles and was unable to mount large-scale offensives.

"After 60 days, it still wasn't ready," Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the top commander in the Persian Gulf War, wrote in his autobiography. On the day, weeks later, when the "Lightning Brigade" was finally declared fit for duty, the war ended.

This time around, said Rodeheaver, a 52-year-old Georgia Power Co. general manager, "we are going to make sure we are vindicated."

The Army can't afford to prove Rodeheaver -- or his brigade -- wrong. Half of the combat troops in this Iraq war are members of the **National Guard**.

To make sure they are fit to fight, the Army has revamped its training to better prepare the part-time soldiers for the field and to teach them what to expect once they get there. The lessons are designed to be so real that the government has hired Iraqi-Americans to play roles ranging from insurgents to local officials and Al-Jazeera journalists.

Before **National Guard** units are sent off to places such as "Forward Operating Base Detroit" -- a collection of tents, armor and Humvees in the Mojave encircled in razor wire and designed to replicate an American outpost -- they are required to undergo training in the basics of combat.

The 48th spent more than two months at Fort Stewart, Ga., honing its skills in everything from marksmanship and first aid training to responding to sniper attacks.

Meeting a new threat

When the brigade finally arrived at Fort Irwin, an unforgiving expanse of parched hills and high desert roughly the size of Rhode Island, it found a different training program to prepare its members for a different kind of war.

Gone were the 1990 lessons for sweeping tank-on-tank battles -- the kind the brigade would have faced against Soviet forces on the plains of Europe or with Iraq's elite Republican Guard along the approaches to Baghdad. Armored columns no longer sent up plumes of dust as they surged across the desert, much as they did in 1942 when a

flamboyant tank officer named George S. Patton Jr. first came here to prepare soldiers for World War II.

Instead, the National Training Center has evolved to teach tactics in fighting a new threat: insurgencies. A dozen villages now dot the landscape, the largest with 40 buildings. There are plans to build a 300-building site to replicate the dense and deadly urban landscape of Iraq's Fallujah or Mosul.

The soldiers from Georgia and elsewhere face what is known as asymmetrical warfare, where gun-toting guerrillas or insurgents can mount quick attacks and slip back into the civilian population, grinding away at a larger, better-equipped force such as the U.S. military.

There are 1,100 role players on the battlefield, posing as insurgents, civilians or Iraqi **National Guardsmen**, who are portrayed by Nevada Guard soldiers. More than 200 of these actors are Iraqi-Americans, many of them recent immigrants who now live in San Diego. They each earn about \$4,000 from a government contractor for the three weeks they are here.

Eight of the center's 12 villages are being used in the war game, outlined in a script that runs more than 1,600 pages. The soldiers are given a breakdown of the ethnic and religious groups in the villages -- Shiite Muslims, Sunnis, Kurds -- and which ones are friendly, hostile or a mixture. There are also Iraqi-Americans portraying Al-Jazeera reporters, whose broadcasts can affect the stability of the villages.

Part of the training involves how to defend convoys and thwart roadside bombs. Trucks and armored vehicles drive through a new, \$2.5 million convoy course, complete with buildings, using the latest technical equipment to prevent the detonation of roadside bombs. Throughout the two weeks, soldiers are tested with mock mortar attacks, infiltration of their bases and ambushes. "We'll keep them up all night long," said Col. Steve Bailey, the center's operations chief. "It's really about creating a laboratory and learning how to face everything they'll see in Iraq."

What is most challenging in the training, officers and soldiers said, is the human element of warfare. Coaxing intelligence information from villagers and dealing with the language barrier are among the biggest hurdles, they said, echoing their counterparts in Iraq.

"This is totally different," said Lt. Col. Mark London, 41, the operations officer for the Georgia brigade. "You don't know who the enemy is or where he is."

Besides the 3,000 soldiers from Georgia, there are about 1,000 Guard soldiers from Illinois, Alabama, Missouri, Rhode Island, Puerto Rico and Maryland. Sgt. Steve Bussard, 25, of Hagerstown, who serves in the Maryland **National Guard**, recalls when he was on active duty with the 82nd Airborne Division, whose troops parachute in to capture airfields or other enemy objectives. That was easier, he said, "than getting used to winning their hearts and minds."

Initially, the Georgia soldiers wanted little to do with those posing as Iraqi **National Guardsmen**, officials said. "We're teaching them that the Iraqis can help," said Brig. Gen. Robert Cone, commander of Fort Irwin and the training center.

At midday, three companies of soldiers of the 48th, together with the pseudo Iraqi **National Guard** troops, arrive in a mock village of a half-dozen makeshift buildings, including one with "Mosque" spray-painted in large black letters. An angry mob of several dozen protesters is waving an Iraqi flag and chanting, "Down, Down, USA" and "George Bush! Ali Baba!" -- a reference to the thief in the well-known story and a popular taunt in Iraq. The Georgia soldiers, backed by "Iraqi police," try to quell the disturbance.

The dry desert air is punctuated by U.S. warning shots and the crack of a sniper's rifle, perhaps an insurgent. Two Iraqi protesters crumple in the dust and are "killed." Though it is uncertain where the bullets came from, the Americans are blamed. "Yesterday the village was friendly. These things can have ripple effects," said Shavin, a 31-year-old Kurd who fought alongside U.S. troops in Iraq two years ago and now portrays a protester. For security reasons, the Army asked that only the first names of the Iraqi-Americans be used, because many still have family members in Iraq.

"We know how Iraq is, so we can show them," said Shavin, who gives the troops high marks overall. "Every day it's a new thing they learn."

The town's "mayor," a voluble 45-year-old Baghdad resident who fled the country in 2000, said the Guard troops made a mistake in not seeking permission from him before they entered the town, a request that might have averted the protests.

"We try to teach them how to treat innocent people, try to avoid killing them," said Wisan, dressed in a white Arab headdress and flowing robes. To ease tensions in the village, the Americans must work to create jobs, he said. And when they talk with Iraqi leaders, they should remember to maintain eye contact. "It shows a lot of respect," he said, before offering coffee and dates to his visitors.

Reader now

The training system seems to be working.

Midway through their two weeks of mock operations, the soldiers of the 48th are receiving strong marks from Army officers and are expected to be certified by the end of the month. Then they are scheduled to deploy to central Iraq, around Baghdad. More than half of the 3,000 Georgia Guard soldiers who are here today were part of the 1990 deployment to Fort Irwin. Many, like Rodeheaver, then the brigade's intelligence officer, are convinced they were ready then to help evict Hussein's forces from Kuwait.

Some blame their failure to deploy on a discriminatory attitude in the active-duty Army, which often viewed Guard troops as ineffectual weekend warriors. Others, such as London, a captain in 1990 and now the brigade's operations officer, said the unit wasn't given enough time to prepare. It was "unrealistic" to expect part-time soldiers to so quickly gear up for war, he said.

As the soldiers get ready to head to a combat zone, morale is high, London said. "The mood is very, very good. We want to serve," he said.

Nevada Lawmakers Want To Improve Veterans' Benefits

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

April 18, 2005

CARSON CITY, Nev. -- Nevada legislators are considering a plan to make permanent a temporary program that pays college fees for people returning from active duty in the **National Guard**. Advocates hope the plan will spur additional education for Nevadans returning from active duty in the Middle East. It's one of numerous programs proposed to help Nevada's **National Guard**, which has one of the highest deployment rates in the country since 9/11.

"I've never seen such an outpouring for the **National Guard**," said Maj. Gen. Giles Vanderhoof, the state's adjutant general and homeland security administrator.

The bills could cost millions of dollars, but legislative leaders said there is public support for such measures. While there are federal programs, "I just feel very strongly that the Guard is the state's responsibility," Assembly Speaker Richard Perkins, D-Henderson, said.

There's a limited amount of money the state can allot to new programs, but "we want to do everything we can to help these folks," said Senate Majority Leader Bill Raggio, R-Reno. Of the state's approximately 3,000 Guardsmen, about 2,000 have been mobilized since Sept. 11, 2001. Some have been mobilized twice, Vanderhoof said.

The temporary program to give waivers on registration and laboratory fees would be made permanent under SB78. Vanderhoof said the tuition waivers are his top priority. Other bills to help Guard members include:

- AB376, creating a "Patriot Relief Fund" to help Guardsmen with mortgage payments, cost of books for higher education and other economic hardships.
 - SB285, paying for \$250,000 life insurance policies for Guard members while on active duty.
 - AB293, exempting Guard members on active duty from motor vehicle taxes.
 - AB113, letting Guard members purchase up to two years of service in the Public Employees' Retirement System. A Senate bill would allow members to purchase up to three years of service.
 - SB355, giving Guard members returning from active duty a bonus of \$500 per month for dangerous operations and \$250 a month for operations with less combat.
 - AB319, requiring businesses to post notices that Guard members can't face discrimination in hiring, retention or promotions.
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House Approves National Guard Benefits Bill

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The Associated Press

April 19, 2005,

By Tim Talley, Associated Press Writer

OKLAHOMA CITY Thousands of Oklahoma Army and Air **National Guard** members would receive \$250,000 life insurance policies under legislation approved by the state House Tuesday.

The bill, part of Gov. Brad Henry's Operation Homefront program, passed the House 99-0 and is headed to a joint House-Senate conference committee for more work. It was previously passed by the Senate.

"This measure ensures financial security for the families of **National Guard** members who give so much to defend us from terrorism here and abroad," Henry said following the bill's passage.

Another part of the governor's program is awaiting a hearing in the House. That measure would exempt half of all military pensions from the state income tax and create a checkoff box for Oklahomans to donate all or part of their tax refund to **National Guard** families who need financial help.

"The men and women of the Oklahoma **National Guard** should never doubt our support of their mission and our appreciation of their many sacrifices," Henry said.

The life insurance measure authorizes the state to purchase \$250,000 policies for all Army and Air **National Guard** members. There are currently 9,615 Oklahomans serving in the **National Guard**. A \$250,000 policy costs \$16.25 a month and the total cost to the state would be about \$1.87 million a year.

Only one member of the Oklahoma **National Guard**, Spec. Kyle A. Brinlee of Pryor, has been killed in the line of duty. But Rep. John Carey, the measure's author, said more deaths are possible given the heavy rotation of Guard units in war zones like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Brinlee, 21, died on May 11 near Alasad, Iraq, when an explosive blew up the vehicle in which he was riding.

Carey, D-Durant, said many **National Guard** members are young men and women with children who struggle every day to pay for basic needs.

"When it comes to priorities, life insurance tends to fall behind buying clothes for the kids or putting gas in the car and food on the table," said Carey, chairman of the House Veterans and Military Affairs Committee.

"Given the risk these men and women take by serving in the Guard..., the least we can do as a state is buy them life insurance so their families aren't left destitute if the unthinkable happens." The measure is Senate Bill 821.

Senate OKs Additional Unemployment Benefits For Some In National Guard & Reserves

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Applegate Oregon News

20 April 2005

Salem, Oregon - Members of the Oregon **National Guard** or military reserves could receive additional unemployment insurance benefits under a bill approved today by the Oregon Senate. Senate Bill 690 permits the payment of supplemental unemployment benefits to dislocated workers whose unemployment resulted from their return to service in the Oregon **National Guard** or military reserve following a change in status.

State Senator Joanne Verger of Coos Bay carried the bill on the Senate floor.

"This is a good bill for our returning servicemen and servicewomen. Many of them go through very trying times when they come back from the war," Verger said.

According to Verger, the bill allows members of the Oregon **National Guard** and military reserves to receive benefits after being deactivated if they are enrolled in an approved training program. Eligibility requirements for benefits were modified so that members of the **National Guard** or reserves will qualify if they returned to service following a change in status from serving under Title 32 to serving under Title 10 at a time designated as a period of combatant activities.

The bill also extends the program, called the Supplemental Unemployment Insurance Program for Dislocated Workers. It was created by the state Legislature in 2001, but included a "sunset" date that would have ended the program in June. SB 690 extends the sunset date of the program beyond June 30, 2005.

The bill now goes to the state House of Representatives.

Bill Would Cover GIs For Catastrophic Injury

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Denver Post

April 20, 2005

By Anne C. Mulkern, Denver Post Staff Writer

Washington - Legislation offering military members extra insurance to cover catastrophic injuries has been introduced in Congress.

Iraq war veteran Ryan Kelly, from Prescott, Ariz., came up with the idea for the insurance and, along with other disabled veterans, asked Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, to sponsor a bill.

Craig introduced the bill as an amendment to military funding legislation and as a stand-alone bill. Rep. Rick Renzi, R-Ariz., has introduced similar legislation in the House.

"The financial stress often for me and my buddies outweighed the physical stress we faced," said Kelly, who lost a leg while fighting in Iraq. "Having to worry about

mortgages at home and whether or not Mom or Dad could visit and take off work isn't what a soldier should be worrying about when he's trying to learn to walk on a prosthetic leg or use a prosthetic arm."

The extra money is needed to help cover the expenses of a family during a service member's extended convalescence, including accommodations, food and lost income.

Heath Calhoun, from Clarksville, Tenn., said his wife, who brought in 40 percent of the couple's total income, left her job for eight months to be with him while he was at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He left the hospital early so that his wife could return to her job.

The new insurance would pay \$25,000 to \$100,000, depending on the level of injury. It would cover such wounds as amputations, blindness, severe burns or brain injury.

Military members would pay about \$1 a month for the insurance, Craig said. It would be an option under service members' group life-insurance policy.

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH AFTERMATH

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Guard, Reserve Members Return To Workforce

Star-Tribune

21 April 2005

By Bill Lockett
capital bureau

CHEYENNE -- When Shawn Meline's Wyoming Army **National Guard** unit was deployed to Iraq, his wife, Linnea, was left to take care of their daughter, Samantha, who was less than a year old.

But they weren't alone.

Meline's coworkers at Automation and Electronics in Casper helped his wife with yard work, and some of them also fixed the family's fence.

"It made my life easier, being over there, knowing that ... she was taken care of when I was gone," said Meline, a staff sergeant.

And, thanks to federal law, Meline and his fellow soldiers in the Guard's 2nd Battalion 300th Field Artillery Regiment get to return to the jobs they left behind.

Because their roughly 14-month deployment exceeded 180 days, the soldiers have up to 90 days after their April 10 return to go back to their jobs, according to Larry Barttelbort, the state's federal contractor for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program.

But Barttelbort said most returning servicemen and women don't take that much time before they go back to work.

"Most of them don't take advantage of that, because they're anxious to get back on the horse," he said.

That's true in Meline's case and with most of the other members of his unit, although Meline said he will take some of that time to take a trip with his loved ones.

"I'm going on vacation with my family, because I feel I owe it to them, and as soon as I'm done with that, I'm going back to work," he said.

For his company's efforts, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program gave Automation and Electronics a state award for being an especially supportive employer.

Molly Parrish, engineering assistant with the company, said Meline nominated his employer for the award. She said company owners Stuart and Daney Tanner deserved it.

"They're very supportive of their employees," Parrish said. "They always have been."

She said Stuart Tanner recognizes that his employees are not just workers but also family members. Plus, Meline's fellow employees were happy to help his family while he was away.

"We were shocked when we found out he was going, because you just don't think it's going to happen to anybody that you're going to know," Parrish said.

Barttelbort was impressed with the company's support of the Meline family.

"They even sent people over to the home of the deployed soldier, and basically they did home repairs for the family," he said. "That's certainly going above and beyond."

Volunteers educate

Barttelbort said he is the only full-time paid employee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program, which is staffed by about 70 volunteers across the state who work with employers and Guard and Reserve troops to help them live up to their duties under federal law.

They are led by Wyoming's ESGR state chairwoman, Janet Cowley of Cheyenne, whom Barttelbort described as a full-time volunteer who also has a full-time job with the Cheyenne Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"The heart of this program is more than 50 volunteers over the state that help with employer support for the Guard and Reserve," Barttelbort said.

The law in question, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, spells out the rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees when a worker leaves as part of a Guard or Reserve deployment.

Employers must let the workers return to work, but the worker is also responsible for keeping the company up to date about details of the deployment.

"That's the heart of this law is that the reservist has to keep the employer informed about what's going on," Barttelbort said.

He said the ESGR program encourages employers to have a military leave of absence

policy, just as they have sabbatical or Family Medical Leave Act policies. Samples of the military one are on the organization's Web site at www.esgr.org.

"Wyoming employers have been just outstanding in supporting the Guard and Reserve," Barttelbort said.

Examples include providing differential pay, continuing health care benefits for the soldier's family, sending care packages overseas, and sending phone cards.

Employers are required under the law to treat the returning Guard or Reserve member as if the person had been continuously employed, which means that person should get a raise if that's what would have happened had the person been working instead of serving the country.

Barttelbort said that requirement is known as the "escalator principle."

Sometimes sticky

Meanwhile, companies often have to hire workers to replace deployed troops. When the serviceman returns, the new worker has to relinquish the position if the company can't afford to employ both.

That can create sticky situations, according to Barttelbort.

"We recommend to employers that they let the new employee know what's up," he said. "Sometimes, that doesn't happen, so it creates a traffic jam on the other end."

But, he said, Wyoming employers have been very understanding.

"It generally goes smoothly," he said.

He noted a recent case back East in which it did not go smoothly. The employer reinstated the returned serviceman, laid him off, created the position again, and then hired the person who had been performing the job while the soldier was deployed.

The case went to court, and about a month ago, the soldier won a \$500,000 settlement, Barttelbort said.

Capital bureau reporter Bill Luckett can be reached at (307) 632-1244 or at bill.luckett@casperstartribune.net.

Employer seminar in Gillette

Wyoming businesses are welcome to attend an employer seminar in Gillette on May 2 at the Heritage Center at the Gillette Cam-Plex from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Refreshments and lunch will be provided.

The seminar is intended to help employers ensure success for their businesses and returning employees who have been away on **National Guard** of Reserve deployments.

U.S. Sen. Mike Enzi is the scheduled keynote speaker for the seminar. Private and publicly held businesses and local, state, and federal agencies are invited to attend.

There is no cost to attend the seminar; however, RSVPs are encouraged at 1-866-992-7641, Ext. 5935. Same day, no-cost registration will be available at the seminar. Similar seminars are being planned around the state for future dates.

Want to learn more?

* For more information about the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program, call Cliff Knesel in Gillette at (307) 689-0042, Dave McNulty in Casper at (307) 261-5454, or Larry Barttelbort in Cheyenne toll-free at 1-866-992-7641, Ext. 5935.

* On the Web: <http://www.esgr.org>.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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National Guard Child Care Assessment by the National Guard Child and Youth Program Child Care: A Fifteen-Minute Difference

April 20, 2005 - Fifteen minutes. What difference does fifteen minutes make? Fifteen minutes can be the difference between keeping a high paying job and qualifying for food stamps for some families of National Guard service members who have been through deployments.

"If only the day care could have opened fifteen minutes earlier, I would not have been consistently late to work after dropping off my infant," remarked a woman who was dealing with one of the unavoidable challenges of today's Guard families.

"I cannot fit in an eight hour day at work between my commute and the day care center's hours," said another spouse whose deployed husband used to see their three children off to day care and school in the morning. Finding affordable, quality day care that works for the family during deployment, weekend drills, and annual training has been a frustration and a stumbling block for many Guard families.

The availability of solutions can impact the family long after the service member has returned—especially when it comes to sacrificing a primary or secondary income to meet the needs of their children.

Is there help out there? Yes! The National Guard Child and Youth Program Regional Coordinators are working to help National Guard families meet their child care needs during deployments and other Guard situations.

Just let us know what YOUR needs are. Whether you have been directly impacted by deployment and childcare issues, or if you anticipate these needs in the future, we need to hear from you. Please participate in the National Guard Child and Youth Program Child Care Assessment at:

<http://www.AdvancedSurvey.com/default.asp?SurveyID=21294>

It takes just fifteen minutes—fifteen minutes that can make a difference.

For more information, contact NGChildANDYouthProgram@mpscrc.com

Briefings Help Families Deal With Deployment

Duluth News Tribune

21 April 2005

By Chuck Frederick
News Tribune Staff Writer

Daddy needs to go to war because people in Iraq deserve the same freedoms and lifestyle as us, Bob Wolfe has been trying to explain to his three young sons.

"They don't understand the entire concept, so I'm putting it into general terms," said Wolfe, who lives near Alborn with his wife and boys, ages 5, 10 and 12. "I had them help me pack my bags. They're as much a part of this as they can be. I think that's helping them a lot."

Wolfe, a jet mechanic, is one of more than 400 members of the Duluth-based 148th Fighter Wing being deployed to Iraq after May 1. The wing is scheduled to be home by fall. Wolfe's Extreme Paintball Duluth business will be on hold until then. His wife, Paula, an early childhood specialist at AlBrook schools, will take on a much larger burden at home. And his sons, Ian, Alec and Evan, will be filled with questions.

"I've sort of prepared them by letting them know what's happening and by telling them I'm a volunteer," said Wolfe, a technical sergeant. "They understand this is my decision. They know it's a choice I've made in my life. They're OK."

Wolfe is saying all the right things to his children, said Jennifer Kuhlman, a family program coordinator for the 148th. Kuhlman was hired a year ago specifically to help families through the Air **National Guard** wing's largest deployment.

"I believe you have to be honest with children," said Kuhlman, an early-childhood education expert. "Be honest with your emotions and don't lie. Tell them you're going to a dangerous place, but that there are people there working hard to keep you safe."

Don't put added pressure on children, she said. For example, don't tell a son, "You're the man of the house now." Children have a tough enough time being children with schoolwork, peer pressure and other fears.

"It's tough on everyone," she said.

To help, the 148th sponsored two family briefings this month with counselors, financial experts, the Red Cross and family support professionals from around the state. About 450 people attended.

"It was way more than I ever expected," Kuhlman said.

Calling trees were established so every family of an activated member receives a phone call within two weeks. They'll be reminded the 148th's Family Support Network is available to answer questions or to help with problems ranging from a broken lawn mower to depression.

Every child received a soft, cuddly guardian bear at the briefings. The stuffed animals were dressed in camouflage with a space on the back for Mom or Dad to scrawl a personal note.

"I hope all the kids getting the bears see them as a way to connect with Mom or Dad while they're gone," Kuhlman said.

"We're a family," said the 148th's Capt. Chris Cloutier. "We deploy as a family. The folks left behind continue on as a family."

Master Sgt. Jim Juntti said he didn't know for sure what to expect when he told his wife, a social worker with St. Louis County, where the wing was headed.

"She's OK with it," said Juntti, a crew chief in charge of making sure an assigned jet is ready to fly.

"This is a serious, serious thing," he said. "Not to belittle all the other missions we've done before, but this one is on a different level. In the past we just packed up our tool boxes and headed out."

Guard Program Aimed At Employers' Support

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Associated Press

25 April 2005

BANGOR — The soft-spoken Capt. Phillip Trevino has a calm delivery, but his even voice cracks as he describes the courageous soldiers with whom he shared a year at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. Trevino's presentation is part of a Maine Committee for Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve program. Headquartered at Camp Keyes in Augusta, the committee has one mission: Develop and maintain support from the public and employers for what soldiers are doing in their deployments.

Known as Bosslifts, the presentations give employers a chance to see the military lifestyle and learn exactly what reservists do when called to duty.

About 25 employers took off last week from Bangor International Airport aboard a Maine Air **National Guard** KC-135 for one such Bosslift.

Back at work a few days later, Rick Randall, operations manager for Pottle Transportation in Hermon, remembered vividly Trevino's account of a year in Iraq. He described the Bosslift as "the chance of a lifetime."

Randall's co-workers include a Navy Reserve safety officer, a reservist driver out of Massachusetts and a mechanic who was activated and served in Iraq. With 180 drivers trucking all over the United States, Randall was impressed with the military's ability to move men and material globally.

"It really was an eye-opener for me," said Bob Foster, whose company, R.H. Foster, employs 360 people. "The military is a whole different culture compared to the world I live in."

For Joyce Hedlund, president of Eastern Maine Community College, the opportunity served to enlighten employers in a tight labor market who may have asked, "How do you plug that hole in an organization?"

The question is paramount, considering Guard and reserve units make up nearly half the 142,000 troops in military theaters, and about 70 percent of the Maine Army **National Guard** has been deployed in recent years, some more than once.

John Simpson, chairman of the Maine Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, said reaching out to employers "has never been so important."

Ohio's First Lady Speaks at Family Readiness Conference

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4/19/05, DUBLIN, OH – No stranger to service members and their families, Ohio's First Lady, Mrs. Hope Taft, took time from her busy schedule to address attendees of the 2005 Family Readiness Conference at the Columbus Marriott Northwest, April 15.

The annual conference, running April 15 through the 17, is a time for Family Readiness Groups (FRG) from across the state to come together to refocus their energies, share in lessons learned over the previous year and to recognize particularly outstanding FRG members.

Moving to the lectern, Taft took the opportunity to speak to FRG members about her recently launched initiative: "On the Ohio Homefront."

Envisioned as a centralized repository, the web based portal (www.homefront.ohio.gov/Home.jsp) links members of Ohio's military community with local business, service and faith based organizations.

"The community wants to show their support of our troops and their families," said Taft, "and we have provided an easy interface for them."

Answering the call to duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism, units around Ohio have deployed at a rate not seen in many a year. Solidifying her reputation as a huge supporter of Ohio's military, Taft has been in attendance in, as Mrs. Debbie Wayt, wife of MG Gregory Wayt, Adjutant General of the State of Ohio, put it, "almost every send-off and home-coming" Wayt could remember.

Said Wayt, "Just recently I was with Mrs. Taft as she shook the hands of over 150 soldiers from the [Company A], 612th Engineer Battalion in St. Mary, Ohio. Her support of Ohio's service members and their families has been invaluable."

Wanting to do more, Taft was inspired to create the "On the Ohio Homefront" initiative in part, "...to share the deep appreciation the Governor and I feel for all that you do."

Recognizing the First Lady's support, members of the FRG gave her a special FRG quilt; only the second ever awarded. In addition, Wayt presented the First Lady with the "Minute-Man" statue honoring her commitment to Ohio's citizen-soldiers and their families.

Coming to her standing ovation inducing conclusion, Taft urged FRGs to join the over 80 organizations already partnered with the initiative, noting that one FRG was already listed on the web-site.

“Help,” she stressed, “will be just a click away.”

To visit On the Ohio Homefront, [click here](#).

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