



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

Indiana Guard Members Complete Infantry Training

National Guard Members Train for Summer Fire Season

BENEFITS

Military, Families Get State Help

New Federal Aid Is Not Enough, Veterans Say

Bill Would Allow Tax Checkoff to Aid Guardsmen, Reservists Taxpayer Gifts to Help Families

Plan Seeks Bonus Pay for National Guard

House Passes Bill To Guarantee Funds for Vets' Mental Care

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

Kindergarten Graduation Makes Dad's "R&R" Extra Special

HEALTH ISSUES

UNC Hospitals, VA Offer Free Dental Care to Returning Vets

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Equal in All Soldiers after a Time; Study: Wounded, Unharmed Same

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES

Guard to Name Auditorium after First Woman Soldier Killed in War

At Arlington, Families Feel Reality of Losses. Bush Addresses Mourners on Day of Remembrances

GENERAL

America Supports You: Indy Race Fans Rally Support for Military

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.af.mil.

Indiana Guard Members Complete Infantry Training

Indianapolis Star

31 May 2005

Kabul, Afghanistan -- For the second time in U.S. military history, soldiers have completed training for a secondary infantry job skill inside a combat zone.

The Indiana **National Guard's** 76th Infantry Brigade, part of Coalition Joint Task Force Phoenix, coordinated the training at Camp Phoenix just outside Kabul and at the Afghan National Army's Kabul Military Training Center.

At a graduation ceremony Saturday, two Indiana soldiers were honored for their success in the two-week training program completed by 35 troops, according to a release sent from Camp Phoenix. Sgt. Joe McFarren, 24, Keystone, was named the course's honor graduate, and Spc. Matt Estheiner, 23, New Albany, received the commandant's award for academic success during the course.

National Guard Members Train For Summer Fire Season

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Associated Press

27 May 2005

By Melanthia Mitchell

Associated Press Writer

FORT LEWIS, Wash. -- A small group of Washington **National Guard** members dug a fire line and learned to mix fire retardant foam on Thursday as they trained at this Army post south of Seattle for what many fear could be a long and difficult wildfire season.

The field activities were part of a five-day training this week, scheduled in response to Gov. Christine Gregoire's request this year that the **National Guard** be trained prior to being activated for deployment to a wildfire. Gregoire in March declared a drought emergency in the state.

It's the first time the state Guard will certify 15 Army and Air **National Guard** members for wildland firefighting so they can then train roughly 100 more of their peers in basic firefighting skills.

"When and if we do get the call to get mobilized for a forest fire or a wildland fire, then we're already ahead of the ball," said Lt. Jefferson Mason, a coordinator with the **National Guard's** Joint Operations Center at Camp Murray, which oversees emergency

deployments of the Army and Air **National Guard**.

Mason said the course costs about \$9,000. It's taught by two contracted firefighting instructors and includes training support from the state Department of Natural Resources.

If additional soldiers are needed on the fire lines this year, **National Guard** officials have identified two, 250-member crews to be trained by DNR, likely at the Yakima Training Center in Eastern Washington.

In the past, basic firefighting skills have been taught by Natural Resources' employees or contractors. But it's usually done in response to a fire - rather than before one - and has required pulling vital human resources from the fire lines, said Joel Rogauskas, Natural Resources' interagency fire training program manager in Olympia.

When responding to wildfires, DNR normally relies first on its own employees, seasonal firefighters and contract crews, as well as inmates from the Corrections Department.

The **National Guard** is brought in only as a last resort, and in the past has normally served only the support role of preparing camps and transporting firefighters.

Thursday's training is what traditional wildland firefighters would receive, Rogauskas said. It included digging fire lines and learning to use hand tools such as shovels and pulaskies - hybrid versions of a shovel and a hoe. Soldiers were also trained to use basic firing devices "to fight fire with fire," he said, most commonly a drip torch and fusees, which look like a standard road flare.

This week's training gives the soldiers the necessary background to then train their peers for Level 1 support: setting up base camps; transporting supplies and personnel to fire lines; and communications.

After watching instructor Larry Scott demonstrate how to use a fusee to backburn a small patch of dry grass, soldiers trekked a few yards down a gravel road to begin digging a fire line among the towering pine trees and thick overgrowth of scotch broom.

"Bump! When I say 'Bump!', that means you move up," shouts Mike Gouette, who has 40-plus years of firefighting experience and is a retired fire management officer with the U.S. Forest Service. Like Scott, he's now a contractor with Incident Management Services and Training in Edmonds. "Loud! You gotta be loud, gotta be heard over the fire folks!"

Soldiers hacked and shoveled an 8-inch swath through the undergrowth, snaking their way through brush, cutting back foliage and unearthing the dark, moist soil beneath to deprive an oncoming fire of any fuel resources. Reminding them to stay equal distances - about 10 feet apart - Gouette bellows, "It looks like kind of an articulated centipede when we get going."

Sgt. Tiffanie Eilers, a heavy equipment operator with the 254th RED HORSE Squadron, volunteered for the course for the experience.

"It's something that a lot of people don't take the time to think about. Then in a time of need, where do you get your people from? When I was given the opportunity to be a part of this I jumped at it," said Eilers, 27, of Orting.

Wearing green camouflage fatigues, black leather boots, a yellow hard hat and a pair of

pearl earrings, the married mother of two was the only woman among the 15 soldiers trained. Like the others, she recognizes the danger that comes with the task, but said it's just part of the job.

"There's definitely some adrenaline involved, but I think in any goodhearted, good-natured person, what really drives you is to help and make a difference," she said.

BENEFITS

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Military, Families Get State Help

Miami Herald

May 25, 2005

TALLAHASSEE (AP) -- **National Guardsmen** and military reservists will have access to grants to help bridge the gap between their civilian and military pay, more veterans' widows will get a tax break and military personnel will get cheaper hunting and fishing licenses under bills signed into law Tuesday by Gov. Jeb Bush.

In the week leading up to Memorial Day, Bush planned to sign these and other measures to ease the burden of military personnel and their families.

One measure, sponsored by Sen. Steve Geller, D-Hallandale Beach, and Rep. Jack Seiler, D-Pompano Beach, will create a matching grant program to blunt the impact of pay cuts taken by reservists and guardsmen called to active duty.

Bush also said he intended to sign a bill that would create another grant program to give need-based emergency help to families of active-duty service members.

If a family back home in Florida were to experience an emergency need for money -- such as expensive car repairs -- it could apply for help. The state would set aside \$5 million for the program under that measure, which was sponsored by Rep. Joe Negron, R-Stuart.

"Families have enough uncertainty in their lives when a spouse has to go and serve," Bush said.

Bush also signed a bill that will give a deep discount on a combined hunting and fishing license to active or retired military, **National Guard** or reserve personnel -- \$18.50 instead of \$82.

Another bill would extend to the wives of partially disabled veterans who die the same \$5,000 homestead property tax exemption that is given to the widows of totally and permanently disabled veterans.

Other bills Bush signed would:

- Protect military families who cancel their car insurance when called out of state or

overseas from having to pay reinstatement fees when they come back.

- Exempt vintage military vehicles from certain new requirements for parades and other displays.
- Let nonprofit organizations contract to install military monuments or memorials at rest areas along the state's highways.

New Federal Aid Is Not Enough, Veterans Say

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

Des Moines Register

31 May 2005

By Jane Norman

As the Memorial Day holiday brings increased focus on the nation's veterans, here's an update on federal money for their health care and benefits.

Veterans' health care would receive a 2 percent boost in money during the upcoming budget year under legislation approved by the U.S. House on Thursday.

The House passed an appropriations bill that would provide \$28.2 billion for veterans' health care, according to the Associated Press. However, veterans' groups have been saying for months that is not enough to cope with rising numbers of veterans in the system and increasing health care costs.

Republican appropriators said the bill also, for the first time, includes \$2.2 billion specifically aimed at specialty mental health care and a doubling of money for mental health research.

Veterans' benefits were increased by \$1.5 billion over the current budget year, a result of expanded benefits for members of the **National Guard** and Reserves.

The House legislation requires a study on post-traumatic stress disorder, which is experienced by some returning members of the service.

The House voted down 214-213 an amendment that would have taken money used for the military base-closing process and dedicated it to benefits for families of troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan and veterans' health care.

The bill still must be approved by the Senate and signed into law by the president.

Bill Would Allow Tax Checkoff To Aid Guardsmen, Reservists Taxpayer Gifts To Help Families

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Boston Globe

May 26, 2005

By Janette Neuwahl Globe Correspondent

Massachusetts residents would be able to donate money when they fill out their tax returns to families with loved ones serving in Afghanistan or Iraq, under a new bill approved by a legislative committee yesterday.

If approved by the full Legislature, the bill would add a checkoff box to state tax forms asking residents whether they want to contribute to the Massachusetts Military Family Relief Fund, which would help support the families of men and women in the Massachusetts **National Guard** or Reserves who are serving, or have served, in the war on terrorism.

Senator Pamela P. Resor, the lead sponsor of the legislation, joined four other lawmakers at the State House in announcing that the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs had approved it and two related bills yesterday morning.

"By the next year's tax time, we hope every one of the citizens of the Commonwealth can express their support for those serving us now," said Resor, an Acton Democrat.

Lawmakers backing the bill say the money would help families who often struggle financially when loved ones take leaves of absences from their often higher-paying civilian jobs to serve on the front lines.

"This fund enables [us] to help with some of the costs, particularly the extraordinary costs like a high utility bill, day care in a situation where one parent is ill, and things that are unexpected," Resor said.

About 800 Massachusetts **National Guardsmen** serve overseas in the war on terrorism, said Major Winfield Danielson, a Guard spokesman. About 1,700 Reservists from the state are on active duty, according to Resor's office.

A spokesman for Governor Mitt Romney said yesterday that the governor would seek the opinion of Thomas G. Kelley, state veterans' services secretary, before commenting on the legislation.

"A lot of people are making a lot of sacrifices on behalf of all of us, and I am very supportive of any measure that will help veterans and their families," Kelley said yesterday.

Former **National Guardsman** Nicholas Paganella said at the press conference yesterday that the addition to tax forms would give taxpayers a chance to support those in uniform.

"A checkoff for the state veterans doesn't cost the Commonwealth anything, but it gives the average citizen the opportunity to do something," said Paganella, 71, who served in the Korean War. "Many young people in the lower ranks don't make a lot of money, and consequently they still have to pay their bills at home, . . . so there's a lot of hidden

expenses that don't come to mind."

Senator Stephen M. Brewer, cochairman of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, laid out two other bills yesterday that the committee had approved.

One would give bonuses of \$750 to \$1,000 to Massachusetts residents who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The other would award scholarships to children, siblings, and spouses of servicemen and women killed or severely disabled while on duty.

"You can't turn on the television or open up a newspaper without hearing about the hardships that families are going through who have relatives fighting overseas," said Senator Karen Spilka, an Ashland Democrat and cosponsor of the tax-return bill. "These bills clearly show that the Legislature recognizes their efforts."

The two other sponsors of the tax-form bill are Representative Matthew C. Patrick, a Falmouth Democrat, and Senator Dianne Wilkerson, a Democrat from Roxbury.

The three bills will be scrutinized by the Senate Ways and Means Committee before being sent to the full Senate.

By adding the checkoff box to the state's income tax forms, Resor said, Massachusetts would join a few other states in asking for contributions for the families of servicemen and women. In Illinois, a similar measure has raised \$3 million over the past three years for 5,000 families, Resor said. South Carolina, Maine, and California have also added a checkoff box on tax forms.

The committee's passage of the three bills came one day after Romney introduced his own bill that would provide a \$25-per-day pay increase for those serving in the Guard. Romney's legislation would also, among other things, exempt those serving in the Guard from paying any fees when they attend state colleges.

Aides to the legislative committee said yesterday that the panel expects to devise its own comprehensive veterans' bill by next week.

Plan Seeks Bonus Pay For National Guard

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

Sentinel & Enterprise (Fitchburg, Massachusetts)

May 26, 2005

By: Julie Mehegan Sentinel & Enterprise Statehouse Bureau

BOSTON - Thousands of Massachusetts men and women now serving in the **National Guard** would be eligible for bonus pay and cash assistance if proposals endorsed by a legislative panel Wednesday are approved.

Guardsmen would also get a bump in salary and would be eligible for free education at state colleges and universities, if a measure proposed by Gov. Mitt Romney earlier this week wins the support of lawmakers.

As Memorial Day observances begin, officials on Beacon Hill are publicizing the need to improve pay and benefits for those who volunteers to serve in the **National Guard**, particularly those called to active duty since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Nearly 10,000 members of the Massachusetts **National Guard** have been mobilized in the four years since the attacks, more than at any other time since World War II.

There are currently about 800 Massachusetts **National Guard** members serving overseas, according to a spokesman.

"This is only the beginning of what we are going to do for our veterans. They 're doing it all for us," said Rep. Anthony Verga, D-Gloucester, co-chairman of the newly-established Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs. "We will not turn our back."

The committee yesterday recommended passage of three bills, including a measure sponsored by Sen. Pamela Resor, D-Acton, that would create a new Military Family Relief Fund to help military families pay their bills. The fund would be financed through a voluntary check-off on Massachusetts tax returns and through private contributions.

"These individuals put their lives on hold to serve our country. They miss moments with their family. They miss opportunities to watch their children grow, " said Resor.

"This mission often takes both an emotional and financial toll on these families."

Many **National Guard** reservists leave well-paying jobs to serve, Resor and other supporters noted, leaving their families struggling to make ends meet. The fund would serve as an emergency resource for those families. The other bills recommended for passage would provide a one-time bonus payment of \$1,000 to any veteran who has served in Iraq or Afghanistan; and make the children, siblings, or widowed spouses of those killed or disabled in the line of duty in Iraq or Afghanistan eligible for full scholarships at public colleges and universities.

Meanwhile, Romney has proposed a bill that would waive the fees for any member of the **National Guard** at state colleges and universities. Guard members already attend those schools tuition-free, but the administration estimates fees make up 75 percent of the cost to go to school.

Romney has also proposed increasing per diem payments to Guard members from \$75 to \$100, wants the state to pay a Guard member's life insurance premiums when the soldier is sent overseas, and has proposed increasing the state death benefit for a Guard member who dies in the line of duty from \$5,000 to \$100,000.

Sen. Stephen Brewer, co-chairman of the Veterans Committee, said Romney's proposals will be fully reviewed, but he suggested the Legislature will use them as a "starting point" to achieve similar goals. Brewer was miffed at comments made by Romney on Tuesday, when he suggested the Legislature wasn't paying close attention when it rejected a Republican-sponsored budget amendment calling for the life insurance and death benefit changes.

Brewer said the Senate had made a commitment not to address policy matters in the state budget, and will consider those proposals separately.

House Passes Bill To Guarantee Funds For Vets' Mental Care

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Philadelphia Inquirer

May 27, 2005

By Richard Cowan, Reuters

WASHINGTON - Mental-health care for U.S. troops returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan would receive guaranteed funding under legislation approved yesterday by the House.

The initiative, which the Senate must also approve, would require that the Department of Veterans Affairs spend \$2.2 billion on mental-health care in fiscal year 2006, which begins Oct. 1. It would be the first time Congress mandated a spending level for such care. The initiative also would double spending on mental-health research.

The measure is part of an \$85 billion spending bill for veterans programs and military construction.

"The odds are if you are in five firefights, you will have a 20 percent chance of developing post-traumatic stress disorder," Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D., Ohio) said. Untreated problems such as post-traumatic stress have led to high levels of drug and alcohol abuse by veterans and to homelessness, Kaptur said.

Homelessness affects about 500,000 veterans every year, often because of an untreated disorder, said Linda Boone, executive director of the National Center for Homeless Veterans.

Members of Congress and veterans group have worried that as troops return from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, the problem might worsen if veterans' facilities have too little money and expertise to deal with mental disorders.

About 139,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Iraq and 19,000 in Afghanistan.

Boone said veterans hospitals were seeing a 20 percent increase in people seeking help for mental health.

A provision that Kaptur inserted into the spending bill would also lead to hiring more psychiatric nurses at veterans hospitals. That, she said, will result in better, quicker diagnosis of psychological problems in returning combat troops.

Lawmakers and veterans groups welcomed the added attention to combat-related psychological problems, but Democrats said overall funding for veterans' health care was still too little.

The bill would provide about \$1 billion more than President Bush sought for veterans' programs and military construction, and \$6 billion more than in fiscal 2005. It also rejects fee increases Bush proposed for some veterans seeking health care.

During House debate, Rep. David R. Obey of Wisconsin, senior Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said the spending bill for veterans failed to keep up with inflation.

Republicans countered that funding for veterans' health care had risen over the last five years. The Republican-controlled House defeated a move by Obey to raise funding for health care by an additional \$2.6 billion in fiscal 2006 and to pay for that by shaving tax cuts for wealthy Americans.

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Kindergarten Graduation Makes Dad's 'R&R' Extra Special

CITIZEN-TIMES.com

May 25, 2005

By Lindsay Nash

SWANNANOVA — Spec. Brent Hildabrand may have missed his 5-year-old daughter's nervousness on her first day of kindergarten, and her singing in her class' Christmas program.

But he was there Tuesday night for her proud waves on stage as she graduated from her first year in school. To Hannah, it was the best kindergarten graduation gift she could have gotten.

"It's good to have Daddy here," she said with a shy smile and a glance at her father at the Asheville Christian Academy graduation ceremony.

It's been a long year for Hannah, whose father was called to service in August and left for Iraq in October. After some struggling in school, everything started to finally "click," her mother Amanda Hildabrand said.

"She knew her Daddy was going to come home and she could read to him, so she pulled through it," she said.

While the soldier isn't home for long, he is home long enough to hear Hannah read and watch her teach her younger brother Jacob to write his name.

"We're just trying to fit everything in during these two weeks," said Brent Hildabrand, who is serving with the Asheville-based N.C. **National Guard** 105th Military Police Battalion in Iraq.

Hildabrand is home for his two-week "R&R," as the military calls it. And for the past week and a half, he's been spending it with his family.

For the Hildabrand family, everything feels like normal again. Brent Hildabrand wakes up every morning with his wife and takes his children to school and picks them up. He bathes the youngsters and reads them stories at night.

"It was over 100 degrees when I left Iraq," Brent Hildabrand said. "It's very different

here, but it's like riding a bike. I fell right back into it."

Brent Hildabrand, who worked as a deputy with the McDowell County Sheriff's Department before leaving for Iraq, signed up with the **National Guard** three years ago. He had served in the Navy in the 1980s and 1990s and knew the retirement benefits of joining would be good for his family.

But in August, his unit was called up to serve in Iraq, where it guards detainees or prisoners of war at Camp Bucca in Umm Qasr, near the Kuwait border.

It had been seven months since he'd seen his family, and he can see the changes that have taken place.

"The kids have grown," he said. "They are even talking better and losing some of that baby fat."

And his wife, Amanda, a former family nurse, quit her job to become a stay-at-home mom while he has been away.

But over the past week, the family has re-connected, making up for lost time.

Brent and Amanda have even gotten time for themselves, while the grandparents watched their children. They enjoyed dinner at Brent's favorite restaurant, Outback Steakhouse, and even went to test drive a new vehicle, a Jeep Liberty.

But their favorite moment was sitting at Lake Tomahawk, in Black Mountain, watching the ducks waddle and waiting for the fish to bite. It was three generations — Brent's father, Brent and his two children.

"I'll think of that moment often when I go back," the soldier said.

But as for Tuesday night, when Hannah sat proudly on stage and sang, "This is the Day that the Lord Has Made," Hildabrand couldn't have agreed more.

"It's better than I could I have expected," he said.

HEALTH ISSUES

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

UNC Hospitals, VA Offer Free Dental Care To Returning Vets

NBC 17

24 May 2005

DURHAM, N.C. -- **National Guard** veterans returning from service in Iraq or Afghanistan will be eligible for free dental services -- if they sign up promptly -- under a new program being run by the Department of Veterans Affairs and UNC Hospitals.

The program, to be formally announced Tuesday, will give soldiers access to initial examinations, X-rays, teeth cleanings and formulation of treatment plans for restorative and prosthetic needs. They would be referred back to their VA medical centers for more complicated work.

National Guard members must enroll for the two-year benefit within 90 days of their discharge from military service, said Pam Howell, spokeswoman for the Durham-based Mid-Atlantic regional office of the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN 6).

"We're promoting this as much as possible to soldiers deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan because sometimes when they come home they're too busy just returning to home life to make this a priority. But then a few years later they might wish they'd taken advantage of it," she said.

The program, touted by the VA as the first of its kind in the nation, will be run under a \$355,000 contract with UNC Hospitals.

VISN 6 serves some 1.4 million veterans in North Carolina, Virginia and portions of West Virginia and South Carolina. It has 10,000 employees among eight VA hospitals -- four in North Carolina, three in Virginia and one in Beckley, W.Va. -- as well as several nursing homes, a housing facility, outpatient clinics, counseling centers and several other programs and facilities.

The 52-year-old, 174-bed Durham VA Medical Center has a rotation of dental residents from the University of North Carolina that includes residents in general dentistry, oral surgery and endodontics.

VISN 6 has a longstanding relationship with UNC, Duke University, N.C. Central University, Durham Tech and the Watts School of Nursing, with students from the schools training at the region's facilities or taking classes from doctors in the system.

Alan Shernoff, the Durham VA's chief of dental service and the retired commander of the Army reserve medical detachment in Durham, spearheaded the contract with UNC after discussing the likely growth of the workload for the region's doctors at a meeting in January.

Shernoff said about 60 returning soldiers have applied for dental services, most in Fayetteville, during the past two months. They'll be among those leading the way into the new program, he said.

"The military is relying so heavily on **National Guard** and reservists," he said. "For example, there's a unit -- the Clinton **National Guard** -- well over 3,000 of them were activated. ...

"Those soldiers, when they come back, will fall pretty much under Fayetteville, Durham and Salisbury for VA services. They're calling them up on short notice to go to Iraq and Afghanistan when they never expected to be deployed. So when they get back I think we'll have something they'll very much want with this program."

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Equal In All Soldiers After A Time; Study: Wounded, Unharmed Same

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

USA Today
May 26, 2005

By Marilyn Elias, USA Today

ATLANTA — Soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan are no more likely than uninjured soldiers to have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) a few months after leaving the battlefield, suggests a study released Wednesday, the first on injured soldiers' mental health.

“It was surprising to us. It's a ‘good news’ story,” says psychiatrist Thomas Grieger of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Md. He reported on 613 soldiers admitted to Walter Reed Army Medical Center at the American Psychiatric Association meeting here.

The PTSD symptom tests, which were given a month after soldiers were wounded, did not identify about four out of five who later developed the disorder. On the other hand, about half with symptoms soon after injury recovered in a couple of months, the study shows. The percentage of injured soldiers with the disorder after six months was about the same as was reported last year for all combat troops.

That does not mean it's the final rate, says psychologist Christopher Frueh, director of the PTSD clinic at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Charleston, S.C. “It could rise later as more try to work. We just don't know.”

The symptoms checklist misclassifies 10% to 20% “either way,” he adds. A standardized interview with a mental health professional “is the gold standard” to determine the real rate, Frueh says. The low rates of post-traumatic stress a month after injury might be because soldiers do not yet realize the seriousness of their injuries, Grieger says. They also received intensive mental health treatment at Walter Reed, he says.

The rates could go up later, when “they may have a wife driving them around because they don't have a car that accommodates their amputation, or their pain hasn't receded like they thought it would,” Grieger says.

The Army is rolling out a program of mental health screenings for all deployed soldiers, Grieger says. Not everyone says it's a good idea. “This is valuable research, but there's no evidence that screening improves the outcome for soldiers,” says psychiatrist Simon Wessely, director of King's Center for Military Health Research at King's College in London.

Wessely says many recover with no treatment, and others feel unfairly labeled. Also, fear of stigma keeps many combat soldiers from seeking help. “Our first priority should be that everyone who actually wants help gets the best.”

Says Frueh: “Many of our (VA) mental health clinics are swamped, though not many from Iraq have come in yet.” Community vets' centers also offer counseling. Says Grieger: “We can encourage them to get help, but we can't force them.”

Wounds that don't stop bleeding

Percentage of wounded soldiers with PTSD or depression at:

Initial evaluation – PTSD: 4.2%, Depression: 4.4%

Three months – PTSD: 12.2%, Depression: 8.9%

Six months – PTSD: 12%, Depression: 9.3%

Sources: Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Dept. of Psychiatry; Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Guard To Name Auditorium After First Woman Soldier Killed In War

The Associated Press

May 23, 2005

The Wisconsin Army **National Guard** has commissioned a bronze sculpture in honor of the Guard's first woman soldier killed in war and will name a military auditorium after her in a Memorial Day ceremony.

The event also will dedicate a permanent tribute to nearly 40 Wisconsin soldiers and Marines who have died since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"I expect it to be an emotional event, but I also hope it is uplifting," Lt. Col. Tim Donovan said Monday.

The memorial would expand to include any others killed, he said.

The Guard's Michelle Witmer, 20, was killed April 9, 2004, in an ambush in Iraq while serving in 32nd Military Police Company. She was the first woman soldier killed in action in the 368-year history of the **National Guard** in America and the first Wisconsin Guard member killed in action since World War II, Donovan said.

A life-size bronze bust of a smiling Witmer in a desert camouflaged uniform and black beret will be unveiled in the lobby of the Guard's headquarters, where the auditorium's name will change to Witmer Hall, Donovan said.

The families of the 38 soldiers and Marines from Wisconsin killed during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and in Afghanistan and Iraq were invited to the Monday morning ceremony, which also will feature Gov. Jim Doyle and other dignitaries, he said.

Plaques with the name of each will be placed outside the entrance to Witmer Hall, Donovan said. It's the first memorial in Wisconsin honoring the memory of fighting men and women who have given their lives for their country since Sept. 11, he said.

The list includes 36 soldiers and Marines killed in Iraq, one soldier killed in Afghanistan

and one killed when the plane hijacked by terrorists crashed into the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

According to Donovan, one of the 36 soldiers killed in Iraq was assigned to the Oregon **National Guard** but grew up in Wisconsin and his parents still live here. "There was more Wisconsin in him than Oregon," Donovan said about including Spc. Justin Linden in the tribute.

"Memorial Day is about remembering, and we are creating in Madison a place where these 38 heroes from Wisconsin will be remembered, and they will be remembered by everybody in our building every day as we walk past Witmer Hall and see these plaques and pray there is never a 39th," he said.

As of Monday, at least 1,634 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count.

At Arlington, Families Feel Reality of Losses. Bush Addresses Mourners on Day Of Remembrances

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

Washington Post

May 31, 2005

By Michael Laris

For families mourning amid the white stone grave markers and the tiny American flags at Arlington National Cemetery yesterday, loss was measured in quiet moments and small, aching gestures.

"That's him," said Sally Soltes, pointing to a button pinned to her stroller. Her husband, Army Maj. Charles Robert Soltes Jr., was killed in Iraq in October, and his photo rested above the head of their 6-month-old son, Robert Harrison.

"We have a firsthand experience of what President Bush was talking about. Before, when people say you must fight for freedom, it's more of a cliché. In this time, right now, it's a reality," Soltes said. "This little guy was born two months after my husband was killed. He never got to meet his dad."

Bush had entered the grand stone amphitheater on the hill at Arlington shortly after placing a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns. Soltes came from California with her three children.

"As we look across these acres, we begin to tally the cost of our freedom, and we count it a privilege to be citizens of the country served by so many brave men and women," Bush said.

Yesterday, Melissa Givens was focused on an earlier set of official statements. President Bush on May 1, 2003, declared an end to "major combat operations" in Iraq, prompting celebration.

"I was watching it on TV, and I look out and there are two guys standing at the door. My

thought was, 'They said this war was over. . . . But they're here telling me my husband's not coming home,' " Givens said. Her husband, Jesse, who drowned in a tank crash in Iraq, had asked to be buried at Arlington. She cried yesterday with the guilt of not doing so. Part of his ashes are in a vault in Springfield, Mo., near his mother.

"The rest of him is in our living room, so he can always look out at us. He's on the closet. He wanted to be here. At the time, I was pregnant and couldn't travel and went with what I could," she said.

Kenneth and Joyce Wentz thought of their son's birthdays.

"He joined the **National Guard** to go to college. He turned 21 on the airplane flying to Iraq," Joyce Wentz said of her son, Cody Lee. The other troops from Williston, N.D., came home on Cody's 22nd birthday, his father said.

Cody wanted to play football and would lift weights during downtime. He could bench press nearly 500 pounds, his father said. He had signed up to build things, not search out bombs, his mother said.

"My son was a homebody, so sending him over to Iraq was way more than he could handle. I don't think they looked at that. They just needed soldiers," Joyce Wentz said. "He said, 'Mom, if you expect any of us home, don't, because we don't know what we're doing.' "

Cody, riding gunner, was killed instantly on a mission. His parents looked in his coffin. "He was wrapped with gauze on his face. We couldn't see him," Joyce Wentz said.

"He was an angel," his father said.

Bush was praised yesterday by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, who said just as President Lincoln saw "the smoke of the cannons rising from the Battle of Bull Run," Bush "could see smoke rising from a different kind of battlefield -- the Pentagon in flames" and has "offered the hope of a new birth of freedom."

For the loved ones of those killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, "today is a day of last letters and fresh tears," said Bush, who read from the final correspondence of several soldiers. Because of their courage, Bush said, "two terror regimes are gone forever."

Cameron Cozzens, 36, of Stafford, an Army officer who attended the ceremony with his wife and three children, is due to leave for Iraq in July.

"Part of me wants to go, because I feel that's where I should be," he said. "The other half -- you're always a little anxious. You don't like to leave your family."

America Supports You: Indy Race Fans Rally Support for Military

American Forces Press Service

May 30, 2005

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, USA

INDIANAPOLIS,— If there are two things that can be said about Indiana, it is that here in Hoosier country they love Indy racing and the military.

Thousands of race fans hold up signs that read "America Supports You" as servicemembers parade by the grandstand at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway May 29. 'Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, USA (Click photo for screen-resolution image);high-resolution image available.

When the Indianapolis 500 -- billed as the "Greatest Spectacle in Sports" -- came to town May 29, more than 300,000 here showed their affection for the troops.

As a flow of red convertibles and red, white and blue pickup trucks carrying Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom war veterans in parade fashion passed before the grand stand, followed by a mixed company of servicemembers from several Indiana **National Guard** units, a loud cheer erupted.

In a surprise to those in uniform, the huge crowd held up signs with words that said it all: "America Supports You."

America Supports You is a Defense Department campaign that recognizes community and individual support for the military.

"I can't tell you how important it is for the American people to say 'thank you' every now and then to the folks who work so hard to protect our freedom," said Air Force Gen. Gregory S. Martin, commander of Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. "To see so many people come to their feet, it makes us leaders so proud of what they -- the young troops -- are doing in representing all of America, and for America to say 'thank you' is so heartwarming.

"So Indiana has very special place in my heart," he added. "This is the greatest state that we (the military) could ever ask for."

Army Spc. Jeremy Corne, 24, a **National Guardsman** from Terre Haute, Ind., who was with the 3rd Infantry Division during the initial assault towards Baghdad, Iraq, said the show of support "lets me know that I'm serving a just cause."

"It makes me feel full of pride and respect for my country. This is very overwhelming; it gives me a good feeling," he said.

Said Jerry LaFountain of Canaan, Ind., who snuck into a "no access" area to get closer for a photo of his son, Army Staff Sgt. Jeremy LaFountain, of the Indiana **National Guard**

color guard team, "Our kids are giving their lives to keep us safe, and we ought to do anything we can to help them, support them, and show them that we are proud of them."

The pre-race ceremony featured a quartet representing the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, which joined in singing the National Anthem as a color guard from the Indiana **National Guard** presented the colors. Overhead a B-2 Spirit stealth bomber from Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo. appeared almost without notice.

There were more cheers for former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State retired Gen. Colin Powell. Powell told the race audience they owe their freedom to America's military.

"From Afghanistan to Iraq, at Camp Victory, Baghdad, and all around the world, these men and women are serving so that we can be free, so that the world with each passing day can be freer," he said, before asking the crowd to recognize the families of servicemembers who died for the cause of freedom in Iraq.

The audience replied with a standing ovation. It was a show of emotion that was felt deeply by families like that of Stephen Downing Sr. of Monrovia, Ind., whose son, Army Pfc. Stephen Paul Downing II, was killed in Ramadi, Iraq, Oct. 28, 2004.

Downing; his daughter, Danica; and his son's children, Hunter, 6, and Taylor, 9; and a niece, Chelsea, 11, were given special invitations for the race, as were several other injured servicemembers and families who lost loved ones in the war. The tickets were courtesy of the Hulman-George family, known here as the "first family of the Indy 500."

"I'm glad the country has started to recognize our soldiers, unlike when I was in Vietnam," Downing said. "It was a whole different story. Now it seems like the city, state and the Indianapolis speedway, they all recognize soldiers for what they are doing. It gives you a great feeling."

Added Danica, who lost her only sibling: "Everyone needs to stand up and recognize our soldiers and have something positive to say."

Which is what Air Force Col. Stewart Goodwin, assistant adjutant general for the Indiana Air **National Guard**, wishes had happened when he returned from Vietnam.

"You would have never seen this during the Vietnam War," Goodwin said of the goodwill towards the military shown today. "All you saw on the evening news was people protesting against the war. I wore the uniform back when people would spit on me as a lieutenant."

However, he added, programs like America Supports You are changing all that. He said the program is helping to let servicemembers know just how much they are appreciated. "Now you go to the grocery store and people are hugging you," he explained.

Others here like Steve Greenwalt, of nearby Lafayette, who brought along a photo of his son, Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Alan Greenwalt, agrees. He said people today are more patriotic than ever.

"During the Vietnam War, the soldiers, sailors, Marines, they didn't get that much respect," he said. "But people are more patriotic now, and they support our troops to the fullest."

Still, today's salute during the 89th running of the Indy 500 is about more than America's support for the military, it is also about remembrance of those who gave their lives for freedom in past wars.

Leaning on a fence at the fabled brickyard, Army Maj. Gen. Marty Umbarger, adjutant general for the Indiana **National Guard**, stared out at the young men and women standing in formation on the track. He said this show of support by America meant "everything" to those in uniform.

"To know you're supported by the homeland, you just can't put a price on that," he said. "It's wonderful day to thank them for their service and their contribution. But one thing we should always remember, this is also about Memorial Day, and today is for those that have given their lives. We must never forget them."

End

[Back to Table of Contents](#)