



NEWS YOU CAN USE

Weekly News for National Guard Families

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Websites:

National Guard Family Program Online Communities for families and youth:

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<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.

Air Guard Medics Come To Utah For A Primer In Combat Trauma

Deseret Morning News

June 02, 2005

By Natalie Andrews

Deseret Morning News

Mannequins, Crayola dye and chicken legs came together for homeland security Tuesday. In army boots and camouflage, medical professionals from the Air **National Guard** are improving their first-response training at a trauma conference this week.

"Our focus is to teach the members of the Air **National Guard** skills that will help them in combat," said Karen Mickelson, University of Utah Hospital trauma educator.

Representatives from the 89 Air Guard units in the nation are refreshing their trauma skills, hoping to become medics that are ready to provide assistance anytime, anywhere, whether that means on the sand of Iraq or at an accident in the United States.

Conference attendees, medical professionals in their civilian jobs, learned to respond to trauma with minimum equipment. Instead of depending on an ultrasound to test for stomach infection, they used an older, more accessible version of the same test. They practiced on human patient simulators —robots that have balloons for lungs, dye for blood and realistic skin that conference attendees cut and stitched up, using razor blades for scalpels.

"I'll be better prepared in my private practice and as a flight surgeon," said Dr. Bob Gentry of Oregon after sticking a needle into a chicken drumstick. The tool he used simulated giving a child medication through the bone marrow when the child is too small to use a vein. Gentry is a family doctor; others that attended were EMTs, allergists, physicians assistants, surgeons and physicians from all walks of life.

Doctors and nurses from the U. Hospital and LDS Hospital are teaching classes on shock, burn care and trauma issues to 600 Air Guardsmen and women. Six instructors from Harvard will also teach classes. At the end of the week, after learning different aspects of trauma treatment, expert Susan Briggs will teach conference attendees how to integrate everything to successfully organize a trauma situation.

Raymond Price, the Utah chairman for the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma, has seen the training save lives around the world. He said he is excited to help the Air Guard implement it in their training and reminded the conference attendees that they never know when they will use it. He used his own experience when he was in New York on a routine business trip to teach a trauma class Sept. 11, 2001. Instead, he spend the day at Ground Zero.

"This really saves lives," Price said. The Utah committee teaches six classes a year and was chosen by the Air Guard for its experience in development.

In an accident, there are three types of injuries, two not survivable. But there are those with trauma-related injuries who would die within the day but can be saved if treated within the first "golden hours" of the accident. Examples of this are a ruptured spleen, a collapsed lung or heavy bleeding.

"We're doing very well in this war, and we want to keep doing well in this war," Col. Randall Falk said. For those deployed and caught in trauma situations, they have a 90 percent chance of survival treated in that golden hour. Falk believes that the more civilians who are trained, the more safe the nation and soldiers overseas are.

Military Responders Geared Up for Active Hurricane Season

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Armed Forces Press Service

June 3, 2005

By Donna Miles

WASHINGTON, June 2, 2005 – With forecasters predicting an active hurricane season this year, military responders are geared up for whatever Mother Nature whirls their way.

Hurricane season officially kicked off June 1, and meteorologists expect the decade-long trend toward active hurricane seasons in the Atlantic to continue this summer. The National Weather Service in Miami predicts seven to nine hurricanes in the Atlantic basin, with three to five of them becoming major hurricanes before the season ends in November.

"Hurricane Hunters" from the Air Force Reserve's 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., are unfettered by the prediction. "We're always prepared, and we're always ready," said Air Force Lt. Col. Mike Odom, their public affairs officer.

The squadron had an exceptionally heavy workload last year, flying 105 missions in support of the National Weather Service. Its crews tracked five major hurricanes during the 2004 season, tracked a record eight tropical storms during August alone, and flew 11- and 12-hour missions for 26 straight days during September, Odom said. "That's unprecedented," he said.

This year, squadron members got an early jump on hurricane season, tracking Hurricane Adrian in the Pacific in mid-May.

The National Weather Service called on the Hurricane Hunters to get a fix on the tropical storm's location as it built off the coast of Central America and threatened El Salvador. During the first leg of the squadron's May 19 reconnaissance mission, Adrian was upgraded to a hurricane. As many as 20,000 residents were forced to flee their homes before Adrian moved inland and weakened.

The mission was the Hurricane Hunters' first flight into an active hurricane in the new "J" model of the WC-130 Hercules aircraft - a faster, more powerful version of the earlier-

generation C-130 transport planes. The WC-130J brings new capabilities to the 53rd Squadron, Odom said, providing crews with computer-assisted flight and navigational controls and better situational awareness that help them avoid flying into the strongest storm cells.

While the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron stands ready to respond to calls from National Weather Service, U.S. Northern Command is reviewing its plans and procedures so it's ready to support any requests for help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

NORTHCOM's Current Operations Group operates 24/7 at the command's Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., headquarters and, in the event of a hurricane threat, would monitor the storm's progress and help coordinate requests for help, according to Air Force 1st Lt. Jody Vazquez, a command spokeswoman. Generally that support comes in the form of logistical, medical and communications support, she said.

By law, DoD provides civil support only when local, state and other federal resources have become exhausted or overwhelmed. In those cases, the lead federal agency in charge of the crisis must ask for DoD help, and the president or secretary of defense must approve the request before NORTHCOM can take action.

Last year's devastating hurricane season, in which four major hurricanes shook Florida within just six weeks, NORTHCOM jumped into high gear when it got the order. For example, when Hurricane Ivan hit the Florida panhandle last September, the NORTHCOM staff secured long-range satellite-communications capabilities, emergency supplies and medical assistance for the areas hardest hit by the storm.

They also arranged for ice, clean water, food and other FEMA supplies to be pre-positioned at military bases in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Kentucky and North Carolina, where hurricanes were most likely to strike.

NORTHCOM's role in supporting civil authorities during hurricanes and other disaster relief operations is in addition to its more commonly known mission of providing homeland defense against threats aimed at the United States, Vazquez said.

Training Prepares Soldiers For Afghan Assignment;

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The Miami Herald

June 5, 2005

By Phil Long; plong@herald.com

HATTIESBURG, Miss. -- From blasts and gunfire a few feet from their ears to angry villagers screaming a few inches from their noses, Florida **National Guard** soldiers here are deep in "immersion training."

It's the new, in-your-face preparation for conditions they might encounter when they begin a yearlong assignment in Afghanistan in early July.

Many of the soldiers, such as Andrew Pozada, of Miami, have volunteered to go. Some,

such as Trevor Ivey, of Miami Beach, have already served in Iraq. They are part of the second largest call-up of Florida **National Guard** troops since Sept 11, 2001. The largest was nearly 1,800 infantry soldiers who went to Iraq in 2003.

The Guard's job is to train the Afghan army, Florida Guard Adjutant Gen. Douglas Burnett said. What is taught at Camp Shelby, he said, is derived from lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Guard units learn what hostilities and danger to expect and also get schooled in Afghan culture and customs.

The training aims to be as realistic as possible, including mimicking new types of attacks soldiers on the ground in the Mideast may have encountered for the first time just days ago.

One exercise Friday:

A squad of soldiers moved into a "Herat," a hastily built mock Afghan neighborhood, only this one is in the sweltering pine-studded rolling hills of southern Mississippi.

The soldiers split into two columns working their way around homes, businesses and even a mosque.

Soon Afghan Americans, Iraqi Americans and three-dozen or so local Mississippians -- all hired by the Army -- showed up and began taunting, screaming, hurling epithets.

"Down, down with the U.S.A!" "Go home, U.S.A!" they yelled, often inches from the soldiers' faces. The "actors" were angry about news reports of the desecration of sacred Afghan documents. In real life, last month a news article about the alleged desecration of the Quran was linked to rioting in several cities.

Soldiers shouted at the protesters to get back, but the villagers did not understand the commands.

A sniper jumped up from behind the railing on the roof of the police station and began shooting at the soldiers.

The crowd scattered.

"On the roof!" soldiers yelled.

The soldiers knelt and opened fire with a withering barrage of blanks. The sniper slumped over the railing on the roof.

The street protesters returned waving fists, screaming louder as the soldiers retrieved a wounded civilian, put him on a stretcher and carried him into the mosque.

Soon, another sniper jumped into the middle of the chaos.

Another burst of bullets, and the sniper fell.

Then the exercise was over.

"It's really scary when they don't understand you and you're this close to pulling the trigger," said Richard Mills, 37, of Hudson, a Guard sergeant and civilian concrete truck driver who participated in a similar drill earlier in the week.

The Florida soldiers are training alongside Guard units from Vermont, Nebraska and Tennessee who will make up the 4,000-member Task Force Phoenix, commanded by

Florida Gen. John "Mitch" Perryman.

"The training is very realistic," added Trevor Ivey, 25, a bartender who lives on South Beach and who has been to Afghanistan in the active Army.

"I can bring experience to the team," he said, explaining why he has volunteered to go back.

A big item on the training schedule is explosives: suicide bombers and explosives concealed in a pile of trash, the carcass of a dead dog or the innards of doorbells or cellphones, chief trainer Col. Dan Zajac said.

Earlier in the day, Pozada's patrol discovered a roadside bomb and stopped to investigate. Two thunderous explosions signaled not the bomb going off, but a mortar attack -- an ambush.

Gunfire erupted from the two-dozen soldiers on the patrol.

"You keep firing until the enemy can't put their heads up any more," Pozada said.

Pozada, a 21-year-old T-Mobile sales representative and University of South Florida student, is like many of the Guard soldiers at Camp Shelby: a volunteer.

When his wife, Myra, 21, a combat medic got called to active duty with her Guard unit, Pozada worked for weeks to get a transfer into her outfit so he could be with his high school sweetheart.

"If she is going to have to go through hardship," Pozada said, "I want to do the same."

Like most of the soldiers at Camp Shelby, Pozada liked the training.

"It gave us hands-on experience of how we will be working with the locals," Pozada said.

And they know the training might save their lives.

On Friday, five soldiers including Pfc. Robert McLaughlin, 20, assigned to a Lakeland-area field artillery unit, were simulating a patrol through a neighborhood.

Strapped to his head and linked to a sophisticated computer was a set of high-tech virtual reality goggles that put McLaughlin in the middle of a brutal firefight.

As other soldiers studied the unfolding action on a large screen in another part of the trailer, McLaughlin was shot.

As the battle subsided, Zajac asked McLaughlin how it went.

The soldier said he had been killed.

Better in Mississippi in training than in Afghanistan, Zajac replied.

Senate Approves Increased Benefits For Public Employees In Active Military Duty

Associated Press

June 2, 2005

(Albany, NY) AP 06/02/05 -- "Patriot Plan III" gained final legislative approval in the state Senate on Wednesday.

The measure increases the death benefits given to the families of public employees who are killed while on active military duty.

Governor Pataki and state Comptroller Alan Hevesi proposed the bill for all state employees in early May.

Survivors of eligible public employees killed while on active duty would get the same death benefits and health insurance benefits they'd get if the reservist or guard member was killed while working as a public employee.

The governor's office estimates that hundreds of public employees from New York are currently on active duty.

The Defense Department says 1,845 US military personnel have been killed in the war on terror. Sixteen were members of the New York **National Guard**.

Families Finding Many Doctors Refuse Military Insurance

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Knight Ridder Newspapers

3 June 2005

By Chris Vaughn

FORT WORTH, Texas - (KRT) - Melissa Noriega got sick, very sick, and couldn't go to her doctor.

She had the wrong insurance. It was the military's insurance.

"I called a bunch of doctors, and not one of them took it," said Noriega, a Houston resident whose husband, Rick, was mobilized by the Texas **National Guard** and sent to Afghanistan last year.

"I went three weeks trying to figure out how to get an antibiotic-resistant infection treated," said Noriega. "Finally my husband's cousin, who is a doctor, treated me for free."

Noriega's experience has highlighted a problem in the call-up of thousands of reservists and members of the **National Guard** outside dense military areas — access to health

care.

Doctors are not lining up to accept Tricare, a government insurance program that in some cases pays doctors less than Medicare and Medicaid and has a reputation for slow payments.

"We stopped taking it three or four years ago," said Susan Blue, a neurologist and president of the Tarrant County Medical Society in Fort Worth. "Reimbursement rates are not high these days with anyone, but the military was the first one to go to a point that it wasn't feasible financially to accept it anymore."

Tricare is the \$18 billion health plan for 9.1 million active-duty military members, their families and military retirees under 65.

Finding providers who accept Tricare in an area with an active-duty installation isn't difficult, and active-duty military members can always be seen by military doctors on base.

But the family of a mobilized reservist from, say, Houston or Texarkana, suddenly thrown from private insurance into the military plan, isn't always so fortunate.

"It hasn't been obvious as a problem," said Noriega, who served her husband's term as a state representative this spring. "When a spouse has their own insurance, they can move everybody in the family onto theirs. But folks that don't have a job and they've got three children are just stuck."

"You have some very narrow choices as to who will accept Tricare," said Ray Lindner, executive director of the **National Guard** Association of Texas. "When it comes to specialists, your choices narrow even more significantly."

Although there is no evidence that families are going without health care or a provider, a reservist's spouse and children might have to switch doctors while they're in the military system.

That hardly seems fair, military groups contend, when a family is already dealing with the absence of a spouse for up to 12 months.

"It doesn't matter if you can find a doctor, because when it's your doctor that doesn't take it, it's an individual crisis," said Sue Schwartz, a deputy director in the Military Officers Association of America and the wife of a Marine.

Humana Military Health Care Services, which administers the Tricare contract in the South, has added 750 more family doctors, 1,300 specialists and 36 hospitals to its list in Texas in the last six months, said Dick Brown, chief spokesman for Humana.

"We have a really good network compared to what was in place in November 2004," when Humana took over the contract, Brown said. "Our network development efforts are continuing now."

Brown also said that 99 percent of medical claims are processed within 30 days of receipt, which exceeds the Pentagon's expectations.

U.S. Rep. Joe Schwarz, a Michigan Republican and physician, recently issued a call for doctors nationwide to accept Tricare as "a patriotic duty."

But it's hard for physicians to get past the reimbursement rates, which are tied to Medicare's rates, with a 5 percent reduction anticipated in January.

Dr. Stephen Brotherton, a past president of the Tarrant County Medical Society and an orthopedic surgeon, said his father, a World War II veteran, gave him grief for not accepting Tricare.

"Any of us would love to serve our servicemen, but what they're paying is well below what we have as a break-even point," he said. "It would be better for me to actually see them for no charge and not try to participate in the program."

The Enlisted Association of the **National Guard** would like Congress to make the health care plan for federal employees available to military families.

"Then you don't run into the problem of finding a Tricare provider," said Mike Cline, the organization's executive director. "We don't want it to replace Tricare, but we would like to see it as an option for people."

The Military Officers Association of America is lobbying Congress to allow the Defense Department to offer a choice to reservists: join Tricare or get a lump-sum payment to pay for private insurance.

GUARD IN IRAQ

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Mass. Guardsman Hailed For Defending US Convoy In Iraq

The Boston Globe

1 June 2005

By Sarah Schweitzer

When a blue pickup truck approached his convoy last Friday, something looked amiss. Specialist Dean Levy of Pembroke, riding atop a Humvee in Iraq, fired warning shots.

But the vehicle kept heading toward the US troops. Levy fired another burst from his .50-caliber machine gun, this time hitting it straight on. The truck turned out to be carrying 400 pounds of explosives and Levy's second burst detonated it, killing the driver and sparing the lives of nearly a dozen US soldiers, according to military officials and Levy's family members.

Levy, 21, a gunner with the Massachusetts **National Guard** serving with the 42d Infantry Division, suffered facial burns and shrapnel wounds in the explosion. He is being hailed for quick thinking and is being considered for a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star, according to his family.

"If the device had gone off when the enemy wanted it to go off, it would have been much worse," said Major Winfield Danielson, a spokesman for the Massachusetts **National**

Guard.

Military officials said they were still collecting all the details of the episode but confirmed that Levy had detonated an explosive device before it hit the convoy.

Levy has returned to duty but must stay out of the sun for three weeks as his second-degree facial burns heal. Shrapnel injured his shoulder in the explosion, which family members said occurred in Baghdad.

His brother, Joshua Levy, 25, a project manager for the city of Boston who spoke with his brother after the episode, said Dean recalled little other than a bright light and his fellow soldiers pulling him back into the Humvee.

"His friends said he was delirious," Joshua Levy said.

His sister, Danielle Levy, said, "He kept asking: 'Did I get the truck? Did I get the truck?' And they said, 'Yes, yes. But are you OK?' And he said, 'Yes, but my face is burning.' "

Danielle Levy said her brother's face was scraped to remove burned skin and he had been left with a blister on his nose and lip. He is expected to make a full recovery, she said.

She said she learned about the explosion Saturday morning while she was putting on makeup.

"It was so scary -- and I just felt so guilty putting on makeup and not knowing how his face was," she said.

Joshua Levy said his parents had taken the news hard, but that his younger brother sounded upbeat when he spoke to him.

Joshua Levy, who also served in the **National Guard**, said he urged his younger brother to sign up.

Levy grew up in Pembroke, and is a 2002 graduate of Silver Lake Regional High School. He attended Bridgewater State College before being called up for active duty. He is the youngest of three and has been stationed in Iraq for nearly five months.

He is scheduled to return to the United States as early as October or as late as December, his family said.

His father is a high school teacher in Plymouth, and his mother is a bank manager.

"We just have to make it through the next months," said Danielle Levy, 23, his sister, a hairdresser who lives with their mother in Marshfield. ■

Offers Troops, Families Special Father's Day Deal

American Forces Press Service

June 2, 2005

WASHINGTON,— Cardstore.com announced June 1 that it's providing a Father's Day card service for troops and their families.

This service is free for forward-deployed U.S. troops serving in the Middle East, and costs 99 cents for those assigned elsewhere.

The company said it will make the process as easy as possible for U.S. military personnel and their families to remember Dad on his special day. They can visit the company's Web site and select greeting cards online, or create their own by uploading a photo, and then adding a personal note to the inside. To take advantage of the 99-cent offer, enter promotion code usdad99 at checkout. Cardstore.com will then print and mail the cards in time for Father's Day on June 19.

"Because of the many notes of appreciation we received from the troops for our Mother's Day initiative, Cardstore.com decided to add the Father's Day promotion," said Al Hulvey, company chief executive officer.

"We are thrilled that Cardstore.com has joined the team and is supporting our military men and women in the Middle East," said Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Allison Barber. "We applaud them for helping troops stay in touch with their families back home through this unique opportunity."

The company is engaging in the Father's Day effort as part of its partnership with America Supports You, a nationwide Department of Defense program that showcases America's support for the men and women of the armed forces.

Since the launch of America Supports You program last November, more than 2 million Americans, including individual citizens, businesses and organizations, have logged onto its Web site.

Home, Sweet Homes For Disabled Vets[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Boston Herald

June 5, 2005

By Thomas Caywood

A Wareham contractor's desire to donate some spare time to help disabled Iraq veterans has evolved over two years into a full-time job running a growing nonprofit with a

national profile.

Homes for Our Troops Inc. has now raised more than \$1 million, most of it during the past year. The Taunton-based nonprofit - which builds new disabled-accessible homes and adapts old ones - has even gotten a plug from the commander in chief.

President Bush gave a shout-out to the group and founder John Gonsalves in a December speech to Marines at Camp Pendleton.

Gonsalves has had to learn on the fly, struggling to reinvent himself as a nonprofit executive as his fledgling charity has taken off.

“Before I started this, I knew absolutely zero about running a nonprofit,” Gonsalves said.

Even so, donations poured in.

A group of Billerica kids raised \$2,400 selling brownies recently. Piano man Billy Joel and pro golfer Phil Mickelson have kicked in tens of thousands of dollars. And Homes for Our Troops last week accepted \$105,000 from the New York-based Avon Foundation.

“It gave us an opportunity at the Avon Foundation to get in at the ground floor on a program that is addressing a real need,” said spokeswoman Susan Heaney.

Gonsalves got involved after he was moved by a news story about a Humvee driver who lost both legs in a rocket attack. “I assumed there was an organization doing this, and I could have just donated some time to help out,” he said.

In December, Homes for Our Troops broke ground in Middleboro on a house for Army Sgt. Peter Damon, a Massachusetts **National Guard** sergeant who lost both arms when a helicopter tire he was working on exploded. Two days ago, Damon delivered the ceremonial first pitch at Fenway.

The house, specially designed to accommodate someone with prosthetic arms, is scheduled to be done by the end of July.

In addition to the Middleboro project, another under construction in Pennsylvania and other projects, Homes for Our Troops recently bought an existing home in North Carolina, which it plans to adapt for a disabled veteran there.

“You hear on the news two soldiers killed and three injured. You don't hear any more than that,” Gonsalves said. “Not enough people realize what they go through when they get home.”

End

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