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Weekly News for National Guard Families

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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.

DEPLOYMENT

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About 600 Iowa Soldiers Alerted For Possible Active Duty

The Courier

July 20, 2005

DES MOINES (AP) --- About 600 Iowa soldiers have been alerted for possible active duty, the Iowa **National Guard** announced Tuesday.

The soldiers are about 560 members of the 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry and about 40 members of the 1st Battalion, 194th Field Artillery. The actual mobilization date and duty location haven't been announced, Guard spokesman Lt. Col. Greg Hapgood said in a statement.

133rd Infantry units are located in Waterloo, Dubuque, Oelwein, Iowa Falls and Charles City. Their mission is close combat and security of key terrain, facilities and installations.

194th Field Artillery units are located in Fort Dodge, Storm Lake, Spencer, Algona and Estherville. Their assignment is to provide artillery fire and close air support for combat units.

Both units were last mobilized three years ago.

BENEFITS

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Wilkes-Barre Adopts New Policy Dealing With Employees Serving In Military

CitizenVoice.com

July 21, 2005

By Denise Allabaugh -- A new policy will help Wilkes-Barre employees when they leave their families and their jobs to serve in the military. The military mobilization policy continues health coverage for employees.

It offers the compensation of the difference between their city salary and military salary when not using accrued leave time. Employees can use accrued sick leave to continue receiving full pay.

Additionally, the policy establishes a bank for employees to donate sick or vacation days enabling military members to continue receiving full pay while they are mobilized.

Mayor Tom Leighton announced the policy at a press conference Wednesday.

Currently, the policy will benefit only one city employee, firefighter Donald Hall, who is serving in Qatar. In the future, more employees could benefit, said Human Resources

Director Christine Jensen.

"We had about half dozen employees serve over the last two or three years and we anticipate two or three others will be called to serve," Jensen said.

Ten to 15 of the city's 290 employees serve in the military, she said. Some employees say they never know when they could be called to serve.

Patrolman Brett Smith, who served in the Marine Reserves for eight years and the **National Guard** for five years, said there is a possibility he could be mobilized. The policy will help his wife and three children, he said.

"It would definitely help my family if I have to leave," Smith said. "That was my biggest worry if I have to go."

Police Sgt. Joe Novak, who serves in the Army Reserves, returned from Iraq in March last year after serving for one year. He also served in Persian Gulf War in 1991. He doubts he will be mobilized in the future, but he believes the policy will be a big help to other employees who are called to serve.

"When I was gone, my two kids lived with my mother and she held a lot of the burden herself," Novak said. "You learn from the past that you want to make it better for those who go next."

City Administrator J.J. Murphy, who serves in the Marine Reserves, praised the policy, especially the part which helps families with grass cutting and other maintenance.

When Murphy was stationed in Virginia from February of 2003 to March of 2004, his wife was home with three children and pregnant with her fourth. She needed help with snow removal and other household chores, he said.

"It is a hardship anytime being away from your family. The military gives you something, but it doesn't pay for everything," Murphy said. "Military members have enough on their minds when they are deployed. Now, they will know their family members are taken care of."

Leighton thanked all employees who "dedicated themselves to our city, our state and our country through their involvement in military services."

"The city values its employees who are absent from regular from employment because they are serving in the U.S. military," Leighton said. "They are serving their country and they should not have to worry about their families while they are over there."

Jensen was appointed a liaison between the city and the employees and their families. She will meet with each employee prior to mobilization to discuss the assistance they will receive through the policy.

Senate Votes To Give Military Health Care To Guard, Reserves

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National Journal's Congress Daily

July 22, 2005

The Senate opted Thursday to extend military health care to all participating members of the **National Guard** and Reserve, setting the stage for a major debate with House members when the \$441.6 billion FY06 defense authorization bill heads to conference committee.

The amendment, sponsored by Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., passed by voice vote and garnered the support of Armed Services Chairman Warner and ranking member Carl Levin, D-Mich.

The successful vote was in stark contrast to the House, where Armed Services Chairman Hunter stripped similar language from the FY06 defense authorization bill after it passed the committee with the support of six Republicans.

During floor debate on the amendment, senators fired warning shots at their House colleagues.

"To my friends in the House, I appreciate all you have done to help the troops, but we are going to fight over this," Graham said. "This is not going away."

Warner said he will help shepherd the amendment through conference negotiations later this year.

"In conference, I will be there and each of you will be by our side," he said. "And I hope you can walk out of that conference some day with a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction."

House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee Chairman John McHugh, R-N.Y., said Thursday he has "no philosophical objection" to extending **National Guard** and Reserve healthcare eligibility, but is concerned that the costs would eat into other accounts.

"It's a zero-sum game," said McHugh, who opposed an amendment proposed by Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Miss., during the committee's markup in May.

Hunter argued then that the language should not be included in the bill because of its high cost as projected by CBO, which estimated the price tag for the additional coverage could be as much as \$4.6 billion through FY10.

Taylor unsuccessfully appealed to the House Rules Committee to bring the amendment to the floor for debate.

Like Taylor's language, the Graham-Clinton amendment would open the military's Tricare healthcare system to all drilling Guardsmen, reservists and their families for a fee. Active-duty troops and reserve-component soldiers called to active duty do not pay a premium for their Tricare coverage.

The amendment would cost the Defense Department an estimated \$3.8 billion over the next five years, Graham said. "There is all kinds of waste in the Pentagon that would

more than pay for this," he added.

Between 20 percent and 25 percent of Guardsmen and reservists do not have access to civilian health care -- a statistic that supporters say has long-term negative impacts on part-time soldiers' readiness. One in five reserve-component troops called to active duty is turned away because of health concerns, Clinton said.

Last year, Congress temporarily extended Tricare to the **National Guard** and Reserve on a temporary basis. Each 90 days of active-duty service bought these so-called "weekend warriors" and their families a year of Tricare eligibility. Graham said that earlier measure was a "very good start."

At presstime, the Senate still was debating the legislation, with votes expected to go well into the night. Senators are expected to consider the authorization bill for several days, in the hopes of wrapping it up before the August recess.

However, Majority Leader Frist plans to file for cloture on the defense authorization bill as early as Thursday, but then switch to gun liability or estate tax legislation. But Frist has said he still hopes to complete the defense bill by recess.

Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., said repeatedly Thursday he opposes interrupting defense authorization floor debate, which might push a vote until after the August recess. But Warner said he believes the interruption would be brief.

"There may be matters which require the attention of the Senate, at which time we do not do anything except put it aside for a brief period of time and then bring it up again," Warner said.

The Senate also passed, 78-19, an amendment offered by Foreign Relations Chairman Lugar that would eliminate barriers to the Nunn-Lugar nuclear non-proliferation program by dropping restrictions that complicate or delay weapons-dismantlement work.

GUARD IN IRAQ

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Louisiana National Guard Leaders Visit State's Brigade In Iraq

The Shreveport Times

July 22, 2005

CAMP TIGERLAND, Baghdad, Iraq -- Maj. Gen. Bennett Landreneau, Louisiana's adjutant general and head of its brigade deployed to Iraq, the 256th Brigade Combat team or "Tiger Brigade," made a surprise visit to the unit this week, ending his trip with a mass swearing-in of more than 400 brigade members extending their hitches while in a combat zone.

Landreneau was accompanied on his Tuesday visit by his senior enlisted adviser, Command Sgt. Maj. John Morrow. The two talked with local soldiers as well as with

personnel from units from other states but attached to the Louisiana brigade, the unit's public affairs section reported.

Their morning began with breakfast with soldiers from the Shreveport-based 1/156th Armor Battalion, at the Tiger Den Dining Facility. There, Sgt. 1st Class Philip White of Texarkana, Texas, noncommissioned officer in charge of personnel operations for the 1st Battalion's Headquarters Company, welcomed what Morrow had to tell them.

"He really stressed the importance of getting back to our families and caught us up on the news of the rest of the Louisiana **National Guard**," White said. "He alleviated a lot of our concerns and put some fears to rest."

Throughout the day Landreneau and Morrow traveled throughout Tigerland and met with soldiers of different battalions and companies.

Later, the 1/141st Field Artillery escorted the state commanders through brigade defense posts and interrogation facility. Landreneau and Morrow also toured support, maintenance and medical facilities with the 199th Forward Support Battalion and lunched with the 2/156th Infantry Battalion and the brigade headquarters and intelligence companies' commanders and command sergeant majors.

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

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Guard Supports Families Through Deployment Hardships

American Forces Press Service

July 18, 2005

By Donna Miles -- Families of deployed **National Guard** and Reserve members face challenges beyond those of active-duty families, and a strong family support network stands behind them to help through those difficult days, the **National Guard** Bureau chief said.

"The challenges are considerable," Army Lt. Gen. Steven Blum said during a joint interview here with The Pentagon Channel and the American Forces Press Service.

For one thing, Guard and Reserve call-ups extend considerably beyond the Army's standard one-year deployment cycles, Blum pointed out. "One year of boots on the ground is not one year for a **National Guard** soldier," he said. "It's about 18 to 22 months of total mobilization time."

That translates to time on active-duty time, away from families in an intensive training mode. "You're basically putting your life on hold for at least a year and a half," Blum said. That's no small sacrifice for the affected troops or the families they leave behind, he said.

And unlike active-component families, those in the Guard and Reserve generally don't have the built-in support system that comes from living in or around a big military base with lots of other families in the same boat.

Guard and Reserve families "are spread all over the landscape," Blum said. "They live in the communities. So when they are called up, that spouse or that family may be the only people in the whole neighborhood or in that whole apartment complex" to have their loved one deployed.

That's considerably different from big bases or posts where "when the wing (or unit) goes, everybody who lives in that enclave feels exactly the same problem."

To help support these families, the **National Guard** Bureau Family Program offers a wide range of services and support ranging from family readiness groups at the unit level to a Web site that details the full range of services available to families, including points of contact.

More than 400 family assistance centers nationwide serve as the program's centerpiece. These centers, generally set up in **National Guard** armories, serve as "a critical link" for families during the loved ones' deployments, said Army Col. Anthony Baker Sr., the Guard's chief of Family Programs. They serve not only Guard and Reserve families, but also families of all active-component members deployed or recently returned from a deployment.

Blum described them as "a single-stop shopping source" for families needing information or assistance, not only during the deployment, but also before and after. Families typically turn to the centers for information about the deployment or to find out where to go for anything -- from counseling support to financial assistance to healthcare access, Baker said. Some come with questions about their family member's civilian employer or to ask how to get military identification cards.

To help broaden the centers' reach, the Guard is partnering with state and local governments, the American Red Cross, the United Services Organization and veterans service organizations. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Veterans and American Legion are already partners, and the Disabled American Veterans will sign on soon, Baker said.

"These organizations are a real force multipliers," Baker said. "They bring important skills and expertise to the table so we're better able to help meet families' needs," Baker said. And regardless of their needs, Baker said the Guard owes it to its members to look out for their families while they're deployed. "If we don't do that, we have failed them," he said. "We want to employ every resource possible for families so that when servicemembers are deployed, they know their families are in good hands."

Knowing that their families have a dependable support system at home enables Guard members -- as well as all other servicemembers -- to concentrate on their mission rather than worrying about their families needs, Baker said. It also has a direct impact on whether they remain in the service. "We have a saying, 'If we sustain the family, then we retain the servicemember,'" Baker said.

Guard To Offer Free Health Clinics

Marietta Times

July 19, 2005

By Kevin Pierson -- A joint venture between the Ohio **National Guard**, the Ohio Department of Health and the Washington County Health Department will bring members of the Guard to Marietta as part of the annual GuardCare program Aug. 6, 7 and 20, 21.

GuardCare, which began in 1995, is a service designed to offer free health services to areas that are medically underserved while offering guardsmen valuable medical training.

“It’s a training mission for our soldiers but it’s also an opportunity for us to fulfill our state and community mission, which is to support Ohioans,” said James Sims, spokesman for the Ohio **National Guard**.

A new location is chosen for the GuardCare program each year based on recommendations from the Ohio Health Department.

Last year’s GuardCare served 1,291 people in Lucas County near Toledo, which is slightly higher than the average of 600 to 800 people each year, Sims said.

Washington County Health Department officials hope to serve 1,000 people during the program and are excited to be chosen as this year’s GuardCare location.

“I’m extremely excited. We’re just really excited that we have this opportunity to partner with the **National Guard** to provide a service that is really needed in this area,” said County Health Commissioner Kathleen Meckstroth.

The services offered during the GuardCare program are determined based on the needs of the community the Guard is serving and recommendations from the Ohio Health Department.

Typically the GuardCare program services consist of physicals, immunizations and blood tests, though some specific tests such as EKGs and vision tests are also part of the program.

“There are some standard tests in there but there’s also some things that are pretty critical,” Sims said. “We worked in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Health to determine what services are going to be offered.”

The GuardCare program is open to children and adults of all ages. Residents and nonresidents of Washington County are encouraged to participate in the program.

In the 10 years the GuardCare program has been in operation, it has not duplicated a location, so it is unlikely that the program will return to the Marietta area in the near future.

Depending on the participation in the program this year, though, Meckstroth remains

hopeful of offering a similar program locally next year.

“We will really have to look at that and see if we can get the community partners that would be willing to contribute testing or time to be able to do this in the future,” Meckstroth said.

Sims appreciates the local effort to bring the program to Marietta.

“I just need to emphasize the fact that it is a cooperative program. The Guard gets a lot of credit for bringing down soldiers but this couldn’t go off without the people in the Ohio Health Department and the people down in Washington County,” Sims said.

New Health Plan for Guard, Reserve

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RedNova.com

July 20, 2005

A new health care plan with coverage comparable to that of federal employees under the Blue Cross and Blue Shield health insurance plan, is now available to members of the **National Guard** and Reserve, and their families.

Tricare Reserve Select serves as a bridge for reserve component troops entering or leaving active duty who are not covered by civilian employer or other health insurance plans. It applies to all reserve component servicemembers who have been activated since Sept. 11, 2001, and who agree to continued service in the Selected Reserve. The coverage is applied retroactively.

Reserve component servicemembers and their families also now are eligible for benefits 90 days before activation, and for up to six months after demobilization.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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“Suddenly Military”; Children of Deployed Reservists, Guardsmen Sample Parents' Lives

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

July 24, 2005

By Doug Gross

Dahlongega --- The crackers weren't so bad.

Otherwise, 11-year-old Megan Canter didn't have much use for the minestrone MRE --- "meal ready to eat" --- that she whipped up for a military-style lunch at summer camp.

"It was disgusting," she said, munching on chocolate cookies on top of a picnic table at

the Wahsega 4-H Center, tucked away in the Georgia mountains.

Flavor aside, the meal was a small way to connect with her father, Sgt. Chuck Canter, who's serving with the Army **National Guard's** 48th Infantry Brigade in Iraq.

Megan was one of 22 children at a special summer camp designed for the 11-to-15-year-old children of deployed military parents, mostly **National Guard** members and reservists serving in Iraq.

Organizers say the camps are a way to help the children of guardsmen and reservists deal with the fear, anxiety and confusion surrounding their parents' potentially dangerous missions in far-off lands.

"We call them the 'suddenly military' kids," said Sharon Gibson, camp coordinator from the University of Georgia's college of family and consumer sciences. "They don't have a peer group to really bounce things off of, and they're not like active-duty military kids, who are more used to their parents coming and going."

With the May deployment of the Georgia-based 48th Brigade to Iraq, there are more of those children in the state than at any other time in recent memory. With 4,000 troops, the brigade is the largest combat unit of Georgia **National Guard** troops to deploy in wartime since World War II.

During the height of the 2003 Iraq invasion, about 224,000 Guard members and reservists from all military branches nationwide were mobilized. That figure now stands at 138,000, according to the Pentagon. The National Military Family Association estimates that about 140,000 children have a parent deployed in either Iraq or Afghanistan.

Dog tags, flags and taps

The weeklong camp held this month in Georgia cost the participants just \$25 each and was funded largely by Operation Military Kids, a national collaboration among the military, state and county cooperative extension offices, the 4-H Club and Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

The camp had "suddenly military" kids spending the week with the children of active-duty military parents, giving them a chance to interact with others who have been through long deployments.

In many ways, it mirrored a typical 4-H camp. Campers played Frisbee, attended a dance and panned for gold in Dahlonega, the mountain town that was home to the nation's first gold rush in the 1800s.

But this camp started with a military-style "bag and drag," where the campers were handed gear including dog tags. Instead of groups, they formed "units." Each day started with PT --- physical training --- at 6:30 a.m. and ended with a flag ceremony complete with the playing of taps.

"It gives me an idea of what my daddy had to go through for boot camp," said Megan, of Tignall, in northeast Georgia. "I wouldn't have made it."

Discussion sessions gave campers a chance to voice their feelings with counselors and campers who have had similar experiences.

Teresa Harvey's 11-year-old daughter, Emilie, was one of those campers. Her father was deployed to Iraq with the 48th Brigade.

"My daughter is the only one at her school going through this," said Harvey, a 4-H employee from Wrightsville, who worked at the camp but went out of her way to keep her distance from Emilie. "She's very close to her dad; she's had it tough."

The camp is similar to others that have cropped up across the country, from California to Florida, as the war in Iraq and the international war against terrorism continue. This year, roughly 2,500 campers will participate in one of 23 free Operation Purple camps run by the National Military Family Association --- more than twice the number of campers last year.

"The Guard and reserves are being hit hard by the fact that they've not operated at this pace of deployment and activation before," said Michelle Joyner, a spokeswoman for the association. "At the same time, active duty has been hit equally hard."

A continuing need

Along with camps in the United States, the association runs summer camps near military installations in Germany, Italy, Japan and Guam.

"We see there always being a need for these camps, because there are always going to be deployments," Joyner said. "This is something that isn't going to go away."

Organizers of the Georgia camp are treating this year as a pilot program. They hope to expand next year, taking in as many as 120 campers.

Thirteen-year-old Greg Barnett of Loganville says he would encourage his peers to check it out.

"You get to meet a whole bunch of people and just have fun," said Greg, whose father also is in Iraq with the 48th Brigade. "I can relate to most of the people here."

GENERAL

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COMTek Pledging Highest "5-Star" Level of Support For Its National Guard and Reserve Employees; Firm Also Gets 'Above and Beyond' Award For Its Intervention With Guard/Reserve Family in Crisis While Husband Stationed in Iraq

Communication Technologies (Press Release)

July 19, 2005

CHANTILLY, Va. and ARLINGTON, Va., July 19 /PRNewswire/ -- Communication Technologies, Inc. (COMTek), a premier provider of information technology (IT) services to the federal government and private companies, and the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), an agency of the Department of Defense, announced today that COMTek will sign a "5-Star Statement of Support" for its employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve. As part of its work for the federal

government, COMTek's Army ROTC Functional Support contract delivers military and leadership instruction at the college and university levels to students at over 270 campus locations across the US.

Tom Hart, employer outreach coordinator for the Virginia Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, will present the "5-Star Statement of Support" to be signed by COMTek President and CEO Joseph Fergus tomorrow at the COMTek headquarters in Chantilly, Virginia. Separately, the North Carolina Committee for ESGR will announce tomorrow that it is recognizing COMTek with an "Above and Beyond" employer award for its extraordinary support of the family of a ROTC instructor who was deployed to Iraq.

The "5-Star Statement of Support" confirms that COMTek has taken the following steps: signed a statement publicly demonstrating its support for their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve; promotes training for managers and supervisors to effectively manage its employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve; reviewed its Human Resources policies to ensure compliance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act Law (USERRA); and is an advocate for employee service in the National Guard and Reserve and will help to promote the mission of ESGR.

Dr. Fergus stated: "As a military veteran, I am proud to have COMTek pledge the highest level of support for our employees who are among the men and women who are serving and defending our country. A major part of COMTek's mission is to provide highly qualified and motivated contract employees who are focused on enhancing the United States Army Cadet Commands mission of recruiting, training, retaining, and commissioning the Army's future leaders at colleges and universities across the country."

Hart said: "Today, supportive employers are critical to maintaining the strength and readiness of the nation's National Guard and Reserve units. By meeting the '5-Star Statement of Support' criteria, the management of COMTek stands proudly with their Guard and Reserve employees, who like the Minutemen before them, answer their nation's call to defend our way of life. Their personal sacrifices are essential to the strength of our nation. I am asking all of America's employers to join COMTek in reviewing and amending their current human resources policies to ensure compliance with USERRA." In addition to signing the "5-Star Statement of Support," COMTek will be awarded the prestigious ESGR "Above and Beyond" award, which recognizes patriotic employers that provide support in excess of the minimum requirements of USERRA. COMTek was nominated for the award for its support of the family of a ROTC instructor who was deployed overseas in Iraq.

Fergus said: "COMTek has taken many steps on a voluntary basis to provide support to our employees who are deployed and returning from the global war on terrorism. Whether it is extending benefits to ensure a soldier's family has health care, sending CARE packages overseas to our deployed employees, or making a corporate scholarship donation for a recent employee who died in June while on duty in Iraq, COMTek is doing its utmost to ensure our people and their families get what they need."

COMTek's Army ROTC Functional Support contract is unique in that most of the professional cadre supplied by the company must either be retired or actively serving

Guard or Reserve personnel, with the majority being officers. At 270 campuses across the United States, the COMTek experts present ROTC instruction and field training, lead cadet recruiting and retention at many sites, perform program administration, and provide field training to current and prospective cadets at Army ROTC Basic and Advanced Camps. COMTek's approach to fulfilling the federal contract is exceptionally efficient due to the company's innovative use of Web-enabled technology.

Of the more than 500 employees at COMTek working on the Army ROTC training project, 103 are currently on active duty. COMTek has had a total of more than 234 Army Reservists and National Guard members activated since September 11, 2001, some serving two tours. Individuals on the Army ROTC training contract have been backstopped with temporary hires of equal or greater experience and technical qualifications. The requirement to fill these positions was not a part of the federal contract, but COMTek elected to do so in order to add value to what it is delivering to the military.

About COMTek

Communication Technologies, Inc. (<http://www.comtechnologies.com>) is a leading-edge telecommunications and information technology company. As part of its worldwide broadband service, COMTek owns and operates the first city- wide commercial broadband over powerline network in the United States.

On December 1, 2004, COMTek announced that it had been named by Inc. magazine as one of the 500 fastest-growing privately held companies in the United States. The COMTek success story made the company a natural for inclusion on the "Inc. 500" hottest company list. COMTek's total growth, as measured by average annual sales revenues, was up 303 percent from 1999 to 2003 and its employee ranks more than doubled during calendar year 2002. With over 900 employees today, COMTek continues to build on 14 years of experience in providing superior service to its customers.

About ESGR

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is a U.S. Department of Defense agency established in 1972. The mission of ESGR is to gain and maintain active support from all public and private employers for the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve. ESGR volunteers provide free education, consultation, and if necessary mediation for employers of Guard and Reserve employees. As the 1.2 million members of the National Guard and Reserve continue to perform an increasing number of unique missions that require extraordinary actions on the part of everyday citizens, ESGR will continue to be the informational agency for the employers of America's Patriots. More information about ESGR Employer Outreach Programs and volunteer opportunities is available at <http://www.esgr.mil>.