



THE

CACTUS PATCH

QUARTERLY

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Striving to be the Best Warrior

Troops compete for the title, put
their skills to the test

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About The Cactus Patch

The Cactus Patch Quarterly is an authorized publication for the Soldiers, Families and civilian employees of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). Its contents are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

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On the Cover



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Commander's Notes

Brig. Gen. Arlan DeBlieck
103rd ESC Commanding General

Soldiers, civilians and Family members, It is a privilege to serve as your new commanding general. The theme of the recent 103rd ESC Leadership Training Workshop, "Rally Point 103: We are the 103rd ESC," summarizes the current state of the command as we approach the transition of authority on Oct. 1.

This is an exciting time for the 103rd ESC, but it is also bittersweet as we bid farewell to the Soldiers, civilians, and Families under the 561st Regional Support Group and the 89th Sustainment Brigade. To members of the 561st and the 89th- I am sincerely grateful for your hard work during your time under the 103rd, especially for your flexibility and teamwork in preparation for the upcoming realignment under the 451st.

As the former commander of the 561st, units in Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska will always have a near and dear place in my heart. I know that you will serve the 451st ESC with same level of professionalism and customer service as you did with the 103rd ESC. The 103rd did not achieve its reputation as a premier provider of logistics without you. I am proud of the Soldiers and am appreciative of all the Welcome Home Warrior Citizen Award ceremonies, changes of command, cooking competitions, unit homecomings, and farewell ceremonies that I was able to attend during my first few months as Commander of the 103rd.

As we say farewell, we also welcome units joining us from the 310th ESC. I would like to take this time to welcome the 206th, 645th, and 646th Regional Support Groups. All three organizations will bring a wealth of experience, professionalism, and perspective to the new 103rd ESC.

Finally, we are fortunate that the 644th and 649th Regional Support Groups will remain with the 103rd as they will be the backbone of the command during the transition. Even though they have both been affected and have had to adapt to the new mission command, their stability balances the command.

The transition and state of the Army Reserve requires the entire command to work together as



one team during the months and years ahead. We must remain relevant and ready at all times. Several units under the command are currently preparing for deployments overseas. The Army Reserve's role is broadening stateside as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2012 authorizes state governors to call on Reserve forces for up to 120 days in the event of a natural disaster or emergency. The 103rd is a prime candidate for these contingencies since we have the capability to transport cargo and heavy equipment as well as provide food, fuel, and water.

Whether preparing for a stateside or overseas mission, I challenge you to continue your commitment to excellence. This command has and will continue to have top-notch Soldiers and civilian employees and will continue to be a leading provider of logistics. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the Army Reserve. We owe gratitude to our Families because we cannot do our jobs without their support. Please take time to thank your loved ones for their sacrifice. God bless.

We Succeed!

Chaplain

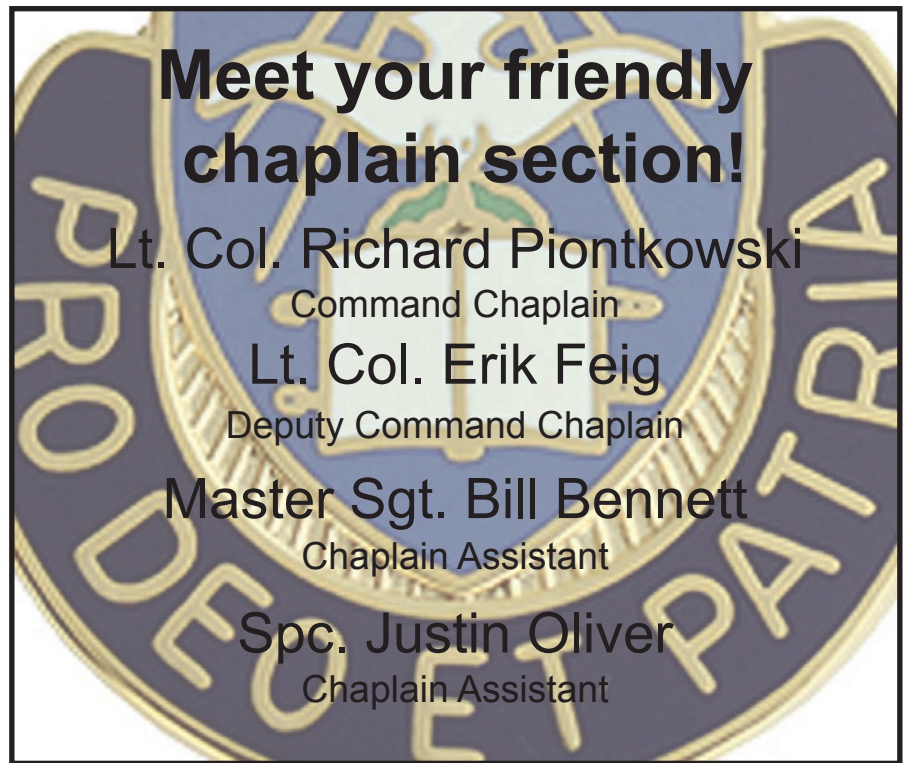
Lt. Col. Richard Piontkowski
103rd ESC Command Chaplain



You would think death would be simple, but what's with all the paperwork? As one of the recently deceased I can assure you the formalities are a pain and an explanation is required.

Three months ago my mother passed away suddenly after a routine operation. As the dutiful son I called the Social Security Administration (SSA) the day after to inform them of her demise. After the usual questions, the SSA person asked for my social security number. "OK, why?" asks I. "Because the reporting agent must give his or her social security number by law," says she. So in goes both numbers and life goes on after the funeral.

Ten days after the funeral the mailbox began filling with letters that began with "To the Estate of..." or "To the Family of..." I must admit they were touching. The Veteran's Administration (VA) informed my family that they were not eligible for any benefits after my death. Discover Card politely asked if the executor of the will of the late Richard... please contact them and make arrangements for the \$64.60 owed on the credit card to be paid back. Knowing that calling the VA was like spitting into a black hole, I called Discover Card. The nice rep on the other end of the line said that I was in the SSA's deceased database.



Meet your friendly chaplain section!

Lt. Col. Richard Piontkowski

Command Chaplain

Lt. Col. Erik Feig

Deputy Command Chaplain

Master Sgt. Bill Bennett

Chaplain Assistant

Spc. Justin Oliver

Chaplain Assistant

The advice of the credit card company was to not call, but appear in person at a local SSA office. I was fearful of going since everyone knows that government employees are either very nice or have the attitude of rabid Wolverines. Fortunately the ladies in the office were very kind and concerned and, they said, had my problem fixed within 15 minutes. Let's pause for a question here: If you read that someone has died, do you check the paper the next day to see if they are alive again? Thus the next two months found me calling in response to letters of my downfall. Fast forward to a month ago.

The Casualty Assistance Office called from Virginia. The gentleman on the phone hastened to assure me that they knew I had not assumed room temperature

but they wanted to warn me that the faulty data was now going through the Army system. You really don't think that means anything until your ID card (CAC) stops working, your promotion packet is affected and (gasp) you can't get paid! Being dead is not easy.

What's the lesson? We all make mistakes, even (God forgive me for saying so) the government can err. The point is not that we make mistakes. We all do. The position is that we keep trying and learn from our mistakes. We can make a lot of miscues in life, but as long as we learn from them, we can continue to thrive and maybe even be promoted.

Chaplain Richard Piontkowski
308-530-5803 (Don't conclude I'm dead if you get my voice-mail.)

103rd ESC changes command

Story and photo by:

Spc. Emily Walter

103rd ESC Public Affairs Office

FORT DES MOINES, Iowa—Brig. Gen. Mark Corson, former commanding general of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), relinquished command of the unit to Col. Arlan DeBlieck during a ceremony held April 22 at Fort Des Moines. Corson was recently assigned to the position of assistant chief of staff, J-4, with United States Forces – Korea.

The ceremony began with an invocation and a presentation of the attending units' colors; the units in attendance were the 649th Regional Support Group, the 644th Regional Support Group, the 561st Regional Support group, the 89th Sustainment Brigade, and Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 103rd ESC. The reviewing officer for the event was Maj. Gen. Luis Visot, commander of the 377th Theater Sustainment Command.

Visot thanked the service members' Families and community representatives who attended, including representatives from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, representatives from the Fort Des Moines Museum, and various employers, noting that their support is crucial for service members' success.

Corson echoed Visot's sentiments on the value of these sup-



Brig. Gen. Mark Corson, former commander of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), passes the unit's colors to Maj. Gen. Luis Visot, commander of the 377th Theater Sustainment Command at the change-of-command ceremony held April 22 at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.

porters, and added an extended gratitude toward his 103rd ESC "Family," whom he led for nearly three years both stateside and during a deployment to Iraq in 2010.

"This is a little bit of a bittersweet day," said Corson. "[It is] bitter in the sense that I have to leave this Family...sweet in the sense that I turn over the command to a good friend and colleague [DeBlieck]...It has been my privilege to serve with you all."

Corson added that he would remember his experience with the 103rd ESC "as a highlight of [his] life."

DeBlieck stoically accepted the 103rd ESC colors as Corson finally handed them off the symbolic "passing of the colors," signifying DeBlieck's official acceptance of the position of unit commander. His new responsibility includes overseeing 62 subordinate units and 5,300 Soldiers located in seven states. There are approximately 300 Soldiers in the 103rd

ESC alone. He acknowledged the change, and noted that changes are a natural part of progress.

"Change is not going to quit happening," said DeBlieck in his closing remarks. "We are going to constantly change...I look forward to working with all of you [in the 103rd ESC] in the future as we move forward."

Following DeBlieck's remarks, two 103rd ESC Soldiers recognized Corson's wife, Michelle, and daughter, Ashton, who attended the ceremony. They were given a bouquet of red roses to acknowledge their support of the 103rd ESC during Corson's command.

The ceremony concluded with retirement of the unit's colors, finalizing Corson's relinquishment of command. Although he called it a bittersweet departure, Corson's final remarks reflected his encouraging attitude about the future of the 103rd ESC.

"No tearful farewells today," he said. "I will see you again."

Remembering the fallen

Story and photo by:
Spc. Gabriel Coco

203rd Public Affairs Detachment

DES MOINES, Iowa— Memorial Day marks the beginning of summer, when friends and family get together for picnics and outdoor activities. It is also the day Americans pay respect to those past and present, who serve and have given their lives for their country. The Fort Des Moines Museum held a commemorative ceremony May 24 honoring members of the armed forces.

The museum has held services for the event seven years running. Service members and their families, veterans, supporters, and longtime supporter of veterans, U.S. Congressman Tom Latham, came to show support and appreciation. The Hoover High School band played during the ceremony.

The event was narrated by Air National Guardsman Lt. Col. Monica Blakley, who spoke about the history of Memorial Day and how the commemoration began. Blakley said the service holds importance not only for service members, but citizens as well.

“If you are a current or past service member, family of a service member, or never had the honor of wearing a uniform of one of our military services, we are all a community,” she said. “It is important we remember as a community. On this day we acknowledge and remember those we have loved. We hold their names and faces in our minds and remember their courage and dedication.”

Following the introduction,



Marine Sgt. Adam Vandervort, and Sgt. Derrick Lowe salute the wreath and American flag in remembrance and honor of American service members during a Memorial Day Ceremony held May 24 at Fort Des Moines Museum in Des Moines, Iowa.

Fort Des Moines Museum Executive Director Michael Kates offered words of welcome and thanks to those in attendance. Kates spoke of the mission for the Fort Des Moines Museum to enhance community cohesiveness through awareness and education provided by events and ceremonies such as the Memorial Day celebration.

The ceremony continued with the presentation of the colors, and the national anthem sung by Air National Guard Master Sgt. Rebecca Starmer.

Guest speaker and Operations and Training Officer for the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), Col. Rob Wiley, spoke of how honoring sacrifice is not unique to America, but how Memorial Day is a holiday uniquely American.

“Our day to remember those who died in service did not begin at the end of a war between nations,” Wiley said. “It was born at the end of a war we fought within our borders, a war fought between states, a war fought between brothers.”

The U.S. Marines presented the ceremonial wreath and the folding of the American flag before the standing crowd.

“Many service men and women return home from deployments to streets decorated with yellow ribbons,” said Wiley. “Others return home in a casket, draped with the most honored decoration of all: the American Flag. They gave everything to support and defend this nation built on life, liberty, and hope.

We owe our service. We owe our optimism. We owe our lives.”

Soldiers heat up competition

Story and photo by:
Spc. Christine Bivens
203rd Public Affairs Detachment

HASTINGS, Neb.— The Philip A. Connelly Award Evaluations visited the 295th Ordnance Company in Hastings to critique Soldiers' culinary skills and mission readiness under the U.S. Army Field Kitchen Category. One of only 17 units under the Army Reserve Command chosen to compete in this stage of the evaluation, the company's team of cooks has shown exceptional skill and excellence in their military occupational specialty.

The Connelly Award Evaluation is an 18-month event held for military cooks and their teams to compete against their fellow Soldiers from around the states for this award and bragging rights in the kitchen. This 45-year-old tradition is a three-part event that begins with more than 100 teams of cooks contending for one of the 17 spots chosen for the second round of the competition. Of the 17 chosen, only four will be selected for the final stage of this event, during which the award will be presented to the winning unit's team of cooks.

"Being selected to participate in this competition is a great honor," said Sgt. 1st Class Jane Stark, 295th Ordnance Company senior food operations sergeant and noncommissioned officer-in-charge, "A lot of effort and training has gone into this for us and I think we have what it takes to get to the next level. I believe we will fair very well."

The cooks are evaluated using a 1,000-point system divided into 10 categories. Some of the categories include proper sanitation practices, following recipes and Army regulations and most importantly, quality as well as taste of the food prepared. For consistency, the same dish is prepared amongst all 17 teams for evaluation. In this case, the menu consisted of sweet and sour chicken, vegetable stir fry, lyonnaise rice, chicken egg drop soup, spring salad and Asian pear cake for dessert.

"We walk in and the team of cooks is automatically at 1,000 points, and when we walk out we always hope they're still at 1,000 points," said Chief Warrant



As part of the Philip A. Connelly cooking competition, Soldiers with the 295th Ordnance Company in Hastings, Neb., simulated a field environment by setting up a mobile kitchen trailer in which they cooked the meals to be evaluated during the Connelly Award Evaluation recently.

Officer 3 Mark S. Morrell, U.S. Army Reserve Command, Philip A. Connelly Award evaluator.

For the 295th Ordnance Company, this event is not only a cooking competition but also vital training for their mission readiness and unit cohesion. More than 25 Soldiers, including cooks, fire fighters, ammunition specialists and more spent 10 days preparing their outdoor field site for the competition as part of their annual training. Hundreds of pounds of equipment including tents, generators, a mobile kitchen trailer, dining facilities, sanitation facilities, perimeter security equipment and more were set up to simulate combat conditions.

While the cooks prepared lunch, the Soldiers worked as a team to support the mission by aiding in sanitization, preparing the dining facilities, keeping guard of the site, practicing safety and simulating events around the post such as reacting to fire, mission and safety briefs, weapons training, and more.

"It's great training for everyone and helps us prepare for the future," said Spc. David Yelovich, 295th Ordnance Company fire fighter and gate guard for the event.

Of the 17 units selected, the 295th Ordnance Company is the 14th to be evaluated this year, said Morrell. This stage of the event concluded in July and the four final units will be announced in August for the Department of the Army level of the competition.

The Soldiers of the 295th Ord. Co. eagerly wait to find out if they are one of the four units chosen to continue to the Department of the Army final stage of the Connelly Awards in August, said Stark.

Building

Story and photo by:
Spc. Emily Walter
103rd ESC Public Affairs Office

DENVER— Service members and their spouses, along with single service members, went back to the basics of maintaining (or obtaining) a healthy relationship at a Strong Bonds retreat March 30 – April 1 at the Sheraton Hotel in Denver. The event was broken into two separate retreats, one for service members and their spouses, and one for single service members; Lt. Col. Erik Feig, chaplain with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and his wife Stacey Feig together spoke for the couples' retreat, and Lt. Col. Mike Merrill, chaplain with the 561st Regional Support Group, was in charge of the singles' retreat.

The focal point of the couples' retreat was communication; this included classes on how to work through conflict, be an active listener, confronting "hidden issues," and maintain patience and open-mindedness. Often, the couples would be instructed to speak privately with each other or to break into groups with other couples to discuss how to apply these skills in their own lives. They also engaged in fun yet practical exercises such as passing a small, square magnet called "the floor" back and forth in order to practice "sharing the floor" in discussion.

"Sometimes it is a necessity to interject something unnatural when natural isn't working for you, when you know you're approaching a topic that tends to cause argument," instructed Erik Feig, acknowledging the silliness of such exercises.

Eric and Stacey Feig guided the couples through many sensitive topics such as how and when to discuss "hidden issues" that sometimes go ignored in order to avoid conflict. However, they also stressed the importance of having fun by making time for dates that both spouses can look forward to, reminding them to "dare to be friends."

"These are solid skills that you can use in every-



Married couples participate in a couples Bingo activity, allowing them to meet other couples at a Strong Bonds retreat held March 30-April 1 at the Sheraton Hotel in Denver. Strong Bonds events invite couples and singles in the military to go back to the basics of relationships by reviewing skills such as communication, active listening, patience, working through conflict, and confronting "hidden issues," among other skills.

day life," said Erik Feig. "They work whether you've been married a long time or not."

Both Erik and Stacey Feig have been teaching relationship skills to service members and their spouses for years, and said they encourage all couples to participate in a Strong Bonds event.

"Every couple can benefit from these skills," said Stacey Feig, who is a marriage and family counselor. "Most couples don't have enough time to just be with each other, and this provides an opportunity for a date night, while also allowing them to practice the skills [taught at the event] in a safe place."

Erik Feig added that the Strong Bonds retreats help couples achieve their marriage goals.

"We're helping them fulfill their own dreams, and to learn to love each other better, which is a bonus," he said. At the end of the event, as a way to celebrate that bonus, Erik and Stacey Feig led a marriage vow renewal ceremony in which the participants could

bonds for *Life*

Couples practice several communication skills with guidance from a workbook given to them at a Strong Bonds retreat held March 30-April 1 at the Sheraton Hotel in Denver. Strong Bonds events invite couples and singles in the military to go back to the basics of relationships by reviewing skills such as communication, active listening, patience, working through conflict, and confronting "hidden issues," among other skills.



"It doesn't matter whether your marriage is going well or struggling. You can always use the time to make your bond stronger."

Capt. Adam Kawaguchi
494th Brigade Support Battalion

have chosen to partake.

Merrill, who led the Strong Bonds singles' retreat, said that the event is a good outlet for single service members too.

"Whether married or not, everyone is in relationships," he said. "Many in the singles' class are dating, or are in relationships with parents, friends or employers."

The objective of the singles' event focused partly on how to find and maintain a healthy dating relationship, and the class was guided by a workbook called "How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk (or Jerkette)." The service members discussed several relationship topics as a large group and sometimes broke into smaller groups for various activities.

"This is not the typical Army event," said Merrill. "It's three days to get to know yourself better and perhaps get a new set of skills for coping with life. It's in a nice hotel, a nice location, and there are

several hours each day for [the service members] to relax, reduce stress, and enjoy the atmosphere, along with the classroom material."

Capt. Adam Kawaguchi, battalion chaplain with the 494th Brigade Support Battalion, attended the Strong Bonds retreat with his wife, Shareen. He is also a Strong Bonds trainer and recognized the importance of such events for all service members.

"It doesn't matter whether your marriage is going well or struggling," he said. "You can always use the time to make your bond stronger. It's also good for single service members because then you have that foundation and will have fewer problems later."

Shareen Kawaguchi said that she has recommended Strong Bonds to other couples because it gives them an opportunity to be alone together without distractions.

"It's been a lot of fun," added Shareen. "I'm going to remember this for a long time."

TRiPS: Still saving lives

Mr. Thomas B. Nielsen

103rd ESC Safety & Occupational Health Office

The season of holiday travel is coming, and Soldiers driving to and from their destinations could encounter any number of hazards along the way. The Army's Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS) risk assessment tool, found online at the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center website, is a great resource to get Soldiers started safely on their summer getaways.

All Soldiers planning to drive a privately owned vehicle on pass, leave, temporary duty or permanent change of station travel orders outside their immediate local area are required to complete a TRiPS assessment before their departure date. The tool allows supervisors to review a Soldier's travel plans for potential safety issues and open dialogue on how to further mitigate risk, especially off duty.

TRiPS, originally released Army-wide in fiscal year 2004, has proven successful in helping reduce driving fatalities every year since its inception.

In FY 2010, active-duty Army fatalities while on TRiPS assessed travel was only 17 percent of total fatalities occurring outside of 150 miles from the installation, according to the USACR/Safety Center. It has been so effective

that all the other military services have adopted it.

The key to the program's success is leader involvement. The tool provides leaders with important details about their Soldiers' plans, overall risk and options to mitigate hazards during specific trips. Armed with vital facts, leaders may then approve or disapprove the online assessment and request the Soldier alter his or her travel to reduce identified risks. This leader-to-subordinate interaction, fostered by TRiPS, is crucial to Soldier safety during long trips away from home station.

Despite its effectiveness, TRiPS is not intended to replace the supervisor's role in approving leave, nor should it become a check-the-block system to provide a paper trail after an accident. The intent is to empower leaders with the facts and bring them face-to-face with their Soldiers to better protect and inform them of driving hazards.

Soldiers can now take advantage of a new "comments" section added during the past year. With this enhancement, both supervisors and subordinates can convey thoughts not captured in the automated assessment. A motorcycle section has also been added for Soldiers riding motorcycles to their destinations.

Soldiers can find the tool at:

<https://safety.army.mil/>

A promotional graphic for the TRiPS (Travel Risk Planning System) tool. The background is a scenic view of a winding road through a dry, hilly landscape under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on this background. At the top left, it asks 'Did you have time to discuss your Soldier's POV travel plans?' and states 'TRiPS can help.' To the right, the title 'TRAVEL RISK TRiPS PLANNING SYSTEM' is displayed in large, bold, yellow and orange letters, with the URL 'https://safety.army.mil' below it. In the center, four bullet points are listed: '- Supports Leader engagement', '- Provides risk mitigation', '- Captures detailed travel plans', and '- Provides risk level'. At the bottom, there are three logos: the U.S. Army 'ARMY STRONG' logo, the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center logo, and the 'ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG' logo with the tagline 'A BAND OF BROTHERS & SISTERS'.



ABOVE: Soldiers with the 516th Transportation Detachment, Management Control Team, sing the Army Song at their deployment ceremony Jan. 22. The 516th is deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation New Dawn.

RIGHT: Capt. Matthew Strickland, commander, 516th Transportation Detachment, Management Control Team, cuts the farewell cake with his daughters Layla and Madison during the unit's deployment ceremony Jan. 22.

516th MCT bids farewell before mission

Story and photos by:
Sgt. Francis Horton
363rd Public Affairs Detachment

ST. LOUIS— Soldiers with the 516th Transportation Detachment, Movement Control Team, participated in a mobilization farewell ceremony Jan. 22.

Approximately 20 Soldiers deployed to Kuwait to perform movement control functions.

The 516th is in charge of moving military equipment from Iraq back to the United States. The Soldiers will perform quality control and monitor the civilian contractors in charge of shipping the equipment home.

The Soldiers conducted pre-deployment training in Fort Dix, N.J., and Fort Snelling, Minn.

During the ceremony, guest speakers from around the state came to wish the Soldiers good luck on their deployment.

"What you do is essential," said William Lacy



Clay, U.S. Congressman from Missouri's First Congressional District. "Today we renew our commitment to all of you."

Capt. Matthew Strickland, commander, 516th Trans. Det., MCT, gave a heartfelt speech to the troops and had a message for their Families as well.

"To the Families who are sending their loved ones into the fight, I thank you for your sacrifices," Strickland said.

Also in attendance to give his farewell to the troops was Brig. Gen. Mark Corson, commanding general of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). According to him, although the current administration has put an end to the war on terror in Iraq, there is still plenty of work that still needs to be done.

"Our commitment to Iraq is not over," Corson said. "It's a challenge, but it's worth it."

Troops compete to become

Story and photo by:
Spc. Monte Swift

203rd Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP DODGE, Iowa— The motivation of nine Soldiers from the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) was more than enough to fight through chilling winds, blowing snow, rain, mud, blisters and bruises during the 103rd ESC Best Warrior Competition held at Camp Dodge, Iowa, March 1-4.

Like Soldiers on a battle field, obstinate in a course of action, the competitors pushed themselves and each other to the limit throughout the 10-event, four-day competition.

Though all Soldiers competing in the event did so for different reasons, their goals remained simple and the same: to do their best, represent their unit and win. The competition represented the second stage of the Army Reserve-wide competition.

"This is a great chance to see what you are capable of doing. You just keep pushing yourself until you can't go any further," said Staff Sgt. Chris Tubrick, 443rd Transportation Company, who was the first noncommissioned officer to complete the 10-kilometer ruck march. "My mentality is to just block

everything else out and keep putting one foot in front of the other."

Due to weather conditions, the ruck march was considered by many the most grueling event of the competition, however, other events such as Army Warrior Tasks lanes and land navigation tested the competitors' minds on a wide range of Soldier tasks.

Each Soldier was issued a unit sponsor before the competition, who served as mentor, advisor and aid to the competitors. Many competitors attributed their success and motivation in part to their sponsors, who did everything from helping them study through long-distance e-mails and phone calls, to picking up dry cleaning. Sponsors were able to take part in some events with their Soldier, but were not allowed to physically help.

"This is a great chance to see what you are capable of doing. You just keep pushing yourself until you can't go any further."

Staff Sgt. Chris Tubrick

The competition was divided into two categories: junior enlisted/Soldier and NCO. However for some, the drive to be the best led to higher ambitions.

"When I arrived here, my mindset was that I'm not just going against the specialists, I am going against everyone, so that kept me going," said Spc. Nathaniel Dewey, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 103rd ESC. To prepare for the competi-



Best Warrior

tion, Dewey worked out and even went running with his vest and pack.

As the long days of the competition went on, Soldiers who had previously arrived as individuals found more motivation in each other, even helping other competitors.

"I didn't know any of the other competitors before I got here, but over the past three or four days, we have got pretty close," said Spc. Cory Schmitt, 445th Transportation Company. "We stick together, figure out what we need to do and help each other study. We are competing with each other, but we are still brothers."

Still, the will to compete for the title "Best Warrior" was on everyone's mind, and presented personal challenges to each Soldier.

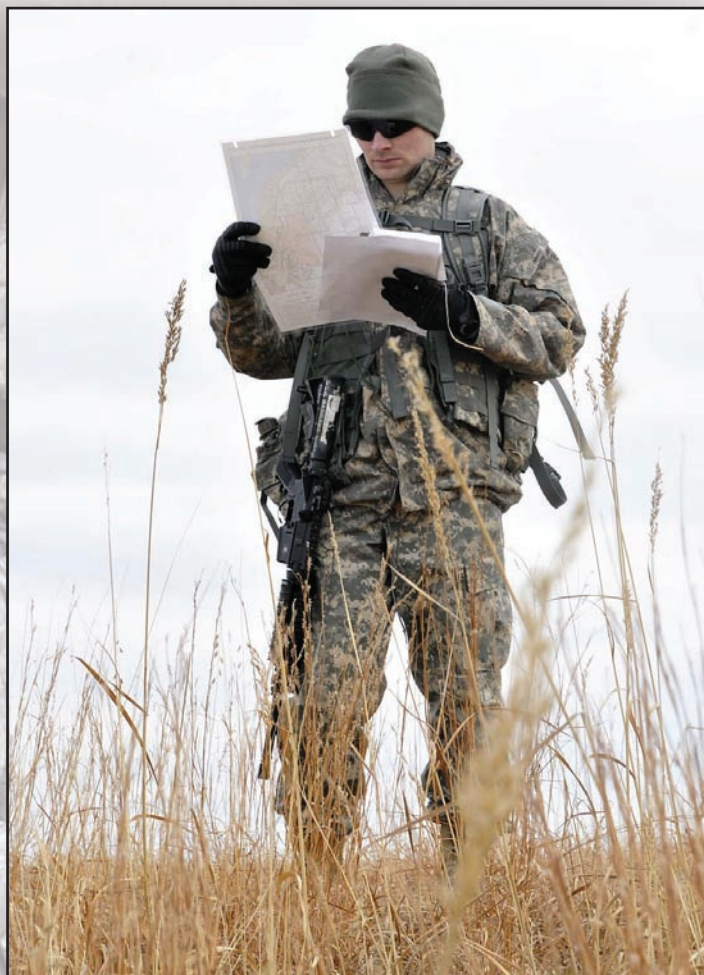
"The most difficult part wasn't really any part of the competition, but dealing with yourself," said Schmitt. "I know when I was on the qualification range I missed targets and was getting frustrated. I found that with a lot of events, and when that happens, you start failing. But I brought it back around, and started hitting every target. I took a deep breath, I relaxed, and bounced back up."

Other events of the competition included a physical fitness test, combatives, a written exam, a grenade range mystery event, and a board. Many Soldiers considered the board and day/night land navigation to be the most difficult events of the competition.

On the final day, awards were presented to Soldiers who competed in the event.

Moving on to the 377th Theater Sustainment Command level of the Best Warrior Competition for junior enlisted Soldier and receiving the Army Commendation Medal was Spc. Austin Okorn, 842nd Quartermaster Company under the 89th Sustainment Brigade. Okorn, a college student and member of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), says due to a busy schedule, study time for the first two levels was limited. "Now knowing it's really getting serious and I am getting further than I had anticipated, I am definitely making sure that I devote a lot of time to preparing for the 377th competition and representing the 103rd the best I can," he said.

Taking home the Best Warrior Noncommissioned Officer title and the Army Commendation Medal was Sgt. Orval Emery, 89th Sustainment Brigade. "I am humbled and I am grateful. There were some really stellar Soldiers out there, and it had to have been close," said Emery. "Bringing this home to the 89th is great, but I am just the race car driver. You had a car, you had a mechanic and a driver. I couldn't have done it without everyone else. My unit and sponsor was great at helping me prepare, sending me questions and helping me study."



ABOVE: A Soldier with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) participates in the land navigation portion of the Best Warrior Competition held in March at Camp Dodge, Iowa. The competition lasted four days and featured 10 events in which the Soldiers showed their tactical wherewithal and competence in performing basic warrior tasks.

LEFT: Sgt. Nathaniel Durbala, financial management technical/budget analyst with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), prepares a .50-caliber machine gun during the 103rd ESC's Best Warrior Competition held in March at Camp Dodge, Iowa. The competition lasted four days and featured 10 events in which the Soldiers showed their tactical wherewithal and competence in performing basic warrior tasks.

Certificates of Achievement were presented to Spc. Nathaniel Dewey, 103rd ESC; Lance Korinko, 443rd Transportation Company; Spc. Cory Schmitt, 445th Transportation Company; Spc. Austin Okorn, 842nd Quartermaster Company; Sgt. Nathaniel Durbala, 103rd ESC; Sgt. Orval Emery, 89th Signal Brigade; Sgt. Tyler Parrent, 203rd Transportation Company; and Staff Sgt. Christopher Tubrick, 443rd Transportation Company.

Winners of the two classes will move on to represent the 103rd at the 377th TSC Best Warrior Competition before moving on to the final stage at the Army Reserve Command level.



Becoming Army Stronger

Spc. Laura Achterberg, 394th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, completes an obstacle course May 15 during Physical Readiness Enhancement Training at Fort McCoy, Wis.

Story and photos by:
Sgt. Debralee P Crankshaw
363rd Public Affairs Detachment

FORT MCCOY, Wis.— The 394th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, at the direction of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), held Physical Readiness Enhancement Training at Fort McCoy, Wis., May 10-24.

“The primary mission is to take individuals that are within the 103rd

ESC’s footprint that need additional improvement in their Army Physical Fitness Training or their height and weight in order for them to be eligible for advanced schooling or military occupational specialty schooling,” said Lt. Col. Kelly D. McNeese, commander, 394th CSSB. “That is important because that is what we do as the military: to be ready both functionally and, as Soldiers, be fit.”

The 258 Soldiers in attendance

from the 103rd ESC and their subordinate units used their two weeks of annual training to take part in this rigorous curriculum.

“We have them for 14 hours a day, with classroom and different PT sessions and marching to chow (more than) 10 miles a day. It’s 1.7 miles to the chow hall and 1.7 miles back. Not to mention marching to the PT fields,” said Sgt. 1st Class Dan Cordell, Platoon sergeant, 1st Plt., A

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Soldiers from the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and subordinate units, participate in Physical Readiness Enhancement Training at Fort McCoy, Wis., May 16.



Sgt. 1st Class Dan Cordell (left), Platoon Sergeant, 1st Platoon, A Company, leads his platoon in flutter-kicks May 15 during Physical Readiness Enhancement Training at Fort McCoy, Wis.

Company of the PRET and security enjoys teaching it. noncommissioned officer-in-charge, “They [the cadre] come from all 103rd ESC.

Cordell is one of the 28 volunteer cadre members who asked to train and mentor these Soldiers.

Cordell said he chose to volunteer because fitness is his passion, and he

enjoys teaching it. “They [the cadre] come from all [major subordinate commands] across the board and they are a great bunch; that just happened by accident,” said Master Sgt. James Holloway, acting command sergeant major, 394th

They’re learning how to find that inner strength that some of them didn’t even realize was there.

CSSB.

The cadre focused on the physical training of the Soldiers with runs, road marches and guerrilla drills. The Soldiers also completed a confidence course, which included tunnels, a cargo rope climb, a rope climb, monkey bars and a low crawl.

“Physical fitness is a key to allow you to adapt and to overcome serious situations, overcome stress, overcome climate,” said Holloway. “It’s

just a good motivator tool and it's necessary for the military."

While the curriculum is demanding, it isn't as bad as some Soldiers feared.

"[I expected] lots and lots and lots of PT, early mornings, late nights; I was not sure I was going to be able to keep up," said Spc. Lisa Brown, truck driver, 1011th Quartermaster Company. "It's not quite as hard as I thought. I still have a hard time keeping up, but as long as you give it your all, it's not so bad."

Also in the curriculum are dietary and nutrition education and support. A dietitian, Capt. Lauren Popeck, 322nd Medical Company out of Southfield, Mich., was on hand for that portion of the training. She gave classroom instruction to the group, but also had one-on-one sessions with those Soldiers who are overweight.

In her classes, Popeck teaches nutrition basics including food groups and healthiest options from each, portion sizes, and weight loss and maintenance tips. During her one-on-one sessions, she listens to the Soldiers and bases her counseling on their needs, as well as providing them with an individual meal plan.

"I was called to support this mission because the role of a dietitian in the Army for the Soldiers in the weight-control program is to educate the Soldiers and inform them and give them the tools they need to be able to lose weight successfully, and to educate them about eating healthfully for the rest of their life," said Popeck.

The Army recommends a weight loss of 3-8 pounds a month for those on the weight control program. According to Capt. Michelle Corker, officer-in-charge, 322nd Medical Co., this is possible if the Soldiers use what they have learned.

"Continue with the dietary guidelines you're learning here and take them home and initiate them into your daily lifestyle," she said. "Thirty minutes to forty-five minutes [of exercise] at least three to five times a week is very reasonable. If they continue to eat nutritionally, like they're being taught, and remember their food groups, [then] they should be able to lose their 3-8 pounds a month very healthily."

The 394th worked with the cadre to set up the cur-

riculum after attending the PRET leadership course, which taught how many iterations of physical training were needed.

"This is our first [PRET] and we thought we brought a lot to the table," said Holloway. "It was already kind of templated, we just used that to set the tone for what is required for the Soldiers to actually meet their goals."

He also added that it was necessary to adjust the training because "nothing ever looks the same as it does on paper."

"We were set up like a training school," he added. "We just took the basics as we normally would at a school environment and just applied it to the way we do everything."

Next year, the 644th Regional Support Group will implement the PRET. The 394th believes they have given them a good starting point.

"We built the launching pad, now it's up to the 644th to take off with it," said McNeese.

The 394th had some concerns when they began, but after initiating the training found those were unfounded.

"[Motivation of the Soldiers]

was one of our main worries initially, but it's no longer a worry now," said Holloway. "We have a good set of cadre along with the combination of the Soldiers that we have. Everyone is pushing and everyone is rooting them on."

The Soldiers have even exceeded their expectations.

"I was a skeptic. When I first got the mission, I thought this is going to be a hard thing to do, but it has not been," said McNeese. "This has been eye-opening in a lot of ways. I think what we've shown here is that the Soldiers, given the opportunity to grow, learn and develop their personal skills as well as their skills in the unit and as a team, that they produce."

The difference in fitness among the Soldiers also concerned some of the cadre, but, according to Cordell, the differences in fitness levels haven't affected the training. However, the planning staff and cadre weren't the only ones with concerns. Some of the Soldiers were not looking forward to the experience.

This is a change of life overall. Don't get lost in the setbacks.

"[My first thought was] I'm in trouble. I'm going to die," said Brown. "I was afraid of how the sergeants were going to be, if it was going to be like Basic [Training] again. That really scared me and they've all been awesome. They're teaching, they're right there pushing you and motivating."

McNeese understands this fear, but has seen something completely different come from these Soldiers.

"It's actually amazing," said McNeese. "The Soldiers come here, not knowing what to expect, thinking it's going to be two weeks of brutality, when actually, they come out, they're motivated, they're learning teamwork, they're learning how to reach deep inside themselves and find that inner strength that some of them didn't even realize was there. We're seeing them grow in their emotional strength as well as their physical strength."

The Soldiers are starting to see and understand these benefits and what they've been taught.

"The people that are here are the ones that aren't used to doing a whole lot, and to throw them right into the mix and start them marching 10 miles a day on top of everything else, it's been rough on them," said Cordell. "But now that we have buses to take them back and forth to chow, they don't want to ride

them because they realize how many calories they're burning just by walking to chow and back."

The nutritional teachings have also had an impact.

"There is a lot of stuff that I never really thought about...but now...it all make sense, like being able to eat right, choosing the right type of meals, the frequency of the meals," said Sgt. Luke Hathaway, chemical noncommissioned officer, 89th Sustainment Brigade.

Brown said she has found something that she will take home with her.

"Having a routine and getting up early is something I didn't motivate myself to do," she said. "The time we are getting up isn't a ridiculous time and it's absolutely something I can keep doing once I get home so I can stay in shape."

Holloway encourages all participants to push forward after they return home.

"Continue what we brought to the table," he said. "This is a change of life overall. We're going to have some setbacks. Don't get lost in the setbacks. You just have to continue to put the full effort forward. And I told the group, while they're here, provide us 50%, just come halfway and we'll take you the rest of the way." ■

BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION


Do you have what it takes to be the next Best Warrior?

WHO: Enlisted Soldiers

WHEN: November 2012

INTERESTED? Sign up ASAP through your chain of command.





Brig. Gen. Mark Corson, Commanding General, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), places a wreath in commemoration of Exercise Tiger April 28 in Mexico, Mo. The only two survivors of Exercise Tiger, David Troyer and Leonard Bruns received a wreath in both Mexico, Mo. and Columbia, Mo.

Exercise Tiger

Story and photos by:
By Spc. Benjamin Slankard
363rd Public Affairs Detachment

COLUMBIA, Mo.— The 68th anniversary of Exercise Tiger, in conjunction with a welcome-home tribute, greeted troops arriving home after deployed to Iraq. The Soldiers were from the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and Missouri National Guard in central Missouri.

The first ceremony occurred in Mexico, Mo., April 28. The event started in front of the Audrain County Courthouse. A convoy of Humvees was lined up in front of the courthouse for the drive to Columbia.

Attendees included Brig. Gen. Mark Corson, commanding general, 103rd ESC; Mayor Bob McDavid, mayor of Columbia; and Jim Cunningham, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 280 chaplain. Corson laid a wreath in both Mexico and Colum-

bia, and David Troyer and Leonard Bruns, two of the last Exercise Tiger survivors, received them.

Following the wreath-laying, a governor's proclamation was read proclaiming April 28 as Exercise Tiger Day for the state of Missouri. Then, the 428th Rifle Team based out of Jefferson City, Mo., performed a 21-gun salute.

Corson led the convoy, accompanied by the Patriot Guard Riders, which was comprised of Army Reserve Soldiers from the 428th Transportation Company of Jefferson City, the 484th Transportation Battalion of Springfield, Mo., and the 620th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion of St. Louis.

The convoy commenced in Jefferson City and continued up the WWII Exercise Tiger Expressway to the Audrain County Courthouse. From Mexico, it continued to the armory in Columbia. The convoy

then made a loop along 10th and 7th Streets, stopping for a moment at the War Memorial in front of the Boone County Courthouse.

All of the Soldiers participating in the ceremonies were volunteers that set their time aside to pay respects and honor those who have served.

Staff Sgt. Michael St. Jacques, in charge of a five-vehicle convoy, was honored to be part of the procession.

"I found the whole thing fascinating," St. Jacques said. "My guys came in and practiced their drill and ceremony yesterday. It's been busy."

Corson offered a governor's proclamation along with his gratitude for troops that serve in the military.

Mayor McDavid offered a welcome speech thanking all those who attended and supported troops past and present, and also personally thanked the 103rd ESC and the Missouri Guard that just returned.



welcomes Vets home

Taps was performed by Bugles Across America, led by Paul Hobbs and the 428th rifle team offered a 21-gun salute.

The VFW Post 280 hosted the final portion of the event and included the 312th Army Band Super Hipnotic Ensemble from Fort McCoy, Wis., which performed The National Anthem and military medleys.

Corson closed the ceremony after proclamations were read on behalf of Secretaries of the Army, Navy, Coast Guard and the governor of Missouri. He also delivered the key note speech emphasizing the role of the military and those who have lost their lives in service of their country.

The end of the ceremony concluded with retiring of the colors and a benediction by Cunningham.

“Those who have passed on are not victims, but heroes,” Corson said. “We may have casualties but we are not victims.”



ABOVE: Veterans stand next to a Humvee to enjoy the sunshine during ceremonies April 28. Veterans attended the events in Columbia, Mo. and Mexico, Mo.

TOP: The 620th CSSB Rifle Team provides a 21-gun salute April 28 in front of the courthouse in Columbia, Mo.

Serving with pri

Story and photos by:
Spc. Emily Walter

103rd ESC Public Affairs Office

CAMP DODGE, Iowa— He won his first international culinary competition in Europe as a young twenty-something. Then, he worked with the U.S. president's staff and food service teams. He even snagged first place in the "traditional pizza" category of the Pizza World Championship — in Italy, competing against Italians.

And that's just to name a few.

Award-winning cuisine is not all that he has served, however. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Danny Wolf, the food program manager with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), has served in the Army since 1976 as a cook, which is about when his colorful career in food service took off. He was in charge of food preparation and presentation for the Warrant Officer Professional Development and Recruitment Workshop held at Camp Dodge Aug. 24-25.

As a young private first class, Wolf was first assigned to a unit in Mainz, Germany. Shortly after arriving, he entered his beef wellington with duchess potatoes and an artfully presented vegetable side-dish into an international cooking competition. The judges named him the winner, which was "unheard of at the time," said Wolf, referring to the fact that he was an American Army cook competing against predominantly European chefs.

When Wolf's commanding general heard of the news, he asked Wolf to be his enlisted aide, assisting the general with various military functions and events. Having accepted the offer, Wolf was promptly sent to French cuisine school, bartending school, Italian cuisine school, and cake decorating school in order to learn a wide range of culinary skills.

In 1980, when Ronald Reagan became president, the commanding general whom Wolf aided was part of the presidential staff. That meant that Wolf, too, was assigned to work for the White House on the protocol team, which attended to visiting military VIPs, the secret service, and official functions.

After three years on one of President Reagan's staff teams, Wolf completed his military contract and left the



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Danny Wolf, the food program manager, shows a few of his collection of culinary accomplishments, which he has

Army to pursue his food service career further. First, he became a corporate chef for Marriot hotels, training chefs, developing menus, and creating management training manuals. Then, Wolf was recruited for United Airlines as the vice president of operations for all food service. He remained there for 10 years.

After his position with United Airlines, Wolf opened five pizzerias in northern Virginia, where he said he made everything from scratch, including the mozzarella cheese that topped the pizzas.

Wolf took his culinary skills even further by entering and winning in three international cooking competitions, two in Atlantic City and one (the Pizza World Championship) in Salsomaggiore, Italy. It is for the pizza championship that Wolf seems to feel the most pride.

"It was amazing because when the American team went to Italy, the [Italian competitors] weren't telling

de, with passion



with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), displays a been acquiring since he enlisted in 1976.

us all the rules,” he recalls. “Nothing was the way we thought it would be.”

Wolf went on to explain that he and his team had never used a wood-fire oven, which was all that was available. He said that each team was required to present their pizza to the judges in Italian, which posed another challenge. Despite the obstacles, though, Wolf won with a pizza topped with buffalo meat, bacon, and feta cheese; he was first honorable mention in the overall competition.

“[The pizza] awed them [the judges],” said Wolf. “Italians had never had anything like that.”

After building his impressive repertoire of culinary skill and credibility, Wolf said he wanted to enter back into the military post-9/11. But in order to reenlist, he needed to lose 150 pounds, which he accomplished in a matter of six months.

“My goal [for enlisting] was three reasons,” said Wolf.

“I wanted to make warrant officer, I wanted to be deployed, and I wanted to bring my love and my passion of food service to the military, where I thought it was gone. And if I couldn’t do that, I’d get out.”

Having made it past the rank of warrant officer, and having been deployed to Afghanistan, Wolf continues to thrive on the third pillar of his goal. In Afghanistan, he was in charge of all military food service, which is the first time an Army Reserve Soldier has performed such a task. Now, he mentors the other 103rd ESC food service specialists.

When asked about his favorite aspect of being a leader in food service, he replied, “Being where my cooks are cooking, mentoring and showing them different ways to work smarter and safer, and...[proving] to a commander that it’s way better to cook than to hire a contractor [to cook].”

In addition to mentoring Soldiers, Wolf also occasionally teaches during home economics classes, showing the students how to make tasty, quick and easy meals for themselves with the simple ingredients that are already in their refrigerator.

At that moment, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Erica Crawford, a Soldier with the 103rd ESC, walked into the kitchen, where Wolf was preparing a cupcake display for the afternoon, commending Wolf on the breakfast meal that his Soldiers served that morning.

“Breakfast was awesome,” said Crawford. “You got some of the best cooks, I tell ya.”

Wolf is no stranger to recognition for his craft. He has been featured in multiple magazines and newspapers, including the Alberta Buffalo, PMQ Pizza Magazine, Virginia’s The Daily Journal, and other publications. He has also appeared on ABC News and “The Tonight Show with Jay Leno.”

Despite growing notoriety, Wolf remains modest.

“I’m not here for the money,” he said. “I’d almost do it for free. It’s more about my culture, my art...It’s more about my beliefs. I want everybody to be able to do this.”

As a way to accomplish that goal, Wolf is currently putting together a cookbook DVD that teaches how to cook at home “like a chef.” After publishing it, Wolf said he is going to give the profits to programs that support service members.

“If you would ask me what I want my legacy to be, I’d say for someone to remember me, saying, ‘Boy, he taught me how to make that.’”

Reserve Day invites state VIPs

Story and photo by:

Spc. Emily Walter

103rd ESC Public Affairs Office

FORT DES MOINES, Iowa— Several members of U.S. congressional offices in Iowa saw first-hand the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) operations and capabilities during Army Reserve Day, hosted by the 103rd ESC June 26 at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. The event occurred shortly after the passing of the Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which allows governors to request federal forces (i.e., the Army Reserve) to assist with a natural disaster or emergency.

The congressional officials who attended were Rep. Bruce Hunter, Iowa House District 62; Mr. Bill Anderson, representing U.S. Congressman Steve King's office; Ms. Ann Dvorsky, representing U.S. Congressman Dave Loebsack's office; Mr. Hugh McGuire, representing U.S. Congressman Leonard Boswell's office; Mr. Skip Moore, Des Moines city council; Ms./Col. Janet Riley and Mr. Mark Schouten, both from Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency; and Ms. Kim Taylor, representing U.S. Senator Tom Harkin's office.

The day began with a background brief overseen by Brig. Gen. Arlan DeBlieck, commanding officer of the 103rd ESC; Col. David Elwell, chief of staff for the 103rd ESC; Col. Gus Checketts, support operations officer for the 103rd ESC; and Col. Robert Wiley, operations and training officer for the 103rd ESC.

"The strength of the Army is our Soldiers; the strength of our Soldiers is our families; the strength of our families is our communities," said DeBlieck. He went on to explain the importance of Army Reserve Soldiers in the community. "Much like the National Guard, our Soldiers bring to



Congressional officials visited the Fort Des Moines as part of Army Reserve Day June 26.

the table Army values...NDAA enables us to bring those values back to the community."

DeBlieck's words resonated as the focal point of the day while the attendees took a tour of the 103rd ESC, whose Soldiers were in the midst of their two-week annual training exercise. This provided the attendees with an even closer look at the unit's operations.

The tour began with the 203rd Public Affairs Detachment, an augment to the 103rd ESC, then continued through the G1 Personnel section, Family Programs, the G3 Joint Operations Cell, Support Operations, the kitchen, G4 Supply section, G6 section, and the Fort Des Moines Museum. At each stop on the tour, a member of the section briefed the attendees about their respective section's purpose and operations.

The purpose of the tour was to educate and build a better partnership between the community and the Army Reserve, and to raise the officials' awareness of the 103rd ESC's capabilities as a logistical headquarters, should the unit's assistance be needed to help recover from a natural disaster or emergency in the continental U.S.

"It's very interesting because you

[103rd ESC] do things most people don't think about, and that the average person would never think about," said Taylor. "It was eye-opening."

Taylor added that the first-hand look at the 103rd ESC was an "incredibly helpful" step so that the members of the city, state, and federal governments can be aware of what exactly the Army Reserve needs in order to accomplish and/or improve their mission.

Riley, whose perspective on the Army Reserve is seeded in both her civilian career and her military career, said the tour was "a good opportunity for some of our elected officials to get a taste of what kind of capabilities our Reserves have," especially following the NDAA. "They [elected officials] haven't been exposed to what the Reserves are all about," she added. "This puts a face and a name to an organization."

By the end of the day, the congressional attendees gained an overarching look at the 103rd ESC. They saw the Army Reserve as a valuable state asset by providing Soldiers who can carry their skills over from the military into the community, and also as a force ready and able to respond to any call for help, either overseas or stateside.

Training teaches troops key skills

Story and photo by:
Sgt. Debralee P. Crankshaw
103rd ESC Public Affairs Office

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT, Calif.— The 620th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion is preparing for future deployments with three weeks of annual training at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., for Combat Support Training Exercise 91.

The battalion is providing support July 9-29 for transportation and quartermaster units with a total of almost 550 Soldiers. These units provide water purification, laundry and bath services, transportation of supplies and materials, and retail and bulk fuel.

“Because we are a sustainment battalion, our responsibility is to provide support to units that come into our base of operation,” said Sgt. 1st Class Deon McKinzie, 620th CSSB, senior human resources noncommissioned officer-in-charge. “We are pretty much the landlord for those units that are coming into theater to perform their individual missions.”

The 620th is supporting the transportation and quartermaster units, but these units are not organic to them.

“A CSSB, under the modular Army, is designed to be able to accommodate any number of different types of companies tailored to a particular mission given to the CSSB,” said Lt. Col. Sean Campion, 620th commander. “There is a high expectation that you can be given any support company and be able to know and understand how to use it and make it fit into the bigger picture of the mission you’ve been given.”

While these units do not belong to the 620th, they have been working together to plan this exercise.

“We’ve had them for almost a year,” said Master Sgt. Richard Montgomery, 620th battle captain. “So we know what their capabilities are, we know the makeup of their units, equipment and personnel-wise. It wasn’t hard at all (for us to have mission command).”

Other sections had a few issues early in the exercise, but looked at them as part of the process.

“Initially, it starts out as a rough process because we’re not on the same page initially,” said

McKinzie. “Then as the exercise goes on and they figure out our needs and we communicate better, then the product that we request gets closer to what we need. Initially, with a unit you don’t work with on a regular basis, you have to go through those growing pains.”

While there was some growth, the exercise is providing a good base for the unit.

“We can create the procedures and lay out the roadmap but when you take that roadmap or those procedures and put them in a real-life situation, your environment will truly dictate what you are going to do,” said McKinzie. “The exercise and the scenarios do give you a base line, a foundation, of what you need to do so you’re not starting at ground zero trying to build up.”

The 620th mobilized to Iraq in 2010. Since their return they, have focused on Yellow Ribbon events and individual training.

“This is really the first battalion-level exercise the unit has had the opportunity to engage in since coming back from mobilization,” said Campion. “There are a lot of new troops here, a lot of individuals who weren’t part of the mobilization who are getting their first exposure to how a battalion headquarters is supposed to operate. That’s a big learning lesson.”

Campion isn’t the only one seeing the learning or the impact it is having on his troops.

“[The Soldiers are] learning their jobs,” said Montgomery. “We have young lieutenants who have never done this before, we have a young chaplain who has never done this before, we have communication experts who have never done this before, a lot of our young Soldiers have never done this before. So all of these things come together so they get the experience and really see the impact of what they do.”

While this is a learning experience, the Soldiers seem excited to participate.

“The Soldiers seem to be motivated to do their jobs, whether it’s guard duty, whether it’s cold out, early in the morning or late at night,” said Montgomery. “These Soldiers, young Soldiers especially, will surprise you with their commitment to the uniform.”

Hot food for hungry troops

Story and photo by:
Spc. Benjamin Slankard
363rd Public Affairs Detachment

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT, Calif.—Cooking dinner in the cozy confines of your home or grilling outside can be a relaxing experience. You can take a trip to the grocery store, choose what you like and leisurely prepare a meal. That isn't always the case when you are cooking for more than 550 hungry Soldiers in the field.

The Soldiers of the 401st Transportation Company, based in Battle Creek, Mich., do just that while supporting the 620th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion during the Combat Support Training Exercise 91 at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.

Soldiers of the 401st receive supplies, prepare, cook, and maintain all aspects of the food and dining facility.

All operations take place in two shifts. The first begins at 2:30 a.m. with breakfast. The food is prepped, cooked and placed on the line in time for the doors to open at 6 a.m. After breakfast all dishes and the hall must be cleaned. This same routine begins again at 1 p.m. for dinner when the second shift takes over.

Sgt. 1st Class Cassandra Van Streain, the senior food operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge, from Kalamazoo, Mich., oversees the dining facility. She orders the food, coordinates shifts and improvises meals. When food arrives, Van Streain must use what is delivered to make a well-rounded meal.

"We strive for customer service and support. Everyone works hard and does their part," Van Streain said. "The sanitation room is one of the harder jobs though."

Van Streain said the temperature in the sanitation area during the day is usually around 130 degrees.



A Soldier from the 401st Transportation Company serves dessert to fellow Soldiers at dinner in support of the 620th Combat Service Support Battalion for Combat Support Training Exercise 91 at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif. The cooks served food for more than 550 Soldiers in the field during the training, working in two shifts, one beginning at 2:30 a.m. and one beginning at 1 p.m.

The 401st is responsible for most of the preparation and cooking, but with only 12 cooks, they need help serving the troops. This is where the kitchen police step in to provide support. On average, 22 KPs will help with serving, trash disposal and cleaning.

The cooks are in charge of the KPs, along with setting up the serving and drink stations and placement of tables.

Van Streain believes this training is necessary to prepare Soldiers for deployment. She said coping with the heat, dust, and long hours will give Soldiers an idea of the conditions in an overseas environment.

Sgt. Joseph Ferris, a food service specialist with the 401st, from Lansing Mich., knows exactly why this training is beneficial. While deployed to Afghanistan, Ferris provided food services in a general's mess hall.

"It was similar to this training here," Ferris said. "We received indirect fire a few times in Afghanistan."

In addition to providing hungry Soldiers hot meals, these cooks know they are still Soldiers.

"We are always Soldiers first," Van Streain said. "We provide a service, but we are combatants as well."

QM Soldiers keep fuel flowing

Story and photo by:

Sgt. Debralee P Crankshaw

363rd Public Affairs Detachment

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT, Calif.— Pumping gas is something most people do, their only thought to get back on the road and to their final destination. In the Army, pumping gas isn't so simple. A lot goes into ensuring military vehicles are provided that fuel to make it to their final destination.

The 728th and 192nd Quartermaster Companies are responsible for bulk and retail fuel at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., for Combat Support Training Exercise 91.

"Our mission here is to make sure all vehicles, generators and light sets have fuel," said 1st Sgt. Steven Jirousek, 192nd Quartermaster Company, first sergeant, from North Ridgeville, Ohio. "We've also been tasked to go on convoys, sending a tanker to refuel those vehicles on the road."

The companies, working together, have sites at Base Camps Milipitas and Schoonover and Camp Roberts. They also run missions between them as well as the Ammunition Supply Point and Base Camps Ward and Tusi.

"Theoretically, if we were in a theater of operation we would have fuel points on all the [Forward Operating Bases], rather than drive on the roads every day," said Jirousek. "It's more...realistic training."

Jirousek said having operations spread throughout the training area is "normal operations" for his unit because at home station the unit is spread out. He also contributes the success to his leadership.



This bladder is used to store fuel until it is distributed. The bladder can hold up to 20,000 gallons of fuel. Soldiers with the 728th and 192nd Quartermaster Companies were responsible for bulk and retail fuel at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., for Combat Support Training Exercise 91.

"The leadership that I brought with me, working for me, is probably the best out there," said Jirousek.

On average, the fuel sites distribute between 4,500 to 7,500 gallons per day. The estimated use for the entire exercise is 100,000 gallons.

The amount of fuel distributed per day depends on the sizes and missions of the convoys for the day and the heat. During hotter days, more fuel is used, according to Jirousek.

Retail fuel is fueling of smaller vehicles, such as Humvees. Retail fuel uses less than 100 gallons of fuel. Bulk fuel is the fueling of larger vehicle, including the tankers. Bulk can also be used to refuel trucks in large convoys.

A retail fuel point is set up similar to a normal gas pump, with a few differences. Due to the type of fuel used, a petroleum fuel specialist fills the tank while wear-

ing an apron and safety goggles. Another Soldier monitors the fuel gauge on the tanker.

The bulk fuel point can receive or distribute fuel. It is set up with hoses that connect to the tanker and a machine that gauges and pumps the fuel into a bladder for storage. There is also another line of hoses for distribution, which connect to the bladder, a pump and finally connect to the tanker or nozzle to fill larger vehicle.

The 192nd is currently in its ready year, which means they can be called to deploy at a moment's notice, so these operations have created a refresher for their troops.

"A lot of our Soldiers haven't touched any of this since [Advanced Individual Training] so they're learning the equipment, so instead of just doing [Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services] on the trucks and tankers as we do at battle assemblies, they are actually getting hands-on," said Jirousek.

Many of the senior leaders of the company are attending military schools so Jirousek sees this time as an opportunity for his junior leaders to step into those shoes.

"They went from last year being told what to do, to telling [others] what to do and why they need to do it," he said.

In addition to their mission, the companies are also participating in convoy training because, according to Jirousek, in theater "you never know; it could happen at the drop of a hat."

PROMOTIONS

SENIOR BOARD

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Chad Leslie Bierman	MSG	1 March 2012
Amy Jolynn Blocker	SFC	1 April 2012
Jimmy Lewis Buggs	SGM	1 May 2012
Duyminh Huu Bui	SFC	1 April 2012
Benjamin James Bushard	SFC	1 July 2012
Christopher David Chavez	SFC	1 July 2012
Cody Alan Christ	SFC	1 July 2012
Edward Clark	SFC	1 July 2012
Michael Alluen Corry	SFC	1 April 2012
Marvel Fisher Jr.	SFC	1 April 2012
Lynette Therese Forslund	MSG	1 June 2012
William Wayne Grobman	SFC	1 January 2012
Dawn Serafini Haitz	SFC	1 July 2012
Edward Melvin Hoyum	SFC	1 July 2012
Brian Lamar Jones Sr.	SFC	1 April 2012
John Robert Jordan	SFC	1 July 2012
Deirdra Marie Kolb	SFC	1 April 2012
Andrew Thomas Kroon	SFC	1 July 2012
Christopher Paul Name	SFC	1 April 2012
James John O'Connell	SFC	1 April 2012
Bryan William Petersen	SFC	1 April 2012
Jackie Donald Pearce	SFC	1 April 2012
Bradley Allen Rothenberger	SFC	1 April 2012
Steven David Sanford	SFC	1 April 2012
Zachary Wayne Schuman	MSG	1 June 2012
Pamala Rae Simpson	SGM	1 May 2012
Christy Marie Wagner	SFC	1 April 2012
Toni Frances Wright	MSG	1 June 2012

JUNIOR BOARD

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Seth Joseph Baldwin	SGT	1 February 2012
Christopher Lee Barber	SGT	1 May 2012
Darryl Dwayne Cantrell	SGT	1 February 2012
James Edward Charlton	SSG	1 May 2012
Douglas John Clingman	SSG	1 June 2012
Britney Lynn Dahlkoetter	SGT	1 May 2012
Sean Ronald Dolan	SSG	1 April 2012
Kent Eugene Dunn Jr.	SGT	1 April 2012
Jeremy Dwayne Echternach	SSG	1 May 2012
Kenneth Edward Eisele	SGT	1 April 2012
Paul Matthew Embree	SGT	1 March 2012
Juan Diego Francisco	SGT	1 May 2012
Julien Michael Frierson	SGT	1 July 2012
Kenton Raymond Fuller	SGT	1 February 2012
Francisco Javier Garcia	SGT	1 April 2012
Prentes Deiongene Potts Gen	SGT	1 February 2012
Albert Kadrin Greenwood	SGT	1 May 2012
Matthew Coleman Gregoire	SGT	1 February 2012
Robert Kenneth Gulick Jr.	SSG	1 June 2012
Tayaun Mambræe Hardy	SGT	1 March 2012
Nickolas T. Haskell	SSG	1 April 2012
James Thomas Hayes	SSG	1 June 2012
Kristopher Deshaun Hall	SGT	1 March 2012
Ahkeshia Kora Henley	SGT	1 May 2012
Lee Andrew Hicks	SGT	1 February 2012
Shane Michael Hicks	SSG	1 February 2012
William Russell Higgs	SSG	1 February 2012

Bryan Christopher Hill	SGT	1 May 2012
Raymond Francis Holland	SGT	1 April 2012
Vera Louise Howard	SSG	1 June 2012
Jordan Daniellynn Hurt	SGT	1 April 2012
Andrew David Johnston	SSG	1 February 2012
Anthony Todd Klein	SGT	1 June 2012
Tony Ray Knutsen	SSG	1 April 2012
Wesley Steven Koob	SSG	1 April 2012
Eric Allen Lasher	SSG	1 May 2012
Caliz N. Lopezdiaz	SGT	1 April 2012
Dustin Martinez	SSG	1 March 2012
Travis Arthur Matlock	SGT	1 May 2012
Shawn Michael Maynard	SGT	1 May 2012
Donald Lee Mayse Jr.	SGT	1 April 2012
Kathryn Nichole McConnell	SGT	1 June 2012
Samuel Michue III	SGT	1 May 2012
Steven Robert Montgomery	SSG	1 April 2012
Paige Leigh Nagel	SGT	1 April 2012
Killian Emmanuelle Naughton	SGT	1 February 2012
Geoffrey Andrew Parsons	SGT	1 June 2012
Jeremy Micheal Phillips	SGT	1 June 2012
Telia Ann Phoenix	SSG	5 May 2012
John Emick Powers	SSG	1 February 2012
Kevin Michael Reilly	SGT	1 June 2012
Joshua James Reynolds	SGT	1 May 2012
Bradley Jess Rice	SGT	1 April 2012
Jose Ramon Riveraandino	SSG	1 May 2012
Brian Mathew Rodney	SSG	1 April 2012
Kasey Dallas Rowley	SGT	1 May 2012
Jeana Marie Ruopp	SSG	1 June 2012
David Anthony Salas	SGT	1 June 2012
Debrah Lynne Sanders	SGT	1 June 2012
Kris Lee Schumacher	SGT	1 May 2012
Jason Daryl Sherman	SSG	1 April 2012
Jeremy John Shier	SGT	1 May 2012
Dayon Eugene Sills	SGT	1 February 2012
John Richard Smith	SGT	1 April 2012
Paul Joseph Smith	SSG	1 June 2012
Andrew Michael Stallcup	SSG	1 May 2012
Joseph Andrew Stewart	SGT	1 April 2012
Samantha Pearle Swanson	SGT	1 April 2012
Andrew Taylor Talmage	SGT	1 February 2012
Fred Allen Taylor	SSG	1 February 2012
Jason Richard Thompson	SSG	1 March 2012
Jonathan Lee Unruh	SSG	1 April 2012
Cecil John Urban	SGT	1 April 2012
Jeff John Weber	SSG	1 April 2012
David Alan Weir	SGT	1 May 2012
Jeffrey Edward White	SSG	1 May 2012
Jesse Lane White	SGT	1 May 2012
Robert James Willing	SGT	1 February 2012
Carl Kenneth Wright	SGT	

Brig. Gen. Arlan DeBlieck

Promotion ceremony

Aug. 26

Camp Dodge



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U.S. Army photo by Spc. Emily Walter

Soldiers with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) participate in a hands-on hazardous materials response class during a three-day drill weekend at Camp Dodge, Iowa, in March. During the weekend, Soldiers brushed up on several skills, including weapons qualification, tactical formation drills, combat lifesaver skills, hazardous materials response training, nighttime weapons firing, and more.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Emily Walter

Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines from Fort Des Moines march in a Veterans' parade held in Des Moines, Iowa, in June. Spectators, including many service members past and present, lined the mile-long stretch of Grand Ave. that marked the parade route. Soldiers with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) marched in the parade.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jessica Brooks

Soldiers with the 339th Movement Control Team recently completed a deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and were honored in a Welcome Home Warrior Citizen Award ceremony June 10 in Manhattan, Kan. The Soldiers were responsible for air and ground movement in several locations throughout Afghanistan. Welcome Home Warrior Citizen Award ceremonies are designed to publically acknowledge Reserve Soldiers and families for their service and sacrifice.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Emily Walter

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Danny Wolf, food program manager with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), examines the cupcake display he designed for the 103rd ESC Warrant Officer Professional Development and Recruitment Workshop held at Camp Dodge, Iowa, Aug. 24-25. Wolf has been active in the culinary field since he enlisted in 1976. He has won several international culinary competitions, including the Pizza World Championship held in Italy, where he took 1st place in the "traditional" category.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Emily Walter

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Harder, G4 noncommissioned officer-in-charge for the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), shows Fort Des Moines summer campers the 103rd ESC motorpool in June at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.



WE WANT YOU

TO GIVE US YOUR SUGGESTIONS!

**Got a story idea, a good
photo, or any other ideas for
The Cactus Patch?
We'd love to hear it!**

**Contact the 103rd ESC Public Affairs Office
at: monica.m.radtke@usar.army.mil**