

# STRIKE NEWS

## BRIGADE CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY



Staff Sgt. Matt Jones

Col. Michael A. Konzman took command of 55th Heavy Brigade Combat Team in a ceremony at the Scranton Armed Forces Reserve Center, Sunday, Aug. 19.

He replaced former commander Col. George M. Schwartz, who now serves as assistant adjutant general at the state headquarters at Fort Indiantown Gap.

As brigade commander, Konzman is in charge of thousands of troops in the 1-109th Infantry Battalion, 3-103rd Armor Battalion, 1-109th Field Artillery Battalion, 1-104th

Cavalry Squadron, 55th Brigade Special Troops Battalion and the 228th Brigade Support Battalion.

“Col. Konzman is a battle-hardened commander who is up to the task of ensuring the brigade’s flag is carried forward as they embark on their mission to the Middle East,” said Maj. Gen. Randall Marchi, deputy adjutant general-Army. “His experience is invaluable as the formation begins their deployment in the coming months.”

Konzman was commissioned as an infantry officer from the University of Scranton in 1983. His active duty experience includes a tour of duty in Germany with the

1st Infantry Division and at Fort Bragg, N.C., with the 82nd Airborne Division. After leaving active duty in March 1989, Konzman joined the Pennsylvania National Guard serving in a number of roles leading up to his current position, including commanding the 1-109th Infantry Battalion in Iraq from July 2005 through June 2006. He has been the recipient of many awards during his 29 years of military service including the Combat Infantryman’s Badge and the Bronze Star.

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Konzman is a graduate of the U.S. Army Airborne School, the Infantry Officer Basic and Advance Courses, the Command and General Staff Course and the United States Army War College with a master's degree in strategic studies.

"It is an honor to join the ranks of the great officers and men who have commanded this brigade," said Konzman addressing those who attended the ceremony. "I pledge my best to you, to those former commanders, and soldiers of this command that I will give you my best, I will give you my all. We will continue to keep this brigade as sharp as we can and we will always be ready to be the point of the spear going into battle any place, any time."

Schwartz has become the assistant adjutant general, serving alongside Maj. Gen. Wesley Craig, state adjutant general, who is charged with overseeing the 19,000 members of the Pennsylvania Army and Air National Guards as well as the many programs benefiting Pennsylvania's nearly one million veterans.

"As a career combat arms officer, Col. Schwartz has done an excellent job preparing the 55th Heavy



Brigade Combat Team for their upcoming deployment," said Marchi. "He will now become a valuable asset to the state headquarters as assistant adjutant general."

Schwartz was commissioned as an Army officer in the branch of cavalry upon graduating as a Distinguished Military Graduate from Mansfield University of Pennsylvania in 1984. After serving in the 28th Infantry Division plans cell, he took command of the 2-103rd Armor Battalion, in 2005. During his tenure, he guided the battalion through its transition to the 55th Brigade Special Troops Battalion. Throughout 2007, Schwartz led a 125-man advisory team embedded with an Afghan National Army infantry brigade. He commanded the 55th Heavy Brigade Combat Team

from August 2010 to August 2012. Schwartz's awards include the Bronze Star Medal and the French National Defense Medal in Gold.

Outside of the military, he works as a human resources and organizational development

professional with Fortune 500 companies. In addition to a bachelor's degree in political science, Schwartz has a master's degree in human resource development from Villanova University and a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College.

"Although I will unfortunately not be able to thank them all, there are many, many people I am grateful to for the support they had given me while I was in command," said Schwartz, addressing members of his brigade. "To my comrades in the 55th Brigade, thank you does not seem sufficient to express the gratitude I have for what you do, how you do it, and the opportunity that I've had to serve with you."

Newly promoted Brig. Gen. George Schwartz, former 55th Heavy Brigade commander is sworn-in as a general officer by Maj. Gen. Wesley Craig, Pennsylvania adjutant general, in a ceremony at Fort Indiantown Gap Sept. 21. Schwartz is now serving as an assistant adjutant general at the Joint Forces Headquarters.



# DEPARTURE CEREMONY

1,500 members of the 55th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, preparing for a deployment to Kuwait, were honored during a ceremony Sept. 30 at Fort Indiantown Gap. State Governor Tom Corbett, adjutant general Maj. Gen. Wesley Craig, 28th Infantry Division commanding general Brig. Gen. John Gronski, and 55th Brigade commander Col. Michael Konzman were among those who spoke at the event.

Photos by: Staff Sgt. Matt Jones



# ALWAYS READY, ALMOST THERE

Staff Sgt. Matt Jones

Members of the 55th Heavy Brigade spent the second half of September at Fort Indiantown Gap completing their pre-mobilization training, only weeks before departing to Camp Shelby, Miss.

There, they will train for roughly three more months in preparation for their deployment to Kuwait.

The list of tasks the units completed at Indiantown Gap can seem daunting, but includes training that is mandatory for mobilizing units.



Combat Life Savers (CLS) are trained to give immediate response to injuries on the battlefield until patients can be treated by medics and doctors.

Other classes relate directly to the deployment. Introductory-level language and cultural familiarization lessons give a soldier a basic understanding of the environment they will soon be immersed in, an environment that is unfamiliar to some of the soldiers.

Of course, no deployment training would be complete without a healthy dose of shooting. Soldiers fired thousands of rounds down the ranges of Fort Indiantown Gap during their two-week stay. Some of the weapons used include the M4 rifle, M9 handgun, M249 machine gun, and M500 shotgun.



The 'call for fire' simulator helps train soldiers to direct artillery fire until enemy positions. Photos by Staff Sgt. Matt Jones



Soldiers inspect each other's nuclear, biological and chemical suits to ensure the highest level of individual protection can be quickly attained.

Included in the classes were a spectrum of skills such as land navigation, movement techniques, battle drills, communication, hand-to-hand combat, vehicle rollover drills, and familiarization with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons.

Many of these classes are taught in basic training or throughout a soldier's career, but have a new significance now that they are being taught before a mobilization.



Soldiers practice individual movement techniques through barbed wire and other obstacles in a simulated combat environment.

This does not account for the time spent on virtual battlefields and weapons ranges. This type of training can reduce the cost and the logistical struggles that normally accompany such tasks.

Most soldiers who have deployed before know that many of these tasks will be repeated or expanded upon during the training that the units will undergo once officially activated into federal service at Camp Shelby. Even then it can be hard to say when a unit or an individual is truly ready.

# CEREMONIAL MESS, STEEP IN TRADITION

Maj. Keith Hickox



The officers and senior enlisted members of the 55th Brigade assembled in a ballroom at the Radison hotel in Scranton for the annual ceremonial mess on August 25, 2012.



The custom of the ceremonial mess is not a new one for the brigade. It has been a long standing tradition. The mess traces its origins to various orders of knights, monastics, universities and other noble institutions.

The British Army began the custom of the mess in the eighteenth century.



The mess would bring together larger units where many officers did not normally come in contact with one another to share its customs and history.

2nd Lt. Dale Grieb, the most junior officer of the 55th Brigade Special Troops Battalion presented the Colmar Sword to Col. Konzman. The sword was symbolic of the sword of surrender accepted by the commanding officer of the 109th Infantry Regiment in the capture of the city of Colmar, France during World War II. The 55th Brigade traces its lineage back to the 109th Infantry Regiment.



The junior soldier at each table is instructed to charge everyone's glasses and prepare for the toast. The mess toasts to the President, Army, Governor, Adjutant General, Commanding General, Brigade Commander, Families and the mess.

To honor their fallen warriors, a moment of silence was given followed by a toast simply with water. A small table was set up in the back of the room, rich with items that symbolized sacrifice, gratitude, and mourning for their late comrades.

The brigade colors, or brigade flag, was taken to the middle of the floor. The lineage and honors of the brigade were recited as battle streamers were added representing each campaign the brigade had served in.

The World War I streamers included Champagne Marne, Aisne-Marne, Oise-Aisne, Meuse-Argonne, Champagne-1918 and Lorraine-1918.

The World War II streamers included Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, Central Europe, Colmar, Luxembourg, Meritorious Unit Commendation and European Theatre.

As tradition, the annual ceremonial mess is not held when part of the brigade is deployed. Therefore the next 55th Brigade Ceremonial Mess is scheduled for 2014.



# A UNIT OF ACTION



Soldiers from the 55th Heavy Brigade participate in a combatives class at Fort Indiantown Gap Sept. 17, 2012. The unarmed combat class is taught to all soldiers preparing for deployment by certified instructors.

Photos by: Staff Sgt. Matt Jones

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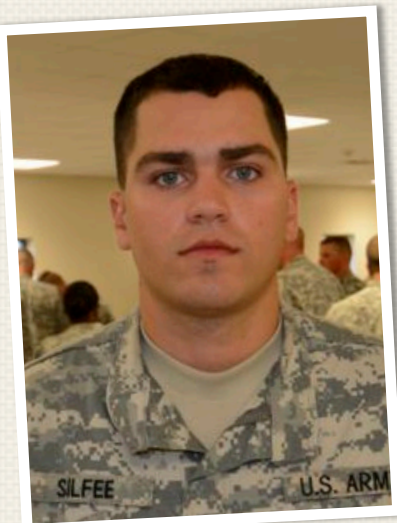
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## ASK A JOE

What is the most valuable training you’ve had so far?



Pfc. Justin Silfee

Headquarters 1-109th Infantry Batt.

“CLS is the most important training that I’ve done. No matter how good you are out in the field things can still go wrong, and if you need to treat somebody you’ve got to do it right..”



Spc. Andrew  
McElroy

Co. B, 3-103rd Armor Battalion

“My favorite training so far has been the 9mm range.

That’s going to be my weapon of choice in country and it’s important that I get familiar with it.”



Pfc. Kara Kuntz

Co. E, 228th Brigade Support Batt.

“The IED lane was the most valuable one I’ve been through so far. I feel like that’s the biggest threat to the troops right now and it’s something we all need to be prepared for.”

# HONORING A FALLEN WARRIOR



Sgt Jan Michael Argonish, a Soldier from the 55th Brigade, was killed on August 27, 2007 during an ambush in Afghanistan.

To honor his life, comrades, friends and family established the "Sergeant Jan Argonish Ride," a non-profit organization that plans, organizes and runs an annual motorcycle benefit ride in Northern Lackawanna County. The event combines many of the activities Jan enjoyed most in life while raising money in support of several noble causes that Jan would have endorsed.

Many past and present members of the 55th Brigade were in attendance for the 5th Annual Ride this year on Sept. 9th, 2012.

(Photos by: Misty Hickox)