

GRIZZLY

Official Newsmagazine of the California National Guard

Charlie Co. drops in

Medevac unit home
from Afghanistan

pg. 7



CNG wins back-to-back at All Army 4

Leadership Corner

Do your part to fight drought

Major General David S. Baldwin



California is experiencing one of the driest years on record, and it is our responsibility to help our state fight this crucial battle. Dry conditions lead to wildfires, and our Soldiers and Airmen will almost assuredly be called upon to protect lives, structures and forests from wildfires later this year. But we need to act now to help our parched state.

Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. declared a state of emergency in January, directing state agencies to cut water usage and imploring residents to reduce their usage by 20 percent. The ongoing drought brings serious public safety, economic and environmental consequences, but if the California Military Department (CMD) and its 23,000 members each do our part, we can make a difference.

Conserving water is key, and there are steps every unit and individual can take to contribute.

- Suspend all washing of vehicles and equipment if safety and operational requirements allow (be sure to maintain clean windshields, windows and lights).
- Review landscaping to determine areas where irrigation can be eliminated or reduced, or where items can be replaced with drought-tolerant plants and xeriscaping.
- Look out for leaking plumbing fixtures.
- Choose low-flow and waterless options when replacing fixtures or starting new projects.
- Shorten shower times and reduce faucet usage.
- Ensure all water connections are metered and monitor water usage.
- Reduce flushing of air conditioning towers to the minimum necessary to prevent breakdown.

At the end of the first two months of this year, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) had already responded to 643 wildland fires. The Southern California region, in fact, never really transitioned out of last year's fire season, according to Cal Fire, as dry conditions kept risk high throughout the winter.

You can help protect yourself by creating 100 feet of defensible space around your home. Clearing leaves, branches, needles, dead plants and other potential fuel for the fire from the area around your home can reduce the chance your property will be damaged by wildfire. As many fires are the result of sparks caused by powered equipment like lawn mowers and weed trimmers, you can also prevent fires by using such equipment before 10 a.m. — when the temperature is low and humidity is high — and by avoiding their use altogether on hot, windy days. For more information on preparing for fire season, visit www.fire.ca.gov or www.readyforwildfire.org/defensible_space.

Though the current drought has brought this issue to the forefront of public discussion, conservation and environmental concerns are always part of any CMD project or mission.

Last year the department's Counterdrug Task Force earned California's most prestigious environmental award for ecosystem and watershed stewardship, the Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award, or GEELA.

The Task Force excels at finding illegal marijuana gardens, working with law enforcement to arrest suspects and cleaning up the trash and hazardous chemicals they leave behind. In fiscal years 2011 and 2012, the Task Force removed 50,000 pounds of trash, 89 miles of irrigation line and 23,000 pounds of toxic fertilizers, pesticides and rodenticides from public land.

2013 marked the second time our department has earned a GEELA in the past seven years; the award in 2007 recognized an erosion control project at Camp San Luis Obispo. We also have earned multiple Secretary of the Army Environmental Awards for natural resource conservation, such as protecting endangered species and planting native trees and plants that improve water quality and stave off erosion.

In 2012 we reached the conclusion of a major project to bring solar energy to Camp Roberts, and alternative energy sources are being used at Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos and California Air National Guard facilities. We have introduced important recycling and composting initiatives, and we are involved in cleaning up soil and water at contaminated sites in California.

At all times and in all projects, we take into consideration the impacts on air, water and soil as well as any historic and natural resources on site. It is our duty to protect this state from all threats, and that includes environmental dangers. As a group and as individuals, we can help ensure a better future for California.

Military culture: Everyone's responsibility

Command Sergeant Major William Clark Jr.



Like many of you, I have grimaced at recent reports of service members from other states posting unflattering photos on social media. Thankfully, I have had time to get past the initial embarrassment of these reports and find what I hope is a positive message for our Soldiers and Airmen.

There was a time when many of us stood smack-dab in the middle of a formation or roll call and just appreciated being part of a unit. None of us were perfect; in fact, any one of us could have been the one who happened to arrive a little too close to the command of "Fall in." Worse yet, we might have been the one who managed to forget the proper uniform of the day, standing there sticking out like a sore thumb just asking for a heaping dose of GI fashion advice. Yet, as uncomfortable as it might have been to be in the spotlight, soon came the undeniable realization that the criticism was intended to teach and help.

From day one, service members are immersed in military culture. In basic training we're taught on a daily basis to recognize what right and wrong look like, and when we arrive at our first duty station, we are molded by noncommissioned officers daily, hourly and sometimes by the minute.

But somewhere along the way, the culture of the world outside the service took hold and created an environment

where improper photos are circulated on social media, and crude jokes and inappropriate behaviors continue to occur.

This is not the way of the U.S. Armed Forces. We are professionals, and we adhere to military standards at all times. If you have not reviewed the social media guidelines published by the Army or Air Force, visit tinyurl.com/bdm6ttt or tinyurl.com/mcdp6vf and familiarize yourself with your branch of service's expectations.

I know that the finest men and women our state has to offer stand in the middle of our formations. You do what you are asked to do, and then you give a little bit more. You may be a little reserved and even a tad bit humble, but you know your jobs and you don't let others pull your weight.

You may wonder silently, "Just what in the world do some of these Airmen think they are doing with their phones?" or "Why didn't someone say something to that Soldier who was acting inappropriately with that other Soldier at the bar?" If you find yourself in that type of situation, accept responsibility and use your situational awareness to make a difference.

Change is all around us, and the future is uncertain. While we face this uncertainty, we cannot ignore service mem-

bers who find their way into trouble. We must begin to change our culture by speaking up when something inappropriate occurs and by being the voice of clarity for our brothers and sisters when they do something questionable.

It's up to us, on a personal level, to stand up and speak up when necessary. We owe it to ourselves, our fellow Soldiers and Airmen, and our country to intervene — to change the culture of what's acceptable.

Remember that change starts with us. If we can change the culture, our strides to eradicate inappropriate social behavior will produce results. This issue can best be addressed with on-the-spot corrections. Identifying behaviors that could lead to an individual being hurt or that could embarrass the Armed Forces is the charge of every Soldier and Airman. With that said, our noncommissioned officers are on the front line of this conflict.

Every leader has general military authority. The excuse that, "It's not my troop" is not valid. Never overlook a behavior that is contrary to our values. If you do, you are just as responsible for an issue as those who commit the infraction.

Stand up and get back to basics. Do the right thing!

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Submissions

Articles:

- ★ Articles range from 350 to 2,000 words. All articles should be accompanied by multiple high-resolution images.
- ★ Include first names, last names and military ranks. Always verify spelling.
- ★ Spell out acronyms, abbreviations and full unit designations on first reference.
- ★ Only submit articles that have been approved by your unit's public affairs officer.

Photographs:

- ★ Highest resolution possible: MB files, not KB.
- ★ No retouched photos, no special effects.
- ★ Include the photographer's name and rank, and a caption: what is happening in the photo, who is pictured and the date and location.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 Giving it their best shot

The CNG's top marksmen once again came out on top in the U.S. Army Small Arms Championship

5 Engineering success

The engineers of the 216th Mobility Augmentation Company keep Highway 1 in Afghanistan clear of IEDs

Commendable actions

Cpl. Christopher Garland of the 216th MAC was recognized for valor under fire in Afghanistan

6 Water, gone to pot

The CNG cleaned up a drug garden on public land where growers had stolen water during a severe drought

Smooth roads help Border Patrol

CNG engineers repaired a remote roadway near San Diego used by Customs and Border Protection

7 Medevac company returns home

Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment returned from Afghanistan with accolades

8 Police receive Guard MRAP training

Soldiers of the 1072nd Transportation Company taught Clovis police officers the ins and outs of the MRAP vehicle



9 40th ID vets go back to school

CNG Soldiers who served in the Korean War visited a high school in Korea they helped build during the war

A mom and a warrior

Combat pilot Maj. Esther Sablan balances service with the demands of motherhood

12 Outstanding service

The CNG recognized its best Soldiers and Airmen during a banquet in Sacramento

The best of the best

See what it takes to be named Soldier or Airman of the Year in the California National Guard

14 Operation Pure Cure

The CNG's 95th Civil Support Team trained with civilian agencies in a bioterrorism scenario

15 Soldiers of the future

The California Army National Guard has found warrior characteristics in Rugby players

Protecting taxpayer dollars

The 349th Quartermaster Company is sorting through seemingly endless piles of equipment in Afghanistan

16 Infantry and aviation

Two CNG units teamed up for mutually beneficial training in advance of the CNG's consolidated annual training in June

17 CNG Biathlon Team returns

After a hiatus, the Cal Guard fielded a biathlon team to compete in the National Guard Western Regional Match

Give him credit

Personal financial counselor Darryl Jones urges you to check your credit report for accuracy

18 Get fit with a purpose

Lt. Col. Daniel Markert recommends establishing a meaningful purpose when designing a fitness plan

Powerful achievements

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kevin Canant has set multiple powerlifting records in California



In Every
Issue

2 | Leadership
Corner

10 | At a
Glance

19 | News &
Benefits

19 | Do You
Know?

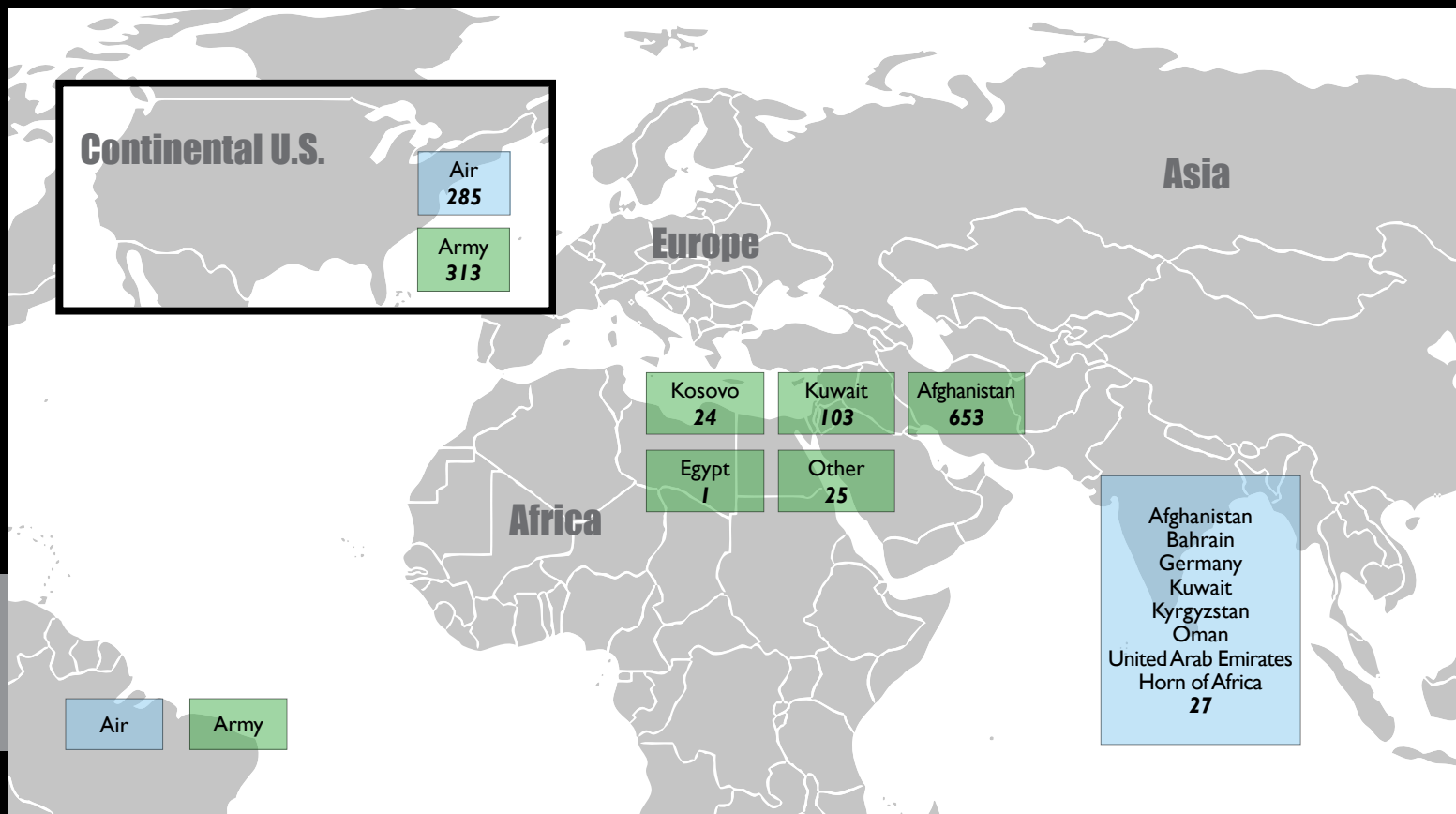
California National Guard mobilizations as of **March 2014**

Cover Shot



Photo by
Navy Lt. Chad A. Dulac

Sgt. 1st Class Dave Cornell of Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, is hoisted to a UH-60 Black Hawk during a September exercise at Forward Operating Base Farah, Afghanistan.



CNG victorious at All Army — again

CNG Combat Shooting Team wins back-to-back titles at nationwide Small Arms Championship

By STAFF SGT. SALLI CURCHIN

Detachment 1, Operations Company, 40th Infantry Division

The California National Guard (CNG) Combat Shooting Team garnered national attention in February, when the team successfully defended its title in the national U.S. Army Small Arms Championship, also known as The All Army.

More than 200 shooters at the competition represented cadets, active duty Soldiers, Army Reservists and National Guard members from across the country Jan. 26 to Feb. 1 at Fort Benning, Ga.

The CNG team's two squads took first and third place in the Overall Team Championship this year, backing up their performance in 2013, when they took first in the Overall Team Championship and the Combined Arms Team Championship.

"Small arms competition shooting includes pistol, rifle and multi-gun matches," said veteran team member Staff Sgt. Oscar Moreno from Company B, 40th Brigade Support Battalion, 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT). "The multi-gun event requires a variety of moving and shooting, transitioning from weapons used and types of targets engaged ... shooting and running distances up to 1.5 miles."

The All Army is an advanced combat live-fire training event that recognizes team and individual excellence in three categories: novice, open and pro. Novice participants have never competed in the All Army, open-class participants have competed at least once, and pro-class participants have earned a Distinguished Marksmanship Badge for excellence with either the pistol or rifle.

"Competition is training," said Lt. Col. Louis Millikan, CNG marksmanship coordinator and commander of 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, 79th IBCT. "Competition is an opportunity to validate our Soldiers' marksmanship skills, where they can gain vast experiences — more than they normally would in the traditional 39 days of [National Guard] training per year."

Top performers

Individual winners for California this year included Spc. Demetrios "Hank" Iannios of the 1-184th, who took home multiple awards in the Open Class, winning the title of Open Class Champion, Open Class Combined Arms Champion and Open Class Rifle Champion. He was followed closely by two teammates in his hunt for the Open Class Championship, with Moreno and Millikan finishing 3rd and 4th, respectively.

Sgt. 1st Class Sean Bayard of the 1-184th, meanwhile, earned the Col. Ralph Puckett Trophy for achieving the highest overall score in the novice class.

Sgt. 1st Class Geoff Applegate of the 1-184th earned the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge at this year's All Army, becoming the only CNG Soldier with that badge as well as the Distinguished Rifleman Badge. Last year,

Applegate took the top individual honor in the All Army, dethroning four-time champion Army Reserve Master Sgt. Russell Moore as the top shooter, but Moore was able to earn back his title this year.

"Besides bragging rights, [the team's performance] gives credibility to the State Marksmanship Program," said Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Matey, the CNG's enlisted leader for operations. "These Soldiers will be the ones to impart the knowledge gained in competition to the next generation of Soldiers."

It starts at home

Every shooter on Team California earns their spot at the annual California Combat Match, a competition held each spring for CNG Soldiers and Airmen.

"I had never competed at this level before joining the team," Iannios said. "I attended the California Combat Match last year and did very well. Since then I've competed at the state, regional and national level. ... You pick up a lot from the pros."

Shooters who compete at the California Combat Match come out the other side as a more valuable contributor to their unit,

Millikan said, because the organizers run a shooting clinic in conjunction with the competition.

"We cover the fundamentals of adjusting your site picture, your weapon, your sites and your optics. We talk about kit, magazine and pouch placement," he said. "These things we do to engage the enemy faster, with a higher degree of accuracy."

One of the events at the Combat Match is called the 9-Minute Match, which Millikan said is "the ultimate test of balancing marksmanship fundamentals and heart rate."

"A shooter that can do this will win on the battlefield and in competition," he said.

Putting training into action

Winning on the battlefield, of course, is the point of marksmanship training and competition. The concept and creation of the CNG Combat Shooting Team developed as a result of 1st Sgt. Jose Garcia's experience in Iraq in 2004.

"A lot of my shots [in Afghanistan] were misses, and I never really knew why," said Garcia, who is now the team's shooting

coach and the assistant state marksmanship coordinator. "It led me to seek out marksmanship-type courses."

Garcia's education and experience led to a teaching spot with the National Guard Marksmanship Training Center in Arkansas, where he met California Guardsmen who told him about Task Force Warrior, a California Army National Guard pre-deployment training element that was disbanded at the end of 2013. That information led to a partnership with Millikan.

"Lieutenant Colonel Millikan was and still is very passionate about shooting, improving this program, spreading the word, increasing the scope and size of the program to turn out the best shooters in the Army," Garcia said.

Together they established the Combat Shooting Team, which is run through volunteer efforts and often at the participants' expense. Training and competition are accomplished in addition to the team members' traditional Guard duties.

Though the opportunity is open to all CNG members, every member of the current team falls under the 79th IBCT, except 49th Military Police Brigade Staff Sgt. Jeff Ice. The members hail from cities and towns all over the state and come from varying walks of life, like ranch hand, police officer and railroad conductor.

Clear mind, sharp focus

As part of the team's mental preparation for the All Army, each year the CNG Soldiers agree to ignore scores.

"We shoot our match and know our individual scores, but we don't keep track of the other competitors," Iannios said. "One of the biggest lessons I've learned from competing is to focus on the task at hand. Our motto is, 'A peaceful mind generates power.'"

Millikan said another common saying repeated by the team is, "Hey, it's in the rear-view, and that mistake was just training."

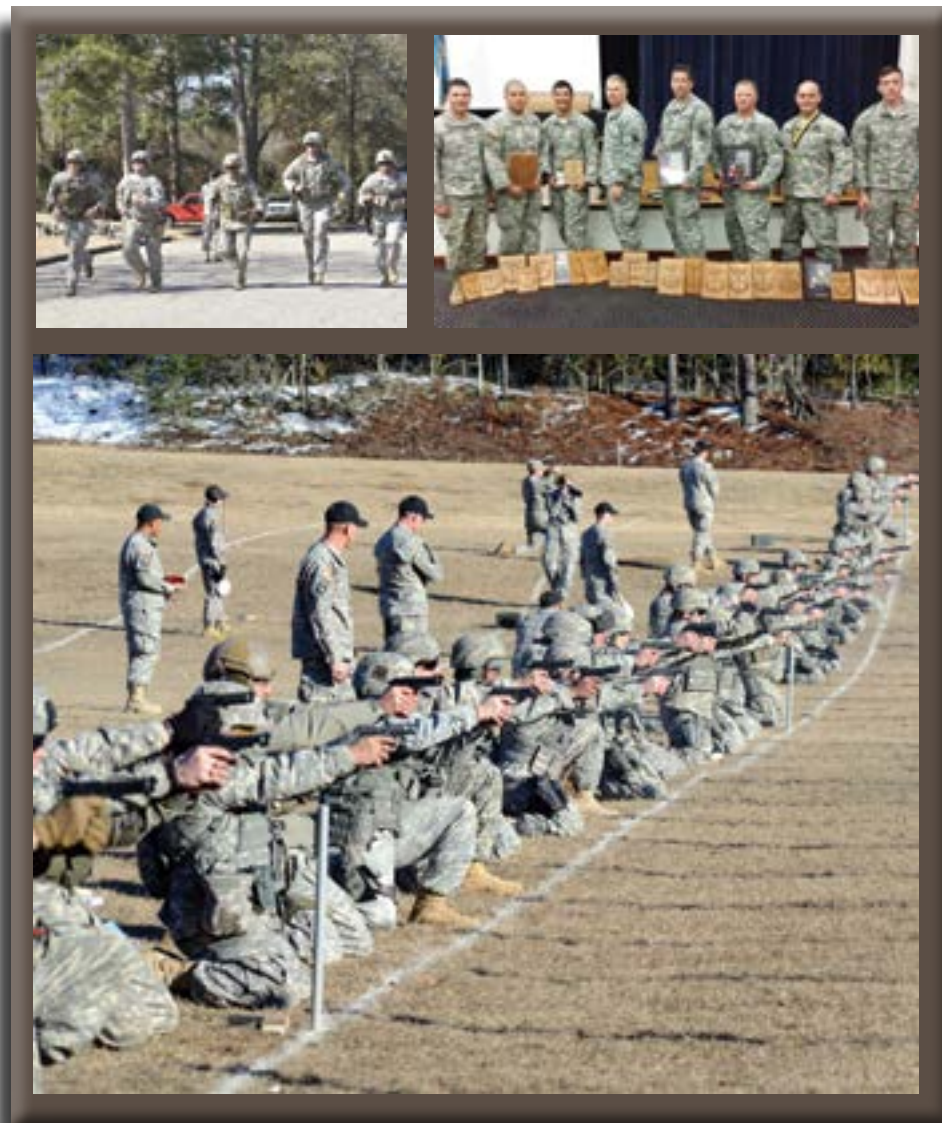
He also often reminds the team members, "Anger is a choice — don't let it bother you."

Proof of concept

"Competing at the All Army matches is a great accomplishment in itself, but winning is monumental for both the Soldier and the state," Matey said. "It's important to return to the All Army match to defend the state's title and confirm to all that two years winning is no fluke and our State Marksmanship Program is top-notch."

Garcia said physical fitness is vitally important to achieving a top marksmanship score, but as long as a Soldier is in top physical shape, the Combat Shooting Team can teach anyone to shoot at a championship level.

"To win validates our training methods, our techniques," he said. "It shows that if you do what we do, you'll produce the best shooters in the Army."



TOP LEFT: Team California Soldiers run from one firing point to the next during the 2013 U.S. Army Small Arms Championship held at Fort Benning, Ga. **Photo by Michael Molinaro** **TOP RIGHT:** Team California is seen here from left to right: Staff Sgt. Jeff Ice, Staff Sgt. Jose Moreno, Spc. 'Hank' Demetrius Iannios, Lt. Col. Louis Millikan, Staff Sgt. Leif Devemark, Sgt. 1st Class Geoff Applegate, Sgt. 1st Class Sean Bayard, and Spc. Sam Furubotten. **Photo by Staff Sgt. Jose Moreno** **BOTTOM:** Shooters take aim on during the 2013 U.S. Army Small Arms Championship held Jan. 26 to Feb. 1 at Fort Benning, Ga. **Photo by Michael Molinaro**

216th engineers clear IEDs from Highway 1

By 1ST LT. LISA MILLER
130th Engineer Brigade

Heavy armored vehicles filled with highly trained combat engineers rolled over snow-and-ice-covered ground from the gates of forward operating base Ghazni, Afghanistan on Jan. 22. The engineers, from the Cal Guard's Platoon 1, 216th Mobility Augmentation Company, was setting out to clear a stretch of Highway 1, or the "Ring Road," which connects all major cities in Afghanistan.

"Everything here in Afghanistan is route-centric, and as engineers, we are the ones keeping the roads open and useable for our fellow brothers- and sisters-in-arms," Capt. Robert Bejarano, the 216th commander, said the night before the patrol. Bejarano expressed confidence in his team and said, "We can impose our will on Highway 1 whenever and wherever we want. My guys have not failed to complete a single mission. We win tactical victories every day."

The 216th MAC is more than half-way through its nine-month deployment. The company has completed more than 50 missions along Highway 1, clearing a strategic highway still active with Taliban insurgents.

Bejarano said the company has a 100 percent find rate for improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, in its area.

Every time one of Bejarano's platoons clears a route, the 216th Soldiers are accompanied by either Polish sappers or U.S. Army infantrymen. This unique, multinational approach to missions developed through the transformation of route clearance patrols into combined arms route clearance operations.

The night before the Jan. 22 patrol, 1st Lt.



TOP: Members of the 216th Mobile Augmentation Company drive on Afghanistan's Highway 1 in search of improvised explosive devices Jan. 22. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Spc. Nickolas Evangelista-Reitner provides overwatch Jan. 22. **ABOVE LEFT:** Staff Sgt. Martin Krebs of the 216th assists a Polish engineer as they prepare to detonate a possible IED. **Photos by 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe**

Minkyu Park and Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Williams, the platoon leader and platoon sergeant in charge of the next day's mission, explained their task and purpose. Every individual who would leave the forward operating base attended the brief and took notes as Park and Williams' spoke. Each member of the team, including the drivers, heavy machine gunners and medics, grasped the need to understand exactly how to execute the mission from

beginning to end.

Soldiers asked questions, which opened discussion of contingency operations in case something did not go as planned. The platoon leader and platoon sergeant valued each individual's input and acknowledged that everyone brought a unique perspective and skill to the patrol.

The next day, each member of the patrol

wore a pair of "yak-trax," the Army's version of an ice-traction device for combat boots. It was the middle of winter, and the platoon was prepared to walk through knee-deep snow and over uneven terrain to attain their objective.

The mission required a pre-dawn wake-up into very cold air, but nothing fazed the Soldiers of 1st Platoon. Each member hustled around and conducted pre-mission checks with efficiency and accuracy.

Like clockwork, the vehicles manned by American and Polish Soldiers, NCOs and officers fell in line, bringing single pieces of the puzzle together to create a coherent team for the day's mission.

Everyone huddled together one last time before departure. Park hit the highlights of his previous night's brief and provided an up-to-date intelligence report. Williams went around the group and asked random individuals to back-brief parts of the mission. Everyone synched.

The circle tightened before the troops dispersed to their vehicles. The Soldiers wrapped their arms around one another, and with heads bowed, prayed for protection, wisdom and clarity.

Instead of shying away from their dangerous mission, 1st Platoon of the 216th MAC courageously went out looking for hazards in order to allow freedom of maneuver for personnel and equipment in their area of operation.

Many leaders say there can never be too many engineers on the battlefield, and Bejarano agrees.

"We will look back on this time," he said, "and realize we participated in the heyday of the engineers' mission since World War II!"

216th shows courage under fire

Combat medic earns award for actions during firefight

By 1ST LT. ANTONIA ELENA PEARSE
411th Engineer Brigade

Heroes are made in the most unlikely and unexpected circumstances, and on Sept. 16, the 216th Mobility Augmentation Company discovered it had two such heroes in their midst.

On that fateful day, almost immediately after dismounting their vehicles to conduct route clearance operations, the 216th's 1st Platoon endured two casualties: one soldier shot in the leg and the other in the chest.

Part of the dismount team became pinned down while returning fire and was unable to render buddy aid to control the bleeding. Focusing only on saving their battle buddies, a 216th MAC combat medic, Cpl. Christopher Garland, and Staff Sgt. Martin Krebs risked their lives as they raced out from their covered positions. Garland, along with another combat medic from the 216th MAC, Staff Sgt. Laurence Jeffery, treated the two casualties while the other Soldiers provided suppressive fire.

"Everyone did exactly what they needed to do," said 1st Lt. Minkyu Park, 1st Platoon leader. "The enemy has all the time in the world. That day the enemy noticed a weakness in our formation and tried to take advantage of it. My Soldiers reacted to the situation and executed what they needed to do perfectly."

Still taking fire, Garland led the litter team back to the vehicles so they could facilitate the movement of the two wounded Soldiers to the landing zone, where a helicopter would arrive to take the wounded to the hospital. Garland assisted in setting up the landing zone and communicating with the flight medics, and upon returning to base, he assisted in caring for the casualties.

"All I was thinking about was the objective: Get the wounded to safety," Garland said. "Training kicked in, and I just acted."

"The gunners were returning fire. Staff Sergeant Wilfredo Delgado, Corporal Rodrigo Ceja and Staff Sergeant Lawrence Suyashi, all 216th MAC, helped me carry the litter," he continued. "Everyone acted the way they were supposed to; unit cohesion was perfect."

Due to his heroic actions, Garland was recognized in September with an Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device for valor and a Combat Medic Badge. Garland and every other Soldier on the patrol that day received a Combat Action Badge.

"I'm thankful for my noncommissioned officers, who are always adapting and overcoming. I'm thankful for my Soldiers, who are always motivated," Park said after the engagement. "I am also on edge. We are only halfway through our deployment, and I don't want



Capt. Robert Bejarano, commander of the 216th Mobility Augmentation Company, presents the Army Commendation Medal with "V" device for valor to Cpl. Christopher at Forward Operating Base Ghazni, Afghanistan, in September.

complacency setting in."

During pre-mobilization training, the unit rehearsed situations that could occur on the deployment — everything from procedures for route clearance patrols and reacting to fire, to resiliency education and improving post-mission mental stability

"Training always pays off," Park said. "The Soldiers might not have used a specific individual task during that firefight, but the trust and teamwork that these men have learned from each other during all the training we've had to do was essential."

Pot gardens threaten water supply during drought

By **CAPT. KARA SIEPMANN**
CNG Counterdrug Task Force

CNG Soldiers and Airmen in February cleaned up an illegal marijuana growing site where water had been stolen from a Sacramento-area farmer and runoff had polluted the water supply.

Soldiers and Airmen hiked nearly a mile from a highway frontage road toward a vineyard and an alfalfa field to find the site hidden behind trees. The marijuana at the site had been cleared out by the CNG and law enforcement agents in October, but a series of pumps, manmade dams, thousands of feet of irrigation hose, trash, animal remains and pollutants remained strewn across the land.

Assisting the Department of Justice's Mountain and Valley Marijuana Investigation Team, the Soldiers and Airmen removed approximately 1,800 pounds of trash that filled four 12-by-12-foot cargo nets taken to a dump by helicopter.

"A primary goal of our operations is to dismantle the illegal growers' elaborate irrigation infrastructure," said Col. Todd Lewis, CNG Counterdrug Task Force commander. "The reclamation process also helps to restore land to its natural state for hikers and camping enthusiasts, as well as for local farmers and landowners."

In the past two years the Counterdrug Task Force has removed 84 manmade dams and 89 miles of irrigation line at illegal sites run by international drug trafficking cartels.

Environmental Impact

The Soldiers and Airmen worked fast because the Department of Justice helicopter was available for a limited

time. Wearing protective gloves, they carefully collected the trash and infrastructure, some of which was coiled in barbed wire or attached to makeshift booby traps. The gloves also protected them from dangerous industrial-strength pesticides and fertilizers present at the site.

Nitrogen-based fertilizer can cause chemical burns on your hands and face, explained Dr. Mourad Gabriel, a scientist at the University of California, Davis. Some of the products used by illegal growers are legal and available at home improvement stores. "But growers are using sometimes up to eight times the recommended dosage, so the chemicals are more concentrated," he said.

Pesticides and rodenticides that have been banned in the U.S. for decades are showing up in endangered species, such as the spotted owl, said Scott Bauer, a California Department of Fish and Wildlife specialist.

Evidence is mounting that there is a risk for humans as well. The runoff from grow sites that flows into the California Delta — the main water supply for the central and southern regions of the state — is contaminated, Bauer said. Contaminated runoff also leeches into the ground and into wells that are used for drinking water, he said.

"All the grow sites in the Central Valley overuse chemicals. Looking at all the grow sites, the landscape is large enough to cause an immediate threat," said Gabriel.

Economic Impact

"Grows hidden in trees on someone else's farm have become more and more common over the past two years," Lewis said.

The grows often rely on stolen water for irrigation.



Photo by Capt. Kara Siepmann

Members of the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force remove irrigation line from an illegal marijuana garden on a Sacramento-area farm in February.

In January, Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. declared a state of emergency in California because of an ongoing drought, meaning water theft takes on even greater urgency. Although it's difficult to estimate losses when water is stolen, the impact of the thefts can be devastating, both to farmers and the public.

Gabriel estimates that in a controlled, laboratory environment, a marijuana plant needs five to eight gallons of water per day. The growing season lasts 125 days, and the gardens have 300 to 500 plants. In the fields of the Central Valley, where there is low humidity and temperatures can exceed 100 degrees, each plant may require 10 to 12 gallons. That means up to 750,000 gallons — nearly \$4,000 worth of water — can be stolen and used each year per garden.

The better the road, the better the response

By **SGT. 1ST CLASS BENJAMIN COSSEL**
Los Angeles Regional Public Affairs

The blade on the grader operated by the California National Guardsmen is nearly as wide as the road itself. They are buffeted on one side by a hill; the other side is a precipitous drop-off 30 to 40 feet down a canyon. Call it nerve-wracking, call it harrowing; these guys call it a day's work.

In addition to filling smugglers' tunnels, repairing border fence and digging drainage ditches, engineers with the CNG's Counterdrug Task Force are often called upon to rehabilitate back-country roads used by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border.

On Jan. 22, four Task Force Soldiers worked deep in the switchbacks near the peak of Otay Mountain repairing roads 100 painstaking feet at a time.

"The work my guys do out here makes the roads safer, easier to access and allows for a faster response by Border Patrol," explained 1st Sgt. Frank Guizar.

The day had actually started the night before. With a two-hour turnaround time between the site where the engineers load up their raw materials and the road project, time was of the essence.

"We'll typically prepare a load of class 2 gravel in the dump trucks for the next day as one of our last tasks of each day," ex-



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Cossel

Sgt. Axel White loads gravel into a dump truck operated by the CNG Counterdrug Task Force Jan. 22 during a road rehabilitation project for U.S. Border Patrol near San Diego.

plained noncommissioned officer in charge Staff Sgt. Joseph Camellari.

As with everything along these roads cutting up and down the mountain, the mix has to be just right.

"You really only get one chance at this," said Staff Sgt. Peter Spackman of National City, Calif. "Too dry and it separates once it hits the roads. ... Too wet and you'll never get it out of the dump trucks."

Before the crew could begin working on the

road, a grader had to smooth down the surface, knock loose any large rocks and prepare it to take the gravel. One-by-one the dump trucks dropped their cargo of gravel infused with soiltac — a polymer-based emulsion that stabilizes soils from erosion.

"It looks like Elmer's glue, it smells like Elmer's glue, it even feels like Elmer's glue," said Staff Sgt. Hillery Conedy, a heavy equipment operator with the task force.

"We like to refer to it as bondo for the road," Camellari added.

Once the gravel was laid down, the grader came through again, smoothing down the rough patches. The final step — tamping down the gravel — was accomplished as Border Patrol agents crossed back and forth across the road, their eyes facing south.

There's only one problem — these types of roads need constant rehabilitation.

"At least once a year we're out here, repairing these roads," Spackman said.

The once-a-year schedule assumes a January rain doesn't flood out the road and runoff from the mountain doesn't wash it out.

"We do regular rehabilitation of the roads," Camellari said, "but if Border Patrol identifies a stretch of road that needs work for whatever reason, we'll do it."

Even as budget constraints reduce Camellari's resources and ability to take on projects, the hard-set noncommissioned officer makes one thing exceptionally clear: "Safety is our top priority — safety for my Soldiers ... and the safety of the agents we're out here helping with the work we do."

Wrapping up the day, Guizar put the exclamation on Camellari's point.

"When we started working out here, this road was nothing more than a goat trail," he said. "A narrow, treacherous goat trail. The work my guys have done has made it safer for Border Patrol as they protect us."

I-168th returns from third Afghanistan tour

Medevac deployment ends with accolades

By 1ST LT. JAN BENDER

California Military Department Public Affairs

During a nine-month tour in Afghanistan, more than 100 Army National Guard Soldiers from California, Nevada and Washington with Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, worked together to provide aerial medical evacuation support to all of Regional Command (RC) West and Southwest. All told, the team logged more than 3,000 flight hours, 683 medevac missions and 730 patients transported.

The company deployed for similar tours in Afghanistan in 2002 and 2008, and its historic performance set a new standard, changing the way the entire Army medevac community trains to deploy.

"The thing that I'm most proud of [on this deployment] is the fact that we brought three states together and pulled everybody into one team," said CNG Maj. David Lovett, Charlie Company commander. "In true National Guard fashion, we made it happen."

Perfecting the Cal-Nev-Wash trifecta

Composed of six aircraft and crews from California, six from Nevada and three from Washington, Charlie Company made the decision early on to disregard any state lines.

"From day one we mixed all three states as a combined joint effort," Lovett said. "There were elements from all three states in the key positions. We completely mixed and matched to ensure we were the strongest we could be, everywhere we went."

Many of the unit's Soldiers had experienced multi-state deployments in the past and were enthusiastic about the decision to structure the company based on performance and merit versus state integrity.

"It all goes back to last deployment. ... We went out with three very strong states ... California, Nevada and Wyoming, and they were able to stay pretty much state-centric. From my point of view that was not the best way to go out the door," said 1st Sgt. Wayne Loader, a Nevada Army National Guardsman who has been with the company since 2008. "So when we got word on the next deployment, we started bringing all of our detachments together to train, almost two years out."

Charlie Company's Washington detachment was the newest addition to the company, as a result of a new Army mandate to increase medevac companies from 12 to 15 Black Hawk helicopters. Formed in late 2011 and nearly fully manned and equipped by mid 2012, the detachment had just one year to prepare for action overseas.

"Especially with Washington getting thrown into the mix as a brand new unit, we needed to spread the wealth," Loader said. "We didn't want our Soldiers worrying about where they're from, but focused on where the unit is going together."

Maj. Tyler Ranney was selected as the Washington detachment's commander, and he led the unit in its evolution from be-

ing an idea on paper to a combat-effective medevac element.

"Coming into this, we had no [real world] experience deploying as a detachment, and so we came in with fresh eyes, looking for what right looked like," Ranney said.

From the start Ranney had faith in his people and their abilities as pilots, air crews and medics, he said, and that only increased as they gelled with the other states and exchanged training throughout the deployment.

Since its initial formation the Washington detachment's sole focus was on readying for the mission overseas, so upon its return Ranney was eager to offer its combat-proven capability to the Soldiers' home state.

"We're ready to stand alone," Ranney said. "With all of the experience, expertise and tools we bring to the table ... I'm excited to see how we're going to integrate ourselves into the civilian emergency response and search-and-rescue arena here at home."

Setting the "DUSTOFF" standard

Charlie Company prides itself in providing "Dedicated Unwavering Service to Our Fighting Forces," or DUSTOFF. Since the Vietnam War, when helicopters were first deployed on medevac missions, DUSTOFF has been the call sign that comes across the radio waves when troops need aeromedical rescue in the midst of combat.

"We're aware of all those troops before us that helped to develop the program and all the sacrifices and efforts they made," said CNG Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Hughes, who has been on every deployment with the unit since he joined its ranks in 1997. "We are the result of a long legacy and tradition that we're proud to carry forward."

This deployment Charlie Company was broken up into small teams and emplaced on forward operating bases throughout RC West and Southwest. Within the first month on the ground, Charlie Company experienced some of their toughest rescues of the deployment.

"There was a stretch of two days where we had a couple aircraft get shot up by enemy fire going into hot [landing zones] to pickup wounded. It was early on, so I was like ... 'Whoa, this is going to be more challenging than I thought,'" said Lovett, who served as a platoon leader during the unit's 2008 deployment, when the company's Black Hawks dodged a near daily dose of hot steel. "Fortunately for us ... though we faced enemy fire sporadically, we didn't have any aircraft damaged for the rest of the deployment."

Each time Charlie Company has deployed to Afghanistan, the variables have been different, but the heart of the mission has remained the same.

"Our typical launch time was six minutes [from the initial call for help]," Hughes said. "Before [units] would roll out on their missions, they would stop by and check out with us. Knowing we were there for them gave them a great sense of confidence."



TOP: Soldiers with Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, gather information about a simulated casualty from Italian Soldiers during an August exercise at Forward Operating Base Farah, Afghanistan. **Photo by Navy Lt. Chad Dulac** **ABOVE RIGHT:** A UH-60 Black Hawk from Company C hoists two Soldiers while training in Afghanistan in September. **Photo by Lt. Chad Dulac** **ABOVE LEFT:** Chief Warrant Officer 3 Brandon Lynch is all smiles with nieces Jaya Fasani, 5, left, and Hollis Fasani, 3, after arriving Feb. 16 at Sacramento International Airport following a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan. **Photo by Capt. Will Martin**

During Charlie Company's 2002 deployment, the Soldiers recognized the need for greater emphasis on in-flight medical care, so they set about making a change. When they returned to Afghanistan in 2008, they brought with them a level of expertise and experience that far exceeded the active duty Army standard.

An extensive study later found the company was able to keep 66 percent more of its patients alive when compared side-by-side with active duty medevac counterparts.

The difference: Each of Charlie Company's flight medics was a certified paramedic instead of only possessing the baseline emergency medical technician certification that was the Army standard at the time.

Soon after, the Army charted a course to raise the standard for the entire medevac community, a change that took effect with a new level of schooling for medevac flight medics in 2012.

Ever-focused on saving more lives on the battlefield, this time around Charlie Company raised the bar again.

"This go-around we maintained that high level of medical expertise with our paramedics, but on top of that we brought along our own physician's assistant," Lovett said. "We pursued a waiver through [the National Guard Bureau] to leverage someone who was already an Army PA and worked full time as a civilian PA in an emergency room to further enhance our life-saving capabilities. ... We were the first medevac company to ever do that."

Citizen-Soldier edge

The unit brought a capability to the fight that only a Guard unit can, Lovett said.

"The medics in active duty units can't compete, because it's nearly impossible to simulate the day-to-day real world experience Guard troops pick up working full-time jobs as first responders," he said.

That breadth and depth of hands-on medical experience is only one aspect of what set Charlie Company apart. The unit's pilots and crews also brought a unique cache of experience from the search-and-rescue and wildfire fighting missions they execute in the high-altitude, rugged and mountainous terrain of their home states — experience their active duty counterparts rarely gain outside of a combat zone.

Another secret to Charlie Company's success is recognizing and grooming talent from a young age.

CNG Sgt. Cody Weaver joined the unit right out of basic training in 2005. He was an aircraft mechanic and served in that capacity during the unit's 2008 Afghanistan tour. On this last rotation he deployed as a crew chief, and interacting directly with those the crew rescued left a mark on him.

"Some of these people we rescue are critically wounded, and we are quite literally saving their lives," Weaver said. "They'll reach out to us or come find us, sometimes with tears in their eyes ... and thank you for saving their life. It's really gratifying to hear that."

Weaver now has his sights set on commissioning as a warrant officer, with hopes that the next time Charlie Company answers the call overseas he'll be in the cockpit.

"I really enjoy the mission and the people that I work with," said Weaver. "For me there is no greater calling."

MRAP it up

Guard Soldiers
train Clovis police
units on new
MRAP vehicles

Photos by Spc. Brianne Roudebush

By **STAFF SGT. TINA VILLALOBOS**
224th Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

Soldiers of the Fresno-based 1072nd Transportation Company made use of their critical skill sets, knowledge of equipment and battle-hardened professionalism in January, when they provided crucial training to the Clovis Police Department.

Clovis PD recently obtained a Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle, or MRAP, from the Army's surplus war inventory. The roots of the intergovernmental training effort in January began with one Guardsman's connection to his Clovis community.

"It came about because, luckily, one of the SWAT team members, Chris Berna, is actually my neighbor," said Sgt. 1st Class Ramon Brusellas of Clovis. "We coached our sons' football team together. One day he said, 'Guess what. We got this big tank thing. I think it's Army. What do you know about it?' Once I saw it, I said, 'Everything.'"

Due to the questions his neighbor was asking, Brusellas knew comprehensive hands-on training would be necessary for the safety of his local police department and his community.

"I was in those vehicles three to four times per week," Brusellas said. "I know exactly how they operate. My number one concern is safety. I was in small villages with those things. I have witnessed rollovers, and I wanted to help prevent something like that from happening to my friend and neighbor."

Because the Army National Guard mission encompasses both state and federal duties, Guard members may be called upon at any time to assist their local communities in times of disaster or rescue operations. Opportunities for intergovernmental training provide awareness of tactics used by other organizations, exchange of ideas and familiarization for future cooperative endeavors.

"I am the course manager and I organized this whole thing," Brusellas said. "But I have two of the best instructors that I could have asked for in Staff Sergeant Carnahan and Staff Sergeant Burton. Those guys have been amazing, and the plethora of knowledge that they obtained during our mobilization have caused the six members [of the Clovis Police Department] that were chosen to take part in this program to rethink their vision of what this truck can do and how they can be effective."

Joshua Carnahan and Alfred Burton are graduates of the Army's official MRAP training course, and Carnahan has completed an extended course that includes technical elements of the vehicle's operation and maintenance. Like Brusellas, both have experience using the MRAP in a combat environment.

Clovis SWAT and narcotics officers discussed the ways community safety may be enhanced with an MRAP. The MRAP does not provide any additional weaponry; it does, however, provide an array of additional protective measures for officers and citizens.

"Often times we have to evacuate neighbors in a hostile environment with a rifle threat," said Sgt. Rod Lichti, SWAT team leader. "We used to try to sneak them out through the bushes; now we can back an armored vehicle up right to their door and they can go right out of the house and into the armored vehicle and we can drive them away safely."

"There is a turret on top of the MRAP where an officer can get up there with protected cover and shoot gas into a house, or they can get out of it and be behind it and shoot from there," he continued. "But, wherever you drive it,

you have a hardened cover position that no civilian rounds can penetrate. It will make our job a whole lot safer."

David Martin, a detective with Clovis PD narcotics unit and a SWAT team operator, lauded the safety and tactical advantages of their newly acquired MRAP.

"I've been in law enforcement for 16 years now," he said. "With the MRAP, we can provide a kind of safe harbor between us and an armed individual. It will assist us with officer rescues."

"Now, we can actually park the MRAP in front of an injured person, and in between [them and] an armed suspect, and be able to perform that rescue in a safe environment, thanks to the armor of the MRAP," Martin said.

Both the law enforcement trainees and their Soldier counterparts benefitted from the MRAP training.

"These guys have been exceptional," Lichti said. "They are definitely subject matter experts. They have not only learned how to use these things through their training, but both of our instructors have used armored vehicles in Afghanistan and Iraq. So they understand it from the academic side, and they also understand it from the real application in the field."

"I have been doing SWAT training for about 20 years, so when I evaluate these guys; I have a little bit of experience to base it on," he added.

Martin also expressed his gratitude for the training provided by the soldiers of 1072nd Transportation Company.

"The Army staff that's been assigned to us has been exceptional with the training that they've provided, and we're very appreciative of that," he said.

"The most beneficial thing I've learned so far is how to operate the MRAP safely," Martin added. "It's very heavy. It's top heavy. You can't get in there and just drive. ... It's not like a 2,500-pound car that stops when you press the brake. You need to learn how it operates and the safe distance of traveling and how it is going to react when you get into a situation. You can only learn that by driving, and you can only get that information from somebody who is trained in it."

The Soldiers learned different perspectives and tactics from their students as well.

"It's been a great training experience," Carnahan said. "I think it went pretty good on both sides. I would like to see this continue in the future."

"This inter-governmental training is a brand new thing that's happening," Burton said. "This is a first time experience for Staff Sergeant Carnahan and me. It is pretty cool. We can bring them here and let them get some firsthand experience on some of these things. There are also a lot of other techniques and tactics that they use that will kind of get us out of continuously using the same tactics. So, talking amongst each other, we get new ideas on both sides."



TOP: Soldiers of the 1072nd Transportation Company work their way through a Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle driving course with members of the Clovis Police Department on Jan. 23 at Camp Roberts, Calif. **CENTER:** Staff Sgt. Alfred Burton of the 1072nd prepares Sgt. James Boldt of the Clovis PD for the driving course. **ABOVE:** Boldt climbs out of a vehicle rollover trainer.

A lasting relationship

Museum celebrates bond between 40th ID, Korean town

By **WALTER HAM**
8th Army Public Affairs

Veterans from the CNG's 40th Infantry Division returned to the school they helped build in Gapyeong, South Korea, in February for the opening of a museum that chronicles the 62-year relationship between the school and the division.

Accompanied by 40th ID Deputy Commander Brig. Gen. Mark G. Malanka, the veterans received a hero's welcome at the opening of the Kaiser Hall Museum and at the school's graduation ceremony Feb. 7.

Gapyeong High School Principal Han Byung-heon thanked the veterans and said the students voted to the name the museum after Los Angeles native Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Kaiser, the first 40th Infantry Division

sion Soldier to die during the Korean War.

"The U.S. came to our country and shared our suffering during the Korean War," Han said. "They are the only people and country that gave us the chance to have such a great school."

40th ID Soldiers took part in some of the fiercest fighting of the Korean War, including the Battles of Sandbag Castle and Heartbreak Ridge. In 1952, the division defended Gapyeong, a strategic town located along the mountainous eastern flank of the South Korean capital, Seoul.

Then division commander, Maj. Gen. Joseph Cleland, saw more than 150 South Korean students studying in a tent near artillery fire. The general decided the students needed a real school. His Soldiers donated \$2 each to the school, and the division helped with its construction.

South Korean school officials originally wanted to call it the Cleland School, but the general insisted that they name the school after Kaiser.

The division's relationship with the school has continued since the Korean War. After Cleland retired from the Army, he also donated part of his pension to the Kaiser School.

Today, the 40th Infantry Division maintains its 62-year relationship with Gapy-



ABOVE: Korean War veterans, military leaders and school officials officially open the new Kaiser Hall Museum at Gapyeong High School in South Korea on Feb. 7. **LEFT:** Korean War veteran Dave Pressey, who served in the 40th Infantry Division, attends the opening, where he would present a plaque to Principal Han Byung-heon on behalf of the 40th Infantry Division Veterans Association.

eong by returning to the school each year and donating scholarships to its students.

Much like the rest of South Korea in the six decades since the brutal war, Gapyeong High School has flourished and excelled. The school that started in a tent now graduates 900 students a year and is one of the top five high schools in South Korea.

Korean War and 40th ID veteran Dave

Pressey presented a plaque to Han on behalf of the 40th Infantry Division Veterans Association. A former infantry Soldier from Ojai, Calif., Pressey came ashore at Incheon and fought in the Taebaek Mountains during the Korean War.

"The Korean people have risen from the ashes," Pressey said outside the new museum that honors his division's relationship with the school. "They're fantastic."

A mother's heart, a warrior's grit

Combat pilot Maj. Edith Sablan embodies the balance and passion of modern military women

By **CAPT. WILL MARTIN**
California Military Department Public Affairs

"If Whole Foods had a drive-thru, I'd go through it every day," said the California Air National Guard's Maj. Esther Sablan, lamenting her effort to keep her three kids fed in a timely, yet healthy manner.

Describing herself as a "mother at heart," Sablan converses in a warm and engaging manner that confirms her self-assessment. But her life's resume betrays an underlying, dogged drive: working mother of twins, MIT grad, Air Force helicopter pilot, combat veteran.

If Sablan can't have it all, it won't be for lack of effort.

"Every day, I wake up asking, 'Who am I going to let down today?'" Sablan said, referring to her seemingly endless attempts at balancing responsibilities. "Is it going to be my civilian job, my military job or my kids? ... It's really, really difficult."

The divide between Sablan's "civilian" and "military" jobs is more semantics than substance. She serves full-time as commander of the 129th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, where, though in uniform, she is paid as a civilian federal technician. Her traditional or "part-time" role with the Guard is as an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter pilot for the 129th Rescue Wing. Sablan has

deployed three times to combat with the wing, best known for its pararescue mission, twice to Iraq and most recently to Afghanistan in 2013.

Sablan's roles as mother and warrior have not only co-existed, but strengthened each other. She unapologetically admits that her heartfelt devotion to her family spills over to her commitment to the troops in her care.

"It's the same feeling," Sablan said. "When there is an Army Soldier on the ground getting shot at, and the only thing between him dying is me and my helicopter, it's the same feeling as if my 2-year-old went running out in the road. You wouldn't hesitate to go, would you? You would absolutely go."

Motherhood, Sablan insists, has actually matured her as a leader. Acknowledging she "was really all about me" as a young officer, Sablan believes raising 4-year-old twins and a 2-year-old toddler has transformed her. Now her sacrificial approach toward her children is paralleled in her effort to mentor troops, especially other mothers in uniform.

"That's my personal quest," Sablan said of recommending the National Guard to mothers. "I wish all stay-at-home moms had an opportunity to be a traditional Guardsman, because it's the best of both worlds. You still have your identity, you still get to contribute ... your resume never

shows a break in service. It's a great opportunity for women."

An opportunity, Sablan admits, that has its unique challenges, especially for a pilot.

"I was breastfeeding twins when I did my last [requalification course]," she said. "Before we would launch to fly, I would say 'I need 30 minutes in the bathroom, and you can't talk to me.' ... You just do what you have to do."

Sablan's nearly two decades of military experience — she earned her commission through MIT's Air Force ROTC program in 1997 — has only furthered her affection for the National Guard. The feeling is mutual, it seems, as Sablan was named the CNG Field Grade Officer of the Year for 2013.

Unsolicited praise for the professionalism and camaraderie of her colleagues pours out of Sablan, who remains bound to the nobility of her wing's mission.

"What I like about this mission: 95 percent of the time, it's a happy ending," she said. "To say that we save lives instead of dropping bombs, that's pretty amazing to me."

But reared as the daughter of an Armed Forces helicopter pilot, Sablan is as adventurous as she is idealistic. Deployed to Iraq in the earliest years of the conflict, Sablan remembers being stuck in Turkey as the Air



Brig. Gen. Randall Ball, deputy adjutant general of the California National Guard, presents the CNG Field Grade Officer of the Year Award for 2013 to Maj. Esther Sablan.

Force awaited authorization to cross into Iraq. That permission never came, as Turkey declined the United States' request to fly equipment into a neighboring and hostile nation. Knowing they would still head into Iraq, Sablan and her peers improvised.

"The night before we went into Iraq, we went to the base exchange and bought our own gear," she said. "That's how expeditionary we were ... pup tents in the middle of Northern Iraq."

Sablan said it's that combination of earthiness and noble purpose that keeps people at her wing for most of their careers, herself included.

"Our deployments, people want to go. They want to be a part of history," she said. "It's just like your family at home. You don't want your family to go anywhere without you. I hope my children have that feeling some day."

Photo by California National Guard

Photos by Pfc. Lee Ho-su

RIGHT: Soldiers from the California Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, evacuate a simulated casualty during a Jan. 22 exercise at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center near Bridgeport, Calif.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Steve Cushman FAR RIGHT: Members of the California Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion sprint onto the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum turf before the Oakland Raiders game against the Tennessee Titans on Nov. 24. More than 100 Cal Guard members also unfurled a massive U.S. flag during the national anthem and participated in a reenlistment ceremony at halftime. Fallen CNG Soldier Spc. Sean Michael Walsh was also honored during the game by the Raiders, who were hosting their annual Salute to Service game. Photo by Staff Sgt. Salli Curchin CENTER: Soldiers of the 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group present the colors during a March 2 change-of-command ceremony for new leader Col. Louis Carmona and outgoing commander Col. Myles Williams. Photo by 1106th TASMG



ABOVE: Members of the 144th Fighter Wing Civil Engineering Squadron Fire Department decontaminate a victim of a simulated chemical spill during a homeland defense exercise March 1. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Chris Drudge RIGHT: Airmen with the 144th Fighter Wing Civil Engineering Squadron train at March Air Reserve Base, Calif., on Feb. 27. Photo by Senior Airman Michael Quiboloy

At a Glance



TOP RIGHT: A Soldier with the CNG's 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, clears out of a UH-60 Black Hawk from the CNG's 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment during combined training Feb. 8 at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif. **For more on the combined training, see page 16. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Cossel** **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Spc. Jeremy Hughes of the 1113th Transportation Company and a loved one conduct a TV interview March 6 after Hughes and his fellow Soldiers returned to Mineta San Jose International Airport following a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan. **Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney** **ABOVE:** Senior Airman Nampol Maikeo says goodbye to his family Feb. 24 before he and about 130 other members of the 146th Airlift Wing deploy to Kuwait from Channel Islands Air National Guard Station, Calif. **Photo by Senior Airman Nicholas Carzis**



Striving for excellence

CNG honors top performers at annual joint banquet

By SENIOR AIRMAN
ROSALIE CAMMARATA
California Military Department Public Affairs

Putting on a uniform isn't just part of a morning routine; it's an earned privilege that embeds pride into the heart of a service member. As part of the 1 percent that volunteers to defend America's freedom, service members sacrifice, endure and overcome, striving to ensure the safety of their loved ones and the nation.

Each year the California National Guard highlights elite members with Soldier and Airmen of the Year awards. This year, during a Jan. 18 banquet in Sacramento, eight of the CNG's finest were named 2014 Outstanding Airmen and Best Warriors.

This was the second year the banquet was a joint event Army/Air Force event, and attendance exceeded 500.

"This year's event yielded even more attendees than last year, and I believe that number will increase every year," said Command Chief Master Sgt. Jason Red, senior enlisted adviser for the 129th Rescue Wing. "These troops work really hard and they deserve to be recognized by the largest crowd possible."

Hard work may be an understatement. For most, the road to recognition has been arduous, both physically and mentally.

CNG Soldiers competed in the Best Warrior Competition in September to earn the titles of Soldier and Noncommissioned (NCO) of the Year. The four-day clash consisted of a 5.89-mile road march; an Army physical fitness test; a chemical, biological, radio-

"Strive for perfection, and when you encounter your moments of failure, no matter how grave, don't let it get you down. Get back up and drive on, Soldier. Drive on!"

**-Master Sgt. John Milor
Senior Air NCO of the Year, CNG**

logical and nuclear (CBRN) knowledge report; the Fight to your Rifle event, which includes various rifle and pistol targets; an obstacle course; an Army combatives tournament; and much more.

"It was harder than I thought it would be," said Sgt. Alex Zonio, a CBRN specialist with the 95th Civil Support Team (Weapons of Mass Destruction). Each day added up physically and mentally, but I focused on each event one at a time."

His tactics paid off, as Zonio was named the competition's Best NCO. Zonio is a 25-year-old with eight years of service in the CNG, including one deployment to Iraq and five years as an infantry team leader for 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment.

"Never give up, never get discouraged," the San Francisco Bay Area native said. "Make yourself 1 percent better each day."

Pfc. Ian Peacock who has been in the Guard only one year, took the title of Best Soldier.

A machine gunner with the 1-184th and another Bay Area native, Peacock had the honor of Jan. 18 being named Pfc. Peacock Day in South San Francisco this year.

The CNG's Outstanding Airmen traveled a different journey. Supervisors and first sergeants nominated Airmen for "Airman of the Month" and "Airman of the Quarter" recognition throughout the year. The candidates from each wing then competed against each other in front of a panel of senior NCOs from throughout California.

Senior Airman Carlos Puga, an air transportation journeyman with the 146th Air-lift Wing, was awarded the title of Airman of the Year. Puga began his military career by earning the prestigious Distinguished Graduate Award during Air Force technical school. He is currently deployed to Afghanistan and therefore could not attend the award ceremony.

Master Sgt. Roberto Amador earned the NCO of the Year award. A native of Mana-

gua, Nicaragua, Amador's military career began in 1992 as a cavalry air scout in the U.S. Army.

In 2000, he enlisted in the California Air National Guard as a member of its security forces. He currently works in Intelligence Operations for the 196th Reconnaissance Squadron at March Air Reserve Base. Amador's mobilizations include a domestic tour in support of Operation Noble Eagle after the 9/11 attacks and overseas deployments for Operation Southern Watch and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

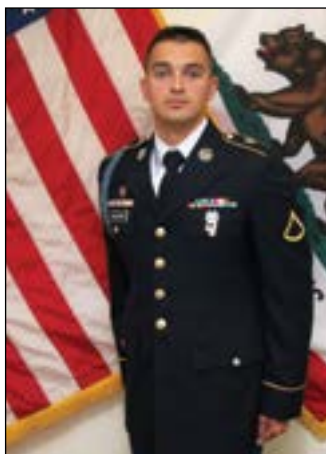
"Work hard, study hard, and enjoy what you do," the 23-year veteran said. "If you enjoy your career and profession of arms, you will never work a day in your life. Be ready for the next step in your career and always be a team player."

Master Sgt. John Milor, a cyber systems security craftsman for the 144th Fighter Wing, is the Air Guard's Senior NCO of the Year. After serving in the Army for four years as an infantryman and an M60 machine gunner, Milor separated from the military for five years before enlisting in the California Air Guard.

Milor's service has included deployments to Panama and Korea and numerous awards, including being named the distinguished graduate and honor graduate upon completing Air Force basic training and technical school. He also created a program Air Combat Command used for five years to improve unit compliance inspections.

"Strive for perfection, and when you encounter your moments of failure, no mat-

2014 Top Soldiers, Airmen



Pfc. Ian Peacock
Soldier of the Year
Army National Guard



Sgt. Alex Zonio
NCO of the Year
Army National Guard



Senior Airman Carlos Puga
Airman of the Year
Air National Guard

ter how grave, don't let it get you down," said Milor, who said he derives frequent lessons from his Army training, the Airman's Creed and the Bible. "Get back up and drive on, Soldier. Drive on!"

"Versatile" doesn't fully describe Master Sgt. Lindsey Bartlett, who serves as the 129th Rescue Wing's first sergeant. Born and raised in Bristol, England, Bartlett enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1996 and became a naturalized citizen in 1998.

Bartlett has served in Air Force as a bassoonist, an operations manager and a public affairs specialist. She has deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and Qatar. She became the 129th Medical Group first sergeant in 2012 and this year earned distinction as the top first sergeant in the California Air Guard.

The California State Military Reserve (CSMR) recognizes two outstanding members each year who are nominated by their units and then appear before a board to compete for the titles of Soldier and NCO of the Year.

"We had very exceptional individuals [compete]," said Charles Collier, command chief master sergeant for the CSMR. "We had to decide between two ties to determine the winners."

Spc. Jonathan C. Scholtz and Staff Sgt. Michael Hatcher emerged victorious.

Having served in the CSMR for just under

two years, Scholtz has proven to be an asset. He is assigned to Headquarters, 1st Army Support Battalion, in San Bernardino, where he serves as a health care specialist. Scholtz received a California Achievement Medal for support of the 148th Transportation Company's range qualification on Nov. 9, 2012.

On Jan. 16, 2009, Hatcher enlisted in the CSMR as a signal trainer. He is currently assigned to Headquarters, CSMR, and travels statewide conducting ground and air communications training, systems orientations training, and Coast Guard rescue flight training. In 2010, Hatcher was awarded the California Medal of Merit for his outstanding communications support during Operation Soaring Angel at Fort Hunter Liggett.

On the left side of each service member's uniform is a nametape, distinguishing their branch of service. Soldiers and Airmen proudly enlist to defend the U.S. in their respective branches, but they are part of one team, as evidenced by the spirit and mutual respect displayed Jan. 18 in Sacramento.

"All the Soldiers and Airmen honored tonight exemplify the Army and Air Force values and have displayed the mental and physical toughness and abilities we value so highly in the California National Guard," said Brig. Gen. Matthew Beevers, assistant adjutant general for the CNG. "I am proud to have shared the stage with them tonight."



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Chris Drudge

A joint California National Guard color guard presents the colors during the CNG Outstanding Airmen and Best Warrior of the Year Banquet on Jan. 18 in Sacramento.

Cal Guard's best of the best in 2014

Senior Airman Carlos Puga, an air transportation journeyman from the 146th Logistics Readiness Squadron, enlisted in the California Air National Guard in 2009. He scored a 98 percent in his Air Force technical training, earning the Distinguished Graduate Award, given to the best student in class. Puga is currently deployed to Afghanistan.

Private 1st Class Ian Peacock enlisted in the California Army National Guard a year ago as a machine gunner with Company B, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment. He completed his first annual training at Fort Magsaysay, Philippines, in support of exercise Balikatan last year. He plans to attend Ranger School and strives to earn the rank of first sergeant.

Master Sgt. Roberto R. Amador, an operations intelligence craftsman for the 196th Reconnaissance Squadron, joined the Cali-

fornia Air National Guard in 2000. His military career began in 1992 with the Army, serving as a cavalry air scout. After eight years in the active duty Army and Army National Guard, Amador switched gears and enlisted in the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing Security Forces Squadron. He has deployed in support of operations Noble Eagle, Southern Watch and Iraqi Freedom.

Sgt. Alex Zonio is a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear specialist for the 95th Civil Support Team (Weapons of Mass Destruction). Zonio enlisted in the California Army National Guard in 2006 and served for five years as an infantry team leader with 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment. He deployed to Iraq in 2008. Zonio is qualified in numerous Army skill sets, including combatives level II, combat lifesaver and air assault. He currently attends the American Military University, majoring in emergency management.

Master Sgt. John Milor, a cyber systems surety craftsman with the 144th Fighter Wing, began his military career in 1988 as an infantry Soldier in the Army. He deployed to Panama with the Army as an M60 machine gunner in support of operations Nimrod Dancer and Just Cause. He also spent time on the border between North Korea and South Korea as a radio operator. In 1996, Milor enlisted in the California Air National Guard in the computer field. He has served as a communications security manager for more than 17 years and consistently receives excellent ratings on his inspections.

Master Sgt. Lindsey Bartlett enlisted in the Air Force in 1996 as a bassoonist. She also served as an operations manager and a public affairs specialist. She enlisted in the California Air National Guard's 561st Air Force Band in 2007 and deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and Qatar. In 2012,

Bartlett became the 129th Rescue Wing Medical Group's first sergeant.

Spc. Jonathan Scholtz enlisted in the California State Military Reserve in 2012. He is assigned to Headquarters, 1st Army Support Battalion, in San Bernardino, where he serves as a health care specialist. Scholtz received a California Achievement Medal for support of the 148th Transportation Company's range qualification on Nov. 9, 2012.

Staff Sgt. Michael Hatcher enlisted in the State Military Reserve as a signal trainer in 2009. He is assigned to Headquarters, California State Military Reserve, and travels statewide conducting ground and air communications training, systems orientations training and Coast Guard rescue flight training. In 2010, Hatcher was awarded the California Medal of Merit for outstanding communications support during Operation Soaring Angel at Fort Hunter Liggett.



Master Sgt. Roberto Amador
NCO of the Year
Air National Guard



Master Sgt. John Milor
Senior NCO of the Year
Air National Guard



Master Sgt. Lindsey Bartlett
First Sergeant of the Year
Air National Guard



Spc. Jonathan Scholtz
Soldier of the Year
State Military Reserve



Staff Sgt. Michael Hatcher
NCO of the Year
State Military Reserve

Operation Pure Cure

95th Civil Support Team tests bioterrorism response

By **CAPT. JASON SWEENEY**
California Military Department Public Affairs

An employee goes rogue and sets off an explosion inside the urban headquarters of a large biotechnology company. A hazardous materials team from the company makes entry into the smoking building but must withdraw after detecting radioactivity. Local first responders that have arrived on the scene determine that it's time to call in the experts.

The alert is sent out and the California National Guard's 95th Civil Support Team (CST) is on the way.

This scenario was part of a multi-agency bioterrorism exercise called Operation Pure Cure, which took place Jan. 22 at the South San Francisco headquarters of Genentech Inc.

The Hayward-based 95th CST organized the exercise, and participants included Genentech's First Alert Team, the South San Francisco Fire Department, the Belmont Fire Department, the San Mateo County Hazardous Materials (hazmat) Team and the San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services.

The 95th CST conducts several exercises a year with civilian first responders to test their ability to work together during a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) event.

Sgt. 1st Class Garrick Whitley, the exercise coordinator and the 95th CST's CBRN non-commissioned officer in charge, said Operation Pure Cure was slightly different from most CST exercises because it involved a hazardous materials team from a private company, Genentech's First Alert Team.

"The unique opportunity for this training

was that we were able to use public, private and National Guard assets, and in the scenario the private asset was very capable with a hazmat response," Whitley said. "Most companies don't have a hazmat team to respond to incidents like this."

South San Francisco Fire Department Battalion Chief Jess Magallanes was the incident commander in charge of the agencies that responded to the simulated attack. Magallanes said the purpose of the exercise was to test the emergency response system during an incident that is a bit larger than what local agencies are used to handling.

He said the 95th CST is a valuable resource that local agencies can call on for its specialized equipment and expertise.

"They're able to basically scale everything up much bigger than my department with 70 sworn personnel can do," he said.

Shortly after receiving the alert, the 95th CST's blue trucks and trailers rolled out of the unit's armory in Hayward. The team's mobile science lab, communications truck, operations vehicle, command vehicle, decontamination truck, medical response vehicle and survey vehicle headed over the San Francisco Bay on the San Mateo Bridge to the simulated disaster site.

The 95th CST is composed of 22 full-time Soldiers and Airmen. The team is operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on call to assist civilian authorities in the event of a CBRN incident. The team's area of responsibility is Northern California, while its counterpart, the 9th CST in Los Alamitos, is responsible for the southern part of the state.

The 95th CST arrived quickly at the Genentech facility, staged its vehicles and prepared for action.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Felipe Arellano



TOP: Sgt. Michael Evans of the 95th Civil Support Team enters a building that was the site of a simulated bioterror attack Jan. 22 in South San Francisco. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Maj. Christopher Angle and other 95th CST members link up with South San Francisco Fire Department personnel during exercise Operation Pure Cure. **ABOVE LEFT:** Evans prepares to enter the potentially contaminated building Jan. 22. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Staff Sgt. Leslie Greenfield of the 95th emerges from a decontamination trailer.

Maj. Christopher Angle, 95th CST deputy commander, was the officer in charge of the team for the exercise. He linked up with the incident commander and a Genentech official in charge of the company's assets. They determined that entry teams should be sent into the building to find the source of the radioactivity.

CST entry team members Sgt. Michael Evans and Spc. Alyssa Quinn suited up in Level B hazmat suits and prepared to enter the smoke-filled Genentech building where the simulated blast had occurred.

The CST entry team and a two-person team from the San Mateo County Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Team then made a joint entry into the hot zone. The teams used specialized equipment to search the smoke-filled hallways and offices.

"Our primary mission was to locate and presumptively identify the strongest radiation source we could find, which was what initially had the Genentech team withdraw from their entry," Evans said. "When I made entry, it was my job to relay back to the cold zone operations what the site looked like, to get eyes on."

Sgt. Alex Zonio, the downrange entry team leader, supervised the 95th team from the staging area outside.

"They are performing a reconnaissance mission, painting the picture for everyone

else," he said.

Evans and Quinn relayed what they were seeing to the team outside, which was determining what the hazards were for people downrange.

The two entry teams entered a darkened room that was filled with thick smoke. They found a workbench surrounded by broken glass. Their sensors led them to a 5-gallon bucket, inside of which they found the radioactive source: uranium-238.

After leaving the building, the two teams were scrubbed down and decontaminated in the CST's decontamination trailer.

"It was a very successful mission," Angle said. "We established a unified command. There was a joint interagency effort for the objective: combined entries, combined mission tracking. We attacked the incident commander's objectives concurrently."

Nick Gottuso, a district coordinator for the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services, acted as the site access control leader during Operation Pure Cure. He said this was his first time watching the 95th CST in action and that the exercise was a valuable test of interagency emergency operations.

"I think that the only way that we ever find out if all these emergency plans work is to exercise them in an event like this," Gottuso said.



Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney

Sift, sort, scrub, save

CNG's 349th Quartermaster Company maximizes materiel efficiency in Afghanistan

By **SPC. AARON ELLERMAN**
1st Sustainment Command Public Affairs

Imagine having a garage sale, operating a recycling center and doing spring cleaning. Now combine all those jobs and multiply it by a few thousand, and you basically have a retro-sort yard.

The idea is simple: Organize materiel and get it to where it needs to go, saving money and avoiding costs through the re-utilization effort. It may be a simple idea, but the actual process is complex and tedious, as Soldiers work diligently to process what amounts to more than a decade's worth of operational supplies.

The first step in the retro-sort operation is receiving the materiel. The retro-sort yard receives containers from multiple sources all over Afghanistan, including units turning in their excess equipment before returning home. Soldiers working at the yard have to sift through the containers and separate the useful items from the rubbish.

"When you open the containers up, you never know what you're going to find in there," said Spc. Brenda Ochoa, an automated logistics specialist with the California Army National Guard's 349th Quartermaster Company.

The next step is to sort and categorize the

materiel according to its classification. The Soldiers sort every type of materiel that comes into the yard; some items, however, go to other facilities immediately after being sorted.

"We process mainly class II and IX items and deliver other items, such as any classified or sensitive items we may find, to other operations handling that specific type of supply," Ochoa said.

Class II and IX items consists of individual equipment, tents, organizational tool sets and kits, hand tools, unclassified maps, administrative and housekeeping supplies, and repair parts and components required for maintenance support.

Some supplies go into the yard's free-issue stock, where units can come and browse the inventory and pick up any needed items.

Much, if not all, of the materiel arriving at the yard is dirty and must be scrubbed to eliminate debris. This part of the process is often the most time-consuming.

"It's very tedious work. You have to make sure you clean in between all the cracks and crevices of everything, and there are some things that come in that have pretty many cracks and crevices," Ochoa said.

Not only does the materiel being shipped have to be cleaned, but the shipping con-



Photo by Spc. Aaron Ellerman

Spc. Justin Reiner, an automated logistic specialist with the Cal Guard's 349th Quartermaster Company, prepares equipment to be shipped at the Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, retro-sort yard Feb. 18. Retro-sort operations save money by sorting materiel in theater before shipping it to various locations for further use.

tainers also need attention.

"Everything has to be thoroughly cleaned and can't have any dirt or bacteria on it that could be potentially harmful to the agriculture of the U.S.," said Spc. Richard Womack, an automated logistics specialist with the 349th.

Once the items and containers have been cleaned, they are ready to be checked by customs agents and shipped to a variety of locations.

"Customs usually comes to inspect twice a day, and we can usually ship out one or two shipping containers of goods per day," said Womack, who is a native of

Mount Shasta, Calif.

The materiel is shipped to a variety of locations where it is put back into the military's inventory, put into immediate service, repaired or used for parts.

The Soldiers at the Kandahar retro-sort yard process about a million pieces of materiel a week, helping to reduce shipping costs by ensuring no unnecessary materiel is sent back to the U.S.

Army equipment is made to last for many years and, through the retro-sort process at Kandahar, the Army is being a good steward of taxpayer dollars, making sure the items see maximum usage.

Rugby builds strength, character, future Soldiers

By **LT. COL. (CA) RICHARD LALOR**
Recruiting and Retention Battalion, CA Army National Guard

In its ongoing mission to attract the best and brightest men and women to its ranks of citizen-Soldiers, the California Army National Guard brought a significant presence to the 30th Annual Sacramento Valley Rugby Association Kick-off Tournament in Rancho Cordova on Jan. 18-19.

The CNG Veterans Honors Program provided a color guard and a national anthem performer Saturday and Sunday; Sgt. Maj. Daniel DeGeorge and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Matey conducted the coin toss before each championship game and presented National Guard-branded rugby balls to coaches during pre-game festivities; the 40th Infantry Division and the 49th Military Police Brigade set up static displays, including an up-armored Humvee, a radio transmission trailer and other equipment; and uniformed personnel greeted participants and answered questions throughout the tournament.

The event is one of the premier youth rugby tournaments in the country, and the Northern California Youth Rugby Association is recognized by USA Rugby as one of the best programs for developing players. The association comprises more than 5,000 young men and women competing in more than 75 clubs and 200 teams in more than 20 conferences, ranging from high school varsity to children younger than 8.



Photo by Lt. Col. (CA) Richard Lalor

Sgt. 1st Class James Hereth of the California Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion congratulates players prior to a championship match during the 30th Annual Sacramento Valley Rugby Association Kick-off Tournament in January.

Referee Ray Schwartz said rugby is an excellent sport for channeling teenagers' competitive nature and developing their strength, character, confidence, leadership and social skills, while instilling in them the game's traditions of respect, courage and camaraderie.

Accordingly, the tournament provided a target-rich environment for members of the California Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion and an excel-

lent opportunity to showcase the Guard to the citizens it serves.

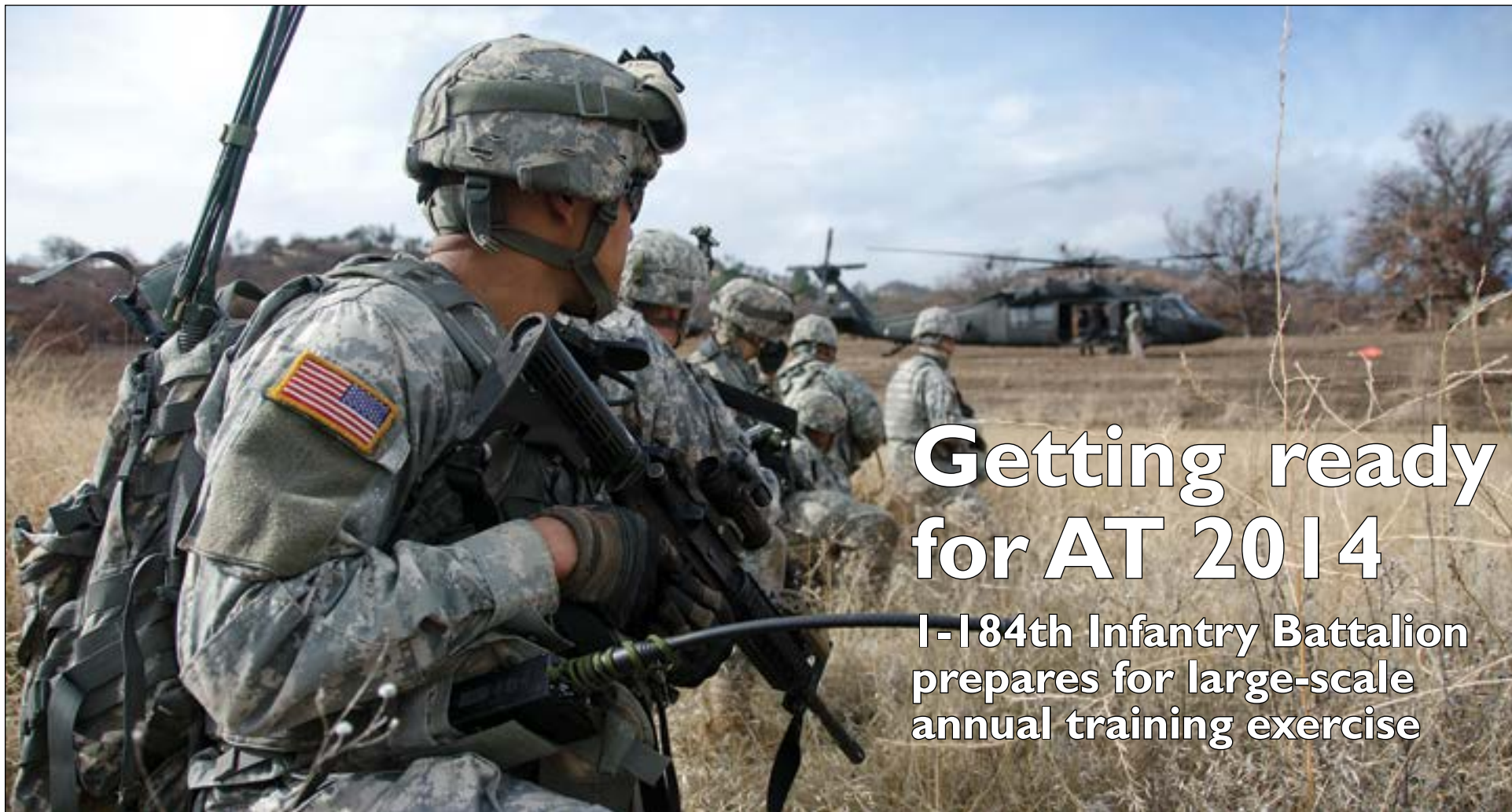
"At this tournament you find literally hundreds of physically qualified kids competing in the same place and time, with their parents and coaches — their primary centers of influence — on hand to support them," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Monforte, who has garnered 11 enlistments in the past three years as a direct result of his involvement in rugby.

Monforte definitely qualifies as an expert. He began playing rugby while serving in the Navy in San Diego and was selected as a member of the All-Navy Rugby Team in 2005 and 2006. He turned to coaching in 2010, when he was assigned as a Guard recruiter in Placerville and El Dorado County.

As head coach of the Mother Lode Rugby Club for high school girls, Monforte's team finished second in Northern California in 2011 and was ranked seventh in the nation. In 2012, his team earned Northern California championship honors.

"Through my coaching I've become known as the 'Guard Guy' and have been able to build a solid relationship in my community," Monforte said. "I have worked hard to establish trust with my players, their parents and schoolmates to serve as a role model and mentor and encourage these kids to make sound and smart decisions. It's not unusual to have friends of my players come to see me, asking about the National Guard and the educational and career training opportunities it offers when they begin thinking about their future."

One of Monforte's success stories is Pvt. Zachary Martin, who is assigned to the Cal Guard's 149th Chemical Company in Turlock. The 20-year-old was introduced to "Coach" Monforte by his sister Ashleigh, who played on Monforte's team. The pair built a relationship, and Zachary liked what the Guard had to offer. He enlisted in February 2013.



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Cosel

Getting ready for AT 2014

I-184th Infantry Battalion prepares for large-scale annual training exercise

SGT. 1ST CLASS BENJAMIN COSSEL
Los Angeles Regional Public Affairs

In their own right, each is iconic in U.S. Army lore: aviation and infantry. Combine these two elements, and you get the stuff legends are made of. But every legend has its early days, and in the mid-morning hours of Feb. 8, deep somewhere in the woods of Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., this one was just beginning.

"What we do today will facilitate our success during annual training," said a focused Maj. Robert Horvath, operations officer for 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment. With a chuckle, he let it escape that he knew what was coming for his troops. "During this upcoming annual training, we — the 1-184 Infantry — have been given an air assault mission."

Under his body armor's heavy padding, Horvath's chest rose and fell in a deep sigh as he looked out across a field. His eyes locked onto the Soldiers huddled en masse in a circle in the distance.

"Crawl, walk, run," he said. "That's what we're doing: practicing this in preparation for our [annual training] mission."

But the 1-184th is just one-half of the equation. In order for this exercise to work, the 1-184th troops need the assistance of Soldiers and assets from Company B, 1st Battalion (Air Assault), 140th Aviation Regiment.

The infantry troops hail from Northern California. Fort Hunter Liggett, situated about 150 miles south of their home in the San Francisco Bay Area, is almost in their backyard. Not so for the pilots and crew chiefs operating the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. The aviation Soldiers hang their hats in Southern California. When they put their birds away for the night, it's to the warm ocean breeze of Los Alamitos, Calif.

One such Soldier is Spc. Scott Pauley of Orange, Calif. Pauley isn't your typical spe-

cialist; he enlisted in the Army at 38 years old. Pauley's stature and physique cut an imposing figure. Built like a middle linebacker, the crew chief easily took charge of troops as the 1-184th began maneuvers.

"First and foremost comes the safety of the aircraft and the crew," Pauley explained during a down moment in the training.

Eight men fully loaded with gear, carrying weapons, who are an equal mix of seasoned and raw Soldiers, are enough to make any crew chief's spider senses tingle. Each Black Hawk costs several million dollars, and the crew chiefs are charged with their care.

"One false move with one of those weapons, and it's a bad day for everyone on the bird," Pauley said.

But it's more than just the safety of the crew and the aircraft. There's always concern for the "pax," meaning passengers in military

lingo. The loading and unloading of a helicopter is rife with danger, and in the years Pauley has served, he's seen some "pretty dumb maneuvers."

"Even some of the guys who've been in the military for years, they get around a helicopter and they kind of lose their minds," he said.

Better to temporarily lose one's mind and have a crew chief call you out than be struck by one of the Black Hawk's rotor blades. According to the Army Aviation Warfighting Center's UH-60 student handbook, when at full speed, those blades spin at a rate of 258 revolutions per minute.

With the assistance of Pauley and his fellow crew chief, all the 1-184th Soldiers loaded onto the helicopter. There was a slight slowdown in the operation as the on-board restraint system proved a challenge to some of the less experienced Soldiers, but Pauley helped them get the straps over

their gear and into the clasps.

When everyone was properly buckled in, the crew chiefs climbed aboard and the Black Hawk lifted into the air.

This being a training mission, it was not a long flight, and soon enough the team's platoon leader called out, "One minute!"

The words were repeated, and everyone — as much as they could — began making final preparations. The bird touched down, Pauley slid the door open, and the troops exploded out, taking up hasty, prone defensive positions at the edge of the rotors' circumference.

As quickly as they touched down, the trio of helicopters took off again and assumed a safe position back at the battalion's base. Then they waited.

They waited for the call announcing mission complete via the use of a keyword. Once the pilots heard the word, they headed back to do it all over again and bring the Soldiers back to the staging area.

All told, the combination of infantry and aviation Soldiers performed three rotations. As the final load was dropped off and the Soldiers retreated back to conduct an after action review, Horvath walked over and began chatting up the pilots.

Horvath wanted to get in a few more rotations, but fuel levels dictated that probably wasn't going to happen. Nonetheless the major seemed mostly satisfied with the day and the performance of his Soldiers.

"There's some things we need to improve upon, but all in all the guys are doing pretty well," Horvath said.

Soon enough Horvath will know beyond a shadow of a doubt if the training paid off. Annual training is just around the corner. This day was just for practice, but come June, it's go-time. This is the sort of stuff legends are made of.



TOP AND ABOVE: Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, prepare to board a UH-60 Black Hawk from Company B, 1st Battalion (Air Assault), 140th Aviation Regiment, during combined training Feb. 8 at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.

Biathlon team back on the slopes

Five-man CNG team makes triumphant return to National Guard competition

By **LT. COL. DANIEL MARKERT**
CNG Current Operations Office

After a few years in hiatus, the California National Guard fielded a five-Soldier biathlon team to compete in the National Guard Western Regional Match in January.

"With the high operational tempo of deployments, we just did not have the talent bandwidth [in previous years] to really capitalize on this centrally funded National Guard Bureau training program," said Lt. Col. Louis Millikan, CNG marksmanship coordinator. "Now we want to use the momentum we generated from last year's win of the All Army Marksmanship Championship Match to get the biathlon team restarted." (See page 4 for more info on the CNG's title at the All Army, which it successfully defended this year.)

The biathlon, one of the oldest Winter

Olympic competitions, combines cross-country skiing with marksmanship using a .22-caliber, bolt-action, long rifle. It is one of the most physically and mentally demanding winter competitions, with participants skiing through trails of varying elevation and firing at targets from prone and standing positions. Each time a competitor misses one of the 4.5-inch-diameter targets, he or she must ski a 150-meter penalty loop.

"Not only is your time slowed in the race, you get more fatigued for the next target set. It really pays to not miss!" said Staff Sgt. Leif Devemark, an infantry scout squad leader with 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment, who had previously competed in three biathlon matches. "Leg strength, cardiovascular endurance and heart rate recovery are big factors in performance."

The purpose of the CNG Biathlon Team is to provide a structured self-development program for Soldiers and Airmen to maximize their physical and mental conditioning and achieve superior marksmanship skills that are validated in a competitive environment. It also sustains the military's arctic warfare training by developing service members capable of operating across long distances in snowbound conditions.

Through regional and national competitions, the chief of the National Guard Bureau (NGB) selects Soldiers and Airmen to compete in national and international biathlon matches and even provides a pipeline for the U.S. Olympic team. These service members are placed on active duty orders for year-round training with world class coaches and facilities.

"These events build trainers through real world experience," said 1st Sgt. Jose Gar-

cia, noncommissioned officer in charge of the CNG marksmanship program. "Competition instills the will to win, to never accept defeat and to prepare your body and mind to be tested to the limits."

"When my scout platoon trained at the [Marine Corps] Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, [Calif.], last year, my training at the NGB Biathlon National Match prepared me to lead my Soldiers in a snow environment," Devemark said. "We hit the ground running and maximized our maneuver time because I was able to train my guys on the basics of clothing, gear selection and individual movement techniques before we deployed into the mountains."

Biathlon training provides more than just tactical skills. Recent medical studies on Army and Navy special warfare personnel have shown stress resilience and recovery are affected by the physical and mental conditioning of the operators. Competitive National Guard programs provide an opportunity and pathway for service members to develop into elite military athletes.

"The CNG Biathlon Team is another venue for our Soldiers and Airmen to develop their full potential as war fighters, particularly in an arctic or alpine winter environment," said Maj. Gen. David Baldwin, California's adjutant general. "Similar to the State Marksmanship Team, the Best Warrior Competition and the Modern Army Combatives Program, the biathlon team is a training tool for commanders to resource, inspire and develop our service members through competitive excellence."

Commanders at all levels are encouraged to participate in competitive programs.



Photo by Lt. Col. Stephen Wilson

The CNG's five-man biathlon team awaits the start of the next event at the National Guard Western Regional Biathlon Match on Jan. 10 in Anchorage, Alaska. From left to right: Sgt. 1st Class James Beeson, Staff Sgt. Jeff Ice, Staff Sgt. Leif Devemark, Lt. Col. Daniel Markert and Staff Sgt. Darryl Moxley.

"These programs are a great incentive for junior leaders at the unit level to step up, motivate and train Soldiers," said Staff Sgt. Jeff Ice of the 579th Engineer Battalion. "Leading my Soldiers through the last California Combat Match tested my leadership, improved our shooting skills and pushed our fitness to the next level."

Team California performed very well in January with four novice biathletes. Four of the five team members improved their rankings from the day one sprint race to the day two pursuit race.

"These results validated our idea that if we recruit athletes, we can coach them to ski and shoot. Three of our biathletes had never been on Nordic skis before, and for them to improve their race performance on day two is a testament to their athleticism and their ability to learn new skills," Garcia said.

For information about competitive marksmanship and biathlon programs, contact Garcia at jose.a.garcia1.mil@mail.mil. For info on training programs to prepare for the programs, contact Lt. Col. Daniel Markert at daniel.t.markert.mil@mail.mil.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class James Beeson

Lt. Col. Daniel Markert fires during a training session at the National Guard Western Regional Biathlon Match in Anchorage, Alaska, on Jan. 9.

What's the score? Keeping tabs on your credit

By **DARRYL JONES**
Personal Financial Counselor, Southern California

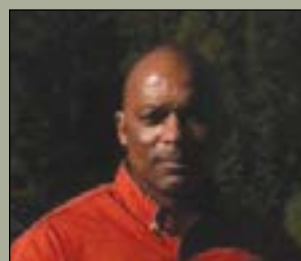
As a personal financial consultant, I conduct six to eight individual or couples counseling sessions per day. One question I always ask my clients is, "When was the last time you checked your credit report or score?" More than half respond that they have not checked their report in a few years or simply do not remember. It is important to periodically check your credit report for inaccurate line-of-credit entries and collections accounts, and for indicators of identity theft. Below you will find important tips about your credit:

1. Check your credit report at least once a year; twice a year is recommended.
2. You can obtain a free copy of your credit report from www.annualcreditreport.com. This service will provide credit reports from Equifax, Trans Union and Experian, but obtaining your score may require an additional fee.
3. Contact your bank or credit union to learn the services they offer. Many financial institutions offer credit protection services for a monthly fee.
4. Pay bills on time.
5. Do not ignore debts in collections. Contact collection agencies to make payment arrangements and settle debts. Communicating with collections agencies can be

Personal Financial Counselors

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Southern California: Hong Tran, CA-JFSAP3@MFLC.Zeiders.com or 323-333-6331



Darryl Jones
Personal Financial Counselor
Central California

challenging, but the goal is to improve your credit rating.

Credit reports can impact your career — such as affecting your security clearance. Also, identity thieves are working full-time to obtain your personal data for their gain. Monitoring your credit report periodically is an effective way to identify inaccurate data in a timely manner.

To reach our National Guard members with sound financial advice, California has been split into three regions, northern, central and southern. Together, Team California — your team of personal financial counselors — is ready to help you reach your full financial potential.

You have access to a full-time personal financial counselor anywhere in California, and your counselor can help you take the leap from financial frustration to financial freedom. Don't put it off any longer. Obtain your credit information, and contact your local personal financial counselor. Financial freedom awaits.

How Do You Rate?

Excellent:	760-850
Very Good:	700-759
Good:	660-699
Fair:	620-659
Borderline:	580-619
Poor:	500-579
Unlikely to be approved:	300-499

Credit Score Key

Source: www.annualcreditreport.com

FIT to FIGHT

with LT. COL. DANIEL MARKERT

I was 41, an infantry major rotating out of my assignment as executive officer of the 79th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and I had an opportunity to command the battalion during the 2007 San Diego Wildfires. It was an incredibly rewarding experience with a great leadership team, but years as a middle-aged staff officer had taken a toll.

I had not deployed overseas, instead leading the rear detachment of 1st Battalion (Air Assault), 184th Infantry Regiment, during its decisive combat operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The anxiety of waiting for an involuntary mobilization and the bouts of depression from performing rear detachment duty while my unit fought in Baghdad had combined with the boom and bust cycle of diet and exercise (which always seemed to end with injury) to leave me over-fat and under-conditioned.

I came to a point of decision: Either get fit and go fight in Afghanistan or retire and reboot my life with a new civilian identity. I had an opportunity to deploy with a small team of senior officers as a combat adviser to the Afghan National Army, so I chose to get fit to fight. One year later, I was 36 pounds leaner and scoring a 300 on the Army Physical Fitness Test.

Four years later, I am just as lean and

stronger (though not much faster — age does have its limits). No injuries, no boom and bust. What changed?

The simple answer is that fitness became a lifestyle instead of an activity. But that does not explain why or how. I have observed three main factors of success.

The first factor was removing a major source of personal and family stress and anxiety: deployment. It was no longer an unknown disruptive event, and the negative emotions impacting my identity as an infantry officer were put in the past. I was volunteering to go to Eastern Afghanistan, to the birthplace of al-Qaeda, and mentor the Afghan infantry to take over the fight.

Second was purpose. This can be a major shortcoming of fitness training programs. Training for fat loss and training for physical appearance are big business in our society. But they are not psychologically compelling. Neither is training to pass a fitness test. Skill acquisition is compelling. I found a training method that was programmed for tactical fitness: movement skills and combat stress mitigation.

The third reason was the sustainability of "health first" training principles. This included injury-proofing through joint mobility drills and yoga compensation

stretching, and nutritional changes based on principles, not a "product" or a "plan."

Maj. Jonathan Shiroma and I will cover programming, stress mitigation and nutritional principles in later articles in The Grizzly and enlist expertise from some of you in the field. For the rest of this article, I'll focus on purpose.

The reason or purpose we give to any action matters more than the specific task. Getting lean and strong and building speed and endurance are costly activities for the body, so setting a goal to "get in shape," attain a certain score on a fitness test or lose 10 pounds is typically not a sufficient purpose to override our nervous system's preference for efficiency and the status quo of the body.

It requires a lot of willpower to achieve these goals, and research indicates willpower is biochemical: You only have so much every day. Best to use it wisely.

The purpose of military fitness is to provide a physical and mental platform to fight in close combat. The end state is the sustained ability to rapidly move in all six degrees of motion to deliver, absorb and retranslate force while retaining decision and tactical movement skills through rapid heart rate recovery.

There are many ways to exercise, but just as athletes develop a training program for the off-season, the preseason and the post-season that are specific to their sport, so too should military personnel.

The nervous system craves complexity



and skill acquisition. That is what keeps athletes coming back to training session after training session: They are developing greater skill as well as greater athleticism. They are training, not "working out."

I found a way to be consistent where I had failed before: Acquiring more sophisticated and tactically relevant movement skills each month required less willpower.

Secondary to that was the measurable improvement in stress recovery and resiliency I have experienced. So as you train on your own to prepare for military duty, write down your purpose statement and develop a training cycle that progresses in relevant movement complexity as well as intensity.

You can contact Markert with fitness questions at daniel.t.markert.mil@mail.mil or dan.markert@warfightersedge.org.

Chief Canant is Army strong

49th MP Brigade Soldier holds several state powerlifting records

By **SENIOR AIRMAN ROSALIE CAMMARATA**
California Military Department Public Affairs

The word "strong" has multiple definitions. It can mean the ability to exert great bodily or muscular power. It also can mean being mentally powerful or vigorous. Finally, it can be defined as displaying great moral power, firmness or courage. All three meanings are equally important and can take a lifetime to develop.

Soldiers from the California National Guard's 49th Military Police Brigade agree that their energetic and enthusiastic property book officer, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kevin Canant, displays physical, mental and moral strength.

Canant began his military career in 1991 as a member of the active duty Army. He was a well-rounded Soldier, working in military intelligence, finance, supply and recruiting. He enlisted in the California Army National Guard in 1996 and deployed to Iraq with the 649th Military Police Company in 2003.

"We took over an Iraqi police station," he explained. "We had to live and work out of it. We even set up a designated area to work out."

At 42 years old, Canant is 203 pounds of solid muscle. He is a professional powerlifter, and it shows.

Powerlifting consists of three major lifts: the dead lift, bench press and squat. Canant holds U.S. Powerlifting Association and American Powerlifting Association "raw" records for California in all three ("raw" means without supportive equipment or performance enhancement drugs), dead lifting 567 pounds, squatting 470 pounds and bench pressing 417 pounds. This also gives him the record for the combined total, 1,454 pounds.

"I never use supportive equipment or performance enhancers," Canant said. "All I need are my bare hands and chalk."

Canant began body building in 1996. Instead of smoking cigarettes, he decided to work out.

"One day I just stopped smoking, cold turkey," he said. "I walked into the gym and started lifting, and I've been doing it ever since."

Canant began lifting as a bodybuilder, but it put a strain on his family: Bodybuilding required a diet different from his family's and seemingly endless hours at the gym, preparing for competitions.

His decision was clear; he would need to find an activity that was less demanding for his wife, Karla, and his two sons, Cody and Tyler.

"Anyone who knows Chief knows that he loves his wife and boys above all," said Spc. Tami Watson. "He gets a boyish charm about him when he talks about his wife that is so endearing and quite refreshing."

After making the decision to put his family first, Canant found powerlifting. It may seem like his routine would be time-consuming, but Canant said his workout regimen can be completed in five one-hour sessions a week. Some days he finishes his workout during his lunch break.

Powerlifting proved to be his niche, and his success serves as evidence. He was recently invited to compete in the U.S. Powerlifting Association World Powerlifting Meet, an international event scheduled for November.

"My family loves going to meets," Canant said. "My wife



Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kevin Canant of the CNG's 49th Military Police Brigade deadlifts 545 pounds at Old Skool Iron Gym in Vacaville, Calif. Canant holds California powerlifting records for deadlift, squat and bench press, as well as the combined record for all three exercises.

is very supportive, and my children are following in our healthy habits."

Canant's children aren't the only ones benefitting from his healthy lifestyle. Canant welcomes anyone open to a challenge to accompany him to his gym.

"It's important to promote physical fitness," he said. "I encourage others to come with me to the gym, regardless of their rank."

Whether it is his wife, children or brothers- and sisters-in-arms, those around him are thankful for his positive energy.

"Chief is constantly amped at a level 10," said Spc. Tami Watson. "It just rubs off on you. He is a great motivator professionally, athletically and personally. I am honored to work with Chief and to learn from him all that he knows."

Photo courtesy of the Canant family



Staff Sgt. Jessica Abrego, right, and Senior Airman Luana Pacheco of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing read to students at Mountain View Elementary School in Moreno Valley, Calif., on March 3 as part of Read Across America, an annual National Education Association event on Dr. Seuss' birthday. Photo by Senior Airman Krista Hair

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

In April the Defense Department will observe the 10th annual Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and the California National Guard will host a series of activities to raise awareness. The theme for this year's month of observance is "Live Our Values: Step Up to Stop Sexual Assault," emphasizing that all of us have a role in combating this crime.

"Commanders and leaders at every level must establish a climate of dignity, respect and trust," acting Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Jessica L. Wright said in a Feb. 3 memo. "We also need a personal commitment from every service member, at every level in our military, to be steadfast participants in creating that culture."

CNG headquarters in Sacramento will host a kick-off event April 1 with a variety of speakers on sexual assault. On April 18 the headquarters will host a screening of "The Invisible War," a documentary about rape in the military, and on April 25, employees will be authorized to wear jeans for "Denim Day" in observance of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Then on April 25, Guard members, leadership and family members will participate in a tandem skydive to raise awareness of sexual assault. The jump, at Lincoln Regional Airport near Sacramento, will cost \$135. Finally, on April 27, Guard members will participate in "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes," in which more than 600 men will literally walk a mile in high heels to raise awareness. To register for that event, go to www.weaveinc.org.

To register for another event or for more information, contact Jennifer Lucero at jennifer.s.lucero.civ@mail.mil or 916-854-3448.

Army Guard end strength reduced

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2014 reduced the Army National Guard's end strength ceiling by 4,000 Soldiers, to a total of 354,200. As a result, the California Army National Guard's end strength ceiling was reduced by 164 Soldiers to 16,223, Maj. Gen. Lawrence A. Haskins, commander of the California Army National Guard, said in a Feb. 25 memo to CNG members.

Defense Department leaders continue to debate ways to reduce spending to meet a Pentagon budget that is scheduled to shrink by more than \$75 billion during the next two years. Many in the Guard, including California's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, have argued that increasing utilization of the nation's most cost-effective force, the National Guard, could maintain current defense capabilities at a lower cost to taxpayers.

Air Force uniform policy changes

The Air Force updated its uniform policy, including changes regarding morale T-shirts, earned badges and physical training gear. The changes result from months spent gathering input from Airmen, officials said.

Morale T-shirts and patches representing an individual squadron are now authorized to wear on Fridays. Squadron T-shirts may be worn with the Airman battle uniform or flight suit when in garrison or on station during unit temporary duty assignments and contingency deployments. Earned Air Force and other services' badges are now authorized for wear. The Air Force physical training uniform no longer has color restrictions for athletic shoes. Airmen are also now authorized to wear black socks with athletic shoes. Cell phones no longer must be black, as long as they are not worn on the uniform or attached to a purse. For more information, view Air Force Instruction 36-2903.

DO YOU KNOW...

the minimum number of testing personnel required to conduct an Army or Air Force fitness test?

Army Regulation 350-1 states Soldiers must refer to Field Manual (FM) 7-22 for Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) guidelines. To ensure the validity of the test, the minimum number of test personnel required to administer the APFT is four: an officer in charge (OIC) or noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC), an event supervisor, an event scorer and a person to hold the Soldiers' feet during the sit-up event. No person is authorized to perform more than one function.

The OIC/NCOIC is responsible for administering the APFT. It is recommended that the OIC/NCOIC acquire the appropriate number of testing personnel depending on the number of APFT performers. Refer to FM 7-22, Appendix A, for a description of standards, administration, duties of test personnel and other instructions.

Per Air Force Instruction 36-2905, 2.23.5.2., a 1:12 ratio of fitness assessment cell (FAC) personnel to fitness assessment participants must be maintained. In extenuating circumstances, while in a drill status, the ratio may be as high as 1:24; however, this is not a desired ratio. It is recommended that enough FAC personnel are present to never lose sight of individuals being tested. Additionally, while not mandatory, unit commanders should publish written guidance on how to administer the fitness assessment and describe fitness expectations.

CORRECTIONS: An article in the January issue misstated the number of Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Awards the California Military Department has won in recent years. It has won two, in 2013 and 2007.

A February article incorrectly stated Chief Master Sgt. Kristina Keck had been named the CNG's senior enlisted adviser; she is actually the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Joint Staff. Command Sgt. Maj. William Clark Jr. is the CNG's senior enlisted adviser.



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Sgt. Cody Weaver, a crew chief with Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, embraces his sons, 2-year-old Carson and 4-month-old Wyatt, whom Sgt. Weaver was meeting for the first time, moments after his plane's arrival in Sacramento on Feb. 16 following a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan performing medical evacuation operations. Photo by Capt. Will Martin | For more on the 1-168th, see page 7.

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