

Two Guard Soldiers receive top honors

*By Stephanie Hayden,
119th Fighter Wing, N.D. Air National Guard*

FARGO – Two Army Guard Soldiers from the 142nd Engineer Combat Battalion were awarded Soldier-of-the-Year honors during the North Dakota National Guard’s combined Officer/Enlisted conference banquet held in the Fargo Civic Center March 4.

Sgt. Christopher E. Hanson, Mapleton, Company B, 142nd ECB, Wahpeton, was named 2006 Noncommissioned Officer of the Year and Spc. Jenilee Kessel, Fargo, Headquarters Support Company, Fargo, was named 2006 Soldier of the Year for E-4 and below.

Each award is the top honor for both the noncommissioned officer corps and enlisted corps within the North Dakota Army National Guard.

Kessel, a general construction operator, said the competition was much tougher than in previous years. One of Kessel’s friends competed in the 2005 round and told her the 2006 award would be much harder to achieve.

“It was different than last year,” Kessel said. “We had to take a PT test and qualify with our weapons. Then we had an essay on navigation.”

Competition for the prestigious awards began in May 2005. Over the course of the next several months, Soldiers competed in company and battalion-level boards across the state. Nine Soldiers were vaulted into the state competition where their mental and physical abilities were tested over three demanding days.

Hanson, a carpentry and masonry NCO in the Wahpeton unit, said he has a great deal of respect for all the Soldiers who competed in the competition, primarily because of the work ethic everyone had during the competition.

“Once I’ve done it, and have been through the competition, I think this is a great opportunity for leadership,” Hanson said. “I had a great time with it. It was a great group of well-rounded professionals.”

During the first day of competition, Soldiers were required to meet Army height and weight standards and then pass the Army Physical Fitness Test. The PT test included pushups, situps and a two-mile run.

Following the PT test, the Soldiers were issued the navigation essay assignment, which involved a topic unknown to them prior to meeting the state board. Day one was completed after the Soldiers wrote a 50-question comprehensive test on general Soldier subject areas.

On the second day, candidates traveled to Camp Grafton South near Devils Lake for weapons competition. The Soldiers zeroed their M-16s and moved to the record firing course where they fired at targets in prone supported and prone unsupported positions.

“It was a typical range,” Kessel said. “We zeroed and fired at the pop-up targets.”

Next, the Soldiers were quickly moved to the Common Task Testing lane, where they completed three CTT events that were

unknown to them prior to the examination. Tests included evaluate a casualty, react to an improvised explosive device and complete a SALUTE intelligence report. SALUTE stands for size, activity, location, unit, time and equipment .

Day two was completed on the Land Navigation Course. Candidates were required to find five markers in three hours using nothing more than a lensatic compass and a map.

After returning to the start point and a hot meal, Soldiers completed the night Land Navigation Course using maps and their compasses.

“We had to find three points in the night exercise,” Hanson said. “We shot our azimuths on paper, set our bezels and away we went.”

Finally, the Soldiers completed their essays and turned them in for scoring. Weapons were cleaned and a formal after action review was conducted.

A total of nine Soldiers competed for Soldier of the Year and NCO of the Year. In addition to Hanson, NCO candidates were Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Miller, Dickinson; Staff Sgt. Samuel Hansen, Leeds; Sgt. Justin Langerud, Devils Lake; and Sgt. Jesse Walstad, Grand Forks. Soldier-of-the-Year candidates along with Kessel, were Spcs, Robert April, Minot; Stephanie Korynta, Grand Forks and Margaret Moody, Bismarck.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Communications Flight
Spc. Jenilee Kessel, Headquarters Support Company, 142nd Engineer Combat Battalion, Fargo, shakes hands with Gov. John Hoeven after she was named 2006 Soldier of the Year March 4 in Fargo.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Communications Flight

Command Sgt. Maj. Jack Cripe shakes hands with 2006 NCO of the Year Sgt. Christopher Hanson, Bravo Company, 142nd Engineer Combat Battalion, Wahpeton, during the combined Officer/Enlisted Conference held in Fargo March 4. Sgt. Jesse Walstad, left, 957th Multi-Role Bridge Company, Bismarck, and Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Miller, Charlie Company, 164th Engineer Combat Battalion, Dickinson, were also Soldier of the Year candidates.

Soldier Talk



The Straight Arrow

What is the biggest challenge facing the N.D. National Guard in the coming years?



CW4 Margaret Birney
Joint Forces Headquarters

"Retention, retention, retention! Recruiting and retention. There are many things I could talk about, but they all boil down to retention."



Spc. Ashley Jahner
957th Multi-Role Bridge Company

"Recruiting is the biggest challenge. Parents don't want their kids to join these days because of deployments and because

media portrays the wrong message."



Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Wagendorf
191st Military Police Company

"Our biggest challenge is to help people understand we are securing our children's freedom and safety in this country. If we don't secure it now, our grandchildren will be asking why we didn't defend our country when we had the chance."



Lt. Col. Mark Tibor
Joint Forces Headquarters

"Transformation. The restructuring of the National Guard is the biggest challenge. Another issue is what units are actually doing vs. their training for a wartime mission. And, there's the ever-important aspect of supporting the state during a disaster."



Spc. Jeremy Greenstein
188th Air Defense Artillery

"Recruiting and retention. Soldiers who have deployed get out and many of those who have been in many years don't want to go overseas. Some parents don't want their kids to go overseas. Keeping people is a big issue."

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Engineers recognize North Dakota Soldier

*Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Marvin Baker,
1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

BISMARCK – Col. Dale Adams has become the third person in the North Dakota National Guard to be awarded the silver de Fleury Medal.

Adams, the Regional Training Institute commander and director of strategic plans in Joint Forces Headquarters (J5), joins retired Guardsmen Brig. Gen. Harvey Haakenson and Col. Terry Robinson in winning the Engineer Regiment award since its beginning at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., in 1989.

"It was very much a surprise," Adams said. "It's the engineers recognizing peer engineers with significant impact on the regiment."

Adams has been in the National Guard 27 years. He has built a remarkable resume to become eligible for this award, which is named after Colonial French engineer Francois Louis Tesseidre de Fleury, who volunteered to fight for independence with the American Army.

Some of Adams' accomplishments include winning the Itschner Award as a company commander, which is the outstanding engineer company in the nation. Under his command, two companies in the 164th Engineer Combat Battalion were mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom, companies that distinguished themselves throughout the theater as "Trailblazers." The 164th won the outstanding mess section in the nation, called the Phillip P. Connelly Award under Adams' command; and his leadership has taken the 164th's Regional Training Institute to the next level of learning.

Col. William Seekins, commander of the NDARNG Engineering



Col. Dale Adams works at his computer in his Bismarck office. Adams said he was surprised to learn he had been awarded the Engineer Regiment's silver de Fleury Medal.

Brigade said Adams' career has truly been outstanding.

"We are fortunate to have a member who represents the Army values so well," Seekins said. "The pattern is clear. Wherever Col. Adams goes, that organization becomes the best."

The Engineer Regiment began issuing three levels (gold, silver, bronze) of the de Fleury Medal after the Engineer school was moved from Fort Belvoir, Va., to Fort Leonard Wood in 1989.

The silver de Fleury is awarded to an individual who has rendered outstanding and significant support or service to the Engineer Regiment. The medal was presented to Adams in front of about 250 people during the combined Enlisted/Officer conference in Fargo March 4.

War through reporter's eyes

By Kasey Gardner,
KVLV/KXJB reporter in Grand Forks

(Editor's note: Kasey Gardner, along with Neal Carlson, were embedded with the 1-188th ADA JLENS group from Fort Hood, Texas, to Fort Drum, N.Y., to Afghanistan. This is a letter from Kasey talking about her experiences.)

Reporters go where no one else wants to go. They stand in snowstorms, hurricanes, and blizzards. But it's the lucky reporters who get the chance to go to war.

Getting embedded with the military is a long, tedious process. Not just from my standpoint, but from the military's as well. It's a series of clearances and documents just to get the process started. To put it in perspective, I've been lobbying for this assignment since earlier last summer when I first found out the Guard was heading to Afghanistan. But it wasn't until the unit's deployment ceremony in November, where they were shipped off for two months of training in Texas, that I made my case to the National Guard.

I love reporting on people, especially Soldiers who are the backbone of our state. North Dakota has one of the highest number of Soldiers deployed in the United States for its population. And these men and women are risking so much to do this job. I feel it's important, if not necessary, to tell their story. What they go through on a daily basis, what their lives are like living in a combat zone, what it's like going from weekend warrior to full-time soldier.

Getting to Afghanistan was the first of perhaps many battles. We followed the well-known military mantra, hurry up and wait. Our first stop was Fort Hood, Texas, followed by Fort Drum, N.Y....Shannon, Ireland... Adana, Turkey...Manas, Kyrgastan....all before ending up in Bagram, Afghanistan.

Our longest and most interesting layover was Manas Air Base, situated between Russia and China. When we got there, more than 300 Soldiers from North Dakota and New York crammed, slept, ate, and lived in clamshells which are basically gigantic tents with hundreds of bunkbeds. Manas Air Base is a former communist base and ironically it was the same base used in the late '70s early '80s to invade Afghanistan.

As a reporter, this was an overwhelming and exciting experience;

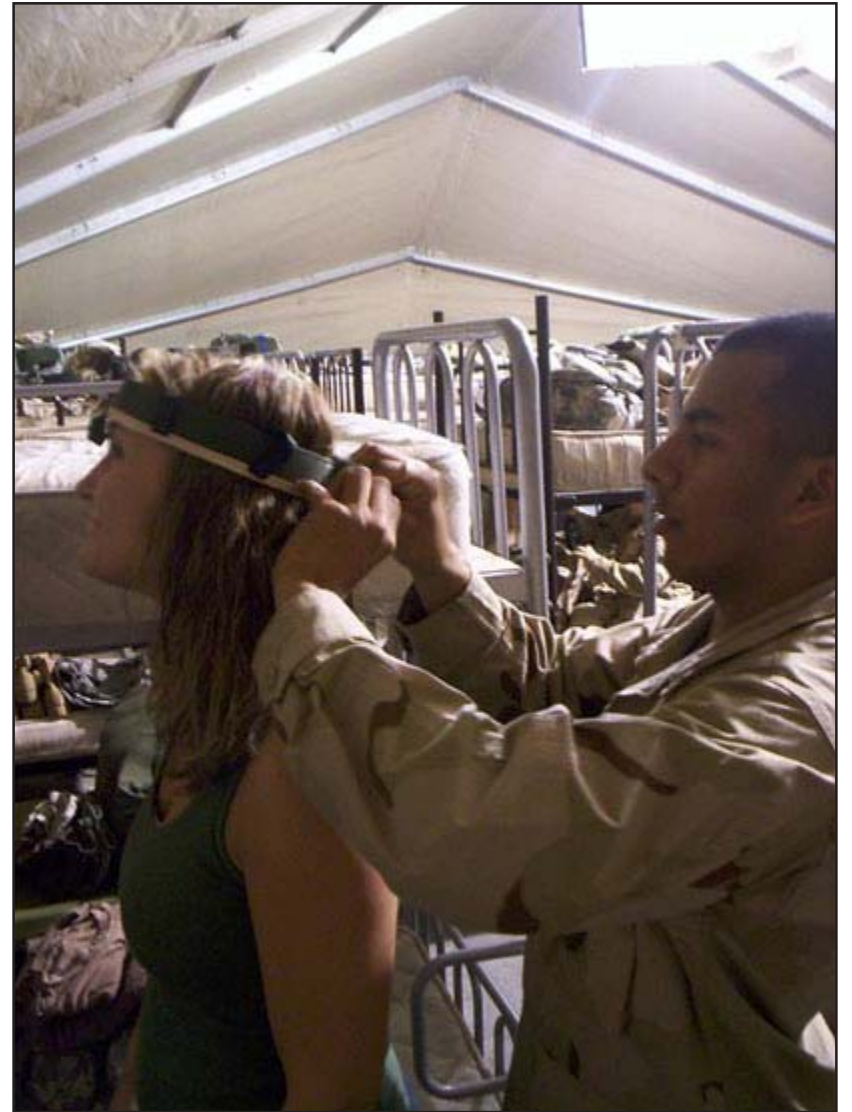
traveling to the other side of the world, while covering 38 incredible people. On this assignment, I was a one-woman-band, which isn't new for me. But leaving Manas and entering a combat zone, it first hit me how physically challenging this trip would be. I was carrying all my gear including a 30 pound camera, tripod, microphones, batteries, 15 tapes, all while wearing body armor/helmet...adding about 30 more pounds to the load.

Once I settled into Afghanistan, I knew there were stories that I had to cover. The days and nights were both very long. The days went on forever because unlike being a local news reporter, where you have interviews set up throughout the day and press conferences to attend, covering Soldiers in war is an ongoing story. So often I would be sleeping and get a knock on my window, which was my cue to get up and go. No time for makeup, showers or breakfast. Just get all (and it was a lot) of my equipment together, put on my body armor and hop in a vehicle. The nights were long because it was often hard to sleep. My mind was always racing about things I had seen or heard during the day.

Each day I usually had a story in mind. Most of my time was spent with the 188th, learning their mission in this war. I also tried to profile as many of them as I could, but over half the unit was deployed immediately to outposts (smaller bases) throughout Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is really beautiful, situated right in between the Hindu Kush mountain range. I got the opportunity to go on a convoy with a Military Police unit out of Alaska. In the convoy, I had a chance to really see the county...including some infamous sites such as Al Qaeda's old training grounds.

By far it was the most amazing, eye opening and interesting experience in my life. I would do it again in a heartbeat. It was such a treat to observe and live the life of a North Dakota



Submitted photo

Kasey Gardner gets fitted for a kevlar by Spc. Jorge Elizondo, 188th ADA. Gardner spent time embedded with the unit in order to report their story.

Guard Soldier. I want to thank my station manager Charley Johnson for believing in me, 188th's Commander Scott Fontaine for letting me be part of his mission, of course all the men and women who let me come into their lives, and Rob Keller at the National Guard for making this dream a reality.

News briefs

Army says visible tattoos on Soldiers OK if not offensive

The Army now permits tattoos on the hands and back of the neck if they are not offensive, according to recently modified Army Regulation 670-1.

The change was made because Army officials realized the number of potential recruits bearing skin art had grown enormously over the years.

About 30 percent of Americans between the ages of 25 and 34 have tattoos according to a Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University survey. In all, the post-baby-boom generations are more than three times as likely as boomers to have tattoos.

The new policy allows recruits and all Soldiers to sport tattoos on the neck and behind an imaginary line straight down and back of the jawbone, provided the tattoos don't violate good taste. As a result of this change, Army Regulation 670-1, chapter 1-8E has been modified.

TV spots available for broadcast

BISMARCK – Two Soldiers from the North Dakota National Guard are included in a nationwide campaign of TV spots called "In Their Own Words."

Viewers will recognize the North Dakota flag, state patch, and they might even know the Soldier representing their community and Guard unit.

Sgt. Kristi Keller, Center, is a member of the 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment in Bismarck and is currently deployed in Afghanistan. Her full unit will be mobilizing in mid April.

Spc. Jordan Nygaard, Jamestown, is a member of Bravo Company of the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion in Jamestown. His unit has spent a year in Iraq.

In unique testimonials from all 50 states and two territories, the Soldiers address topics that range from the benefits that have positively influenced their lives, to training, to their overseas and domestic deployments. Included in the 91 spots is Sgt. Tyler Campbell, Lemmon, S.D., a member of the South Dakota National Guard.

Their honest and personal appeal to year-old target make viewers of parents, teachers, proud of these national Guard.

The attractive dual-DVD merging sent to TV stations across North Dakota. The air time given these spots is crucial to spreading the word about the amazing opportunities the National Guard has to offer.



accounts of service stories will certify the Guard's 17-24 audience and will all ages, including elders and neighbors, members of the Na-

tively packaged chandising kit is be-

Status report for JLENS

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – Members of the 188th Air Defense Artillery (JLENS/RAID) stationed here are going into their third month of deployment with sister unit (SECFOR) trickling into the deployment.

According to Maj. Scott Fontaine, the unit plays a critical role in supporting forward operating base protection in Afghanistan by providing both day and night surveillance. Fontaine said his unit's equipment also provides an early-warning system that would otherwise tap numerous Soldiers for security on the largest base in the mountainous country.

On March 1, President and Mrs. Bush arrived for a short time. Fontaine described it as a great morale booster. The commander-in-chief spoke briefly and was on his way to Pakistan. Fontaine and eight of his Soldiers attended.

Early spring weather has been great, according to Fontaine, peddlers sometimes sell their wares outside the compound and a third Soldier has announced a new arrival to the family while the unit is deployed.

N.D. continues to lead in recruiting

By Sgt. 1st Class Marvin Baker,
1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FARGO – The recruiting and retention sergeant major for the North Dakota National Guard isn't surprised the state is near the top in numerous recruiting and retention categories.

Sgt. Maj. Steve Olson, Fargo, cited favorable numbers as a combination of a strong recruiting and retention force, a pilot recruiting program called the Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (GRAP) and a concerted effort by all Soldiers in the state to maintain numbers and a high degree of professionalism, which, in turn, sells the Guard to new members.

"It's a team effort across the state. Everyone is doing such a good job," Olson said. "In our state, we all shoulder it."

As an example, Olson pointed out that North Dakota is ahead of its target number when the fiscal year ends in September. As of March 31, there were 3,171 people in the Guard with a goal of 3,200.

"As of today (March 31) we are 21 ahead of our benchmark," Olson said. "Our goal is 3,200, so we're doing very well."

The GRAP program has also been working well, according to Olson. North Dakota was one of five states that entered the inaugural program in December 2005. The result thus far has been 132 enlistments. Olson added 881 Soldiers have now signed on with the GRAP program.

Nationwide, the program produced 754 enlistments in its first

two months.

GRAP is designed for National Guard personnel to work on a contract basis as a recruiting assistant. For each person signed, the Soldier receives a \$1,000 payment and when a new enlistment ships to basic training, the Soldier receives an additional \$1,000. It is also available for prior service personnel.

The program has been so successful; it has been extended to all states and territories and now includes full-time AGR personnel and technicians.

Olson talked about attrition, accessions and the state's strength maintenance score. He said the state is strong in all those categories, but he pays particular attention to the strength maintenance score, which is how National Guard Bureau holds state adjutants general accountable for numbers.

North Dakota is currently second in the nation, behind only South Dakota and is tied with Iowa. Olson said strength maintenance has become a top priority in North Dakota because if that number drops to a fair to poor level, then the end strength will ultimately affect force structure.

North Dakota is No. 7 in the nation in attrition, which is defined as the number of Soldiers who



File photo

The North Dakota National Guard is near the top in numerous recruiting and retention categories because of a concerted effort by all Soldiers in the state to maintain numbers.

choose to stay in the Guard.

"National Guard Bureau likes to see attrition at 18 percent or lower," Olson said. "Fourteen percent is a historical number that we haven't seen in eight years. We are extending almost nine out of every 10 Soldiers."

Finally, Olson talked about another statistic called recruitable market share. That's the number that compares with enlistments in the other branches of service. North Dakota's 61.2 percent, places it first in the nation. He said the National Guard is far ahead of the other military branches in this category in the state.

Olson said the recruiters work hard and the above statistics reflect on that hard work. But that extra help should keep North Dakota at or near the top as fiscal year 2007 approaches.

"We're proud of our numbers and they couldn't happen without a total effort," Olson said. "We used to have a sales force. Now we have Soldiers selling the Guard."



Some Soldiers may be eligible for new Combat Action Badge

By Sgt. 1st Class Marvin Baker
1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

North Dakota National Guard Soldiers deployed in support of the global war on terror may be eligible for a new award called the Combat Action Badge.

Approved by the Army Chief of Staff in May 2005, and retroactive to Sept. 18, 2001, the Combat Action Badge may be awarded to any Soldier performing assigned duties in an area where hostile fire pay or imminent danger pay is authorized and where the Soldier is present and actively engaging the enemy or being engaged by the enemy and performing satisfactorily in accordance with the prescribed rules of engagement.

In addition to small arms fire, qualifying combat actions include: attacks by mortars, rockets, rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers.

According to Master Sgt. Jeff Newton, the supervisory human resources specialist with the North Dakota Army National Guard, if a Soldier believes he or she is eligible for the Combat Action Badge, contacting their unit is the initial step.

"The unit will have the required information," Newton said. "Statements are required, unit logs are needed for justification and qualification has to be proved. We're just the end station before the request goes to National Guard Bureau for final determination and approval."

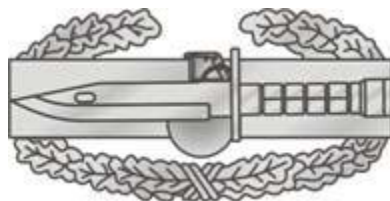
Newton said there has been some debate regarding eligibility for the Combat Action Badge and the NDARNG will be setting up a special awards board to review those requests that are questionable.

Thus far, Newton is aware of 105 requests for the badge but this number will probably increase to around 300 to 400. Units include the 142nd Engineer Combat Battalion, the 957th Multi-Role Bridge Company, the 141st Engineer

Combat Battalion, Fox Battery of the 188th Air Defense Artillery, Detachment 42, OSACOM and individual augmentees deployed to hostile areas. Units that are currently mobilized will be requesting the awards thru their theater commands.

"Anyone mobilized to a qualifying area may be eligible if they meet the requirements," Newton said. "The commander turns in the request, we screen it, and then it goes to National Guard Bureau."

Newton added that anyone who has received a Purple Heart is automatically eligible for the Combat Action Badge, however, it must be proved, and so a Purple Heart certificate must be submitted with the Combat Action Badge request.



Enlisted Soldiers who are awarded the Combat Action Badge will also receive 10 promotion points on the Enlisted Promotion System, according to Newton.

Retired individuals may also be eligible, but there is a separate avenue for them to make a request.

"We can only process requests for current members," Newton said. "If they got out, the request has to go to the Human Resources Command, but they will still have

to contact the unit they were mobilized with to get the proper documentation."

Newton said there are a number of Web sites that may provide information on the Combat Action Badge, but unless it comes from the Department of the Army, he cautions it may not be accurate. Guidance was sent to the units on 7 March 2006, which included the National Guard Bureau and Department of the Army policies.

He stressed that if Soldiers believe they are eligible, they need to first contact their unit, gather the information needed for eligibility and complete a DA Form 4187. The request must be signed by the commander and turned into Newton's office no later than May 15.

Public unit to

By Sgt. 1st Class Marvin Baker,
Acting first sergeant, 129th MPAD

For the second time in three years, the unit is being mobilized. This North Dakota unit is the first in the state to be mobilized for the war on terror.

In March 2003, just days after the invasion of Iraq, there was so much uncertainty at the time that the unit didn't know what was happening.

This time, we have had a chance to prepare and we mobilize in mid April. That span of time, has been a tremendous help to the unit.

Something else that prepared us for this mobilization have been utilized in numerous ways since we were mobilized.

In their own words

producing a fort TV show called Heart of the North, in military and civilian circles.

At the time, many of us were only beginning our experience in military journalism. That was a challenge in the Army public affairs world.

Upon returning to North Dakota, our Soldiers continued on numerous video and print missions pertaining to units deploying, units coming home, media engagement and media escorting. And with nearly 3,200 North Dakota National Guard personnel mobilized since Sept. 11, 2001, the members of the 129th have been busy all across the state.

For the experienced Soldiers, the past three years have helped us keep our skills sharp and know how to conduct an interview, record and edit.

For the younger Soldiers and those returning from deployment, the process has been intense and many of the challenges we face, as well as the past couple of months, similar.

Thus, the 129th is prepared for this mobilization. We will go to Wis., for validation training, then to U.S. Army Garrison, where we will become bloggers, video producers and more.

Essentially, we will contact Soldiers interested in being on TV, radio or in print. If they agree, we then contact the local or regional media.

What's interesting about this is our public affairs role. It's what we are used to doing. Its public affairs role with the major worldwide media on a global scale and ourselves.

Some of the media our predecessors have worked with are ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, as well as numerous local and regional media to help tell the story.

Thus, the members of the 129th are going to shape the scope of reports coming out of the mobilization.

We are being encouraged to keep our resumes updated. When this deployment is over, we will have opportunities that could vault them into public affairs roles as interesting as the upcoming mission.

So, rather than looking at this as if we are just going perhaps we should be proactive and tell our story.

Yes, we'll be away from home and family, but we're representing our country in the capacity we were trained for. In essence, we're drawing a decent paycheck and the Soldiers in theater will be counting on us.

Affairs deploy

The 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, a National Guard unit now has the distinction of being mobilized twice in support of the global

initial push into Iraq, we were activated. One of the 13 of us from the Bismarck detachment was mobilized from one day to the next.

prepare. The 129th was alerted in November of five months, even though it seems like help in preparing us individually and as a

mission, is that members of the 129th since arriving at Fort Riley, Kan., exactly three years ago.

ords One of them was working for the local newspaper, the Fort Riley Post. Another was a member of the Fort Riley Journeys, which won high praise in

school trained and had little or no field experience. The mission catapulted us into the middle of

ment Unit Public Affairs representatives (MURs): The North Dakota National Guard Public Information Office and the Straight Arrow. We need your help. In order to continue covering the units across the state, we need your assistance, photos and stories. The MPAD is a unit and there will be a shortage of public affairs people to cover all the great things that are happening with your unit. Please help us by sending photos and stories to Master Sgt. Keller at robyn.keller@us.army.mil.

Keep our skills sharp and we haven't forgotten to write an article.

Recently joining the unit, the learning process is assigned in the past three years, as it simply cannot be taught in a classroom.

mission that will take us first to Fort McCoy, Wis., then to the Central Command in Florida and Qatar. We need editors and media engagement teams.

s in the field; ask them if they would be willing to write a newspaper in their hometown. If they are willing, we will set up the interviews.

Primary mission is somewhat different from public affairs, however, we will be making contact with the media on a daily basis rather than filing the stories

have engaged include all four networks; the major international networks, press agencies and radio stations. We will also work closely with the Army's story.

getting a ground-floor opportunity to help with the CENTCOM's areas of operation.

individual logs of our work and build our resume. Our young Soldiers will have job opportunities in public relations and journalism positions as

we were losing out on a year of our lives, we turned this into "lemonade."

aily for more than a year. But, we're serving our country, we're gaining valuable work experience and we're doing a lot of traveling because of the 129th to help tell the Army's story.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Communications Flight

Loaded with tactical missiles, aircraft 82-0967 accelerates for takeoff on the milestone sortie from Langley Air Force Base, Va., flown by Maj. Craig D. Borgstrom, 178th Fighter Squadron.

N.D. Air Guard reaches new heights

By Master Sgt. David E. Somdahl,
119th Fighter Wing/PA

Personnel from the 119th Fighter Wing established another flight safety mark March 6 that may never be duplicated.

Pilots from the 119th Fighter Wing surpassed 70,000 hours of accident-free flying in the F-16 fighter aircraft March 6, on a practice air defense scramble mission from the North Dakota Guard's Alert Detachment at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.

"The Happy Hooligans have continually proven themselves as the best of the best," Gov. John Hoeven said. "This new safety record is a testament to the dedication and professionalism of our pilots and all of the airmen that support their mission."

Personnel involved with the record shattering flight include Staff Sgts. Aaron D. Weaver, Nicholas B. Shulstad and Adam S. Dewey, and Senior Airman Brandon G. Lohse, all from 119th Fighter Wing Alert Detachment at Langley. Maj. Michael J. Depree flew aircraft 81-0777 and Maj. Craig D. Borgstrom piloted aircraft 82-0967 on that flight.

The North Dakota Air National Guard first flew the F-16 Air Defense Fighter in December 1989 and is regularly acknowledged for their impeccable flight safety record by National Guard Bureau and Headquarters, Air Combat Command, U.S. Air Force. The Maj. Gen. John J. Pesch Flight Safety Award was awarded to the 119th Fighter Wing for the fourth time in 2004.

In addition to 70,000 hours in the F-16, the 119th Fighter Wing has flown more than 51,000 accident-free hours in the F-4D Phantom II fighter between 1977 and 1990, plus another 20,860 hours of safe flying in the F-101B Voodoo. The last accident resulting in the loss of an aircraft occurred in March, 1973 after a mid-air collision of two F-101B fighters over central North Dakota. Pilots and weapons system officers from both aircraft survived. All told, the wing has more than 142,500 fighter aircraft flight hours since that time.

Seventy thousand hours of continuous accident-free flyer equates to flying a single F-16 non-stop for nearly eight years.

Only one other Air National Guard unit, the 169th Fighter Wing at McEntire Joint National Guard Station, South Carolina, has flown longer in the F-16 fighter aircraft without a mishap. The South Carolina Air National Guard has flown F-16 aircraft since 1983 and experienced two aircraft crashes, one of which killed the pilot. Last year they surpassed



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp,
119th Communications Flight

Master Sgt. Michael Rix, 119th Maintenance Group, signals to a pilot that the F-16 aircraft is ready for launch during a series of pre-flight checks.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp,
119th Communications Flight

The 119th Fighter Wing commander Col. Robert J. Becklund, right, congratulates Maj. Craig D. Borgstrom, 178th Fighter Squadron, following the milestone 70,000 hour flight flown March 6 at 119th Fighter Wing Detachment 1, Langley Air Force Base, Va.

100,000 flight hours since their last mishap.

The North Dakota Air National Guard is an active participant in the Continental United States NORAD Region, beginning with the runway alert program at Fargo in 1954, and hosting air defense alert at home station through the spring of 1990. The Hooligans operated detached air sovereignty alert sites at Klamath Falls, Ore. from 1989-1994, at the former March Air Force Base, Ca from 1994-1998, and now at Langley AFB since September, 1998.

119th may get C-130 aircraft while awaiting new mission

By JFHQ-PAO

Washington, D.C. - North Dakota's congressional delegation and Governor met with top National Guard leaders to press for new and expanded missions for the 119th Fighter Wing of the North Dakota Air National Guard.

In the meeting with Lt. Gen H. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, and Brig. Gen. Charles Ickes III, Deputy Director of the Air National Guard, the congressional delegation and Governor urged the Pentagon to quickly finalize plans to base Light Cargo Aircraft (LCA) at Fargo's Hector Field. They also received word from the generals that C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft will likely be assigned to Fargo as a temporary flying mission to maintain personnel levels at the base as the Happy Hooligans transition from flying F-16 fighter aircraft to Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and the Light Cargo Aircraft.

"While we are eager to get the Hooligans in the virtual cockpits of UAVs, their tremendous flying record indicates they can contribute even more with an additional flying mission. Piloting the Light Cargo Aircraft would be a great fit and we are urging the Guard to base this mission in Fargo," the delegation and Governor said in a joint statement.

In the meeting, Generals Blum and Ickes detailed plans to base LCA at Fargo's Hector Field. The planes, which are capable of carrying 50 troops, would be used for both national defense and natural disaster response. Gen. Blum has indicated that the Hooligans are at the head of the line for the LCA, funding for which is requested in the Pentagon's budget for fiscal year 2007.

While pilots from the 119th Fighter Wing are slated to retire their F-16 jets next year, the LCA will not be available until about 2009. Happy Hooligan pilots are expected to begin flying Predator UAVs by the end of 2006 but the difference between the personnel needed for the Predator unit and the F-16 unit could create a temporary reduction in staffing. The delegation and Governor have been fighting for an additional, temporary mission for the Hooligans to ensure there are no personnel cuts between the retirement of the F-16s and the arrival of the LCA. Responding to the North Dakota leaders' request, the generals detailed a transition plan that includes temporarily stationing four C-130 aircraft at the base.

Seeking perfection on the prairie

164th Regional Training Institute recognized as an Institution of Excellence

*By Officer Candidate Amy Dobler,
Headquarters 164th Regiment (RTI)*

Just an hour or so from the Canadian border, near the largest natural body of water on the North Dakota prairie, lies a century-old nonpareil.

Camp Gilbert C. Grafton spans about 1,500 acres along the shores of Devils Lake and immures the 1st Engineer Training Battalion, 164th Regiment – the only full-time Reserve Component Engineer school in the United States.

“We’re the best of the best,” says 1st Sgt. Wayne Melberg, senior instructor.

It’s not a comment made lightly or without adequate accreditation to back him up.

Institution of excellence

The school was recently certified as an Institution of Excellence, meaning that 100 percent of accreditation standards have been met. Vigorous Army standards do not make this an easy-to-accomplish task. A January 2005 news release from the U.S. Army’s Training and Doctrine Command noted that none of the schools it accredits – including the Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., which is responsible for accrediting the 164th RTI – had ever achieved such stringent requirements.

“We take pride in that we’re ‘part-time,’ so to speak, and we’re training to standards at Fort Leonard Wood,” Melberg says of the Reserve Component school in comparison to the active Army one.

The Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood evaluated and assessed the 164th RTI five separate times this past year. The accreditation process, which includes internal and external assessments, is used to ensure quality and standardization of education and training throughout the Army’s active and reserve components. As part of the process, Engineer School evaluators checked on daily risk assessments, conducted training site visits, and reviewed administrative records, including instructor credentials and staff and student packets. The superior assessment and evaluation led to the Institution of Excellence distinction.

The 164th RTI commander, Col. Dale Adams, and NCO Commandant, Command Sgt. Maj. Gerald Miller, know the school and the 175 courses scheduled each year, are among the best.

“To the best of my knowledge, it’s a first for any Engineer training battalion, active or reserve, and is indicative of more than just excellent instructors,” Adams says on the Institution of Excellence distinction. “This could not have been accomplished without excellent in-processing by the personnel section, outstanding equipment maintenance, well-disciplined test control procedures, superior logistical support, and much, much more. It’s truly a credit to the entire team.”

The 164th RTI has been a full time school since 1988, and continues to grow. About 3,500 students train there annually, but that number is expected to surpass 5,000 within the next few years. The school provides instruction for all

engineers in Total Army School System Region G, along with the national overflow of students for Engineer training missions. Instructors train on a dozen specialties, including combat, horizontal and vertical engineering, as well as the respective NCOES courses. A new 250,000 square foot, \$53 million schoolhouse will be erected by 2008 to meet the growing needs of the Engineer branch.

Weather or not

“Training is conducted year-round with students on the ground approximately 47 weeks every year,” says Lt. Col. Lannie Runck, 1st Engineer Battalion commander. “This can be a challenge in the great white north during the winter months.”

Soldiers come from as far away as Puerto Rico, Guam and Hawaii. When the wind blows stiffly off of Devils Lake on dark January mornings, most simply shake their heads and ponder how anyone can live in such a place.

The yearly training schedule works around North Dakota’s blustery winters, though, with Basic and Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Courses filling the coldest months since they are heavily classroom based. These types of courses take a hiatus in the summer months as training on heavy equipment, combat engineer and bridging tasks comes into full swing.

Serious mission

With Soldiers deploying frequently to combat zones, instructors at the RTI approach their jobs in earnest.

“We take it very serious that we’re taking Soldiers out into harm’s way,” Melberg says.

“Harm’s way” is a place that Melberg knows intimately.

The two-time combat veteran returned from a yearlong deployment to Iraq in February 2005, where he served as a Trailblazer with the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion, North Dakota Army National Guard.

The Trailblazer mission was one of assured mobility, with engineers finding and destroying roadside bombs and conducting route clearance operations to inhibit future IED emplacement. It was an inherently dangerous mission, and not everyone made it home. Melberg received a Purple Heart after sustaining injuries on a November 2004 patrol that killed his gunner and left his driver with serious wounds and an amputated leg.

Most of Melberg’s instructors don’t need reminding on the seriousness of their mission, either.

There are about 40 active instructors at the RTI. Their experiences range from an infantryman in Vietnam to Desert Storm to current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. While many have deployed, many too also have more than a dozen years of instructor experience. Others are new to the institute, but bring valuable real-life experiences, which they incorporate into

their training.

While the new doctrine has yet to be written on route clearance and IED missions, the RTI is prepared.

“It’s a good thing we’ve had some people deployed because they know what’s coming,” Melberg says of future training and instruction.

They’ll be back

The level of instruction students receive at the RTI is apparent beyond the Engineer School’s accreditation. After-action reviews are conducted with every student who goes

through Camp Grafton. Time and time again, Soldiers rave about their experience at the school – even though some find the temperatures colder than they would typically prefer.

“By the time they leave, if you were to look at the AARs:

‘No, I wouldn’t ever want to live there, but the experience was excellent,’ (they write),” Melberg says.

Students often comment positively on their training and say they can’t wait to come back despite the snow and ice. Over and over, one sentence appears on AARs Melberg reviews: “This is the best school I’ve ever been to.”

Staff Sgt. Jerry Brown attended the Construction Inspector and Supervisor Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course Phase 2 at Camp Grafton this past December. The Colonial Heights, Va., native, who was a Navy Seabee earlier in his military career, commented that he was “especially impressed with the knowledge, maturity, calmness and quiet professionalism of the staff there. I was inspired to be a much better NCO and engineer at Camp Grafton. I consider it to be the home of the Army Engineers.”



Camp Grafton file photo

“I felt that the school there is a first-class environment,” Brown says, “designed specifically with the student in mind. All of the personnel, including the chow hall personnel, know that their job is to make as positive an impact on the student as possible.”

Command Sgt. Major Jeff Riggs, who attended the Carpenter/Masonry Engineer Course with the CET Combat Engineer Task training at Camp Grafton last spring, described his training as “far superior than any other military school I have attended – reserve or active duty.”

Again, the instructors’ skill and style contributed strongly to the experience.

“The level of instruction was superior,” says Riggs, who lives in Vicksburg, Miss. “The instructors had to follow the structured curriculum, but they gave you the updated practices in those fields, due to they had worked or still work in the fields of instruction. They had a great attitude that they answered, demonstrated, and they allowed you to practice the task. To sum this up, the instructors knew the little tricks of the trade that made your learning and their teaching easier.”

Dakota pride

While the weather may chill some of the fondness for North Dakota by those from warmer climes, their approbation of the training they receive there makes the trip worthwhile.

Camp Grafton facilitates students getting the full North Dakota experience, too. After all, how many post exchanges sell fishing licenses and tackle?

The replete North Dakota encounter encompasses more than the prairie sunsets and wall-eye fishing, though. Studying at Camp Grafton’s Institution of Excellence could very well be accredited to that intrinsic North Dakota sojourn, too.

“We really conduct ourselves to a higher standard because we’re North Dakotans and the work ethic is there,” Melberg says. “It just goes along with the whole North Dakota National Guard – we take care of business and it’s nice to be recognized for that.”

Safety Corner

*By Maj. Kurt Fleck,
Joint Force Headquarters*



Spring has sprung. The cold is behind us and the summer approaches. With the coming of fun in the sun are the added risks associated with playtime. We care not only for the military member, but for family members too. A person cannot be totally productive if a loved one is in the hospital nursing wounds.

Sports and recreation injuries account for large portion of the reportable ground mishaps, lost workdays and hospital visits. Paperwork for us, added work for co-workers who pick up the load and pain for the member. Most of these injuries can be avoided with a little forethought and a lot more common sense.

Some simple guidelines to follow: If you’re a boater, make sure and give your boat a good once over to ensure everything is in working order and that you have enough PFD’s for everyone in your boat. If motorcycling is your pastime, please ensure that you wear the proper personal protective equipment when operating the machine. For those do-it-yourselfers, make sure your equipment is ready for lawn and gardening, as well as household projects. Start off slow and re-familiarize yourself with your tools and surroundings. Last, have a plan for inclement weather. A good plan may save your life or the life of a loved one. You can find safety checklists and more information on spring safety by visiting our web page at NDKO (JFHQ-SSO) or by contacting Maj. Kurt Fleck or CW3 Travis Bridwell at 333-2280 or 2281. Have an enjoyable and safe spring.



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kiel Skager, Joint Force Headquarters

Connie Sprynczynatyk (center) pins the rank of Major General on her husband Dave Sprynczynatyk's beret. Maj. Gen. Sprynczynatyk was promoted on Feb. 17. His daughter Cathryn Sprynczynatyk (left) and his daughter-in-law Rebecca Sprynczynatyk (right) "pinned" the second star on Maj. Gen. Sprynczynatyk's shoulders.

Sprynczynatyk receives promotion to Maj. Gen.

By 1Lt. Dan Murphy,
1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BISMARCK – Brig. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, Director of Logistics for National Guard Bureau, was promoted to Maj. General on Friday, Feb. 17.

Gov. John Hoeven, Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen, Adjutant General, North Dakota National Guard, family, friends, and fellow Soldiers filled a room at the Raymond J. Bohn Armory in Bismarck to witness the promotion of Sprynczynatyk.

Sprynczynatyk's second star to the rank of major general was "pinned" on by his daughter Cathryn Sprynczynatyk and his daughter-in-law Rebecca Sprynczynatyk, his wife Connie participated in the ceremony as well, changing the rank on his beret.

"It is because of the support of my mentors, my fellow Soldiers, and my friends and family that has allowed me to reach this point in my military career and to have the honor of being promoted to major general,"

"It is because of the support of my mentors, my fellow Soldiers, and my friends and family that has allowed me to reach this point in my military career and to have the honor of being promoted to major general,"

**Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk,
Director of Logistics for
National Guard Bureau**

Dave does not step back every time he goes to mind set of what do complete this task. need, Americans, the spirit, dedication step up and take on my pleasure and this promotion,"

Haugen said, commitment and National Guard is

What ever he does, he gives 100 percent. It is a pleasure to promote him to major general, he earned it."

Sprynczynatyk serves as the primary adviser to the Chief, National Guard Bureau for all logistics matters including mobilization, supply, maintenance, transportation, acquisitions logistics, installation, facility, and environmental issues. He has held this position since Nov 1, 2003.

Maj. Gen. Sprynczynatyk began his military career in 1972. In 1978, he received a direct commission to first lieutenant in the 164th Engineer Group.

Prior to his current assignment Sprynczynatyk was the Assistant Adjutant General in the North Dakota Army National Guard.

In 2001, the Governor of North Dakota appointed Sprynczynatyk as the Director of the North Dakota Department of Transportation.

Chaplain's Corner



Do you have the time?

Chaplain (Maj.) David L. Johnson,
68th Troop Command

"What time is it?"

A man had been driving all night and by morning was still far from his destination. He decided to stop at the next city he came to, and park somewhere where it was quiet so he could get an hour or two of sleep. As luck would have it, the quiet place he chose happened to be on one of the city's major jogging routes. No sooner had he settled back for a snooze when there came a knock on his window. He looked out and saw a jogger running in place. "Yes?" he said. "Excuse me, sir," the jogger, said, "do you have the time?" The man looked at the car clock and answered, "8:15." The jogger said thanks and left. The man settled back again, and was just dozing off when there was another knock on the window and another jogger. "Excuse me, sir, do you have the time?" asked the jogger. "8:25!" the man replied. The jogger said thanks and left. Now the man could see other joggers passing by and he knew it was only a matter of time before another one disturbed him. To avoid that, he got out a pen and paper and put a sign on his window saying, "I do not know the time!" Once again he settled back to sleep. He was just dozing off when there was another knock on the window. "Sir, sir?" said a jogger, seeking to be helpful, "it's 8:45!"

Time...it's a funny thing isn't it? If things are going well in our lives...then time seems to fly, right? On the other hand, if we are going through hardships and difficulties in our lives...then time seems to crawl along. The clock just doesn't seem to tick fast enough! You all know what I mean.

As you read this, all of you are in different places in your lives...from deployment to re-

deployment...from starting a new job to beginning a new relationship...and from major stressors to facing little or no stress at all. **Time flies in these situations AND AT THE SAME TIME it moves just way to slow!**

So...what time is it for you today?

Whatever time it is in your life today...please read with me the first part of Psalm 46:10. It says, "**Be still and know that I am God!**" And what does this mean for "ALL TIMES" in our lives? This verse calls us to STOP... BE STILL! Isn't this what we tell our kids when they are running around the house all full of that energy we wish we had? Isn't this also what we tell our neighbor/loved one when they are burning the candle at both ends? We want them to rest because in that time of rest they can rebuild/renew their strength. This verse is God's call to us, as well, to do the same thing. Why? Our Lord is calling us to "REST" in HIS promises so that we are strengthened for all that life throws at us. Take a look now at that rest of Psalm 46. In it you will read some of these promises about how the Lord is our refuge, our help and our strength...in all circumstances.

So where do we get the time just to BE STILL? It's not easy...but it is important. We know that like the trucker in the story above, even when we try to have some time for ourselves and our relationship with God...sometimes we still get interrupted. In spite of that, however, our promise is that the Lord is faithful...HE will see us through each second, each minute and each hour of each day!

So...whatever time it is for you today...remember and know...that our Lord is there looking out for each of your needs!

Dear Lord, as we watch the "many clocks" in our lives...remind us always of your love and care. Amen.

JAG Notes



Claim process for POV damage

By Warrant Officer Amber Wilson,
JAG Office

General Rule: Collisions are not considered unusual occurrences and may be reimbursed by the government. Collisions can include hit-and-runs and those involving animals or shopping carts. For example, it is not an unusual occurrence for a parked vehicle to be struck by a shopping cart in a commissary parking lot or by a hit-an-run driver, nor is it an unusual occurrence for a motor vehicle to strike a deer on or off the installation. **To have a potentially compensable claim the POV in question must be operated pursuant of orders for the convenience of the Government.** Travel is not considered to be for the convenience of the Government unless it was pursuant to written orders authorizing use for which the claimant is entitled to reimbursement. Travel to drill is generally not on orders authorizing POV travel for the convenience of the government. Although travel from temporary quarters to a TDY site pursuant to orders is considered use in the performance of military duty, commuting to or from a permanent place of duty is not. Permissive TDY and similar travel is not considered to be for the convenience of the government. **Note: Valid orders are only one consideration for compensability of the claim. While unusual, claims could be denied for other unrelated reasons (alcohol, deviation in trip, etc.) Claim Forms:** DD Form 1842 and DD Form 1844.

Noteworthy information: If you are ever on IDT, AT or other written orders or just on your way to drill and you are in a vehicle accident, immediately report it to the local authorities and your unit. The unit should then notify the safety office and the legal office.



What's inside

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New building ushers in Camp Grafton's future

NEW AGE: A big change is being planned for the parade grounds at Camp Grafton. This architectural rendering show what is in store for the future of the Regional Training Institute at Camp Grafton. This view is looking from south to north. The U shaped area in the near ground is the \$20 million phase II Billeting portion of the project, which is not yet funded. The far ground portion is the \$27 million phase I classroom, administration, and storage portion of the project scheduled to be bid in FY 08.

