

GMG

Green Mountain Guard | Spring/Summer 2014



From The TAG



Maj. Gen. Steven Cray
The Adjutant General

As the summer comes to a close I thought I would update you on a few things happening in the Vermont National Guard. In times of fiscal uncertainty the Green Mountain Boys continue to lead the way for our state and nation. The 86th Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) deployed to the Joint Readiness Training Center, Ft. Polk, La., for a Decisive Action Training Rotation where the Vermonters have trained and deployed alongside our active component, fought in the same battles and met and exceeded the same standards as our active duty counterparts. It is imperative that we continue to maintain that readiness across the Vermont National Guard and vitally important that the Reserve component, the Army Reserve, the National Guard and Active components stay as ready as possible.

The 158th Fighter Wing continues to prepare for and execute the exercises that focus on interoperability with other components. Most notable working with U.S. Navy F18s for two weeks this July. In August they will host an open house to showcase the men and women of the Air Guard. One purpose is to show the community the jobs that their family, friends, and neighbors do each and every day.

As always strength and readiness is the common denominator that allow us to perform our missions, integrate new equipment and Soldiers and Airmen into our organization. Strength in numbers is what provides us the opportunity to continue to serve our state and nation. Excellence attracts excellence and the Vermont National Guard is certainly at the top.

Integrity, Service, Excellence

GMG

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Look for these two logos throughout the magazine. Click on them to find links to additional photos & videos!

IN & AROUND: VTANG

RIGHT: A1C Tiffany Thompson, TSgt Jacob Mitchell and A1C Kirk Heinchon of the 158th Fighter Wing Command Post go down a quick reaction checklist during a training scenario at the South Burlington International Airport, March 9, 2014. Relocating to an alternate Command Post. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by A1C Jon Alderman)

BELOW: U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Phillip Clark of the 158th Fighter Wing replaces the Environmental Control System boot on a F-16 Fighting Falcon on March 8, 2014, at the Vermont Air National Guard base. The ECS boot, attached to the high stage bleed air shut off valve, channels the air off the F-16 engine to provide the cabin with air condition. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Jon Alderman)



LEFT: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Giovanni Mateus unloads a travel pod after recovering an F-16 from its flight to the Savannah Combat Readiness Training Center, Savannah, Ga. on Jan. 31, 2014. Staff Sgt. Mateus is part of the Total Force Initiative, assigned to the Vermont Air National Guard. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by SrA Chelsea Clark)

BELOW: U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Katie Jacques of the 158th Fighter Wing Aircrew Flight Equipment Squadron inspects a parachute used in the ejection seat of a F-16 Fighting Falcon, South Burlington, Vt., March, 9, 2014. Jacques was checking the body of the parachute for foreign objects and debris. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman Jeffrey Tatro)



IN & AROUND: VTARNG



LEFT: Spc. Stephen Trombly, attached to A Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain), practices his sniper stalking in a winter environment at a firing range in Barton, Vt. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

BELOW: Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont Army National Guard receive the Valorous Unit Award at Norwich University, Northfield, Vt., January 12, 2014. The unit was honored with this award for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy during Operation Enduring Freedom. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



RIGHT: Pfc. Jamie Chadurjian, Vermont Army National Guard, sights in a 60mm mortar for a training exercise at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site at Jericho, Vt., Jan. 11, 2014. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

BELOW: U.S. Soldiers with the Army Mountain Warfare Mountaineering and Advanced Instructor courses climb Smugglers' Notch in Cambridge, Vt., Feb. 20, 2014. This is the final tasking of the students prior to graduation the following day. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sarah Mattison)



Code Fixes Fire Truck Saves Base THOUSANDS

Bent over a small display inside the cab of the fire truck, heavy mobile and special vehicle technician Tech. Sgt. Marshall Coats was part of the vehicle maintenance squad that spent hours in mid-December searching through binary code. Black pixelated numbers streamed across the green screen as he tried to discover the error with the turret of the truck's fire extinguisher, rendering it immobile.

Of the three crash fire trucks on base, the 2006 Stricker is the newest and its accessories are electronically powered- a different game compared to the hydraulic-powered accessories on the other, older, base's trucks. But with complex technology comes complex troubleshooting and when one of the turrets on the Stricker refused to rotate, the members of the vehicle maintenance group found themselves not using a wrench to attack the problem or even able to physically touch the issue – they found themselves sifting through thousands of ones and zeroes.

"When you have half a million dollar truck, the electronics in it are very advanced – they multiplex," Coats said about the J1939, a communication network used as an operating system. "What I mean by that is that everything communicates using one pathway, multiple computers using one path of communication. It gets pretty advanced."

Having spent eight years in the Army in vehicle maintenance and owning a strong background of civilian work in this field, Coats is no stranger to the developing field of electronic vehicular maintenance. But after a solid week on the phone with the help desk, but both he and the representatives were stumped when all their diagnostic tools kept telling them that the vehicle was operating fine. Adding to frustration, the technical support also misdiagnosed a few times, which meant VTANG firemen were short a vehicle as parts were shipped in, found to be unhelpful, and shipped back out.

Knowing that if another crash truck were to malfunction it would affect the commercial planes at the Burlington International Airport which VTANG fire department supports as well as the F-16s, Coats persisted until he got the engineer of the software on the phone.

She told him what number sequence to look for as he operated each function of the fire truck separately, trying to isolate the one relay that had gone bad.

"I was able to go in there and actually pull up the lines of code for the software and test out the modules and see if they were talking to this KAntrak display," Coats said about the troubleshooting. "You look at the

display and it would say 'on' or give you a number one to let you know that when you move the joystick right that it's sending the proper signal to the nozzle to move. Have you ever seen the Matrix? That's what I'm talking about – lines of code moving down, ones and zeroes."

It was time-consuming and arduous, but after two weeks the mechanics were finally able to fix problem with a \$900 part. Because they didn't have to fly in a tech support person, provides lodging and meals, and pay their high fees, the group saved the base more than \$10,000. As a bonus: Now that shop is familiar with a different facet of troubleshooting.

Surprisingly, this high-tech job doesn't fall under the realm of communications or electronics; as a vehicle technician, Coats works on vehicles with technology unimagined of thirty years ago.

"This is not something even three years ago we would never have gotten this in-depth over diagnostics," said Coat's supervisor, Superintendent Craig Sanborn. "The way the vehicle fleet is evolving is fast-paced and intense and it's a struggle to keep our training at the same stride."

New vehicles are being made with a computerized brain and 90 percent of the problems maintainers fix are

electronic. Gone are the days of the backyard mechanic fixing things with duct tape, bailing twine, and fence wire, said Sanborn.

Back in the 80s when he joined the shop, Sanborn had no idea what a personal computer was much less an idea it would one day power the vehicles he repaired. With current technology, four to five functions can be dependent on a single wire, a concept he said that was sometimes hard to wrap his mind around.

As a group they prioritize training and average six months of in-residence training a year, working out to about 30 days per mechanic.

The only way maintainers can meet the demands of their job, he said, is by continually budgeting for factory-training courses. The mechanics who go return to share their learned knowledge with the rest of the shop, turning the initial costs of training into bulk savings for the base.

"A while ago we had a sweeper core that went down and because of our mechanics' training we saved \$4,000," Sanborn said. "We try to rebuild things if we can but if we have to replace things our men will find parts from local shops, saving us even more money. On an average year, cost savings with the airmen in my shop is in the tens of thousands of dollars."



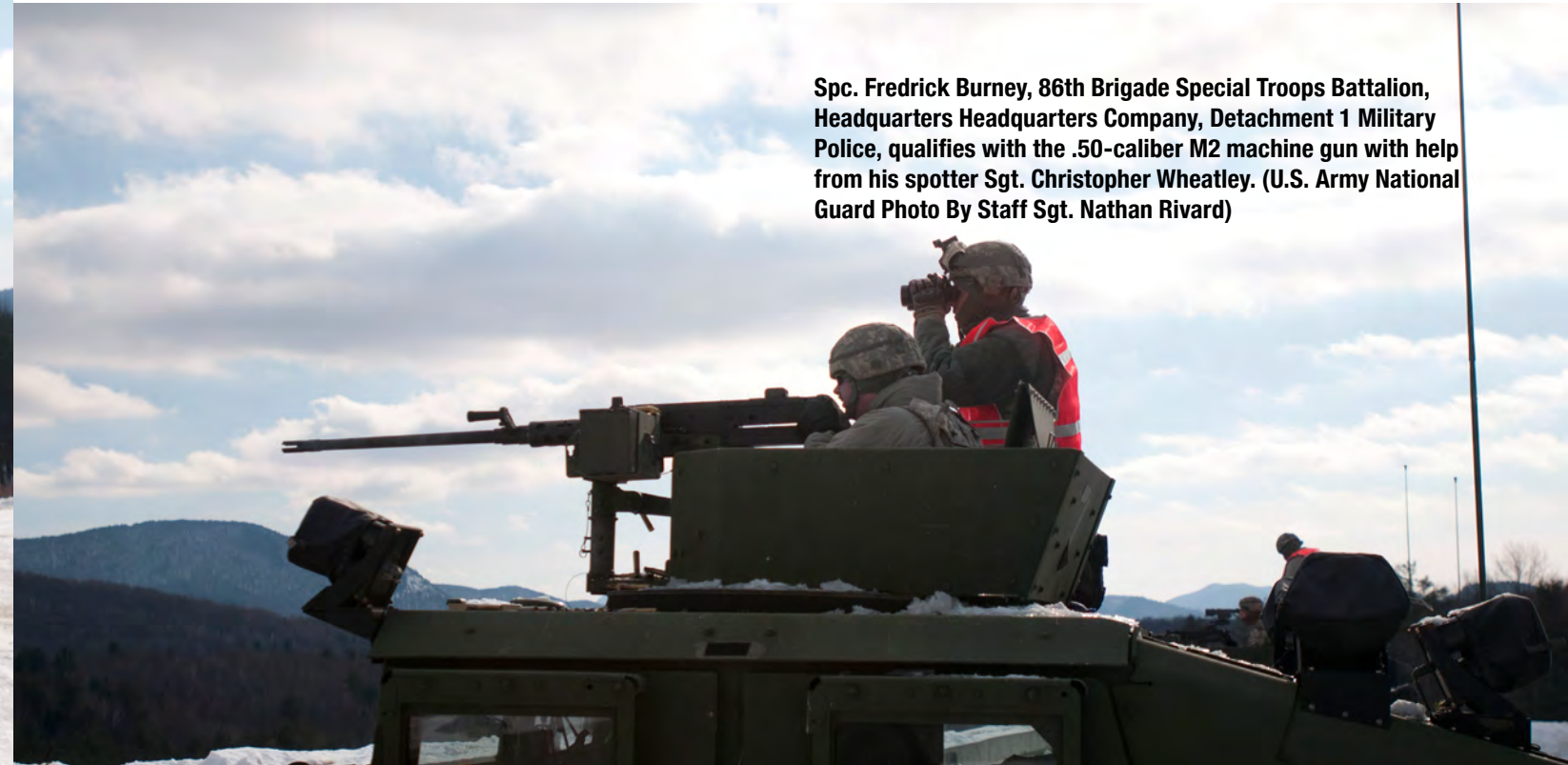
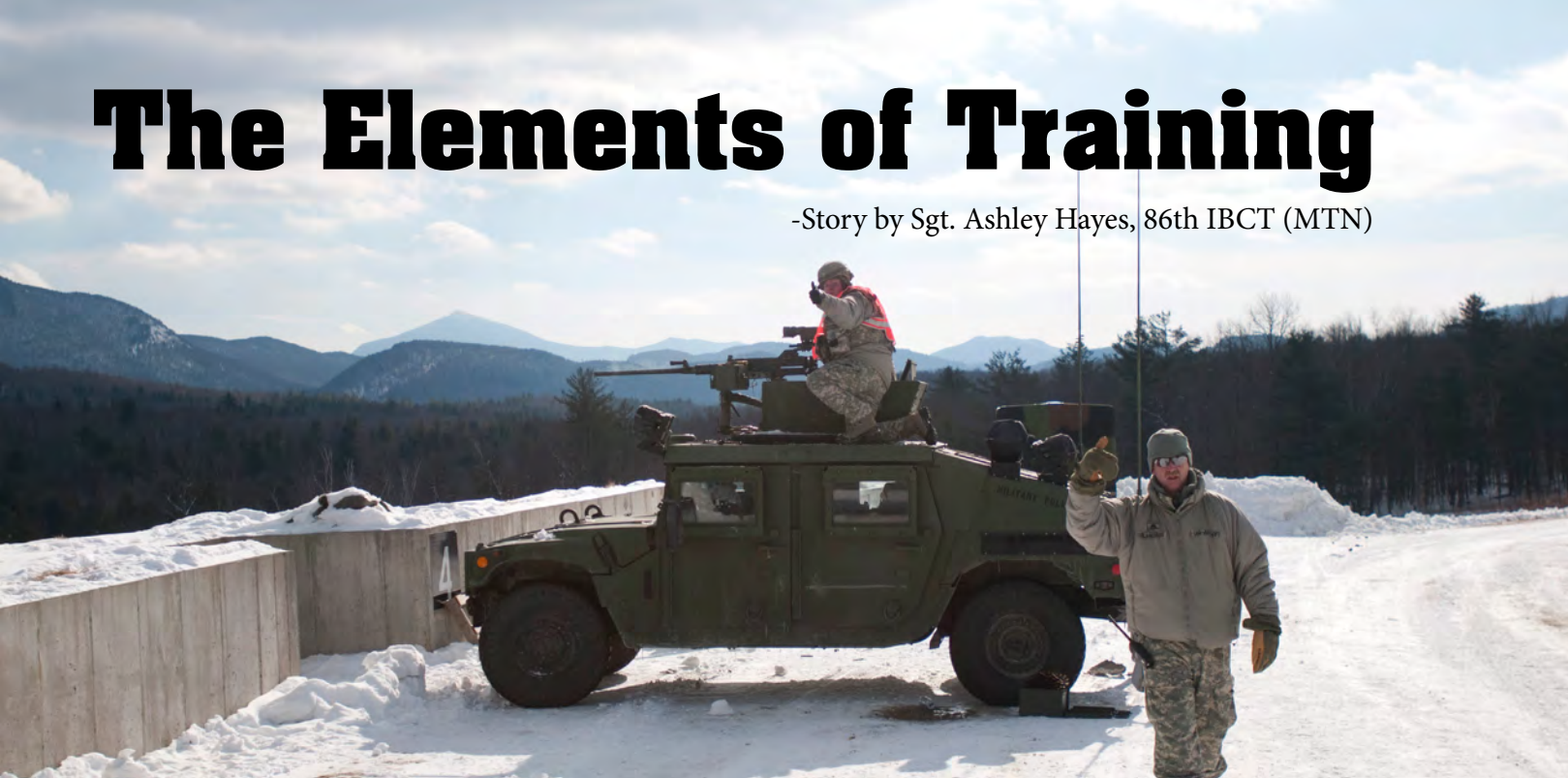
Below: U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marshall Coats of the 158th Fighter Wing's Vehicle Maintenance shop shows the complexity of one of the vehicles he works on with a large schematic March 7, 2014. Coats unrolls a large schematic from the factory to show the advanced nature of the vehicles computer. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Victoria Greenia)

ABOVE: U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marshall Coats of the 158th Fighter Wing's Vehicle Maintenance shop shows how the vehicle display operates with the turret of one of the crash fire trucks March 7, 2014. The turret has been malfunctioning requiring Vehicle Maintenance to troubleshoot the on board computer. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Victoria Greenia)



The Elements of Training

-Story by Sgt. Ashley Hayes, 86th IBCT (MTN)



Spc. Fredrick Burney, 86th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Headquarters Headquarters Company, Detachment 1 Military Police, qualifies with the .50-caliber M2 machine gun with help from his spotter Sgt. Christopher Wheatley. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

CAMP ETHAN ALLEN TRAINING SITE, Vt. - Overcoming snow, below freezing temperatures, and elements of a typical Vermont winter was a challenge in itself. However, that wasn't the main focus of Saturday's training.

The 86th Brigade Special Troops Battalion came together Feb. 9, 2014 at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site (CEATS), to zero and qualify on the 50-caliber machine gun. This was another stepping-stone on the road to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), at Fort Polk, La. There, they will participate in a three-week training event.

The opportunity to work as a team, was an important element during the drill weekend.

"We don't train with our parent company, HHC, all the time, so it's good that we can train collaboratively," said Army Sgt. 1st Class Weiland Ross, a Military Police Officer with the 86th BSTB. "So it's good to get all the different elements of the company together on the same sheet of music."

Furthermore, learning to work on gunner teams is important for future training and combat. Ross elaborated

on the importance of the weapons training and how it will better prepare them for JRTC.

"It'll definitely make it easier because the crews we use for the mounted gunnery are crews that are set once they get qualified," said Ross. "They stay as a crew and we don't swap people around. If you qualify as a crew, that's how you stay the rest of the training. It gets them to develop and work collaboratively together as a team and develop some cohesion amongst each other."

Consequently, the frigid temperatures added an element of difficulty to complete training, especially for those who were qualifying for the first time. Besides staying warm by a fire, or sipping on a cup of hot soup, the unit took the opportunity to conduct cold weather training.

"We were doing some training on building snow shelters," said Ross. "Also, some demonstrations on different types of stoves and things like that for both cooking and staying warm in a cold weather environment. A lot of guys are new out of training and they've never used that before."

The low temperatures also posed a

level of difficulty during qualifications. This required the gunners to layer up on clothing, which was a blessing, but also a barrier.

"We have gloves on and it's hard to feel," said Spc. Brandon Woods, a military police officer with the Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

Woods said he is from Vermont, so he is used to the colder temperatures, which might be more of a challenge for someone from the south.

Additionally, there is an increased amount of pressure placed on units to complete required training before going to JRTC. The minimal amount of days left for training must be used efficiently, even if that means operating in unfavorable conditions.

"It's a lot of training requirements all at once, you have your individual tasks as well as your gunnery," said Ross. "We have a lot of training events that we have to cram into one year. Our training schedule is pretty packed so we have to take advantage of it while we can."

On the other hand, working together while facing the elements, can add to the accomplishments of the team.

"Once the weather cooperates when its warmer they'll already have a cohesive bond and they should train and come together a lot better," said Ross.

The challenges of cold weather, learning to work as a team, and overcoming the pressures of training requirements are taken in stride, as they are only part of what increases the level of preparedness and realism.

"The most realistic training you're going to get is if you ever have to go get into combat and shoot a weapon," said Ross. "So that's what you're training to do, you're training to go and fight as a team. So it's definitely realistic, and if we ever deploy or go somewhere for a cold weather conflict, the soldiers will be trained and ready because they've already been exposed to it."

MIDDLE: Pfc. Stephen Miner, goes through clearing procedures on the .50 caliber M2 machine gun during weapons qualification at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

RIGHT: Spc. Zakery Hunt, 86th Brigade Special Troops Battalion Headquarters Headquarters Company, Detachment 1 Military Police, adjust sites on the .50 caliber M2 machine gun as with help from Sgt. Skyler Genest as he prepares to zero the weapon before qualification. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)





Vt. Guardsman First on Scene in Winooski Fire

Story by Capt. Dyana Allen, State Public Affairs



WINOOSKI, Vt. - Around 3:30 pm, Senior Airman Garrett Shepler, a weapons loader with the Maintenance Group at the 158th Fighter Wing, was driving back to his home in Plattsburgh, N.Y., when he happened to come upon a structure fire on Main Street in Winooski.

"I remember sitting there in traffic, and all of a sudden I just looked over, and I saw these two guys standing outside their door, they were looking back inside the building and looked panicked."

Shepler then said he turned on the blue light bar he has on his Durango because he is a volunteer firefighter in Cumberland Head Fire Department, in New York.

He made his way through traffic and pulled up on a scene that he describes as a full-blown structure fire.

"There were no flames showing, just pitch-black smoke," he said, "barreling in circles out of the door."

Shepler went to go in the building to make sure that no one was left inside, and he said the smoke hit him in the face and that it burned to breathe it in.

"I went to run in, then the smoke hit me and I wasn't thinking, so I was taking off my fleece and my blouse while yelling to the two men standing outside, 'who else is in there?' When they said, 'no one,' I was relieved."

Shepler took control of the scene at that point and what he describes as a very, hot fire at Pecor Auto.

He asked what the men knew about the fire. He said one of the men was really upset and was saying, 'That's my shop.'

He told Shepler there were accelerants, such as, propane, gasoline, oil, and a vehicle still inside the garage, and knowing this information, Shepler worried that there could be an explosion.

The owner wanted to move his truck and would have had to go back into the burning building to get the keys. Shepler kept him from going back into the building telling the owner that he would not make it back out.

"One thing that could have changed the whole situation, was the owner wanted to open the garage doors. I had to explain to him that you could create a back draft by increasing the supply of oxygen to the quickly developing fire."

The doors were spring doors, so if the garage were

opened too quickly, Shepler feared that they could make the situation worse.

Realizing that the developing situation could become hazardous to bystanders and neighbors, Shepler moved his vehicle to the street to block off the driveway when two Winooski Police Department cars showed up. The police began shutting down the street, while Shepler was doing a walk around the building to assess the situation further.

Once the Winooski fire chief got on scene, Shepler briefed him on what his assessment was explaining that he was a fireman from New York state and offered the chief help if he needed it.

"The chief said, yes, we're gonna need you," Shepler recalled, and he jumped into action, letting out lines, directing the first firefighters on scene with what he knew, and the situation progressed, he helped where ever he could.

He took out windows for ventilation, started saws, and even helped some of his fellow firefighters with making sure their equipment was on and working properly.

Shepler says that his instincts as a fireman took over and he just wanted to make sure that everyone else got out and, today, he said he is thankful that no one was injured.

Shepler has a heroic story to tell his family and friends when he got home, about what he describes, "as just another day at work."



(U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Rob Trubia)

Working as a Guardsmen

Story and Photos By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard, 172nd PAD

It wouldn't have been a realistic experience if it wasn't raining for his first time with Infantrymen. Vermont's Lieutenant Governor Phil Scott took a trip to the Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho to spend the day with Vermont National Guard Soldiers. On a cold day when the rain and ice shut down Interstate 89 Lt. Gov. Scott did exactly what the soldiers were doing, embraced the suck. He started the day off by aiming mortars with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment and then took to the mechanics shed with the soldiers of Echo Company, 186th Brigade Support Battalion. He finished the day with a foot patrol through the ice-covered woods in the downpour of rain with the infantrymen.

Scott was given a wealth of knowledge when working with the 81mm mortars by Pfc. Amnott, Sgt. Evans, and Spc. Palermo, Headquarters, Headquarters Company 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment. The mortar crew's lesson would show later in the day how important they are to help win in a combat scenario.

The Lt. Governor also got to meet the soldiers of Echo Co. 186th Brigade Support Battalion who fix the break downs and keep the motor pool running in the mechanic's shed at the training site. Pfc. Seth Augeri, Spc. Mason Jacob, and Sgt. 1st Class Theborge told Scott about what they do to keep the vehicles going and stories about their mechanical work on deployments.

Rounding off the day was a dismounted foot patrol on the way to an objective that was controlled by the enemy. Crampons, metal devices wore on feet to grip snow and ice, were worn to get some tractions in the nasty conditions. The patrol started by dismounting the vehicles, maneuvering into the woods and up hills to get to the objective. Once there, simulated mortar fire and heavy arms fire bombarded the objective before the infantrymen and their newest recruit, Lt. Gov. Scott, pushed through the objective.



When the smoke cleared and the soldiers were done with the mission, it was nothing but smiles in the rainy weather, including one of the biggest smiles from Lt. Gov. Scott.

ABOVE: Spc. Jacob Mason, Pfc. Seth Augeri and Sgt. 1st Class Theborge talk to Vermont Lt. Gov. Phil Scott about annual servicing they perform on military vehicles and the process used to keep vehicles up to date.

BELOW: Sgt. Evans, Headquarters instructs Vermont Lt. Gov. Phil Scott on how to aim an 81mm mortar during a training exercise.



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158th Fighter Wing Bids Farewell



LEFT: U.S. Air Force Col. David Baczewski relinquishes command of the 158th Fighter Wing during a change of command ceremony at the Burlington International Airport, South Burlington, Vt, Jan. 4, 2014. Col. Thomas Jackman Jr. follows Col. Baczewski as the 16th Wing Commander of the 158th Fighter Wing. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman Jeffrey Tatro)



Story by Airman 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz, 158 FW

The 158th Fighter Wing of the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) welcomed its new wing commander, Col. Thomas W. Jackman Jr., who succeeded Col. David P. Baczewski Jan. 4th, 2014.

"The wing owes you a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid," said Jackman to Baczewski at the change of command ceremony. "Thanks to you the future of our wing is on a flight path to an amazing first, the home of the F-35s. I'm looking forward to fostering ever-improving relationships with our local community and maintaining the mission-ready focus that you've given us."

Baczewski's motto to always 'be ready' led the base to a 99 percent compliance rating on the 2012 Unit Compliance Inspection and the positioning of the VTANG as a future site of the F-35 fighter jets. He will be missed by the VTANG as he leaves for his new role as the executive officer to the deputy commander of the United States Northern Command at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado.

Jackman served as vice commander to the wing alongside Baczewski for the last two years. Jackman's excitement was obvious when he spoke on his plans to further develop the VTANG and he continued to express his thanks to the Airmen of the VTANG.

An emotional Baczewski expressed his gratitude to the base as a whole and to his family in particular, thanking his co-workers for understanding that family comes first and thanking his family for supporting him in his career and service.

"My staff, you always listened when I talked about my family," Baczewski smiled. "And my family, you always supported my commitment to my service."

Overseeing the change of command was Major General Steven Cray, the Adjutant General of Vermont, who expressed how Baczewski fully exemplified the Air Force core values of integrity, service, and excellence. As Baczewski moves on, however, Cray said the VTANG would be in good hands and that he had confidence in Jackman's ability to move the wing forward.

ABOVE: U.S. Air Force Col. Thomas W. Jackman Jr. accepts command of the 158th Fighter Wing during a change of command ceremony. Col. Thomas Jackman Jr. will be the 16th Wing Commander of the 158th Fighter Wing. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman Jeffrey Tatro)

BELOW: U.S. Air Force Col. Thomas W. Jackman Jr. accepts command of the 158th Fighter Wing during at the change of command ceremony. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Jon Alderman)



VTANG *Soars* Over Savannah



Written by: Airman 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz, 158th FW

U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. William Etter, 1st Air Force Commander, and Senior Airman Marc Robert review technical data while preparing an F-16 for takeoff. Lt. Gen. Etter flew with the Green Mountain Boys in Sentry Savannah at the Savannah Combat Readiness Training Center, Savannah, Ga., on Feb. 4, 2014. Sentry Savannah is a multi-unit exercise, combining skills in air-to-air missions, air-to-ground training, and in-flight refueling. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by SrA Chelsea Clark)



Tech. Sgt. Corey Burton references technical data while launching an F-16 during Sentry Savannah. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by SrA Chelsea Clark)

More than 200 members of the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) went to the Georgia Air National Guard's Savannah Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC), Savannah, Ga., to participate in Sentry Savannah, a month long, multi-unit training exercise in February.

Sentry Savannah was the largest ever military training hosted by the Savannah CRTC with over 50 fighter jets from the Air Force, Marines and Navy participating. The primary focus of the cross generational exercise was air-to-air combat training in an over-water maritime operation.

"This is awesome," said Lt. Col. Daniel Finnegan, 134th Fighter Squadron Commander, VTANG. "It's a great learning experience...It's a good deployed location, plenty of ramp space and the airspace is close and sizable. It's been great being integrated with these different platforms."

Many of the training exercises involved air-to-air movements such as refueling, coordinating multiple aircraft maneuvers, and even ground-to-air engagement training. Airmen from a range of shops included Intelligence, Maintenance, and Operations groups contributed, bringing with them more than a dozen 158th Fighter Wing F-16 aircraft.

"In Savannah we were able to work with other units and different jets and support gear," said Lt. Col. David Gritsavage, a program manager with VTANG Base Operations who helped lead the mission, "the goal of

the training was to focus on exercises that we're not always able to practice at home."

The location of Sentry Savannah played heavily on the exercise's duration and required air training space. Savannah CRTC facilities were used by the Green Mountain Boys, Hawaii ANG, Washington D.C. ANG, and Tyndall AFB. But these weren't the only units in the training, the proximity allowed for three refueling wings to also take part in the exercise. The units from Florida ANG, and the Naval Air Station in Beaufort, Sc., participated from their home stations. Throughout the month, over 1,000 personnel used the facilities of the CRTC for Sentry Savannah.

"It was a good experience to work with airmen from various units," said Staff Sgt. Maryjane Palumbo, an Aviation Resource Manager in Operations who also went on the training deployment. "Other units handle their equipment differently, so it was a good opportunity to learn how we can adapt as our unit grows."

A continuing goal of the VTANG is to apply what was learned in Savannah to future work here in Vermont, being able to conduct similar trainings on a smaller scale.

"We were able to integrate our wing and equipment with other generations of aircraft, such as the F-22 Raptors," said Gritsavage. "We were extremely successful in this, and it's a good sign for any future equipment changes here."

Senior Airman James Charkalis loads practice munitions on an F-16 as part of Sentry Savannah at the Savannah Combat Readiness Training Center, Savannah, Ga., Feb. 5, 2014. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by SrA Chelsea Clark)





Hanging



With



The



Mortarmen

Story by Spc. Roy Mercon, 86th IBCT (MTN)

JERICHO, Vt. - Like the Seven Dwarfs of fairy tale, or prison chain gangs of old, the soldiers of Mortar Section, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment are used to using pickaxes. During their drill weekend this February, the mortarmen prepared their mortar sites by chopping through frozen dirt and rock. They are doing this in preparation for their Annual Training at Fort Polk, La., later this year.

“The key is to ensure the base plate is properly seated with the ground,” said Spc. Anthony Grant a mortarman with the unit, referring to the main base on which the mortar will sit. “That way, we can be sure that our mortars are fired in a safe and consistent manner.”

Grant, like the rest of these mortarmen, considers site preparation an essential skill to retain. While it may not be as flashy as ‘hanging’ the mortar, making sure your weapon fires safely and in the right direction is one of the most important parts of the process.

The classic scene in the movie ‘Stripes’ comes to mind when watching these men work. In the snowy woods of Vermont this weekend, it isn’t bumbling Capt. Stillman coming through to assess his troops. Instead, Brig. Gen. Steve Cray, the adjutant general of the Vermont Guard, and Command Sgt. Maj. Forrest Glodgett, the state’s command sergeant major came to ensure the soldiers of this mortar section are working to standard. After all, being proficient in the use of this weapon is key when mobile artillery is needed.

“Mortars are key in this Infantry Brigade,” said Glodgett. “To be able to provide artillery to the battlefield in a quick, mobile fashion is what this section is all about.”

Glodgett knows this from experience. A former mortarman himself, Glodgett remembers a time when he and his team would walk miles carrying heavy components in order to be able to provide artillery support.

“While the larger guns are great, they

require much more effort to move and set-up,” said Glodgett.

With the holes chopped to an adequate depth, it’s time to actually set-up the guns. This is something drilled into the minds of these soldiers since their initial training and entry into the Army, and it is plain to see how well they know their equipment. Using Defense Advanced GPS Receivers, called DAGARS, as well as sight poles and scopes, these mortars are checked, re-checked, and checked once more for good measure. This is a training mission and it’s important to ensure the entire section knows how to set the mortars properly.

“It can’t be overstated how important proper alignment is when setting up these mortars,” said Sgt. 1st Class Cantrese Adams, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the mortar section. “In a situation where you have limited rounds, and those you are supporting might have even less time; accuracy and proficiency is everything.”

Indeed, missing your mark can have disastrous consequences. This is why, before any rounds are fired, a range safety officer working for Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, or CEATS, must be present during the initial round of fire. This RSO ensures that the mortars are aligned correctly, and the rounds aren’t hurtling toward something or someone they shouldn’t.

As mentioned before, the key aspect of any mortar section is mobility. When the battalion commander requires artillery support, and time is of the essence, it is the mortarman that answers the call.

“Our inherent ability to be organic and mobile allows us to be wherever the commander needs us to be,” said Adams. We may be part of HHC, but our assets belong directly to him [battalion commander].”

While some may think the road to the unit’s Annual Training at Fort Polk, La. is six months long, the members of the mortar section can only train on drill weekends. This means, in reality, there is less than a weeks worth of hands-on training before heading to the Joint

Readiness Training Center. These soldiers are acutely aware of their time limits and are utilizing all the daylight they have at their disposal to ensure their abilities and weapons are ready for whatever comes their way.

PHOTOS, LEFT TO RIGHT:

Dirt flies as Cadet James Montgomery swings a pick axe to chip through the frozen earth to set a 81mm Mortar base plate(U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt Heidi Kroll)

Spc. Dante Stumpo attaches the M4 Mortar sight to the tube of the mortar so that he can target the 81mm system for a live fire exercise. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Heidi Kroll)

Sgt. Ned Davis shows fellow mortarman Sgt. John Mazza how to remove the protective wrapping from a mortar round. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Heidi Kroll)

Sgt. Mike Balch confirms the line of sight is set in by Spc. Tristan Woodward ensuring that the 81mm Mortar system fires at the correct target.(U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Heidi Kroll)

BELOW: Spc. Dante Stumpo, a works with fellow Mortarman Spc. Anthony Grant to ensure the 81mm Mortar System is level during a live fire exercise. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Heidi Kroll)



Gear Mountain

New

New Mountaineering Kits issued to Army Mountain Warfare School

Story by Staff Sgt. Sarah Mattison,
State Public Affairs



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Bradley Cormier, a supply sergeant with the Army Mountain Warfare School inventories the newly received Army Mountaineering Kits (AMKs) at the Ethan Allen Firing Range, Jericho, Vt., February 19, 2014. The AMK which was developed to help Soldiers traverse cliffs and mountain faces as well as cross snow and ice, will be fielded in four different kits tailored to meet different mission requirements. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah Mattison)

JERICHO, Vt. - Mountaineering harness, rope, webbing, belay devices, carabineers, ascenders and more ... All of these items will become standard issue, as part of the new Army Mountaineering Kit (AMK). The AMK was issued to the Army Mountain Warfare School (AMWS) in Jericho, Vermont, as the first of four Army schoolhouses scheduled to receive the kits.

"It's important to be fielded the equipment that the army at large will be using, so that we can incorporate it here into our training at the AMWS," said Lt. Col. John Guyette, commander of the Army Mountain Warfare School. "By incorporating it into our training programs, soldiers will go back to their units and see the exact same equipment and be able to safely train and operate with the exact same equipment being fielded to their units."

Continuity of equipment gives soldiers an enhanced capability of understanding what is in the system.

"The AMK uses standardized equipment that has been determined to be safe, meeting American Mountain Guides Association standards," said 1st Sgt. Nathan Chipman, the first sergeant for the AMWS in Jericho. "It puts the safe

equipment and right equipment in the soldier's hands, where they have been adapting and using makeshift kits over the last few years."

The Army Mountaineering equipment received by the AMWS incorporates three different types of kits. The High Angle Mountain Kit (HAMK), the Assault Climber Training Kit (ACTK), and the Snow and Ice Mobility Kit (SIMK).

The basic high angle mountaineering kit, which would be issued to a maneuver company in an Infantry Brigade Combat Team, gives the soldiers an ability to use a basic harness, ropes and associated equipment to maneuver in mountainous terrain, urban environments as well as other specialty environments such as well caches. The assault climber kit is used to set the protection in the climbing lanes or the necessary means to move the entire unit through an area that needs specialty equipment. Soldiers dealing with a range of environmental factors can utilize the snow and ice mobility kit, specifically while operating in austere conditions.

"It's important that as these soldiers get this equipment, they have a resource here at the army mountain

warfare school to get trained properly and safely," Chipman said. "They need to be able to return to their units and to teach a basic utilization of the equipment. This will ensure that the soldiers that want to come here or that can come here, will have an opportunity to advance through our courses, whether it be the Basic Mountaineering course, the Assault Climber course or in our soon to be approved Mountain Planners, Mountain Riflemen's and Rough Terrain Evacuation courses.

The AMKs will next be delivered to the remaining schoolhouses; the Northern Warfare Training Center in Alaska, the 5th Ranger Training Battalion in Georgia, and the Army Special Forces School in Colorado. Over the next 18 months, the Army will issue the kits to both active duty and National Guard units across the country.

VTANG Firefighters Spring into Action

Written by Airman 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz, 158th FW

It's never good to hear the sounds of breaking glass and twisting metal at the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) base. Unless those sounds are caused by the VTANG Fire Department conducting accident response training exercises.

Members of the department took advantage of the warmer weather to conduct outdoor training exercises during their April drill weekend. Tech. Sgt. Andrew Sheldon, Firefighter and Assistant Chief of Training, explained that the department has a strict schedule for their training exercises.

"We can't always train outside because of the weather," said Sheldon, a long time member of the VTANG and a full time staff member at the 158th Fighter Wing's Fire Department. "In the winter we balance that with classroom and technical skill trainings so that when we are able to work outdoors we can get the most out of it."

For training to be effective, it is always treated as if it were a real situation. With that in mind, Sheldon placed a call to the department to "report" the car accident. VTANG firefighters responded within minutes, arriving on site and beginning the rescue process.

To prepare for the exercise the department had not only flipped the car upside-down, but had also placed two training mannequins inside. After stabilizing the wreck to prevent further injury, these "survivors" were treated with care, safely extracted and loaded into an emergency vehicle for transport.

Maintaining a regular training schedule is essential for the department because they also respond to emergencies outside of the base, such as a semi-truck accident on I-89 in June of 2013. The truck had gone off a bridge and the VTANG team had to rescue the driver from the wreckage from inside a ravine, adding an additional level of complexity and danger to the work.

The VTANG department has a large staff of permanent members, and many of the traditional Guardsmen also work in a civilian fire department off base. Senior Airman Chris Brown, a Firefighter, said that it is essential for every member to be fully proficient in all roles.

"All the jobs we do tie together," Brown said. "And we never know what position we might need to fill on a given day. It can be challenging to fit the training into a drill weekend, but we focus on the crucial aspects of

the training so that we can be ready if we're called on."

In addition to the skills and capabilities required of any fire department, including vehicle extrication and EMT services, the VTANG fire staff members are also required to be able to ensure the safety of the aircraft, pilots and air field. They also provide support to the Burlington International Airport which shares the runway with the VTANG.

During upcoming summer drills the department will also be working on a pilot egress exercise, which involves safely extracting the pilot from the fighter jet. Sheldon commented that the additional factors required when working with the jet make the extraction more complicated.

While the VTANG firefighters often respond to calls off base and work with local departments, the training conducted during monthly drills is unique to the Fighter Wing.

"We do have certain training goals we need to meet," Sheldon said. "But the important thing is to ensure safety and improve our skills. We have a very strong team and they bring a lot of knowledge to the table but we can always go one step further, be that much better at what we do."



(U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Jeffrey Tatro)

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Weapons Familiarization

Story by Sgt. Ashley Hayes, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (MTN)

JERICO, Vt. - Wind-blown snowdrifts set the scene for another cold day at range 7-1. Two Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) soldiers took part in their first range experience March 15, 2014, at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt. The firing points, etched out of the snow, provided some protection from the wind as it whipped at the soldiers moving around the range.

This was a unique opportunity for the RSP soldiers to fire and familiarize with the weapons and to experience how a military range operates. The soldiers were given an in-depth safety briefing regarding proper weapon handling and safety so they would feel prepared and confident. Ensuring soldier safety and proper weapons handling, are top priorities of the Vermont Army National Guard.

Staff Sgt. Andrew Courville, a Vermont Army National Guard recruiter, reflected on the experience level of his soldiers, considered each person's individual needs, and the benefits the training would bring.

"One of the RSP soldiers here has already been through basic and has already fired all of these, but the other one has not. I think it'll give him a good step forward before he ships off for basic," said Andrew Courville.

One of those soldiers, who conveyed confidence in her training, is Pvt. Sierra Courville, an intelligence analyst, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 186th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain).

Sierra Courville attended basic training at Fort Leonard Wood last summer. Thus, firing a weapon is not new to her, but firing at a cold Vermont military range is. For her, this provided familiarization, not only with the M4, but also within a different learning



environment.

"This was a lot more relaxed and a lot colder," said Sierra Courville.

Sierra Courville will attend Advanced Individual Training (AIT) in July, before joining her unit in the fall. Sierra Courville has been in the RSP program throughout the last year and will continue to drill with RSP until graduation from AIT. RSP attendance is required partly so soldiers maintain their military bonds and accountability is kept.

"It taught me a lot of things I needed to know before I went to basic, so that I could spend more time focusing on other things," said Sierra Courville.

Firing the M4 is also not something new for Pvt. Christian Jarvis, a newly-enlisted soldier in the Vermont Army National Guard.

"It's like an everyday kind of thing," said Jarvis.

He said this is because he frequently fires the M4 with his father and at

ABOVE: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brian Gagne, an electronics warrant officer with Bravo Company, 186th Brigade Support Battalion, fires down-range with his M4 weapon March 15, 2014, at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt. (Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Ashley J. Hayes)

the Public Safety and Criminal Justice Program at Randolph Technical Career Center. However, the atmosphere at a military qualification range provided a different experience.

Jarvis described the experience as "more controlled." He said the "put in the ammo and shoot" experience with his father plays out differently than the "tell you what to do next" military firing range mentality.

This is just the beginning of his military career. Jarvis will be attending basic training at Fort Benning this summer. Jarvis said having practice on the range would

help him be more prepared when he has to qualify during basic training.

Despite the cold weather and a different shooting experience, Jarvis shot 36 out of 40 targets.

Andrew Courville said this was a special opportunity because it's not very often they get to come to the range.

"I brought them to the EST simulator down in Northfield a couple of times but never up to the range like this," said Andrew Courville.

Andrew Courville said he hopes training like this would generate more youthful enlistments. Even though both soldiers had prior experience firing the M4, time at the range helped prepare them for future Vermont National Guard Training.



BELOW: Pvt. Christian Jarvis, an infantry soldier, with Alpha Company, 3-172nd Infantry Regiment, fires his M4 rifle during a range familiarization training. Jarvis shot 36 out of 40 targets, and will use this training to his benefit when he qualifies during basic training in July at Fort Benning, Ga. (Army National Guard Photo By Sgt. Ashley J. Hayes)

ABOVE: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brian Gagne, an electronics warrant officer with Bravo Company, 186th Brigade Support Battalion, awaits further instruction after qualifying with his M4 weapon March 15, 2014, at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt. The weapons qualification was also an opportunity to conduct cold weather familiarization as there was plenty of snow blanketing the range. (Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Ashley J. Hayes)



2013 Best Warrior Competition



The Best Warrior Competition encompasses all of basic soldier skills in an event to find the best junior-enlisted and non-commissioned officer. Soldiers test their mental and physical fortitude in multiple tasks that require use of their military knowledge and bearing.



Biathlon Championships



Story & Photos by Staff Sgt. Sarah Mattison, State Public Affairs

The Vermont National Guard hosted the 39th Annual Chief, National Guard Bureau (CNGB) Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vermont. The six day event featured more than 120 Soldiers and Airmen representing twenty-one states, competing in six different competitions.

“Biathlon is a sport that combines both cross country skiing and shooting. This program focuses on critical soldier skills, physical fitness, discipline, and marksmanship, while incorporating fundamental soldier skills of shoot, move and communicate,” stated Maj. Christopher Ruggerio, Coordinator of National Guard Biathlon.

Biathlon is a unique sport, in that it occurs at opposite ends of the athletic physiology spectrum combining extreme cardiovascular stress with absolute mental focus. Participants alternate between skiing trail loops intended to get their heart rate up, and then transitioning to shooting half dollar sized targets at 50 meters (150ft) while attempting to control their breathing.

Athletes competed in Sprint, Pursuit, Patrol and Relay races, as well as a non-biathlon Super-Sprint race and Shoot-off competition. In order

to participate in the CNGB Biathlon Championships, biathletes had to qualify in either the Eastern, Western or Central Regional competitions.

“What you’re seeing out here, is novices, intermediates, and Olympic athletes participating in this week’s events,” said Ruggerio. “This makes it a great event for our young Soldiers and Airmen, to come out and get advice from our expert athletes.”

Spc. Conrad Roberts, a Soldier with the North Dakota National Guard since 2012, has been competing in biathlon events for the last seven years. He originally enlisted in the National Guard 2 ½ years ago to obtain assistance for his education, but was contacted about competing on the biathlon team due to his experiences with the sport.

“This is one of the biggest competitions of the year, defiantly a culmination of all the hours we put in throughout the year,” Roberts said. “To be competitive in this sport, it requires about 250-300 hours of annual training a year. That’s 6 days a week, 365 days a year.”

For Spc. Gregory Lewandowski, a Soldier with the Wisconsin National Guard, this is his first year competing with the National Guard Biathlon and

he is the lone athlete representing Wisconsin at the CNGB Biathlon Championships.

“There is a great camaraderie here, everybody is helping each other out,” Lewandowski said. “I’ve gotten assistance from the Ohio guys to help get me zeroed on the range and I’m competing on a relay team with members of both North and South Dakota. You really get the sense that National Guard is national.”

Results from the CNGB championship allowed for the selection of an all guard team. These Soldiers and Airmen will represent their states, the National Guard and the U.S. in international competitions.



Results:

Men’s Sprint Race:

- 1st- Staff Sgt. Jeremy Teela, (VT)
- 2nd- Spc. Wynn Roberts, (VT)
- 3rd- Lt. Col. Duncan Douglas, (RI)

Women’s Sprint Race:

- 1st- Maj. Barb Blanke, (UT)
- 2nd- Sgt. 1st Class Erin Graham, (VT)
- 3rd- 2nd Lt. Kristi Ann Laughlin-Hall, (AK)

Junior Men’s Sprint Race:

- 1st- Pfc. Jordan McElroy, (VT)
- 2nd- Pfc. Tadhg Nakada, (AK)

- 3rd- Pvt. Warren Rosholt, (MN)

Men’s Novice Sprint Race:

- 1st- Lt. Col. Matthew Schell, (AK)
- 2nd- Sgt. Alex Goldfarb, (WY)
- 3rd- Spc. Gregory Lewandowski, (WI)

Women’s Novice Sprint Race:

- 1st- Spc. Ashley Anderson, (MO)
- 2nd- Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer Akoa, (ME)
- 3rd- Sgt. Teddi Jerles, (OH)

Men’s Pursuit Race:

- 1st- Spc. Wynn Roberts, (VT)
- 2nd- Staff Sgt. Jeremy Teela, (VT)
- 3rd- 1st Lt. Blake Hillerson, (ND)

TOP LEFT: U.S. Army Pfc. Jordan McElroy, a member of the Vermont National Guard, competes in the junior men’s sprint biathlon race. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah Mattison)

LEFT: U.S. Army Pfc. Wynn Roberts, a member of the Vermont National Guard, prepares to shoot during the senior men’s pursuit race. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah Mattison)

Women’s Pursuit Race:

- 1st- Maj. Barb Blanke, (UT)
- 2nd- Sgt. 1st Class Erin Graham, (VT)
- 3rd- 2nd Lt. Danielle Bean, (VT)

Junior Men’s Pursuit Race:

- 1st- Pfc. Jordan McElroy, (VT)
- 2nd- Pvt. Warren Rosholt, (MN)
- 3rd- Pfc. Tadhg Nakada, (AK)

Junior Women’s Pursuit Race:

- 1st- Pvt. Elise Putnam, (WA)

Men’s Novice Pursuit Race:

- 1st- Staff Sgt. Jamie Haines, (AK)
- 2nd- Lt. Col. Matthew Schell, (AK)
- 3rd- Spc. Gregory Lewandowski, (WI)

Women’s Novice Pursuit Race:

- 1st- 2nd Lt. Kristi Ann Laughlin-Hall, (AK)
- 2nd- Spc. Ashley Anderson, (MO)
- 3rd- Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer Akoa, (ME)

Team Patrol Race:

- 1st- Vermont
- 2nd- North Dakota
- 3rd- Minnesota

Team Relay Race:

- 1st- Vermont
- 2nd- North Dakota
- 3rd- Alaska

RIGHT: U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Erin Graham, a member of the Vermont National Guard, competes in the senior women’s sprint biathlon race. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah Mattison)

Team Award:

- 1st- Vermont
- 2nd- North Dakota
- 3rd- Minnesota

2014 ALL -GUARD TEAM

- Staff Sgt. Jeremy Teela (VT)
- Spc. Wynn Roberts (VT)
- Lt. Col. Duncan Douglas (RI)
- Staff Sgt. Jesse Downs (VT)
- 1st. Lt. Blake Hillerson (ND)
- Spc. Conrad Roberts (ND)
- Maj. Eric Nordgren (ND)
- Lt. Col. Paul Peterson (MN)
- Maj. Daniel Morken (UT)
- Sgt. Andy Wilkens (CO)
- Pfc. Jordan McElroy (VT)
- Pfc. Tadhg Nakada (AK)
- Pvt. Warren Rosholt (MN)
- Maj. Barb Blanke (UT)
- Sgt. 1st Class Erin Graham (VT)
- 2nd Lt. Kristi Ann Laughlin-Hall (AK)
- 2LT Danielle Bean (VT)
- TSgt Danelle Card (ND)
- PVT Elise Putnam (WA)





Somewhere.....In the Wood line

He is nearly impossible to see from the field looking into the wood line. He stands completely upright and waits for his shot. He entered the woods a couple minutes ago and as soon as he wanted to disappear, he did. Pulling a vanishing act in the blink of an eye, he prepares for his shot. Minutes later, the crack of a rifle explodes and his target is hit.

“The primary and secondary mission of a sniper is to deliver long-range precision rifle fire on key targets, select targets and targets of opportunity,” said Spc. Stephen Trombly, attached to A Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain).

Trombly is a United States Army Sniper in the Vermont Army National Guard. To him, sniping is more than just a job.

“Sniping is an art,” said Trombly. “In India ... there was a bird called the Snipe. If you could shoot that bird out of the sky, you were known as a Sniper. In other words, it’d be like a humming bird for us.”

Being able to shoot such a small bird out of the sky would be no easy task. This is why snipers have some of the hardest marksmanship training in the world.

“There’s a lot of steps to becoming a U.S. Army sniper and it’s not just because you can go deer hunting

out in the woods,” said Trombly. “You have stalking; you have target detection, range estimation, actually being able to shoot and using your common sense and your skills outside of that.”

Many people don’t make the cut at sniper school. Trombly was one of nine that finished from his class of 33. That’s a completion rate of just over 27%.

“Sniper school is not fun, it is not a game,” said Trombly. “You have to get to the mindset that every day you can fail, everyday you can go home or as they say, ‘You’re going back to the house.’ They’ll get you up every morning, smoke you every day, they want to make sure if you ever were put into a hostile environment that you as a soldier and as a sniper ... that you will be trained to do what you need to do in a combat or life situation.”

Trombly says his body wanted to shut down every day, but he knows his training is essential to his success and will make him ready for the future.

“You have to go out there and be prepared for the environment whether it be snow or summer,” he said. “Whether it be 120 degrees, or it be the mountains of Afghanistan or the bushes of Haiti it doesn’t matter. Wherever the government sends you, you have to be prepared for that and

that’s just one of the many things that when you go out to be a sniper, it’s not just putting on some camouflage and walking into the woods.”

For a sniper, cover and concealment are some of those many things he has to be prepared for. If a sniper is seen, their mission is compromised and they may not be able to take that shot on key targets.

“When you’re looking at something you know what you’re kind of looking



for, said Trombly. “If you’re looking for me, I’m going to have to try and trick your eyes.”

Shine, contrast of background, or even dust, which is the number one target indicator in the world, can give away a snipers position. Trombly starts his concealment process as soon as his mission starts.

“I call it grocery shopping,” he said. “When you get off a truck, you take as much stuff as you can; grasses, leaves, and you tie it to your ghillie suit. When that’s done you crawl out and you find what’s called a ‘vegblock.’”

A ghillie suit is camouflage clothing worn to resemble the natural environment a sniper is in. Similar to a hunters camouflage, but usually with added burlap strips in order to attach natural camouflage elements.

A vegblock is vegetation that will offer him concealment from being seen, but will still allow him to fire rounds on his target.

“You find a loophole in that Vegblock that you can shoot through,” said Trombly. “After that you step off from that piece of shrubbery, or bush or tree, or whatever it is and you want to take pieces of that bush or bush around it that looks like that and tie it into your upper body. That way you look like that bush from a distance and the reason you set yourself back

is because when you pull the trigger all the stuff that is coming out of your muzzle will make the bush move and that’s called ‘tossed salad.’”

It’s the attention to the smallest details that make or break a sniper. Trombly doesn’t just perform diligently as a sniper; he brings it to his civilian career as well. He works as a ballistic technician at the Revision Factory in Newport, Vt. His duties there are to test the quality of helmets produced by firing bullets into them. This shows him well made the helmets and the impacts that they can take. If they don’t meet the standard, engineers must find and correct the deficiencies. The job seems so different, but there are many still many similarities.

“When I come here I take what I learned from sniper school and I apply it,” Said Trombly. “I know how to reload bullets; I learned that at sniper school. I know what penetration is. I know what the muzzle velocity consists of for each weapon system. I know powder grains. I know just the simple facts of how to clean a barrel properly.”

The confidence and knowledge gained through the National Guard doesn’t stop when he takes the uniform off, he brings it to work with him.

“When I actually make my shot and I finalize it and I make the helmet

compliant it’s just like taking the final shot as a sniper,” he said. “I have it in. I know what I’m doing. I know my shots are correct. It all adds up in the end. So I believe what I have in the guard I can take it back here.”

There is one trait he holds above all of his training and all of his knowledge, pride.

“I’m honored to wear this ghillie suit and sit beside this flag,” said Trombly as he sat next to the American flag. “And mission dependent that if I went out there, I know that I’m properly trained by the United States Army and the Vermont Army National Guard to complete my mission when I have to.”





Making The Call

Story & Photos by Spc. Roy Mercon, 86th IBCT (MTN) Public Affairs

JERICHO, Vt. -With the road to the Joint Readiness Training Center getting shorter each day, soldiers of the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) are doing all they can to ensure their readiness meets the high standards they set for themselves. This weekend, for example, the soldiers with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment recently participated in training designed to give their scouts and forward observers a better understanding of how to make a Call for Fire at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, March 15.

A call for fire, or CFF, is a concise message prepared by a forward observer, according to Army Field Manual 6-30. The manual states that a CFF is a request for fire, not an order. It must be sent quickly, but clearly enough that it can be understood, recorded, and read back without error.

Sgt. 1st Class Seth Wilkinson, Fire Support NCO for 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment conducted the training. He said the class aims to educate the forward observers on the basics of calling for indirect fire.

“When [the scouts] are operating in the field they may not always be with their direct fire weapons,” said Wilkinson. “They may need to be able

to call on the battalion or FA (Field Artillery) assets in order to engage the enemy with indirect fire at a greater distance than they would be able to with their direct fire.”

The goal, he said, is to ensure that these scouts don’t get themselves into a compromised situation.

He considers using the computerized simulator close enough to the real thing to prepare these soldiers for future operations. At first glance, the projected image displayed by the simulation projector looks like an empty field in the middle of nowhere. Upon further inspection, small vehicles dot the landscape. These are the targets the scouts are attempting to destroy using the skills learned during the instructional portion of the class. In order to accurately aim the weapons of the Field Artillery units, they have to use proper measurement techniques and procedures. Artillery rounds can be devastating, requiring a ‘measure twice, cut once’ approach to ensure minimal collateral damage.

“The trainer is relatively realistic,” said Wilkinson. “Obviously, you can never substitute live rounds in a simulator, however this is as close as you can get to actually firing live rounds.”

It is quite possible these soldiers will have to demonstrate what they have learned soon. At JRTC, the entire 86th IBCT will be involved in war-gaming

simulations, with live rounds thrown into the mix.

“They possibly will [shoot rounds] live at JRTC,” said Wilkinson. “Certainly, I foresee them having to do that. “

The 86th IBCT has been training on various tactics, techniques and procedures for the past few years, with a focus on demonstrating their abilities at JRTC this summer.

ABOVE: Sgt. 1st Class Seth Wilkinson, Fire Support NCO for 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment takes questions during training designed to give their scouts and forward observers a better understanding of how to make a Call for Fire.

BELOW: Maps and binoculars used during a Call for Fire class.



VTANG Welcomes Wing Chaplain

Written by Airman 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz, 158th FW

Early in his life Maj. Michael Medas, a Priest in the Roman Catholic Church, knew that he wanted to devote himself to helping others. Initially he was only planning to use his seminary studies to provide a foundation to his service to other people no matter what career path he chose. While there he was struck by the realization that the seminary and the priest hood was the perfect fit for his life.

“The way I describe it is like a favorite sweater,” Medas said. “It was the right fit, not just right but also comfortable.”

Medas continued his education at Saint John’s Seminary in Brighton Mass., his home state, and in 1986 began work in the Air Force Chaplain Candidate program. The program functions much like an ROTC scholarship; this allowed him to continue his education while serving military installations and their members. He was officially ordained in 1988 and became an active member of the Air Force Chaplain Corps. He also continued his studies, attending Gallaudet University where he earned a Master’s Degree in social work with a focus on helping the deaf and hard of hearing.

As a military Chaplain Medas provides religious services to all Air Force personnel. He has worked with faiths including Catholicism, Judaism and non-faith beliefs such as Atheism. The primary goal of an Air Force Chaplain is to support all members of the Air Force not only in their spiritual or religious needs but also in their personal lives.

“My experience as a Chaplain is that if you respect another person’s per-

spective you will be treated the same. In over a decade of service in the Air Force I have never had anyone not respect my perspective in return.”

Medas first came to the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) as a visitor in late 2012. During the visit he was impressed by the community and the people he met. When a position opened he was excited to take on the role as the base Chaplain.

Tech. Sgt. Daniel Gillis serves as one of the Chaplain Assistants in the VTANG and is working towards becoming a Chaplain himself. He is excited to be working with Medas.

“He’s very forward thinking,” Gillis said. “He’s been very clear as a leader and a Chaplain, he listens to everyone’s input and uses that feedback when he makes decisions. The communication in our office has been fantastic and we’re all very eager to see what we’ll accomplish as a team.”

Joining the VTANG has been a reaffirmation for Medas. He spoke on how welcoming the base members have been. There is a very strong feeling here of how much people want to serve their country and their community.

“There has never been a moment where the community was lacking,” Medas said. “Every question I’ve asked, any help I’ve needed, people have gone the extra mile. To have that happen so consistently across the base, it really highlights the strength of the VTANG.”

One of the few challenges Medas has faced in his career is simply the issue of time. By nature, he admits, Chaplain work is conducted on an individu-

al basis and finding time to meet and connect with all members of a base can be difficult.

“One of my goals,” Medas said, “is for people to hear that their Wing Chaplain acknowledges there are many different ways to approach spirituality and religion, and for them to be comfortable coming to our office for any of their needs.”

To help make that possible, Medas and the VTANG Chaplain office have set up a new schedule, what they call the visitation schedule, allowing time for the Chaplains and their assistants to visit all the offices on base simply to connect with members unofficially. He hopes that this will remind members that the Chaplains are not present only for spiritual needs but for personal guidance as well.

When Medas speaks of other faith groups, and of people in general, it is very obvious that they and their beliefs are valuable to him. He appreciates that part of his role in the Air Force is to help with spiritual resilience as a whole, and his goal for the VTANG is ensure people are aware of the role of the Chaplain office and to spread the message that their door is always open.

“In 26 years as a priest,” Medas said, “what I’m always humbled by is that life is always more complex than we know. That sense of having respect and patience for one another, because you never know what someone is carrying with them, a joy or a sorrow. That’s the gift that priesthood has given me, that people are able to share their lives with me.”

Guerrier Nordique

Into the Arctic Circle as an “Arctic Warrior”



1

12 Soldiers from the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) joined the 35th Canadian Regiment in Northern Canada for Guerrier Nordique 14. Guerrier Nordique translates from French to English as “Arctic Warrior.” The exercise was strenuous with temperatures dropping to -76° Fahrenheit.



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1. Soldiers from the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) prepare a bivouac site, March 2, 2014 on Baffin Island, which is located in the Arctic Circle. U.S. Soldiers train alongside their Canadian counterparts during an exercise named Guerrier Nordique.

2. Staff Sgt. Steve Jennings, a Soldier from the Army Mountain Warfare School disassembles a tent at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier in preparation for the trip to Baffin Island, March 1, 2014.

3. 1st Sgt. Todd Gagnon, a Soldier from the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), lights a camp stove at a bivouac site on Baffin Island, March 2, 2014. Gagnon is the group Non-Commissioned Officer in charge of U.S. Forces during the Guerrier Nordique exercise.

4. Staff Sgt. Taylor Ward, a medic with the Army Mountain Warfare School, helps set up a tent at a bivouac site on Baffin Island, March 2, 2014.

5. Sgt. 1st Class Peter Jennings, a Soldier from the Army Mountain Warfare School, prepares some equipment on Baffin Island in the Arctic Circle, March 3, 2014.

6. Soldiers from the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) set-up their bivouac site in the Arctic Circle, March 3, 2014.

Photos By Sgt. 1st Class Jason Alvarez, 172nd PAD

High Ropes Steep Slopes and Conquering the Mountain

By Sgt. Ashley J. Hayes,
172nd Public Affairs Detachment

The Army Mountain Warfare School pushed on with training as usual in the mountains of Vermont, Castle Rock to be specific, June 14-15, 2014 at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt. The wooded environment and rocky terrain provided the perfect setting for the training the students would embark on throughout the weekend.

"The bulk of the training is outside," said Sgt. 1st Class Bill Jolly, an Instructor at the Army Mountain Warfare School.

The students began their ruck march up Castle Trail to the training site early Saturday morning to take advantage of the outdoor classroom. The class often travels on foot to various training sites during the two-week course. It is also encouraged because of this, that students come to the course in good physical shape.

"There's a lot of variable terrain and you're carrying around a decently heavy ruck and you're rucking up mountains, nothing too crazy, but it can be tough on a [soldier]," said Staff Sgt. Emlyn Jones, a part-time instructor at the Army Mountain Warfare School.

Saturday morning was dedicated

to learning how to make a transport tightening system, or high line, which can be used to traverse over a river when other routes are not feasible. The students learned how to build the high line in three separate stages and practiced building each stage three times to create muscle memory. This created valuable learning time as the students will be tested in a few days with only 12 minutes to accurately build the system.

Training can change at a moments notice based on the weather and the ability of the students, said Jolly. Originally climbing was on the agenda for Saturday, but the rainy weather caused a safety concern. That didn't stop the class from completing the climbing portion of the course on Sunday, which was dedicated to learning how to ascend and descend the steep rock face.

This was an important day because it would be the only opportunity for the students to experience climbing rock, said Sgt. 1st Class Max Rooney, an Instructor at the Army Mountain Warfare School.

He also explained the importance of climbing without gloves and feeling the rock against bare hands.

Students, with the Army Mountain Warfare School Basic Course, complete their foot march up castle trail, June 14, 2014, at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt. The basic course is physically demanding requiring students to travel on foot to many of the training activities. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Ashley J. Hayes)



U.S. Army Sgt. Dave Hetu, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Specialist with the 21st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company (WMD), and Student at the Army Mountain Warfare School, climbs up the rock face, June 15, 2014, at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt. The training consisted of ascending and descending on five lanes of varying difficulty. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Ashley J. Hayes)

"Any time that there's another material in between you and the rock there's more of a potential to fall," said Rooney.

The students put on their equipment and grouped into three-person teams to complete five different climbing lanes of varying difficulty. The lanes were anywhere from 30 to 60 feet with some shorter one's presenting more of a technical challenge. An instructor was placed at each of the five lanes to ensure safety and to guide the students as they traversed up the rock face.

"It seems simple enough, but actually it's quite challenging," said Staff Sgt. Nhat Nguyen, a Student at the Army Mountain Warfare School.

Nguyen said he found it challenging to figure out where to place his feet. However, he said the instructor's advice as he was climbing up the rock face helped him to overcome that challenge and successfully reach the top. He said he is anxious to bring back the knowledge he has learned at the school to his unit.

"I will enjoy the time I have here and make the best of it, and I will bring the knowledge back with me," said Nguyen.

Spc. Tyler Overman, an Infantryman with Charlie Troop 105th Cavalry, and Student at the Army Mountain Warfare School, ascends a near vertical portion of Castle Rock, June 15, 2014 at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt. Overman used the skills he learned during the classroom portion, and trust in his classmates acting as his safety's, to successfully climb the rockface. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Ashley J. Hayes)



A Soldier of Another Breed

Story By Spc. Roy Mercon, 172nd PAD

FORT POLK, La. - Man's best friend. Fido. Spot. Whatever you may call them, having a dog by your side is as American to some as apple pie. And while a rifle may be a Soldier's best friend in most cases, for Sgt. Alfonzo Sanchez, his best friend is Cuki, a military working dog (MWD). Cuki and her handler Sanchez are active duty Soldiers sent to Louisiana to assist National Guardsmen participating in a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center here at Fort Polk.

Led by the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), this year's JRTC rotation is one of the biggest in history, including 19 state National Guard units, in what is known as a Decisive Action Training Environment.

An MWD handler is "responsible for the care and training of his or her service dog, which contributes to combat operations abroad and installation security at home by providing target odor detection (explosive/drug)," according to Goarmy.com, a site describing the various jobs a prospective Soldier might take.

Cuki and Sanchez are considered assets during the various scenarios that are slated to take place during the rotation. "We are going to be utilized just as we would be in theater," said Sanchez. "If the commander requests us, we will be there to help."

Having a canine serve the needs of Soldiers is nothing out of the ordinary. In ancient times, larger breeds would be outfitted with suits of armor containing spiked collars and sent into battle to cause

grievous bodily harm to the enemies of their masters. Once modern weapons rendered this strategy useless, the practice was all but abandoned.

Officially coming into U.S. military service during World War I as a way to pull carts carrying guns or wounded, their usefulness has since expanded. Relying on the dog's enhanced senses to provide support in detecting various substances has become an essential part of today's military. Now, a working dog in a military role might include law enforcement, drug and explosives detection, search and rescue, or tracking.

Cuki is a German Sheppard trained to patrol and search for explosives. Sanchez and Cuki have been together for three years, deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan, and have had missions protecting the President, Vice President, and the Secretary of Defense.

In the military, the ones responsible for a working dog are called handlers. "To say I'm the master takes away from the dog's position on the team," said Sanchez. "It's tradition to say that the dog is always one rank above the handler." This gives a sense of teamwork and mutual respect between the two.

"Cuki will listen to no one but me," said Sanchez. This is key in situations where clear and concise communication is essential. For example, if Cuki and Sanchez are on patrol with a squad, and Cuki identifies something that could be a potential explosive, Sanchez is confident that she will not hesitate when issued commands to return.

This keeps Cuki and the rest of the Soldiers as safe as possible.

In order to be able to work with a dog like Cuki, rigorous training must first be completed. Job training for Military Working Dog handlers requires 18 weeks of learning how to care for, handle and train a MWD. The first seven-week phase covers on-the-job instruction and teaches police methods and techniques for dog handling. The second phase of instruction is an 11-week course that provides basic instructions on the application of Military Working Dog utilization and employment capabilities. Phase II teaches basic obedience, controlled aggression, first aid, principles of conditioning, building searches, scouting, detection, and daily care and grooming of assigned MWD, according to Goarmy.com.

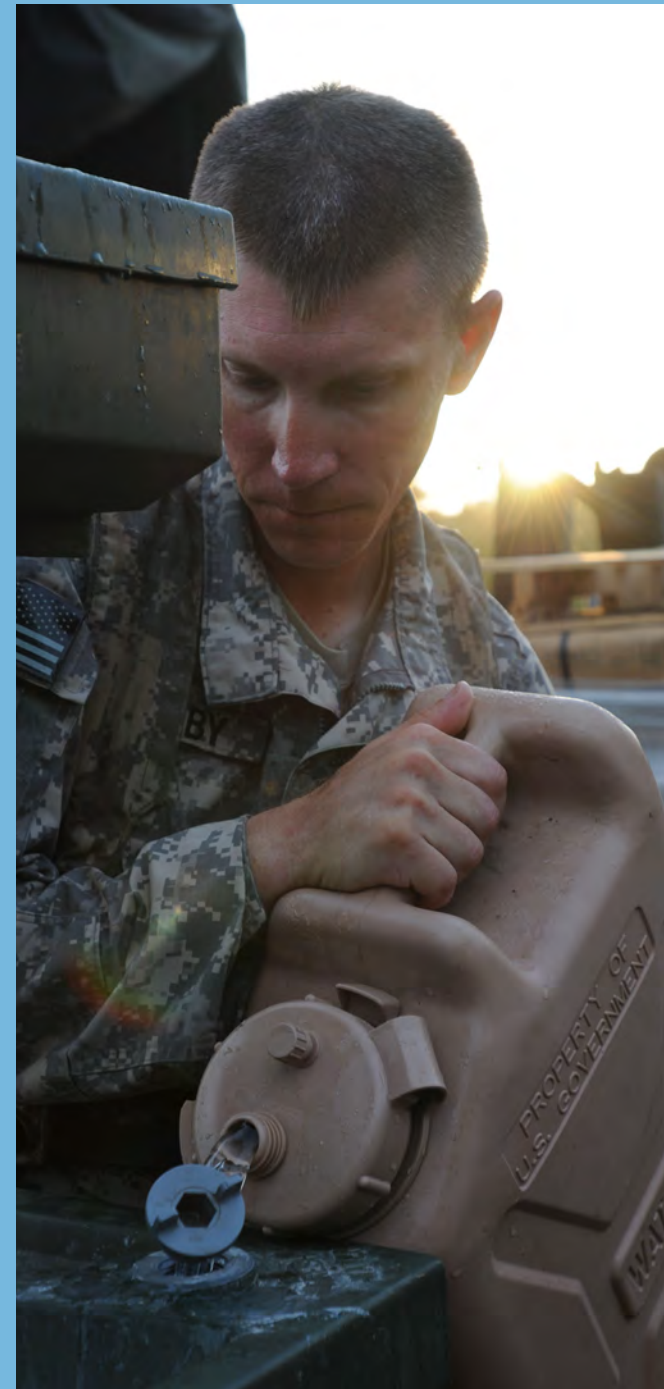
Once Cuki reaches the end of her time in service, either through health concerns or age, Sanchez hopes to adopt her. After being together for three years, two deployments, and countless other missions in the states, separating the two would be a difficult task.

"[Cuki] is seven right now, but she's healthy as a horse," said Sanchez. "I'm leaving the army soon, and while I don't hope for her to become unhealthy and discharged, I still hope to adopt her. If she's healthy enough, then hey, let her keep working. If not, I'll take her home, sure."



JRTC Snap Shots

Photos By Sgt. Heidi Kroll, 172nd PAD



Alpha Battery *Grows* Their Family

Medical Training

Story by Spc. Roy Mercon, 172nd PAD

FORT POLK, La. - Most of the Soldiers participating in the 'Decisive Action Training Environment' rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, La. did not have the choice to attend. But one Soldier in Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment is as new as they come.

Pvt. Glenn Butts, a gunner from Raynham, Mass., did not have to come to Louisiana. As a recent graduate from Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training, he is a brand-new member of the Battery, and was exempt from this year's annual training. Yet, Butts was eager to serve Massachusetts and meet his new family, so he volunteered.

He did not have to come down to this particular training," said Sgt. Douglas Evans, a senior gunner in Alpha Battery. He received a call from the unit, asking if he would like to join us on this, and he volunteered."

"The first day wasn't that bad," said Butts. "Everyone took me in like a son. I'm a young kid at 19; everyone else is 25 or older. They took me in and showed me everything. It wasn't bad at all. It was like a new family."

Alpha Battery, a unit belonging to the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) came to Louisiana to support advancing troops on the mock battlefield set up for the more than 21 states participating in the exercise. Leadership from all over the military came to witness parts of the rotation, including Gen. Frank Grass, Chief of the National Guard Bureau. So far, all indications point towards a rousing success for the brigade.

For Butts, just getting to know the rhythm of his new team has been his focus.

"It's been quite an experience for him," said Evans. "[Butts has] done an outstanding job. He still has that military posture and discipline coming from Basic, and we can see that. He's a very hard-working individual."

So far, Glen loves his new job, even though the time in the hot Louisiana sun can be demanding on these New England Soldiers.

"It's not that bad," he said. "Being up all night, pulling security and stuff like that, I can see how it can get irritating. But overall, I don't mind it, because everyone here supports one another. We know it's going to be bad, but we're here for each other. We just keep each other together. We just work through it."

Throughout high school, Glen always considered joining the Guard to be an option. It wasn't until one day last year that he finally was pushed over the edge and into a recruiting station.

"I wanted to be active and help people," he said. "I remember I was sitting there watching TV and I saw a National Guard commercial come up, and it was like, 'help your community,' so that intrigued me. I like helping out people a lot, so I just walked in to my recruiter's office, and the rest is history."

His parents were split on the decision in the beginning, but have sense come into an agreement that Glen joining was a good decision.

"As I'm sure any mother will agree, hearing your son tell you that he's joining the Army is a scary moment," said Linda Butts, Glenn's mother and a resident of Raynham. "But after he enlisted, and the reality sinks in, I couldn't be prouder."

My dad was behind it 100 percent," said Glenn. "He kept on telling me throughout my senior year of high school, 'hey, join the Army, it's a good thing. It'll make you a man, and just build you up, all that stuff.'"

"Glenn has always wanted a career in helping people," said Linda. "He used to tell me he wanted to be an EMT, now he says he wants to be a firefighter. Becoming a Soldier was a natural thing for him to do. He's always on the lookout for everybody else."

It wasn't until he was shipped out to Basic, and he was in the thick of his training did he realize the full weight of his decision to become a Soldier.

"I just wanted to do something bigger than myself," he said. "I like it a lot. When I got to basic, and they handed me my M16, and I shot it for the first time [I had never shot a gun before] that was my moment. I realized then that this was the real deal, that I was actually doing this; becoming a Soldier."

Glenn is seriously considering turning his time in the National Guard into a career. He wants to spend at least 20 years serving his country.

By Staff Sgt. Victoria Greenia, 158 FW

While the majority of the Vermont Army National Guard (VTARNG) unit trained in a mock-warzone lovingly referred as "the box" in a 'Decisive Action Training Environment' rotation for the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, La. Other members of the VTARNG augmented during the exercise were standing by to support the in-the-box Soldiers.

Soldiers with the Vermont Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) manned the Joint Aid Station Rear (JASR) in conjunction with the Nebraska Army Guard, providing medical support to nearly 5000 troops participating in the rotation. Training together for two weeks were Army and Air Guard, Reserves, and Active components from 21 states, reinforcing the total force concept for seamless in-theatre integration.

As daily temperatures soared into the 90's with night temperatures offering little respite, the medical group found itself adopting the mantra "Drink water, and then more water." The majority of the non-combat injuries seen at the JASR are heat-related as people from the northern parts of the country acclimate.

In just a little more than two weeks the medical staff had administered to about 500 troops, estimated Lt. Col. Patricia Hammond, a Vermont Army Medical Command nurse case manager who arrived June 15 for her annual training at JRTC. Her job is to carefully follow a soldier from the moment he or she is admitted to any medical station and as long as the line

of duty (LOD) exists.

The JASR is the third tier of the medical care echelon available during the exercise, and Hammond explained that Soldiers in the field are referred first to their unit battalion aid stations or Charlie Company medical for minor injuries. For more serious incidents Soldiers are sent to JASR, and emergency injuries are taken to Fort Polk's Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital (BJACH) with follow-up care conducted back at JASR.

"The way to explain it is to think of the JRTC box as theatre operations, like Afghanistan or Iraq," she said. "Think of the JASR and the BJACH as the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. And think of the VTANG MEDCOM as the MTS (Medical Tracking System) stateside."

Regardless of the severity of the injury or where the Soldier is treated, Hammond said each case is diligently tracked.

"We use a spreadsheet that provides date, name, rank, social, the unit they're with; we track everyone, even if they're active duty or reserve, who comes through here," she said, describing an in-depth tracking system she and a co-worker created while stationed in Afghanistan. "It has what their injury was and whether it was a disease, non-battle injury or a battle injury, the status, and where they are currently stationed. It can also be used to see any trending injuries such as heat casualties or insect bites that medical should be concerned about."

For Hammond, tracking cases

as they go through the medical process doesn't stop at maintaining thorough records. She literally tracks Soldiers, visiting with them at their quarters, hospital, or even back at their detachments in Vermont. Having established a good working relationship with hospital staff here at Fort Polk, her case management includes making rounds to her Soldiers and recommendations for care.

She said when the Soldiers go home, she will still check in with them, even Soldiers who live in other states who may be attached to Vermont units. She acknowledged that not every case manager may be as thorough as she is about the health care process for the troops, but to her it is a priority.

"[I do this] because they're our Soldiers and they're what are important," she emphasized. "They're our bottom line. Soldiers are our biggest asset and we have to take care of them. As medical staff, that's what we do."

The JASR is providing good hands-on training for the medical staff. Although its members aren't down in the mock villages conducting searches or avoiding mock-enemy fire as much as their infantrymen brethren, they are still getting the essential skill set JRTC promotes; learning to merge seamlessly with other units regardless of branch or duty status.

Working alongside of the Vermont medical group is the 313th Medical Company from Nebraska. The unit's main mission is ground ambulance transport, so manning a clinic isn't what the 313th normally does –

however Sgt. Charles Wilkins, a combat medic acting as a team leader while at JRTC, was quick to point out the task is not outside its capabilities and said things are running smoothly thanks to the staff’s professionalism.

As with any operation, there are kinks and sharp edges that need to be smoothed out, he said, but the Vermont and Nebraska medical groups have been working through whatever challenges come their way. For example, supplies are always a concern, he said, but careful monitoring has proved successful and they haven’t run out of any essentials. Also, when field medical units are overrun with patients, the overflow is sent to JASR.

“Sometimes we’re a little overwhelmed. Before noon today we had almost 40 patients,” Wilkins said. “30 patients is a normal number for the entire day. We processed them all in and out relatively smoothly and quickly, giving everyone the aid they needed.”

Wilkins said he has been working closely with the three Vermont doctors at JASR, noting that they respect the skills and knowledge of his team. The doctors welcome the medical technicians’ ideas, observations, and suggestions, which makes it much easier for the groups to integrate and

provide top-notch healthcare.

“Some of our more experienced medics here will come up with a treatment plan and the doctors will look it over and sign it,” he said. “I’ve worked with doctors before who don’t allow us to do anything except follow their plans, but I feel like the doctors here allow us to anticipate their needs and their wants and allow us to carry it out.”

Hammond agreed that the unification of the two groups has gone well, and said that the Nebraska medics are excellent at what they do, working very well with her and the doctors.

“It’s been a close working relationship – which I expected – because the National Guard is one big happy family,” she said. “I’ve never experienced a situation with another National Guard unit that wasn’t very collaborative.”

breakfasts for the troops at the ridge so the those there can eat. He makes sure people who work odd shifts have meals brought to them as well, including aviation assets for the Apaches and Blackhawks. Also on his route are the troops manning the Life Support Area (LSA).

A section of the LSA is the logistical mobility group, which ensures safe travel for the troops back and forth to the range from their living quarters. Here, many of the Soldiers are stepping up to the plate and learning skillsets outside their Military Occupational Specialties to complete the mission.

“We’re a group of misfits that got thrown together as a family,” said Staff Sgt. Patrick Swain, a fuel handler with the 186th Brigade Support Battalion who was in charge of a logistical mobilization group at the ridge. “We got escorted here, thinking it was going to be three days, but it ended up being three weeks.”

Out of the group only three are actual truck drivers; the others are mechanics, a fuel handler, chemical technician, and an intelligence analyst. All are Vermont Guard except one, Sgt. Michael Matlock from the 45th Infantry Brigade in Oklahoma, but many of the Vermont Guardsmen in the group were strangers to each other.

Although the days have given them 90-degree intense heat, supplies have sometimes been limited, and basic amenities for bathing and laundry are portable shower units and buckets, spirits were high. They hung together as a group, laughing as though they were old friends.

“Soldiers are Soldiers, no matter what state you’re from,” Matlock said. “I came in here and integrated pretty easily for being with a state I’ve never been with before.”

Swain said most of the Soldiers who are in ‘the box’ are going to think that manning the LSA was getting off easy for their annual training, and he said that their duties at the ridge were actually quite rigorous; they wake up before 4 a.m. so the trucks can roll out an hour later. By 4:30, all the Soldiers must be ready and have performed the morning preventative maintenance on vehicles. Resources for taking care of the vehicles have to be squared away, and something as simple as refueling one of the large trucks can take more than an hour.

“We had to scramble for assets but we did a really good job coming together as a team and getting the mission completed,” Tucker said, who added that it was only through teamwork that they are able to do their jobs.

The Soldiers’ hard work has not gone unnoticed by some of the other Soldiers that have gone through the LSA for their live-ammo exercise.

Sgt. Stephen Mattison, an infantry squad leader in A. Company, is a Soldier who came for live-fire training. He noticed the attention to detail the drivers gave to them, and said the support groups at Peason went out of their way for rotating elements.

“They’re great,” he said. “Every couple of days they get ice for the coolers. Whatever is left in the cooler they dump in the water buffalo so the water’s a little bit cool for us. They’ve been awesome.”

Up on Peason Ridge

By Staff Sgt. Victoria Greenia, 158 FW

Up on Peason Ridge, a distance away from what’s called “the box,” the field where the Vermont Army National Guard is conducting its Decisive Action Training Exercise, are about two dozen Soldiers supporting live-fire exercises, patterning their eating and sleeping schedules around the schedules of incoming Soldiers. To get the full extent of training, they are taken to the ridge to work with live ammunitions.

On the large parcel of land are mock villages, targets, two mortar firing positions and field artillery positions. First, the troops ‘crawl’, performing leading procedures and practice runs. Once proficient, the ‘walk’ phase includes dry fires and blanks, and finally, they ‘run’, using live ammo to knock the targets down. During the exercise troops use high explosives, white phosphorous and smoke rounds. Adding to the cacophony of noise are circling Apaches and F-15s.

“There’s a lot going on,” Staff Sgt. Joe Johnston, Sergeant of the Guard (SOG) said. “A lot of dangerous stuff.”

The potential for danger is what makes his job so important. He was the man in charge at the ridge to ensure visitors had proper and safe escort and all troops supporting the live fire exercise had food, water, and access to showers.

Johnston’s biggest concern: Making sure people don’t wander into the danger zone. He said it wasn’t like Ethan Allen Firing Range in Jericho, Vermont where there are clearly defined zones, he said; the whole ridge is a live range. Unescorted people could accidentally find themselves driving through impact zones and never know the risk until it was too late. Unexploded ordnance hazards are an additional cause for concern.

His biggest lesson learned: How to delegate.

“I’ve learned I can’t do it all, even though I want to,” he said. “I’ve learned to give responsibilities to other people who can do the jobs I just don’t have time to do, and because of that we get the job done.”

Although the Soldiers, who come from West Virginia, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Mexico and Nebraska rotated their shifts, it’s an unspoken reality that each person is on-call, 24 hours a day. Although activities quiet down in the late afternoon, emergencies can come up, he said, such as the previous night when someone had to be let in quite late so he could fix a Humvee.

Johnston said he does his best to make sure each Soldier gets a break so he or she can catch up on needed sleep.

Every morning, well before dawn, a Soldier takes a van for the 45-minute ride to the dining facility and picks up



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GAT 2.0



The Army's Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness program encourages Spouses to take the Global Assessment Tool (GAT 2.0)

ARLINGTON, Va. Now through October, the Army's Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2) program is conducting a campaign to encourage Army spouses to take the Global Assessment Tool (GAT 2.0).

The GAT 2.0 is a confidential, online, self-assessment tool that provides users with scores for their individual levels of fitness in five dimensions: Family, Social, Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual. The GAT 2.0 is an annual requirement for Soldiers, but there is also a tailored version specifically for spouses.

"A key part of creating a more ready and resilient Army is ensuring our families have the same tools and resources as our Soldiers," said CSF2 Director, Col. Kenneth Riddle. "Since the launch of GAT 2.0 on January 27th, 2014, over 375,000 Soldiers have taken this self-assessment. We want Army spouses to take advantage of this self-awareness tool, as well, and follow-on resources that the GAT 2.0 recommends."

In addition to providing users with their individual scores in the five dimensions of strength, the GAT 2.0 also provides the user's RealAge®, which is a metric that reveals users' biological age compared to their calendar age. Users also receive their results in the Performance Triad of Sleep, Activity and Nutrition.

Self-Awareness is only part of the benefit of taking the GAT 2.0. Self-development is the second part. After receiving their scores based on the GAT 2.0, users are directed to ArmyFit™, which houses the tools and resources for users to increase their resilience and improve their overall resilience and well-being. Each user receives tailored recommendations to help them navigate through the myriad resources available within ArmyFit™.

The strength of the Army comes from its family members. The GAT 2.0 provides spouses with the opportunity to know themselves and stay psychologically strong for themselves and their families. "What makes the GAT 2.0 different from other online surveys is that it's designed specifically for members of the Army family," said Grace Heath, who's been an Army spouse for 17 years. "It gives my spouse and me common ground when we talk about things like strength and resilience."

To keep the recommendations provided by GAT 2.0 relevant, CSF2 plans to keep adding new content and functions to ArmyFit™ over the coming months. These include the ability to sync a personal activity monitor's data with the site to chart a person's daily physical activity, and use that data to compete with other users.

For more information on the GAT 2.0, visit <http://csf2.army.mil>

To take the GAT 2.0, visit <https://armyfit.army.mil>

Emergency Preparedness Month

• Be Prepared, Make a plan!

By LTC Randall Gates

Hello from the Office of Military Support where we think and plan for emergencies on a routine basis. Did you know that September is Emergency Preparedness Month with the Department of Defense? Perhaps you know- or suspect- that military families are, on average, no better prepared for emergencies than their civilian counterparts. Well, the State of Vermont and its Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security would like to help you make a viable plan that helps prepare yourself and your families for myriad disasters that can strike at any time. We are doing this, at the same time, here at Camp Johnson and other Guard locations throughout the State. In fact, our slogan for Emergency Preparedness Month is "Be Prepared, Make a Plan!"

Thinking about emergencies can sometimes be overwhelming. Disasters happen though and being prepared is the best way to cope with the event and protect you and your family. You have seen storms, floods and fires and maybe things such as hazardous waste spills or multi-car accidents; they have all happened in Vermont recently. Planning ahead helps you be safer, more comfortable

and much calmer during a crisis.

Making a plan is the first step in individual and family preparation. The Vermont Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security has excellent resources to help you begin crafting your own plan. Through the use of concise "focus sheets," you can begin to understand those details needed to construct a plan. The focus sheets are part of a guide titled: Just in Case. Be Ready for an Emergency. This publication and additional planning resources are located at www.dps.vermont.gov. These focus sheets include "Getting Started" provides basic preparations steps. "Staying Connected" details how bringing friends and family together and talking about preparation can help. "When the Lights Go Out" describes those things to consider when your home loses power. "If You Need to Stay at Home" provides information on how to further cope with the loss of water and heat. "If You Need to Go" details evacuation considerations such as community shelter information and transportation. "The Your Medicines" focus sheet lets you understand the importance of remembering your medicine during an

emergency. The family pet is covered in "Man's Best Friend." Finally, "Here Comes the Flu" describes myths about the Flu that how families should be well-prepared for this annual event.

Preparation for emergencies is a logical way to take care of yourself and your family. During Emergency Preparedness Month we will push out additional information through our full-time workforce and through the Family Readiness Program. Family Readiness has purchased Quick Series books that cover Emergency Preparedness and they will be free of charge. Please let my Military Support Office know of any concerns or suggestions you have regarding Emergency Preparedness Month. Get started and make your plan.

Vermont Guard-led Rotation at Fort Polk a Success

Story by Spc. Roy Mercon,
172nd Public Affairs Detachment

FORT POLK, La. - The Army is going back to its “Decisive Action Training Environment Rotations” at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk. The Vermont-headquartered 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) is the first and only National Guard unit to take part in a rotation at JRTC this year. With 21 states contributing Army Guard units and assets to the exercise, this is the first rotation of its kind for the National Guard since 2003, when JRTC rotations became mission-oriented to units preparing to deploy.

A decisive-action training rotation is meant to be a “catch-all,” preparing units for any type of mission.

“The Decisive Action Training Environment presents Army forces and our joint partners with a training model that helps leaders identify requirements and shape unit training to build formations capable of fighting and prevailing under a wide range of conditions,” said Lt. Col. William Adler, chief of plans at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. “This capacity to stimulate and train Soldiers and units is essential to generating and maintaining a superior ground combat capability.”

“The Decisive Action Training Rotation was the most challenging and realistic environment where leaders and their Soldiers were tested and had to prove themselves in every action they undertook,” said said Col. John Boyd, commander of the 86th IBCT (MTN). “The sense of accomplishment resulting from operating in austere conditions, long hours, extreme heat and humidity is palpable across the Mountain Brigade.”

In addition to the massive National



A medic with C. Company, 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment renders aid to a police chief while in the midst of a simulated chemical attack during training, June 18, 2014, at Fort Polk, La. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Roy Mercon)

Guard presence, four Army Reserve units, five active component units, Special Operations teams, and Air Force assets are bringing their skill sets and knowledge to bolster the complexity and cohesion of the exercise. Having all components working together in this rotation reinforces an expeditionary capability by incorporating all elements of a modern battle space.

“The Soldiers, who will undergo a decisive-action training rotation, will work alongside Guard special operations forces and active-duty units,” said Brig. Gen. William Hickman, commander of JRTC and Fort Polk in a recent interview with Army Times.

The 86th IBCT finds itself in what’s known as the Army Force Generation

Model, or ARFORGEN. This model, designed for all BCTs, consists of a five-year cycle, which includes a rotation at either JRTC or the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. This model better suits the transitioning needs of the National Guard and military as a whole, because it ensures proper training timetables, and allows families and employers of Guardsmen to better plan for their worker’s absences.

“This is a phenomenal opportunity for the Guard to come here,” said Gen. Frank J. Grass, Chief, National Guard Bureau. Grass came to Fort Polk June 20 to witness the historical rotation firsthand. “What we tried to do is look at a rotation time, making sure that we’ve taken care of families, we’re taking care of employers, we can get



Pv2 Greg Kundicz, a motor transport operator with G Company, 186th Brigade Support Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) assists with lowering a pallet of concertina wire, June 10, 2014, at Fort Polk, La. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Roy Mercon)

the predictability, and so we built a schedule based on a five-year cycle.”

Despite declining resources, the demand for Army forces is on the rise. With more than 70,000 Soldiers deployed today, and about 85,000 Soldiers forward stationed in nearly 150 countries, the need for sufficient training across the Army components is high.

Though this is the first time in more than 10 years, this force has been training together in a way that exceeds the expectations of the National Guard Bureau. Grass says the training they receive here will stay with them throughout their careers.

“They may have met here,” said Grass, “[but] when they walk away from here, they’re going to take back lessons from this brigade combat operation here at JRTC that will pay them benefits for years to come.”

Grass met one-on-one with Soldiers and Airmen across the exercise, to get a sense of how the individual is faring. Overall, he says, the adaptability of these Soldiers allows them to concentrate on the training and properly retain the information they need:

“Most of the Soldiers and Airmen I’ve met out here are from the northeastern part of the United States. It’s a little bit warmer here, so they’ve had to adjust to the heat, and they’ve had to acclimate, and they’ve done that well. Every one of them out here has been extremely engaged and extremely receptive to their [trainer/mentor] comments, and they’re almost to a point where, as soon as something pops up that they need to improve upon, they’re ready to

implement it immediately into the next operation, and that’s what we want to see.”

Maj. Gen. Steven Cray, adjutant general, Vermont National Guard, also came to Louisiana to observe his troops. Like Grass, Cray is very impressed with the 86th, and is proud that Vermont is leading the way in the ARFORGEN model.

“The 86th IBCT (MTN) has been preparing for a number of years in the ARFORGEN cycle,” said Cray. He said the 86th met all of the requirements to go to JRTC for this historic rotation. “The [National Guard Bureau] went to the Army and said, ‘Look, the 86th is the most prepared unit to be able to function at JRTC,’ and here we are.”

“I compare it to any sport ... pick one ... this is the National Championship where your previous performance got you an invitation,” said Boyd. “You go out there and you perform.”

Cray feels the successes of the 86th’s rotation here further validate the readiness of Army National Guardsmen when compared to Active component brethren.

“The Army National Guard has been an integral player in our nation’s defense,” said Cray. “They have deployed alongside our active component, fought in the same battles. To continue to maintain that readiness within the National Guard is extremely important.”

Soldiers from the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) camouflage their humvee in a defensive position, while participating in their Decisive Action Training Environment rotation, Fort Polk, La. , June 15, 2014. (U.S. National Guard Photo by Sgt. Heidi Kroll)



Being able to work alongside their active duty brethren is more important than ever. In a recent interview with Army Times, Col. Dan Williams, a senior planner for Forces Command explained that concrete partnerships between components are now in place:

“If you are an active component BCT, you now have a partnered National Guard BCT. It makes no sense for two components to be training like-events on different sides of the same post. We train together when we can.”

This partnership understanding has aligned the 86th IBCT (MTN) with 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, located at Fort Drum, New York.

Cray feels JRTC continues to preserve the readiness his unit has, regardless of the fact that Vermont isn’t scheduled to deploy anytime soon.

“JRTC is that culmination of putting all those assets together to give our Soldiers the best training they can. There isn’t a deployment scheduled for the 86th right now, but who knows what’s going to happen to this world tomorrow? So, we need to be ready. It’s vitally important that the Reserve component, the Army Reserve, the National Guard and the active components stay as ready as possible.”



A Soldier from the 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment targets his M119 Howitzer in case of a mock attack during a ‘Decisive Action Training Environment’ rotation at Fort Polk, La., June 15, 2014. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Heidi Kroll)



Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Westover, from Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) prepares to move forward and assess an obstacle in the roadway during a “Decisive Action Training Environment” rotation at Ft. Polk, La., June 22, 2014. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Jeffrey Rivard)



Staff Sgt. Christopher Elliott, an infantryman from Nottingham, N.H., with C Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), carries a simulated casualty during a decisive action exercise June 18, 2014. (U.S. Army Photo By Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes)



A Soldier with the 131st Engineer Company attached to the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) attaches a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck to a trailer so that he can move equipment, with his while participating in their Decisive Action Training Environment rotation. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Heidi Kroll)



Staff Sgt. Ryan Gray, an infantryman from Goffstown, N.H., with C Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), takes a retinal scan from a role-player during a decisive action exercise June 18. About 100 soldiers from the New Hampshire Army National Guard’s mountain company are in Fort Polk, La., training with their parent unit, the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain).



First Sgt. Shannon Kulakowski, of Epping, N.H., the first sergeant of C Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), halts a role player at a checkpoint during a decisive action exercise June 18, 2014.

A Soldier with the 131st Engineer Company attached to the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) moves dirt to create artillery emplacement, while participating in their Decisive Action Training Environment rotation. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Heidi Kroll)





Change of Responsibility



State Command Sgt. Maj. Forest Glodgett relinquished his State Command Sgt. Maj. responsibilities to Command Sgt. Maj. Toby Quick at the Green Mountain Armory Camp Johnson in Colchester, Vt., July 19, 2014.



Command Sgt. Maj. Glodgett was selected as the Command Sgt. Maj. of the Vermont National Guard on February 1, 2011. Command Sgt. Maj. Quick is coming from the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) to take over as the highest ranking NCO in the state.





Vermont's New Lakotas Arrive

By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard,
State Public Affairs

Photo by Capt. Brian Williams

The Army Aviation facility in South Burlington, Vt. saw the landing of two new pieces of equipment to help push into the future. Two UH-72-MEPS-Lakota helicopters were flown from Meridianville, Al. to the facility in South Burlington during the weekend.

"The Army retired the OH-58 that we had," said Lt. Col. John Johnston, state aviation officer. "It was the last single engine airframe that the Army was operating, so now all of the aircraft in the Army inventory dual-engine aircraft."

The Vermont crews received two weeks of training on the new operating systems before flying them back home to replace Vermont's OH-58 Kiowa which have been used since the late 80's and early 90's according to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kevin Carvey.

"The helicopters that we replaced were a 1972 and a 1973," said Carvey. "Each of them has had over 7,000 flight hours put on them. We recently got divested of those by sending them to Kentucky where they will be fielded to law enforcement or sold to law enforcement."

7,000 flight hours is roughly the equivalent of flying the helicopter 75 minutes a day, everyday, since Vermont first received the

helicopters.

As time passes and technology progresses, so does the equipment in the helicopters.

"The autopilot is a nice feature," said Johnston as he explains the technology upgrades. "It gives you more options from a crewmember standpoint on how you operate the systems. Because of the range of the aircraft as well, it'll give us a longer on station time and a little more comfortable on station time, so we can focus on the task of searching or whatever the mission is."

The UH-58 Kiowas did not have

autopilot and had to be stabilized in the air by a pilot which was another task to be performed while on missions. This new feature allows crews to focus more on the mission instead of just flying.

"These are, I would say 90% better in as much as the technology that provides the stabilization, it reduces pilot workload," said Carvey. "With this having autopilot and stability systems it's going to reduce the pilot workload and be able to focus more on the mission."

"The main use would be defense support to civil authorities," said

The working controls and monitors of Vermont's new Lakota helicopters. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)



Carvey. "In cases such as Irene, search and rescue, or as other units have done, gone to the southwest border to supplement the border patrol or homeland security. Other units have also been very active during 9/11 or during major events, units will provide security and support in particularly with video footage or with communications because we have a very robust communications suite."

The video footage is one of the most improved upgrades for the new helicopters. A new downlink system is able to send video from the air to the ground effortlessly.

"One of the profits that we will receive by having this aircraft is we are going to be take whatever footage that we get form the air and real time send it to the ground in either a digital or analog signal," said Carvey. "The ground or incident commanders will be able to make decisions with the best situational awareness as a result of this."

Carvey stated this ability has up to a 30 nautical mile range and can send in a higher definition than the former analog system. The ability to relay information from the sky to the ground through multiple agencies is one of

the key goals.

The upgrades and new features didn't happen for just the two helicopters either. The aviation facility itself has seen substantial upgrades that streamline helicopter maintenance.

"It's a great facility," said Johnston with a pride filled smile. "The work stations allow us to plug the aircraft into the work stations and operate all of the systems inside the hangar without having to bring them out, so we can troubleshoot and do any maintenance procedures that are called for without actually bringing the aircraft outside and starting them, so in the Winter months that's a great advantage."

The facility is more efficient, accommodating, and helps cut costs on helicopter use.

"You don't have to move an aircraft to perform a maintenance function," said Johnston. That increases the operational readiness rate and is a great training aid. We can operate all of the systems on the aircraft inside the hangar. It allows soldiers to come in and look at the systems without having to bring them outside and start them which costs money.

While it may be impossible to know how long a helicopter will last.

Carvey believes if the previous aircraft are any indication of life expectancy they should be 40 years or more. The trained soldiers, great working facility, and how well the previous helicopters were taken care of should be a testament to that belief.

UH-72 Lakota landing at the Army Aviation Facility in South Burlington, Vermont after it's flight from Meridianville, Al. (Photo by Capt. Brian Williams.)

