

The KEYSTONE

Spring - Summer 2014

252nd Engineers

- Deploy to Afghanistan to assist with draw down

128th Chem. Co.

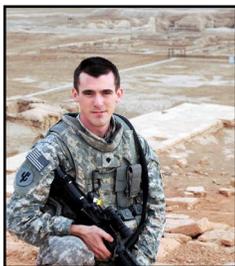
- Soldiers conduct CBRN training at FTIG

End of an Era

- Chaplain Coyle retires after 22 years of dedicated service



Featured Journalists



Sgt. Zane Craig

Sgt. Zane Craig deployed with the 109th MPAD to Iraq from 2010-2011, where he served as a photo journalist in support of numerous units. He has been a part of the 109th MPAD since

his initial enlistment into the Pa. Army National Guard capturing the Soldiers stories and realying them in print and multi-media outlets.



Staff Sgt. Coltin Heller

Staff Sgt. Heller has served the PA Guard as photojournalist with the 109th MPAD since his enlistment in 2006. He deployed with the MPAD in 2010 in

support of Operation New Dawn, where he traveled Northern Iraq to gather the Soldier's stories. He is a graduate of the Basic Multimedia Illustrator course offered at the Defense Information School located on Ft. Meade, Md.

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The KEYSTONE

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Do you have a story to share? *The Keystone* welcomes submissions from readers. Send to the 109th MPAD at kevin.b.askew.mil@mail. The Keystone reserves the right to edit submission selected for the publication.

PENNSYLVANIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

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Command Sgt. Maj. Matt Hensinger

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Commander's Corner

Col. Mark McCormack

213th Regional Support Group



As we conclude training year '14, I feel it necessary to thank every Soldier for their commitment and dedication to both readiness and safety. The last 10 months have enhanced the overall capability of the 213th Regional Support Group, all assigned units, and the individual soldiers in the command. Deployments remain an ongoing priority for our formation and we continue to be a leader in the Domestic Response missions in the Commonwealth. The senior leaders of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard continually acknowledge your individual efforts and sacrifices and I am always proud to be on point for the organization.

As we approach the next training year we sadly say goodbye to the 228th Engineer Company and the 103rd Engineer Battalion. Both organizations and assigned Soldiers have proven again and again to be essential parts of our overall formation. During their affiliation with the 213th RSG they have deployed overseas, responded to the needs of our state, and sent soldiers to neighboring states to assist during times of need. Their lineage is one of the finest in the U.S. Army and I am personally proud to have served with the men and women of both organizations.

As Command Sgt. Maj. Hensinger and I made unit visits during the annual training cycle we were always inspired by the brotherhood and comradery evident in every unit. The units of 213th RSG are a very diverse collection of support elements with singular and specific missions in the PAARNG. I routinely remind our senior leaders that although we are not a doctrinally designed brigade size formation we always achieve mission success and serve our nation and Commonwealth, whenever and wherever directed.

I encourage all Soldiers to continue to strive for the best. The Army formation will change in the near future and it is imperative that you maintain all aspects of individual readiness and military education. Continue to look out for your "Battle Buddy" and report any actions, issues, or concerns to the chain of command so assistance can be provided. Today's battlefield extends into our personal lives and Soldier well-being is crucial for all of us on a daily basis.

Again, thank you for all you do for Pennsylvania and the citizens of America. You are the 1% willing to give back to our nation and make countless sacrifices to ensure our future. ▼

Chem Soldiers train using gas chamber



U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Coltin Heller, 109th MPAD

Soldiers with 128th Chemical Company, 728th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 213th Regional Support Battalion, Pennsylvania Army National Guard prepare to remove their masks during annual training on Fort Indiantown Gap, May 9, 2014.

Staff Sgt. Coltin Heller
109th MPAD

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Pa. – Soldiers assigned to the 128th Chemical Company, 728th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 213th Regional Support Group, Pennsylvania Army National Guard conducted confidence training as part of annual training May 9, 2014.

The training differed from what most think of conventional training, as the chemical, biological, radiological and neurological Soldiers with the 128th utilized a gas chamber as part of

their training.

“Today we conducted gas chamber training,” said Pfc. Vincent Gallagher, a chemical operations specialist with 128th Chemical Company. “It’s mainly to make sure that your protective mask works so you can trust your equipment when you go down range.”

The protective mask protects Soldiers from breathing airborne pollutants, biological agents, radiological fallout particles and toxins by forming a sealed cover of the face.

The CBRN noncommissioned officers inspected each

Soldier’s mask, ensuring proper mask wear and seal. The Soldiers also received instruction on entering and exiting the chamber before the start of training.

“We got into squads, and the [noncommissioned officers in charge] briefed us on how to go through the gas chamber,” said Gallagher, who calls Philadelphia home.

The NCOs in charge of the range prepared the chamber by lighting a small fire and heating tablets of tear gas, which layer the interior of the chamber in thick white haze.

“We went in, put on

our protective masks and made sure our seal was nice and tight.

Then we pulled off our mask breathed in some of the air and re-sealed our masks and then we were assured our gear was working properly,” remarked Gallagher.

After the Soldiers cleared and sealed their masks, they completely removed their masks, exposing themselves to a full dose of the tear gas.

“I’ve done this a few times,” said Gallagher, his eyes still watering from the gas.

The mask training and exposure to tear gas provides the Soldiers

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U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Coltin Heller, 109th MPAD

Staff Sgt. Chrystal Jenkins, chemical operations specialist assigned to the 128th Chemical Co., 728th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 213th Regional Support Group, inspects seal on her Soldiers' masks during gas chamber training on Fort Indiantown Gap, May 9, 2014.

CHEM, Cont' from Page 4 —

with first-hand experience preparing them for real-world situations.

“As [chemical, biological, radiological and neurological] specialists, we’re trained to handle [hazardous material] incidents,” said

Pfc. Aerianna Bright, also a chemical specialist with 128th Chemical Company. “If there was a chemical related incident, we could ‘recon’ the area and then take samples of debris or objects on site and remove any hazmat from the area and decontaminate any

contaminate areas and people if need be.”

“It’ll be real agents down there,” said Gallagher, speaking about deploying. “It won’t be tear gas, it’ll be something worse. You want to be sure your equipment works effectively.”

Bright, also from Philadelphia, said the training allows the individual Soldier the ability to aid other Soldiers, if needed.

The 128th Chemical Company Soldiers will continue to train for the duration of annual training, partnering with other CBRN response agencies and units in support of Vigilant Guard, an emergency preparedness exercise hosted by the Pennsylvania National Guard. ▼



U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Coltin Heller, 109th MPAD

Soldiers assigned to 128th Chemical Company, 728th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 213th Regional Support Group enter the gas chamber during annual training on Fort Indiantown Gap, May 9, 2014. The training provided refresher and familiarization training for the Soldiers.

252nd Engineers deploy to Afghanistan

Staff Sgt. Coltin Heller
109th MPAD

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. -

Pennsylvania Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to 252nd Engineer Company, 103rd Engineer Battalion, 213th Regional Support Group were honored in a deployment ceremony April 5.

The Soldiers trained and re-trained during the last year for their upcoming mission to Afghanistan assisting coalition forces there.

“This ceremony is designed to publically recognize the Soldiers of the 252nd Engineer Company for their self-less service and their dedication to the mission that they are set to embark upon in defense of this great nation,” said Lt. Col. Christopher McDevitt, commander of 103rd Engineer Bn.

The 252nd Soldiers spent more than two weeks at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., where they learned and refreshed such skills as land

navigation, individual movement techniques, low visibility driving, Modern Army Combatives, and combat life saving.

Speaking to the 250 supporters gathered in the auditorium, McDevitt said, “During my 25-plus years serving in the military I have never seen a unit as fine as yours. You are ready.”

Many Soldiers assigned to 252nd Eng. Company volunteered for the deployment, leaving their organic units and re-classing from their military occupational specialties.

“I volunteered to join when they put it out through the battalion, they were looking for volunteers to go overseas,” said Pfc. Jordan Farson, heavy equipment operator with the 252nd Eng. Company. “Originally I was a 12-Bravo, which is a combat engineer. I had to get re-classed to 12-November, which is a heavy equipment operator.”

We run equipment, anything

from bulldozers, to dump trucks, excavators, added the Marysville, Pa., native.

The Soldiers trained as horizontal engineers, able to deconstruct existing buildings, but more importantly assist with building local infrastructure, including pipe work, roadway rebuilding and airport construction.

Each member of the deploying unit is confident in their ability to complete the mission.

“I’ve been with the unit for three years now,” said Sgt. Richard Doran, heavy equipment operator with the 252nd Eng. Company. “We’ve been training for the last 18 months to reach this moment. A lot of us have gone through extra training just to get to this moment.”

“I feel very confident we will complete our mission, any mission that we are given we will complete it,” added Doran, who calls West Newton, Pa., home.

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U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. HollyAnn Nicom, 109th MPAD

First Sgt. Matthew Pritt, senior noncommissioned officer assigned to 252nd Engineer Company, 103rd Engineer Battalion, 213th Regional Support Group, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, speaks to his Soldiers during a formation at the Johnstown Amory before a going away ceremony, April 5, 2014. The 252nd Soldiers are slated to deploy to Afghanistan this year to assist coalition forces.

FTIG revamps training grounds for Vigilant Guard

1st. Lt. Amanda Westlund
109th MPAD

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Pa. – Training Center engineers completed multiple improvements to the structure collapse site this spring in preparation for hosting Vigilant Guard here.

Staff focused their efforts on improving the site which simulates search and rescue crews reacting to a real world emergency situation.

“One of the major elements of search and extraction training is being able to do high ropes missions,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Ostronic, a Training Center engineer. “These missions could include rescuing victims from an

elevated area, breaking missions while on rope and repelling down to rescue the wounded from an elevator shaft.”

In response to those training needs, training center personnel relocated the site in 2014 and transformed it into a functional, certified rappelling structure and rubble pile with 34 lanes at the site.

Additionally, engineers installed a fire hydrant at the collapse site. The hydrant will provide fresh water to the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force, decontamination team. This team conducts casualty wash and rinse operations in the event of a biological or chemical incident. Finally, holes as



U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Gregory McElwain, 109th MPAD

deep as 6’ were patched to make a safer training environment.

Vigilant Guard is a multi-state and multi-agency exercise that tests emergency preparedness throughout the commonwealth. This simulated exercise provides an opportunity for Soldiers to work alongside state agencies such as PEMA and PENNDOT in order to minimize loss and coordinate reconstruction.

“We take great pride

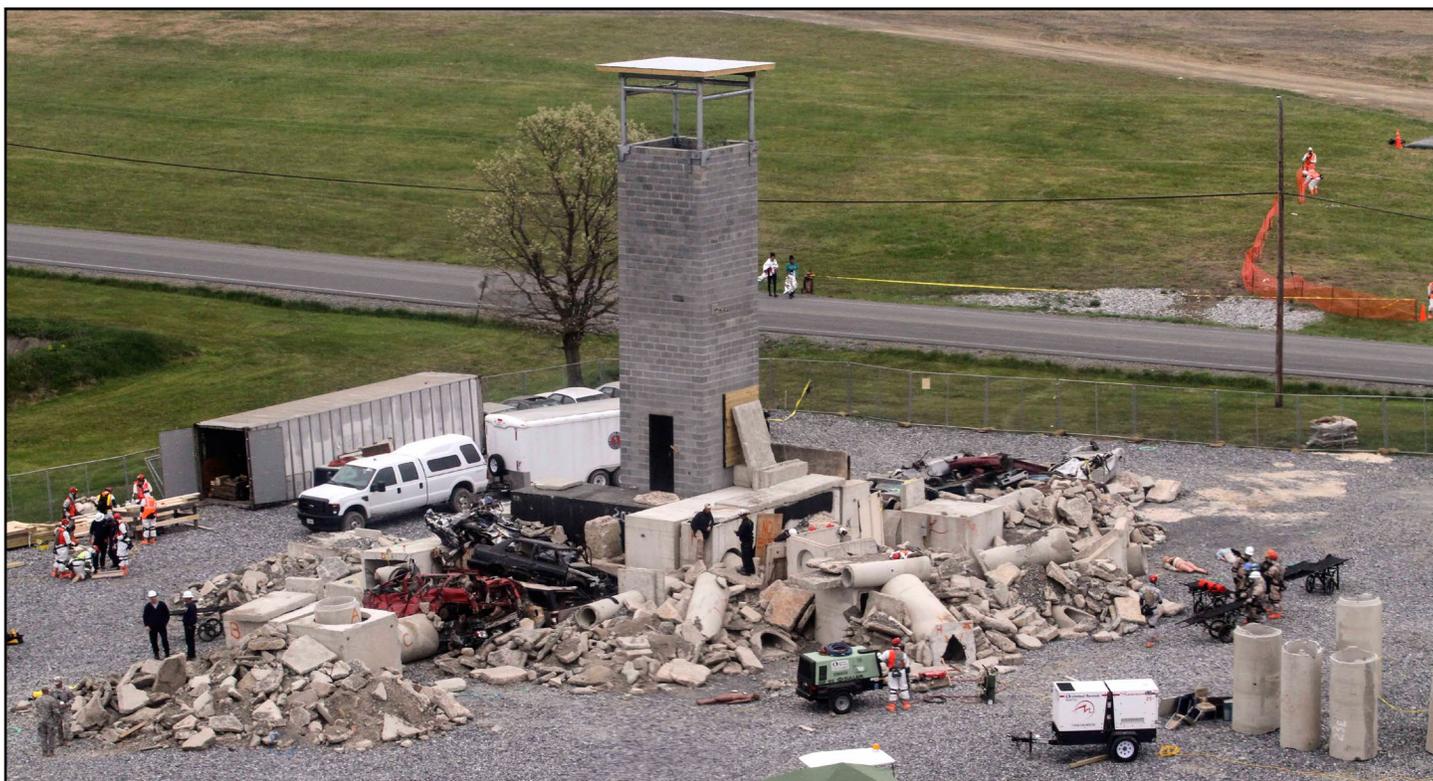
in our training areas and constantly seek to improve our ability to provide training resources,” said Lt. Col. Dale Waltman, chief of plans, training, operations and security.

Fort Indiantown Gap has more than 17,000 acres and 140 training areas and facilities that make the installation an ideal training ground for active duty, Reserve, National Guard and outside agencies to conduct training. ▼

Soldiers used various breaching and bracing techniques at the recently constructed structure collapse site on Fort Indiantown Gap during Vigilant Guard, an annual training exercise testing the capabilities of emergency crews and first responders. Soldiers from several states traveled to Pennsylvania to utilize the training site.



U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Gregory McElwain, 109th MPAD



In preparation for Vigilant Guard, an annual exercise held through out the country aimed at testing the ability of first responders and emergency services, members of the Fort Indiantown Gap Training Center constructed a structure collapse site (above) for rescue teams to train on breaching and extracting techniques. A similar site (below) situated on the grounds of Harrisburg Area Community College main campus, offers rescue and first responder teams life-like scenarios, such as burned out buildings, collapsed tunnels and contaminated environments, on which to train, ensuring their readiness should a disaster occur. Soldiers assigned to the 213th RSG acted as liasons to out of state units training at each site.



U.S. Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Coltin Heller, 109th MPAD



U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Coltin Heller, 109th MPAD

DEPLOY, Cont' from Page 6

Staff Sgt. Michael Lark, who previously deployed to Iraq with the 131st Transportation Company, 728th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 213th RSG, as truck driver, volunteered to deploy this time as the operations noncommissioned officer, organizing and tracking movement within the company.

He too is confident of the unit and its leadership.

"The leadership within the company is very, very well put together," said Lark, who hails from Royersford, Pa. "And watching the new upper-echelon [noncommissioned officers] fit in the way they have is the only time in my career I've seen it done the way it has been so far. It was a very easy transition to come in here. Everybody works very well together."

The Soldiers prepared for time

Susie and Jerry Huber, relatives of Capt. Joshua Kupchella, commander of 252nd Engineer Company, 103rd Engineer Battalion, 213th Regional Support Group, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, show their support by waving American flags as the Soldiers file out after a going away ceremony held in their honor at the Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center, April 5, 2014. Many Soldiers' families attended the ceremony, spending time with their families prior the their deployment.

spent away from family in addition to the mission, spending time with family before, during and after the ceremony.

"We spent a lot of time together in the last couple of months. Did a lot of family time," said Lark, a father of two. "A lot of going out to eat, a lot of movies, play time with the kids."

For many other Soldiers, the deployment marks their first. The separation from family and friends presents a new challenge to them.

"I've been in the military six years and this is my first time going overseas anywhere," said Sgt. Benjamin Leib, also a heavy

Capt. Joshua Kupchella, commander of 252nd Engineer Company part of 103rd Engineer Battalion, 213th Regional Support Group, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, addresses his Soldiers and their families during a going away ceremony held at the Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center, April 5, 2014. "I definitely cannot forget the families," said Kupchella. "The long times away, the last-minute changes, training which seemed like every week this year, would not be possible without your support. Thank you."

equipment operator with the 252nd. "In certain aspects of things, I'm looking forward to it. In other ways it's going to be pretty tough on myself and obviously my family I'm leaving behind."

Kupchella thanked the families for their support and flexibility during the train up for the deployment.

"I definitely cannot forget the families," said Kupchella, who calls Strongstown, Pa., home. "The long times away, the last minute changes, training which seemed like every week this year, would not be possible without your support. Thank you."

After leaving Pennsylvania, the 252nd Engineer Company will continue training at Fort Bliss, Texas before traveling to Afghanistan. ▼



U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. HollyAnn Nicom, 109th MPAD

103RD ENG. BN. CHANGE OF COMMAND AND RESPONSIBILITY



U.S. Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Coltin Heller, 109th MPAD



Lt. Col. Kurt Neilsen assumed command of the 103rd Engineer Battalion, 213th Regional Support Group, Pennsylvania Army National Guard from Lt. Col. Christopher McDevitt during a change of Command and Responsibility Ceremony held at historic Ft. Mifflin, July 7, 2014. Command Sgt. Maj. Nick Lazor assumed responsibility during the ceremony, promising to carry the “Dandy First” Battalion forward during his tenure as the senior noncommissioned officer.

Chaplain Coyle retires

Sgt. Zane Craig
109th MPAD

ALLENTOWN, Pa. - Lt. Col. Edward Coyle, chaplain of the 213th Regional Support Group and a Girardville native, celebrated his final mass in uniform Aug. 3 at the Allentown Readiness Center.

Coyle served in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard for nearly 22 years, while continuing his duties as a priest and pastor.

"I was the priest right down the street from the armory, and the Soldiers invited me to come," said Coyle.

Balancing the full-time job of running a parish with care for the spiritual and emotional needs of Soldiers of the 213th Regional Support Group would not work without a wide network of mutual support.

"The Guard has been very flexible and supportive when I've needed to be at the parish, no one has ever complained, and from the parish itself, many of them are Soldiers in the National Guard, so they were very supportive of me, and I'm very proud of the fact that I wear a uniform," said Coyle.

Coyle currently serves as pastor of The Most Blessed Sacrament

Parish, in Bally, where many parishioners are veterans or Soldiers, or have children or grandchildren serving.

"More than anything, I'll miss his enthusiastic presence, someone you can always count on for a smile, a good morning, and to engage with Soldiers on a daily basis whenever we have drill," said Col. Mark McCormack, commander, 213th Regional Support Group.

One of the ways Coyle supported the 213th was by mentoring 1st Lt. Ezekial Mack, chaplain candidate with the 213th Regional Support Group and a Pennsburg native.

"I've been here serving under Chaplain Coyle since my very first day back in 2010, and as a chaplain candidate, your supervising chaplain is a very important part of your growth as a Soldier and even in ministry," said Mack.

"Chaplain Coyle has been a fantastic mentor and his experience, even though we come from different faith backgrounds, has been invaluable as a friend and mentor," he said.

Chaplains have a duty to provide guidance for Soldiers of all religious backgrounds, not just members of their own



U.S. Army National Guard photos by Sgt. Zane Craig, 109th MPAD

Lt. Col. Edward Coyle, chaplain, delivers his last sermon as a Soldier and chaplain of the 213th Regional Support Group Aug. 3 at the Allentown Readiness Center. "Even though we're here to honor and recognize his commitment and service to the National Guard, I think it's even more fitting that we honor him through our attendance and participation in his final service," said Col. Mark McCormack, commander, 213th Regional Support Group.

denomination.

"I think that was one of the unique things about being a chaplain, you do get to go beyond your own faith community. Being able to provide for the spiritual needs of Soldiers from other faiths presents a challenge but it's a good challenge," said Coyle.

After Coyle delivered his final mass in uniform, the 213th gave him a brief retirement ceremony followed by a cookout lunch.

"Having an event like this for someone like Chaplain Coyle is indicative of the sacrifices all Soldiers make, but even more so in his case, because as a Catholic priest, he has a congregation that needs him every day of the week, yet he still finds the time and has the concern for the individual well-being of the Soldiers that allows him to sacrifice

some of his free time here," said McCormack.

Coyle said he sees the 213th Regional Support group as exactly what the name describes, a group that supports each other through good times and bad.

"I think the incoming chaplain, whoever they may be, is so lucky, so blessed to have this opportunity because they will be given so much by these Soldiers.

These people really do care for each other. I always liked the idea that we're a support group. I've always felt that support, and I'm sure the new chaplain will feel the same," he said.

"I handle the sacred things every day at mass, the body and blood of Christ, and as a Soldier you handle the sacred lives of other Soldiers, and there's nothing more sacred than peoples' lives." ▼

No Soldier Stands alone!

Whether at home or abroad there are always those who stand ready to serve our finest as they serve.

Military One Source
www.militaryonesource.mil

Suicide Prevention
www.preventsuicide.army.mil

Sexual Assault
www.sapr.mil

Substance Abuse
acsap.army.mil

Department of Veteran Affairs
www.va.gov

Tricare
www.tricare.mil



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