

# THE ARIZONA ROUGH RIDER

## GUARDSMEN AWARDED COVETED EIB

Arizona Guard Soldiers Earn  
Expert Infantry Badge

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## ENGINEER SOLDIERS COMPETE FOR TOP

Soldiers from the  
253rd Engineer  
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switch it up

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Soldiers from the  
363rd Explosive  
Ordnance Disposal  
Company train up.

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Capt. Amanda Hammond



1st Sgt. Michael Major

Capt. Amanda Hammond  
Publisher

1st Lt. Macario Mora  
Sr. Writer / Editor

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Freese  
Publication Manager

Sgt. Rick Hoppe  
Layout Editor

Staff Sgt. Brian Barbour  
Staff Writer & Photographer

Sgt. Crystal Reidy  
Staff Writer & Photographer

Sgt. Adrian Borunda  
Staff Writer & Photographer

Sgt. Chris Moore  
Staff Writer & Photographer

Spc. Amber Bohlman  
Staff Writer & Photographer

Pv3 Elizabeth Smith  
Staff Writer & Photographer

Sgt. Adrian Borunda  
Cover Photo

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To submit stories, photographs and cartoon artwork, or make inquiries, please e-mail us at:

amanda.m.straub.mil@mail.mil  
macario.p.mora2.mil@mail.mil  
robert.e.freese.mil@mail.mil



# APACHE HELICOPTER DEBATE

## FRAUGHT WITH VEILED CONSEQUENCES

Story and Photo by  
Maj. Gen. Michael T. McGuire  
The Adjutant General of Arizona

In the current national debate over the U.S. Army's ill-conceived plan to commandeer all 192 National Guard AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, there is more at stake than aircraft.

Overlooked by the proponents of this plan are the implications for our country's system of checks and balances, and ultimately the liberty of our citizens.

The Army's layered rhetoric, designed to dupe Congress and the American people into believing their plan is best, consistently echoes a dangerous and loaded argument – the idea that state governors have no need for Apache helicopters.

If we accept that argument, we embark further down a slippery slope and there will be little to stop the Pentagon from taking all National Guard war fighting equipment in the future. What will be next? Tanks, fighter aircraft, air tankers or field artillery? What about our M-4 and M-16 rifles?

The Army's hasty declaration that the Guard does not need combat capability for state missions conveniently ignores the many reasons it's here in the first place.

of a large centralized government by dispersing power to citizens through their state governments.

It stands to reason that the size of the Army's active component should contract in times of peace. After Sept. 11, 2001, the Army swelled from 480,000 to 570,000 at the peak of the war while the other services maintained relatively consistent manpower levels. Today, the Army's short-term solution has long-term consequences as it wants to plunder combat arms equipment and resources from its reserve component because presumably it's difficult for them to accept post war downsizing.

The real solution to the Apache debate is one that falls in line with the Constitution and provides adequate forces amid historic cuts to the defense budget. The Army must reverse its plan and divert Soldiers and equipment from the active component to the National Guard where they can be maintained at a fraction of the cost. America can keep its highly-trained, combat-capable Soldiers right here where they are always ready, always there.

States do need Apache helicopters, and virtually every other capability found in the National Guard, because the people of a free republic need their states to have them.

It's the National Guard that defends the homeland. The Guard ensures the sovereignty of our airspace through fighter alert missions throughout the country. The Guard is our initial crisis response force for everything from natural disasters to terrorist attacks. And as a vital component of the Total Army, the Guard fights and wins our nation's wars overseas alongside active duty service partners.

The most important reason is deeply rooted in the Constitution. Many of America's Founding Fathers, studying the precedents set by the British and Roman empires, believed the greatest threat to liberty was a large standing army which they viewed as an unchecked power dangerous to a free republic.

They therefore gave Congress – the branch of government most representative of the American people – the power to raise and support armies in times of need. They also gave Congress the power to provide for the calling forth of the colonial Militia, the predecessor to the National Guard, to suppress insurrections and repel invasions.

This division of power meant that power was checked; and helped limit the blunders

UPCOMING

# EVENTS



CLICK ON THE EVENT TO VISIT THE WEBSITE!



### VETERAN'S DAY PARADE

Downtown Phoenix

The parade kicks off at 11:00 A.M. on Tuesday, November 11, 2014. The starting point is North Phoenix Baptist Church (at Central Avenue and Bethany Home Road) The parade then heads South on Central, turns East on West Camelback Road, then heads South on Seventh Street where the parade participants will de-stage at Indian School Road.



### FREE THANKSGIVING FEAST

Scottsdale

Z'Tejas restaurant in Scottsdale is welcoming active duty and reserve servicemembers and their families for a free Thanksgiving feast. This year's meal begins at 11:30 am. Space is limited, so be sure to send your RSVP to [marketing@ztejas.com](mailto:marketing@ztejas.com)



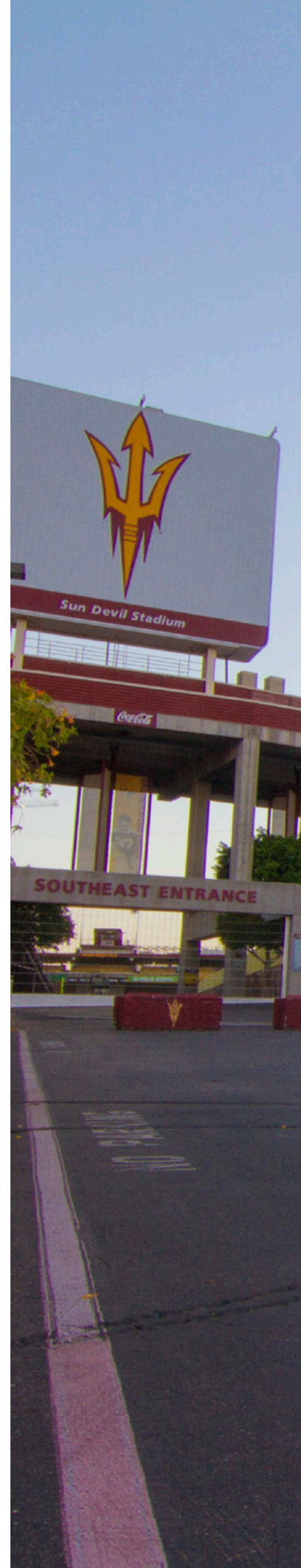
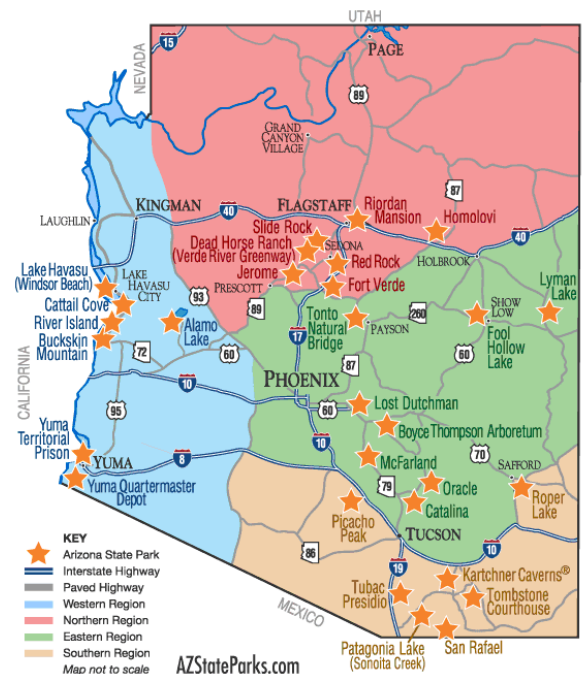
Arizona State Parks

AZStateParks.com

### 50% OFF STATE PARKS FOR GUARD

Arizona State Parks

Arizona is the most beautiful state in the union and fall is it's most beautiful time of the year. Take advantage of our amazing Arizona State Parks while they offer half off admission to all active duty, guard, reserve servicemembers and eligible veterans. The discount is available to the servicemember and up to three guests. So get out and enjoy the natural beauty you can only find here in Arizona!



# ARIZONA NATIONAL GUARD MUSTER

DECEMBER 7, 2014 | SUN DEVIL STADIUM | TEMPE, ARIZONA | 10:00 A.M.

For the first time in over a century, the Arizona National Guard will muster in one formation, and there are 7,531 reasons why I've chosen to revive this time-honored military tradition. I am proud of each Soldier and Airman who voluntarily serves our state and nation, and the time has come to recognize you.

On Pearl Harbor Day, Sunday, Dec. 7, at 11 a.m., we will meet on the field at Arizona State University's Sun Devil Stadium. As the minutemen of the colonial militia first mustered in 1636, we will assemble for review by our Commander-in-Chief, Governor Jan Brewer.

ASU graciously agreed to partner with us in this effort, offering a venue large enough to accommodate as many members of our community who wish to attend in honor of your service. We invite your families, friends, and coworkers to join state and community leaders at the event. We also invite our vast veteran population, students, public service organizations, civic groups and the general public to fill the stadium. All are welcome, and admission is free.

This is our way of holding an "Open House" event for our communities. It presents an opportunity for them to witness your professionalism, discipline, precision, dedication, and your commitment to defend your fellow citizens, or come to their aid during an emergency. I want Arizona to see you for what you are; the greatest National Guard in the country.

Throughout wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the longest in American history, you placed your personal lives and civilian careers on hold and went into harm's way to defend freedom. You are the best-trained and most-experienced National Guard the world has ever known.

As Citizen Soldiers and Airmen, we are deeply embedded in the communities in which we serve. To many Arizonans, we are the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force. For your focused efforts to improve your

communities and enhance public support for our missions I thank you and encourage your continued work to strengthen local ties.

We cannot underestimate the impact that a muster of this kind will have on those relationships. This is one mission we can do together; a truly joint effort to reach out to our neighbors. And though they will be there to witness our historic muster, we will honor them by showing them that our service is not possible without their unyielding support.

Additionally at the muster, we will ensure that veterans of all services and all foreign wars are properly honored. This formation is our way of saying 'thank you' to those who have gone before us or served alongside us.

It is my hope that once you are on that field standing shoulder to shoulder with your brothers and sisters in arms, that you will look up into the stands to see and hear the adulation of those you swore to protect. You will look around and see that you and your unit are part of a military family that extends far beyond the armories and bases you call home.

Following the muster ceremony, you will be released to your families and friends to enjoy a community expo adjacent to the stadium. We are working with numerous organizations and partners to host an afternoon of fun, food, and attractions where you can fellowship with each other and the people who want to shake your hand and thank you for your service - myself included.

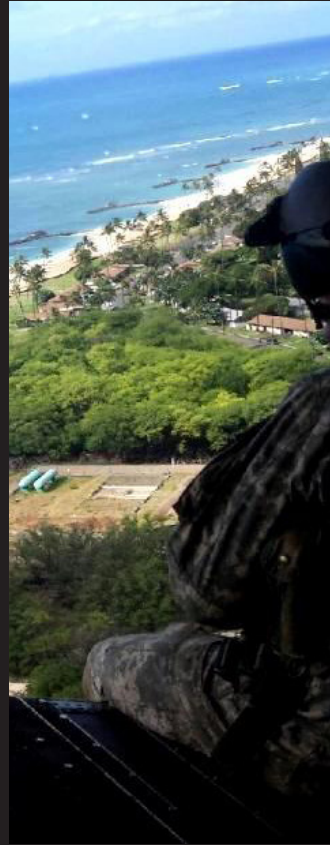
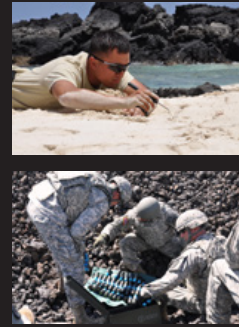
There are 7,531 reasons to conduct a public muster, and for each one it will be a day you always remember - a day you are proud to call your own. Again, I thank you for your service and your support for this historic event.

Story by

Maj. Gen. Michael T. McGuire

# ARIZONA GUARD EXPLOSIVES EXPERTS TRAIN IN HAWAII

Story and photos by Spc. Wesley Parrell



Army 1st Lt. Amanda Birch, a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot with the Arizona Army National Guard's 2/285th Air Assault Helicopter Battalion, Alpha Company, prepares for a night mission during Operation Angel Thunder 2014 at Papago Military Reservation in Phoenix, May 12. Approximately 2,000 multinational agencies are expected to participate in Angel Thunder. The operation is a joint service combat search and rescue exercise providing training for personnel recovery assets using a variety of scenarios to simulate deployed settings.



Story and Photos by Sgt. Crystal Reidy

## BLACK HAWK PILOT FLIES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**P**HOENIX - When 17 year-old Amanda Birch told her mother she wanted to be a pilot, her mom had a practical question, "How do you even know you like to fly?"

Her answer was to go to the local airport during her junior year of high school, find a flight instructor and start flying fixed-winged airplanes. Now a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot, Army 1st Lt. Amanda Birch can honestly tell her mom, "Yes, I like to fly."

Not every pilot joins the Arizona Army National Guard with flight experience but Birch, a platoon leader for the 2/285th Air Assault Helicopter Battalion, Alpha Company, was already a licensed commercial pilot and flight instructor.

After earning her Bachelor of Science in Aeronautics from the University of North Dakota, she moved to Arizona and began working as a flight instructor.

In 2009, she decided to fly for the Army National Guard.

"I wanted to fly and make a difference. I wanted to fly Soldiers back home to their families," Birch said.

She said she also enjoys flying for the Guard because of the opportunities to fly places others cannot. For example, she can fly low, and land off site in the desert or on pinnacles in the Four Peaks Wilderness area.

"Piloting in the Army is an exciting

included the basic officer leadership course; flight training; survive, evade, resist, escape (SERE) training; and "dunker" training which trains aircrews to escape a helicopter turned upside-down under water.

Birch said as soon as formal training ended, her on-the-job training began. Her unit taught her to fly with Bambi buckets used to fight wild fires, with sling loads and other mission specific training.

"We have to meet training hours as well as pass our annual proficiency and readiness test exam," Birch said. "So basically the training and testing never ends for pilots. We are always learning."

Army pilots are trained to fly specific aircraft. Birch explained all pilots start on a basic helicopter similar to a news helicopter before moving on to a scout-type helicopter. Finally, pilots begin training on tactical aircraft such as Black Hawks, Apaches, Chinooks and Kiowas.

The Army National Guard assigns pilots based on mission requirements. Birch said she is happy she was selected for Black Hawk training.

"Black Hawks can be used for civilian missions like natural disasters and with SWAT missions with the local police," Birch said.

"Birch has developed into a fantastic organizational leader and makes a great officer," said Capt. Caleb Grandy, Alpha Company commander.

and dynamic environment to adapt to, I love the unique challenge," she said.

One major challenge was the journey to finish flight school.

Birch said civilian flight school was a typical college experience with a lot of math and science classes with added flight hours at the end of a school day.

"Army pilot school was a lot more difficult because you have to memorize a lot more information in a much shorter period of time," Birch said.

The 15-month training pipeline

MAUNA LOA, Hawaii – The Arizona Army National Guard's 363rd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company conducted its annual training at the Pohakuloa Training Area here July 25 to Aug. 8.

Located 6,200 feet above sea level, in the upland saddle region between Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, the PTA is the largest Department of Defense installation in Hawaii.

PTA offers realistic training in a setting not found anywhere else. Its 80-acre base camp, higher-altitude airfield with a 3,700-foot runway, and firing ranges provide the infrastructure to conduct small-arms and crew-operated weapons familiarization training and qualifications, and artillery and mortar live fire.

"Part of our training mission was to conduct high tempo,

deployment like scenarios," said Sgt. Laura Crabtree. "The ranges at PTA allowed for us to use a variety of our explosive ordnance disposal techniques during live demo operations on a scale that we had not done anywhere else."

In addition to fine-tuning technical skills, the 363rd participated in a unit evaluation by the 706th EOD Company stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Active-duty Soldiers tested the Arizona unit's ability to respond to real world scenarios and provided insight into mission capabilities from the command level down to the EOD team level.

"Working with our active-duty counterparts opens new avenues of training and knowledge that will further our abilities to do our jobs," said 1st Sgt. Jason Dannettel. "We can combine our real life experiences with their real life experiences to improve the skill sets for both units."

The 363rd later repaid the favor and conducted an external evaluation on the 706th.

"The fact that the 363rd was able to perform at a level commensurate with the active component speaks to the value of the National Guard EOD Soldier," said Capt. Rori Comiskey, 363rd EOD company commander. "These Soldiers only see 48 training periods and one 15 day annual training per year, yet they consistently

perform on par with their active counterparts."

Comiskey said working with the 706th helped develop a beneficial active-Guard EOD relationship, and ensure compatibility for future missions.



## NEW STATE COMMAND CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER TO FILL WARRANT VACANCIES

PHOENIX – The Arizona National Guard welcomed its new state command chief warrant officer at a change of responsibilities ceremony here Aug. 3.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Daniel Toporek took the reigns as top warrant officer in the state from Chief Warrant Officer 5 John Vitt, as hundreds of Guardsmen, along with numerous friends and family, looked on.

Toporek, from Phoenix, began his military career in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. In 1990 he applied and was selected for the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Flight Training program. The following year, he was appointed the rank of warrant officer 1 and went on to pilot the AH-64A Apache helicopter.

“I look forward to Chief Toporek’s leadership and his ability to influence beyond the chain of command,” said Brig. Gen. William Hall, land component commander for the Arizona Army National Guard. “I know that he is up to the task of increasing the effectiveness of the warrant officer program.”

Toporek deployed to Afghanistan in 2006-2008 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with the 1-285th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion

While leading an impressive career that has taken him to the Pentagon, and now the top office in the state for a warrant officer, Toporek counts his time in the skies of Afghanistan as his greatest military achievement.

“There were times over there where there were good guys on the ground and bad guys on the ground,” he said. “My greatest achievement has always been keeping those good guys safe.”

For the new command chief warrant officer, filling the ranks of the Arizona Guard’s warrant officer vacancies is one of his top priorities.

“I want to ensure that commanders understand the value of warrant officers in the state,” Toporek said.

“Warrant officers are usually off working hard, doing their jobs, but they tend to be quiet about it. I want to be their voice to show the great work that they do and the important roles they play.”

As Toporek takes over the position Vitt has held for five years, he admits that he has some big shoes to fill.

“It’s a pretty daunting challenge,” Toporek said. “He’s an icon. Things are good, but they can always be better, and I’m going to work as hard as I can

to make that happen.”

Toporek lives in Phoenix with his wife, Ana, and daughter, Lillith. His son, Jesse, lives in Tucson; his son, Jose, lives in San Diego; and his daughter, Mayra, lives in Washington, D.C.

Story by  
Sgt. Ryan Scott

Photos by Sgt. Lauren Twigg



## NEW COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARIZONA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD TO FOCUS ON SOLDIER SKILLS

PHOENIX - The enlisted members of the Arizona Army National Guard welcomed their tenth state command sergeant major at a change of responsibilities ceremony here Aug 3.

Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Powers will serve as the advisor to the Arizona Army National Guard’s land component commander for Army enlisted-related issues; focusing specifically on training, care and professional development of strong leaders.

“My number one goal is for the Soldiers to have fun. Not ‘joking around’ fun - they will do that on their own,” Powers said. “What I mean is that training hard is fun; and I want Soldiers to conduct meaningful training every drill weekend.”

“It is fun to shoot, move and communicate, and it is fun to conduct air assault missions. This is why Soldiers join the Guard. We need to let them be Soldiers.”

Since assuming his position July 1, Powers traveled throughout Arizona to observe training and talk to Soldiers about the future of the Arizona Guard.

Powers said he wants Guard members get back to the basics of the Soldier’s Creed and ensure that they live by the creed in all aspects of their lives, not just

while wearing the uniform.

“We all know the Soldiers Creed. If we apply it at home, during training, and at work, we will find success and complete our missions at the highest proficiencies,” he said.

Powers began his active duty Army career in 1986 and joined the Arizona Army National Guard in 1997, serving as a UH-60 Black Hawk crew chief. He rose through the ranks serving as a first sergeant for Alpha and Delta Companies, both for the 1-285th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, and served as command sergeant major for the 198th Regional Support Group, the 215th Regional Training Institute, and the 98th Troop Command.

His deployments include Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, in Iraq, and Operation Enduring Freedom, in Afghanistan. He also deployed with special operations units during Operation Gothic Serpent, in Somalia, and Operation Uphold Democracy, in Haiti.

“During his deployment in Afghanistan Command Sgt. Maj. Powers was a great leader because he was very approachable and always willing to answer questions,” said Sgt. 1st Class John Jones, who deployed with Powers in 2006-2008. “He prepared me to be a better

noncommissioned officer because I could take his leadership style and apply it to my leadership with my troops.”

Powers said he challenges the leaders of the Arizona Guard to afford Soldiers every opportunity to conduct their military operation specialty.

“Soldiers do not join the Guard to watch PowerPoint presentations,” he said. “They join to be Soldiers and we need to give them time to train.”

He is currently on a military leave of absence from his civilian employer, Robertson Fuel Systems, based in Tempe.

“I am extremely grateful to Robertson Fuel Systems, for their support of my military career and for their support of the Soldiers in the Arizona Army National Guard, by allowing me to take this time to serve as the command sergeant major of the Arizona Army National Guard,” Powers said.

He and his wife Stephanie reside in Tempe with sons Anthony and Johnny. Powers holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Ashford University and is a graduate of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy.

Story by  
Sgt. Crystal Reidy

# GUARDSMEN EARN COVETED EXPERT INFANTRY BADGE

Story and photos by Sgt. Adrian Borunda

CAMP NAVAJO, Arizona – In the high altitude of northern Arizona, five Guardsmen from 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, and one from Louisiana earned the prestigious Expert Infantry Badge out of 135 who attempted the grueling test here this month.

Soldiers from Arizona, New Mexico, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Utah and Hawaii participated in the first EIB test conducted by the 1-158th. The Arizona Guardsmen who earned the EIB were: Capt. Brian Gaume, Staff Sgt. Chad Spahr, Spc. Jeremiah Drane, Spc. Daniel Lopez, and Pfc. Nickolas Ball. Spc. Brian Smith from Louisiana also earned the badge.

“The EIB is very prestigious, it sets you apart from your peers within the infantry community,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Fidel Zamora, the EIB president of the committee that organized the event.

To earn the badge, Soldiers had to perform above standards. Each had to qualify as an expert with the M4 semiautomatic rifle, score a minimum of 75 points in each of the three Army Physical Fitness Test events, and demonstrate proficiency with an array of weapons systems used by the infantry, from the M9 Beretta pistol to the 40 mm MK19 grenade launcher.

Further building on that knowledge, the Soldier’s tactical movement techniques and their ability to deal with stress were tested in practical exercise lanes. Day and night land navigation, basic medical treatment of wounds and calling for artillery fire were also among the tested skills.

“There is a tremendous amount of pressure put on the candidates – a lot of stress. That way we know if he is proficient in those tasks going through the test,” Zamora said.

He said it’s typical not to earn the badge on a first attempt and that only about 8 to 10 percent of the original starting numbers earn the badge.

For Staff Sgt. Chad Spahr, an Infantryman with A Company, 1st-158th, this was a second and successful attempt to earn the EIB.

“

The EIB is very prestigious, it sets you apart from your peers within the infantry community.

”



Spc. Jeremiah Drane, Soldier with Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, Arizona Army National Guard, is awarded the distinguished candidate award for being the top performing soldier during Expert Infantry Badge testing at Camp Navajo, Arizona, July 24.

Pvt. Jason Devlin, a Soldier with C Company, 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, Arizona Army National Guard, goes over the motions of proper procedure for immediate action on a M2 .50-caliber machine gun. First Battalion conducted Expert Infantry Badge testing as a part of their annual training. There were six recipients of the EIB out of 135 candidates.

Photo by Sgt. Adrian Borunda



“I was stressed out. You don’t know if you’re going to make it or not,” Spahr said. “You train so hard, and you go through so much that if you don’t make it, well who knows when that chance is going to come again.”

Spahr said that if a Soldier really wants the badge he has to pay attention to details.

“Learn from your mistakes and have that attention to detail, that’s what the EIB is all about,” he said. “There is so much that goes into each task that if you forget one little thing, that’s a no-go.”

Spc. Jeremiah Drane, a Soldier with Headquarters Company, 1st-158th, defied the odds and earned the EIB on his first attempt. He was also the distinguished EIB recipient for outperforming the rest of the candidates.

“It’s not the ‘easy infantry badge.’ It’s the Expert Infantry Badge,” he said. “You have to take the time to focus, train, learn and complete it to standard.”

Drane, a member of the scout and sniper platoon, said he didn’t earn the badge on his own; it took time outside of drill and the support of his leaders.

“The biggest reason for my success was my [noncommissioned officers]. There were many times outside of drill that they sat down with me and went over something as simple as call for fire,” he said.

The Soldiers will now return to their units throughout Arizona as subject matter experts in all things infantry. They will pass their skills and knowledge to their subordinates and peers.

“They are going back to their units in their communities to make sure that Soldiers are trained to standard,” Zamora said.

First Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, set up the test sites and was certified to conduct EIB training and testing by officials from Fort Benning, Georgia, home of the U.S. Army Infantry.

“I don’t look back,” Acker said. “I always look forward to the next mission or event.”

The winners were announced at an awards banquet in Phoenix, March 22.

# ENGINEER SOLDIERS COMPETE FOR TOP, ACQUIRE NEW SKILLS

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Lauren Twigg

FLORENCE, Arizona — When focusing on basic warrior tasks during annual training, the seemingly endless “death-by-PowerPoint” classes and simulated exercises can be mundane and drawn-out. The Soldiers from the 253rd Engineer Battalion, Arizona Army National Guard, decided to switch it up this year and hold a motivating competition.

More than 100 Soldiers from the engineer unit participated in their first-ever “Engineer Challenge” June 19 to 20, at the Florence Military Reservation. Soldiers were put to the test on basic warrior tasks and some basic combat engineer skills as well.

“During this two-day event, Soldiers challenged themselves on basic warrior skills and some engineer tasks, which may not have been in the original framework of their own jobs,” said Maj. Gretchen Bolerjack, the executive officer for the 253rd Engineer Battalion. “It was designed so our Soldiers from the construction, logistics and combat engineer companies can cross-level and cover down, so in a live situation there is always equal cover of tasks – plus, having the variety combined like this allows for all to compete across the board.”

This cross-training was unlike other units, as the job of an engineer versus

a logistician are distinct, the competition took all Soldiers out of their comfort zones and gave them the necessary skills to be assigned to an engineer unit.

“Reconnaissance operations is primarily a combat engineer tasking, but we wanted to integrate our other Soldiers into this skill set in order to expand the utility of the battalion as a whole,” said Staff Sgt. Nicholas Papke, a reconnaissance noncommissioned officer for headquarters-headquarters company. “If everybody can do the essential skills needed, for example, if we are short people, we can rely on others within the battalion to assist with engineer

tasks.”

Second Lt. Patrick Locke said Soldiers weren’t just thrown into the cross-leveling but were given several days of training to prepare for the event.

“Some of the Soldiers are not completely trained on engineer skills, and so we provided some courses prior to the competition so everyone can compete,” said Locke, an operations officer and the event’s officer in charge. “This type of training will definitely put the battalion at an advantage in future missions.”

The Engineer Challenge event provided an opportunity to sharpen skills, train on new ones, and find weak spots requiring more training in the future.

“One of the more challenging parts for the Soldiers was the preventative maintenance checks and services skills, which is a basic vehicle maintenance skill that all Soldiers should know how to do,” Bolerjack said. “Many of the Soldiers were realizing that they had forgotten some steps or were unsure how to perform a certain task, so this helps leadership gauge where additional training is needed.”

When envisioning a combat engineer calculating bridge width or determining the grade of a hill, some may think high-tech devices are involved in the process. To the contrary, a pen, piece of paper,

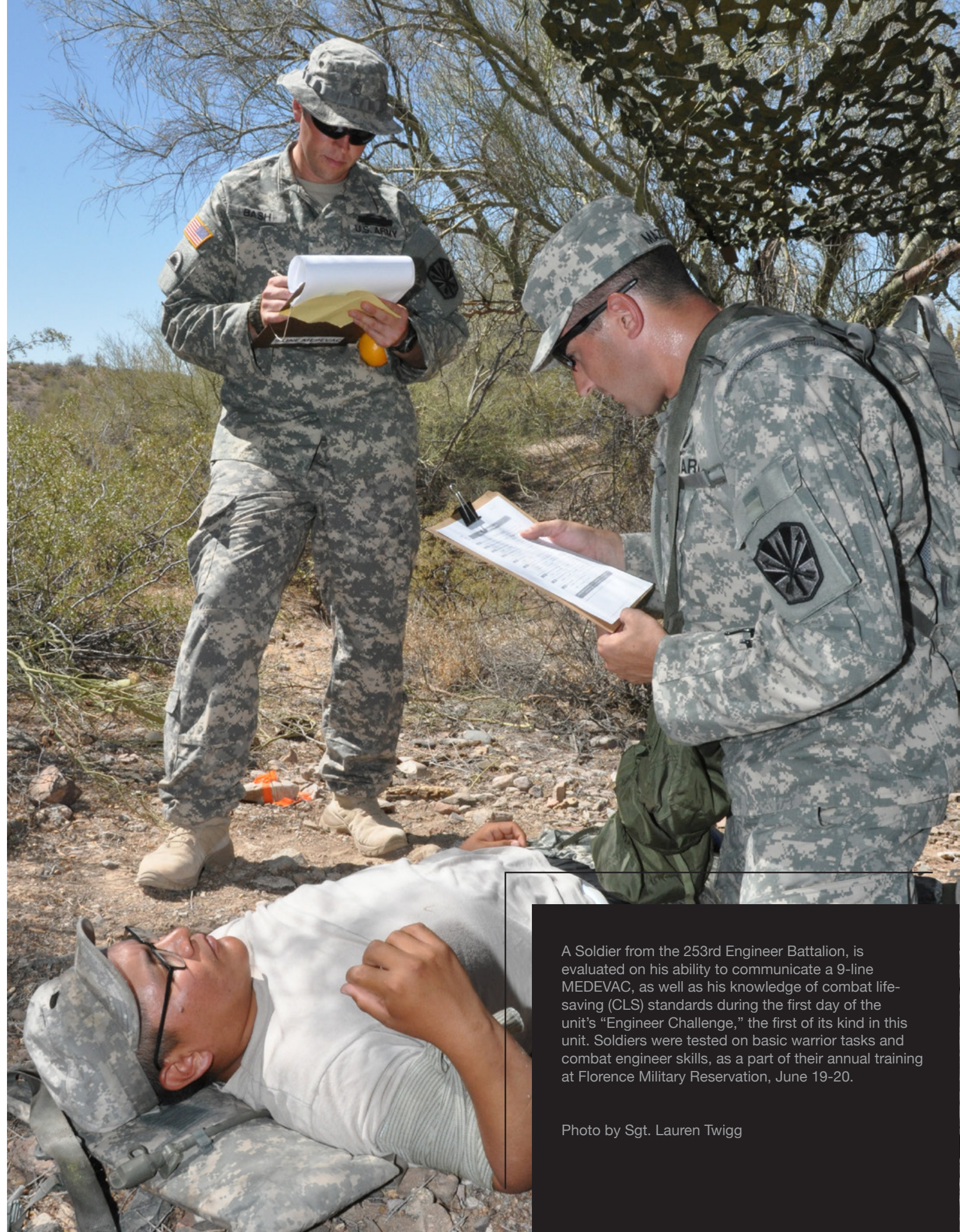
Pythagoreans Theorem, and a compass and tape measure is all that is needed, said Papke.

“The methods we use for any recon is pretty basic – we use tape measures, our feet, our eyeballs – because we can apply techniques to measure a hill using formulas, and a pace count for a quick and quite accurate method,” Papke said. “Certainly, a cell phone with a little accelerometer, or a device to track the angle of something can be great as well, but while deployed, most likely a cell phone will not be handy, and we cannot always count on digital equipment to be accurate or work properly – all you need are some basic tools and your brain.”

At the end of the competition of more than 5 miles of competitive lanes, while enduring the hot, arid Sonoran climate, the Soldiers earned their bounty. The Soldier with the top score in individual warrior tasks was awarded an Army Achievement Medal, and the top team for engineer skills all received certificates of achievement, battalion coins, and a mounted certificate at the battalion headquarters as a commencement for future engineer challenges.

“After the planning involved with designing this competition, the success or failure of those efforts are tested when Soldiers begin the event,” Bolerjack said. “I feel this was highly successful, and was a testament of how the Soldiers within the battalion have that esprit de corps. This will be a future tradition now with this battalion based on how well this event really went.”

“ This type of training will definitely put the battalion at an advantage in future missions. ”



A Soldier from the 253rd Engineer Battalion, is evaluated on his ability to communicate a 9-line MEDEVAC, as well as his knowledge of combat life-saving (CLS) standards during the first day of the unit’s “Engineer Challenge,” the first of its kind in this unit. Soldiers were tested on basic warrior tasks and combat engineer skills, as a part of their annual training at Florence Military Reservation, June 19-20.

Photo by Sgt. Lauren Twigg





driven by taking care of his Soldiers and people than him.”

When talking about those closest to him, Vargas was overcome by emotion.

“The most important thing was always my family and taking care of Soldiers. I’m glad to be home. These are not tears of pain, they are tears of happiness,” Vargas said.

Brig. Gen. William Hall, land component commander for the Arizona Army National Guard, retired Vargas during the ceremony.

“Thank you for being a great warrior, thank you for being a great Soldier, and thank you for having the desire to serve your country and the state of Arizona,” Hall said.

Strahl attended the ceremony to honor his close friend and award him the Meritorious Service Medal for his achievements while serving at the 173rd.

“He is a generous and kind individual and strong Army leader,” Strahl said.

**P**HOENIX –Capt. Frank Vargas, a former Arizona Guard and 173rd Airborne member, was awarded three Purple Hearts here June 25.

The Purple Heart is the oldest military decoration still given to U.S. military members and is awarded to those killed or wounded while serving in combat.

Vargas received the decorations for three separate actions: Sept 15, 2010, while conducting village clearing operations in Southern Afghanistan, March 2011, from incoming rocket fire, and July 4, 2011, from an improvised explosive device while conducting route clearing operations.

“The best way I can describe Frank would be his heart,” said Capt. David Strahl, a logistics officer with the Warrior Transition Battalion in Fort Riley, Kansas. “I’ve never come across an individual [who] is more

## SOLDIER AWARDED THREE PURPLE HEARTS

Story and photo by  
Sgt. 1st Class Robert Freese

**Above:** Army Brig. Gen. William Hall, land component commander for the Arizona Army National Guard, awards Army Capt. Frank Vargas three Purple Hearts for actions in Afghanistan. Vargas was also awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and retired from the Army during the ceremony in Phoenix June 25.

**P**HOENIX - A Black Hawk helicopter ride does not scratch the surface for honoring three Arizona Army National Guard Soldiers receiving Purple Hearts at a ceremony held June 7, at Camp Navajo near Flagstaff. The Purple Heart is awarded to members of the armed forces of the U.S. who are wounded by an instrument of war in the hands of the enemy and posthumously to the next of kin in the name of those who are killed in action or die of wounds received in action.

Spc. Antonio Medrano, 22, of Yuma, Spc. Leif Skoog, 23, of Phoenix, and Pfc. Gino Duran, 20, also of Phoenix were injured separately during incidents where their unit was attached during their deployment to Afghanistan in 2013. The three Soldiers served with the 819th Engineer Company where Medrano was a wheeled mechanic and Skoog and Duran served as Combat Engineers.

The Purple Heart Ceremony reunited the Soldiers with their friends from the unit of which Skoog is still a member, but Medrano and Duran now serve elsewhere in the state. Brig. Gen. John Burk presided over the ceremony and presented the awards.

“It is an honor to be here and thank you for your service,” said Burk. “Only you know what you went through on your deployment. Keep that as your bond. The Purple Heart is arguably the most

significant award of your life. We recognize your sacrifice of our great state and nation.”

As the rest of the unit stood at attention, Burk called each of the recipients individually to receive their medal.

“It was a great experience to ride on a Black Hawk and get an award that is so distinguished,” said Duran. “It brings me honor. I’m not happy about the way I got it, but I am proud to serve.” Duran works full time for National and Alamo Car Rentals. He is married and has one daughter.

Medrano is a single father with one son and is studying full time to be a dental assistant. “It feels good to be recognized and good to be back with the unit,” said Medrano. “Receiving the award helps you appreciate life more – the little things.”

“I am humbled that they took the time to have a ceremony for us and bring us all back together,” said Skoog. “This award helps me realize the sacrifices other soldiers before me have made and the ones who will make sacrifices in the future. Skoog is single, a full time roofer and spends a lot of time improving his own home.

Each of the Soldiers volunteered for the deployment. Duran went just shortly after he returned from basic training. Their primary responsibility in southern Afghanistan was route clearance for convoys. Each suffered injuries as a result

## THREE SOLDIERS RECEIVE PURPLE HEARTS

Story and photos by  
Capt. Matthew Murphy

of their service and each completed the term of their deployment in Kandahar.

“You expect the worse and you prepare for the worse,” said Medrano. “It builds character,” said Duran. “I can proudly say I did that and I’ve been there.”

The Soldiers said they have no regret performing their duty and serving. They added they appreciate the great support systems they have with their own families and their National Guard Family.

“ I knew I had to act fast and take action. If I did not do something, people could be hurt or worse.”

# SOLDIER HELPS FAMILY FROM BURNING HOME

Story and photos by  
Spc. Wes Parrell



**P**EORIA, Arizona – An Arizona National Guard Soldier drew on his military training when he assisted a family from their burning home here Aug. 26.

Pfc. Samuel Pineda, an infantryman with the 158th Infantry Battalion, returned to his residence near the 8600 block of Malapai Drive in Peoria when he saw smoke billowing from the front of a neighbor's home. As he approached the residence, he saw two young girls running back and forth near the front door in a panic.

“They told me the house was on fire and someone was inside,” Pineda said. “That’s when my training and instincts kicked in.”

Pineda immediately called 911. He saw flames growing near the front of the house, so he ran to the back of the home to locate the occupants.

“As an infantryman, we are trained to act calm during intense situations,” Pineda said. “I knew I had to act fast and take action. If I did not do something, people could be hurt or worse.”

Shouting through a window, Pineda made contact with the people inside and directed them to the backyard, away from the flames near the front door. From atop the backyard wall, Pineda helped a teenager climb over into a neighboring

yard. The father of the children handed his 6-year-old son to Pineda, and he handed the child over to his older brother. Pineda then assisted the father over the backyard wall and led them to safety before first responders arrived to combat the blaze.

On the day of the fire, local media reported “a mystery neighbor” helped the family escape the burning home. A witness said Pineda immediately jumped the wall surrounding the backyard to assist the family out of the house.

Pineda has been a member of the Arizona Army National Guard for two years. He attended basic combat training and infantry

school at Fort Benning, Georgia. Training experienced there, such as reacting to enemy contact, helps condition Soldiers like Pineda to critically think and take action during high stress situations.

“I’m just glad I was in the right place at the right time,” Pineda said. “Once the police arrived, I did not want to be in the way, so I provided my contact information to the officer and left. I feel sad that the family’s home was damaged but happy that no one was hurt.”

The City of Peoria Fire Department recently contacted Pineda and is organizing a ceremony to recognize him for his valiant efforts that day.

# SOLDIER INSPIRES LOCAL AT-RISK YOUTH

Story and photos by  
Spc. Wes Parrell

**P**HOENIX – The desire to serve motivates many young Arizonans to enlist in the state’s Army National Guard, and for many of those, the desire compels them to give back on a fulltime basis.

One particular Soldier, Spc. Zachariah Deans, a motor transport operator with the 153rd Brigade Support Battalion, serves between drill weekends as a group leader for at-risk youth at the school he once attended. He said the school and the Army Guard gave him a helping hand as a once troubled

teen and now he’s paying it forward.

“I want to make a difference in the world,” Deans said. “That is all I wanted to do since I was 16 years old.”

Deans grew up in Mesa, where he experienced a turbulent childhood. At 16 he entered an Arizona Child Protective Services program and was enrolled as a student at Canyon State Academy.

Canyon State Academy in Queen Creek, is a residential school program for disadvantaged youth.



Canyon State focuses on education as well as the social and personal skills necessary to succeed in life.

“Canyon State Academy provided me support through encouragement and positive role models,” Deans said. “I experienced success on the football team and built confidence in myself.”

Upon graduation Deans entered the workforce in the food service industry but always felt there was something missing.

“I worked menial jobs but wanted to find a career where I could truly help

people,” he said. “That’s when I decided to join the Arizona Army National Guard.”

Deans soon enlisted and reported to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for basic training which he said instilled in him Army values such as discipline, respect and selfless service.

Using his military training and experience Deans returned to where it all began for him and became a group leader at Canyon State Academy. As a group leader he is the primary direct-care provider for his assigned students — responsible for helping them meet attainable goals.

“I see kids where I use to be,” he said. “Using the Army values I help guide them to a path to be self sufficient, not self destructive.”

Deans said he feels good knowing that each of them can do what he did to make the most out of their lives.

Deans, now married with a 19-month-old daughter, and a son due this fall, said, “I know that I still want to do more, and the Arizona Army National Guard has provided me a foundation to start from.”



# NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

By Ethan M. Riley

1

Make a Plan that identifies family meeting locations, important numbers and includes an out-of-town contact.

2

Prepare a Kit with enough nonperishable food, potable water and prescription medications to last 72 hours. Other suggested kit items include a manual can opener, a flashlight, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, and copies of important documents.

3

Be Informed of preparation drills that your employer, schools and local emergency management office does for potential threats. Stay updated on local and national weather and news, and learn to use everyday technologies such as Internet and mobile phones to stay connected.

4

Inspire Others with your positive preparedness example. Give blood or take a basic first-aid course and invite others to join you. Share what you've learned about personal, and family preparedness and find ways to involve others in the preparations.

In addition to Plan, Prepare, Inquire and Inspire, here are four things you can do to get better prepared.

## SUBMIT A RECIPE TO THE EMERGENCY KIT COOK-OFF

For the fourth straight year, the Emergency Kit Cook-off, [www.EmergencyKitCookOff.org](http://www.EmergencyKitCookOff.org) challenges the community to exercise the contents of their emergency kits. Create a recipe that pairs at least one of this year's featured ingredients with other nonperishables from your kit or pantry. The 2014 Featured Ingredients are chickpeas, canned pumpkin, Instant Ramen noodles, almond milk and dark chocolate.

## COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR OUT-OF-TOWN CONTACT

Start with a family communication plan and inform your out-of-town contact of your plans. An out-of-town contact is somebody who lives in a different town — preferably another state — that your family can call in an emergency. It is their responsibility to relay "safe and well" messages between family members and to help families reunite after an emergency. If you don't have an out-of-town contact look through your contacts for a friend or out-of-town relative who is reliable, and in return, offer to be their out-of-town contact. Update your family communication plan with new information.

## ENTER YOUR HOME ADDRESS INTO THE NATURAL HAZARDS VIEWER

Be informed of the threats to your home and family. Plug your address into the Natural Hazards Viewer, [data.usgin.org/hazardviewer](http://data.usgin.org/hazardviewer), to identify local hazards and learn how to mitigate the impacts on persons and property. The Hazards Viewer maps earth fissures, active faults, and earth epicenters, flood potential and fire risk in Arizona. ADEM partnered with the Arizona Geological Survey to script the mitigation recommendations.

## SHARE INFORMATION WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Inspire others to get prepared. Send National Preparedness Month information to friends, family members and/or coworkers.

One of the best ways to keep your family safe is to keep them prepared.

Everyone has their favorite season. For many Arizonans, that time of year is autumn. Which in our minds unofficially starts Labor Day weekend. September is, after all, when football monopolizes the weekend, days get shorter, kids are in school and temperatures start to drop.

September is also National Preparedness Month, which is a reminder for service members and their families to prepare for possible hazards to include floods, wildfires and the monsoon season.

The Arizona Division of Emergency Management suggests the following steps to prepare for possible disasters:

# MOBILIZATION TRAINING BRANCH SETS THE STANDARD

Story by Sgt. Reba Benally and Spc. Amber Bohlman  
Photos by Sgt. Adrian Borunda

FLORENCE, Arizona - A team of skilled Soldiers rehearse and research months before a deployment in order to train rotations of Guardsmen before they head downrange. Their uniform badges are a testament of their combat experience.

The Mobilization Training Branch Soldiers understand the importance of properly trained Soldiers. A failure to train can lead to deaths on the battlefield.

"I help develop and execute the training for units deploying down range," said 1st Sgt. Justin Zulueta, noncommissioned officer in charge of the MTB. "Since the MTB has been training and deploying Arizona Guard Soldiers, there has not been a single Soldier killed in combat in the Arizona National Guard. I think that is due in part to the professionalism and the incredible amount of effort that all the trainers on this team put into the training that they do, as well as pure dumb luck."

The MTB is mainly based out of the Florence Training Center, north of Florence. The majority of their ranges, equipment and operating systems are located at FTC. The team also trains troops at Camp Navajo, west of Flagstaff, and on occasion Fort Huachuca, near Sierra Vista.

"The training of the MTB far exceeds

those of the active duty components," said 1st Sgt. Michael Major, first sergeant for the 123rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment out of Phoenix, the most recent unit to be trained by the MTB.

"The MTB is much more professional. Their training is harder, and it's what we would want all Soldiers to go through for a basic standard."

The state of Arizona supports many full-time positions, but one that is often overlooked is the MTB. They are a group of handpicked individuals who have a combined expertise and are dedicated to training Soldiers who are preparing to mobilize.

"Most importantly, we are looking for subject matter experts with tactical and technical expertise and the ability to effectively share and train said knowledge," Zulueta said. "Secondly, combat experience and finally general military professionalism and physical fitness."

When the MTB is not training and setting the standard for their trainees, they are maximizing their time and using their resources to maintain their skill sets to compete and help facilitate local and national competitions.

"We did the Best Warrior Competition. We've done both ultimate fitness challenges for the last two years and

the military immersion program," said Staff Sgt. Michael Pisel, an observer controller/trainer for the MTB and a platoon sergeant during drill weekends. "We do all of the little state things."

Their responsibilities range from monitoring weapons qualifications and conducting classes during annual trainings, to helping conduct countrywide events. For example, they helped facilitate the state Female Engagement Team tryouts.

Although the trainers are often away from home for months at a time, that doesn't affect their motivation and the amount of effort they put into their training.

"The best thing for me is when you are training somebody and they're not getting it, then later on the light comes on," Pisel said. "That's the best part."

Each member of the MTB shares their knowledge and new information with each other in order to benefit the team and allow each member to give their all.

"This job is awesome. Everyone on the team is really passionate about what they do and that's what makes the team strong," Pisel said. "Everyone really wants to be here. It's something you never really hear, but everybody does what they're really passionate about."



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A very old Arizona state flag sat on a table for sale at an antiques show in Michigan. An expert on Civil War cloth happened to browse the table, and he recognized the flag was an authentic flag from the early 1900's – shortly after Congress granted Arizona statehood.

This expert had a son in the Arizona Army National Guard and decided to buy the flag for his son.

The nationally renowned antique expert, Dan Stice, is the father of the 158th Combat Service Support Battalion's very own commander, Lt. Col. Kenneth Stice.

"It's a very neat flag. My dad sent it to me last year. I was like 'ah man, if we only would have had it in 2012 at our 100-year anniversary,'" Stice said.

The flag is displayed in the foyer of the U.S. Property and Fiscal Office, which is a good place for the roughly 100-year old flag. The Arizona state flag, adopted in 1917, is intricately tied to the history of the Arizona National Guard.

The Arizona National Guard sent a team to the 1910 National Rifle and Pistol Matches at Camp Perry, Ohio. The Arizona team was the only team without any kind of emblem. The Soldiers from the Arizona Territory were embarrassed.

Col. Charles Wilfred Harris was the team

captain and one of the chief designers of the rifle team flag. Harris sketched the design with Rep. Carl Hayden, and Hayden's wife, Nan, sewed the first flag, which was flown at the 1911 National Rifle and Pistol Matches.

Back in Phoenix, some legislators did not like the design. One legislator wanted a gila monster on the young state's flag, while another thought it should have an eagle. Others thought the flag too closely resembled the Japanese flag.

On Feb. 17, 1917 the Arizona legislature adopted the Harris/Hayden design we know today.

According to the North American Vexillogical Association, Col. Harris' design is the 6th best flag design in North America.

Story by

**Sgt. 1st Class Robert Freese**

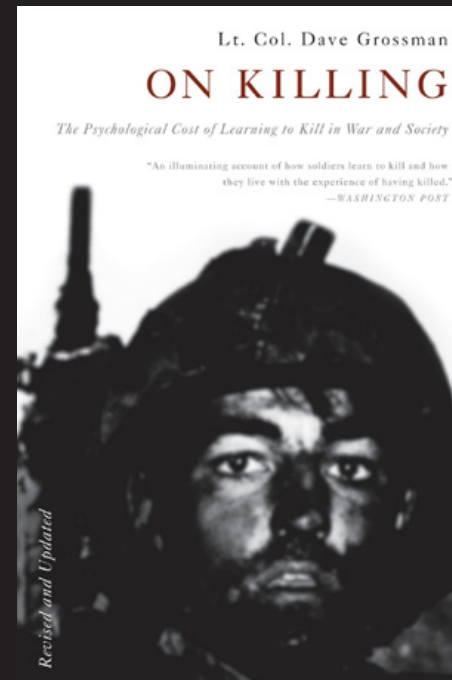
# HISTORY

ARIZONA NATIONAL GUARDSMAN  
DESIGNS STATE FLAG

## IN REVIEW: ON KILLING

by Army Lt. Col. Dave Grossman  
(retired)

Review by 1st Lt. Macario Mora



"Grossman, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, compares the act of killing to sex. He illustrates clearly throughout his study how the two taboo subjects are often overlooked and not given the thorough academic examination they deserve."

I had just landed in Kuwait in 2004, and as a 19 year-old lance corporal, I wondered what I had gotten myself into. Soon we would be in a convoy headed toward the great unknown – at least for me. It was my first and only deployment to Iraq.

My gunnery sergeant noticed I was nervous. I tried hard to hide it. However, I was unable to mask my fear. He asked me what was wrong, and I told him I didn't want to let anyone down. Strangely enough, though I was a Marine, killing someone wasn't on my bucket list.

As we talked on our bus ride, I noticed he was reading "On Killing," by Dave Grossman. He explained the book to me, and I made a mental note to read it – hoping it would alleviate my anxiety. Needless to say, once in country my focus soon turned to the task at hand, which didn't include a whole lot of reading – rather writing.

So, 10 years later I finally read Grossman's study on killing. I should have read it as a young lance corporal. However, even these many years later I found much of the book rather helpful.

Grossman, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, compares the act of killing to sex. He illustrates clearly throughout his study how the two taboo subjects are often overlooked and not given the thorough academic examination they deserve. Grossman even gives a convincing, albeit uncomfortable argument the two acts are not mutually exclusive. However, the reader should keep in mind Grossman's book was published in the mid-90s and much of it is dated; however, to my knowledge the study of killing still isn't in mainstream academia whereas sex has found a following.

In a short article I couldn't even begin to brush the surface of Grossman's in-depth look into that most primal of instincts. There are many takeaways, most notably the great lengths to which many Soldiers go to not kill their "enemy."

The book alludes to many examples throughout history that illustrate human beings – at least sane folks – often cannot commit themselves to killing another, even at the cost of their own lives. For example, Grossman's sites a study conducted during World War

II that concluded only 5-15 percent of Soldiers actually fired their weapons at the enemy when given the opportunity. Another great example is the 20,000 or so muskets recovered from the Battle of Gettysburg that were loaded more than once, which provides evidence many Soldiers never actually fired their weapons, but simply went through the motions.

Grossman's study also shows that with enough conditioning Soldiers' willingness to kill another human can rise dramatically. During Vietnam, for example, Soldiers had a 90-95 percent fire rate. Grossman also goes on to explain how dehumanizing the enemy can increase a Soldier's willingness to kill. This can be illustrated by the use of derogatory language to describe the enemy such as Krauts, Gooks and the modern day Hadjis.

The book's final takeaway is Grossman's look into the psychiatry of killing. He estimates, through various studies, that roughly 98 percent of Soldiers will sustain some sort of psychiatric malady when confronted with prolonged combat. The other 2 percent are psychopaths who not surprisingly excel in war.

The book was an easy read that mostly held my attention. Unfortunately, Grossman dedicated the last chapter to his insistence that video games and T.V. would desensitize the youth of America, essentially turning them into a bunch of violent psychopaths. Well, that hasn't exactly panned out and seems a bit silly, but this is in retrospect.

Grossman states at the beginning of his book that he himself hasn't killed in combat, but what really makes this study so relevant and fascinating is Grossman's use of antidotes given by combat veterans spanning many wars. This book is on the Chief of Staff's reading list and after reading it I understand why. The act of killing and its impact on Soldiers hasn't changed. Grossman's study helped me cope with past experiences and would most certainly help to bring closure or at least a bit of understanding to many of the hardened combat veterans of the past decade.



Photo by Army Spc. Wes Parrell

# PARTING SHOT

THE NEW  
**ARIZONA**

ARMY SGT. LAURA CRABTREE ASSISTS ARMY STAFF SGT. STEVE JONES FROM THE 363RD EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL COMPANY WITH SECURING HIS BOMB SUIT DURING TRAINING AT THE POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, HAWAII.

**ROUGH  
RIDER**