



GMG



Green Mountain Guard | Spring 2015

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ON THE COVER



Pfc. Thomas Collier, 131st Engineer Company, operates an excavator at Camp Moussa Diom, Bargny, Senegal, Feb. 17, 2015. The 131st Engineer Company is in Senegal to build a humanitarian land mine detection training range with the Senegalese armed forces during their annual training. Senegal is one of Vermont's state partners in the Partnership Program. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

STAFF

ADJUTANT GENERAL
MAJ. GEN. STEVEN CRAY

EDITORS
MAJ. CHRISTOPHER GOOKIN
CAPT. DYANA ALLEN

LAYOUT/DESIGN
TECH. SGT. SARAH MATTISON

STAFF WRITERS/PHOTOGRAPHERS
JFHQ, STATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS
158TH FIGHTER WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS
172ND PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

MESSAGE FROM THE TAG

Maj. Gen. Steven Cray, The Adjutant General

STRENGTH

Recruiting young men and women into our ranks of the Vermont National Guard is our number one priority. Why you might ask is this a priority over training or maintaining our equipment? Because without the required number of soldiers and airmen we can't effectively train or accomplish our assigned missions. The Vermont National Guard is always looking for men and women who want to serve their state and nation in a very special way. I believe people join our ranks to serve in a professional organization that values who they are as a person and their contributions to the group. It is often said that "The highest of distinctions is service to others". I believe that is very true and certainly true of our men and women in uniform.



The best recruiters in an organization are the personnel themselves. The most success we have in attracting new recruits comes from our internal lead program. In most cases if we can attract a person to come see what the National Guard does and meet other soldiers and airmen, the more likely they will join our ranks. Recruiting young men and women into the National Guard is not an easy task. There are many factors and many competing interests to recruiting a new soldier or airmen. Our full time recruiters work very hard and can't do it alone. I have said many times that recruiting is a team sport and that it is everyone's job to keep our strength as high as possible. I am so proud to lead the men and women of the Vermont National Guard and I want more people to experience this profession of service. Please help me keep the Vermont National Guard strong!



VOLUME 16, ISSUE 1

IN & AROUND

VTARNG



ABOVE: Sgt. Josh Lacasse, survey team member, 15th Civil Support Team, finishes the 5k ruck march during the Vermont Best Warrior Competition at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., March 22, 2015. Vermont Soldiers also competed in a variety of Solder tasks in order to move onto the Regional competition in May. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

LEFT: U.S. Soldiers with the Vermont National Guard's 40th Army Band perform at the Vermont State House in Montpelier, Vt., January 14, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



LEFT: Soldiers with Alpha Company, 3-172, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) move toward an objective during annual training at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., January 12, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)

BELOW: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ian Macknair, a medic and readiness non-commissioned officer, C Company (Medical), 186th Brigade Support Battalion, Vermont Army National Guard, instructs cadets from the University of Vermont's (UVM) Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) on the process of packaging a patient into a Sked and hoist operations, in Winooski, Vt., March 3, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



IN & AROUND

VTANG



LEFT: Senior Airman Adam Hagmaier, an F-16 Fighting Falcon electronic warfare systems journeyman assigned to the 158th Fighter Wing, Burlington Air National Guard Base, Vt., prepares to attach power cables to an F-16 during Red Flag 15-1 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Feb. 4, 2015. Red Flag provides a series of realistic air combat scenarios that will help increase combat readiness and effectiveness. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Thomas Spangler)

BELOW: Airman 1st Class Andrew Galeener, an F-16 Fighting Falcon crew chief assigned to the 158th Fighter Wing, Burlington Air National Guard Base, Vt., marshalls an F-16 during Red Flag 15-1 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Feb. 4, 2015. Red Flag provides a series of air combat scenarios designed to increase air and ground crew combat readiness and effectiveness. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Thomas Spangler)



ABOVE: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Josh Mitchell and Tech. Sgt. Allison Shelp, both F-16 Fighting Falcon avionics technicians assigned to the 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard, perform maintenance on an F-16 during Red Flag 15-1 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Feb. 4, 2015. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Thomas Spangler) (U.S. Air Force photo by Airmen First Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz)



BELOW: Tech. Sgt. Allison Shelp (background), and Staff Sgt. Josh Mitchell, both F-16 Fighting Falcon avionics technicians assigned to the 158th Fighter Wing, Burlington Air National Guard Base, Vt., perform maintenance on an F-16 during Red Flag 15-1 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Feb. 4, 2015. Red Flag missions are conducted on the 2.9 million acres Nevada Test and Training Range with 1,900 possible targets, realistic threat systems and opposing enemy forces. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Thomas Spangler)

Staff Sgt. Terry Boulanger, mechanic, 131st Engineer Co., lifts a bulldozer to remove the front blade for repairs at Camp Moussa Diom, Bargny, Senegal, Feb. 20, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)



MECHANIC IN SENEGAL

BARGNY, Senegal – American ingenuity. Something that can't be explained, can't be taught, and somehow just happens. Staff Sgt. Terry Boulanger showed a group of Senegalese Army engineers his Vermont ingenuity.

"I went out into the bone yard and took a rear service drive light off," said Staff Sgt. Terry Boulanger, mechanic, 131st Engineer Company. "Took the mount out and just got like two 4-foot wires and hooked the positive to the light bulb and the negative to the ground on the bracket. I showed them how to test for power. Hitched it on a battery and the light came on. They can use it for basic trouble shooting because they don't have a test light. I was just thinking one day and I could make one, so I went and did it."

The Senegalese Soldiers working with Boulanger had not seen this before and were amazed at what he did.

"By seeing him do that, we realized that you [U.S.] are complete military," said Sergeant Chef Samba Ba, mechanic, Senegalese Army. "You can do anything.

Usually, when we say military, we work on fighting, but they showed us other ways to be military."

The military is thought of as a fighting force, but the 131st Engineers showed Senegalese soldiers that there is more to the military than just fighting. Boulanger was happy about showing them this trick and the Senegalese were happy as well.

"They were pretty tickled. Pretty impressed. They got it," said Boulanger. "I explained to them you don't have to put negative on battery you can ground it anywhere on machine. They grounded it on different spot and light came on, so I think they got it."

Boulanger didn't stop troubleshooting there. One piece of engineering equipment, Vostosun VSBL30-25 backhoe, hadn't worked in a long time. Staff Sgt. Boulanger looked it over quickly and had an idea to start it.

"It wouldn't start for a long time because of the battery, it only took me like two minutes to know it was the electrical solenoid," said Boulanger. "It

was sticking and wasn't opening to let fuel go through. I reached in and held it open until it started up. It's a temporary fix. They need to replace solenoid. I've had to do this many times before, especially with construction equipment."

The Vermont National Guard Soldiers are in Senegal conducting their annual training. They are building a humanitarian land mine detection training range with the Senegalese. This training range will allow the Senegalese to train their own Soldiers to detect landmines.

"I think it's a good idea to build this," said Boulanger. "I didn't realize there were that many land mines over here. That is not something we worry about it the U.S. It makes sense, it is money well spent."

An operation on this scale requires a lot of heavy equipment and mechanical problems are commonplace. Boulanger is here to make sure the machines keep running, so the engineers can keep working.

"I've fixed their backhoe, the D6 dozer, and made a few tools. If we didn't fix those, they couldn't run. Some are temporary fixes because we don't have the parts, but they are operating. If the equipment can't work, the job doesn't get finished. I've gotten my hands pretty greasy a few days, but it's all part of the job."

He is the man turning wrenches and getting dirty behind the scenes, but when it comes to fixing a problem, his name is the first to be mentioned.

"His expertise has been invaluable to this mission," said Capt. Austin Barber, commander, 131st Engineer Co. "We were having troubles with rental equipment and Senegalese equipment. He was able to craft up some fixes for us to keep on working."

U.S. Soldiers appreciate what he brings to the table and his Senegalese counterparts also have taken notice of what he has done.

"They helped the military in Senegal learn more, add more experience, and how to make things easier and faster," said Samba. "Even though we had problems with communication, the way we

opened up was nice. It was not a problem, we put it all together."

Boulanger continued to work and invent until the last minute. During this time of year, Senegal is very dry. Throughout the entire project it rained once. That light rain lasted only a few minutes. The engineers needed to drive metal posts into the dry hard ground to make a fence and they had no necessary tools to accomplish that task. Boulanger's engineering brain started thinking again.

"I was in bone yard numerous times. They have 20-25 5-ton vehicles out there, so I knew that was about the size of an axle we would need. There happened to be one out there that didn't have any bolts in it, so off it went. I brought it to the Germans and they cut a point on it."

Staff Sgt. Boulanger took a 5-ton vehicle axle and turned it into a nail. The engineers then turned an excavator into a hammer. They created holes in the ground that the fence posts could easily slide into. This completed one of the final stages of the project.

He hopes to continue working with the Senegalese in the future, but if it's not him, he wants someone that can pass on lots of knowledge.

"I would come back again, but I would give somebody else the chance, the opportunity, but I would want it to be someone fairly knowledgeable. I want to send somebody that's been in the military for a couple of years and can pass on lots of experience."

- SSG Nathan Rivard, 172nd PAD



iron chef MRE

- TSgt. Sarah Mattison, JFHQ

What do chicken fajitas, beef stew, chicken with noodles and chili and macaroni have in common? Each is a dining option from the Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) menu and they were also the secret ingredients in the “Iron Chef: MRE” challenge at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt. during the 186th Brigade Support Battalion, Vermont Army National Guard’s annual winter training.

“Every year the Army has a competition called the Connelly, which is for the food service section,” said Sgt. 1st Class Reuben Ouellette, a cook with the 186th BSB Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC). “This competition involves all aspects of food service, from paperwork to setting up and cooking Mobil Kitchen Trailers (MKTs). I thought it would be a morale builder by having the cooks prep an MRE, change it, plate it up, present it in an appealing way and to have a friendly competition.”

In addition to training, the Soldiers from the 186th BSB had an opportunity to showcase their skills and team-up with local culinary students from the Randolph Technical Career Center (RTCC).



“The purpose of this event was to teach garnishing and how to plate the food in an appealing way; most people eat with their eyes and if its not appealing to the eye, most won’t try it,” said Ouellette. “I have been holding this competition for about seven years now and this is the first year we have invited a culinary class from a high school to participate. It is important for our Soldiers to interact with the community, so that they know what it is that we do for training.”

Nine students from RTCC teamed up with four Soldiers, splitting into four different teams; the Falcons, the Warriors, Beefalicious and team Brownie. The actual competition comprised of three parts: preparation of the food, presentation to the board and a question and answer segment. After a safety briefing on the use of MKTs, each team was then given two of the same MREs (selected at random), an hour to prepare a plated dish utilizing ingredients from the MREs and any food and resources they could find in the MKTs.

“Not only does this event give the Soldiers an opportunity to showcase their skills, it also provides the Soldier the chance to mentor young students. The students can become familiar with what it means to be a member of the Vermont Army National Guard,” said Capt. Therese Farrell, Recruiting and Retention Officer for the 186th BSB.

“Providing opportunities for our Soldiers to interact with civilians and bridging the gap between the two is always a good thing. It also showcases a low-density Military Occupational Specialty that often does not get as much press as the infantry or other combat MOSs.”

“I enjoyed getting to participate in this event, it was a new life experience for me,” said Caleb Warren, a senior at RTCC. “I have never worked with an MRE before and it was very enjoyable learning something new to do, creating something original on the spot.”

“I really liked our dish, it was good,” said Warren. “Something that I would have done differently though is add more garnishing and maybe change up the flavor a bit. We worked with the Chicken Fajita meal and it was a little bland at first; but we added salt, pepper and lemon in addition to incorporating bacon and more chicken to the main dish. For our dessert, our MRE came with a brownie and we added apples, cinnamon and sugar to the top.”

“It was a cool experience working with a member of the National Guard,” said Warren. “I could definitely tell Spc. Selena Correa knew what she was doing. She had great ideas and was on top of her game; she knew what to do and what to add to the dish. It definitely helped to have someone there to share ideas. I would definitely want to do a

competition like this again. I feel like it would be good if the school participated in this yearly, learning something new and making people think on the spot is just going to make us better.”

Kris Baran, a senior at RTCC, enlisted in the Vermont National Guard last September as a mechanic. Currently assigned to the Recruit Sustainment Program, he will leave for basic training following his high school graduation in June.

“My experience has been awesome since joining the Vermont National Guard,” said Baran. The best part about serving is creating bonds with other Soldiers and meeting people from different parts of the state. Getting to participate in this competition was a lot of fun too, I really enjoyed getting to work with other units and experiencing the different kinds of training that they do. What I found most challenging about the competition was trying to keep the food warm while traveling from the MKT to the building where we needed to present our dishes.”

After the hour was up, each dish’s temperature checked as part of the evaluation. Then each team took turns reporting to the board and presenting their dishes. In addition, they were each asked a couple technical cooking questions, regarding the preparation of their meals.

“I think this event was a blast! It was different, it was new and it was exciting,” said Sharlene Larkin, a senior at RTCC. “Having only one microwave for all of the teams to share was challenging, but we managed. I think it was fun to team up with a member of the National Guard. It was a little scary at first meeting the board, but it was fun learning that the military has more to offer than what I expected.”

“What I like most about this event was that I got to experience something that most people don’t get to. It was my first time getting to see a National Guard base and it was a really cool experience,” said Benjamin Parrotte, a junior at RTCC. “Teaming up with a military member was helpful and really cool. It was nice to have somebody there that has worked with MREs before and it was a good experience to have someone that works in the military and enjoys cooking. It was a great experience and a lot of fun!”

Sgt. 1st. Class Andrew Courville, a recruiter with the Vermont Army National Guard and a judge for the competition said “As every team presented, we were all really surprised at each dish that came through. There’s not much that you can do with an MRE and they all presented some pretty amazing meals!”

The first place winners, team Brownie, presented a rice, corn and chicken dish topped with bacon, served with corn tortillas. For dessert they had a brownie covered with chopped apples, covered in a cinnamon sugar drizzle.



TOP: U.S. Army Spc. Selena Correa reports to the board and presents her team and their dish.
MIDDLE: Team Falcon’s dish is presented to the board.
BOTTOM: The RTCC students and instructors pose for a photo with U.S. Army Capt. Zachariah Fike and Capt. Therese Farrell.
LEFT: Team Brownie’s plated dessert.
(U.S. Air National Guard photos by TSgt. Sarah Mattison)



VERMONT AIMS HIGH

- A1C Dana Alyce-Schwarz, 158th FW



The Vermont F-16s take to the air as they depart for another mission. Working with Nellis Air Force Base and several visiting units, the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) crew works sixteen hour days between two shifts as they push to ensure the success of the training missions.

This first-hand experience is crucial not only for the pilots, but also for the Airmen who maintain the aircraft. With two sorties each day, the maintainers are able to see the direct impact of their work both in how the aircraft performed during flight and what needs to be addressed before the next flight.

An F-16 Fighting Falcon assigned to the 134th Fighter Squadron, 158th Fighter Wing, South Burlington, Vt., launches during Red Flag 15-1 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Jan. 26, 2015. Red Flag provides an opportunity for Guardsmen aircrew and maintainers to enhance their tactical operational skills alongside units from around the Air Force. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Siuta B. Ika)

“It lets them know their mission is important and that their efforts are critical to the success of Red Flag, but also to the VTANG as a whole,” said 1st Lt. Tom Rolicki, an Intelligence Analyst Officer. “We’re very proud of the success of the VTANG, the willingness of the crews to accept debriefs, to learn how we can set the bar higher. Everyone has really stepped up and that could not have happened without the strong crew of airmen.”

With units from Army, Navy and overseas allies, there is a great deal of overlap in roles. The units have been very supportive of one another, assisting with parts, maintenance and communication of tasks. Having a full complement of aircraft also allows for the VTANG pilots and crew to experience a complete mission, with roles assigned to various aircraft; aggressors (enemy aircraft), strikers (responsible for eliminating targets) and escorts (protecting friendly aircraft from attack).

Missions flown at Red Flag have included a variety of trainings ranging from simulated air-to-air combat and defense, dealing with ground defenses and anti-air attacks, communications, cyber-warfare and preventing ground level sabotage. These different exercises

fit together to create as many practice combat situations as possible, which provides experience and feedback to the VTANG pilots and crew.

“When we fly missions at home,” said Lt. Col. Jeff Palmer, the Operations Support Squadron Commander, “we are limited to our own jets. So we have to work under the assumption of how we would react to other aircraft. With these exercises, we get to have those craft in the air with us. This gives us invaluable experience that we can take into a real-world situation.”

Knowing how their unit performs and where they fit in the tactical planning will allow the members of the VTANG to execute future trainings with greater success. Working with other units also gives useful insight in how Vermont’s assets will help in mission and how we may be deployed.

“The VTANG had a good foundation to work from,” Palmer said. “We’ve been very busy, making the most

of this opportunity. As a unit we have always known how to achieve success and Red Flag will only make us more effective.”

Tech. Sgt. Allison Shelp (background), and Staff Sgt. Josh Mitchell, both F-16 Fighting Falcon avionics technicians perform maintenance on an F-16 during Red Flag 15-1 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Feb. 4, 2015. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Thomas Spangler)



- A1C Dana Alyce-Schwarz, 158th FW

Vermont Air National Guardsmen assigned to the 158th Fighter Wing, perform pre-flight checks before a training mission during Red Flag 15-1 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Feb. 4, 2015. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airmen First Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz)



NELLIS AFB, Nev. – As the heat shimmers off the flight line the roar of jets taking off mixes with the sound of laughter as the members of the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) take a moment to relax between assignments.

Red Flag serves as a training exercise for flight missions and provides valuable experience to Airmen. During this time flight missions must be researched and planned, maintenance is required before and after each flight, and all systems have to be checked before the pilot enters the aircraft.

Temporary Duty Assignments (TDYs) are an essential part of training for the VTANG, particularly for drill status Guardsmen who are often only able perform the traditional one weekend a month.

“When we have a drill weekend, it can be very difficult to get all of our work and trainings completed

in just two days,” said Tech. Sgt. Allison Shelp, an Avionics Technician. “Being here for three weeks has given us the chance to really focus on improving our skills. We see each other so briefly, even within our own offices and workshops. I know that other crews work on the jets, but in avionics I don’t often get to spend time with people from fuels, weapons or the engine shop.”

Along with more time to work, many of the airmen appreciated being able to spend more time with members of the VTANG, making use of their off-duty time to grow closer as a unit and family.

Many people have taken advantage of the local opportunities in Nevada; weekend visits to the Grand Canyon, hiking local mountain paths and seeing popular tourist attractions have been common during the trip. This camaraderie strengthens the VTANG’s already strong community. Between their own assignments,

many members have taken the time to assist other crews with their workload. The Airmen have welcomed the additional responsibilities without hesitation and have taken the opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and skills that will serve to make their performance stronger, both individually and as a unit.

“There’s a strong community amongst the VTANG and you’re seeing that in action here. People are helping each other and looking out for their Wingman,” said SeniorMasterSgt. Jason Guyette, an Inspection Element Supervisor and serving as a Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge. “Leadership has been nothing but impressed with the performance of the VTANG, we’ve been able to go above and beyond the expectations laid out by Red Flag. We’ve had strong success with our missions here and that’s going to make us that much more effective in a real-world situation.”



Soldiers attending the U.S. Army Mountain Warfare School in Jericho, Vt., climb Smugglers' Notch as part of their final phase of the Basic Military Mountaineering Course, in Jeffersonville, Vt., Feb. 19, 2015. Students in the Basic Military Mountaineering course spend two weeks acquiring the skills and knowledge required to operate in mountainous terrain. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)

INTERNSHIP

recruiting & retention

COLCHESTER, Vt. – The Vermont Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion or RRB, has been working closely with several students from the Center for Technology, Essex or CTE, over the last year. It started off as an idea and became a reality very quickly with the help of CTE officials and Recruiting and Retention NCO's in the Vermont Guard.

The internship program allows students from various fields of study at CTE to team up with different departments at Camp Johnson and perform hands-on training with members of the Vermont National Guard.

“Working with the coordinators from CTE we were able to determine which VTARNG sections would coincide with the programs offered at CTE and then we began pairing students up with members of each department,” said Sergeant 1st Class Kevin Wesolow, Vermont Army National Guard Career Counselor. “Since then we have expanded to where we are today.”

To-date the State Public Affairs Office, the RRB Marketing Department and the Combined Support Maintenance Shop or CSMS have worked with 16 students from CTE and of those, two have enlisted and three are strongly considering enlisting the Vermont National Guard.

The Essex Tech Graphic Design and Digital Publishing Course allows students to design projects from conception and ideation, through digital production and preparation, to output in various media.

In collaboration with the State Public Affairs Office, the RRB has worked with two students from Essex Tech over the last year. The first student, Zachary Postalwait, spent half his time with the marketing department and the other half with the Public Affairs Office.

He was unable to be reached for interview, as he graduated from Army Basic Training on January 23 and is on his way to his Advanced Individual Training, AIT, at Fort George G. Meade, MD.

“Although my original intent was to provide the best experience for the CTE students, I believe very much that the program will [continue] produce strong leads for the VTARNG,” said Wesolow.

“I have only had great feedback from students on their experiences on Career Work Experiences with the VTARNG,” said Sarah Knight, Career Development Coordinator, CTE. “Whether or not the students are interested in military careers or not, they feel they are treated with respect and are really treated as individuals with a chance to learn and try their hand at work skills.”

Though the interns are not expected to join the Vermont Army National Guard, Postalwait determined he would begin his career as a public affairs specialist and will be assigned to the 172nd Public Affairs Detachment upon completion of AIT.

“I feel that they gain a more accurate understanding of what the different occupations in the VTARNG do,” said Wesolow. “They are also able to experience a very unique work environment that isn’t always found in the civilian sector. This gives them another example to compare other experiences too as they decide what avenues they want to pursue after High School.”

Both the RRB and CTE intend to continue this program with a third intern and has already begun working with the marketing department.

“I [do] believe that this program will continue on because of the effort that is continuously being contributed, both by the VTARNG and CTE,” said Wesolow. “The program seems to have become a very good resource for CTE and in doing so has also enabled the VTARNG to showcase all that we have to offer.”

The school appreciates that the motivation for the VTARNG is not to recruit – no student has felt any pressure to enlist – but that it exposes them to various career paths, said Knight. Students see the benefits of such an experience as making them more well-rounded individuals.

- 1LT Jace Rivard, 172n PAD

airmen breaking bread

A DUAL ROLE

Volunteering not only in uniform but out of it, Senior Airman Carl Dudley plays a dual role in giving back to the community. Airman Dudley laid the foundation for Airman Breaking Bread (ABB) to begin a Vermont Air National Guard chapter.

While volunteering at an air show in Ohio, Dudley came in contact with the founders of ABB organization. The ABB is an organization that aims to get Airmen to participate by donating food to the local community. Dudley was so moved by the experience that he decided to bring the organization to Vermont.

In its first year at the 158 Fighter Wing, Dudley posted flyers and placed bins in squadrons around base. He managed to gain 469 lbs of food for the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf during the 2014 holiday season.

Dudley and a team of Airmen picked up then delivered the donations via truck to the food shelf.

“We are the first National Guard Base to participate in ABB and its always great when the guardsmen can help out the community in different ways,” said Dudley.

“The ABB program is such a great idea I just wanted to bring it to my own community. You never know when someone may need help. Knowing there are not only Airmen but people out in the community to help can make life easier.”

Master Sgt. Eric Holbrook, of the 158th Fighter Wing Medical Squadron, assisted Dudley by being his senior advisor and guiding him in some decision making for organizing ABB on base. He made sure that senior leadership on base was informed and up to date with the activities involving ABB.

“We collected a lot of food and everything was a huge success” Holbrook said. “Airman Dudley really took control and handled most of the work, I was just there to support and guide him.”

The motto that the ABB group stands for is “We serve our community, our Nation, to impact the World.” It is definitely a motto that Dudley has taken pride in successfully representing. We look forward to new projects from the Vermont Chapter of ABB.

- A1C Jeffrey Tatro, 158th FW



Senior Airman Carl Dudley, 158th Fighter Wing medical squadron, demonstrates how to apply a combat application tourniquet on Airman 1st Class Alex Putnam, 158th Fighter Wing maintenance squadron, Burlington International Airport, South Burlington, Vt., March 7, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman First Class Jeffrey Tatro)

DUAL DEPLOYMENT

BARGNY, Senegal – The state mission and the federal mission, two different worlds that the National Guard reports to. When disaster strikes at home, the National Guard answers the call. When service members need to deploy to another country, the National Guard once again answers the call.

The 131st Engineer Company, Vermont Army National Guard, answered the call twice...in the same week. Vermont Engineer Soldiers deployed to Senegal, Africa to construct a humanitarian land mine detection training range at Camp Mousaa Diom in Bargny.

Senegal is one of Vermont's state partners in the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program and this overseas deployment training has been in the works for months.

When then Soldiers boarded their plane on Feb. 9 to reach Senegal, they worried about delays due to winter storms in Vermont. They missed the storms and arrived without delay. The rest of New England did not avoid the storm.

A February snowstorm pounded New England with snow and Mass. declared a State of Emergency. When Mass. needed help moving snow, the Green Mountain Boys loaded their trucks and headed south.

"The fact that we can be mobilized simultaneously, in places as diverse as downtown Boston and Senegal, speaks volumes about the quality of our units leaders, junior leaders and overall readiness," said Second Lt. Matthew Brosseau, 131st Engineer Co. Boston task force commander.

Even with 22 Soldiers deployed to Senegal, an engineer task force formed quickly and headed to Mass. There were 38 Soldiers plowing, loading, and dumping snow throughout Boston. A mission like that does not come without its challenges.

"One of the biggest challenges that we have been facing while down here it that this is a very urban area," said Staff Sgt. Jesse Blomgren, operations non-commissioned officer.

"Myself and my Soldiers are not very familiar with the area and when you start operating large vehicles and convoys in a dense urban environment it creates challenges. The solution for this has been the

972nd Military Police providing us with support and escorts every day. These hard working Soldiers from the Massachusetts Army National Guard have been absolutely instrumental in the success of our missions. I personally couldn't be happier to be assigned to this mission in Massachusetts."

The 131st Engineer Co. commander, Capt. Austin Barber was in Senegal with his Soldiers and had complete faith in his unit back home, but even 3,700 miles away he was still the man in charge.

"It weighs heavy being so far removed from troops in action," said Barber. "My options for command and control are from guidance and having faith in my officers and NCOs to get the job done. From here I'm still managing, organizing replacement forces and follow on forces, and making wellness calls to the families from Senegal."

One group of Engineers is pushing dirt, rock, and sand. The other is moving snow, ice, and slush. No amount of miles or even the Atlantic Ocean could stop an engineer rivalry from forming.

"To quote 1st Sgt. Beattie, 'We can haul more snow than you can sand'. The two-word response from the troops in Senegal, 'challenge accepted,'" said Barber.

"We aren't trying to do a better job then them [Boston], we are doing a better job," laughed Sgt. Jared Reed, Heavy-equipment operator, Team Senegal. "We're moving snow and they're moving sand," said Brosseau, Team Boston. "We'll have to see who's moved more when everyone is back."

"We are really accomplishing two missions here; its more than moving dirt and building the site," said Spc. Richard Zilski, maintenance engineer, Team Senegal. "We are also learning and teaching. We are setting ourselves up for future missions and learning more. They are just moving snow around. We are changing the landscape."

"Well with regards to the rivalry between the two missions, I will just let the numbers speak for themselves," said Bromgren, Team Boston. "It would be very hard for them to equal the number of equipment hours, man hours, and cubic yards of material moved, but with that being said I couldn't be any more proud of my soldiers on BOTH missions."

When each team is trying to outperform the other, both Boston and Senegal benefit from the hard work. Succeeding on a mission in any environment whether on home soil or abroad is one of the key components of the National Guard.

"These two simultaneous operations are a perfect example of just how diverse and flexible the Soldiers and leaders of the 131st engineers are," said Barber. "The slogan for this campaign is sand and snow."

- SSG Nathan Rivard, 172nd PAD

LEFT: Staff Sgt. Shawn Danaher, construction supervisor, ground guides Sgt. Raymond Rawling, heavy-equipment operator, both with 131st Engineer Company, as he dumps a load of sand into a land mine detection training lane at Camp Moussa Diom, Bargny, Senegal, Feb. 17, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

U.S. Soldiers with Detachment 1, 131st Engineer Company, Vermont Army National Guard assist with snow removal in Braintree, Massachusetts, February 17, 2015. National Guardsmen from Vermont and Maine are supporting their Massachusetts counterparts in responding to recent major snowfalls that have buried areas of the Bay State. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



VTANG PRESENTS YOUNG HEROS AWARD

BURLINGTON, Vt. – On Friday, March 27th Senior Master Sgt. Dennis Mercier and members of the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) visited the Vermont Children's Hospital to honor the most recent Young Heroes Award recipient.

The Non-Commissioned Officer Academy Graduates Association (NCOAGA) sponsors The Young Heroes award program. The program honors children who have displayed courage and bravery while battling life-threatening disease, illness or injuries. The primary goal is to pay tribute to the courage and dignity of real life young heroes whose tremendous life-struggle might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

"It's a way for us to give back," said Mercier, the security forces manager and President of the local chapter of the NCOAGA. "A way to give an opportunity for these young people to be recognized for the hard work and sacrifice they have gone through."

Master Sgt. Peter Chevalier, member of the NCOAGA and the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of Cyber Transport at the VTANG, explained the history of the Young Heroes program with the Vermont Guard goes as far back as the 1980s. The program took a brief hiatus but was renewed in 2006. With close to six awards per year, this was the 53rd award since the program was restarted.

Mercier went on to say how important community involvement is to the National Guard mission at the national level, but also in a local capacity. Recipients and their families are also invited to visit the 158th Fighter Wing for a tour of the facility, bringing the community involvement full circle.

"Without the support from our community we would not be able to accomplish our mission," Mercier said. "The Young Heroes program is not about promoting the VTANG or the military. It's about recognizing how essential the members of our local area are to our success."

The program and base tours are just one way that we can show how we appreciate their support." Chevalier said that of the twenty members of the local NCOAGA chapter, usually four or five will attend a Young Heroes presentation. He also said that the program often has other Airmen volunteer to attend, either because they know the family or are interested in joining the program and continuing to support it.

Children can be referred to the program by family members, friends, hospitals, social workers, support groups, nurses, teachers, physicians or anyone who knows the child and can verify they have faced or are currently facing a life threatening disease or injury. Once a potential recipient has been nominated members of the NCOAGA contact

the child's parents to ensure they have permission to present the award.

"Because of the sensitive nature of the program, we always get permission from the parents or guardians before we move forward," Mercier explained. "Sometimes we're asked not to come, some parents feel it would cause unnecessary stress and would rather their child recover more, but usually we get permission to continue and the way the children light up when they see us is the best part."

As part of the program the recipient is given a medal during a brief military ceremony, they are also awarded a commendation expressing the respect the VTANG and NCOAGA members have for the strength and fortitude the recipient showed during their struggle.

"We're promoting the child and letting them know we recognize what they've fought through," said Mercier. It changes how you see things, that what we do carries an impact. We see how it affects the community and how that, in turn, affects us."

- A1C Dana Alyce-Schwarz, 158th FW



NORTHEAST REGIONAL NETWORK TRAINING SESSION



Vermont Military Personnel Management Air Staff Office hosted the first ever North East Regional Network Training Session at the Vermont Joint Force Headquarters. Many of you may not know what the Military Personnel Management Officer (MPMO) and MPMO Assistant in the Air Staff Office does, I have penned a few of the duties below so you would have some insight.

Although always necessary, but not so glamorous, one of the reasons the MPMO job is exciting is due to the fact that the position is responsible for 01-08 Officer Promotions, Officer Appointments and the final administrative process for Senior Non-Commissioned Officer promotions. It is good to see our deserving Airmen mark a milestone along their military career. Board eligible nominees are always happy to receive an email or phone call from our office for some reason; subsequently a few months after a federal promotion board has convened.

The MPMO is also responsible for General Officer Management, Federal Awards at JFHQ and for State Awards, Wing-wide. They have a piece in waiver packages, TAG endorsement memos for job ads, over grade/excess exception policy requests, MSD extensions, admin boards and G- Series orders to name a few.

New York, Maine, Rhode Island, New Jersey and Vermont attended the training session. The other Northeastern States were unable to make it, but plan on attending the next training session. We met for a social at the American Flat Bread restaurant the evening of

March 18 to network. The following day we convened for a one day training session.

I assigned a topic for each state to brief during the session to include: officer promotions, enlisted promotions, force management, state awards and control grades. Each state manages their curriculums slightly different and use various computer programs to accomplish the task. Learning how each state works with their program and tools to get the end state was the main reason we held this training session.

Many of my counterparts have been in the position three to five years and sharing their experience and knowledge with the other MPMO's increased the effectiveness in each state exponentially. We have scheduled another training session in New York to include all of the Northeastern states. We will include topics that were not discussed during this meeting and my goal is to develop an official Director of Personnel – MPMO council in the Northeast, so MPMO's can network and share ideas.

The training session provided a great opportunity to stay connected with our counterparts and will keep us at the tip of the knowledge spear in the future. I recommend meeting and sharing ideas with your state counterparts you never know what you will learn!

- Lt. Col. John Geno, JFHQ-Air Staff

teamwork

GUARDSMEN TRAIN WITH CADETS

WINOOSKI, Vt. -More than 80 Cadets from the University of Vermont's Reserve Officers' Training Corps participated in a Combat Life Saver training event facilitated by members of the Vermont Army National Guard's C Company (Medical), 186th Brigade Support Battalion.

Over the last three years, this annual event has been valuable to both cadets and medics. Not only does it help to prepare the cadets for their Cadet Leader Course (CLC) after their junior year, but it also allows for the Guardsmen to work with and develop relationships within the community.

"This training event is great because it's beneficial to both units," said Lt. Col. Timothy Knoth, professor of Military Science, Green Mountain Battalion ROTC.

"The Cadets get to interact with junior enlisted soldiers and Non-Commissioned Officers from the National Guard which is one of the components that they might choose to serve in."

"This is prerequisite training for us [the Cadets], but it's also a refresher training for the Soldiers, helping them to develop as small group instructors. It's about teamwork, it's about training, and it's about community. It's the epitome of the relationship that the ROTC and National



U.S. Army Sgt. Zach Brown, a medic, C Company (Medical), 186th Brigade Support Battalion, Vermont Army National Guard, discusses different methods of establishing an airway to members of the University of Vermont's (UVM) Reserve Officers' Training Corps, in Winooski, Vt., March 3, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)

Guard have. We have students who need to learn and they have instructors that need to practice their craft, it's mutually beneficial," Knoth said.

Cadets were divided into four smaller groups and passed through a four stage round-robin allowing for intermittent periods of instruction. Cadets had opportunities at each stage to practice with "hands-on" training to increase their proficiency in a practical manner.

Stage one practiced care under fire with mass casualties and hemorrhage control. Stage two covered airway management and reassessing of interventions. Stage three encompassed Nine-Line medevac requests and preparing for evacuation and stage four dealt with injury description, treatment and prevention for environmental considerations.

"The way that we structured it, we wanted it [the course] to be left didactic and more hands on," said Sgt. Dennis Nunez, a medic with 186th BSB and noncommissioned officer in charge of the instructors for the event. "This way we could verbally instruct on the things that we wanted them to learn, but they were also given the opportunity to get hands on, as well as getting used to doing and seeing it."

"I think this is an awesome way to give and take," said Nunez. "It gives us an opportunity to see the future leaders. We've been doing this for a few years now and two of the new LTs in our unit are actually UVM graduates from this program."

2LTs Nicholas Selig and Ryan Zabinski graduated from the ROTC program in May 2014. Both serve as platoon

leaders with C Company (Medical), 186th Brigade Support Battalion.

Cadet Molly Kalaher, a Cadet and senior nursing student at UVM has been participating in the joint medical trainings for the last three years.

"We have worked with the National Guard since my freshman year and we have always had a great relationship with them," said Kalaher. "It's nice to have Soldiers with outside experience come to the training. Most of those guys have combat patches from doing actual work as medics. As a nursing student, I can't really give enough justice to the teaching they provide. Hands on training is completely different than in a classroom," said Kalaher. "They really hit the nail on the head with teaching us on what is most essential. This is especially important for our

upcoming Joint Leader Training Exercise [JLTX], where we're going to have simulated, realistic scenarios of casualties."

This weekend, the Cadets will have an opportunity to put their newly honed medical skills to the test as they prepare for a joint field training exercise with more than 350 ROTC cadets at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt. UVM, along with their associated schools; Castleton State College, the State University of New York at Plattsburg, Saint Michaels College, Middlebury College and Champlain College will host the University of Massachusetts, and the University of Connecticut in the three-day event.

"This will be a culmination of this year's field training and leadership training. It's a scenario-based exercise that's intended to replicate a mini-operational deployment for them [the Cadets]," said Knoth. "For the seniors, it's a culmination of their leadership, for the juniors it's their last validation exercise before they go to Cadet summer training, and for the underclassmen it's really a chance for them to do small unit tactics for the first time."

- TSgt Sarah Mattison, JFHQ



U.S. Army Sgt. Zach Brown, a medic, C Company (Medical), 186th Brigade Support Battalion, Vermont Army National Guard, demonstrates proper insertion of an oropharyngeal airway to Cadet Danika Ashness, a freshman at the University of Vermont (UVM), Winooski, Vt., March 3, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



TOP RIGHT: Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Cadet Julia Sjoquist, a freshman at the University of Vermont (UVM), practices treating a patient under fire, Winooski, Vt., March 3, 2015.

BOTTOM RIGHT: U.S. Army Sgt. Amanda Comolli, a medic, C Company (Medical), 186th Brigade Support Battalion, Vermont Army National Guard, instructs Cadet Ronan Sefton, a freshman at the University of Vermont (UVM), and Cadet Christopher Devito, a sophomore at Castleton State College, on how to prepare a patient for transport in a Sked, in Winooski, Vt., March 3, 2015.

(U.S. Air National Guard photos by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



Staff Sgt. Shawn Danaher, construction supervisor, ground guides Sgt. Raymond Rawling, heavy-equipment operator, both with 131st Engineer Company, as he dumps a load of sand into a land mine detection training lane at Camp Moussa Diom, Bargny, Senegal, Feb. 17, 2015. The 131st Engineer Company is in Senegal to build a humanitarian land mine detection training range with the Senegalese armed forces. Senegal is one of Vermont's state partners in the Partnership Program. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

VERMONT'S BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

JERICHO, Vt. - As snow fell on the second day of Spring, Soldiers from around Vermont kicked off the 2015 Best Warrior Competition at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vermont. Three Non-Commissioned Officers and two junior enlisted Soldiers battled for the state's top spots.

The oldest competitor, 40-years-old, battled it out with the young guns.

"You have more than a 20-year range in age and probably a 20-year range in experience difference," said Staff Sgt. Adam Maynard, information operations instructor, 3rd Information Operations Battalion, 124th Regiment (Regional Training Institute). "You've got young guys that are fast, but don't have a lot of experience and you have older guys like myself that are not as fast, but we know all the little secrets and tricks and have the experience. You have to use what you have to compete against them and they are using what they have to compete against you. In the end, you just hope you come out on top."

The youngest competitor, 19-years-old, was striving for recognition.

"Anytime as a Specialist, you're walking around a bunch of sergeants major, staff sergeants, and sergeants 1st class, you're trying to prove yourself," said Spc. Mark Viens, 186th Brigade Support Battalion. "It's interesting to be out there, be confident in yourself, and I think you do try to prove yourself."

The Soldiers were evaluated on an Army physical fitness test, weapons qualification, stress shoot, ruck march, land navigation, written test, board review, and a gauntlet of other Soldier tasks during the two-day competition.

Mentors followed their Soldiers throughout the weekend to offer support and advice during the competition. Sgt. 1st Class Paul Morris, who was mentoring Sgt. Shawn Allen, information technology specialist, Joint Force Headquarters, competed in the Regional Best Warrior Competition last year.

"Being able to understand the stresses of the competition and coming back a year later to give pointers to help him [Allen] is great," said Morris. "Tips on ruck marches, the gear, some of the questions being asked during the competition helps him out and takes away some of the stress. He was able to take that knowledge and use it. He studied before the competition, and it helped him out. It also gave me a lot of pride to see him take that and work with that."

The Best Warrior Competition is designed to test a broad spectrum of skills to find Soldiers that exemplify the National Guard.

"I go back to 2009 and 2010 when we were trying to build a total Soldier and it wasn't just about being good at one thing," said Command Sgt. Maj. Toby Quick, Vermont National Guard command sergeant major. "They have to be proficient in all matters. Shoot, move, communicate is how we really started and it just keeps progressing every year, so we are looking for that total Soldier. It is very demanding physical, I'm not going to tell you it's not, but we are also looking for the smart Soldier, who can speak well, present themselves well"

It was a close competition the entire weekend, but at the end of the two days only one enlisted and one NCO could be named Vermont's Best Warrior.

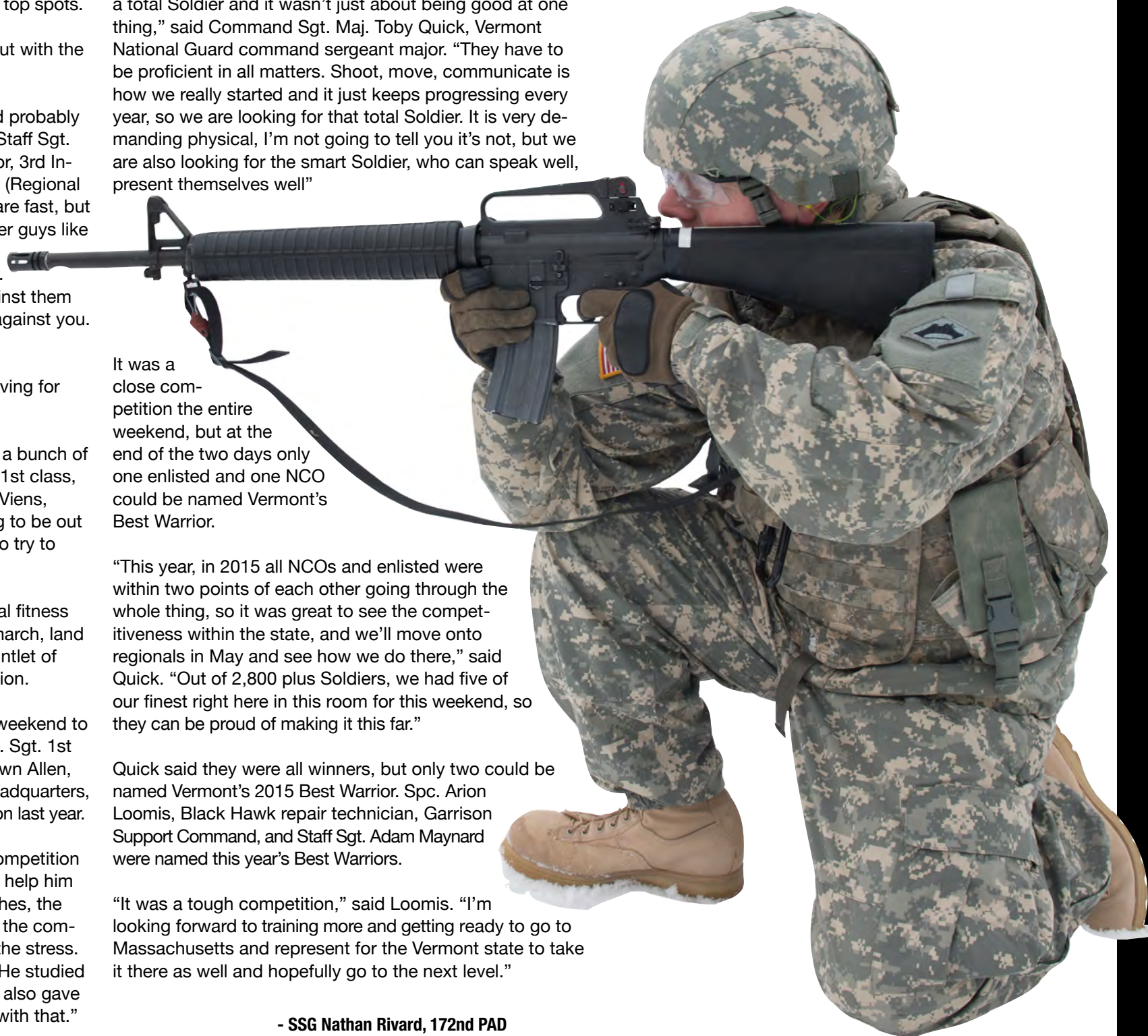
"This year, in 2015 all NCOs and enlisted were within two points of each other going through the whole thing, so it was great to see the competitiveness within the state, and we'll move onto regionals in May and see how we do there," said Quick. "Out of 2,800 plus Soldiers, we had five of our finest right here in this room for this weekend, so they can be proud of making it this far."

Quick said they were all winners, but only two could be named Vermont's 2015 Best Warrior. Spc. Arion Loomis, Black Hawk repair technician, Garrison Support Command, and Staff Sgt. Adam Maynard were named this year's Best Warriors.

"It was a tough competition," said Loomis. "I'm looking forward to training more and getting ready to go to Massachusetts and represent for the Vermont state to take it there as well and hopefully go to the next level."

- SSG Nathan Rivard, 172nd PAD

BELOW: Sgt. Shawn Allen, Joint Force Headquarters, fires during the stress shoot portion of the Vermont Best Warrior Competition at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., March 21, 2015. The stress shoot tests a Soldier's shooting ability after vigorous exercise. Vermont Soldiers compete in a variety of Soldier tasks in order to move onto the Regional competition in May. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)



TOP: Sgt. Josh Lacasse, 15th Civil Support Team, searches the undercarriage of a van during basic Soldier task testing portion of the Vermont Best Warrior Competition.

MIDDLE: Soldiers run up a hill during the stress shoot portion of the Vermont Best Warrior Competition.

BOTTOM: Spc. Mark Viens, 186th Brigade Support Battalion, performs push-ups during the stress shoot portion of the Vermont Best Warrior Competition.

(U.S. Army National Guard photos by SSG Nathan Rivard)

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brian Letourneau, Vermont Army National Guard, practices his marksmanship skills at Camp Ethan Allen Training Center, Jericho, Vt., March 1, 2015. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airmen 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz)



VERMONT PROUD TO HOST BIATHLON

CAMP ETHAN ALLEN, Jericho, Vt. – Over 120 athletes from 24 states gathered in Vermont for the 40th Annual Chief, National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships. Competing over the course of five days the athletes will push themselves to the limit both physically and mentally

Over 120 athletes from 24 states gathered in Vermont for the 40th Annual Chief, National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships. Competing over the course of five days the athletes will push themselves to the limit both physically and mentally.

“It is an honor to welcome so many great athletes who represent our National Guard,” said Maj. Gen. Steven Cray, the Adjutant General of Vermont. “As the Executive Director of the program, I welcome all the Soldiers and Airmen who are hard-working, talented and driven service members representing our states and the National Guard as a whole.”

As a sport the Biathlon is unique in that it combines cross-country skiing, designed to elevate the heart rate, and precision marksmanship, which requires a steady hand and controlled breathing. Athletes ski long distances, typically

averaging 10 kilometers, then transition to shooting targets as small as a golf ball at 50-meter distances. This combination of cardiovascular stress and mental concentration breeds a high caliber of athlete, as well as Soldiers and Airmen. This ability to move quickly, shoot accurately and communicate clearly is essential to mission success.

“There is an extreme level of discipline and focus required,” said Staff Sgt. Sarah Lehto, Head Biathlon Coach for the Vermont National Guard. “Our athletes are very passionate about the sport and we train throughout the year to prepare for the championships. Several of our competitors have gone on to the U.S. National Team and have competed in world cups and the Olympics.”

The National Guard has the Biathlon program to encourage and acknowledge excellence among its members, and to recognize the achievements and contributions of the service members who compete. The program also serves to provide Soldiers and Airmen who are highly physically fit, as well as develop a strong sense of camaraderie and community through healthy competition. The program was turned over to the Vermont Army National Guard in 1973, and as a joint force program is available

to Army and Air National Guard members throughout the country. Top athletes from this program can be selected to become members of more advanced teams and programs. Having sent members to the Olympic team as recently as 2010, the biathlon continues to gather support. Of the 120 competitors, 30 athletes are attending the championship for their first time. The sense of community is strong, with members trading advice on technique and training, ensuring that competitors have all the equipment they need, and generally providing support and encouragement.

“Having so many members compete for their first time is an excellent opportunity,” said Lehto. “All of our athletes are very passionate about the sport, and having the chance to share the competition provides everyone with that much more motivation to push themselves.”

The biathlon opened with the sprint race, an individually timed event for two laps of the course that determines placement in the pursuit race. Later in the week competitors will join their teams for the relay race, and the patrol race where each team has a leader that directs the three others teammates on the course and shooting range. Top performing athletes will have the opportunity to form advanced teams for future events while others will return to their home states and will continue training for next year’s championship.

- A1C Dana Alyce-Schwarz, 158th FW



Sgt. 1st Class Erin Graham, Vermont Army National Guard, competes in the Sprint Race at Camp Ethan Allen Training Center, Jericho, Vt., March 1, 2015. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airmen 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz)



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jesse Downs, a horizontal construction engineer in the Vermont Army National Guard participated, in the 2015 Chief, National Guard Biathlon Championships at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho Vermont. Over 120 athletes competed in this championship over a course of five days. The biathlon consists of skiing distances of 10 kilometers on average then transition to shooting targets at 50 meters that are the size of silver dollars. It is a competition of physical fitness and marksmanship excellence. Staff Sgt Downs is the anchorman of the Vermont Relay team. They finished first in this competition. Originally from Central New York, Downs has been skiing since before high school and for the National Guard since 2000 when he enlisted. Now he competes in biathlon events stateside and internationally. He has competed in the National Guard championships multiple times and won also in the world military games in Europe. His Favorite event in the Biathlon is the Relay Race which combines personal but also team accomplishments. So far this year he has placed fifth in the mens sprint race. He also was selected to participate in this year’s world military games and be apart of the All National Guard team with fellow teammates from Vermont. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by A1C Jeffrey Tatrot)

JERICHO, Vt. - Thursday night, March 5, Maj. Gen. Steven Cray, the Adjutant General of the Vermont National Guard, thanked the more than 120 athletes who had come to Vermont for the 40th Annual Chief National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships. Taking place at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt., the Biathlon ran for five days of racing and shooting competitions.

Earlier in the week Cray had opened the Biathlon by expressing how pleased he was to see such a strong representation from a variety of Guard units with teams arriving from 24 states. Cray also gave a special greeting to the 30 athletes, military and civilian, who were competing at their first championship.

“It’s wonderful to see such a strong sense of community,” Cray said. “To see us all come together, to respect and support each other is what it means to be part of the Guard family.”

Biathlons provide a unique challenge as a sport, consisting of a mix of cross-country skiing followed by precision marksmanship. The drastic switch, from cardiovascular exertion to focused shooting, places added pressure on the athletes who must balance a heightened heart rate with the mental discipline needed for hit their target. Throughout the course athletes must also maintain clear communication with their competitors, calling out when they will be passing someone in order to safely avoid collisions.

This combination, often referred to by the athletes as, “move, shoot and communicate,” neatly summarizes the importance for military members to always be mission ready. For military personnel to be physically fit and able to move quickly, to have the capability to focus on an objective, and to concisely and accurately communicate with teammates.

Biathlon athletes train throughout the year, with many states hosting training camps for their athletes and for visitors. In areas where the lack of snow removes the ability to ski, athletes compensate in a variety of ways; running, roller-skiing, cycling, any activity that provides a similar stress on the heart and lungs.

“It’s a fantastic experience,” said Spc. Tadhg Nakada, a signal support systems specialist with the Alaska National Guard. “I joined the team because I wanted that

extra challenge. It’s a great way to get out and see the sport, see other states and teams. I get to push myself and see how good I can be.”

With a mix of athletes this year, ranging from novices to former Olympians, there is a healthy level of competition throughout the event. Many of the younger athletes appreciate the opportunity to learn from more experienced members, saying how often they have received advice on techniques or training methods. And the more seasoned competitors enjoy seeing the renewed passion for a sport they love.

“I’ve been a Biathlete for over 20 years,” said 1st Sgt. Daniel Westover, an infantry mountaineer with the Vermont National Guard. “I’ve been an Olympian and I’ve competed on a world scale. I retired from competition in ’02, the other retired athletes and I are happy to share our experiences and support the new competitors. Anything we can do to support the event also allows us to support the Guard, and that’s what we’re all here for.”

The Biathlon consisted of four different race style events, two individual and two team events, with a break in the middle for an informal shooting competition. Competitors who place well in the individual events have the opportunity to be considered for both World Cup and Olympic teams and the team events are used to determine which state wins the championship.

The winners of the individual events included; Spc. Jacob Dalberg of the Minnesota National Guard who took first place in the Men’s Sprint and Pursuit races. Sgt. 1st Class Erin Graham of the Vermont National

Guard who took first place in the Women’s Sprint and Pursuit races. Spc. Jordan McElroy of the Vermont National Guard who took first in the Junior Men’s Sprint and Pursuit races. Pfc. Elise Putnam of the Washington National Guard won first place in the Junior Women’s Sprint and Pursuit races.

For the team events the Minnesota National Guard team consisting of; Staff Sgt. Frank Gangi, Sgt. Jacob Dalberg, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Derek Lindberg and Lt. Col. Paul Peterson took first place in the Patrol race. The winning team for the Relay race was the Vermont National Guard team including; Spc. Jordan McElroy, Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Westover, Staff Sgt. Brian Letourneau and Staff Sgt. Jesse Downs. The Vermont National Guard also won first place for the team cups for the second year in a row, a prize awarded to the best overall performing teams.

Cray closed out the event by once again thanking the athletes and support teams for their effort and asking the competitors to push forward with the program as they return to their home states. Cray stressed the importance of what the athletes bring to the Guard; dedication, a strong sense of service, and asked they share that level of commitment with their home units.

“Be the champions we know you are,” said Cray. “The discipline you have displayed this week is a true testament to who you are and what you represent. I ask that you lead by example, share your skills, your knowledge and your enthusiasm for what you do. With your support our organization can only grow and improve.”

- A1C Dana Alyce-Schwarz, 158th FW



Members of the All-Guard Biathlon team poses for a photo at Camp Johnson, Colchester, Vt., March 5, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman First Class Jeffrey Tatro)

FROM HIGH SCHOOL to Senegal

BARGNY, Senegal – Less than two years ago, senior Thomas Collier was sitting in physics class with Mr. Considine, waiting to hear the bell for the last time at Hazen Union High School. Now, Pfc. Thomas Collier is in sunny Senegal building a training site for an engineer school.

“I’m here to build classrooms with two conexes and cover it with a roof. They will be used for classroom instruction before the Senegalese go to the training lanes. They will also be used after training for after action reviews to see where they can improve.”

This is Collier’s first time overseas. The farthest he has been from home with the Vermont National Guard was the Joint Readiness Training Exercise he went to last summer in Fort Polk, Louisiana. Senegal is an enormous change of environment for a first trip out of the country.

“It’s hard getting past the language barrier, but once we do we tend to get a lot done,” he said. “You so get used to everyone speaking English, operating equipment the same, and just doing very similar things. The language definitely takes some getting used to. We are all working on it with simple phrases though.”

In unfamiliar territory Collier still finds similarities between home and Senegal.

“Definitely a culture shock,” he said. You realize how good we have it in America. It feels good to make a difference and help a country that is less fortunate than we are. We are all really hard workers and the Senegalese work just as hard, so they are just like us when it comes to the work site.”

Collier was happy to experience this at such a young age. Culture days were built into the trip in order for the Soldiers



Pfc. Thomas Collier, horizontal construction engineer, 131st Engineer Co., watches and directs Pfc. Antoine Benjamin Baye Ndong as he operates an excavator at Camp Moussa Diom, Bargny, Senegal, Feb. 17, 2015. The 131st Engineer Co. is in Senegal to build a humanitarian land mine detection training range with the Senegalese Armed Forces during their annual training. Senegal is one of Vermont’s state partners in the Partnership Program.

to learn about the countries and it’s history. “It was cool going to Goree Island,” he said. “Learning the history of how the slave trade worked and how it was a problem for more than 300 years. We learn about it in the U.S., but when you’re on an island that sold 20 million slaves, it puts a whole perspective on it.”

“It feels good to make a difference and help a country that is less fortunate than we are.”

Building experience at such a young age is only one of the reasons why Collier feels blessed to come here. He believes what they are doing to help

truly matters. “This job is important because they have landmines here,” Collier said. “We have manuals to train on it, but it’s not something we actually think about in the United States. Building this site will allow them to train people to find and remove landmines making their people safer.”

Looking back at his high school days, he couldn’t image being in Africa and operating heavy-equipment in 80-degree weather in the middle of February.

“Out of everything, I thought I’d do in high school, this was not even close to what I thought. I’m grateful to be here and amazed at what I am doing now. This is way different than sitting in physics class.”

- SSG Nathan Rivard, 172nd PAD

Sgt. Todd Newton, heavy-equipment operator, 131st Engineer Co., operates an excavator as Pfc. Antoine Benjamin Baye Ndong, engineer, Senegalese Army, rides along to watch and learn at Camp Moussa, Bargny, Senegal, Feb. 13, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)



FIRST TIME IN SENEGAL

- SSG Nathan Rivard, 172nd PAD

Something a briefing cannot prepare you for is that first drive through town. “It was like you see in the magazines, but it was real,” said Sgt. Todd Newton, heavy-equipment operator, 131st Engineer Company. “Fruit stands on the side of the road and people walking around. The clay houses that people live in. Seeing it on TV or seeing photos in a magazine is one thing, but when you drive past it, it’s a whole new experience”

This is Newton’s first time leaving the country. The farthest he has been from home is Ft. Polk, LA. He was there last summer with the engineers for the Vermont National Guard’s rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center. Ft. Polk is only 1,715 miles from his Vermont hometown, Marshfield. His job site in Bargny, Senegal is a little more than 3,800 miles away.

“Equipment is equipment no matter where you operate it,” said Newton. “We have sand and rocks in Vermont, the biggest difference is I’m running equipment outside in the middle of February.”

Newton laughed that he was outside and working with no doors on an excavator two days after Valentines Day. The high temperature for the day in Senegal was 82-degrees compared to -16 low in Marshfield.

The 131st Engineer Co., Vermont Army National Guard, is building a Humanitarian Demining Training Practical Exercise Area in Bargny, Senegal.

“With the growing population of Senegal, they’re looking to expand their agriculture and some of the most fertile lands are located in that Casamance region,” said Capt. Austin Barber, commander, 131st Engineer Co. “So right now they are unable to farm some of this terrific fertile land down there. So by establishing this demining assistance program. Their armed forces, contractors, and other neighboring countries will be able to demine these critical areas to develop them for future growth.”

Newton is proud to help in the construction process.

“I love being able to build this site to help people,” he said. “I don’t even know how to explain it. It’s nice to work with them, so they can have a better future. It’s a great experience to know that we are building something that they will use for years to come.”

While he is here for a mission, he is also enjoying the culture.

“I love the culture here. They are all happy with the way they are. To us, it would be living poor, but to them it is not living poor. They are happy with what they have and appreciate it. They feel blessed to have what they have.”

Newton is here for work, but he couldn’t ask for a better experience.

“It is work, but not for me. I mean it is work, but it’s what we do. When you can do this work in 70-80 degree weather in what is the middle of Vermont’s winter, you can’t beat that.”

It doesn’t matter if it’s dirt and rock in Vermont or dirt and rock in Senegal. Newton does what he is trained to do. Push, dig, and clean it up land to make it usable for military operations.

“If we need a hole dug to place metal objects in for their land mine training, I dig it,” said Newton. “If it needs to be moved to the other side of the field, I

move it. And at the end when we are almost finished, I’ll go through and put final touches on it, so it looks good. I’m an engineer and that’s my job, whether it’s here or Vermont.”

He had another first on this mission. He had the chance to run excavator with a Senegalese Soldier, Soldat de l’ere Classe Antoine Benjamin Baye Ndong, sitting right next to him and learning from what he saw. They speak different languages, so hand movements and smiles were the most common communication.

“It was way different than how I normally run excavator. It wasn’t bad, it was just different,” said Newton. “I was sitting in the driver’s seat and Antoine was right there next to me watching every move. They do not get as much practical experience as we get as engineers, so they jump on any chance they get to watch, learn, or practice on the equipment. Its just good training, its nice when you teach them something and you get to see them do it and see it in action.”

His new Senegalese engineering friend was overjoyed to have the chance to work with Newton.

“He increases my experience and there was stuff I didn’t know on the excavator,” said Ndong. “He taught me how to make a turn by putting the bucket down and turning without any pivot.”

That may sound simple, but being able to accomplish that simple turn can be difficult and also preserves the ground that the excavator is on. Ndong learned more than just that.

“He made me discover a new way to handle the engine,” said Ndong. “He improved my way of operating this engine and made my job easier.”

Ndong does not want to stop after one day. He wants to keep going. “I want to work a lot with Newton,” he said. “Especially, Newton. I can operate all of the engines [equipment], but what Newton taught me was something I did not know. And I am going to take what Newton taught me and show those tricks to others.”

Cooperation and mutual exchange of knowledge is one of the goals of the engineers’ mission. Newton also enjoyed this experience working with Senegalese engineers.

“It was a good experience working with them and I hope to do it again in the near future,” said Newton. “This is a good project and I would like to do something similar here again.”

This is the first mission for the 131st Engineers in Senegal, but Newton hopes for future opportunities.

“I would love to come back here for another engineering project. The Senegalese engineers are great to work with. They appreciate what we are doing and they want to learn as much as they can from us. I’d come back here in a second and hopefully the next time I could see how much more they have learned.”

For Newton, it was his first time overseas, but with the potential of future engineering projects in Senegal, he hopes it won’t be his last.



Sgt. Todd Newton, heavy-equipment operator, 131st Engineer Co., poses with Pfc. Antoine Benjamin Baye Ndong, engineer, Senegalese Army at Camp Moussa, Bargny, Senegal, Feb. 13, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

F-16 Fighting Falcons assigned to the 134th Fighter Squadron, Burlington Air National Guard Base, Vt., stand ready on the flightline overlooking the Las Vegas strip prior to playing part in a Red Flag 15-1 night training sortie at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Feb. 4, 2015. During Red Flag exercises, the Nellis flightline can be home to more than 150 U.S. Air Force, joint and coalition aircraft. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Joshua Kleinholz)

