



The Official Magazine of The U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)

# PEACEMAKER

Vol. 1, 2016



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18 Review**

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# PEACEMAKER

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Peacemaker is the official publication of the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) to provide command information to service members and their Families. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the command's Public Affairs Officer, under the provisions of AR 360-1. Contents of Peacemaker are not necessarily official views, nor endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, or the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne). Peacemaker is published quarterly.

**On the cover:** A U.S. Army paratrooper conducts his equipment recovery after a jump from a UH-60 Black Hawk during an airborne operation for Operation Toy Drop on Nijmegen Drop Zone, Ft. Bragg, N.C., Dec. 2, 2015. Hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command, Operation Toy Drop is the world's largest combined airborne operation with seven partner-nation paratroopers participating and allows Soldiers the opportunity to help children in need receive toys for the holidays. (U.S. Army photo by Timothy L. Hale)

**On this page:** U.S. Army paratroopers fill the sky at Sicily Drop Zone for the 18th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Dec. 5, 2015, at Fort Bragg, N.C. Operation Toy Drop is the world's largest combined airborne operation and allows Soldiers the opportunity to help children in need receive toys for the holidays. (U.S. Army photo by Timothy L. Hale)



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# LETTER *from the* COMMANDING GENERAL



**Maj. Gen.  
Daniel R. Ammerman**

This command recently completed our Yearly Training Brief (YTB) in preparation for Training Year 2017. We had great dialogue during the YTB between commanders and most of our partners in readiness to include John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations proponents, our Information Operations proponent and Joint Readiness Training Center. What was quite evident was that we have come a long way in improving our number one priority of readiness over the past year. However, there was consensus that we are not yet where we need to be. We clearly have the ability to reach our readiness goals and the way ahead is clear. We will deliver the readiness that the Army expects of us and more. The Army, primarily through the geographically aligned Army Service Component Commands, requires us to deliver manned, trained and ready units. Our units need to provide the supported commands with civil affairs, psychological operations, and information operations capabilities.

While many of our units are at full

strength, with both officers and enlisted we have a grade imbalance. We will fix this grade imbalance through emphasis on maximizing quota utilization so our Soldiers are prepared for advancement to fill our mid-grade shortages. We will preserve our investment in our people by continuing our emphasis on retention, re-enlistment and promotion. In addition, we will need the assistance of all Soldiers in our targeted recruiting effort to attract Soldiers in key grades, critical functional expert skills, and foreign language. Our local relationships with Recruiters and Army Reserve Careers Division will assist us with this targeted recruiting.

We have money for schools this year, we need to fill 100 percent of our school quotas/seats for DMOSQ, Professional Military Education (PME), Airborne, Jumpmaster, and other critical courses that our Soldiers need to function effectively in their duty position. The foundation of a ready unit is Soldiers who are qualified in their MOS. That is because when units are called upon to deploy, they typically can only take qualified Soldiers. Between now and year end, I am asking Soldiers who are not DMOSQ or need PME to push to get these complete so you can be a contributing member of your unit. Both of these are important so you can improve your technical skill as a Soldier and increase your abilities as a leader to continue to progress toward your full potential. We have the school funds to send many of our Soldiers to DMOSQ and PME schools now and the situation might not be so favorable next year. Towards this goal, we need Soldiers to expeditiously complete their distance learning (DL) modules of their courses and first line leaders to assist them with this goal as well as ensuring Soldiers receive their earned compensation for DL.

***“Our NCOs must be experts in training execution. Our readiness is dependent on a trained, engaged, caring and empowered NCO Corps.”***

And of course those Soldiers must also be ready so we will continue to emphasize unit training and the medical and dental health of the force. While leader development must be part of everything we do, that is especially true of unit training. Unit training provides the opportunity for mission command as well as coaching and mentoring opportunities as subordinate leaders do their own planning and execution. Our NCOs must be experts in training execution. Our readiness is dependent on a trained, engaged, caring and empowered NCO Corps.

We must bid farewell to a couple of our senior leaders within USACAPOC(A). We are losing some great and talented senior leadership to retirement in Col. Bjorn Anderson, Col. Bill Grimes, Col. Bob Mason, Col. Phil Rosso and Command Sgt. Maj. James Helms. These exceptionally talented leaders will be greatly missed.

Lastly, congratulations to Brig. Gen. Sele, Brig. Gen. Mason, Brig. Gen. Coggins, Sgt. Maj. Bennett, Command Sgt. Maj. Schoenberger on their recent selection for advancement

to new assignments of increased responsibilities.

In closing, demand for our critical engagement enabling capabilities has been increasing. We must be ready not only because the Army and Joint Force demand it but our Soldiers deserve it. I continue to appreciate the talent, commitment and service of our Soldiers and Families. Thank you for continuing to proudly serve in the Army Reserve for the security of our great nation.



# LETTER *from the* COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

*“I challenge each and every one of you to make it your personal goal this year to improve your own readiness, and the readiness indicators of those in your span of control.”*

I have observed through my unit visits, that we have exceptional Soldiers and leaders in our formations, but we still have work to do. By now you have heard the USACAPOC(A) Commander, Maj. Gen. Ammerman, say readiness is a top priority. You may have heard Gen. Abrams, Forces Command Commander, say his number one priority is readiness, and ‘we need to build readiness.’ Well, leaders and future leaders, we have to become more ready than we have ever been. Our readiness indicators from the personal to the training perspective, are in need of improvement; from Duty Military Occupational Specialty Qualification (DMOSQ), to Professional Military Education (PME,) to exercises, to mobilization. We need to grow our readiness factors by using what we have before us, some plentiful, with many at levels much less that we have ever been used to. From Electronic Based Distance Learning (EBDL- plenty of funding), to mass medical events and the voucher system to address medical readiness, to exercises (only sending small teams to the exercises), now is the time to build readiness, in yourselves and in your units; get your Soldiers prepared to “fight tonight.” This is a readiness mantra that is resonating throughout the Army Reserve. We have to be ready to answer the call to duty and be physically, mentally, spiritually ready to fight. I challenge each and every one of you to make it your personal goal this year to improve

your own readiness, and the readiness indicators of those in your span of control.

In the near future, we face many changes in how our units will look, and we want to keep the best, brightest, most ‘ready’ Soldiers in our units.

Remember, you are in the Army, and one of its systems is to grow and develop leaders. Be ready. Seek positions of greater responsibility; put in promotion packets, volunteer to lead others, and develop your subordinates into leaders. Lead: always.

I look forward to continued unit visits to meet with all of you and to assess your readiness levels.



Command Sgt. Maj.  
Peter Running



# LETTER *from the* CHAPLAIN

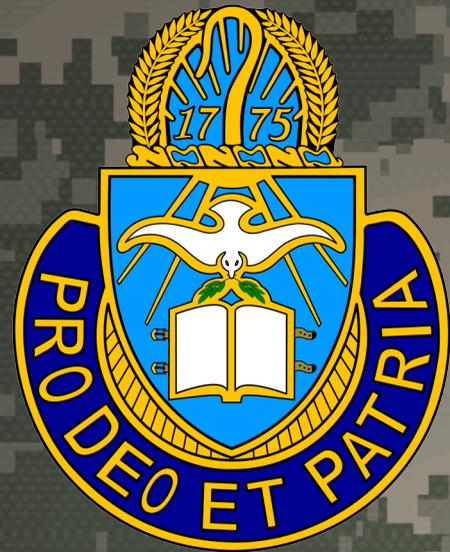
USACAPOC(A) has unfortunately had a number of losses recently and our family has suffered. Many of those both near and far to the respective situations have pondered questions about how something like this could have happened or did I miss something about their battle-buddy. There are questions that do not need answers but one that we often concern ourselves with. We often try to find justifications for matters beyond our control. Chaplains provide valuable resources to help in addressing those questions. Utilizing their tools as pastoral counselors and their empathic ministry, chaplains support the family of the Soldier and those who seek counsel.

The level of trust developed between a chaplain and the Soldiers is especially evident in times where there is a crisis or tragedy. In particular, the loss of a Soldier by any means, including self-harm, and the impact of that loss on the unit, their family and the overall morale and well-being of those with any level of connection directly or indirectly to the soldier. Chaplains and those trained in grief counseling are equipped to provide guidance, support and counseling to those affected by the loss. It is not merely the presence that allows for the support, but the deep sense of connectivity and brotherhood felt by our Army family.

In the responsibilities understood by the Chaplain Corps, chaplains honor their Soldiers both in times of grief and in times of joy. They offer a sense of dignity and provide tools and resources to allow for those to grieve. These tools provide for the resiliency of those affected by those losses and allow for transformative growth. Chaplains provide opportunities

for Soldiers to socialize, interact and receive counseling and support. Often, chaplains are called upon to aid in Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Programs (SHARP) training, suicide prevention and, when necessary, grief and other types of counseling. Chaplains in their capacity as a spiritual advisor have confidential communication enabling Soldiers to freely and openly disclose and discuss matters of conscience, without the fear of repercussion. This allows chaplains the ability to offer pastoral support and counseling, regardless of the predicament or circumstance.

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity”. (Proverbs 17:17) May our USACAPOC (A) family be blessed to allow for our growth and compassion through our adversity; May we suffer less and rejoice more; and may our hearts reach out those we’ve lost and may their memories be looked upon with honor.



CH (Capt.) Michael I. Gisser

# THE RISK COMES

**Staying safe in the cold means staying aware of your personal risk.** Know your limits and plan ahead for all your activities, both on and off duty.



# READY ...OR NOT?

**Ready ... or Not** is a call to action for leaders, Soldiers, Army Civilians and Family members to assess their “readiness” for what lies ahead—the known as well as the unknown.

Throughout our professional and personal lives, events happen all around us. We are often able to shape the outcome of those events, but many times we’re not. Navigating life’s challenges is all about decision-making.

So are **YOU** ready ... or not?



<https://safety.army.mil>



# OPERATION TOY DROP

**Story by  
Sgt. 1st Class Joesph Bicchieri**

FORT BRAGG, N.C. -- Each year the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) runs Operation Toy Drop.

It is a joint collective training and airborne operation established in 1998 by a Civil Affairs paratrooper. When that paratrooper, Sgt. 1st Class Randy Oler, suffered a fatal heart attack on April 20, 2004, while performing jumpmaster duties, his friends and family in the Civil Affairs community ensured the tradition would continue.

The first Operation Toy Drop collected 550 toys

Left: Members of the U.S. Army Parachute Team, the Black Knights, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Parachute Team, the Black Daggers and Dutch Jumpmasters conduct a military free fall airborne operation from a C-27 during Operation Toy Drop at Camp Mackall, N.C., Dec. 10, 2015. Hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Operation Toy Drop is the world's largest combined airborne operation with seven partner-nation paratroopers participating and allows Soldiers the opportunity to help children in need receive toys for the holidays. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Manne)

Sgt. Makenzie Black, an intelligence analyst for the United States Army Civil Affairs Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) and an elf for the 18th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, checks her list on Dec. 3, 2015 while volunteers from the 65th Military Police Company sort donated toys according to gender and age. Operation Toy Drop is the world's largest combined airborne operation with paratroopers from seven partner-nations and allows Soldiers the opportunity to help children in need receive toys for the holidays. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Bicchieri)



Spc. Jeffery Marrero of the 65th Military Police Company (Airborne) bags toys donated by units participating in the 18th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop. Marrero was one of the first six Soldiers to line up on Dec. 3, 2015 for a chance to jump the next day and volunteered to help United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) Soldiers load the donated toys while he waited. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Bicchieri.)



## 4,000 PARATROOPERS. 6,000 TOYS DONATED.

for children in need.

Since then, the operation has expanded to collect more than 6,000 toys in 2014. All of those toys require a lot of sorting by age and gender before they are packed for distribution.

Thousands of toys must be bagged and loaded.

Sgt. 1st Class Catherine Reese, an intelligence analyst with USACAPOC(A), and the "chief elf" on the scene, managed the toy drop-off from the back of a rapidly filling box truck while bicycles are loaded onto a nearby van.

USACAPOC(A) elves consider themselves fortunate, because they aren't working alone.

"We got lucky," said Staff Sgt. Jessica Taylor, an intelligence analyst with USACAPOC(A). "We already have Soldiers in line and they are helping out."

Soldiers from the 65th Military Police Company arrived on the scene at 7:30 am on Dec. 3, 2015, almost 24 hours ahead of the lottery.

They brought their presents to donate and faced the prospect of a chilly day and a colder night just to have the

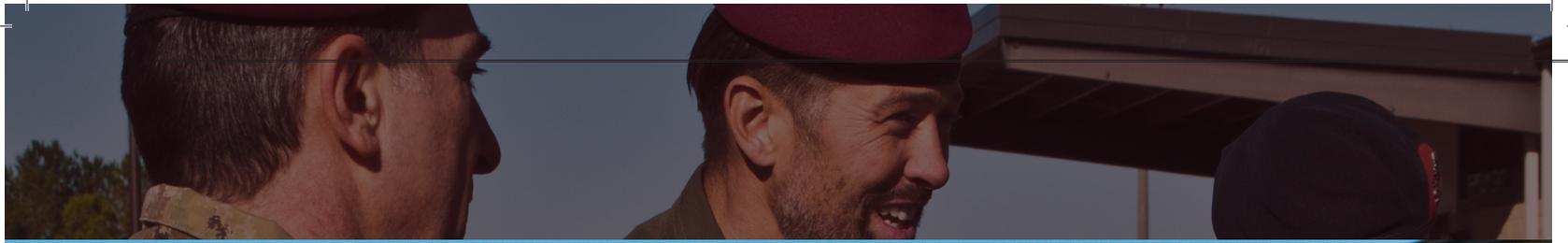
chance to participate in collective training and airborne operations early the next morning.

"I'm very excited. I love to jump," said Spc. Jeffrey Marrero, one of the first six military policemen in line.

The elves expected to see more than 1,000 Soldiers donating toys to enter a lottery for just 600 jump slots. They did not expect to see six of those Soldiers show up before anyone else and immediately stood up to help load presents.

In the words of USACAPOC(A) elf, Sgt. Makenzie Black, "They recruited themselves."

As the elves scurried to make Operation Toy Drop successful, they inspire the Soldiers around them to contribute in the same way Sgt. 1st Class Randy Oler inspired USACAPOC(A) to carry on his legacy.



Left: U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Daniel R. Ammerman, the commanding general of U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), interacts with partner-nation jumpmasters during the 18th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop's Lottery Day on Dec. 3, 2015 at Pope Field, N.C. Operation Toy Drop is the world's largest combined airborne operation with seven allied partner nation paratroopers participating and allows Soldiers the opportunity to help children in need receive toys for the holidays.

# the jumpmasters give back

Story and photos by Spc. Angela Lorden, 362nd  
Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORT BRAGG, N.C. -- Jumpmasters from the Netherlands participated in the 18th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop here during December 2015 to contribute to the airborne community and train with six other partner nations and U.S. jumpmasters.

Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), is one of the largest, combined airborne operations in the world. The event's primary mission was to collect toys from various donators around the Fort Bragg, N.C., community to be distributed to children in need during the holiday season.

Jumpmasters spent the week preparing for Operation Toy Drop's main event, "Jump Day," which happened Dec. 5, 2015. Since then, the jumpmasters have trained and jumped with U.S. paratroopers and partner nations.

"We've gone through how to properly inspect the aircraft, how to load the jumps up and everything and give the commands at each aircraft," said U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Colby Scidmore, a jumpmaster assigned to assist the Netherlands' jumpmasters while they are here for Operation Toy Drop. "I answer any questions that they have regarding the way we do things compared to how they do things, because their commands are a little bit different."

For Sgt. 1st Class Ruud Van Dillen, a jumpmaster from the Netherlands, this was his fifth year coming to America to represent his country for Operation Toy Drop.

"It's a good thing for us to give something back for the paratroopers and the airborne community," Rudd said. "It's also good training for our new jumpmasters because of the different airplanes, which they can get used to from different countries."

The jumpmasters trained on several different types of training platforms. The Boeing C-27, the C-130 Hercules and

the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter were among the types of aircraft used.

"A lot of people, I know from my unit especially, we don't get to see these type of platforms," Scidmore said. "We don't jump from C-27s, UH-60s, or any of the rotary wing platforms. This is a really great experience for them to get out there and try something different. And even for myself, this is my first time being able to be a jumpmaster on these kinds of platforms. It's really great for me, because I can think back and train up all my jumpmasters on how to properly use these platforms."

Experience is a quality Netherlands has brought to the table each year they've participated in Operation Toy Drop, Scidmore said.

"All of them have a couple hundred jumps to over 1,000 jumps," he said. "So they're very experienced and knowledgeable on how they do things."

When the jumpmasters weren't training, they spent free time getting to know one another better, Scidmore said. It's this hospitality that helped make the Dutch jumpmasters feel welcomed.

"[The U.S. jumpmasters] are very willing to help us ... Also after work times, so that's nice," Rudd said. "They are nice. They've shown hospitality."

The Netherlands plans to continue to participate in Operation Toy Drop for years to come, Rudd said.

It's this support from partner nations that has made Operation Toy Drop successful since its inception in 1998. Thanks to all of its contributors, Operation Toy Drop has received and donated over 100,000 toys to underprivileged children.

"It's important to give something back," Rudd said.



Representatives from the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa Army civil affairs battalion and information operations office sign a guest book at the Rwanda Peace Academy Feb. 4, 2016, in Musanze, Rwanda. Rwanda is one of the largest contributors of forces to peacekeeping operations in East Africa. The Ministry of Defense's impact continues to expand as the Rwanda Peace Academy takes on a larger role as an international training, research and education center.

# Preparing for Peace

East Africa has become a cross-section of U.S. forces, allied forces, and foreign humanitarian efforts. It seems excessive. But there is much work to be done to ensure a lasting end to conflict.

Story and photos by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Peter Thompson

KIGALI, RWANDA—Representatives from the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) Army civil affairs battalion and information operations office visited civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) personnel from the Rwanda Defense Force, Feb. 1-4, to share best practices and gather information for future operations between the two

forces.

During the engagement, participants discussed the relationship between CIMIC and information operations, pre-deployment training, and skills and tasks needed to be proficient CIMIC officers.

Rwandan CIMIC officers have many of the same roles and responsibilities as U.S. Army civil affairs. Army civil affairs specialists are responsible for researching civil environments, acting as liaisons between civil components of an operational environment, and conducting security force assistance, while enabling the civil-military operations of the supported commander.

Information operations is responsible for integrating, coordinating and synchronizing information-related capabilities to enable, inform and influence operations.

During the engagement, participants from CJTF-HOA and the RDF discussed each function's operations and organizational structures to determine similarities and differences that will help with creating a future training plan for CIMIC personnel.

"The civil affairs and CIMIC need to share information and best practices because we always need to improve. To improve we need to learn through our differences," said Lt. Col. Jeanne Chantal Ujeneza, RDF Army CIMIC and gender

deputy director. “In the future we will train CIMIC personnel differently, so this helped me to better understand which skills we need to train our officers.”

“Our approaches for civil affairs and public information are similar, which is a good thing,” said U.S. Army Capt. Morgan Shepard, CJTF-HOA information operations planner. “Even though we are like-minded, our resources and organizational structure are different. We want to ensure we are helping them to maximize their resources and send competent people into the field.”

Rwanda is one of the largest contributors of forces to peacekeeping operations in East Africa. The Ministry of Defense’s impact continues to expand as the Rwanda Peace Academy in Musanze takes on a larger role as an international training, research and education center.

This interaction with Rwandan CIMIC forces was the first of four phases intended to strengthen the relationship between CJTF-HOA and RDF and support regional training efforts for peacekeeping operations.

“Phase one was important because it allowed CJTF-HOA and RDF personnel the opportunity to identify the challenges for preparing proficient CIMIC personnel in support of peacekeeping operations,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Nathaniel Mitcavish, CJTF-HOA civil affairs specialist.

During phase two, personnel from the RDF CIMIC will participate in a conference at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, which will address the protection of vulnerable populations

U.S. Army Capt. Morgan Shepard, Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa public information officer, discusses civil military operations and the roles of Public Affairs and Public Information Officers Feb. 2, 2016, at RDF headquarters, Kigali, Rwanda. During the engagement, U.S. Army civil affairs and Rwanda Defense Force Civil Military Co-operation (CIMIC) discussed similarities and differences between the organizations. The RDF will use the knowledge gained during the event to address training and organizational needs for their forces.

and the application of international humanitarian law.

Phases three and four will utilize the established relationships with the RDF, Rwanda Peace Academy, and the existing relationship with the British Peace Support Team-East Africa (BPST-EA) to further support sustainable development of regional partner nations who contribute peacekeepers.

**“Even though we are like-minded, our resources and organizational structure are different.”**

According to Mitcavish, completing the four phases will increase interoperability and synergy among CJTF-HOA, RDF, BPST-EA and Rwanda Peace Academy by supporting regional training efforts for peacekeeping

operations and enabling the impact of those partners to grow.

Rwandan and CJTF-HOA representatives agreed on the importance of an ongoing mutually beneficial partnership to aid in the progression of CIMIC operations.

“There is a great deal of enthusiasm from our leadership that started this process, so we need that enthusiasm to continue to support the work we would like to do,” Shepard said. “I think there will be great value if this relationship is maintained and if we are able to move in a direction that is helpful to the RDF.”

“It doesn’t stop here,” said Capt. Edouard Turatsinze, public relations and communications officer for Rwanda’s Ministry of Defense. “The most important thing is that we have had this meeting. This is the starting point so now we will continue to move forward together.”





Sgt. Brian Duckworth, a combat medic with Charlie Co., 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, prepares for a convoy by setting a M249 light machine gun on top of a high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle on February 17, 2016 at the Ft. Irwin, National Training Center. Civil Affairs teams embedded with Stryker and Explosive Ordnance Device teams while conducting convoy operations during the units NTC rotation.

# An introduction to CONVENTIONAL WARFARE

STORY AND PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. GREGORY WILLIAMS, 353RD CIVIL AFFAIRS COMMAND

FORT IRWIN, NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER - Surrounded by sand and rocks protruding out of the ground like thorns, two Civil Affairs Soldiers prepare for a key leader engagement (KLE) mission.

As the Soldiers approach an abandoned building, a four-man security squad emerges out of a dark corner to greet them. As the group moves out, a observe controller walking five meters back monitors how the Soldiers maneuver through the village watching how Soldiers interact with role players during the aftermath of the previous days scenario. In the Mojave Dessert, civil affairs teams are utilizing skills and doctrine that hasn't been used in the last decade as they adapt to training in conventional warfare exercises. Soldiers with Charlie Company 411th Civil Affairs Battalion conducted civil affairs operations training during the units validation for deployment at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California.

"Civil Affairs is a viable asset in any

aspect of fighting because what we do here is important and we let the civilian population know that we're not here to takeover because all they might see are big guys with big guns," Sgt. Jan-Michael Mohan, a civil affairs non-commissioned officer with Charlie Company, 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, said. "When we go speak to them they don't have that fear anymore." During the units training, civil affairs teams embedded with 3rd Stryker Cavalry Regiment (TF Rifles) groups testing their civil affairs skills on role players who were caught in between the fighting of an opposing army against U.S. forces. As the scenario evolved, U.S. ground troops did not gain favor with the local population as civil affairs teams learned during their KLE's with governing officials.

Monitoring the units training were observe controllers who have gone on multiple deployments focusing on the implementation of civil affairs techniques and Soldiers attitudes. "We're looking to see how dedicated they are to

a mission and how knowledgeable they are with the doctrine," Staff Sgt. Matthew Susko, an observe controller with the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, said. "This mission is different from what civil affairs has traditionally done where it's a force on force decisive action engagement where civil affairs over the past ten years has been COIN-centric. (COIN stands for counter-insurgency.) The change in mission and adapting doctrine are a bit of a challenge, but most teams are stepping up." Susko said the teams were doing a good job integrating civil affairs across their war fighting functions, but there have been challenges along the way.

"They're supporting a heavy number of conventional troops with armor battalions and First Stryker battalions and are engaging an enemy that has equivalent equipment so they're not fighting a counter-insurgency war. The enemy have their own tanks and helicopters so finding the civil affairs niche in this as opposed to guerrilla warfare takes a bit

of adjusting to,” Susko said.

As the battle rhythm continues to become faster for the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion, the unit finds itself constantly on the move going from mission to mission while relocating their tactical operation center (TOC) on a daily basis. Having Reservists train alongside their active duty counterparts within the Army affords both components to build camaraderie, but also challenges Reservists to show how citizen Soldiers can marry both their civilian and military occupations.

Mohan said he was told to “embrace the suck” by Soldiers who’ve passed through NTC before, but the units command group challenged the teams to show the active duty Soldiers that they aren’t to be taken lightly and are prepared to prove their worth.

“The idea of being a “pogue” doesn’t apply to us.” Mohan said. “They didn’t know we were Reservists. Some of them thought that we had to go through a selection process, but we explained that we have to be critical thinkers, intellectuals, and diplomats all at the same time. If these guys have any idea of what civil affairs is now it’s the idea that we’re enablers and we’re here to help them out by us painting a broader picture.”

Susko said having experienced Soldiers and officers to lead the Soldiers is important because conventional war exercises challenge civil affairs troops to focus on their doctrine, warrior tasks & drills, MEDAVAC operations, and combat life savers skills, which are meant to keep them on their toes.

“We’re using doctrine and practicing scenarios that we haven’t been able to practice in the last several decades because we’ve been so focused on counter-insurgency warfare,” Susko said.

“Relearning how to support a unit in a conventional fight is a skill set that’s fallen by the way side after the Middle East and we have to get it back based on current geopolitical situations.”

No matter the mission whether it’s in Africa, Europe, or the Middle East, the 418th is ready to deploy its Soldiers around the world.



Students from the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics in Durham, N.C., donate more than 300 toys to 18th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop on Dec. 3, 2015. Since 2012, the students’ Operation Toy Drop Elves mission has been to support Operation Toy Drop.

## Local Students Bring Christmas Cheer

Story and photos Spc. Angela Lorden,  
362nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORT BRAGG, N.C. - Students from the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics in Durham donated more than 300 toys to the 18th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop on Dec. 3, 2015.

Since 2012, the students’ Operation Toy Drop Elves mission has been to support Operation Toy Drop, an event hosted by the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne). Operation Toy Drop collected toys from various donators around the Fort Bragg, N.C., community to be distributed to children in need this holiday season.

Operation Toy Drop Elves started out as a small project to help Fort Bragg Soldiers carry on their Toy Drop tradition which has grown into a non-profit group that contributes between 300 to 400 toys annually for Operation Toy Drop.

“We actually have a toy drive every year to donate specifically to Operation Toy Drop,” said Sarah Yaun, a student at NCSSM and an “elf” with Operation Toy Drop Elves. “We think it’s a great cause because the holidays are about giving and giving back to the community, which is especially important at our school because we’re tuition-free and we really depend on our community. This is our way of giving back.”

The students collected donations for approximately three weeks. In addition to receiving toy donations, Operation Toy Drop Elves also raised money. The profits were used to purchase toys for Operation Toy Drop.

“Everyone deserves to have a toy for Christmas,” she said.

Thanks to contributors like the students from NCSSM, Operation Toy Drop has raised over 100,000 toys for the community since its inception.



# Picking Up

*the*

# LINGGO

**In many societies, language is a difficult barrier to overcome. But for the 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion, practice makes perfect.**

Story and photos by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Victoria Sneed

Illustration by U.S. Army Sgt. Kimber Gillus

CAMP LEMONNIER, DJIBOUTI - More than 10 members of the 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion, Delta Company, joined local students for an English language discussion group at the Diplomatic Institute in Djibouti on Jan. 12, 2015.

The U.S. military members participated in the intermediate and advanced courses, helping students practice their new language skills with native speakers.

"[Civil Affairs] liaise between the U.S. military and government officials, people of influence, local leaders, religious, civil and military," said U.S. Army Capt. Tommy Stephens, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion team chief. "The majority of these students are working toward positions in government and business."

By increasing the skills of the local populace, civil affairs helps create an environment that enables continued economic growth and sustained broad-based development.

"We aren't here to force our solutions onto our African partners," said Stephens. "We try to help them sustain themselves."

The class is a networking opportunity for both sides of the conversation in both a professional and personal capacity.

"When [U.S. military members] come here, they become friends with us," said Fatouma Djamh, Diplomatic Institute English language student. "It is interesting to know what their life is like, how they live in Djibouti and what they do in our country."

In addition to making acquaintances, military members

gain a sense of accomplishment for helping out the local populace.

"A lot of the people who come here want to use English to improve their lives," said U.S. Army Maj. William Jones, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion chief. "It gives me fulfillment being a part to make their lives better."

The knowledge gained in these exchanges can expand beyond the bounds of the classroom and impact others in the community.

"I have children, and I want to teach them to speak English," said Djamh. "I want for my children to go to university abroad. If they don't speak English, it may be hard for them."

Helping Djiboutians learn English enables them to increase their knowledge, potentially elevating their position in the community.

"A lot of them want to learn English because they believe it will make their lives better," said Jones. "It may give them economic opportunities they never had before."

The course isn't purely about education; it is a chance for military members and Djiboutian locals to learn about each other on a personal level by sharing similarities and differences.

"It was fun to talk with them about our lives," said Stephens. "They want to know more about us and what we do, where we're from or what kind of pets we have. They are so interested in us, and I'm fascinated with them."



Above: Djiboutian students laugh with U.S. military members during an English discussion group at the Diplomatic Institute in Djibouti, Jan. 12, 2016. More than 15 members from the local community participated in the group discussions, improving their English speaking and comprehension skills by interacting with native speakers.



Right: U.S. Army Maj. William Jones, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion team chief, clarifies a phrase for Djiboutian students during an English discussion group at the Diplomatic Institute in Djibouti, Jan. 12, 2016. The English discussion groups not only help students practice their newly acquired language skills with native speakers, but they also acquaint them with U.S. military members on a personal level.



# Preventive Measures

Story and photos by  
U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Daniel  
R. DeCook

Top left: Capt. Bryan Hays, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion Dental Cell Officer in Charge, inspects the molar of a local woman in Ali Sabieh, Djibouti. Top right: Members of the Djibouti Ministry of Health and the 403rd provided more than 10 hours of dental assistance to local villagers.

Bottom left: A Djiboutian woman awaits dental care from Soldiers of the 403rd. Bottom right: A preventive medicine officer shows a group of Djiboutian children proper flossing techniques as part of the Dental Civic Action Program.

Without the Dental Civic Action Program provided via U.S. Africa Command's humanitarian civil assistance program, the residents of Ali Sabieh may go years without dental care.

ALI SABIEH, DJIBOUTI—The 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion, deployed in support of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, worked alongside Djibouti Ministry of Health personnel to provide dental care to villagers and share dental education in Ali Sabieh, Djibouti, Feb. 9-10, 2016.

Funded by U.S. Africa Command's humanitarian civil assistance program, the Dental Civic Action Program (DENTCAP), aims to provide emergency dental procedures, basic extractions and dental education.

Capt. Bryan Hays, 403rd CA BN Dental Cell Officer in charge, and Staff Sgt. Nakisha Susberry, 403rd CA BN dental cell non-commissioned officer in charge, saw more than 45 patients, treating everything from minor tooth pain to severe infection.

Without the DENTCAP team, many of the residents of Ali Sabieh may never receive dental care.

"We really appreciate the American team who came here to make everything we need here easier. It was good for them to be here; we needed the help," said Abdirahman Guelleh, Djibouti Ministry of Health.

The team treated patients for more than 10 hours, and extracted more than 50 teeth. They also understood the need to educate the children of the community on oral hygiene.

As local children gathered around an oversized denture model, Col. Mitch Meyers, preventive medicine officer, gave a class on the proper techniques for brushing, flossing and rinsing.

"Whether it's here or Soldiers back home, without proper oral hygiene you run a high risk for dental infections," said Hays. "Many of our patients came in with severe pain, and we believe that educating them on proper preventative measures can help in the future."

The long day of work not only provided the community an opportunity to receive critical dental care and education, it also gave the civil affairs team a strong sense of accomplishment.

"For me it's been great just to see this environment and to work with the people of Djibouti," said Hays. "I'm pretty beat, my back is worn out, but I am so pleased with what we did here. It's very fulfilling to know we did a lot of good for this community."



# EMERGENCY

## Response

Story and Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Daniel DeCook

**On a busy two-way road packed with motorists about an hour south of Djibouti City, four 18-wheelers sat smashed together, their cabs crushed like soda cans in a recycle bin. Shattered glass covered the streets, and the screams of a trapped man filled the air.**

PORT OF DJIBOUTI - Before coming face-to-face with this tragic accident, members from the 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion, assigned to the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, were en route to Ali Adde, a remote village not far from the Somali border, for a dental civic action program mission to provide basic dental care to local villagers, Feb. 10, 2016.

That mission looked as if it would have to wait when the team approached a traffic jam of more than 40 cargo trucks at stand still. Not far from the Port of Djibouti, which supplies 18 countries and 380 million people with various goods, a large swarm of cargo trucks often block roads and bring traffic to a stand still.

Like many other motorists, the civil affairs team decided to weave in and out of narrow openings to pass the massive trucks blocking the road. That decision would prove invaluable for one man.

As the team approached the middle of the traffic jam, they realized an accident had taken place.

"At first it appeared to be just a rear-ending, but as we got up close I could see one person on the ground," said Sgt. 1st Class Melissa Ferris, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion Delta Company senior medic. "We made the determination to stop and help, and if everyone was ok, we would keep going."

However, a man was trapped in his tractor-trailer and needed medical attention. That's when the civil affairs team including Ferris, a member of the Army Reserves and a 11-year veteran of the Syracuse Police Department, and Sgt. 1st Class Cynthia Price, a volunteer firefighter in her hometown

of Ivyland, Pennsylvania, sprung into action and quickly took over the hectic scene.

Bystanders wrapped chains around the tangled mess of crushed metal to free the man trapped inside as Ferris called for her bag of supplies and began treatment.

While more than 20 bystanders surrounded them, Ferris and Price took charge and quickly had control of the scene.

The training and experience both Ferris and Price gained in the Army and as first responders in their hometowns proved crucial.

"Everyone was just standing around, so I had to take charge," said Ferris. "You have those moments in training where you think this is so repetitive, but then when it happens real-world like this, you take control and do what you can to help."

Between the two, Ferris and Price have responded to countless vehicle accidents in the U.S.

"It was no different than being back home. Being a firefighter and drill sergeant, it runs through your blood," said Price. "Muscle memory kicks in and that's it - we are going to assist in any way we can."

As the man lay on the pavement writhing in pain, Ferris and Price went to work.

After checking for massive bleeding and an open airway, their thoughts turned to saving his eyesight.

"After we immobilized his neck, my main focus was to get the glass that shattered in his face and eyes out safely," said Ferris.

Nearly 20 minutes after arriving at the crash site and

Sgts. 1st Class Melissa Ferris, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion Delta Company senior medic, and Cynthia Price, team sgt., load a victim into an ambulance at the scene of a multi-vehicle accident in Djibouti, Feb. 10, 2016. Ferris is an Army Reservist and a Syracuse, N.Y. police officer. Price, also a Reservist, is from Ivyland, PA. where she is a volunteer firefighter.



U.S. Army Reserve Sgt. 1st Class Melissa Ferris, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion Delta Company senior medic and a 21-year Syracuse police officer, poses for a photo in Syracuse. (Courtesy photo)

working tirelessly treating the victim, the sound of sirens could be heard in the distance.

While the remaining team members cleared a path, Ferris and Price strapped the man to a stretcher and loaded him into the waiting ambulance.

Once the ambulance doors closed, Ferris and Price stood there in the middle of the road. No report to fill out, no names to take down and no witnesses with which to speak. They did exactly what they knew needed to be done.

“It’s the right thing to do. I wouldn’t drive past an accident back home in New York,” said Ferris. “If someone drove off the side of the road in the snow, I’m going to stop and see if they need assistance. It’s just something that I do. It didn’t matter that we were in Africa.”

“It was no different than being back home. If the scene is safe, you go in, you do what you need to do to assist and get them to a hospital. You take care of people,” said Price.

As Ferris and Price stood in the road, dripping sweat with hand covered in blood and dirt, they removed their gloves, and wrapped their arms around each other and hugged.

U.S. Army Reserve Sgt. 1st Class Cynthia Price, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion Delta Company team sergeant and Ivyland Pennsylvania volunteer firefighter poses for a photo in Ivyland, PA. (Courtesy photo)





Capt. Benjamin Riley, a civil affairs operations officer with the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion briefs the units command group on battlefield operations during War Fighter Exercise 16 at Ft. Carlson, CO on Feb. 9, 2016. More than 30 civil affairs Soldiers participated in the exercise in preparation for a deployment to the Horn Of Africa.

# Data: Battlefield of the Future

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Gregory Williams

FORT. CARSON, CO. – In a dimly lit room with loose cables dangling from the ceiling, fingers could be heard pounding away on keyboards as a group of eyes are glued to their computer monitors. On one side of the room, Soldiers run internet searches on land areas while on the other side digital maps and charts are being built using a secret computer system.

With the compiled results, the civil affairs Reservists will use the data to recommend action to Active duty commanders during the exercise. Soldiers with the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion integrated Civil Affairs support during War Fighter Exercise 2016 at Fort Carlson, CO. The purpose of the training was to not only integrate with the 4th Infantry Division, but to also provide a training environment similar to what the unit will encounter when they deploy to the Horn Of Africa.

“This exercise will prepare us to support a taskforce and the scenarios have been tailored made for our future mission,” Capt. Hallie Carter, a current operations officer with the 418th

Civil Affairs Battalion, said. “What we bring to maneuver commanders are recommendations on how to deal with the human dimension of the local environment.”

During the exercise inside the Fort Carson Mission Training Complex (MTC), Soldiers built civil information management plans sending advisory reports to battlefield commanders.

Carter said she was getting invaluable experience during the training because she was learning how to support a division level staff that will help commanders reach their long term goals and mission objectives. “If we didn’t have this training we could be in danger of running into future problems. If you send an ill prepared headquarters element then the unit runs a risk of having to replace Soldiers.”

Besides using wall maps, stacks of report binders, and a sand table, the Army Reserve Soldiers were given the opportunity to train on and use a Command Post of the Future (CPOF) system. CPOF is a software system, which allows mission oversight for commanders by using drag and

Soldiers with the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion navigate through the controls of Command Post Of The Future (CPOF) system during War fighter Exercise 16 at Fort Carlson, CO on Feb. 9, 2016. The CPOF software allows Soldiers to input data and update digital maps in order to present the most up to date information to commanders.



Soldiers with the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion navigate through the controls of Command Post Of The Future (CPOF) system during War Fighter Exercise 16 at Fort Carlson, CO on Feb. 9, 2016. The CPOF software allows Soldiers to input data and update digital maps in order to present the most up to date information to commanders.

drop data elements, and hard data.

“There’s so much more stuff to move around on this system because it compiles detailed information, times, and dates so this definitely beats using a sand table,” Spc. Jacob Cannon, a CIM cell analyst with the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion, said. “Everything is right at our fingertips and it will help commanders see more things clearly, which will help run missions quicker.”

Cannon said commanders are bombarded most of the time with power point slide shows, but having a CPOF system helps civil affairs Soldiers to condense information onto a digital map.

“This system can also allow users to highlight economic issues, and can be used for city planning for displaced refugees. It’s great to have a lot of the different sections come to me because this system makes us more valuable,” Cannon said. Every day of the exercise, the unit chose a different civil affairs Soldier to assist the 4th ID response cell using information from their CPOF system.

As recommendations were presented to the combatant commander, this exercise tested the Army Reserve Soldiers.

“This has been a challenging experience because we have to understand the needs of a division commander and enable site key players to do their job,” Carter said.

“Civil Affairs is not us giving away a bunch of stuff, but helping commanders realize a long term goal. It all has to be about a coordinated effort to achieve the desired end state.”

Connor said this exercise has definitely helped the unit prepare for the challenges they may face in the Horn Of Africa, but he wants the exercise to evolve for civil affairs Soldiers in the future.

“I want to see more hands on training like combining a Civil Military Operation Center (CMOC) with CPOF systems and doing key leader engagement’s with role players,” Connor said. “It’s more than just computers, you have to have that face to face element so you can implement a lot more skill and that helps us bring more to the table.”



Top left and right: U.S. Army Capt. James Quigg, public affairs officer assigned to U.S. Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), prepares for his professional Mixed Martial Arts debut with fellow fighter Da'mon Blackshear.

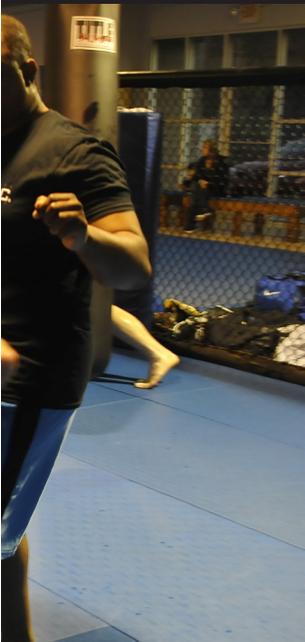
Left and bottom: Coach Sylvester Stevenson trains Quigg for the next level of competition. Mixed Martial Arts is a contact sport built around grappling, striking and other martial arts and combat sports.



# Army Skills, Lifetime Passion

For a USACAPOC(A) Soldier and West Point grad, meeting standards is only part of the mission. Capt. James Quigg wants to rise above boundaries, on and off the battlefield.

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Crofoot





AUGUSTA, GA.— Army mixed martial arts and hand to hand combat is something all Soldiers learn, and retrain on constantly. These are skills that can be the difference between life and death in certain situations overseas. The problem is that most Soldiers don't get this training that often, and become rusty on the techniques.

For Army Reserve Capt. James Quiqq, a public affairs officer with United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) out of Fort Bragg, N.C., a simple college requirement rekindled an old passion and inspired a new life goal.

“Going to college at West Point, in our summers we were required to do a military detail - in my case that meant taking a grappling with strikes class (so trying to get submissions while you're also trying to hit them in the face and body) then learning a self-defense curriculum and teaching it the incoming freshmen and incoming sophomores for that year. The next year I had to do a military school, and I was fortunate enough to get to do Combatives level 1 and level 2.”

For Quigg, this was training he was already very comfortable with.

“I'd been wrestling for so long, and I loved the challenging, competitive nature,” Quigg said. “When I got to college and they wouldn't let me try for the wrestling team, I got into doing jiu jitsu. When they told me it was like wrestling, but most of the “potentially dangerous” moves were the whole point of the sport, I was even more convinced this was something I really wanted to do. I love fighting a living breathing opponent responding to my actions in real time. I love testing my skills against a guy who has sweat and bled and worked to hone his skills just like I have.”

The world of Mixed Martial Arts and the military also have many similarities.

“One of the things my Army training brings to my MMA, is the demand for adaptability. You look at METL tasks and subtasks - those are detailed tasks and there are often a lot of them. When you combine that with limited training time and resources, it means you have to get creative and adapt to

“I love fighting a living breathing opponent responding to my actions in real time. I love testing my skills against a guy who has sweat and bled and worked to hone his skills just like I have.”



Bottom: Quigg takes a respite from intense drills. MMA training is associated with a series of drills and techniques such as grappling and striking.





shifting core tasks. The same is true of MMA,” said Quiqq.

“I’ve certainly never struggled earning the respect of my peers, subordinates, or superiors. The work ethic that combat sports ingrained in me from a young age is generally apparent. I’ve also been able to push through hard Army training by telling myself it’s not as hard as fight camp, and on the other side, I am pushed through tough moments in fight camp by reminding myself of some of my more difficult Army experiences.”

Quiqq went on to win his pro MMA debut in Augusta, GA. Quiqq has already started training for his next fight, and plans on doing it for a while. He one day hopes to open his own gym in his hometown of Sanford, N.C., where he can try and help the sport grow, and maybe help some other Soldiers get into it.

Bottom: Stevenson and Quiqq run through striking drills using focus mitts. Training varies from day to day, with much of the practice focused on overcoming weaknesses in technique and skillset.



## Training

When most people think of training for contact sports, they think of consistent drills from the onset, with predictable and scheduled sets and repetitions. From Capt. Quiqq’s point of view, preparing physically and mentally for an MMA bout involves constant change in training regimen. Here is an example of what his typical training day may look like.

### ISOLATION

These are warm-ups that are focused around combat art style, such as boxing or jiu-jitsu. This can be done on your own, with a punching bag or other equipment, or with a partner.

### PARTNER DRILLS

Using the style from the isolation phase, you practice movesets with another live person.

### LIVE DRILLS/SPARRING

Limited to the techniques you have been practicing for the entire session, you challenge yourself against a live opponent. There are also limitations to what your challenger can do, and usually both competitors are given a specific goal. For example, if your session has been grappling-focused, the goal may be to end the sparring match with a grappling move.

### COOLDOWN

The term speaks for itself, but this time is also taken for the coach overseeing the session to review and advise if needed.

# 1st Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Training Brigade Changes Command

Story and photo by 1st Lt. Fawn Heitman

FORT BRAGG, N.C.—The change of command is a time honored tradition that dates back thousands of years. The change of command is a military tradition that represents a formal transfer of authority and responsibility for a unit from one commanding or flag officer to another. The passing of colors, standards, or ensigns from an outgoing commander to an incoming one ensures that the unit and its Soldiers is never without official leadership, a continuation of trust, and also signifies an allegiance of Soldiers to their unit's commander.

This weekend, the Soldiers of 1st Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Training Brigade, (1TB) experienced this tradition as outgoing Commander Col. Phillip S. Rosso and incoming Commander Col. Michael L. Robertson executed a change of command ceremony at Fort Bragg. The presiding officer for the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Christopher W. Stockel. Command Sgt. Maj. Paulette Williams, sergeant major for the 1TB Command, was also in attendance.

Colonel Michael L. Robertson, who assumed command was born in Pueblo, Colorado and raised Colorado. In his free time likes to brew beer, and ride his road bike. He was commissioned in the Regular Army in 1993 as an infantry officer. He is a graduate of The United States Military Academy, earning a Bachelor's Degree in mechanical engineering. Col. Robertson also possesses a Masters of Arts Degree from Norwich University in Diplomacy.

The highly decorated officer looked forward to taking command of this great unit as he addressed his new Soldiers.

"I know I have big shoes to fill as I take over, but I also know that we have a great command, and the troops in our formations are great at we do. This will be an excellent opportunity for us to continue in supporting other CA and PYSOP units as they prepare to do missions worldwide."

Col. Philip Rosso, a native of Staten Island, N.Y. was the commander of 1TB since 2013, and he had nothing but praise for everyone who supported him during his command.

"I would be a miss if I didn't start by thanking the United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) (USACAPOC[A]) leadership for their mentorship. I would also like to thank my battle buddy the Command Sgt. Major; without his help, the mission would have suffered. I would also like to thank all my Soldiers for an incredible job. Each one of you did your part and made me look good in the process. And last but not least, I would like to thank my family, because without your support, I would never be here."

This was Col. Rosso's final assignment. After 30 years of service, and multiple deployments, he will retire.



Above: Col. Philip Rosso, outgoing commander of the 1st Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Training Brigade, passes command onto incoming commander Col. Michael L. Robertson.



# The Balancing Act

Story by Capt. Ebony Malloy

ATLANTA, GA. -- The lifestyle of a Soldier is no easy feat. Training requirements, deployments, grueling workdays and physical fitness at the break of dawn are a few things Soldiers undergo. Soldiers are often tasked with fulfilling multiple roles in order to contribute to mission success. Capt. Lauren Sharpless, an U.S. Army Reserve military technician with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), is a prime example of how having a can-do attitude, putting forth maximum effort mixed with the drive to tackle various objectives is a fine recipe for triumph.

Sharpless, a West Point graduate, regards herself as a military brat and is a native of Maryland. With Fort Bragg, N.C. being Sharpless's first duty station, nearby Fayetteville is the location she calls home. She explains what sparked her desire to attend the prestigious military academy along with her motivation for joining the elite group of men and women who constitute the foundation of our nation's Armed Forces.

"My mom is really the one who inspired me to become a Soldier. The Army was always a part of my life, so it was a natural decision for me to join the Army. We took a family vacation when I was in the 8th grade to New York and visited West Point while there. Ever since then, I knew that was where I wanted to go and it was the only college I applied to," she said.

With several years of active duty service under her belt as a human resource officer, Sharpless decided that she wanted to seize the opportunity to maintain her Airborne status while being closer to loved ones in the Fayetteville area. Upon transferring her commission from active duty to the Reserves, Sharpless came across a military technician position advertised at Fort Bragg. "I wanted to come back to Fort Bragg because my family is still in the area, and I still wanted to maintain my Airborne status. Being a Paratrooper and a Jumpmaster are things I really enjoy, so I knew I wanted to continue to do that in the Reserves," she said.

For Sharpless, she found that the world of Human Resources and Force Development has multiple similarities, which enabled her to use knowledge gained and experience

in her former military occupational specialty in her current functional area. She stated, "Having been a human resource officer on the active duty side, Force Development relates in many ways, but also gave me the opportunity to learn a different side of the Army structure and manning. My duties as a management analyst are to manage the structure documents for USACAPOC(A) and all its subordinate units, to ensure their accuracy in accordance with the commands needs and mission."

She goes on to express her delight for her Force Development position as she is appreciative of various avenues her job has allotted her to broaden her horizons...not to mention, an ideal work atmosphere to sweeten the deal. "I enjoy my job because it has afforded me the opportunity to learn and grow both as a civilian and as an officer, not to mention the people here are great!" she said.

There are several key aspects that are deep-seated into Soldiers' everyday lives such as the Warrior Ethos, Army Values, the Soldiers' Creed and the ability to be mentally and physically tough. Sharpless discussed an interestingly unique and impressive aspect about her life. She continues to illustrate her versatility as a Soldier, spouse, parent and crossfit competitor. Sharpless discussed her venture into the world of crossfit.

Sharpless stated, "I first got into crossfit while deployed in Afghanistan. Just started trying out different workouts and attempted to learn the movements. Once I redeployed and actually went to a crossfit affiliate and competed against others, then I really start to think I might be good at this at a much higher level." She always sought to be the best at everything she does, and do not like settling for second place. Sharpless stated, "If I'm going to commit to doing something, it is going to be all or nothing."

Having graduated from West Point while serving as an active duty and Reservist officer, Sharpless explained how she manages motherhood and being a spouse along with ensuring her fitness is top-notch in order to succeed as a crossfit competitor. She also expressed how the support of family has played an essential part in her achieving her goals.

“I am beyond fortunate that my husband is also supportive of my goals. We have two young children, ages five and three, so that definitely makes it tough to dedicate so much time to something other than them. I only workout two hours a day, and I make the most of those two hours. With a full-time job and a family with two young children, that’s all I can do,” she said.

Sharpless refuses to allow her jam-packed day-to-day schedule be an excuse for why she can’t accomplish her goals. She stated, “My family supports me and I want to set a good example for my kids....work hard, commit and dedicate yourself, and you can accomplish anything.”

Once Sharpless redeployed, she and her family moved from Fort Campbell, KY back to Fort Bragg, N.C. where she started to get a little more serious about crossfit. “Over the last two years, I’ve continued to work hard, get stronger, work my weaknesses and just get better. I competed in countless local competitions to get the experience competing against different athletes at all levels, and eventually competed in larger events and a national competition as well,” she said. Sharpless is a firm believer that if you want to be better, you have to compete against the best. She stated that there is no way to gauge where you are unless you compete against those who are better.

This past March started the 2016 CrossFit Open and the start of the competitive CrossFit season. It was Sharpless third time competing in the CrossFit Open. In previous years, Sharpless finished 160th and 180th in her region. “That wasn’t good enough for me. I sought out a new coach and began a new training plan and was determined to finish much higher than I did in previous years,” she said. After this year’s CrossFit Open, Sharpless efforts to obtain a new coach along with revamping her training paid off greatly as she placed 31st overall in the South East region.

As a result of her impressive performance, Sharpless was invited to compete individually at the Atlantic Regionals, but decided to go as a team with her younger sister, who finished 24th overall in the region along with four other people from CrossFit North Charleston that were on the team.

Sharpless and her team drove on to take part in another team event at The 2016 Reebok CrossFit Games Atlantic Regional which featured the fittest men, women, and teams from the Mid Atlantic and South East United States. A whopping 48,000 athletes from these two regions entered the Open, but only the top-40 men, 40 women, and 30 six-person teams were invited to compete at the Atlantic Regionals held May 20-22 in Atlanta, Georgia, at the Georgia World Congress Center. The team placed 14th after 3 days of fierce competition. “It was a tremendous experience that definitely left me even more determined and eager to get better. Now that this year’s competitive season is officially over for me, it is time to get to work for next year. My goal is to qualify as an individual next year,” she said.

Sharpless conveyed that there are tough aspects of her life and acknowledge that her supporters are the reason why

she has been able to prevail. “It is definitely tough to balance my family, job and crossfit, but I am super fortunate that my family supports me, my unit and co-workers support me and all my friends support me. Without them, I would not be able to do it,” she said.

As a master-rated Jumpmaster and being air assault qualified, Sharpless explained how her military training aided her in various ways throughout her career, family life and crossfit. “My military training has contributed to my success in crossfit. It helps me push through workouts and has made me mentally strong. Not just my military training, but being a mother as well. Pain is relative, so all my military training and experience as a mom makes it a little easier to push through the pain and being tired during a workout. I don’t ever want to have to explain to my kids why I quit or didn’t give 100 percent, so I’m going to do so every single time,” she said.

Fully aware of her tenacity, can-do attitude and having proved that she’s getting stronger and placing higher and higher with each competition she enters, Sharpless has her eye on the crossfit prize. She stated, “I am going to continue to train for next year’s competitive season and hope to qualify for Regionals as an individual in 2017, with the larger goal of making it to the CrossFit Games. That may take a few more years, though!”



**Top:** Capt. Lauren Sharpless (right) who is assigned to the Force Development section of the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C., displays her overall upper body and lower body strength during the Overhead Squat event at the 2016 Reebok CrossFit Games Atlantic Regional. The three-day competition was held March 20-22 in Atlanta, Ga., at the Georgia World Congress Center. (Photo courtesy of Capt. Lauren Sharpless/USACAPOC(A) Force Development)

