

# GRIZZLY

Official Newsmagazine of the California National Guard

## Earning their spurs

Troopers from the Cal Guard's 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment and the U.K.'s Honourable Artillery Company earn silver spurs during an intense annual training exercise at Camp Roberts

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Cal Guard Green Beret gives first-hand account of Special Forces fight in Afghanistan

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# Leadership Corner

## The importance of marksmanship

Major General David S. Baldwin



Marksmanship is a vital skill for all of us in the Armed Forces. As Soldiers and Airmen, I expect you to hit what you aim at.

Whether you're a truck driver, human resource specialist or infantryman, you're required to be proficient with your assigned weapons system. After all, we're in the Armed Forces—the key word being “armed”.

It can be easy to lose sight of the importance of marksmanship, especially if you're not in a combat arms branch, or while participating in our vital Defense Support of Civil Authority (DSCA) missions. But whatever your military operational specialty, remember that the citizens of our state and nation expect us to defend them with lethal force if need be. You are expected to do your job in a combat environment, defend yourself, and have the ability to fight and defeat the enemy. In today's world, we have no shortage of enemies who wish to do us and our nation harm. This means you, as a Soldier or Airman, need to be a good shooter.

The Cal Guard has proven time and again that we have some of the best shooters in the nation. The California Military Department Combat Shooting Team, known as Team California, has won three consecutive All Army Championships from 2013 to 2015. And we've won the Western Regional Championships from 2012 through 2015. We've got some great shooting talent in our ranks.

Team California has risen to top of the field through

passion, coaching and practice.

Passion puts you into the zone where you're practicing at the limits of your performance and correcting yourself to improve. When you do this long enough and frequently enough, you develop expertise. To get better, you have to challenge yourself and get outside your comfort zone. This is what our top shooters do. They practice their strengths while challenging themselves to improve.

Coaching and good leadership is key to success on the range. A good coach brings out passion and motivation in a shooter and helps sustain it. He or she is a subject-matter expert who knows how to program an effective marksmanship program that can be measured by the unit's ability to put effective fire on a target. Leaders need to identify NCOs in their units who can become coaches to train and assist unit members so that they are prepared and at their best when it's time to hit the range for Individual Weapon Qualification (IWQ). As a formation, we need to look at who has the latent capabilities to plan and execute good training for the unit and implement proper preliminary marksmanship instruction (PMI).

Unit marksmanship training is like physical fitness. It's not something you obtain in one day. It's a perishable skill. You have to put in the work to maintain your edge. The one annual qualification we do a year is not enough. Your marksmanship proficiency depends on

proper training and application of the basic marksmanship fundamentals. Study the field manual for your assigned weapon, dry-fire practice and train with your unit.

We are citizen Soldiers and Airmen, which means, unlike our active duty counterparts, most of us have other jobs and life commitments. This means if we want to become better marksmen, we may need to practice on our own time at civilian shooting ranges. The top shooters on Team California put in countless hours of their own time training to be the best.

And to truly test yourself, attempt to participate in competitive marksmanship whenever you can. Competition pushes us to improve and become better.

The Ninth Annual California Combat Match is Sept. 12-19 at Camp Roberts and Camp San Luis Obispo. This match is where our top shooters are identified from across all our Cal Guard units. If you're not going this year, make it a goal to someday compete in our state match.

At the end of the day, the number one reason we're here is to shoot. If you wear the uniform, this is expected of you. If we don't have a high degree of lethality as an individual Soldier or Airman, or as a military force, we're not a deterrent to our enemies.

Hit your target. That's what it's all about.



Cal Guard Green Berets from Alpha Company, 19th Special Forces Group, deployed to Afghanistan for a six-month mission in the first half of this year to secure tribal areas in Nangarhar Province from ISIS-K. After this valley was secured, the Green Berets reenlisted one of their own. Photo courtesy of A Company, 19th Special Forces Group



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## Submissions

### Articles:

- ★ Articles range from 350 to 2,000 words. All articles should be accompanied by multiple high-resolution images.
- ★ Include first names, last names and military ranks. Always verify spelling.
- ★ Spell out acronyms, abbreviations and full unit designations on first reference.
- ★ Only submit articles that have been approved by your unit's public affairs officer.

### Photographs:

- ★ Highest resolution possible: MB files, not KB.
- ★ No retouched photos, no special effects.
- ★ Include the photographer's name and rank, and a caption: what is happening in the photo, who is pictured and the date and location.

E-mail submissions and feedback to:  
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Cover photo by  
U.K. Warrant Officer 2 Mick Hitch

A Cal Guard medevac helicopter lands on a hill at Camp Roberts in June as a U.K. Soldier from the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) looks on. The HAC and the Cal Guard's 1-18th Cavalry Regiment conducted a large two-week exercise at the camp for their annual training this year.

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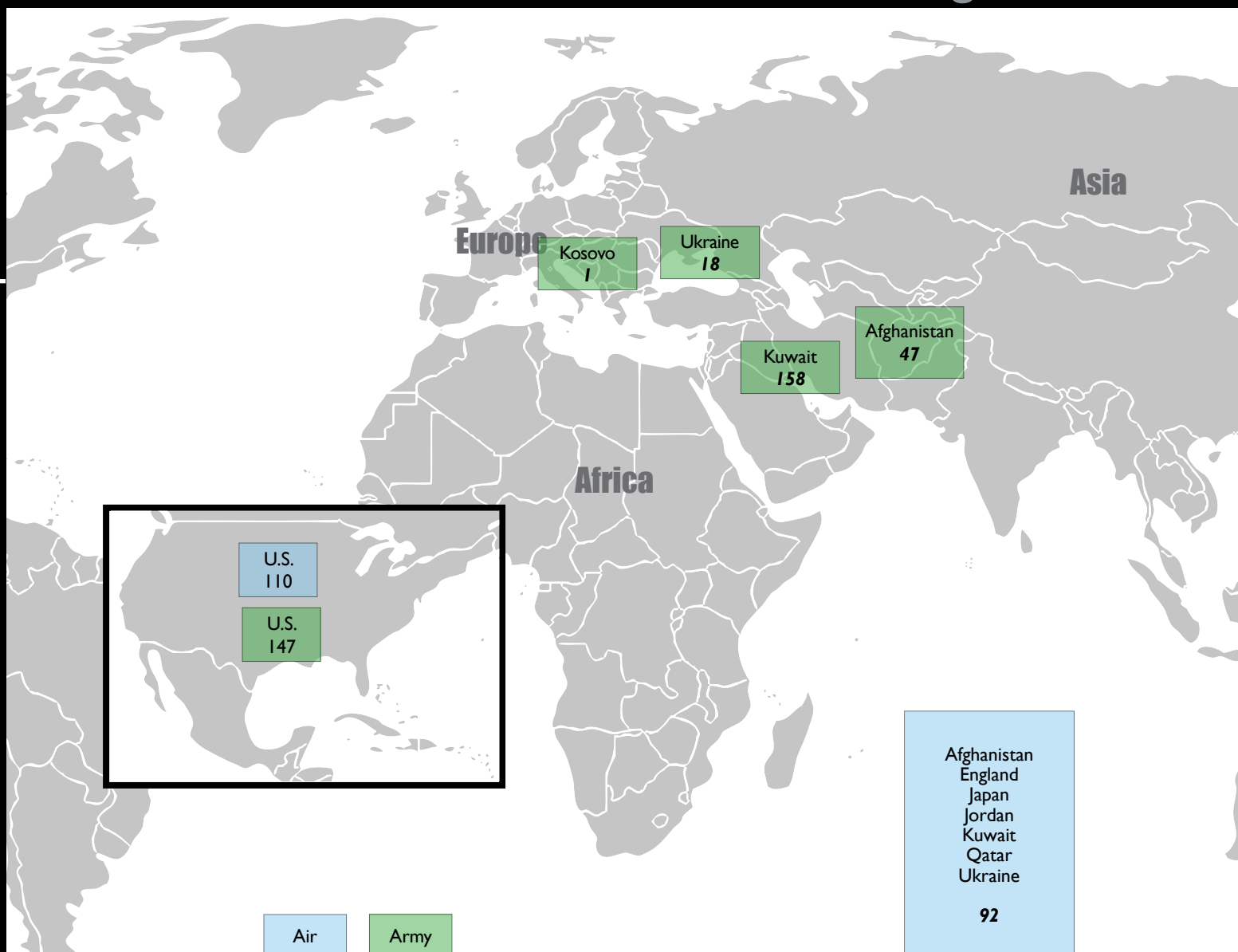
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Lt. Col. Heidi Gibson, 407th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron commander, on June 7 at the 407th Air Expeditionary Group in Southwest Asia. Photo by Senior Airman Ramon A. Adelan

## Blueprint for success: Deployed Air National Guard Airman combines architecture, military careers

By **SENIOR AIRMAN RAMON A. ADELAN**  
470th Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs

Every student is at some point confronted with the question of what they want to be in life.

Many professions top the wishlists and students may aspire to become firefighters, police officers, doctors or any number of other dream occupations. No matter what path they choose, it will take dedication and hard work to get to even just one goal.

Lt. Col. Heidi Gibson not only achieved, but tackles two such impressive careers at the same time. Gibson holds the titles of principal in her very own architecture firm and is the 163rd Civil Engineer Squadron commander with the U.S. Air National Guard at March Air Reserve Base, California. Currently, she is deployed to the 407th Air Expeditionary Group as the commander of the civil engineer squadron there.

"As a young girl, my dream was to become a veterinarian but shortly after volunteering at an animal shelter and seeing animals under distress I quickly changed my mind," Gibson said. "I believe my father encouraged me to become an architect so that he could have an architect 'handy and readily available' at his beck and call. My family was consistently remodeling homes for resale or rent, so I basically grew up with my tool bag on my hip."

Her military journey started with Gibson enlisting upon graduating high school. The Hemet, California, native studied at the California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo graduating in 1994.

After earning her bachelor's degree in architecture, she applied for an officer's position in the civil engineer squadron

at March ARB.

Meanwhile, for three years Gibson interned in San Francisco, where she then began working toward her architectural license. As she gathered experience, she later was licensed and decided to start her own firm.

"I was a captain, had a two year-old child and a newborn baby when I started my firm in 2006," Gibson said. "I do not know what I was thinking at the time, how I thought this would be a good time to start an architectural firm."

While the timing wasn't perfect, Gibson said she went forward with her firm and succeeded against all obstacles -- despite juggling work, military requirements and a brand-new business in a competitive field.

"The largest challenge with owning and running my firm was earning respect from contractors, which is male dominated," Gibson said. "When I would go out to job sites, they would initially assume that I was the secretary coming out to take notes. Once they realized I knew what I was doing and understood construction, they quickly became my best form of marketing."

Specializing in projects ranging widely from wineries and restaurants to religious designs such as a mosque, the quality of her firm's work was quickly recognized in the field.

"The firm grew quickly and I began receiving projects I couldn't do on my own," Gibson recalled. "So I reached out to a college friend to take the leap and join me. She was more than ready to take the risk."

Gibson successfully combined two challenging careers for more than 10 years, which she has used experiences and education to positively attribute to both professions.

"These two aspects of my life have great synergy," Gibson said. "The military has given me great leadership techniques and experiences that I take back with me to the firm. And likewise, my civilian experiences bring ideas to the table that open up solutions that otherwise might not have been thought of by fulltime military personnel that do not have the civilian experiences."

"I deal with many jurisdictions and organizations to get projects passed. These negotiation skills have come in handy," she continued. "I also have to work with many types of engineers to design and build unique structures, therefore these experiences have made it very easy for me to think outside of the box."

At the 407th AEG, Gibson leads a civil engineer team of 260 total-force Airmen, who sustain the base infrastructure and to initiate actions for future contingencies. Despite being halfway around the world, she also continues to manage her business.

"There are many challenges when I deploy," Gibson said. "I'm here as a squadron commander ensuring our engineers are accomplishing everyday tasks while we plan for future growth of this base. I also still must keep in contact with my high-profile clients back home and complete Air War College courses. My plate is full, but it keeps me on my toes daily."

Gibson gives credit to her father who influenced her to set out on the paths she's conquered. He was a local city planning director and a traditional guardsman as the commander of the same March ARB unit she leads today.

"My father told me I wouldn't regret joining the Air National Guard, and he was right," Gibson said. "I absolutely love it. But overall, I continue to serve and lead because I take pride in volunteering to support our nation."



# Cal Guard's Staff Sgt. Brian Campagna named nation's top RRNCO

By COL. (CA) RICK LALOR  
JFTB Public Affairs

It can arguably be stated that outside of combat the most difficult and challenging job in any branch of the military belongs to the recruiter, and that the recruiter's mission is the most critical because without him or her, there simply would be no military.

Be that as it may, there is absolutely no argument as to who is the top Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention NCO (RRNCO) in the nation for FY16. His name is Staff Sgt. Brian Campagna and he belongs to Team Azusa and Alpha Company of the Cal Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion (RRB).

Not only is his selection a huge personal accomplishment for Campagna, it is truly a historic milestone for the RRB as it marks the first time that a California Guard recruiter has achieved top national honors. And to put everything in perspective, there are 129 Recruiting and Retention NCOs in the Cal Guard and approximately 3,600 RRNCOs serving in the Army National Guard across 50 states and four territories. Reaching the pinnacle of his profession was no easy task for Campagna, who

first earned the No. 1 ranking in Alpha Company. He then captured state honors by besting the top RRNCOs representing the other three Cal Guard RRB companies, which earned him the right to compete against the top RRNCOs representing Recruiting and Retention Region VII – including Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada and Guam.

And having outperformed them, one last big step remained – to battle the best-of-the-best RRNCOs representing the other six National Guard Strength Maintenance Regions from across the nation.

It is important to note that this competition was much more than a production contest. Held in Norman, Oklahoma, it was constructed around the "total soldier concept" in which each RRNCO's integrity, credibility, military bearing, professionalism and overall military knowledge of a myriad of subjects were factored into the total assessment.

Each finalist was asked the identical questions to ensure a level playing field, and those questions were "open-ended" so the judging panel could obtain a clear and concise snapshot of each finalist's knowledge and ability to communicate

their answers. Even NCO evaluations, Army Physical Fitness Test scores and results of an Army Service Uniform inspection were included in each finalist's overall judging.

In summing up the grilling that he took from the judging panel—composed of seven command sergeants major—and having survived two days of uncertainty awaiting the results, Campagna shared that the competition had been a "very intense experience," which do doubt was a significant understatement.

"I am so very blessed, and my success was truly a team effort," said Campagna. "This honor is for my team, for my state and for all of the members of the Cal Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion who worked with me and mentored me since I first joined the command in April of 2013.

"Nobody in California has ever done this before, and I am so proud to bring positive recognition to the RRB. Now I want other members of the recruiting team to say that since I was able to achieve this recognition, they can also achieve it!"

Prior to joining the California Army Na-



Staff Sgt. Brian Campagna and Recruiting and Retention Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Vincent Herbert display a mounted saber awarded to Campagna upon his selection as the top Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention NCO in the nation. Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Brian Campagna

tional Guard, Campagna served in the Marine Corps, in law enforcement as a member of the Los Angeles Police Department and the U.S. Marshals Service, and for a celebrity protection agency in the private sector.

"Serving in the National Guard has been the best thing that has ever happened to me," related Campagna, whose enthusiasm and the energy he brings to his profession are contagious and readily apparent to everyone he comes in contact with. "Sure, wearing the recruiter badge can be a 'pressure plate,' but it provides me with a tremendous opportunity to inspire, train, motivate and lead—to have a positive impact on everyone around me. "Recruiting is not just about making the numbers," he concluded. "When you are positive about what you are doing, and you believe in the mission and the great things that our Soldiers do for our country, you have a very real opportunity to help shape the future of our military and National Guard."

"The RRB team accomplished something in FY16 that has never been done in California and it is an honor to serve as the command sergeant major for such a talented group of NCOs and officers," said RRB Command Sgt. Major Vince Herbert. "Staff Sgt. Campagna is the type and caliber of NCO that we are looking to build our foundation on. He is the epitome of an NCO and embodies the 'Be, Know, Do' attitude of the NCO Corps... He proved that in competition amongst the nation's highest achievers.

"Staff Sgt. Campagna's dedication to his service and mission shines in everything he does and I expect nothing but great things for this Soldier in the future."



Staff Sgt. Brian Campagna mentors a prospective Cal Guard recruit in his office at the Azusa Readiness Center. Campagna was named the top Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention NCO in the nation for 2016. Photo by Col. (CA) Rick Lalor

## Cal Guard RRB scores big in FY16 strength maintenance awards

By COL. (CA) RICK LALOR  
JFTB Public Affairs

In addition to Staff Sgt. Brian Campagna being named the Army National Guard's top Recruiting and Retention NCO in the nation, the Cal Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion celebrated a banner year by capturing a number of other prestigious national and regional honors for FY16. These included:

- A certificate of commendation in recognition as the nation's top Recruit Sustainment Program
- Los Angeles MEPS recognized as the top military entrance processing station in the nation
- Capt. Shane Southerland recognized as the top Officer Strength Manager for Recruiting and Retention Region VII

- Staff Sgt. Colin Urbanski recognized as the top Automation NCO for Recruiting and Retention Region VII

"SSG Campagna exemplifies and extends the opportunities found within the California Army National Guard and he and all our honorees strive for excellence and professionalism in everything they do... as do so many others in our organization," said RRB Commander Lt. Col., Forrest Horan. "Our society places great trust in the military and demands that those who practice the profession of arms consistently demonstrate our core values.

"I hope that this recognition for outstanding performance by the RRB will motivate and inspire more Cal Guard Soldiers with a desire to join our ranks," continued Horan. "Our recruiting, retention and recruit sustainment program missions are critically important and our door will always be open to them."





A Cal Guard Green Beret team with Afghan Special Forces after the valley is decisively controlled. Two ISIS-K flags were captured during the fighting. Photo courtesy of A Company, 19th Special Forces Group

# De Oppresso Liber—To free the oppressed

A Cal Guard Green Beret from Alpha Company, 19th Special Forces Group, describes his team's six-month mission in the winter and spring of 2017 fighting ISIS-K in the valleys and mountains of Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province

**By SPECIAL FORCES DETACHMENT COMMANDER**  
A Company, 19th Special Forces Group

No shower in over 22 days, not much sleep either; we are often awakened by shift change or an explosion of some kind. The mission is almost over; six long months with over 45 days in the valleys.

I've experienced more fighting than I'd ever seen, over 250 enemy killed in action (EKIA), inflicted solely by one U.S. Special Forces Team and an Afghan Special Forces Company, living and fighting together.

We just have to make it home through a rough area; a stronghold where Taliban fighters are furious about our recent raids resulting in the destruction of over \$38 million dollars' worth of illicit drugs, supplies and equipment. The Taliban doesn't care about the drugs per se, but they do care about the money they make that is used to promote their power and cause.

Intelligence reports said the Taliban were planning several ambushes, and a "grenade attack" on a convoy at a choke point near a local bazaar. Intelligence had been 50/50 lately due to the complexity of the area, but that day it was spot on.

As the convoy maneuvers north through the heavily populated bazaar, we are rocked by two explosions. The lead gun truck takes two direct hits from an enemy grenade launcher and our heavy machine gun is disabled.



Cal Guard Green Berets conduct a Key Leader Engagement with Afghan provincial and district-level leadership in the spring of 2017. Photo courtesy of A Company, 19th Special Forces Group



**LEFT: A Cal Guard Special Forces Team conducts mounted movement with close air support. RIGHT: Aftermath of a Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (SVBIED) attack.** Photos courtesy of A Company, 19th Special Forces Group



The convoy pushes through the attack and the Afghan Special Forces immediately begin to fire their weapons in the air to disperse the on-looking crowd and attempt to identify the aggressors. Like cockroaches fleeing from the light, the locals flee and the bazaar becomes empty.

Protected by armor, no one is seriously hurt and the vehicle can still roll. A few hundred yards later we make it to the highway where we can pick up speed and it should be smooth sailing all the way back to base. But not more than 20 minutes down the road, I feel a shock wave followed by a huge explosion behind my vehicle. I get a bad feeling about this one.

"IED, Truck 3 is hit and can't move, their communications are down, looks bad!"

I exit my vehicle to survey the damage and assess the situation. We immediately come under attack from the northern tree line—a complex ambush from multiple fighting positions.

"Request immediate air support, our convoy has been hit, Truck 3 is disabled, small arms fire from the north. Suppressing with organic fires, standby....."

I see the front end of our third vehicle is completely destroyed and there is a burning hull of another vehicle 20 meters away. There is a broken dead body (enemy) thrown an additional 30 meters from the burning hull.

I recognize at once that this was not an IED, but a suicide vehicle bomber. I see the occupants from the U.S. vehicle; they are OK but rattled by the explosion. Despite the chaos

of the battle, the Afghan and U.S. Special Forces don't need to be told what to do or how to maneuver. We have maneuvered on the enemy over 100 times together and by now it's a fluid movement orchestrated by a seasoned team. U.S. and Afghan Special Forces exit their vehicles and engage with their M4s and rocket launchers, shoulder to shoulder into the nearby enemy positions.

The Afghan Special Forces use the armor on their truck to protect the U.S. mechanics and Green Berets, while they hook up the disabled truck for towing. The passengers of Truck 3 are redistributed into other vehicles.

A loud burst from our mini gun engages the tree line 75 meters away. Machine guns from the turrets are moved to provide maximum fire power and destroy the enemy. The rhythmic cracks from our guns are in an almost musical sync while providing an effective base of fire. I find a location with some cover where I can see the battlefield. I'm with my interpreter, a U.S. Air Force Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC), and an Afghan fire team providing security.

Within minutes the JTAC gets F-16s on station and I have two Apache attack helicopters in route. The JTAC coordinates a "show of force" with the F-16s bringing them within several hundred feet over the enemy's head. The F-16 engines roar violently and the fire from the enemy subsides. This is a smarter enemy who understands there is no winning this fight. I link up with the Afghan Special Forces commander and coordinate our movement home, now at a slower speed because of the towed vehicle. Twenty-five kilometers to go and we are done. We have an Apache escort to get us home. One hour later we make it our base, safe.

**Continued next page**





**LEFT:**A Cal Guard Special Forces leadership team surveys the front lines with an Afghan general in Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province in the spring of 2017. **RIGHT:**A Special Forces Team employs 60 mm mortars against ISIS-K positions in the spring of 2017. Photos courtesy of A Company, 19th Special Forces Group

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We are finished, and ready for a shower, finally.

Nine months prior to our final convoy home, Alpha Company received the call to deploy in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel in Afghanistan. Alpha Company, from the Army National Guard Special Forces Regiment, based out of Southern California, deployed Special Forces Teams across Afghanistan in the some of the most contested and austere parts of the country. Each Special Forces Team was partnered with Afghan commandos or a Police Special Unit (PSU) to conduct counter terrorism operations to enhance the security and stability of the Afghan Government.

Special Forces are specifically designed to integrate with and through host nation indigenous forces to train, fight and win together. With declining numbers of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and a smaller support network, the Special Forces' success relies heavily on building relationships, synchronization, and the ability to operate in isolated and dangerous areas where the enemy thrives. An astute understanding of strategic effects, multifaceted operations, and the employment of organic weapons and close air support were key elements to the success in the complex fight against Afghanistan's formidable and experienced enemies.

Several Special Forces Teams were deployed to southeastern Afghanistan in Nangarhar Province where the Pakistan border facilitates sanctuary, freedom of movement, and training grounds for Islamic State Iraq Syria-Khorasan Province (ISIS-K). Within these tribal areas, U.S. and Af-

ghan government presence is minimal and ISIS-K influence has grown and begun to project their power through high profile attacks in urban areas against the Afghan Government. Intelligence and enemy activity verified that ISIS-K leadership was strong in the southern valleys and fighters numbered in the thousands. Reporting also indicated that the civilian population suffered tremendously from ISIS-K, specifically by their stern and strict interpretation of Islamic law with torture, rape, and murder as acceptable consequences.

While training with the Special Police Unit, one Special Forces Team encountered an Afghan man who brought a severely injured boy. The team medic immediately began lifesaving treatment and transported the boy and his father to a nearby U.S. base. After the boy was saved, it was learned that he had picked up a foreign item, and it exploded. Before the injured boy and his father were taken to the U.S. base, their family had been murdered and their house burned to the ground by ISIS-K. These atrocities were committed because the family did not submit to ISIS-K way of life and ideals. Special Forces Team members spoke with other displaced families from these areas and heard similar horrific stories. One man relayed that he had six daughters and had been trying to have a baby boy for years. Finally, the man's wife gave birth to a son and he was so happy he celebrated by shooting an AK-47 rifle in the air. ISIS-K men came to his home and inquired as to why the man shot his weapon. Upon learning the reason, the ISIS-K fighters killed the baby boy to teach a harsh lesson. As the political appetite for the elimination of ISIS-K grew, the Special Forces Teams were tasked to fight ISIS-

K head on in their own territory and rid Afghanistan of a quickly emerging threat to security.

ISIS-K had taken control of the deep southern valleys of Nangarhar where there was no electric grid, paved roads, or cell phone service. This agrarian society appears as if the landscape and homes had not changed in over 1000 years. The only indication of modern technology was the occasional solar panel or dilapidated vehicle that was able to make the arduous journey down dirt roads. The water from the rivers flows into a centuries old irrigation system called Karezs, which channels water through a series of canals and underground tunnels. This simple handmade technology feeds the water to crops and nearby homes. In this area the people keep their animals under the same roof in which they live. This once peaceful region was an ideal location for ISIS-K to manipulate the uneducated and less fortunate population and influence them to attack and exploit the Afghan people and government. ISIS-K studied U.S. and Afghan tactics through years of fighting and experience and prepared a defense in depth to protect their sanctuary. ISIS-K placed a plethora of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) along routes, emplaced mortar systems under foliage to avoid detection, and built hidden fortified fighting positions which over-watched the routes where the Special Forces Teams would likely infiltrate.

Mid-March 2017 the Special Forces Teams infiltrated into the southern valleys with Afghan commandos and Afghan Special Forces and met stiff resistance. The Coalition Force fought every day for the first two weeks while pushing deeper into the valley where key ISIS-K leadership coordinated the fight and resupplied their front lines. As the Coalition Forces degraded the strength of ISIS-K, the Special Forces Team organized key leader engagements with the district and provincial leadership, the Afghan National Army (ANA), and the Afghan Local Police (ALP) to build a combined effort to fight ISIS-K and rebuild the community. The Special Forces Team garnished additional support from these entities through heavy construction equipment and additional security forces which began to contribute to the overall effort.

Alpha Company's operation with two Special Forces teams resulted in 403 ISIS-K fighters killed in action, 26 IEDs destroyed, and the strategic control and security of the Nangarhar southern valleys. As the major fighting ended, displaced residents began reoccupying the valley. Children were observed playing and cheering coalition forces as families migrated back to begin rebuilding their lives.

It was truly an incredible reward to see families get their life back and enable them to live free without the tyranny and oppression from ISIS-K. The Special Forces motto "De Oppresso Liber" means to free the oppressed and has been illustrated throughout the U.S. Special Forces history dating back to World War II. The people of Nangarhar, Afghanistan were freed from the tyranny of ISIS-K and the Afghan and U.S. Special Forces added a page to the illustrious history of the regiment.



**A Cal Guard Green Beret surveys the landscape after a 12-hour firefight in Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province in the spring of 2017. Photo courtesy of A Company, 19th Special Forces Group**

*Note: Author's name withheld for operational security*



# Cal Guard Black Hawk responds to Kings River flooding

By **CAPT. WILL MARTIN**

California Military Department Public Affairs

Famous for its work around wildfires, the Cal Guard is adding floods to its growing emergency-response resume.

Only months after mobilizing to address floods in the Oroville region, the Cal Guard again deployed aircraft and personnel on June 25 to assist flood-response efforts in the Kings River region.

The Cal Guard deployed a UH-60 Black Hawk and aircrew from its Mather flight facility to support Tulare County emergency-response personnel with aerial surveillance and the sling-loading of more than 80,000 lbs. of rocks sandbags. The Black Hawk crew ferried the rocks and sandbags to breaches in levees that led to the flooding.

"Responding to the communities in which we live and serve is at the heart of the Cal Guard mission," said Lt. Col.

Thomas Keegan, a public affairs and aviation officer present on the flight. "When Tulare County reached out to us for help, we jumped into action."

The flooding occurred as a result of high temperatures and rapidly melting mountain snow across Central California. As the snow melted, it began to overwhelm the Pine Flat Reservoir, impelling the Army Corps of Engineers to release water into the Kings River. The release led to three breaches in levees along the Kings River, causing flooding and the evacuation of nearly 100 homes and 300 people near the waterway. Standing water reached as high as 10 feet in some areas.

"It was like a war zone out here," Doreen Dalbey, an area resident told the Fresno Bee. "At one point it (the water) got scary high. I thought the whole house would flood."

Dalbey and other residents began mandatory evacuations on Friday, June 23, at



**A Cal Guard flight crew from the Cal Guard's Mather Flight Facility assisted flood-response efforts on the Kings River June 25 by ferrying rocks and sandbags with their UH-60 Black Hawk. Photos by Lt. Col. Thomas Keegan**

the direction of the Tulare County Sheriff's Office. The next morning, the California Office of Emergency Services issued the Tulare County request for National Guard assistance. Sunday morning, the Sacramento-area Black Hawk crew deployed.



"Quick turnarounds are essential to our domestic and emergency-response missions," said Keegan. "Mother Nature doesn't always accommodate our timelines, which is why we train year-round for swift mobilizations. Readiness is the key to assisting our neighbors in their time of need."

## Aviators participate in Mount Shasta search-and-rescue training

By **NICK MEYERS**

Mount Shasta Lead Climbing Ranger, Shasta-Trinity National Forest

Multiple federal and state agencies gathered at the Weed Airport, in Northern California on May 3 for annual Mount Shasta search and rescue helicopter training. Hosted by U.S. Forest Service climbing rangers assigned to the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, the training is built around the mantra, "train like you fight, fight like you train", as Tom McConnell, a retired Cal Fire helicopter pilot used to say.

Participants this year included the California Highway Patrol, Siskiyou County Search and Rescue, California Army National Guard, U.S. Forest Service, outfitter and guide companies, Shasta Mountain Guides and Sierra Wilderness Seminars.

The majority of the day was focused on allowing the helicopter pilots and their crew to fly around and also land on the still-blanketed in snow-capped mountain. Mount Shasta's terrain is unlike anywhere for hundreds of miles. The 14,179-foot mountain rises over 7,000 feet above any other piece of terrain in the viewable area. The potentially active volcano can almost create its own weather pattern. Wind and weather on Shasta are extremely variable and with safety a top priority, it's essential that pilots and crew are able to practice and become familiar with this volatile environment.

Annually, Forest Service climbing rangers continue their partnership in assisting Siskiyou County's search and rescue efforts, set forth by a memorandum of understanding. Together they conduct an average of a dozen rescues on the mountain. Common incidents include lost person searches and slips and falls. Mount Shasta hosts seven glaciers and steep, icy terrain with often times unrelenting wind and whiteout conditions. The proper knowledge, skills, and equipment is essential, along with good decision making habits. A slip and fall without the use of an ice axe for immediate self-arrest will result in



**A flight crew from the California Army National Guard's Mather Flight Facility goes over the capabilities of their UH-60 Black Hawk, used by the military as a search and rescue air ambulance. Photo by Nick Meyers**

a long slide for life. Climbing into a white-out when unfamiliar with the terrain is never a good idea. Rangers work tirelessly educating climbers on mountain safety and wilderness etiquette.

Around 50 people, enjoying the absolutely perfect weather, stood around four helicopters on the airport's tarmac. California Highway Patrol brought three of their Astar's while the National Guard flew in their UH-60 Black Hawk from their air ambulance unit out of Mather. The morning session involved a few opening comments by USFS Lead Climbing Ranger, Nick Meyers, USFS Recreation Officer, Becky Cooper and Siskiyou County Sheriff's office SAR coordinator, Mike Burns. Meyers and fellow climbing ranger, Forrest Coats, followed with a presentation on mountain orientation, common landing zones,

and current conditions on Mount Shasta. Scott Grant, from the California Highway Patrol, gave a presentation on helicopter capabilities.

### After class instruction, it was time for some hands-on

Aerial crews broke out for their flight training on the mountain. For ground crews, the training offered an opportunity to become familiar with each agency helicopter specifics, tools used for rescue, passenger safety briefings and helicopter capabilities. This is instrumental with successful rescues that occur with the use of those that would be assisting from the ground. The California Highway Patrol also provided several iterations demonstrating their hoist operations.

"Whenever the Cal Guard gets an oppor-

tunity to train alongside the Forest Service, we jump at the chance," said Capt. Will Martin, spokesman for the California National Guard. "They've been our faithful partner in search and rescue missions in our national forests for decades, and it's only by regularly training together that we've been so effective in saving the lives of our neighbors when they need us most. They're great to have on the team when we're in the trenches."

Naturally, we all hope that the climbing season on Mount Shasta goes by without an incident. However, with thousands of climbers attempting the peak every year, it's likely that pilots and crews will have to put their skills to test. Fortunately, you can rest assure that rescuers are tuned up for professional and safe rescue operations on the mountain.



# Cal Guard's 115th RSG executes HICON mission for KFOR 23 validation exercise

By **CAPT. JASON SWEENEY**  
69th Public Affairs Detachment

Kosovo Force, or KFOR, has been conducting a peace and security mission in Kosovo since 1999. The California National Guard has been part of the peacekeeping effort in Kosovo going back over a decade now.

For three weeks in June and July, 34 Soldiers with the Cal Guard's 115th Regional Support Group were at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center at Hohenfels Training Area, Germany, to help train the Arkansas National Guard's 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which is conducting a validation exercise before deploying to Kosovo for a 9-month KFOR 23 rotation. The 115th is assuming the role of KFOR higher command (HICON - COMKFOR) during the exercise.

For the exercise, Col. Bruce Balzano, commander of the 115th RSG, is in the role of KFOR HICON commander. "The 115th's battle staff is comprised of veterans from Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation New Dawn and rotations in the Balkans," Balzano said. "We provide an experienced and capable mission command platform in order to provide realistic command and control during the 39th IBCT's final validation exercise."

Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Witt said his Soldiers at the 115th bring a wealth of experience to the training. "For the short train up time, they hit the ground running," Witt said. "We've got everything from logisticians, operations, human resources, combat arms experience, as well as Soldiers with a wealth of deployment experience. Their adaptability helped show their true professional abilities."

Kosovo, which has an Albanian majority, was a province of Serbia when ethnic tensions between the Albanian majority and Serbian minority escalated to violence in 1999. KFOR, a multinational NATO peacekeeping force, was formed to bring safety and stability to the province, which declared independence from Serbia in 2008. The peacekeeping mission has been successful but the KFOR mission continues indefinitely to ensure the peace continues.

The U.S. Army National Guard has been a major contributor of troops to the ongoing KFOR mission. The



**Capt. Patrick Bagley, center, served as the Chief of Operations (CHOPS) during the KFOR 23 validation exercise at Hohenfels Training Area, Germany. First Lt. Brian Bell, right, was a battle captain. Maj. Leslie Palmer, behind Bagley, was the deputy commander. Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney**

California Army National Guard's presence in the Balkans dates back to the Bosnian War in the early 1990s and through the present KFOR mission.

In preparation for its deployment, the 39th IBCT has been conducting realistic training simulating crowd and riot control, situational awareness patrol training, liaison monitoring team training, active shooter incidents, press conferences and other scenarios the troops may encounter in Kosovo. Once the training in Germany is complete, the 39th will deploy to Kosovo and assume control of KFOR's Multinational Battle Group-East (MNBG-E).

"The MNBG-E is conducting training that focuses staff and Soldiers on cultural awareness as well as a strong

understanding of the political and economic considerations we should be aware of in NATO," 39th IBCT commander Col. Michael Spraggins said. "We are conducting training with our NATO allies to increase interoperability while conducting peacekeeping operations. Overall, we have enjoyed tremendous success preparing ourselves for the mission in KFOR."

Spc. Sarah Bates is a human resource specialist at the 115th. The exercise at Hohenfels is her first experience overseas. During the exercise, Bates and her fellow Soldiers at the 115th got a chance to see some of the country on cultural days.

"Germany is beautiful," Bates said. "I feel like I'm getting good training here and experiencing a new culture."



**ABOVE LEFT: Maj. Leslie Palmer, left, was in the role of deputy commander to Col. Bruce Balzano, right, commander of the California National Guard's 115th Regional Support Group during the KFOR 23 validation exercise. Photo by Maj. Joey Monforte RIGHT: Paratroopers extinguish fire during Fire Phobia training for a Kosovo Force mission rehearsal exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany June 23. Photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Farina BOTTOM LEFT: 115th Soldiers visit Regensburg during a break in the exercise. Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney**





LEFT: Cyclists battle a hill and the heat on Camp Roberts on June 6 during the annual AIDS/LifeCycle ride. Some 2,226 cyclists passed through Camp Roberts on Day 3 of the 545-mile ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. RIGHT: Cyclists stop and check out a tank at the Camp Roberts Historical Museum on June 6 while taking a break during the AIDS/LifeCycle ride. **Photos by Capt. Jason Sweeney**



LEFT: Dancers from “Aloha, Polynesia!” perform during an AsianAmerican & Pacific Islander observance at Joint Forces Headquarters in Sacramento on 31 May. **Photo by Master Sgt. David Loeffler** Capt. Ian McNear walks down an alley in the historical German city of Regensburg during a break in a KFOR 23 validation exercise, which was conducted at nearby Hohenfels Training Area, Germany. Thirty-four Cal Guard Soldiers from the 115th Regional Support Group participated in the exercise and got the chance to visit beautiful Regensburg during a summer festival. **Photos by Capt. Jason Sweeney**



Wearing colors ranging from green, yellow, red, purple, pink, orange, blue and, of course, camouflage, the California Military Department celebrates Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month at Joint Forces Headquarters, Sacramento, on June 26 to show support and pride for all who serve. **Photo by Master Sgt. David Loeffler**



# At a Glance



TOP: Soldiers from the Cal Guard's 1-18th Cavalry Regiment and the U.K.'s Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) pose for a photo at Camp Roberts in June. The two units conducted Exercise Vambrace Saber at the Camp. **Photo courtesy of the Honourable Artillery Company** CENTER LEFT: 1-18th Cavalry Regiment commander Lt. Col. Jeremy Hopkins inducts American and British Soldiers into the "Order of the Spur" at the Camp Roberts Soldier Bowl on June 14. **Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney** CENTER RIGHT: Congressman Salud Carbajal, center, meets Lt. Col. Jeremy Hopkins, right, and U.K. Lt. Col. Mark Wood, left, on June 10 at the Camp Roberts Combined Arms Collective Training Facility during Exercise Vambrace Saber. **Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney** BOTTOM: A squirrel takes on a rattlesnake on June 8 near the Soldier Bowl at Camp Roberts. The squirrel won. **Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney**





**LEFT:** Horses and the Colors were part of the “Spur Ride” ceremony June 14 at Camp Roberts where Soldiers from the 1-18th CAV and the U.K.’s Honourable Artillery Company earned their spurs for successfully completing several rigorous training events. **RIGHT:** Helicopters from the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade conduct a fly over during the ceremony. **Photos by Capt. Jason Sweeney**

## Cal Guard’s 1-18th CAV teams up with U.K.’s HAC at Camp Roberts

After two weeks of intense training, the 1-18th CAV and the Honourable Artillery Company conduct a “Spur Ride” with pomp and ceremony

**By CAPT. JASON SWEENEY**  
69th Public Affairs Detachment

The Cal Guard's 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment and the U.K.'s Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) teamed up in early June for an intense two-weeks of annual training at Camp Roberts.

The HAC is the U.K. Army's Reserve Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Regiment, and is based in the City of London.

The Americans and Brits came together for Exercise Vambrace Saber, which simulated an enemy insurgency conducting cross border incursions, culminating in the engagement of insurgent forces. The exercise was designed to test the ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) capabilities of both the 1-18th Cavalry and the HAC.

During the exercise, both U.K. and American troopers made use of the substantial training areas at Camp Roberts, including its many firing ranges, landing zones and its state-of-the-art Combined Arms Collective Training Facility (CACTF), where the two units conducted urban warfare training.

“We conducted tough and realistic training as an integrated task force with the Honourable Artillery Company surveillance and target acquisition regiment, and several enablers, including a chemical recon platoon, engineering platoon, Tactical UAS (Unmanned Aerial System) platoon, and



**The Honourable Artillery Company Band arrives at the Camp Roberts Soldier Bowl on June 14. Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney**

MPs,” said 1-18th CAV commander Lt. Col. Jeramy Hopkins. “The 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, California State Military Reserve, the 40th BSB, and 224th CSSB supported us throughout the operation, which really allowed us to add depth, complexity, and train at multiple echelons. Throughout the entire event, and even through the planning process, the Brits were enjoyable and easy to work alongside. They were professional, focused, and had good senses of humor. During our annual training, it was a privilege to train with the second oldest unit in the world still in existence. The HAC has a tremendous history, fantastic Soldiers, and a pretty amazing band.”

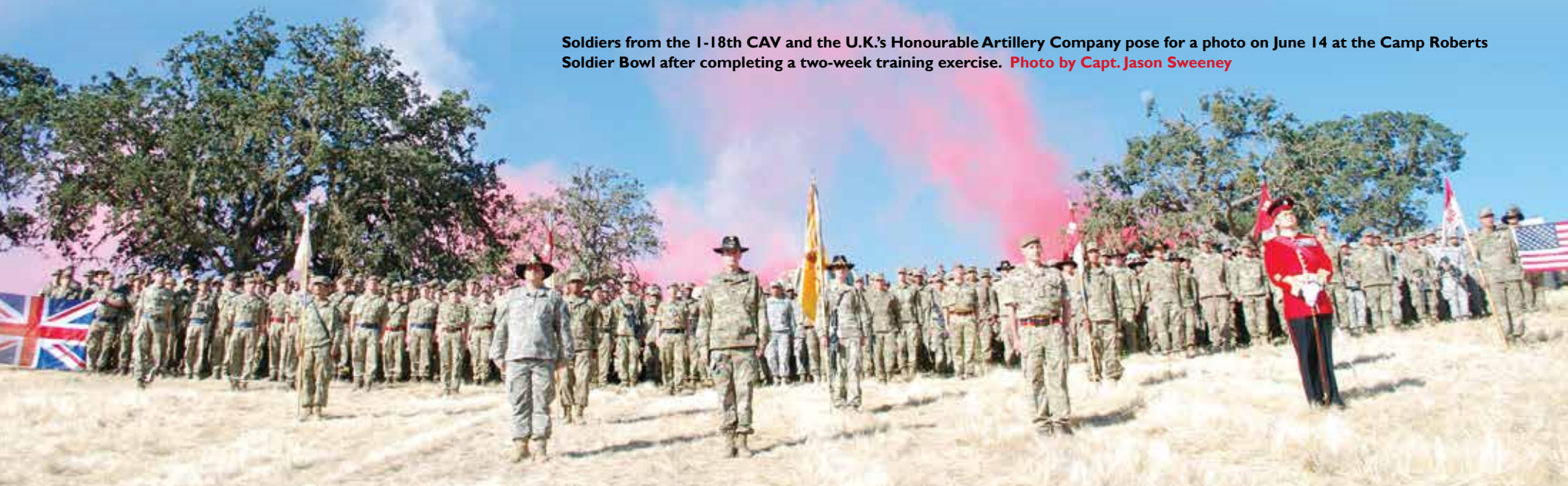
The exercise concluded with a cavalry tradition called a “Spur Ride.” U.S. and U.K. troopers were inducted into the “Order of the Spur” by Hopkins in a ceremony at the Camp Roberts Soldier Bowl.

To earn their spurs, troopers had to successfully complete a series of training events at a high level, including an Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT), weapons qualifications, a ruck march and other Soldier skill events. Silver spurs were placed on their boots during the ceremony. The event included troopers on horseback, a helicopter flyover by the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade and music from the HAC Regimental Band.

The band provided the pomp and ceremony playing “The Star Spangled Banner” and “God Save the Queen” as everyone sang along.

“Exercising with the 1-18th CAV was an incredibly valuable experience as it enabled us to train as we expect to fight; with our primary allies, in an expeditionary context against a near peer enemy,” said Lt. Col. Mark Wood, commander of the HAC. “Camp Roberts provided a fantastic training environment, and its complex terrain, climatic extremes and purpose built population centers really challenged our Soldiers. The 1-18th CAV were a brilliant unit to work with; capable, professional and incredibly supportive, we learnt a huge amount from working with them. Not only did we get the chance to better understand how they operated, but we also captured some best practice that has helped us to refine our own tactics, techniques and procedures.”

**Soldiers from the 1-18th CAV and the U.K.’s Honourable Artillery Company pose for a photo on June 14 at the Camp Roberts Soldier Bowl after completing a two-week training exercise. Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney**







**LEFT:**An American Soldier instructs a British Soldier on firing a .50-cal machine gun at Camp Roberts in June during the 1-18th Cavalry's two-week annual training exercise. **RIGHT:** British troopers from the U.K.'s Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) take aim at the OPFOR during an exercise with the 1-18th CAV at Camp Roberts in June. **Photos by HAC Capt. Jonathan Ivey**

## CSMR plays OPFOR at multinational 1-18th CAV annual training exercise

**By 1ST LT. (CA) JOSEPH VILLEGAS**  
California State Military Reserve

In the culminating event of a Exercise Vambrace Saber that took place in the first half of June at Camp Roberts, the smoke cleared around Forward Operating Base Echo as elements of the Cal Guard's 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment and the Honorable Artillery Company (HAC) of the British Army conducted an air and ground assault against a determined and motivated opposing force (OPFOR), made up primarily of California State Military Reserve (CSMR) personnel.

The CSMR is an all-volunteer, unpaid component of the California Military Department with a mission to support the Cal Guard's Soldiers and Airmen. The CSMR's mission in the exercise at Camp Roberts, along with attached California Army National Guard (CA ARNG) chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense (CBRNE), Military Police, medical, and headquarters and headquarters troop (HHT) units and personnel, was to provide a realistic and capable OPFOR.

This mission was led by 79th CSMR Support Brigade Charlie Company commander,

Capt. (CA) Daniel Derkum, with the support of Soldiers from the 79th Support Brigade, 143rd Support Battalion, 49th Support Brigade, 224th Support Brigade, 100th Support Command, 163rd Support Group, 26th Cavalry Support Regiment, Center for Military History, and the Aviation Support Brigade.

Members of the 79th CSMR Support Brigade along with attachments, enthusiastically provided added training value to an international annual training event conducted by the 1-18th CAV and the HAC. After six months of preparation, three Field Training Exercises (FTXs) and 26 exceedingly difficult reconnaissance and attack missions, the CSMR delivered the type of OPFOR that was requested by the 1-18th.

In one of the biggest CA ARNG annual training exercises for 2017, with almost 700 personnel, alongside air and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) assets, elements of the CSMR role-played as the OPFOR Red Force (REDFOR), providing realistic and challenging training for the troops of the 1-18th CAV and HAC. Involving the coordination of hundreds of troops from the CA ARNG, British Army, and the CSMR, the two-week exercise tested the reconnaissance capabilities and combat readiness of the 1-18th CAV

and the HAC.

The CSMR worked closely with 1-18th operations officer Capt. Joshua Carlson in coordinating the OPFOR activities. When briefing the CSMR on his philosophy of OPFOR, Carlson stated, "OPFOR is 50 percent tactics and 50 percent theater."

The 79th CSMR Support Brigade with attachments provided just that theater and realism for the 1-18th CAV and HAC. The CSMR introduced a healthy amount of realism and immediacy to the scenarios. The OPFOR missions included reconnaissance and combat patrols, target identification and engagement, and unconventional harassment using Battle Field Effects (BFX). These engagements helped develop and sharpen skills and techniques to ensure victory in future missions and deployments.

The overall success of this mission validates the CSMR commitment, capability and dedication in meeting the unit embedment support requirements of the CA ARNG.

This annual training provided valuable experience for Soldiers of the 79th CSMR Support Brigade and attachments, as they became integrated with other units from

within the CA ARNG. CSMR tasks included mission planning, briefing, troop leading procedures (TLP), and mission execution. In addition to all enjoying the FTX, it provided a fantastic opportunity to develop cohesiveness, adaptability, capabilities, and esprit de corps.

All CSMR troops who participated were thanked in person and awarded a certificate of appreciation by the 1-18th CAV Squadron commander, Lt. Col. Jeremy Hopkins.

In recognition of the CSMRs contributions, CSMR Soldiers were invited to participate in the 1-18th CAV's "Spur Ride." In a first for the CSMR, two Soldiers from C Company, 79th Support Brigade, Capt. (CA) Dan Derkum and 1st Lt. (CA) Joseph Villegas, participated in and completed this time-honored cavalry tradition. After undergoing a rigorous 36-hour course of ruck marching, reconnaissance and combat skills tests, they proudly earned their silver spurs. They were inducted into "The Order of the Spur" in a ceremony that included Hopkins and HAC commander Lt. Col. Mark Wood. The final ruck march of the Spur Ride was led by the ceremonial horse-mounted cavalry of the CSMRs 26th Cavalry Support Regiment.

## Golden and bald eagle nesting pairs call Camp Roberts home

**By CAPT. JASON SWEENEY**  
69th Public Affairs Detachment

Golden and bald eagles are not uncommon sights at Camp Roberts. The majestic birds of prey can sometimes be seen soaring over training areas, roads and the Nacimiento River, which runs year-round through the camp.

During a drill weekend in July, a bald eagle flew in, perched on a telephone pole and oversaw the first formation of the garrison's headquarters and headquarters company, boosting morale and adding a patriotic atmosphere to the morning.

Camp Roberts is currently home to three nesting eagle pairs, which raised six eaglets over the 2017 season.

"The Nacimiento River is a constant water source and is a main attraction for the eagles," California Military Department Wildlife Biologist Michael Moore said.



**ABOVE:** Nancy, a bald eagle, has raised two eaglets on Camp Roberts during the nesting season in 2017. **RIGHT:** Nancy's son, Ronnie Jr., a juvenile whose head is not yet white, was hatched on Camp Roberts this spring. Four bald and two golden eagles were hatched on Camp Bob this year. **Photos by Jeanne Mayer**

"These birds select an area they like and they like Camp Roberts."

Two of the nesting pairs are bald eagles, named Ron and Nancy and George and Martha. The third nesting pair are golden eagles that go by Kurt and Goldie. Two more golden eagles, a pair named Boris



and Natasha, have been seen on the East Garrison, but a nest hasn't been located.

Biologists from the Camp Roberts Environmental Office keep an eye on the eagles and their nests over the nesting months. Both eagle species receive federal protection under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection

Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and are considered "fully protected birds" under California law.

According to Moore, the Cal Guard is legally obligated to ensure that activities on the camp do not adversely affect reproduction, foraging, roosting, or other behaviors of the eagles. Reducing the risks posed to eagles from training activities at Camp Roberts is a primary focus on the installation that reflects the importance of properly managing special status species in a manner that ensures continuation of the military mission.

Eagle monitoring and eagle buffer zones during the nesting months from January through August are used to minimize threats to the birds. Soldiers conducting training near nesting sites are briefed on the eagles and given maps that include the buffer zones.

Plans are in the works for an eagle cam to live stream from the eagle nests next year.



# SCRA and its California-law counterparts

Servicemembers Civil Relief Act and California law offer relief when National Guard Soldiers are called to duty

By **CAPT. CHRISTIAN WELLISCH**  
49th Military Police Brigade JAG

Service members may generally be familiar with the federal Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. Those who have served on active duty are likely to have received a briefing on the SCRA, or may have had to invoke its protections, such as putting litigation on hold (known as a “stay”) until they are able to return home to take care of matters, or getting out of a lease or terminating mobile phone contracts when required to move pursuant to military orders. These and other SCRA benefits and protections are available to all active duty service members. Additional information is available at: <https://servicememberscivilreliefact.com>.

However, not nearly as many are familiar with the various protections the California legislature has provided to address issues faced specifically by members of the National Guard. This article provides a brief overview of the SCRA and its state-law counterparts, with a focus on Chapter 7.5 of the California Military and Veteran’s Code (CMVC), comprising sections 400 through 409.14. This is meant to provide a general overview, and does not constitute legal advice. For help with exercising your rights under the SCRA or the CMVC, contact your Judge Advocate’s office. You may even want to bring a copy of this article as a starting point!

## Historical Background

The SCRA’s roots can be traced back to the Civil War, when Congress recognized that unscrupulous litigants were able to obtain default judgments against Soldiers who were unavailable to appear in court to argue their cases due to their military service obligations. To address this unfair situation, laws were enacted creating a moratorium on legal actions against Soldiers who were away from home to fight a war in defense of the Union. While this started as a temporary measure applicable only during times of war, it evolved into permanent protections that first took shape as the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Civil Relief Act, and eventually morphed into today’s Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. The most recent version of the law is found in Chapter 50 of Title 50 of the United States Code, sections 3901 through 4043 (50 U.S.C. § 3901 et. seq.).

## Significant aspects of the federal SCRA

The SCRA’s stated purpose is to strengthen the national defense through the protections it provides, so that service members may “devote their entire energy to the defense needs of the nation.” One important way the SCRA achieves this relates to the original intent of legislative protections during the Civil War. Namely, by providing for the “temporary suspension of judicial and administrative proceedings” during military service. (See 50 U.S.C. § 3902). The SCRA has a very broad application, but it does not cover criminal proceedings and it also does not allow service members to delay or avoid paying child support. Otherwise, “judicial and administrative proceedings” includes just about every type of proceeding, not just court cases. In addition to this, the SCRA also provides additional protections such as a maximum 6 percent interest rate on all pre-service debts, including mortgages, student loans, and credit card debt. With limited exceptions, the SCRA allows service members to request a rate reduction on any debt they had prior to receiving active duty orders. Other sections protect against fines and penalties under contracts, tax deferrals and similar protections, preventing evictions (of dependents, too) and the ability to break a lease when necessary, protection from foreclosure, termination of motor vehicle leases and telephone contracts, and more. Many of these protections require specific paperwork, which should be completed with the help of a judge advocate. Service members on active duty who are experiencing legal or financial difficulties should seek legal assistance through their JAG office.

## SCRA and California law

Because the SCRA is federal law that covers service members only when in federal service, California provided legislation to fill gaps that may affect members of the National Guard while serving under state control. California law is also specifically designed to address service in the reserve component which, contrary to the active component’s continuous active service, often consists of successive, intermittent periods of active service with return to civilian status between each. In addition, some protections and benefits

under California law offer greater benefits than similar protections available under the SCRA.

## Overview of protections under California law

California law provides various minor rights and protections sprinkled throughout the Military and Veterans Code and elsewhere, such as exemption from jury duty and a general disclaimer of liability for acts done in the course of performance of official duties. But the bulk of SCRA-type protections are in Chapter 7.5 (sections 400 - 409.14). This chapter is covered in more detail below. However, additional protections worthy of mention are available under the California Military Families and Financial Relief Act, which is found in sections 800 - 812 and allows service members to defer payments on obligations including mortgages, vehicle loans and leases, credit cards, and retail installment contracts for up to 180 days.

As a side-note, a common misconception among service members is that some protections only apply when they are involuntarily ordered to active duty, as opposed to voluntary service. This is not true. The protections are designed to ensure that military service is not a hindrance, whether voluntary or involuntary. As the United States Supreme Court noted, the SCRA is “always to be liberally construed to protect those who have been obliged to drop their own affairs to take up the burdens of the nation” (See *Boone v. Lightner, et. al.*, 319 U.S. 561 (1943) at 575). This is equally true for protections under California law, as well as the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), which protects against loss of employment due to military service.

## Protections under Chapter 7.5

Returning to the specifics of Chapter 7.5, starting with section 400, it is intended to extend protections similar to those found in the SCRA to reservists. It covers anyone who is in state or federal full-time service for at least seven days in any 14-day period, whether under Title 32 or Title 10 orders, and also including orders under authority of the governor during emergencies including an insurrection or similar disturbance under sections 143 or 146 of the Military and Veterans Code. This is more broad than the SCRA, and can cover full-time National Guard orders such as FTNGD-OS, authorized under Title 32. For verification, look for “auth” or a similar note on orders, which may show “32 USC 502(f)” or something similar. So long as it starts with “32 USC...” it reflects Title 32, and therefore covered under Chapter 7.5. But as always, the best way to proceed is to seek the advice of a qualified judge advocate.

Many of the sections in Chapter 7.5 track the SCRA almost verbatim. Compare section 401, for example, with section 3919 of the SCRA. They use almost identical language to prevent damage to a service member’s credit when he or she exercises the rights of postponement. However, the Military and Veterans Code often provides more than the rights available under the SCRA by specifically providing for attorney’s fees, costs, and damages for violations, and in some cases - as section 401 illustrates - also rendering a violation punishable as a misdemeanor. Also of note is MVC section 409.14, which states that any “service member or other person” seeking to enforce any of the rights listed in Chapter 7.5 is not required to pay a filing fee or court costs. As a practical matter, these provisions are meant to encourage private attorneys in providing assistance to service members, who often lack the means to pay court costs or attorney’s fees. This presents a big advantage over the SCRA, which can be enforced in court, but does include a provision relieving service members of the obligation to pay filing fees.

Another section worth mentioning is subsection (b) of § 403, which is based on § 3933 of the SCRA. It applies when a service member has incurred contractual fines or penalties that can be attributed to hardships of military service. Under federal law, a court can “reduce or waive” such charges. Under the Military and Veterans Code the court can also waive or reduce these fees, but it also has wide discretion to provide relief “on those terms as may be just.” This language may allow courts to exercise even greater discretion to help service members than relief limited to reduction of fees.

## The 409.3 petition

In addition to the sections that mirror the SCRA, Chapter 7.5



**Capt. Christian Wellisch at Fort Benning, Georgia, July 3, 2013, during a direct commission course. Wellisch serves as a Judge Advocate General officer for the California National Guard’s 49th Military Police Brigade. He is leaving the Cal Guard to join the active duty Army. Photo by Cpl. Danielle Rodrigues**

also contains a special procedure for an expedited hearing under section 409.3, which deserves special focus due to its many advantages. It allows any service member (or authorized representative) to file a petition in court to seek relief from any pre-service obligation. The court may provide for deferral of payments, but the statutory language also has a catch-all phrase that allows the court to include relief on “any other terms as may be just.” Similar to section 403 discussed above, this language in section 409.3 allows courts to shape relief to fit the specifics of each situation as necessary on a case-by-case basis. However, there are some limitations on available relief from taxes and mortgages.

Two fill-in-the-blank forms have been created for use with section 409.3; forms MIL 010 and MIL 015, available online at: <http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/mil010.pdf> and <http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/mil015.pdf>. They are designed to be relatively simple and allow for service members to fill out, submit, and serve the forms on their own. Because MIL 010 has been adopted by the California Judicial Council for mandatory use, all 409.3 petitions must be submitted using this form. The procedures require the court to set a hearing date within 25 days of filing, so that a service member who has received deployment orders can have his or her day in court as soon as possible. After filing, the forms must be “served” as required by California law; i.e., someone who is at least 18 and is not a party to the case must deliver the papers to the opposing side at least 10 days prior to the hearing. For more information on “service of process” see the California Courts’ Self-Help section at <http://www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp-serving.htm>, or contact a judge advocate or private attorney. The opposing side (the “respondent”) must then file and serve a response at least five days prior to the hearing. This ensures that both sides are properly notified and are prepared to appear in court, and provides the service member with means for quick resolution of obligations that may interfere with military service. Notably, the 409.3 petition is available both as a preventive measure prior to active service, as well as up to six months after active service.

This brief overview shows ways in which California law in some cases offers broader protections than the federal Servicemembers Civil Relief Act on which it was based. Often, a properly drafted letter can result in benefits that exceed those provided under either federal or state laws. For example, some companies have been known to offer deferments or rate reductions lower than the maximum statutory 6 percent, sometimes reducing interest rates to 0 percent during active duty service. In addition to the SCRA, found at 50 U.S.C. § 3901 through § 4043, various sections of the California Military and Veterans Code, including § 400 through § 409.14, as well as § 800 through 812, and others, can offer helpful rights and protections that are often overlooked. Service members who are experiencing financial or legal issues owe it to themselves to look into available protections that may allow them focus on service without undue distractions. Even those who are not experiencing hardships but simply are on, or expect to receive active duty orders may want to take advantage of one or more available benefits. While this brief overview can serve as a starting point, anyone interested in how these or other benefits may help in their specific circumstances should seek advice from a judge advocate.



# Find Your Why: Get motivated by asking the right questions

By **CAPT. JASON BLACK**  
State Behavioral Health Officer-San Diego

As a Soldiers and Airmen, we have busy lives and a lot things to do. Some of those things we know we should be doing more of, like physical training (PT), but sometimes we just don't have the motivation to do it. Something always seems to get in the way and impede us from eating healthier, working out more, or you can fill in the blank.

Motivation is defined as the intensity and direction of effort. Basically, it is the stuff that we CHOOSE to spend our time on (direction) and how much we want to do it or enjoy doing it (intensity). For example, if you want to eat better, but find yourself not actually eat better, then we can say that you are more motivated (by something) to eat unhealthy than healthy.

To change our behavior, we must think about our behavior. Ask yourself why you want to do it? Why is running something that you want to do? Because you are in the military and must be evaluated on it every year? OK, but what could be a reason, a deeply personal one, that could make running more meaningful? Another way of asking is, "What can running represent to me?" Self-confidence? Independence? Strength? Being an example to your team or family?

Looking for a deep personal and meaningful reason for working out instead of something more superficial like having a better body will increase motivation in the long run. Sure, beach season is now upon us and trying to fit in that bikini or board shorts can be a big motivator for a few weeks, but it will not last much longer. Finding something that speaks to the spirit of who you are and what you value in yourself will help you stick to a behavior longer. Reflect on how you can make that activity more personally meaningful to you.

A fantastic way to do this is to journal your thoughts about

the activity. This will help you drill down into what really matters to you. If you get stuck, just channel your inner toddler and keep asking why. Anybody who has ever encountered a two-year old for more than ten minutes will understand. Another way to ask it is, "Why is \_\_\_\_\_ important to me?"

For example, your reason might start out superficial like wanting a better body, which is fine because we all do, but then take it a step further and ask yourself, "Why do I want a better body?" "Why is having a better body important to me?"

Possible response: "Because I want to look good."

Why question: "Why do you want to look good?"

R: "Because I'll be more attractive."

Q: "Why do you want to be more attractive?"

R: "Because more people will like me."

Q: "Why do you want people to like you?"

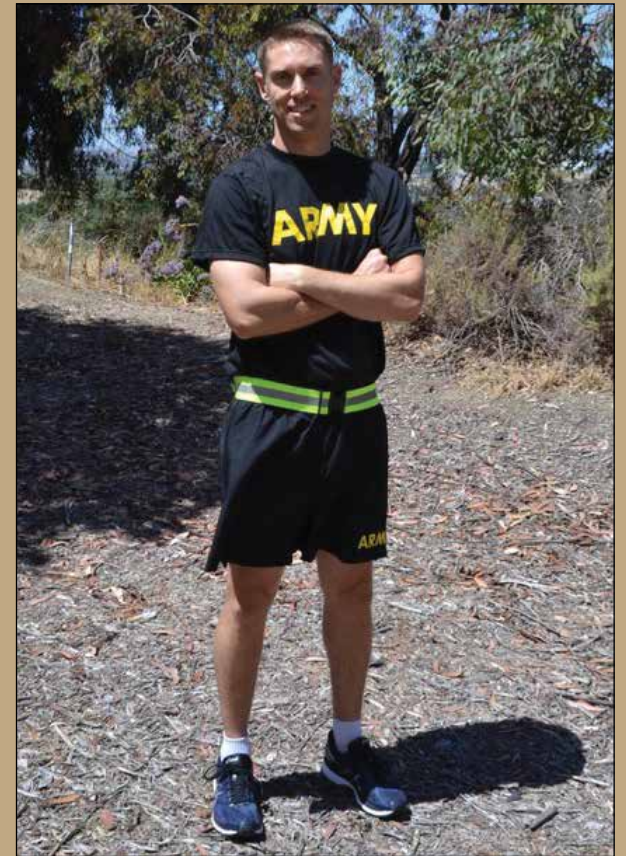
R: "Because it will make me feel better about myself."

Q: "Why do you want to feel better about yourself?"

R: "Because I deserve to!"

We can keep this going, but it appears to be headed toward something to do with self-esteem. When you get to the end of the questioning and find a more personal meaning, capture it with a phrase, motto, or mission statement. Write this statement out and post it some place where you will see it, so that it can be a reminder, or set a reminder on your phone with the statement just before the time you would get ready to run or workout. That way your why will be on your mind.

Now instead of just wanting to look good, we can now view running as something as important as taking your life back. Every run can represent taking strides, metaphorically and literally, to become the person you have always wanted to be and deserve to be. Running can now be physical means through which you transform psychological self. Running can be your physical journey toward a new you!



**Capt. Jason Black**

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## SOLDIER & FAMILY ASSISTANCE

**SERVING THE SERVICEMEMBER, VETERAN, & FAMILIES OF  
THE ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD, & RESERVE OF CALIFORNIA**

**Providing a wrap around service through direct programs or with  
referrals to our Collaborative Partners.**

*"Thank you for your quick actions. Within a few short days, I went from zero focus, high amounts of stress, sadness and anger, to gradually having it dissolve each day as the National Guard [Family Programs] worked and protected my family." - SGT G.B., Deployed*

**24/7 Helpline 1-800-449-9662**

### Essential Services:

- Community Information and Outreach
- Employment Resources and Referral
- Financial Resources and Referral
- TRICARE Resources and Referral
- Crisis Intervention and Referral
- Legal Resources and Referral
- Deployment Outreach
- ID Cards and DEERS

*"I was not prepared for the amount of help my family received." – Servicemember*



# 40th ID Band unites with IDF Choir

Cal Guard and Israeli Defense Forces musicians perform in celebration to honor USA and Israel

By COL. (CA) RICK LALOR  
JFTB Public Affairs

The California National Guard's 40th Infantry Division Band joined the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Choir in a gala concert tribute to Israel and the United States on June 19th in Beverly Hills, California.

The event, held at the Beverly Hills Synagogue, was a musical celebration ranging from American patriotic selections to music celebrating the passion and spirit of the Israeli people – proof positive that music is truly the universal language of mankind.

Highlights included solo performances by 40th ID Band vocalist Sgt. Marcus Dangelo and performances by Lt. Col. Shai Abramson, Chief Military Cantor of the IDF, Cantors Netanel Baram and Colin Schachat, and the IDF ensemble conducted by Maestro Ofir Sobol.

Abramson, who was a participant in a memorial wreath-laying ceremony at the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem during President



Israel Defense Forces Chief Cantor Lt. Col. Shai Abramson, backed by the IDF Choir, takes center stage in front of a full house at the gala concert tribute to the USA and Israel in Beverly Hills, California, on June 19. Photo by Col. (CA) Rick Lalor

Donald Trump's recent visit to Israel, served as a major in the paratroopers and head of the Teleprocessing Weapons Systems Department in the Technology Logis-

tics Branch of the Israel

Defense Forces before being appointed Chief Military Cantor.

The 40th Infantry Division Band is one of the busiest units in the Cal Guard and serves as its musical ambassador to audiences of all ages throughout the Golden State and surrounding states.

"We are citizen Soldiers and our music reflects the culture and diversity of our state and nation," said band commander Chief Warrant Officer 4 Eric Sukanuma. "What an honor it was for us to perform with such prestigious and talented artists. Music builds bridges and truly serves to enhance relationships and understanding."

"We're standing here tonight, hand in hand, playing the same music and enjoying the same songs... all of us with great smiles," reflected Yossi Mark, a member of the IDF Choir. "This proves that together, if we try, there can be unity for the whole world."

## JFHQ observes Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month

By NIKI CHING  
Office of Equal Employment  
Opportunity

The California Military Department's (CMD) Joint Force Headquarters hosted an energetic Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month Observance on the afternoon of 31 May. Presented by the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Office and Special Emphasis co-managers, Lt. Col. Sidney U. Cardozo and Maj. Jonathan M. Shiroma, the event featured guest speaker journalist Rowena Shaddox; a "Bizarre Foods" contest; cultural performances by "Aloha, Polynesia!"; plus food samplings from Sunshine Hawaiian Barbeque and Kona Ice shaved ice truck. Col. Susan I. Pangelinan opened and closed the event.

"I think it is a wonderful time to promote the diverse cultures within our Asian and Pacific Islander community," commented Shiroma. "The military has long been the organization that sets the pace for truly exhibiting the melting pot of cultures, and that is why these types of special occasions are important," he explained.

Shaddox, a Filipina, is the Fox40 Solano County Bureau Chief. She worked as a newspaper reporter for 11 years before transitioning to television reporting. Shaddox has covered Solano County for nearly 20 years, most of that time reporting on crime, including infamous murders. At the AAPI event, she graciously shared personal stories of her family and herself.

Seeing it as both educational and entertaining, the "Bizarre Foods" contest was an idea which the



LEFT: Dancers from "Aloha, Polynesia!" perform during an Asian American & Pacific Islander observance at Joint Forces Headquarters in Sacramento on 31 May. TOP RIGHT: Tech. Sgt. Joseph A. Prouse and 1st Sgt. Richard W. Aller contemplate life as they sample some "Bizarre Foods" during the event. Employees at Joint Forces Headquarters enjoy shaved ice from Kona Ice. Photos by Master Sgt. David Loeffler

EEO Office has had in mind for a while. While perhaps not bizarre to the cultures from which they originate, most of the foods may appear unusual or strange to those unfamiliar with Asian food.

A variety of foods from diverse Asian and Pacific Islander cultures were presented to unsuspecting volunteers. These "delicacies" included fish flavored crackers from the Philippines; squid flavored grilled seaweed from Thailand; whole, dried tunsoy (freshwater sardines) from the Philippines; black grass jelly from Taiwan; durian fruit from tropical Southeast Asia; chicken feet from China; and balut (fertilized duck or chicken egg with a nearly-developed embryo which is eaten from the shell) from the Philippines.

After some hesitation, but cheered on by the audience, four brave participants impressed the crowd by devouring nearly every item with gusto! One of the leading contestants, Tech. Sgt. Joseph A. Prouse, who works in the state

headquarters Public Affairs Office, said he was mentally prepared. "I was surprised how good the balut tasted! The hardest thing for me was the durian because of both its smell and texture. I almost lost it there."

Describing himself very adventurous when trying different foods, Prouse said he is ready to sign up for the next eating challenge!

When asked about his favorite "Bizarre Food" that day, another leading contestant, 1st Sgt. Richard W. Aller, NCOIC of State Personnel, explained, "'Favorite' is a hard word to get to when eating all of those 'interesting' foods, but I think the one that tasted the best or most normal to me would be the chicken feet," which reminded him of cold orange chicken. He said the hardest dish for him to consume was "One hundred percent, without a doubt or reservation, the durian! Grosses thing I have ever eaten!" He added that the "Bizarre Foods" showcased at the event "definitely pushed the



limits for some of us!"

"Aloha, Polynesia!" has performed in California for over 30 years. The troupe has performed in diverse events such as schools, cultural fairs, other community events, Sacramento Kings half time shows, and the Pacific Rim Street Festival, as well as private parties. Its members have traveled abroad to perform in Hawaii, Canada, Spain, and Tahiti. The group performed dances for the CMD from the cultures of the Maori, who are the indigenous people of New Zealand, and from Tahiti.

"They were so enthusiastic!" exclaimed Pangelinan.

The dancers encouraged volunteers from the audience to try maneuvering poi balls, which are generally used in group choreography at cultural events with singing and music in Maori culture. "Poi," the Maori word for "ball," is actually a performance art, or the tools which are used for it and in this case, is unrelated to poi

eaten by Hawaiians. Volunteers from the audience were also chosen to try lively Tahitian dancing, and they proved themselves to be good sports.

After the festivities in the front of Joint Forces Headquarters, participants moved on to the cafeteria area, where they could partake in food samplings. These included Spam musubi (a block of rice with meat wrapped in nori seaweed), Asian barbecue chicken musubi, and fried shrimp from Sunshine Hawaiian BBQ. The EEO Office also supplied some milder "Bizarre Foods," such as individually packaged bean curd snacks, rambutan fruit (similar to lychees), plus two types of ice cream flavors, purple yam and cheese with corn. Kona Ice shaved ice truck gave out samplings of flavored shaved ice, a popular local Hawaiian treat. And, Ms. Harvinder Kaur of Kaur's Threading Lounge was available to create temporary henna art tattoos on interested parties.

First Sergeant Aller opined, "By far, this was one of the best cultural awareness events we have had in the building. Very original! I look forward to next year's cultural observance!"

The goal of Special Emphasis/Ethnic Observances is to provide education and cultural awareness to CMD service members and civilian employees. The observances are part of the Adjutant General's Equal Employment Opportunity and Equal Opportunity programs. Anyone interested in hosting an observance at an alternate location (unit, armory, wing, etc.) should contact the EEO Office at the following: ng.ca.caarnng.list.eeo-eo@mail.mil or at 916-854-3177 for guidance and assistance with funds.





## What's left behind: effects of MJ grow sites

CDTF supports efforts to identify and document hazardous materials found in marijuana grow sites on California public lands

By **SGT. BRIANNE ROUDEBUSH**  
Counterdrug Task Force

In recent years, the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force and the law enforcement agencies they support have encountered increasing amounts of toxic substances in illegal marijuana grow sites. Several law enforcement officers have fallen ill after coming in contact with unknown chemicals, creating a need for hazardous materials training and chemical testing.

In partnership with the University of California, Davis Integral Ecology Research Center, members of CDTF ground tactical teams conducted on-the-job HAZMAT training in Plumas County, April 26-27. The 14 members who completed the training will be able to take the skills and knowledge back to other members of their teams.

Over the course of the two-day training, team members learned how to utilize appropriate protective gear, identify and sequester toxic chemicals, and collect samples of unknown substances for further testing.

Historic grow sites in the Plumas National Forest are riddled with trash, pesticides, rodenticides, fertilizers and other chemicals that the team members were able to test, identify and document as part of training.

"The goal of the training was to qualify the service members as subject matter experts who are not only capable of performing technical HAZMAT functions, but also able to support and advise law enforcement officers on safety and awareness," Sgt. 1st Class Ricardo Alonso, the CDTF HAZMAT program manager, said.

Now, when marijuana suppression teams enter illicit grow sites, they are trained to look for unknown substances first.

"It's important because a lot of guys, like myself, do this type of mission every year and a lot of exposure to these chemicals can cause pretty severe health risks later on down the road," Sgt. Christopher Petrossian, a CDTF ground tactical team member, said. "So we're learning how to protect ourselves and protect our teams from these contaminants that are out here."

In addition to identifying safety hazards to the team, CDTF



**ABOVE: CDTF members take samples of spray bottles to test for hazardous materials during on-the-job HAZMAT training in Plumas County, April 26. RIGHT: A CDTF member helps Corrina Kamaroff, an associate ecologist with the Integral Ecology Research Center at UC Davis, document the type and amount of fertilizer left behind at an historic marijuana grow site. Photos by Sgt. Brianne Roudebush**

HAZMAT also supports the IERC's efforts to assess the environmental damage illegal grow sites inflict on public lands.

"We want to quantify exactly what the environmental damages of these trespass grows are," Corrina Kamaroff, an associate ecologist with IERC, said. "We're looking at the chemicals and the fertilizers, seeing how it affects the soils and the water systems and how that directly relates to wildlife - specifically sensitive and endangered species - because it's all connected."

Kamaroff said that while the trash, fertilizers and household pesticides and rodenticides are problematic for the environment, the biggest problem are the unknown chemicals.

"It's detrimental," she said. "The wildlife is getting into these chemicals and it's really a safety issue for everyone involved."



### PUTTING COUNTERDRUG SKILLS TO USE ON DEPLOYMENT

Five current and former members of CDTF (pictured in left photo) who deployed to Afghanistan with A Company, 5-19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) were able to use the skills and training they gained with CDTF to help the local Narcotics Interdiction Unit in Afghanistan. Throughout their deployment, they assisted with the interdiction and dismantlement of three heroin production sites.

"As we started to delve into the mission planning, we realized [the local unit] didn't have a very good risk assessment or comprehensive safety brief for the hazards associated with this kind of mission," one of the members said. "Some of the guys we were working with had never seen the production of heroin and there is a potential for people to get chemical burns or inhalation."

The team was able to reach out to law enforcement officers they had worked with in the past to create a safety brief which was translated into the local language and implemented as the primary training for future counter-narcotics missions.







# California National Guard



## Office of the Inspector General

### Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT)

**July 2017**

The APFT is designed to ensure a base level of physical readiness for all Soldiers and to facilitate unit leaders in assessing the readiness of their unit. However, simply passing the APFT should not be the primary objective for a unit or individual Physical Readiness Training (PRT) program. Instead, PRT programs should be designed to maximize physical fitness and unit mission readiness. APFT scores are also often considered in personnel administrative actions or board proceedings; therefore, it's imperative that every APFT be administered properly with each individual Soldier exerting maximum effort to obtain their best possible score in each event of the APFT. Doing so will not only benefit the Soldier, but facilitate leaders in accurately assessing physical readiness and the effectiveness of their PRT program. Often, the IG observes issues involving the Administration of the APFT, to include Testing Procedures and Fitness Standards.

#### Key References:

- AR 350-1, Army Training and Leader Development (19 August 2014)
- FM 7-22, Army Physical Readiness Training (October 2012)
- AR 600-8-2, Suspension of Favorable Personnel Actions – Flags (11 May 2016)



#### Administration of the APFT

Commanders may administer the APFT as often as they wish, but they must specify beforehand all Record APFTs.

- AGR & ADOS Soldiers: Take a APFT twice each calendar year, with 4 months (minimum) between record tests.
- RC Soldiers: Take the APFT once each calendar year, with 8 months (minimum) and no more than 14 months (maximum) between record tests.
- All Soldiers who fail a record APFT for the first time, or fail to take a record APFT within the required time period, will be flagged IAW AR 600-8-2.
- AGR & ADOS Soldiers who fail the APFT will be retested NLT 90 days following the initial APFT failure, and RC Soldiers not on Active Duty will be tested no later than 180 days following the initial APFT failure.

#### Testing Procedures

- Administering the APFT requires four duty positions:
  - Officer In-charge or NCO In-charge (OIC or NCOIC)
  - Event Supervisor
  - Event Scorer
  - Support Personnel (such as Event Time Keeper or Demonstrator)
- APFT administrators may perform multiple duties; however, the Event Scorer may not be the Event Time Keeper or Event Supervisor.
- Civilians, Retired Soldiers, and Inactive Ready Reserve Soldiers (IRR) are prohibited from administering the APFT.
- Clothing not prescribed as part of the APFU/IPFU, electronic devices, equipment that offer potential for unfair advantage, and braces or items not prescribed by a medical profile are not authorized while taking the APFT.

#### Fitness Standards

- The APFT consists of Push-ups, Sit-ups, and a 2-mile run. They must be tested in that order and on the same day.
- The approved alternate aerobic events are the 800-yard swim, 6.2-mile bike, and the 2.5-mile walk. Only Soldiers on permanent or extended temporary profile (more than 3 months) may take alternate aerobic event.
  - Alternate aerobic events will be determined by the commander and are a "GO" or "NO-GO" grading system.
- To pass, Soldiers must attain score of at least 60 points in each event or a "GO" on the alternate aerobic event.
- Soldiers are allowed a minimum of 10 minutes rest, and a maximum of 20 minutes rest, between each event.
- All three events must be completed within a two hour test period. A test period is the period of time that elapses from the start to the finish of all three events.





Cal Guard Soldiers from the 1-18th Cavalry Regiment salute as the U.K.'s Honourable Artillery Company Regimental Band plays the "Star Spangled Banner" at the Camp Roberts Soldier Bowl on June 14. Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney

## What is the Blended Retirement System?

The Blended Retirement System (BRS) blends the traditional, 20-year cliff-vested defined benefit annuity, similar to the existing Uniformed Services' legacy retirement systems, with a defined contribution plan that allows Service members to contribute to a Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) account with government automatic and matching contributions. This change of military retirements was a result of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

When Congress passed Blended Retirement in the 2016 NDAA, they also passed into law the requirement for DoD to teach Financial Literacy to Service members and their spouse upon request. The Service Secretaries will ensure financial literacy training at key phases of a Service member's career.

The BRS does not change the manner in which members of the National Guard earn retirement points.

Under BRS about 85 percent of service members will receive a government retirement benefit if they serve at least two years, even if they don't qualify for a full retirement.

You are eligible for the BRS if you are a Service member in drilling or active Service, who was in a paid status on Dec. 31, 2017 and you have less than 4,320 retirement points. If you are eligible to opt-in to the Blended Retirement System, you must take the mandatory Blended Retirement opt-in training.

For Army National Guard members: To obtain your point summary, you must see your State RPAM NCO for your "ARNG Annual Statement, Form 23A". The correct column to use to verify your opt-in eligibility is the "Total credible points".

For Air National Guard members: You can find your points by visiting the vMPF (virtual MPF) on the AF Portal. Once in vMPF, go to "Self Service Actions" then go to "Personal Data", "ANG/USAFR Point Credit Summary Inquiry (PCARS)", and "Service History". You should use the Total Points Summary however, please verify your points with your FSS.

## Airmen wanted for Weather Flight

The 210 Weather Flight, the 163rd Attack Wing's battlefield weather team, which supports U.S. Army aviation brigades, is currently looking for enlisted Airmen who are interested in cross-training.

The flight supports U.S. Army aviation brigades by providing weather forecasting for aviation operations. Deployment opportunities may include the continental U.S., the Middle East, Europe, South America, Korea and Australia.

The minimum ASVAB scores required for these positions are 50 in electronics and 66 in general. Applicants must have normal color vision.

Current and prior service members will complete active duty training including a nine month weather course in Mississippi, four months of follow-on training in Florida, four months of seasoning days at March Air Reserve Base, and a one-month battlefield weather mission qualification course in either Florida or Arizona.

Interested personnel and those with questions may call [951-655-2954](tel:951-655-2954) or [951-655-3078](tel:951-655-3078).

## Officer/Warrant Officer Symposium held in September

If you are interested in becoming a commissioned officer or warrant officer in the California Army National Guard, you're invited to attend the next Officer/Warrant Officer Symposium, which will be held concurrently in Northern and Southern California on Sept. 9 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Northern California symposium will be held at the Okinawa Armory, 8450 Okinawa St, Sacramento. The Southern California symposium is at Joint Force Training Base Los Alamitos, 11206 Lexington Drive, in the Liberty Theater.

The symposiums are a one-stop shop where you'll get all the information you need to know about becoming an Army National Guard officer or warrant officer. Those interested in instructor positions for 31B, 88M, 91D/B, OCS and WOCS should also attend.

Register to attend by emailing: [ng.ca.caarng.list.223rd-rti-mailbox-access@mail.mil](mailto:ng.ca.caarng.list.223rd-rti-mailbox-access@mail.mil).





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Troopers from the Cal Guard's 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment pose for a photo at the Camp Roberts Soldier Bowl on June 14 after completing an intense two-week annual training exercise.  
Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney

## The Grizzly Newsmagazine

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Retired members, email [jason.b.sweeney2.mil@mail.mil](mailto:jason.b.sweeney2.mil@mail.mil).



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