

Monday,  
Dec. 15, 2008  
Issue 9

# The Desert Raven



81<sup>st</sup> BCT commander, Col. Ronald Kapral, and his staff wishing the rest of the brigade a happy holidays from Camp Ramdai, Iraq (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



## Happy Holidays 81st BCT

### IN THIS ISSUE

Page 3

Eagle Eye awarded to 2-146 FA Soldier  
1-161 Inf. assumes duty

Page 4

1-185 Soldiers receive their combat patches  
Maine shows off it's 'northern' hospitality

Page 6

2-146 FA enjoys a desert Thanksgiving

Page 7

Staying fit while deployed

Page 8

Getting some 'star' support from home

Page 9

2-146 Soldier fixes the 'unfixable'

Pages 10 and 11

Enjoy photos from across the brigade

Page 12

Get a new, free CD especially for the troops

Page 13

Is your job safe back home? Learn your rights

Page 14

HQ Co. goes country on Camp Ramadi

Page 14

The National Guard turns 372



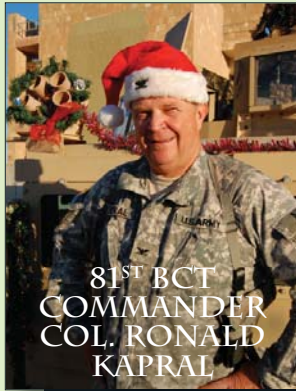


## Message from 81<sup>st</sup> BCT Commander

By Col. Ronald Kapral  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT commander

For most of us, the holiday season is a special time of year, but this year is different for us. Though we are not going to have the opportunity to spend the holidays with our loved ones, we must not forget them either. The sacrifices you are making are felt by the families and friends left back home. Be sure to remember them and thank them for all they are doing to support you and keeping the home fires burning.

The holiday season can also be a depressing time. Be receptive to your fellow soldiers. Note any changes in their behavior. Remind them that



they are not alone. If you suspect something is wrong, notify your chain of command or the chaplain.

Soldiers need to maintain their vigilance, especially during this time of the year. The enemy is also aware of this season. Always be combat ready and never take anything for

granted.

Finally, I want to take the time to personally thank you and your family for serving. Your sacrifices will never be forgotten. We are writing the history that our children will read about. You are making a difference. I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. 🍷

## Inspector General

It is everyone's right to contact an Inspector General. Some key things to keep in mind before contacting the IG are:

- What do you want the IG to do for you?
- Have you given your chain of command an opportunity to address the problem?
- Have you requested assistance from any other source or agency?
- Do you have supporting documentation?

Some issues are not IG appropriate, such as:

- Equal opportunity complaints. See your EO representative.
- Hazardous work conditions. Contact your local safety representative.
- Criminal allegations. Contact your chain of command, CID, NCIS or PMO

When in doubt, ask and we can work to get you to the appropriate person or agency to work your issue.

**81<sup>st</sup> BCT IG:**

**Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Paul Scott**

**DSN: 344-0953**

**e-mail address:**

[paul.a.scott@us.army.mil](mailto:paul.a.scott@us.army.mil)

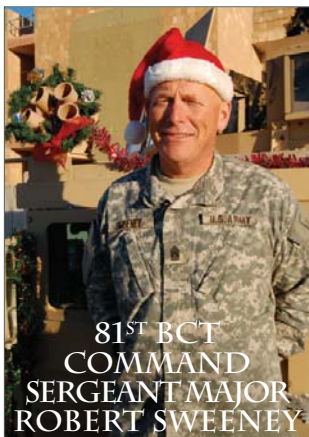
[paul.scott@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil](mailto:paul.scott@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil)

## Message from 81<sup>st</sup> BCT Command Sergeant Major

By Command Sgt. Maj.  
Robert Sweeney  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Command Sgt. Maj.

The feedback we are receiving on the brigade's performance to date has been very good. This means the officers and noncommissioned officers are doing their respective jobs, but more importantly, our Soldiers are executing their missions to standards. We could have the greatest leaders of all times, but without the quality, commitment and professionalism of our Soldiers, all our leadership would be for not. I thank each of you for answering the call to duty. Regardless of the mission, you continue onward and are making great achievements. Well done team, well done!

As we get ready to celebrate Christmas here, let's remember the



spirit of Christmas, for it is truly better to give than to receive. For those of us here in Iraq, it means giving a hand to your battle buddy, sharing your holiday cookies with your team or cheering up a member when they get the holiday blues. For those small things are priceless gifts that only we

can give to one another.

To our families back home, I want you to have a safe and joyous Christmas, and in the holiday spirit of giving, please reach out to those who are less fortunate than us and have fallen on hard times. Spread some holiday cheer to them on behalf of the Soldiers of the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT!

Merry Christmas and happy New Year!! 🍷



*Happy  
Holidays  
81<sup>st</sup> Brigade  
Combat Team!*



# 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA Soldier earns Eagle Eye Award

By 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Matt Baldwin  
A Co., 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA

Pvt. Grant T. Hoover of Alpha Battery, 2-146<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, will be the first to receive the Eagle Eye Award for identification of an improvised explosive device along Route Tampa Nov. 9, 2008.

The Eagle Eye Award is an Army Commendation for Achievement, given to every Soldier in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Expeditionary Support Command who identifies an IED.

During a security mission along route Tampa, Hoover noticed something on the side of the road, between Marez-East in Mosul and Harbor Gate, along the Turkish border. It was around 3:00 a.m., still dark, and the spot lights revealed an odd shape on the railroad tracks to the right.

"You start easing up a bit. You can only stay alert for so long, and

you fall into auto pilot," Hoover explained.

It was their third mission out, and he called it on the radio: "Hold on."

The other radios echoed in the night air. Crunching tires changed pitch, slowing down on the gravel.

Hoover checked again. "I felt sure. It looked like a panel. Something was out of place. Everything stopped."

Explosive Ordnance Disposal came out and positively identified the explosive device. They found a fuel can, and said that it held 10 pounds of unidentified ordnance. A large piece of cardboard was standing up to conceal the bomb, and it appears as though it was found before being completely set up.

The award will be presented to Soldiers at the end of the tour.



Pvt. Grant T. Hoover, of A Batt. 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA, is the first to be recommended for the Eagle Eye Award (Photo by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Matt Baldwin)

# 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. assumes duty in Balad

By Sgt. David Isaac  
1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 161<sup>st</sup> Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion) assumed responsibility for escorting convoys of supplies to forward operating bases from the Indiana Army National Guard's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 293<sup>rd</sup> Infantry at a ceremony outside the battalion headquarters at Joint Base Balad, Iraq last month.

Col. Therese O'Brien, commander of the 55<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, presided over the ceremony and praised the 1-293<sup>rd</sup> for their strong record of safety and mission accomplishment.

"I've watched you and your leaders and you have done an outstanding job," said O'Brien.



Company commanders, first sergeants and guidon bearers from 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB) stand in formation during the Transfer of Authority ceremony at Joint Base Balad, Iraq (Photo courtesy of 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf.)



Lt. Col. Greg Allen, commander of 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB), and Command Sgt. Maj. David Windom, command sergeant major for 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB), uncasing the battalion's colors at Joint Base Balad, Iraq (Photo courtesy of 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf.)

She also said she looked forward to seeing the 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB) in action: "I've heard great reports about your battalion and I implore you to continue to take the hard right as leaders."

Both battalions continued the long-standing military tradition of uncasing and casing colors. To signify the completion of their mission, the 1-293<sup>rd</sup> rolled and cased their battalion colors and the 1-161<sup>st</sup> immediately uncased and unfurled their colors to show they stood ready to assume their new mission.

After assuming responsibility, Lt. Col. Greg Allen, the 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf.'s commander, said, "We've got some big shoes to fill. The 293<sup>rd</sup> Nightfighters have done a great job here, but we are up to the task."





# 1-185<sup>th</sup> Soldiers christened as combat veterans

By Capt. Renato Rossignoli  
1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. Bn.

Soldiers of the 1-185<sup>th</sup> Armor Battalion were awarded their combat patch, Nov. 27, 2008 at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, after reaching their 30<sup>th</sup> day in a combat zone.

Combat patches have been awarded to Soldiers since World War II. It is worn on the right sleeve and indicates the unit with which the Soldier saw combat.

The ceremony began at 8:00 a.m. in front of the battalion headquarters. The 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. Bn. command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Charles Jolicoeur from San Bernardino, Calif., assembled the battalion. Each company commander, first sergeant and representative of the command group walked the ranks congratulating each Soldier on earning their combat patch.

While the 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. Bn. has its fair share of combat veterans who have been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, it also has many Soldiers who have never been to combat.

Sgt. Ulises Gomez, a human resource noncommissioned officer, reflected on the moment, "I am very proud to have received my combat patch while serving in a unit of the California National Guard. This combat patch will be something I will always wear on my uniform, and it will follow me throughout my career."



Capt. Gerald Mothes, a native of San Diego, and 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. David Budek, a native of West Covina, Calif., congratulate their Soldiers on earning their combat patches Nov. 27 at COS Speicher (Photo by Capt. Renato Rossignoli)

Spc. Juan Rivas, a battalion local area network manager, expressed similar sentiments when he commented, "Receiving that patch during the ceremony was quite an experience. I feel proud and honored because I will not only be going back home as a Soldier, but as a veteran. It is a rite of passage that I am very proud of because it shows that I have been there."



Spc. Eva Finnell looks at unit patches on the ceiling in the Maine Troop Greeters' hall of fame at the Bangor International Airport, as Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class John Bucher calls home during a stopover there as part of the battalion's movement to Iraq. Both are from H Co., 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB) (Photo courtesy of 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf.)

## 'Northern' Hospitality

By Sgt. David Isaac  
1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB)

Patriotic citizens from Maine repeated a nearly two-decade-old tradition as they greeted Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 161<sup>st</sup> Infantry (Combined Arms Bat-

talion) and the 181<sup>st</sup> Brigade Support Battalion during their recent stopover at Bangor International Airport en-route to Iraq.

The Maine Troop Greeters showed their 'northern' hospitality to the Guardsman just as they have all deploying servicemembers since 1990. The group began as U.S. troops deployed in support of Operation Desert Shield and has continued through troop deployments to and from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Bill Knight, a World War II veteran and the group's founder, said today's groups and celebrations are smaller because of security concerns. Troop movements are not public and the group typically only gets an hour or two notice, making it difficult to assemble the large groups that greeted Desert Shield and Desert Storm veterans. In the past, the greeters would advertise their events in the local newspaper and on local television stations and attract crowds of more than a thousand greeters and would often include high school bands and American Legion color guards.

The MTGs have greeted nearly 3,700 flights, 740,000 troops and even 150 military working dogs since May of 2003. During the troops' stay at the airport, they were treated to free snacks and free use of 40 cell phones.

Over time, grateful troops and commanders have thanked the MTG by presenting them with letters, patches, flags, coins and certificates, which now line the walls and even the ceiling in the group's 'hall of fame'.

Whether troops are heading to the fight or home from it, this die-hard cadre ensures they understand how much their sacrifice is appreciated by those at home.



## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER


By Lt. Col. Carl Steele  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Chaplain

We are in the middle of the holiday season. Family members at home are busy shopping, baking and getting ready for office parties and school programs. Those of us deployed are busy thinking about what is happening at home, getting ready for a party or at least a good meal at the dining facility, and glad for no shopping. The holidays are a hard time to be apart, but there are some things you can do.

At home, carry on family traditions that you may have. Find a special way to remember your Soldier.

Here in Iraq, start a new tradition. Don't forget to reach out and touch your family at home. Remember the phone lines may be long, so get an early start. Take pictures of what you are doing and share them with each other.

On my last deployment I started a new tradition. Ten of us woke up on Christmas Day and went to the dining facility together. We shared home made jams and jelly. We spent the morning eating and talking about home. This new tradition did not catch on at home but it was a good memory of Iraq.

Do something meaningful and special this holiday season. 



## Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

By Master Sgt. CathyJo Wings  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT SARC

### Army Regulation 600-20 Chapter 8-4 Definitions

According to Army Regulation 600-20 Chapter 8-4, there are two types of sexual violations.

The first type, sexual assault is classified as a crime. Sexual assault is defined as intentional sexual contact, characterized by use of force, physical threat or abuse of authority, or when the victim does not or cannot consent. Sexual assault, includes rape, nonconsensual sodomy (oral or anal sex), indecent assault (unwanted, inappropriate sexual contact or fondling) or attempts to commit these acts. Sexual assault can occur without regard to gender, spousal relationship or age of victim.

"Consent" shall not be deemed or construed to mean the failure by the victim to offer physical resistance. Consent is not given when a person uses force, threat of force, coercion or when the victim is asleep, incapacitated or unconscious.

The second type, other sex-related offenses, are defined as all other sexual acts of violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice that do not meet the above definition of sexual assault, or the definition of sexual harassment as promulgated in DoD Directive 1350.2, Department of Defense Military Equal Opportunity. Examples of other sex-related offenses could include indecent acts with another and adultery.

In the event you you are sexually assaulted, contact your SARC, unit victim advocate, chaplain or medical personnel

81<sup>st</sup> BCT SARC Master Sgt. CathyJo Wings  
[cathyjo.wings@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil](mailto:cathyjo.wings@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil)  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT SARC  
DSN 344-0932  
VOIP 696-5171



## Hugs from Fort McCoy

The Eagle Systems team from Fort McCoy sends a shout out to the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT. Eagle Systems is the company that most of the civilian employees, including SRP and medical, at Fort McCoy work for (Photo courtesy of Eagle Systems)



Your Military Health Plan

Effective Jan. 1, 2009, TRICARE will reduce the rates for TRICARE Reserve Select. Monthly premiums for TRS individual coverage will drop 44% from

\$81.00 to \$47.51, and TRS family coverage will drop 29% from \$253.00 to \$180.17. To view the entire news release, visit: <http://www.tricare.mil/pressroom/news.aspx?fid=480>





# A DESERT THANKSGIVING FOR 2-146<sup>TH</sup> FA

By Sgt. Blayden Wall  
2-146<sup>th</sup> FA

Soldiers in 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Alpha Battery, 2-146<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery were treated to a special Thanksgiving feast courtesy of Logistic Taskforce Alpha out of Bamberg, Germany Nov. 27, 2008 in Haburgate, Kurdistan.

As part of their convoy mission, Soldiers of 2<sup>nd</sup> plt. escort third country national trucks from Mosul, Iraq to Haburgate, Kurdistan. Because of the distance and time constraints, the Soldiers are given a rest period in the Ibrahim Khalil Customs Facility, better known as the Marble Palace, a building used by the U.S. military and located in the Haburgate community. After the rest period, Soldiers escort the loaded trucks back to Mosul.

Halfway through their current mission, 2<sup>nd</sup> plt. found themselves spending the Thanksgiving holiday at Haburgate, located on the border of turkey.

As Sgt. Brandon McClure stated,



Lt. Col. Chun, commander of Brigade Special Troops Battalion of the 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade out of Bamberg, Germany, cuts into the first of nine turkeys specially prepared for the troops and the civilians of the Haburgate community (Photo by Sgt. Blayden Wall)



Spc. James Wohlman, a member of A Batt., 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA from Ocean Shores, Wash., makes his way through the food service line under the infamous Haburgate Cafe neon sign. Soldiers enjoyed a special Thanksgiving feast nearly three days in the making (Photo by Sgt. Blayden Wall)

"I am going to eat turkey on Turkey Day two hundred meters from the border of Turkey."


Nine turkeys, hams, prime rib, crab legs and shrimp provided the foundation for the meal. Vegetables, fruits, pies and cakes rounded out the special meal. Carved ice sculptures and Thanksgiving decorations transformed the small Haburgate Café into a formal dining room set for special guests.

Capt. Charles Ausman, commander of LTF Alpha, said the special meal was put together for the Soldiers and the civilians who assist the coalition forces to show appreciation. Preparations began two days earlier with cooking, cleaning and dining room reorganization. LTF Alpha Soldiers worked in shifts to prepare the meal and to ensure everything was ready for the Soldiers and civilians partaking in the Thanksgiving meal.

During the meal, Kurdish Soldiers and civilians mingled with American Soldiers, exchanging stories and

talking about culture and traditions.

"This is the best Thanksgiving I have ever had away from my family," said Pfc. Steven Kristrom as he was eating a second plate of food. When asked why, Kristrom said, "It is a very homey environment, great food, and we are getting to see firsthand that we are making a difference."

For many of the Soldiers from 2<sup>nd</sup> plt., this is their first deployment and first Thanksgiving away from family. 

## HELP US MAKE THE DESERT RAVEN BETTER!

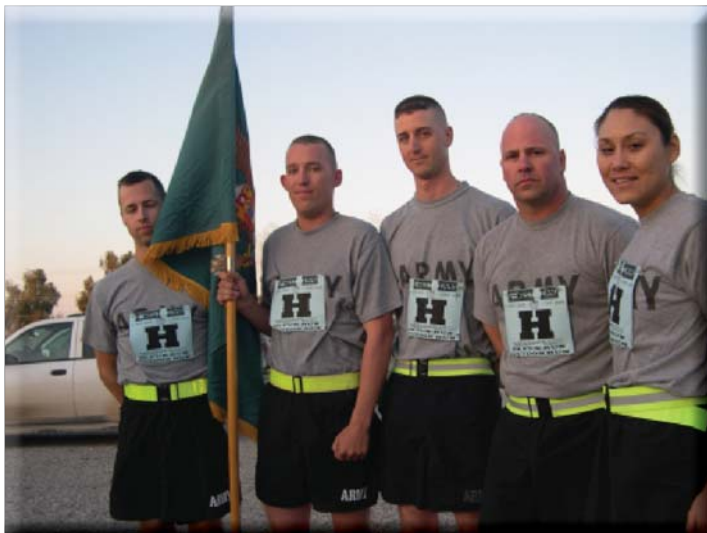
Do you have a story to tell?

What is your platoon doing?

Do you know a Soldier who has gone above and beyond?

Please send your photo and story submissions to [emily.suhr@us.army.mil](mailto:emily.suhr@us.army.mil) by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.





Soldiers from the 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB participated in the Veteran's Day race at COB Q-West Nov. 11. The team showed battalion pride by racing with the battalion colors.

From Left to Right: Spc. Christian Harris, Spc. Scott Mcleod, Staff Sgt. Christopher Herring, Command Sgt. Maj. David Nunn, and Capt. Kirstie Roy (Photo courtesy of 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB)

## MEDICAL CORNER

By Lt. Col. Stephen Anderson  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Surgeon Cell

**M**ost of us have settled into a routine here in Iraq. The weather is mild, and the food is good. Many of you have also settled into a healthy exercise routine. If you have not, we encourage you to start a regular exercise program. A regular exercise program can add years to your life, and add life to your years! Some of the benefits of regular exercise include:

1. Exercise improves your mood. A workout can help blow off steam and calm you down. It also stimulates chemicals in your brain that will leave you happier and more relaxed.
2. Exercise combats chronic disease. It can manage or even help prevent conditions like high blood pressure and high cholesterol. It can also help prevent type II diabetes, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer.
3. Exercise helps manage your weight. When you exercise you burn calories, the more you burn, the easier it is to keep your weight under control.
4. Exercise strengthens your heart and lungs. Exercise helps your entire cardiovascular system. You will have more energy to do other things you enjoy.
5. Exercise promotes better sleep. Regular exercise can help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep.

Start gradually, and perform at least 20-30 minutes of aerobic exercise 3-4 times a week. You will be amazed at how quickly your health will improve. 🏃‍♂️



HQ 81<sup>st</sup> BCT Soldiers wait for their turn "at bat" during a practice game on Camp Ramadi, Dec. 10, 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Sgt. Edward Brock from HQ 81<sup>st</sup> BCT pitches the ball during a practice game on Camp Ramadi, Dec. 10, 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Pfc. Justin Singleton from HQ 81<sup>st</sup> BCT tries to escape with the ball during a flag football game between HQ 81<sup>st</sup> and Combat Logistics Battalion 5 Nov. 25, 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Martha and Mary residents Edith Garner, left, and Dorothy Lazzarini work on banners for the families of deployed 81st BCT Soldiers. On the right is volunteer Janet Powell (Photo by Larry Steagall/ Kitsap Sun)

## Showing support to troops; Showing support to families

By Ed Friedrich (Originally published in the Kitsap Sun Nov.21, 2008)

**R**esidents of the Martha and Mary Health and Rehab Center are lifting spirits of families with Soldiers fighting in Iraq.

A dozen extended-care residents are crafting blue-star banners for Kitsap National Guardsmen's kin. The flags have hung in homes since 1917 to signify a family with a member serving overseas.

The residents, who have worked on the banners since summer, presented 30 of them to National Guard representatives last month. They'll keep making more.

"We're really happy that the folks did this for us," said Erin O'Brien, family readiness group coordinator for Bremerton-based C Company, 1st Battalion, 303rd Cavalry. "It was very nice. The families are really going to appreciate the banners."

O'Brien's husband, Lt. Stephen Silber, is a platoon leader serving in Taqaddum, Iraq. They live on Bainbridge Island.

Another Bremerton unit — C Company, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry — is in Balad, Iraq. Its family readiness group coordinator, Donna Gerken of Lacey, also attended last month's ceremony, along with Sgt. 1st Class Ray Andringa from the Port Orchard armory and Ron Underwood, a family assistance coordinator for the 81st Brigade, which includes Bremerton units. Gerken's husband, Rob, is a 161st Infantry's commander.

They were welcomed by about 40 Martha and Mary residents, who received a touching letter of gratitude in return.

"A lot of those folks who came to the presentation were veterans themselves, of World War II and Korea," O'Brien said. "They were very happy to have us there, very happy to do something for us."



## 81st BSTB helps Iraqi kids

By Capt. Jacqueline Baird  
81st BSTB

**S**oldiers from the 81st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, stationed out of Everett, Wash., helped repair a tattered playground at an elementary school in Jedellah Sofla, a village near Contingency Operating Base Qayyarah-West, Iraq, Nov. 12, 2008.

During a visit to the village, the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 81st BSTB commander, Capt. Forrest Horan, noticed the playground equipment was unstable and decided to return later that day with his troops and repair it. He wanted to ensure that the equipment was safe for the children to play on and would last longer. Soldiers from HHC, 81st BSTB returned to the village with tools and materials needed to complete the project.

Little acts of kindness, like this, help build relationships between the U.S. and the local Iraqi population. The 81st BSTB has been in country for two months and will be participating and facilitating other humanitarian projects while in theater (Photo courtesy of 81st BSTB)

The inspiration came from Debbie Fitzgerald, an activities coordinator at Martha and Mary. She had stitched a banner when her National Guard son was shipped overseas, "so as a mother I could wrap my head around the fact that my child was going to war."

It seemed like a great project for the residents.

"They all either had loved ones go to war or have been to war themselves," Fitzgerald said.

Because the residents have cognitive and physical challenges, Fitzgerald kept the design simple. The 11-by-17-inch banners feature a blue star on a white background with a red border. They are crafted from felt and paint.

"All I did was contribute the design and idea and they did the rest," Fitzgerald said.

The National Guard units are scheduled to remain in Iraq until August.





# Soldier coined for fixing the 'unfixable'

By 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Matt Baldwin  
A Co., 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA



Sgt. Bobby Walters of Alpha Battery, 2-146<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion was awarded the 18<sup>th</sup> Combat Sustainment Brigade coin Nov. 26, 2008 at COS Marez, Iraq, formerly known as Diamond Back.

Walters, who is assigned to the Headquarters Platoon in A Batt., and several fellow squad members from the maintenance section, were invited to meet at the battalion conference room.

"At first, we didn't know why we were going to staff call, and then we heard Bobby was getting a battalion coin," Staff Sgt. Scott Woinarowicz said.

As the motor sergeant, Woinarowicz leads the maintenance crew, including qualified mechanics, electricians, and several administration clerks.

**"Last week, when I heard that they were operational, I just had to give out a coin in recognition of doing the impossible." -Lt. Col. Roscoe, 18<sup>th</sup> CSSB Bn. Cmdr.**

Walters, an electrician from Shelton, Wash., began working on broken swamp coolers after the battalion maintenance officer said that they could not be fixed.

Woinarowicz explained, "He [the BMO] seemed to think that it was a really big deal that Bobby was working on these things. It was a bit of a mystery to us all, really, and it did not take a long time to get them all running again, not at all, not for Bobby. He cleaned them up. They looked like new."

There has been excess equipment on the books since A Co., 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA first arrived in Marez-East, and a lot of it is being fixed up and moved off the COS and off the property books. Along with the excess generators, trucks, outdated communication shacks and portable welding trailers, the swamp coolers are just another few items added to the list of things to get out of the motor pool area. So they thought.

The 18<sup>th</sup> CSSB Bn. Commander, Lt. Col. Roscoe, explained the mystery, after he and the 18<sup>th</sup> CSSB Bn. command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Bryan D. Kroontje, awarded the coin.

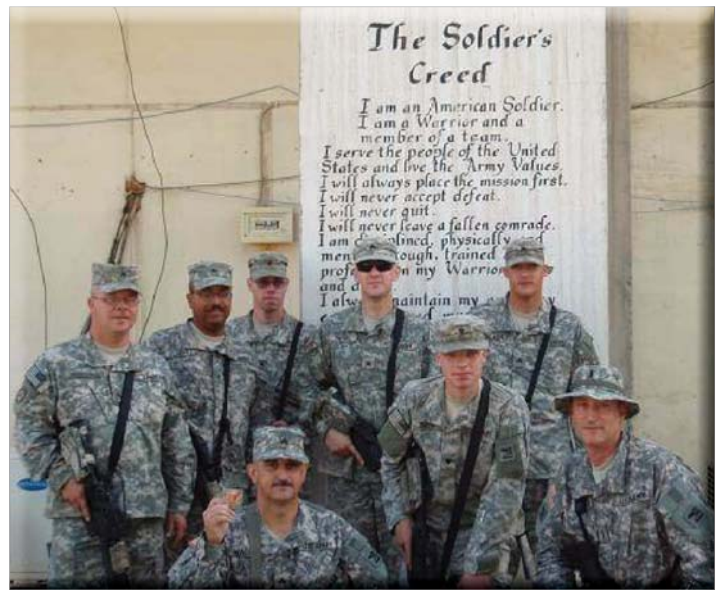
"It all started after we first arrived here in country last June. It was hot, and those swamp coolers were broken, and no one could fix them. They told me they could not be fixed. The last battalion and their logistics people said that these things were beyond repair. And all for

different reasons, people kept telling me they should just be thrown away. Then the old Alpha Battery said the same thing. I kept threatening that someone needs to fix the swamp coolers, so our guys down at the motor pool could have some way of cooling off during the day, and I did threaten once," he admitted, "that if they were not fixed, then I was going to move the entire battalion staff and their offices down to the motor pool, and they could work there in the heat until those coolers were fixed."

The coin ceremony was held in the battalion conference room. All the staff members laughed as the battalion commander said this, and they nodded in agreement over hearing him recall the threat.

He continued, "I took the problem to the [base defense operations center] on Marez, took it as high as the post mayor's cell, and someone had a contracting officer from back in the states somewhere call me on the phone once and explain why these things cannot be fixed. All in all, I figure that about a thousand people, literally a thousand people, have told me that those swamp coolers had been broken, were beyond repair, could never be fixed, and there they sat. So, last week, when I heard that they were operational, I just had to give out a coin in recognition of doing the impossible."

After this, he offered his applause, and the maintenance section was allowed to get back to work.



Sgt. Bobby Walters, a mechanic with A Batt., 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA from Shelton, Wash. (center front), holds the coin he received from the 18<sup>th</sup> CSSB Bn. commander. His team from the maintenance section in Headquarters Platoon was there to witness the award: (From left to right) Staff Sgt. Scott Woinarowicz, Sgt. Luis Velazquez, Spc. Daniel Heffington, Sgt. Clay Thissell, Spc. John Ziese, Sgt. Nicholas Voelker and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Matt Baldwin (Photo courtesy of 2-146 FA)





# THE RAVEN GALLERY



A humvee crew from C Co., 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB) engages targets with their M2, .50 caliber machine gun during familiarization fire at a range in Iraq (Photo courtesy of 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf.)



Five newly promoted sergeants from E Co., 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB) recite the Noncommissioned Officer's Creed. From left to right: Sgt. Andrew Sunagel, Sgt. Michael Shults, Sgt. Rodrigo Nino, Sgt. Reginald and Sgt. Clinton Hede, (Photo courtesy of 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf.)



Baseball All-Star pitcher Curt Schilling from the Boston Red Sox read the re-enlistment/extension oath to Sgt. Mark Fitzpatrick, from B Trp., 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav., at Al Taqadum on Dec. 5, 2008 (Photo by Spc. Mike Chaco)



Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Sweeney, Col. Ronald Kapral and Lt. Col. Carl Steele serve a traditional Thanksgiving meal to tenants of Camp Ramadi, Nov. 27, 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Chief Warrant Officer Gordon Jay, from HQ 81<sup>st</sup> BCT Mayor's Cell, gets a room key to hand out to a new tenant on Camp Ramadi, Nov. 27, 2008 (Photo by Maj. James Taylor)



Master Sgt. Daniel Hagemeier of HHB, 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA plays soccer with children from the Mosul area as other children receive aid by the vehicle (Photo by Master Sgt. Douglas Rieck)





# THE RAVEN GALLERY



The band CatchPenny performs at the Community Activity Center on FOB Marez, where 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA is stationed, Nov. 14, 2008 (Photo by Sgt Virgil Akins)



The 81<sup>st</sup> BCT command staff stand behind a cake made by the Camp Ramadi dining facility. The staff served Thanksgiving dinner to the tenants on Camp Ramadi Nov. 27, 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Congressmen Brian Baird, from Washington's 3<sup>rd</sup> congressional district, hands a handmade holiday greeting card to Lt. Col. Bryan Grenon from HQ 81<sup>st</sup> BCT during his visit to Camp Ramadi Dec. 12 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Courtney Sanders, of HHB, 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA, celebrates after her successful practical exercise with fire extinguishers. The course was put on by the FOB Marez Fire Department on Nov. 19, 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Virgil Akins)



Master Sgt. Douglas Rieck, Spc. David Beck, Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Herbert Poole, Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Mikel Costello, Spc. Kyle Brown and Capt. Jack Mushallo, members of FOB Marez base defense operations center and HHB, 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA pause for a photo (Photo courtesy of HHB, 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA)



Spc. Anthony Ikehara, from HQ 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, sorts through holiday mail received Dec. 12, 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)





The CD "For The Troops II," including Grammy Award winners/nominees and multi-platinum selling recording artists Trace Adkins, Daughtry, Josh Groban and Five For Fighting, is now available for free at the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) Web site, [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com).

"I'm excited that the CD 'For the Troops' project is back with a new roster of fantastic artists and great songs," said John Ondrasik who performs under the band name Five For Fighting and spearheaded the CD's development. "After the response from last year's effort, creating a sequel was a no-brainer. The CD 'For the Troops II' has a bit more rock and a few surprises, but at its core is a thank you to those whose sacrifice secures our freedom and that of our children."

U.S. active duty servicemembers and veterans worldwide with a valid military ID can download the album at no charge at [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com). Another 200,000 hard copies of the CD will be arriving courtesy of TriWest Healthcare Alliance at military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan, America Supports You events, USO Centers, Fisher Houses and other locations across the nation and overseas. CDs were delivered to Camp Murray, Wash. Dec. 11.

"We strongly believe that music can be an effective and healthy mental break during times of stress or family separation," said TriWest President and CEO David J. McIntyre, Jr. "We are exceptionally grateful for individuals like John Ondrasik and the other artists, who are driven to thank our troops in memorable ways and who encourage others to do the same. It is an honor for TriWest to serve America's military families, and we hope more Americans also remember to thank

those who protect our safety and freedom."

"As Americans, we cannot do enough for these dedicated men and women who serve our nation," said Trace Adkins. "I am honored to be involved with this project and hope that it may bring a moment of enjoyment to them as they defend our freedom and our way of life."

Released last fall, songs from the original CD "For the Troops" were downloaded more than 350,000 times at [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com), and another 200,000 service members and retirees worldwide received hard copies of the CD. Ondrasik partnered with AAFES, TriWest and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) to produce and release both CDs.

For more information on the CD and the artists, please visit [www.cdforthetroops.com/](http://www.cdforthetroops.com/).

### The complete track listing of "For the Troops II" is:

- 3 Doors Down – "When I'm Gone"
- Daughtry – "Home"
- Five For Fighting – "Freedom Never Cries"
- Good Charlotte – "I Don't Want to Be in Love (Dance Floor Anthem)"
- Gretchen Wilson – "California Girls"
- Isaac Hayes – "Theme From Shaft"
- Joe Perry – "Shakin' My Cage"
- Josh Groban – "Machine"
- Jude – "I Think It's Time (Everything's Alright)"
- Keith Urban – "Everybody"
- Maroon 5 – "Won't Go Home Without You"
- Roy Orbison – "In Dreams"
- Alan Jackson – "Where I Come From"
- Trace Adkins – "Fightin' Words"

## American Legion helps troops connect

Military troops deployed overseas can now use their webcams to talk with their families back home without having to download software packages that might not pass muster with command cybernet security requirements.

The American Legion has launched "VetCam," a free webcam service that enables U.S. military servicemembers and veterans to talk face-to-face on their personal computers with friends and family by simply registering as a user. Once registered, each user can connect with two webcams and use the service 24/7 from any place with an Internet connection.

"Webcam technology has been around for a while, but many required downloading software to make them work," said David K. Rehbein, national commander of The American Legion. "We want our troops, our veterans and their families to be able to enjoy the pleasure of talking face-to-face with their loved ones anywhere in the world, with just a couple of mouse clicks. Next to actually being there, seeing and talking with your spouse and kids, mom and dad, and best friends are morale boosters prior generations of veterans never had."

To initiate the service, a user will need a webcam or a computer with a built in webcam. Then, just go to <http://www.legion.org>, click on VetCams, register and start communicating. Once registered, simply log in at any time to connect.

All members of the United States Armed Forces (active duty, Reserve and National Guard), members of The American Legion, their families and friends are welcome to use this complimentary technology.

With a current membership of 2.6 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and patriotic youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.



# ESGR

## EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE


By Ken Schwarm

Program Support Specialist Wash. ESGR

Your Washington ESGR Committee wishes you all a merry Christmas and a safe New Year. We want you to know that we are here to assist you with your employer issues on your return. Because of the current economic situation, we have received inquiries from concerned Soldiers wondering how safe their jobs are.

While no one can predict the future, there may be changes in your work situation when you return. Some employers may be reducing their workforce or reassigning people to where they are needed.

It is important to remember you do have protections under federal law in those cases. The basic rule of thumb under USERRA is an employer has to treat you as if you had never left for military service. You must be given the same seniority, pay and status as you would have had if you remained working at your job. Even if your job does not exist any longer, or your employer has downsized, your employer may still be obligated to give you the same benefits they gave to everyone else while you were gone. This can include severance pay, reassignment into a different position or even training for a different career field.

Each case is different and needs to be looked individually. Please know that ESGR is ready to answer your questions and assist you if necessary to mediate with your employer. 



Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Sweeney, the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT command sergeant major, and Col. Ronald Kapral, the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT commander, pose for holiday photos Dec. 11, 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)




Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a Department of Defense agency, has opened the nomination season for the 2009 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. National Guard and Reserve members and their families are eligible and encouraged to nominate employers who have gone above and beyond in their support of military employees. Nominations will be accepted at [www.FreedomAward.mil](http://www.FreedomAward.mil) until January 19, 2009. The Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the U.S. Government to employers for their outstanding support of their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

Last year, more than 2,000 submissions were received. The state-level ESGR chair committee selects one nomination for each of the three categories, large businesses with more than 500 employees, small businesses with less than 500 employees and public employers, such as the police or fire department, to send to the national committee.

Some employers not selected for the national level, but who still display outstanding commitment to their citizen-Soldier may be selected for the Washington ESGR Above and Beyond award. Examples of going above and beyond include differential pay, care packages, family contact and care or assistance. Servicemembers can also submit their employer, which could include the company, a supervisor, an HR professional, etc., for a Patriot Award.

The entire ESGR award program, from the Patriot Award to the Freedom Award not only honors our outstanding employers, but also helps build a partnership with these employers and others to employ, support and seek to employ additional men and women of our Guard and Reserve.

For questions regarding the Freedom Award nomination process, please visit [www.FreedomAward.mil](http://www.FreedomAward.mil) or contact Beth Sherman, ESGR Public Affairs, at 703-380-9717. 

## Who is ESGR?

The Washington Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Committee has more than 80 volunteers, with three paid employees.

These volunteers range from all walks of life, retired reserve, guard and active servicemembers, parents of military members, former city employees and folks that just want to support. Our committee is dedicated to support each and every one of you and your employers! This is their way of giving back. If you need assistance please contact the Washington State ESGR. (253) 512-8489 - fax (253) 512-8941 [Kenneth.Schwarm@us.army.mil](mailto:Kenneth.Schwarm@us.army.mil)





# Country comes to Camp Ramadi

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT

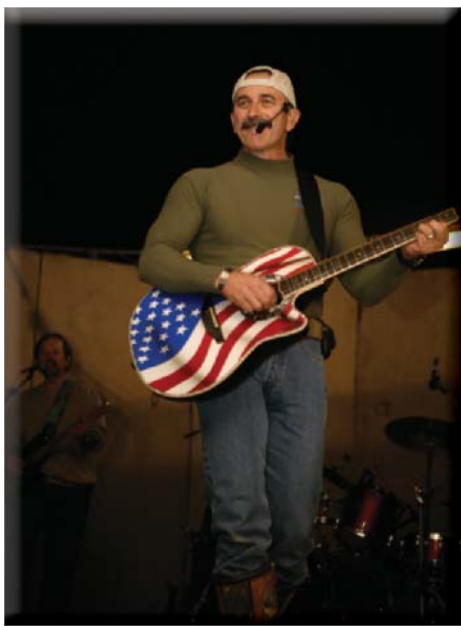
Country music star Aaron Tippin visited Camp Ramadi, Iraq Nov. 26, 2008 during his six-base Drill N' Thrill Thanksgiving tour sponsored by Stars for Stripes.

Tippin has done three morale tours in Iraq and two in Afghanistan, as well as performances throughout the Middle East during the 1990 Gulf War.

"Some folks might not know this, but my career was kind of kicked off by the military. I came along during the days of the Persian Gulf War, and I got invited along on a Bob Hope tour," said Tippin. "So the first Americans to ever hear me sing, 'You've Gotta Stand for Something', were in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and they were our troops. I guess you could say it's a friendship that's lasted 20 years."

During Tippin's Stars for Stripes tours he makes a point of shaking hands and signing autographs for as many troops as possible, despite the fact that he has traveled thousands of miles and had very little sleep.

"We didn't come here to hide out; we came here to shake hands," stated Tippin.



Country music star Aaron Tippin performs during his visit to Camp Ramadi, Iraq Nov. 26, 2008 (Photo by Marine Staff Sgt. Joshua Higgins)



Members of HQ 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, enjoy an Aaron Tippin Concert at Camp Ramadi, Iraq Nov. 26. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

At one point, Tippin got back out of his vehicle after wrapping up an autograph and photo session to get to his sound check, so a couple of Marines who arrived late after getting off duty could get autographs and pictures with him as well. His travel throughout Iraq often involves late night flights, all-day visits and evening performances. He may get a little sleep on the flight and then start the whole thing over again the next day. By the time Tippin heads back to the U.S., he will have played five shows in Iraq and one in Kuwait.

While in Ramadi, Tippin visited several units to see what they were doing and observe the changes in Iraq since his last visit in 2007.

"My favorite part is seeing all of the good that is being done. Shaking hands with all of you guys and gals is a big blessing. All we ever get is what is shown on the media, most of the time that's whatever bad news they can dream up. Not everybody in America gets to see all the good," said Tippin about his favorite part of coming over here. "It's what I like to call bringing the love over and hauling in the truth back. It's a blessing to be the messenger."

Tippin has always supported U.S. military members. The overseas performances and visits are his way of

showing it.

When asked what he would like to say to all deployed servicemembers, Tippin said, "Happy holidays to all you guys and gals out there. You can't be home with your families and being over here just a few days without mine makes me realize the suffering, among the many other sacrifices, that you do for me. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. I want to see you at an Aaron Tippin show on the other side of the world."

Tippin's Iraq and Kuwait tour was sponsored by Stars for Stripes, a charity organization devoted to bringing a morale boost to United States military deployed overseas through celebrity entertainment. It was formed by Judy Seale in 2003. With a background in country music and international tours, she formed the organization to entertain troops who otherwise might not get to see the entertainers that come through.

Seale visited Camp Ramadi along with Tippin and Fox News Channel contributor Bill Cowan, a retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel. Seale has spent nearly 18 years dedicated to bringing entertainment to the troops. During these trips the entertainers are giving up their time and money. They are not paid for their time or performances, according to Seale.





1636



2008

# National Guard celebrates 372<sup>nd</sup> birthday



*More than 200 Soldiers re-enlist during the National Guard's 372<sup>nd</sup> birthday celebration at the Al Faw Palace on Camp Victory Dec. 13. Eighteen Soldiers from the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT re-enlisted at the celebration (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Frazier)*

## NG Soldiers re-enlist, celebrate component's 372<sup>nd</sup> Birthday

*By Spc. Eric J. Martinez  
Multi-National Corps – Iraq*

Members of the Army National Guard and Multi-National Force and Corps – Iraq, celebrated the 372<sup>nd</sup> birthday of the Army National Guard in the Al Faw Palace rotunda on Camp Victory, Iraq Dec. 13.

"We've been answering our nation's call, just like our forefathers did 372 years ago," said Maj. Gen. Nelson Cannon, director general, Civilian Police Assistance Training Team, Directorate of Interior Affairs, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq, and part of the Michigan National Guard. "The National Guard has constantly been serving as one of our most enduring institutions. We are all part of the legacy of what is now called, the National Guard."

National Guard troops from all over theater descended upon the palace to devote further years towards serving their nation and to share in the birthday celebration of their component.

"On the thirteenth day of December, we celebrate the National Guard Birthday," said Col. David Sheridain, chief of National Guard affairs, MNC-I. "I am extremely

honored to be with you here today. On behalf of General Odierno (commander, Multi-National Force – Iraq), Lieutenant General Austin (commander, Multi-National Corps – Iraq) and the many other senior leaders, I welcome you to Al Faw Palace and salute you for your continued service to our nation at a time when you are needed most."

The ceremony highlighted the history of the United States military's oldest component and featured a mass re-enlistment of more than 200 Army National Guard Soldiers from more than five states. The National Guard service members, who re-enlisted during the birthday celebration, represent the wide array of troops who perform crucial missions in support of operations in Iraq.

"Today's event comes at a time when the National Guard's participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom is increasing," Sheridan said. "The full gamut of Air and Army National Guard assets continue to roll and fly in and out of theater without pause, but none of this would be possible without the Soldiers and Airmen who are willing to volunteer to serve away from their loved ones."

"We've set aside our communities, our careers and, most importantly, our families," Cannon said. "We do this with much personal sacrifice."

## Did you know?

- The Army National Guard is the oldest component of the Armed Forces of the United States and one of the nation's longest-enduring institutions.
- From the Pequot War in 1637 until the present day, the Army National Guard has participated in every war or conflict this nation has fought.
- The greatest number of combat divisions to fight the Germans during World War I came from the Guard - including six out of the eight that the German General Staff rated as "Excellent" or "Superior."
- The Guard doubled the size of the Regular Army when it was mobilized in 1940, more than a year before Pearl Harbor
- A significant portion of the force deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq continues to come from the Guard. At one point in 2005, half of the combat brigades in Iraq were Army National Guard – a percentage of commitment as part of the overall Army effort not seen since the first years of World War II.





A Korean War veteran salutes during the singing of the National Anthem, Thursday, July 27, 2006 at the White House (Photo by David Bohrer)

## New Law Authorizes Veterans' Salutes during National Anthem


Veterans and active-duty military not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the national anthem, thanks to changes in federal law that took effect this month.

"The military salute is a unique gesture of respect that marks those who have served in our nation's armed forces," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "This provision allows the application of that honor in all events involving our nation's flag."

The new provision improves upon a little known change in federal law last year that authorized veterans to render the military-style hand salute during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, but it did not address salutes during the national anthem. Last year's provision also applied to members of the armed forces while not in uniform.

Traditionally, members of the nation's veterans service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the national anthem and at events involving the national flag while wearing their organization's official head-gear.

The most recent change, authorizing hand-salutes during the national anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel, was sponsored by Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, an Army veteran. It was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which President Bush signed on Oct. 14.

The earlier provision authorizing hand-salutes for veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, was contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, which took effect Jan. 28, 2008. 

## National Guard Official Song

I was a minuteman at Concord Bridge  
The shot heard 'round the world  
and I was there on Bunker Hill  
When "Old Glory" was unfurled  
And when my country called me  
From within or from afar  
I'll be first to answer  
Proud to be the Guard

Defending Freedom protecting dreams  
This is the spirit of what it means to me  
For my God and my home that I love  
I GUARD AMERICA

And in the eyes of my enemies  
Or the eye of a storm  
I face the dangers as they come  
In any shape or form  
I am your sons, your friends, your fathers  
And your daughters working hard  
To be the best and keep us strong  
Proud to be the Guard

Defending Freedom protecting dreams  
This is the spirit of what it means to me  
For my God and my home that I love  
I GUARD AMERICA

Defending Freedom protecting dreams  
This is the spirit of what it means to me  
For my God and my home that I love  
I GUARD AMERICA

### 81<sup>ST</sup> BCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



#### MANAGING EDITOR

MAJ. JAMES SCOTT TAYLOR

JAMES.SCOTT.TAYLOR@US.ARMY.MIL

#### ASSISTANT EDITOR

SGT. EMILY SUHR

EMILY.SUHR@US.ARMY.MIL

#### PRINT JOURNALIST

SGT. AMANDA GAUTHIER

AMANDA.R.GAUTHIER@US.ARMY.MIL

TO SUBMIT ARTICLES, PHOTOS, OR STORY IDEAS

E-MAIL EMILY.SUHR@US.ARMY.MIL

PHOTOS NEED TO BE IN A JPEG OR TIFF FORMAT.

PLEASE INCLUDE A MICROSOFT WORD DOCUMENT.

IDENTIFY WHO IS IN THE PHOTO, WHO TOOK THE  
PHOTO, WHEN AND WHERE.

(IDENTIFICATION = FULL NAME, RANK, UNIT, DUTY  
POSITION AND HOMETOWN).